

Selected

THE SCHOOL TEACHER—A CIVIL SERVANT

Few people regard the school teacher as a civil servant, yet he is undoubtedly in that class. Moreover, he has been the only civil servant in Canada under a civil service commission system. He must pass at least two examinations to get his certificate—one examination in theoretical work, and one in practical work. Then he gets his certificate from the Department of Education or some similar examining body. Even then he is not entitled to a position. He must wait until a position is vacant and a new teacher is required. Further, he must then come into competition with other applicants. His standing on his examinations is considered. His age, parents, address and other qualities are discussed. Finally, the school board appoints one of the applicants. There is no civil servant in the country, not even a policeman or fireman in the large cities, who is so carefully examined before given a position, nor is there one who faces keener competition.

It is the application of such a system to all civil servants, federal, provincial or civic, which is the ambition of those who advocate Civil Service Reform. Just imagine the kind of school teachers we would have if the choice and appointment of all these men and women were left in the hands of members of the provincial legislatures! Does any sane man think that under such a system our teachers would be such a magnificent, well-equipped, well-trained body of men and women as we have today in every province in the Dominion? How many men would enter the public school teaching service, if they knew that after years of work, they might find some mechanic

who knew nothing of education placed by political pull over their heads in a position as principal of a school or as inspector? The introduction of the spoils system into the teaching profession would ruin our schools utterly.

Yet, this is just the kind of system which prevails in other branches of the civil service. During the past few months a grey-headed politician who was a furniture manufacturer has been appointed postmaster of ———; a grey-headed politician who was a business man has been made postmaster at ———; a grey-headed doctor and ex-member of the Commons has been made postmaster at ———; and a newspaper publisher and ex-member of Parliament has been made surveyor of customs in ———. What must be the feelings of the members of the civil service who are forced to work under these men? Is it any wonder that our civil servants are occasionally found shirking their duties and careless of the return which they render for their salaries? Is it any wonder that nearly every service performed by a government department, federal or provincial, costs twenty-five to fifty per cent. more than if it were performed by a private corporation?

Every branch of every civil service should be, like the teaching profession, placed upon the merit system. Competitive examinations for entrance, merit in work and competitive examinations for promotion, and no person allowed to enter the service by the underground route, should be the rule everywhere. This improvement in the public service is the aim of all civil service reformers.—The Canadian Courier.