

THE CIVILIAN

VOL. III.

OCTOBER 7th, 1910

No. 12

The Real Strength of Union

Many a civil servant seems to labour under the delusion that by looking at every civil service problem through his own individual spectacles and by crying out or keeping silent in exact accordance as his own interests are hurt or unaffected, he is doing as much as could be expected of him to help things forward. It is a natural failing, and few are entirely free from it. Scratch a civil servant, and in most cases you will find a man with a theory about the service—and usually the theory if turned into practice would land him a step or two higher in the scale of classes or salaries.

The man who can see only facts bearing on his own fortunes is not only a bore but a bane to his fellows. In the past he has been too much the typical civil servant, so that it is still difficult, if you are a civil servant, to discuss any question appertaining to the service without being thought to have some axe to grind. Of course, we are human beings, and want all we can individually get, but with the civil service before the country as it is at present it falls quite within the sphere of "practical" questions to ask if the old way is worth very much. Certainly it can no longer claim to be the only way.

Civil service employees, whether as a class or as individuals, will never come into their own, will never receive that treatment which the character of their work and their individual abilities merit, until their demands are based on high general principles. Instead of hastening, the scattered efforts of individuals actually retard the chances for better laws and better treatment. Parliament will, justly or unjustly, turn a deaf ear to you or to me when we go to it asking it, for our dear sakes, to pass a law that will increase our individual salaries. Such appeals but tend to accentuate the already widely-diffused idea that Government employees are a lot of kickers. What is required is a strongly organized movement for a general betterment, with the whole civil service behind it, and with its demands based on a thorough knowledge and broad view of the place the service occupies in the general scheme of things. What the individual must do, if success is to come, is to work for an organization of this character.

The Civilian for one does not believe that you could kill the Civil Service Association of Ottawa, the great prototype of organization in the service, with a club. But with the end of its year in view, when its concrete and specific achievements of the past twelve months will quite properly come under review and criticism, with some inevitable casting of balances, and some one to point its failures, this broader result should be remembered and dwelt upon. Our editorial suggestion as to its constitution to-day is intended not as criticism but an appreciation of the place it occupies in the service, and by "service" we mean not the service at Ottawa alone, but the service throughout the Dominion to which it has been from the first a shining example.