

The explanations given in further conversation may be illustrated by the supposed case of a typical Civil Servant. Need arises in one of the departments for some person to fill an office, new or old. The Commission is applied to. Advertisements are issued making known the requirements. Applications come in. These must be acknowledged and filed, and the aspirants for office must be examined. Under the law, the examination, except in certain cases, must be competitive. This provision is interpreted in a broad and practical way. For instance, there would be no sense in having a formal competition when a stenographer is wanted, for stenographers at present are in tremendous demand. If a candidate is qualified there are half a dozen departments eagerly awaiting her services. Again, in the appointment of many specialists, a written examination in college fashion would result in nothing, or worse—the best man for the job would almost certainly be left out. But a board of practical experts can test the qualifications of the applicants in such a way as to leave the best man like the gold in the miner's rocker after all the gravel has been washed out. When the party is appointed he comes directly under the charge of the Commission for all the purposes of the Civil Service Act. It is the business of the Commission to see to it that every member of the service gives the best service of which he is capable and that he is treated justly and reasonably as an officer of the government.

As everybody knows, there are three Commissioners, Hon. Dr. Roche, Dr. LaRochelle and Mr. Jameson. To facilitate the work, the departments of government are divided into three groups, one for each Commissioner. But to avoid the danger of separate authority and responsibility, that is, to make each corporate decision the act of the whole Commission and not of one member of it, a most ingenious system has been adopted. Theoretically, the Commission meets every day—it might almost be said that on that basis it is always in session. Every act performed on behalf of the Commission is recorded in the minutes and a copy of the minutes of the previous day awaits each Commissioner in the morning. Should there be any error, or should any entry need explanation, the matter is taken up and settled at once. But "silence gives consent" in

this case, and minutes not objected to are held to be approved. Thus every decision reached, even in the most obscure and unimportant matter is placed on record and is the guide and authority until cause arises for a change. One has only to consider for a moment the mass of detail with which the Commission has to deal to understand how this system stabilizes policy, saves labour and ensures efficiency.

For the purposes of office administration the Commission's affairs divide into three branches. First, there is the Administrative or Secretary's branch; second, Examination; third, Organization of the Service. The Administrative branch, of course, has general charge. It is organized in four divisions, Correspondence, Assignment, Minutes, and Records. The duties of these several divisions are suggested by their names. The work of the correspondence branch is tremendous—letters come in by the basketful, and all, even the least important, are answered, as the lawyers say, with diligence. The assignment division receives the names of those successful in examinations and places the newcomers where they can render the best service. The account already given of the system of keeping minutes will suggest that the work of the division that has this duty in hand calls for care and intelligence. It must be like editing a newspaper with only three or four readers who go over every paragraph with a microscope. The work done is never finished, for the case of Sundown Smith, post office clerk at Monrotoppeg, given leave of absence ten years ago, may be referred to as a precedent by somebody, and the papers may have to be gone into. Letter books, applications, files of correspondence and reports accumulate like wheat in an elevator, and the trick is to have each paper so kept and so indexed that it can be found when required. This is a problem common to all offices, of course. The records division of the Civil Service Commission seems to have got the best of its problem.

After the Administration branch of the Commission comes that of Examinations. This has already been dealt with in part. There are those who hold very strongly that a system of academic examinations intelligently devised and consistently carried out will result in a better class of appointments, on the whole, than any other. That opinion is entitled to respect,

especially as it can point to such examples as the Civil Service of India. But it does not seem to command itself to the present Civil Service Commission of Canada. Their belief seems to be that the way to find the best man for the job is to find him—to follow in each case the method that seems best for that case. Provision is made for the holding of academic examinations wherever that method promises good results. But that form of examination is often an attempt to catch minnows in a dipper—the experience is that the big one gets away. For a great class of cases advantage is taken of that provision of the law which authorizes the Commission, in effect, to command the assistance of all existing members of the Civil Service. There are responsible executive officers in every part of the country—post office inspectors, district engineers, and representatives of marine, justice and other departments and services. Instead of building up an organization of its own, a long, expensive process and never certain of success, the Commission calls those now in office to its aid as occasion may require. The politician thought that he was the one universal and persuasive person, and that the Commission simply could not do without him. But the King's service runs to the ends of the country and touches in some way every inhabitant. In the Civil Service itself the Commission has a great mechanism through which it can make the reform of the Service a reality, and this mechanism it is using. A bunch of labourers, for instance, are wanted on a breakwater extension. These men used to be "recommended" by the politician-in-chief of the riding. Now the Examination branch chooses them, and it acts on the best advice obtainable, let us say, in this case, that of the district engineer. But there are big cases, or complicated or otherwise unusual cases, where neither the academic examination nor Civil Service co-operation seems the best method. In such a case the course is followed that has already been suggested—a board of experts is convened and on their reasoned advice, based on careful consideration of the qualifications of the candidates a choice is made.

When Mr. Average Man talks about Civil Service reform he has in mind nothing but the work of the Examination branch. He believes that if you appoint the best man to