

# THE CIVILIAN

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## Is it Millenium?

The first manifesto of Sir Robert Borden surprised the members of the federal Civil Service with the inspiring order that the Outside Service was to be brought under the Merit System; at least to the extent that the Act of 1908 grants a measure of "merit" to the Inside Service. The Prime Minister made Civil Service reform the first plank in his platform of domestic policies. It thus took second place only to the now almost universal policy of carrying on the war. This announcement by the Government marks a new milestone on the thorny road of public service life in Canada, and its significance is not yet appreciated by the fine body of men in the Outside Service who have suffered under the patronage system. This is not all, however, for the Prime Minister has delivered himself of another announcement of declared policy. In a second manifesto he makes an avowal and a declaration which, win or lose, will become a classic in the literature of Canada's public servants. Here it is:

"But there are other reasons why the Union Government should be entrusted with power. It has pledged itself to the extirpation of old abuses and to a wise and bold policy of constructive reform. The system of patronage in the distribution of contracts and offices which has prevailed in Canada for generations has been the root of many political evils.

"It has fostered local and sectional interests incompatible with the national welfare and injurious to the efficiency of the national services. It has troubled representatives of the people, permitted the ascendancy of organized minorities in the constituencies, and affected the independence of Parliament itself. It may be that these evils should have been overcome long ago. Censure may lie upon successive governments which have tolerated the system.

"But inveterate diseases succumb only to heroic treatment—and heroism has not distinguished Canadian parties in dealings with patronage. Generally, governments have lived long in Canada and when for many years distribution of patronage has been confined to the party in power there is a natural disposition to adjust the balance when at length the other party succeeds to office. Once committed to the system, influences are recognized and interests created that are not easily resisted or dislodged.

"It is believed that a Government derived from both political parties and strengthened by special representation of agricultural and organized labor, can act with greater freedom and independence than a Government which held office under the old conditions. Hence the resolution to abolish trading in patronage, *to fill public offices by merit and not by favoritism*, and to establish honest and open competition in awarding contracts and buying supplies."

Ottawa is the primeval, also the "prime evil," hotbed of the patronage crimes which have been carried on in Canada unchecked. It is therefore obviously relevant to place among the Civil Service records a minor manifesto uttered by the senior member lately distributing favors in the constituency of Ottawa. Mr. Fripp, ex-M.P., has delivered himself thus: