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Efficiency Records.

Text of the addresses delivered by Messrs. Steele, Wheeler, Birdseye and Murray before the National Assembly of Civil Service Commissioners in Ottawa, June, 1916.

Mr. PHILLIP STEELE (Chicago Civil Service League, Chicago, Ill.): Mr. Chairman, I am in the class known as Employees. I started to work for the City of Chicago twenty years ago. I have seen several different systems of so-called efficiency rating, methods of keeping efficiency records, put into effect, and I have seen them become discarded, cast into the scrap heap and thrown out. I was very much impressed with Mr. Murray's address and his report. My experience and that of others in the Service he has almost expressed and when it comes to making or writing efficiency records it is purely a matter of personal judgment, and with all due respect to the gentlemen who said we had to come down to personal judgment in the final analysis to get a comparison, I do not believe it is a fair proposition to try and mark up efficiency records for any large body of men and let the judgment of different people enter into that. I am a mechanical engineer in charge of a pumping station. There are nine pumping stations in Chicago. Our daily system of marking has been discarded, but we have to make out a monthly report of efficiency on a percentage basis. Four of the chief engineers out of nine went in years ago under the crookedest examination ever held in Chicago and were not in any sense real Service men. The others have advanced through the ranks and are Civil Service men. They have to turn in a report at the end of each month on a percentage of 85 per cent maximum and 75 per cent minimum. Some of these men always mark everybody 85 per cent; others always mark on the basis of 78 per cent. Yet these marks are matters of record and when it comes to an examination for the position of chief engineer the engineers so marked up go into that examination with this inequitable system of marking on efficiency. In one instance the difference between the man who got the position and the man standing next to him was 1 per cent, and the defeated candidate was one of those who came under the 78 per cent marking. It is impossible to get at a basis of marking covering all kinds of service. It would be better to have a special note of unusual events, assuming that the man who is not specially marked is doing ordinary, efficient work. That comes the nearest to being a fair and square way. There is a chance for efficiency endeavour, but it should be devoted towards the standardization of work. A department may not be doing efficient work but the individuals in it may be highly efficient. Who is to make the standard for this inefficient department? For the last year there has been a complete check on the nine pumping stations, but it is of course essential that there should be somebody in the engineering office capable of analyzing that report. The human element must be always considered. You must have not only esprit but the feeling that everything is going on the square. The feeling that they are being treated on the square is the biggest thing towards making men advance