

## The Civil Service and Politics

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of details and then extend. The principle of the situation is this: that all appointments below that of deputy minister in the clerical line, except those of day laborers and people of that sort, in the inside service, shall be made in connection with our Civil Service Commission, in one of two ways. Either we shall describe the positions by advertising them and throwing them open to general competition, or, if in a department some technical or professional position has to be filled, the department or minister may nominate with the consent of the government at large some specialist for the position. But it is required of the Commission to investigate the qualifications of such nominee, and if we are not satisfied we don't issue a certificate. And without our certificate such person cannot be appointed.

So that in one line we are singularly free to hunt up certain people to fill positions, and in the other the Commission has an absolute vote power on any nomination by the government. Now in operation that has not worked badly, though it may seem that the government was simply keeping a string to its bow. Because the government found such a relief in simply being able to say to the Commission, "We want a man, or a number of men, of such a character," and then the government could say to all and sundry begging for positions, "We have absolutely nothing to do with it and you will have to go and see the Commission."

Well, some of them were very wrath at first. They said, "Yes, that only means that the direct avenue to appointments has been shut off. Now we will have to find up what blind alley or back-stairs we have got to go to get in." That was the suspicion on the part of a good many. At the same time it enabled the government, at any rate, to wipe its hands of these appointments. They came down to us and wanted to know how this and that was going. We patiently explained things to them. Some members differed about it and curiously enough some of

the opposition members were most troubled about it. Because, as I say, the promise of patronage is not a monopoly of one party, but is open to both and if you take it away from one you take it away from both.

One member of the opposition said, "I don't like the system at all." I said, "How is that? Don't you think it works fairly?" Oh yes, I think it does," he replied, "though I didn't think so at first. But the trouble is you are appointing people from both sides. Well," he said, "that is cutting us out. We have been telling our own people that they would never get a look in till the government was defeated and that then we would deliver the goods when we got in. Now you're delivering the goods without them putting us in (Laughter) You are cutting out one of our strongest arguments."

Now, I think, very few members of parliament seriously object to the process and both parties, as in the United States and as in Britain, are committed up to the very hilt to stand by the process not only as instituted so far, but to the extension of it, as the present government intends to do.

### Promotion for Efficiency

Lastly the question is, how is the Commission working?

Firstly, with regard to the question of promotion: we are necessarily given the power to deal with those already in the service. No promotion to an office below that of deputy minister can be made without our certificate. That is in the inside service again, but it would apply, if extended, to the outside service as well. There is a difficulty because many people were put into positions in the inside service who had never qualified under any conditions. They were simply put in under the old system of party patronage. These people expected that the same influence which put them in would keep them going on up. Now, they discover that the influences which put them in have evaporated and that going on up depends on themselves and that is not very palatable to some. The consequence is that the real, strenuous objection to the extension of our powers, or the continuation of them indeed, is from those who are already in the service and who see, many of them, and I have to acknowledge to them quite frankly that they are quite correct, see the conditions of promotion hopelessly blocked. That is not a very pleasant situation and their attitude is a very natural one for them to take up. But for those who are capable and who can meet the requirements it is a very encouraging feature.

Promotion with us is a question of efficiency, not of length of service. If two men are equally efficient, then the senior man, the man longest in the service, should go up. But if it is plainly demonstrated that a man below him, no matter how far below him, is the more efficient man, he is the man who goes up. Otherwise, you can see that there is no encouragement to faithful service, to working for the government in the proper spirit. And there would simply be a tendency to look at the list ahead and say, "Until they have all gone up there is no chance for me. I might as well take it easy." That is the condition of hope on the one side, for the more efficient and the condition of despair on the other side, for the less efficient and particular despair to those who see their party influence and connection going for naught.

Then as to the outsider coming in. There are two kinds of men or servants recruited into the service. One, the young man or the young woman who knows little or nothing about what they are to do in the service. That is, they are entering to learn their business. They come in at the lower grades and work up as they study. Then there is the other class, the man with experience, with training worked out and arrived at in the surrounding developments and results in the outside world. This man is wanted to come in and take charge of inside work at a high level. Here we have two totally different classes, one merely going in to learn the business, the other coming in to direct or assist with experience and qualifications gained in the outside world. The difference is a very vital one. The test, therefore, in these two cases would be very different and that is where, I think, we are in a position to improve on some of the British and American methods.

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we had written competitive examinations and on the basis of that, without technical qualifications at all they enter in proportion as they stand. We advertise so many positions of a certain kind for the next six months, hold examinations up and down the country, take the first twenty or thirty or whatever it is and dole them out as necessary.

### For Technical Positions

But for other positions I have been long enough at a university to know that a written examination only goes so far, that there are higher types of examination than written examinations, and personally I found it desirable to use the other feature in university work even. The question is, how are you going to conduct any other kind of examination? Well, that is where the flexibility of our system comes in. It was absolutely indispensable that we should be free from, perhaps not the suspicion, but at any rate the proof of favoritism and if you don't set an ordinary written paper before any kind of a man to fill any kind of a position, how can you prove that the other process of selection is free from favoritism?

In the British departments they have had to face the same difficulty. Well, we advertise the position in the same way as they do. We state in the advertisement what is required, what are the minimum conditions for the position, whether it is the geological survey or in the engineering department, or wherever it is. We usually require that all applicants who will be considered must be graduates of some recognized scientific institution. That ensures that all the men we have to encounter have had a proper training in the business they are to conduct.

All those who square with the conditions are then required to have had experience in certain specified lines. When we get the applications we send them a form to fill in various answers to questions indicating where they were educated, whether we can get their certified diplomas, at what institutions they have had experience, with whom they were employed and at what kind of work and so on. We then take that, but we don't ask them ourselves to furnish us with any credentials at all or letters of introduction. We make enquiries of the persons with

whom they worked, regardless of whether they think they pleased their employers or not. We state to these employers the conditions, and the responsibility is laid upon them of giving accurate and trustworthy information. We state the purpose for which the man is wanted and in that way accumulate his record. We take this record and then we call in certain experts in this line, one of whom is the man who is going to be responsible for the work that man does. And we find invariably that if a man is absolutely responsible for what his subordinate does, he is looking for the best man he can get, otherwise he is simply breeding trouble for himself.

He doesn't know, and we don't know, anything about the politics of the applicant. Sometimes we have to send to foreign countries for the right man. Either there is not sufficient work of that kind and sufficient experience in Canada or the few men doing it are far more highly paid than we can pay them. We get a man from abroad and ask him to make a report on the work to be done and then we call in an associate expert from outside and then go over their reports ourselves and on their joint report we come to the conclusion that such and such a man is the best man for the position. His name is then entered for a six months' probation, which I hope will be extended to one year at least in the higher technical positions. If during that time he doesn't come up to requirements he is subject to dismissal. If he goes beyond that time he is automatically permanently appointed.

That, in brief, is the stage at which we have arrived. I have tried to show you what were the conditions giving rise to the necessity for that reform. I have tried to indicate what steps were taken and may say, in conclusion, that the outlook seems to be at the present time ripe for the taking of the whole service out of politics, thereby redeeming the politician from the worst persecution he ever endures and making it possible and more agreeable for a better class of men, and for the same class of men to devote their energies to the higher service of the country so that the party shall serve the country instead of the country serving the party." (Loud cheers.)

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