

## Rebuke and Interrogation.

### A Voice from the Universities.

I am neither a civil servant, nor the son of a civil servant, but from its foundation I have read *The Civilian*, always with interest and usually with profit; so that I think that I am entitled to ask a question.

You have recently shown with great fearlessness the evils of a system by which large portions of the civil service of Canada are honey-combed with political patronage. This fact had long been known to us all, but you have rubbed it in till it stings. Conditions of appointment are so bad in many parts of the service, especially of the Outside service, that one wonders why the work done by the officials so appointed is often so satisfactory. But in the words of a great man now gone unto his own place: "What are you going to do about it?"

Something has already been done. In 1908 the Parliament of Canada, in a temporary spasm of righteousness, passed a Self-Denying Ordinance, by which large portraits of the Inside service were taken out of the hands of the politicians, and put under the control of a Civil Service Commission. Appointments were transferred from over-worked politicians, pestered by every form of illegitimate influence, to men set as far above such influence as frail humanity can be. These men at once set out changing the service from a haven for the destitute into a career for the vigorous. What attitude might have been expected from *The Civilian*? The Act was naturally imperfect. It is common talk that loop holes have been found in it through which unscrupulous ministers may crawl. I should have expected *The Civilian* to come to their defence. The Outside service is still under the politician. Appointments to it are still made by the local patronage committees of the party in power. I should have expected *The Civilian* to urge that gradually, cautiously, wisely, large portions of the Outside service be brought under the Commission. I should have expected sympathy with its difficulties, encouragement against its critics, strengthening of its hands for the uplifting of the service.

None of my expectations have been fulfilled. The references in *The Civilian* to the Commission have been few and meagre. Of late most of them have been of the savour of unsweetened lime-juice. Why is this? Why are you disappointed with the Commission, and what alternative plan do you recommend? You have diagnosed the disease; your tone seems to show that you have little hope in the existing physicians; what is your own prescription?

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Your sincerely,

W. L. GRANT.

Queen's University,  
Kingston, Ont.  
Aug. 20th, 1913.

*In reply to the above letter from Professor Grant, who is a most welcome visitor to our pages as indicating the growing interest in the public service, the editors take the opportunity to announce that in a forthcoming issue of The Civilian there will be begun a series of articles on the Civil Service Commission. The articles will be a sequel to the articles on Patronage, to which Professor Grant refers, and the attitude of the editors towards the Commission, past, present and future will no doubt be developed.—[Editors.]*