

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ISSUES ITS TENTH ANNUAL REPORT

Summary covers twelve months from September 1, 1917, to August 31, 1918—How functions were extended by Order in Council of February.

EFFORTS OF COMMISSION TO CARRY OUT REFORMS

The tenth annual report of the Civil Service Commission for the year ending August 31, 1918, was laid on the table of the House of Commons on the afternoon of April 7. The report is of unusual interest owing to the fact that it deals with the action of the Commission during the transition period when the Outside Service was being brought under its control. A brief summary of the contents of this volume, supplied by the Commission, follows:—

At the beginning of the period under consideration, viz., in October, 1917, important changes took place in the personnel of the Commission. Dr. Adam Shortt, one of the original members, resigned, and Mr. Clarence Jameson, member for Digby, N.S., was appointed to succeed him. At the same time an Act of Parliament creating a third commissionership was put into operation by royal proclamation, and the Hon. W. J. Roche, M.D., M.P., Minister of the Interior, was appointed to the position, and named chairman by the Governor in Council. These two gentlemen with Dr. La Rochelle, the remaining member of the original Commission, constitute the present Civil Service Commission.

EFFORTS AT REFORM.

The report outlines the efforts of the Commission to carry out Civil Service reform as promised in 1917 by the Prime Minister's manifesto and as provided for by the Civil Service Act of 1918.

An historical review covering the period from 1868 to the present time shows the growth of abuses in the Civil Service due to the operation of the patronage system, the legislation enacted from time to time to counteract these abuses, and the reforms actually accomplished. It emphasizes the fact that all the Royal Commissions of investigation agreed in condemning the patronage system and insisting on a system of appointment and promotion based on merit.

A description of the merit system follows. It aims at promoting efficiency and economy in a non-political Civil Service:—

"(1) By selecting public employees of ascertained fitness, demonstrated in competition, from the entire body of the people, without regard to their politics, religion, or influence; and,

"(2) By applying the methods of scientific employment to maintain the efficiency of these selected employees after they enter the service." The first step towards the accomplishment of these aims is a classification of positions on the basis of the duties performed, employees doing like work receiving like pay, regardless of seniority or other fortuitous circumstances. Each class of positions must have the same standard of service and the same competitive examination. Examinations for positions in the departments in Ottawa are open to all residents of Canada, and for positions in the several provinces to all residents of that province. The examinations are to be of less academic and

more practical a nature than formerly and include one or more of the following practical tests; practical experience along the lines of the work to be done, and capacity to deal with phases of the work likely to arise, medical and physical tests, demonstrations of skill, personal interviews, probation or try-out under observation, inquiry into the habits, business record and character of the applicants. The merit system deals with many other problems than the conduct of examinations. It must provide for the removal of incompetent or superfluous employees, the adjustment of defective organization and the maintenance of standards of efficient service. The merit system "bases tenure, promotion and salary preferences on continued merit, and supplies, either alone or through co-operation with the deputy heads, the administrative machinery for arriving at the facts and applying the correctives of scientific employment."

WORK OF RECLASSIFICATION.

A careful reading of the Civil Service Act will show the heavy responsibilities placed upon the Commission. The chief of these was the work of reclassification. The magnitude of this work cannot be realized without a knowledge of conditions in all the ramifications of the Outside and Inside Service, and in the so-called "war branches" working under special legislation. The situation was one calling for expert assistance. These experts were secured and have been working on the new scheme, which is briefly described in the report and which will be laid before the House at an early date.

The next grave responsibility of the Commission, that of organization, can never be finally discharged. It is necessarily progressive and elastic. This has been provided for by the creation of an organization branch within its staff whose duties may be summarized as follows: administration of the classification, organization studies and reports, special investigations.

The problem of recruiting the ranks for the combined Outside and Inside Service has become very complicated. The report describes the examination methods and the means devised for securing highly trained men for technical and professional positions. A list is appended of the gentlemen, all well known and experts in their own line, who have served on examining boards to decide between the applicants for these positions. The advertisement of these positions has been as extensive as the yearly appropriation of the Commission would permit.

The legislation with regard to the placing of returned soldiers has been faithfully adhered to. In every case where a qualified returned soldier has been available, he has been given the preference over other candidates.

ADJUSTING DIFFICULTIES.

It is to be expected that there should be violations of the law during the first few months that the new Act was in operation. The change was very radical, the new conditions unfamiliar. Some confusion was inevitable and the violations in many cases were not intentional. For this reason the Commission in its first report feels justified in withholding particulars. The 50,000 positions in the Outside Service were suddenly placed under the control of the Commission. It was obliged to expand rapidly to handle its new responsibilities and in some cases was not able to meet the pressing needs of departments whose work was expanding too. It has taken several months to adjust these difficulties and during these months it seems hardly fair that its actions should have been submitted to such attacks as were made upon it in the House a few weeks ago. It is unfortunate that the report should not have

been published soon enough to forestall such criticism and to prove that the Commission had made an earnest effort to carry out the legislation and to handle the situation, in the face of great odds. It rests with Parliament now to ratify the powers it has conferred by refusing to vote to the departments any appropriation out of which salaries can be paid without reference to the Commission. In this way only can the control of the Civil Service Commission over all appointments be assured.

The Commission has been called upon to make several investigations during the year. Appendices are attached giving memoranda of Commissioner Jameson re the staff of the Board of Pension Commissioners and the Department of Public Printing and Stationery.

SUPERANNUATION.

In reference to the vital question of superannuation, the report makes the following statement:—

"Superannuation.—By the terms of an Order in Council of the 17th of April, 1918, the Civil Service Commission was instructed:—

(1) to prepare and submit to the Governor in Council for approval a list of all officers who, owing to advancing age, ill-health, or lack of experience and ability, were not capable of rendering efficient service to the State and should, therefore, be retired in the interests of efficiency and economy; and,

(2) to report to the Governor in Council, for approval, the conditions under which each employee should be retired, including the provision, if any, that should be made for any such employee.

"In obedience to these instructions the Commission secured the necessary data from the several departments to enable them to prepare the information called for. This provided a list of 96 officials recommended for retirement, 70 of whom had not subscribed to either of the existing superannuation funds, and the remaining 26 were contributors thereto. A memorandum was prepared in accordance with the second instruction, setting forth the conditions under which, in the opinion of the Commission, these employees should be retired; but in view of the fact that Parliament had voted no money by means of which these officials could be superannuated, no further action was possible so far as the 70 non-contributors to the superannuation fund were concerned. The memorandum in question is being submitted to the Government for its information.

"In this connection the Commission would call attention to the imperative necessity of a Superannuation Act for the Civil Service. The fact that the Government by its action last session desired to be advised as to the present condition of the personnel of the service in this regard is sufficient indication that the necessity of proper provision being made for superannuation is appreciated. Such necessity is recognized by all large employers of labour, and the Commission would very strongly urge the importance of the earliest possible consideration being given to this question which is so vital to the efficient and economical administration of the public service."

The Commissioners conclude their report with the usual tables showing the appointments, promotions, and transfers made during the period covered, the examinations held, the number and names of the successful candidates, and the examination papers used at the regular and special examinations.

B.C. Copper Production.

The production of copper in British Columbia last year was 62,858,628 pounds, valued at \$15,480,323, as compared with 57,730,958 pounds, valued at \$15,691,275 in 1917, an increase of approximately 9 per cent.—Office of Commissioner for Immigration and Colonization, Winnipeg.

STRONG VITALITY IN POTATOES FOR SEED

Quality makes big difference in yield says Experimental Farm Note.

The yield of potatoes throughout Canada would be very much increased if everyone who grew potatoes used seed of the strongest vitality, free from disease. While the variety used is important, the quality of the seed often makes much more difference in the yield than the variety says an experimental farm's note issued by the Department of Agriculture.

Seed potatoes from a crop which grew vigorously until the tops were cut down by frost in autumn usually give much better returns than those from a crop where the tops died up in the middle of summer. There are parts of Canada where the former conditions obtain, as a rule, and it is from such places that the most vigorous seed is usually obtained.

In 1918 the best seed of the Green Mountain potato yielded at the rate of 387 bushels per acre while the poorest seed yielded only 57 bushels per acre at Ottawa. In the case of Irish Cobbler, the best seed yielded at the rate of 616 bushels per acre while poor seed yielded only 26 bushels per acre, a remarkable difference. Just as striking differences have been obtained in other years.

Each grower of potatoes should aim to have a full stand of plants in the field and to have every plant a vigorous and healthy one. There is often a large proportion of misses in potato fields and a still larger proportion of weak and diseased plants which lessen the yield enormously.

Experiments have been tried in different parts of Canada to determine the best time to plant potatoes for highest yields, and from these experiments and the experience of the best growers, the following dates are suggested as being the best:—Prince Edward Island, June 1-7; Nova Scotia, June 1-15; New Brunswick, June 1-15; Quebec, May 15 to June 15, depending on the part of the province; Ontario, May 1 to June 15, depending on what part of the province; Manitoba, May 10-15; Saskatchewan, May 10-24; Alberta, May 10-24; British Columbia, April 1 to May 15, depending on what part of the province. The tendency has been in most places in Canada to plant later than is desirable for highest yields. From results obtained, the following general recommendation is made:—

Where the spring is early and autumn frosts early, plant early. Where the spring is early and summers are dry, plant early. Where the spring is late and autumn frosts are late, early planting is not so important. Where the spring is early and autumn frosts are early, plant as soon as soil is dry enough.

Tender Asked For.

Sealed tenders addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed "Tender for Neurological Ward, Military Hospital, Vancouver (Shaughnessy)," will be received until 12 o'clock noon, Wednesday, April 30, 1919, for the construction of a neurological ward, Military Hospital, Vancouver (Shaughnessy), B.C.

Plans and specification can be seen and forms of tender obtained at the office of the Chief Architect, Department of Public Works, Ottawa; the Superintendent of Military Hospitals, Harper Building, Vancouver, B.C.; and of the Resident Architect, Victoria, B.C.

Tenders will not be considered unless made on the forms supplied by the Department and in accordance with the conditions set forth therein.

Each tender must be accompanied by an accepted cheque on a chartered bank payable to the order of the Minister of Public Works, equal to 10 per cent of the amount of the tender. War Loan Bonds of the Dominion will also be accepted as security, or war bonds and cheques if required to make up an odd amount.

R. C. DESROCHERS,
Secretary.

Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, April 2, 1919.