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The Classification Problem — Some Light from the United States.

The classification problem is from first to last one of the most difficult that arises in the planning and administration of an efficient civil service. An important stride forward in this respect was taken in Canada in the Act of 1908, when definitions were for the first time attached to the various grades; but the chaos which has succeeded in many quarters the merely arbitrary transfer from the old to the new has, pending final adjustments, left the situation to a great extent unchanged. Certainly, civil service officialdom has not yet become accustomed in current practice to the new and far-reaching theories of the classification system of 1908. While matters are thus practically indeterminate, and the classification question still agitating more or less the minds of civil servants and others, there may be profit in glancing at certain developments which are at the moment in progress concerning this same problem of classification as it obtains in the federal civil service of the United States.

Classification in the U. S. Service.

The present system of classification in the United States dates back to 1853 and 1854. At that time government clerks were divided into four classes, first, second, third and fourth, according to the salaries paid, which were \$1,200, \$1,400, \$1,600 and \$1,800 respectively. For some time it has been apparent that this classification was obsolete. In 1906 a Commission thoroughly investigated the matter and recommended to President Roosevelt a plan for reclassification.

During the present session of Congress a bill embodying the recommendations of this Commission has been introduced, and a few days ago it received the endorsement of the House committee on reform in the civil service. The aim of the measure in general is to establish a uniform system of classification in the various departments, based on the character of the work performed.

The New System Proposed.

The system suggested to replace the obsolescent one above referred to is to be made up of the following divisions or grades:

Supervisory Grade.—Chief clerks of division and other employes who perform supervisory, executive and administrative duties. Salaries, \$4,000 and over.

Clerical Grades.—1. Senior clerks—Employees who are assigned to work largely supervisory, or requiring the highest order of clerical ability, involving much original thought, consideration and investigation. Salaries, \$2,100, \$1,980, \$1,860.

2. Clerks—Employees who are assigned to work more or less routine, involving responsibility, special ability and original thought, consideration and investigation. Salaries, \$1,740, \$1,620, \$1,500.

3. Junior clerks—Employees who are assigned to work of a routine character, requiring but little original thought or consideration, but requiring judgment, responsibility and special skill. Salaries, \$1,380, \$1,320, \$1,260, \$1,200.

4. Under clerks—Employees who are assigned to work of a simple or routine character, requiring care, accuracy and skill. Salaries, \$1,080, \$1,020, \$960, \$900.

Subclerical Grades.—1. Employees whose duties are not clerical or mechanical, but require some special skill, or involve personal responsibility, as messengers, watchmen, skilled laborers. Salaries, \$840, \$780, \$720, \$660.

2. Employees engaged in rough and unskilled work, as laborers generally. Salaries, \$660, \$600.