

# THE CIVILIAN

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## Publicity in the Civil Service Commission.

In drawing the attention of the service at some length to the Civil Service Commission *The Civilian* desires to disassociate itself from that school of criticism which may aptly be termed "professional cavillers." In this class Toronto *Saturday Night* may justly be placed. The educational test is recognized far and wide as the best means of establishing a standard for entrance to a public service under the merit system, yet *Saturday Night* recently exploded salvos of denunciation of the commission's academic test, and extracted much unmerited mirth from the subject of examinations, quite apart from the merits of the Third Division case. To *The Civilian* any consideration of the doings or undoings of the Commission is too serious for filibustering humour.

The atmosphere in regard to the commission is at the present time surcharged with dissatisfaction, and comparisons are being made between administration under the commission and under the spoils system. This is, surely, too severe a condemnation of the commission, and arises, in our opinion, from the fact that the commission, instead of being a public service commission has been turned by the present commissioners into a close corporation. The commissioners lack either courage or an appreciation of the public nature of their office.

The distribution of the rewards of position or emolument are not always indicative of the true proportion of ability or industry. One man, a modest genius, like unto the gem of purest ray serene lying beneath the dark unfathomed caves, may

never be discovered or appreciated; another, mediocre but skilled in the arts of the lobby or the salon, may scale the heights and seize the rewards of merit. The Civil Service Commissioners have been entrusted by the people with the scales of justice with which to measure out necessary reforms under the merit system. Dealing with a service which for over forty years had been under the spoils system, the task was not an easy one. Realizing the difficulties surrounding the task, *The Civilian* has during the four and a half years of the commission's existence, refrained from criticism of a number of special cases passed upon by the commission. The single exception to this rule was in respect to publicity, to the lack of which in the annual reports we have drawn attention a number of times. If the commissioners do not chose to more fully enlighten the public, of whom they are the trustees, they cannot complain if they are judged upon such evidence as may be obtainable. We may fairly ask the question, why can we not get information, for instance in regard to the charge laid against the commission in the report of the Librarians of Parliament? Do the commissioners propose to barricade themselves behind the privileged prerogative of kings? Let us see how civil service commissions elsewhere are conducted in regard to publicity. This information will be of value not only to the Ottawa service which is under the jurisdiction of the commission, but also to the Outside Division which at no distant date is to come under the act of 1908.