

REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

The Question of Dismissals.

A CONSIDERABLE number of the newspapers are getting rather excited over the question of dismissals from the Civil Service by the new Borden Government. There have been dismissals, but there have not been as many as the newspaper reports would seem to indicate. After a Government has been for fifteen years in power there are likely to be a considerable number of employees occupying more or less temporary positions who may be dispensed with safely. Some of these superfluous workers have been dismissed. Again there is a certain number of temporary appointments in connection with Parliament which are made for the session only. In such cases the new Government has favoured its own party adherents as against the party adherents of the late government. In addition to this, nearly a hundred persons occupying subordinate positions in the Department of Public Works have been summarily dismissed.

The dismissals in the Public Works Department form the only basis for a genuine criticism of the new Government. Mr. Monk has undoubtedly made a mistake. It is understood that he has done this under pressure from the two Ottawa members of the House of Commons. These gentlemen were foolish enough to open a patronage office where 2,800 so-called party workers registered their applications. Having made this grievous error, the Ottawa members have been bombarding the cabinet ministers for "vacant positions." Mr. Monk is the only one who has yielded to these importunities. Knowing Mr. Monk as a kind-hearted and somewhat studious professor of law, one feels more inclined to give him the smallest share of the blame. The largest share must be borne by the greedy Conservative politicians of the City of Ottawa.

In an excellent three-column article on this subject, the *Toronto Evening Telegram* points out that Sir James Whitney and his associates in the Government of Ontario faced the same situation in 1905, after the defeat of the Ross Government. At that time some of Sir James' supporters threatened to resign unless he dismissed a large portion of the Liberal office-holders. Sir James' only answer was "Go ahead and put in your resignations." The *Telegram* adds, "these resignations were never put in and the office holders were never put out." Mr. Monk would have been well advised had he followed the example of Sir James Whitney.

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Illuminating Incidents.

THAT Mr. Borden is not in sympathy with dismissals from the Civil Service except for adequate reason, has been shown on at least one occasion. One of the elevator operators in the Parliament Buildings was among those dismissed a few days ago. It appears that he had been so kindly disposed towards the aged statesman who has recently vacated the office of Premier, that he was bold enough to say good-bye to Sir Wilfrid when the Premier departed for Rideau Hall to hand in his resignation. When Mr. Borden heard that this was the only offence charged against the elevator operator he ordered that the man should be restored to his position. And it was done.

Another incident is told in the dispatches from Ottawa. One of the dismissed men went to the Conservative organization and obtained a certificate to the effect that he had been an election worker for the Conservative party during the September contest. He duly presented this certificate to the executioner and his life was spared. In short he was being dismissed on the ground of "offensive partisanship." He proved that he was an offensive partisan but that his work had been done on behalf of the Conservatives. Therefore, he was allowed to remain.

These two incidents, though entirely different in character, indicate the foolishness which is behind some of these dismissals. It also shows that the new cabinet are more to be sympathized with than criticized. In their fight against the patronage monger and the place hunter they need the active support of every citizen who believes in a permanent and efficient Civil Service. No doubt there are employees of the Government from Halifax to Victoria whose services might easily be dispensed with for the country's good, but not one of these should

be dismissed without a reasonable investigation and a fair trial. Even the criminal receives that in British courts of justice.

The Moral of It All.

EVERY person who is disgusted with these flurries in the Civil Service whenever a new government comes into power at Ottawa, or at one of the provincial capitals, must feel more kindly towards Civil Service Reform. When the whole of the Canadian civil service, inside and outside, is placed under a Civil Service Commission, as in Great Britain, then these pitiful exhibitions of political greed will be almost wholly eliminated. Mr. Borden has promised this, but it will take at least five years, perhaps ten years, to accomplish it. In the meantime it will be the duty of good citizens to preach and talk Civil Service Reform. The patronage mongers are always at work and only constant watchfulness will prevent them starting a reactionary movement.

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Another Bank Amalgamation.

MERGERS are the order of the day in the business world and amalgamations in the banking world. The latest bank amalgamation is that of the Eastern Townships Bank with the Canadian Bank of Commerce. The new bank will have a total of fifteen millions paid up capital, a reserve fund of twelve and a half millions, and total assets of over two hundred million. This will make the Bank of Commerce as large as any other bank in Canada and one of the strongest financial institutions in the world.

Sir Edmund Walker, who has been the leading spirit in the Bank of Commerce for a great many years, is to be congratulated upon the success which he has achieved. He has probably accomplished more than any other single Canadian banker of the period. Under his management and direction, the Commerce has made steady and rapid progress. It has never had a set-back. There may have been some luck, but the majority of those who are in close touch with financial matters give credit to Sir Edmund's care, shrewdness and exceptional business acumen.

