

The Business Value of the Merit System

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An Industrialist Speaks

"If we are to be regulated in each and every detail of our lives we must have an effective merit system or we shall be destroyed." So said one of our leading industrialists in 1940. What did he mean? What is the merit system and what is its value in America today?

Economically and socially, under democracy, we are dependent on two forces: business and government. Business produces jobs, income, necessities and luxuries. Government regulates business, renders vast services, and maintains our defenses. Human beings operate government. Partisan and stupid application of regulatory laws, or of relief and defense expenditures, weaken confidence—cripple the nation.

Democracy as a way of life, is dear to Americans. Its weakness lies in the partisanship and ineptitude of much of its government personnel—regardless of which party is in power.

The merit system is England's and America's democratic, open competitive method of selecting and advancing *well qualified* government employes. America doesn't use it enough!

More and More Jobs!

The number of public employees in this country exceeds 3,500,000. The cost of public salaries exceeds five billions annually. The competence or lack of competence of government workers affects the daily lives of every citizen. It is these workers who *interpret* and *apply* our laws regulating business, wages, hours, and working conditions, unemployment and old age insurance, communication facilities, inspection of food, supply of drinking water, police

and fire protection, operation of transportation, production and transmission of power, issuance of licenses, investigation and collection of tax assessments, welfare and relief work, building of roads and public works, care of the aged, the destitute and the sick, as well as hundreds of other common services. Each of us as a citizen and taxpayer has a stake in these services. Each of us is concerned not only with getting a dollar's worth of service for a tax dollar paid, but, for the preservation of democracy itself, in seeing that all these services are as effectively rendered as *skill, non-partisanship* and *high morale* can assure.

Government Employs More Men and Women Than Any National Industry

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|--------------------------|-----------|
| Government | |
| (Federal, State, Local) | 3,500,000 |
| Textile Industries | 1,814,000 |
| Agriculture | |
| (Food Products, Forests) | 1,583,000 |
| Iron and Steel | 1,166,000 |
| Transportation | |
| (Air, Land, Water) | 779,000 |

Political Practice

When Hymie Shorenstein was appointed keeper of the Records of Kings County, New York, at \$6,500 per year, it was because he was a good friend of the ward heelers. But he was unable to keep or supervise the keeping of the records because *he could neither read nor write* English. Accurate records are essential to any business. What price confusion and delay? Shorenstein cost the taxpayer \$6,500 a year—equivalent to the tax on 162,500 movie admissions.

Business Practice

Successful commercial and industrial concerns in the United States today pick their workers only after a careful analysis of their ability and experience.