

Daily Democrat

CANADIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

Harper's Magazine for March has an article on the above subject, in which the writer says that the civil service in Canada "is composed exclusively of Canadians. In the federal government and in the provinces there is an organized system; the federal system has been constantly amended, and is not yet free of recognized defects. The main points of excellence, more or less perfectly attained, may be stated to be a decent entrance examination for all, a special, strict, and particular examination for some who are to undertake technical duties, and a secure tenure of office. The federal act of 1886, which has since been amended in details, was not arrived at without many experiments and the accumulation of testimonies and diverse reports; and it did not follow exactly the majority report of 1881, but leaned too much, in the judgment of many, to the English system, the working of which has not been satisfactory. The main features of the act, omitting details, are these: The service has two divisions—first, deputy heads of departments and employees in the Ottawa departments; second, others than those employed in Ottawa departments, including customs officials, inland revenue officials, post-office inspectors, railway mail clerks, city postmasters, their assistants, clerks, and carriers, and inspector of penitentiaries. A board of three examiners is appointed by the Governor in council. All appointments shall be "during pleasure," and no person shall be appointed or promoted to any place below that of deputy head unless he has passed the requisite examination and served the probationary term of six months; he must not be over thirty-five years old for appointment in Ottawa departments, (this limit is not fixed for the "outside" appointments,) nor under fifteen in a lower grade than third-class clerk, nor under eighteen in other cases. Appointees must be sound in health and of good character. Women are not appointed. A deputy head may be removed "on pleasure," but the reasons for the removal must be laid before both Houses of Parliament. Appointments may be made without reference to age on the report of the deputy head, on account of technical or professional qualifications or the public interest. City postmasters and such officers as inspectors and collectors, may be appointed without examination or reference to the rules for promotion. Examinations are dispensed with in other special cases. Removals may be made by the Governor in council. Reports of all examinations and of the entire civil service list must be laid before Parliament each session. Amendments have been made to the law in the direction of relieving from examination on their promotion men who have been long in the service, and an amendment of last session omitted some examinations altogether.

"It must be stated also that the service is not free from favoritism, and that influence is used, if not always necessary, to get in and to get on in it. The law has been gone around by means of the plea of "special qualifications," and this evasion has sometimes been considered a political necessity on account of service to a minister or to the party generally. I suppose that the party in power favors its own adherents. The competitive system of England has a mischievous effect in the encouragement of the examinations to direct studies toward a service which nine in ten of the applicants will never reach. This evil, of numbers qualified but not appointed, has grown so great in Canada that it has lately been ordered that there shall be only one examination in each year.

"The federal pension system cannot be considered settled. A man may be superannuated at any time, but by custom, not law, he retires at the full age of sixty. While in service he pays a superannuation allowance of two and a half per cent on his salary for thirty-five years; after that no more. If he is superannuated after ten years' service, say, he gets one-fiftieth of his salary for each year. If he is not in fault in any way, government may add ten years more to his service so as to give him a larger allowance. If a man serves the full term of thirty-five years he gets thirty-five fiftieths of his salary in pension. This pension system, recognized as essential to a good civil service, has this weakness. A man pays two and a half per cent of his salary for twenty years. If the salary is \$3000, his payments would have amounted to \$1200, with interest, in that time. If he then dies, his widow gets only two months' salary as a solatium; all the rest is lost to her, and goes to the superannuation fund of the treasury. Or, a man is superannuated after thirty-five years; he has paid perhaps \$2000, with interest; he draws, say, one year's superannuation allowance, and then dies. His family get nothing at all, not even the two months' salary they would have had if he had died in service. This is illogical and unjust. If the two and a half per cent had been put into a life policy, the insurance being undertaken by the government, a decent sum would have been realized at death.

"A civil service is also established in the provinces. That in Quebec is better organized than the federal; the government adds to the pension fund one-fourth of that retained from the salaries, and half pensions are extended to widows and children.

"It will be seen that this pension is an essential part of the civil service system, and the method of it is at once a sort of insurance and a stimulation to faithful service. Good service is a constant inducement to retention, to promotion, and to increase of pension. The Canadians say that the systems work well both in the federal and provincial services, and in this respect, as well as in the matter of responsible government they think their government superior to ours."

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