

# THE CIVILIAN

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## A Review of the Civil Service Situation.

By Commissioner LaRochelle.

*The Civilian has the privilege of presenting to the civil servants of Canada a careful and clear analysis of Commissioner LaRochelle's memorandum to the Secretary of State, which was published in the issues of November 26 and December 10. This analysis was prepared after an interesting conversation with the Commissioner, and should be helpful in the solution of Civil Service problems.*

Dr. LaRochelle is of the opinion that the Civil Service law of 1908 is a very efficient safeguard for the merit system, and that, slightly retouched and properly applied, it should eventually give complete satisfaction. Carefully framed along the lines of the British service system, which is probably the best in the world, it should be prudently dealt with. Its general structure is sound, and its imperfections are only connected with details of application. No good purpose can be served by making a target of it; on the contrary, it should be an object of care and solicitude.

The Commissioner is also of the opinion that, on the whole, the new system has favourably stood the test of experience and given satisfactory results. It has already accomplished a considerable reform of the old conditions of the Service, under which appointments and promotions were generally based on political and personal grounds. Since 1908, all the appointments in the classified Inside Service (except to some of the technical and lower grades positions) have been made through competition; and even in regard to professional and technical positions, 58/100 of the appointments since that time have been made by competition. It should not be forgotten that it took Great Britain nearly a century to secure the present state of efficiency of her public service.

The only section of the law with which Dr. LaRochelle finds serious fault—and it may be corrected with a mere stroke of the pen—is section 30, which, in his opinion, provides for an inadequate remuneration of the Third division clerks. This clause has interfered with the proper organization of the Second division of the Service and created evident hardships in the Third division. He regrets the shortcoming of this clause, as otherwise no serious criticism of the law itself would have been heard from any quarter. Such criticism would have been limited to its mode of application.

As to the case of the officials appointed under the old regime and automatically classified in the Third division in 1908, it is not the law that is to blame if their promotion is obstructed by the Second division non-competitive examination, since section 26 properly provides for the protection of such of them as are deserving and had complied with the requirements of the old Act. It is purely and simply rule 20 of the Civil Service regulations, and it can any day be satisfactorily amended by the Government and the Commission through an order-in-council.