

is a question more difficult of answer. If the law is imperfect, as many Civil Service Laws are, the authorities concerned with its enforcement will be regarded as efficient by strict constructionists of the law when they adhere literally to its provisions. They will then be condemned by administrators, impatient with what they characterize as Civil Service obstruction, and by adherents of the merit system, who believe in Civil Service administration which sensitively responds to the needs of the departments and who advocate a legitimate elasticity in its enforcement.

The principle of the merit system has the simplicity of an eternal verity. But eternal verities become complex in their application. The merit system has had its enemies. The earlier reformers fought the spoilsman who denied the validity of the verity. While the spoilsman is still active in his attempts to undermine the Civil Service Law, he acts behind the scenes and he frequently pays the merit system the public tribute of hypocrist, which vice pays to virtue.

A more formidable opponent of the merit principle has emerged. He is the impatient efficiency expert, who maintains that the administration of the Civil Service Law substitutes, in the language of the late E. H. Harriman, "incompetency for dishonesty." This opponent is more dangerous than the spoilsman, for he throws down the gauntlet boldly to the administrator of the merit system and the latter must meet it. We cannot justify this challenge by asserting that the merit system brings better results in the long run. Such a defence does not answer the challenge because the efficiency expert is interested in the application of high standards now without waiting. We must refute him by proving that Civil Service administration is consistent with efficient government. We must employ the Civil Service Law as an aggressive instrument of efficiency in government.

Is it true that the Civil Service Law creates an army of mediocrity, and then protects it with a solid armor of secure tenure? If this were so, the new enemy would triumph.

If we believe in the army of classified employees as an instrument of aggressive efficiency in government, we must abandon the Chinese Wall conception of Civil Service administration. We must conceive of our Commissions as the hiring agency of their government and apply many of the principles of efficiency to the work of Civil employees that now obtain in enlightened and progressive private business corporations.

Opportunities for advancement are offered the workers in large establishments, based upon their records of faithful service. They are kept by professional employment experts, who devote constant attention to increasing the efficiency of the workers, not alone by mechanical devices, but through methods of co-operation, which stimulate the human interest of employees in the success of the establishment.

Mechanical devices are futile without a soul behind them. We must aim at galvanizing the life behind the machine; enlightened employers are learning this lesson fast, governments must do likewise. For, are we not concerned in making Government a model employer? Among the chief conditions of model employment are: One—Adequate wages. Two—Adequate opportunities for advancement. Three—Proper incentive for advancement. Four—A goal to be reached. Five—Conditions of work, which bring not only results to the Government, but growth to the employee.

We can never retain a live employee who refuses to remain in a rut without providing him adequate compensation. Not infrequently we are unable to draft men and women of calibre in the higher professional service, because the compensation is lower than is offered in private em-