

THE CIVILIAN

VOL. I.

JUNE 19th, 1908

No. 4

The Salary Question.

Some further considerations on the Civil Service Commission's report and the proposed Civil Service Act.

Though at the moment of going to press we may still be said to be without final information as to the manner in which the government proposes to deal with the salary question, the following observations on what seem to us the fundamental principles involved are offered in the hope of assisting an intelligent discussion of the subject.

It might have been thought that on a question so immediately important to all concerned as that of salaries, some clear-cut, definite statement would have been among the first of official utterances in connection with the proposed reforms. That such has not been the case, however, need not be received with unmixed disappointment. The spirit and not the letter of the new legislation will count for most, and a government is invariably diffident in putting forward the expenditures involved in any change. At the same time as some danger of confusion of thought lurks in the whole question of civil service remuneration at the present time, it may be well to re-state the situation in its origin as well as in its development during the past few months.

About a year and a quarter ago, the government, in view of the prolonged and still continuing rise in cost of living, was moved to do, what practically every other employer of labour in Canada had already done, namely, adjust its scale of salaries to the

changed economic conditions. The appointment of the Royal Commission followed. Between the appointment of the commission and the date of its report to the government the only incident that need detain us was the presentation of the memorial of the Civil Service Association in June, 1907, with its extended and convincing statement with regard to cost of living tendencies during the decade 1897-1907. In view of the cordial acceptance of that memorandum on every hand, and especially by the commissioners, it may be of interest to quote again from its closing paragraphs:

"In conclusion, the Association wishes merely to emphasize, by way of recapitulation, the important points that it has sought to make clear in the preceding statement. If the evidence it has collected is correct, the price of nearly every staple commodity, constituting the very basis of existence, has advanced to a degree that, without liberal provision to counteract, will soon cause not only distress but impaired efficiency in the service. Rentals, wages, and other kindred expenditures have been shown to be quite as strongly upward as prices. Applying these facts in the most practical way possible, it was found that to the man of low salary the increase in cost of living during the past ten years has amounted to 30-35%, while to the man of higher rank and remuneration, it has been at least 26% to 30%. These are not guesses, but re-