

The Service Degraded

Improper Appointment and Promotions

The Kind of Service which the Government Deems Worthy of Public Reward

The character of a government may be judged by its appointments to important and responsible public positions. An administration which appoints disreputable or dishonest men to the public service, or retains and promotes officials who have been proved unworthy, cannot be credited with good intentions. The Laurier administration has appointed, kept in office and promoted a large number of persons who should never have been placed in any public position, and whose only qualification for appointment or reward was a kind of party service which reflected discredit upon themselves and upon the party to which it was rendered. The following is a list, by no means complete, and a brief sketch of the public record of officials who have been rewarded and protected by the Government.

JOSEPH NIXON

For party services Nixon was made land agent and caretaker at Macleod. It was found on investigation in 1905 that in four years preceding Nixon had retained for long periods, various sums of public money, that his accounts were missing or mutilated, dates of payment falsified, and cash receipts not accounted for. The investigation was held by R. E. A. Leach, of "thin red line" fame and was not severe. Nixon threw part of the blame on his son, who was fifteen years old when the offences began, while it was shown that cash payments not accounted for had been made to the father personally. Neither Nixon nor his son was prosecuted and Nixon was allowed to resign on making good the amounts traced to him. Twelve days after Nixon's malfeasance was established and reported to Ottawa, Mr. Oliver appointed him to another office in the Immigration Department at \$25 per month, and a fortnight later raised his pay to \$75, or the same salary that he had before the investigation.

PHILIP WAGNER

As a reward for party service Hon. Frank Oliver, then a private member, caused Wagner to be made an immigration interpreter, in which capacity he victimized confiding foreigners who fell into his hands. One immigrant handed him money to pay freight on his luggage. Wagner pocketed the amount and the Galician went without his clothes until the Government paid the freight. Afterwards Wagner was charged with keeping for himself money which trusting Galicians had given him to put in the bank or to remit to Europe or to pay for land. Immigration officials suspended Wagner and stopped his pay, but Mr. Oliver interposed and had the payments restored and Wagner's salary increased. Finally several criminal informations were laid against Wagner, of which two for fraud and theft,

were carried to a conclusion. Wagner was convicted and served out two terms of imprisonment at hard labor. When he was released Mr. Oliver had him re-appointed, at a higher salary than before. Wagner is now receiving \$1,300 a year. It was established by sworn statements that while in receipt of that salary he assisted in the last Alberta election by distributing beer and other articles among the Galician electors. These affidavits were sent to Mr. Oliver, as head of the department, but he refused to take action or to make investigation, and retains Wagner in office.

W. J. DOBEY

Shortly before the elections of 1904, the P.O. Inspector reported a shortage in the accounts of W. J. Dobey, Postmaster of Thessalon. Investigation revealed a default of over \$1,100, which sums the officer was reported to have applied to his own use. The Inspector's recommendation of instant dismissal was carried out, but the member for the county got in his work and the record was changed to one of resignation. Dobey worked hard for the Government in the Federal and Provincial campaigns following, and was then restored to his office, the pay of which he had drawn during the whole period of resignation. The salary of his office is \$1,070.

W. T. R. PRESTON

He needs no introduction. Mr. Preston is known as the constructor and operator of the Ontario campaign machine, the character of which has been revealed by the evidence of Pritchett in the London conspiracy case, by the West Elgin confession, by the Brockville and Huron revelations, by the bogus ballot box episode, and many similar events. After the West Elgin crime Sir Wilfrid sent Preston to England as Chief Immigration Commissioner, salary \$3,000, a free house and other perquisites. There Preston evoked the North Atlantic Trading Company, whose operations constitute one of the greatest swindles of modern times and cost the Country \$367,245. After Preston's activities had involved the Government in endless diatribes and trouble, and when he was wanted at Toronto to give evidence in the London conspiracy plot, he was sent off to Asia at \$3,600 a year salary, with expenses on an Oriental scale.

J. D. JACKSON

This Ingersoll lawyer sought evidence against a Conservative member, and was proved to have offered \$2,000 to one man to procure such evidence "true or false." He paid \$10 to one man and \$250 to another who used the money to suborn perjury. The conspiracy was exposed before Mr. Justice Street who from the bench reprobated Jackson's conduct in strong terms. Shortly after this certificate was given, Sir Wilfrid appointed Jackson to the position of Commercial Agent at Leeds and Hull, England—salary \$3,000 a year.

R. E. A. LEACH

He was Liberal organizer at Manitoba in the general election of 1904. Under instructions from Ottawa the official voters' lists, printed at the Government bureau, were handed to him by the Manitoba returning officers. Leach sent them back with a red line drawn through 9,399 names, as persons improperly on the list. Leach had no more authority to touch these official lists than any man