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ADDRESS BY COMMISSIONER SHORTT.

Explanation and Defence of Civil Service Commission.

The People's Forum of Ottawa has proven a most useful institution by affording means by which leaders of thought and the great public in whose behalf these leaders act may get together. Never has this function of the Forum been more worthily exercised than in the meeting of Sunday, February 14th, when Dr. Adam Shortt, Civil Service Commissioner, gave an explanation of the workings of the body of which he was the first appointed member. There was a large audience, including many civil servants.

Dr. Shortt was well received by the audience. Though his address was long,—decidedly long for a popular presentation of a somewhat technical subject,—yet it may be said as a tribute to both speaker and audience that the attention was perfect throughout. This was all the more remarkable because Dr. Shortt spoke in merely conversational tone, and towards the close of his address his voice did not carry to all parts of the hall. There was a rising interest in his remarks, however, and the attention of the audience grew keener, though the speaker's voice grew less audible. In view of the great importance of the subject, and of the fact that this is the first public expression of the Commission in Ottawa outside their somewhat reticent official reports, lengthy extracts from Dr. Shortt's address are given.

Dr. Shortt said in part:—

“It might seem like carrying coals

to Newcastle to discuss the civil service in Ottawa; but an experience of some six and a half years has convinced me that even in this city there are people who do not understand a good many points about the civil service. Of course, I shall not attempt to cover the details of the subject, but there are two or three points which I should like to discuss. . . .

“One of the difficulties of the civil service as compared with other occupations is the more or less rigid definitiveness of it as a career. One who goes into an ordinary business or professional occupation is permitted to indulge hope of great possibilities. He has the possibility of becoming a millionaire; he has the possibility of becoming the most noted person in the country. But the civil servant has his career pretty definitely mapped out ahead of him.

“Many people forget when they hear a particular criticism or observe some member of the service not conducting himself in the very best way, that he is a very exceptional person; they do not see the four or five thousand in the regular service and the couple of thousand more on the fringes of it, in the irregular service, who are not showing these objectionable qualities. But it is well in looking at the service as a whole to keep this in view. Therefore, when we regard the service as a means of realization for the individual in income and position, we must recognize that its effect in this way depends also upon the individual.