

# THE CIVILIAN

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## Patronage in the U.S. Civil Service.

By President Taft in the *Century Magazine*.

*In the last issue, The Civilian in its leading article dealt with some of the failures of public administration in Canada. In the present issue the views of President Taft on the working of the public service in the U.S. are strongly set forth. In a following issue some frailties of the service of Great Britain will be presented to our readers. The basic principle of the administration of government business is involved in these articles, and the Editors will, at their termination, draw some conclusions and suggest a remedy.—Eds.*

### The Government's Unjust Wage-Scale.

The present service of the government shows that wages paid under the government are not just. The compensation of unskilled labor is out of all proportion to that of skilled labor. Messengers in the government service, performing tasks which in business houses are ordinarily assigned to boys who are serving an apprenticeship and are paid \$150 or \$200 a year, receive from \$600 to \$900 per annum, whereas skilled labor, if that term may be applied to scientists, chiefs of divisions, who must be possessed of more than ordinary executive ability, and others of exceptional attainments, rarely receive from the government more than half the compensation they can command in private business.

The reason is obvious. Every man,

whether he be a messenger, a laborer, or a scientist whom it has taken years to train, has a vote, and the vote of one is as potent as that of the other. This being true, those who have not attained to any marked degree of efficiency, and whose services, therefore, have only a minor economic value, but who constitute by far the large majority, are able to exert an influence which maintains their rate of compensation above the value of service they render. This is partly offset by depressing the compensation of those whose service is more valuable. And in practical operation this results in the most efficient servants of the government being constantly won away by private enterprises which offer greater remuneration, and in discouraging those of mediocre ability or energy, at least to an extent which prevents their striving to make their services more valuable. The reward for the extra effort is insufficient to induce it. As a consequence, the government service is always unduly expensive, is usually less efficient, and has gained the unenviable reputation of *diminishing the energy and destroying the initiative and enterprise of those who remain long in it.*

### Why Government Service is not Profitable.

Compared with private enterprises, no service rendered by the government pays. None is conducted so economically, nor is this due by any means to a difference in