Sir Edmund is more than a banker. He is a leading citizen. He has touched Canadian life at many points and has done something for Canadian literature, Canadian art, Canadian scientific research and Canadian social progress generally. There is, perhaps, no other man in Canada who has so broad a record. This may seem like excessive praise, but no unprejudiced student of Sir Edmund's career could reach any other conclusion. Natural resources and favourable climate will not alone make a country; it must have men who measure up to the highest standards. Sir Edmund is one of those who are helping Canada to reach the national level of its contemporaries.

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Good and Bad City Government.

WHEN discussing city government in Canada, one may discover its strength and weakness only by comparisons. A recent incident in Philadelphia affords such a basis of comparison. The garbage of that city is removed by a private company under contract with the city. In 1905, the contract amounted to \$560,000. In the following year it was given to another firm for \$339,575. This was a considerable reduction. It should have been held at that figure, but instead in 1907 it was increased to \$418,500. In 1908, it went up to \$488,988; in 1910 to \$498,000, and in 1911 to \$510,000. The same firm did the work throughout this period. This showed collusion somewhere. In November last bids were again received, and the company which had done the work for five years was underbid. It tendered at \$510,000 and a competitor bid \$420,000. The official in charge refused to accept any of the bids, declaring that he had information which led him to believe that an even better bid could be obtained. Fresh tenders were called for, and the old company bid \$278,588 and got the work for the seventh time.

From these facts, one may gather that Philadelphia has been paying about \$200,000 a year more for removing its garbage than it ought to pay,

mainly because the contractors had enough friends or influence at the City Hall to get the higher price. In Canada, such a state of affairs could not exist in regard to a simple matter like garbage removal. Every Canadian city does this work itself and does it economically. In other words, Canadian cities are ahead of United States cities in municipal operation of civic services.

The contract system for civic services is most dangerous. It is not so much the higher cost as it is the baneful influence of the contractor. Every civic contractor is likely to get mixed up in civic politics whether he likes it or not. Aldermen come to him and seek his aid in their election. His employees come to him and ask for direction as to how they shall vote. Inevitably he is drawn into the vortex of vote-getting. For this reason, if for no other, the civic contractor should be eliminated wherever possible. He cannot be forced out entirely, but he should not be allowed to perform civic services which require him to have a body of employees who may become a political influence. Nor should he have a contract of large dimensions, the yearly renewal of which is likely to create a temptation which human nature cannot resist.

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Bank Profits Here and Elsewhere.

JUST what rate of profit the Canadian chartered banks are making, it is hard to say. Most of them will run from twenty to twenty-five per cent. There is first the dividend of at least ten per cent; then the sum to be carried to rest which amounts to at least five per cent.; and lastly there are the concealed profits known as "inside rest." This gives a total rate of profit which is much higher than that in industry, commerce or other forms of finance. The profit comes mainly from two sources: a low rate of interest (3 per cent.) on deposits, fixed by the Bankers' Association, and low salaries to junior officials.

However, though Canadian banks are making too high a rate of profit, there are Banks in the United States which make a much higher rate. The First National Bank of New York will this year pay the holders of its ten millions of stock dividends amounting to fifty per cent. Last year it paid forty per cent. For many years previous to 1902, this institution paid 100 per cent. in annual dividends. In that year its capital was increased to ten million and its dividend rate placed at 20 per cent. In 1905, it was increased to 25 per cent., and in 1906 to 32 per cent. Its hundred dollar shares were quoted at \$840 in 1910 and are now around \$980.

Compared with this, our banks are quite modest. Nevertheless the public would be glad to see the larger and stronger Canadian banks pay higher salaries to their officials. The rates paid tellers, sub-managers and managers are lower than this class of men are paid by other large commercial institutions and are lower than their merit and ability warrants.

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Protecting the Politician.

AUSTRALIA is talking of protecting her politicians by permitting the newspapers to publish only signed articles about them. It is to laugh. The truth is that the newspapers do not publish more than half of what they know of the average politician or public men. Of course it may be different in Australia; the politician of that country may be less human than those in Canada. I am not informed on that point. My own impression is that Canadian public men are as high-minded, as patriotic and as unselfish as any set of public men in the world. Yet they are terribly human. If all the little stories of their private hours, their cronies and chums, their backing and filling on private bills, their twisting and turning to retain the support of corporations and institutions which have influence in their constituencies—if all these little stories were told about the politicians, or the bankers or the financiers, or of any of us, the newspapers would be even more entertaining than they are to-day.

The wonder in my mind is that the newspaper writers show such excellent restraint and moderation. They confine themselves, in the main, to a discussion of the politician's relation to public questions. They try to find out what is best in every man and to boost him whenever possible. For political purposes they may attack him on occasion, but they seldom hit below the belt. They are seldom as virulent in their attacks upon political opponents as the politicians themselves.

If the politicians were as kind and as generous to their opponents as the average newspaper editor is, our public discussions would reach a higher average. Of course there are exceptions, but speaking generally the newspaper writer is more gentlemanly and courteous than the politician.