

SELECT SPECIAL COMMITTEE

RECRUITING

The keystone of the Civil Service Act is the principle of appointment by competitive examination.

The provisions of the Act embodying this principle are:

Except where otherwise expressly provided, all appointments to the Civil Service shall be upon competitive examination. (Section 20).

Such examinations may be written or oral or in the form of a demonstration of skill or any combination of these; they shall be of a character fairly to test and determine the relative fitness and ability of candidates actually to perform the duties of the class to which they seek to be appointed, and any investigation of training and experience and any test of technical knowledge, manual skill, or physical fitness that, in the judgment of the Commission, serves to this end may be employed. (Section 26 (2)).

It will be noted that the Act contemplates much more than the mere elimination of unfit candidates. In many other Civil Service systems the examination prescribed is merely qualifying in nature. The Civil Service Act of Canada, however, goes much further and prescribes open competition, which, as stated in the recent Report of the Royal Commission on the British Civil Service, "was introduced (in Great Britain) in order to avoid the evils of patronage, and has worked well." The competitive system embodies two principles: first, that every citizen shall have the right to compete for positions in the service of his country; and second, that "the best shall serve the State."

The first step in the application of the competitive system, once the preliminary considerations of qualifications and salaries have been decided upon, is to advertise the fact that applications are invited and to provide for the filing of applications by persons interested. The employment field is selected in which it is most likely that the desired material will be secured, and all possible means of co-operation with educational institutions and technical or professional organizations are utilized to bring examinations to the attention of likely applicants. It may be noted that positions at the headquarters of the Government at Ottawa are open to residents of the entire Dominion, while local positions are filled from the locality in which the vacancy occurs.

The term "competitive examination" as used in civil service laws has been defined as any reasonable method of ascertaining relative merit and fitness, the best examination method being the one best suited to secure efficient public servants, and, as indicated in the second clause of the Act, any form of examination may be utilized which will produce the desired result. In examinations for clerical and lower grade positions, the factors include a test of the candidate's education, a test of his general intelligence, and, where necessary, a test of his knowledge of the technique involved in the duties of the position. In examination for special or technical positions, the following tests are included:

- (1) Tests of educational qualifications, either by means of written papers or by sworn statements made by the applicants and verified by school diplomas, college degrees, etc.
- (2) Tests of training and experience, made by means of the sworn statements of the applicants verified by investigation among previous employers.
- (3) Technical tests, either written, practical or oral, along the lines of the duties to be performed.
- (4) Oral tests to compare the personal qualifications of candidates for positions requiring supervisory ability, executive capacity, etc.
- (5) Satisfactory evidence as to the honesty, reliability and trustworthiness of candidates for positions of a fiduciary or confidential nature.