

Governor Hughes, of New York, on Civil Service Reform

No man in the United States is held in higher esteem by the people than the Hon. Charles E. Hughes, Governor of the State of New York. A prospective President, and for some years past an effective champion of clean politics in his own State, his acceptance a few days since of a vacancy in the Supreme Court has called forth a demonstration unique of its kind — of felicitation mingled with regret that the gain of the Bench must be purchased by the loss of so potent a force for good in politics. The incident makes timely a reproduction of an address which the Governor made last year at the annual meeting of the National Civil Service Reform League, held at Buffalo, N. Y. Shorn of introductory matter, the address was as follows:

Some Basic Principles.

"It is said that we are a government of laws and not of men, and most important is it that we should never lose sight of that fact. The government depends upon principle, upon the will of the people as expressed in the fundamental law and in legislation enacted according to popular desire, and does not depend upon the wish or caprice of individuals. But in another and equally important sense we have a government of men and we will have no government better than the men who administer it.

"We notice that fundamentally we need two things: first, the untrammelled expression of the people in the choice of their officers who administer and in the choice of their legislators who make their laws. We want no limit placed upon legitimate political activity. There is a vast amount of earnest political endeavor, of honest effort to achieve what is right in the world of politics. We want more and not less of it. But we want no perversion of our party or political machinery so as to set up obstacles in the way of that freedom of choice by which the people can get the men they want and the laws they want. And then the second thing is efficiency,—the highest degree of efficiency in the management of the business of the state. If you have those two things,—untrammelled expression of the popular will, through necessary organization and political machinery, of course, but created and active for the purpose of expressing and not preventing the expression of the popular will, and, on the other hand, efficiency according to approved standards, recognized in the world of business, in the management of public concerns,—then you have true democratic government.

The Object of Civil Service Reform.

"Now, the object of civil service reform is not to provide theorists with a pet idea and

an opportunity to maintain a propaganda of interest to a limited few. The object of the movement with which we are connected tonight in this public meeting is not to hamper or interfere with any legitimate political work. The object is not to protect a class of people who happen to be engaged in the state service and to give them privileges and immunities apart from what may be considered fair and necessary in order to promote the public welfare. The object is only one, and that is to have the business of the state conducted as well as it can be conducted. And so when any proposal is made in connection with this matter we ask not how does this square with what Mr. A. has said, or how does this comport with the theory advanced by Mr. B.; we ask not what effect it will have upon the fortune of this party in or out of power; we ask and should ask but one question:—What will be the effect of this in giving us better administration of government?

Qualities Needed in Public Servants.

"Now in the administration of government we want at least three things:—We want capacity, we must have disinterestedness, and we must have accountability. How are we to get men of capacity? I doubt not that many an honest man, single-minded, taking an important position, with the burden—for it is a burden—of making appointments to subordinate offices, has often felt that he was restricted in doing what he desires to do and in giving the administration he wants to give because of the civil service law, and probably the intensity of his emotion will be in inverse ratio to the length of his experience in office. Here and there a man may feel that he knows just the man for a particular job. He wants him; he can't get him; he feels limited and restricted; he thinks the people will be the sufferers. But if the government is not to be administered as a matter of individual caprice or according to the dictates of a particular officer's judgment, it must be administered in accordance with principles as embodied in a system which in the long run, and covering the multitude of cases which must be covered, gives us men of capacity. And no one has long, I believe, been honestly under the burden of office without being grateful that some means has been afforded of testing capacity and of relieving the appointing power from the onslaughts of those who desire the appointment of dependents or favorites.

"Despite the fact that I had something to do, in a very humble way, with civil service reform work and thought my position was entirely clear, I was surprised after taking office to find that there were men who