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By EDWARD G. LOWRY

Author "Washington Close-Ups," "Banks and Financial Systems," etc. Contributor Political and Economic Articles to Leading Periodicals and a Writer of Recognized Authority on the National Government's Business Methods.

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XI. HIRE GOVERNMENT HELP

The civil service commission hires all employees in the classified service of the government. The only thing to be said about the classified service, is that it has not yet been classified. But you shall hear what the civil service commission has to say about hiring help, without comment from me.

There is an utter lack of definitely planned and well-organized employment policy in the government service.

There is need for a centralized employment office with jurisdiction in all matters relating to employment.

The employment methods of the government should be such as to serve for a model for private business.

There is at present no central control over the executive service short of the President. The President is a busy man and cannot concern himself with the details of the executive departments.

The lack of efficiency in government offices has a marked effect on private business.

Definite information concerning the number of federal civil employees in different branches of the service and the amount of the government pay roll are not readily available.

An official register, or blue book, is issued every two years. It is out of date long before it is printed.

A provision of the civil service rules theoretically gives the civil service commission authority to collect and maintain complete personnel statistics. The labor and expense involved, however, practically prohibit the collection and compilation of reliable statistical data.

In addition to the limits of the commission's authority is the absence of authority to enforce its findings. The commission can make recommendations to the departments and offices and urge their observance, but it cannot enforce them.

Congress passed what is known as the civil service law January 16, 1883. This act created the United States civil service commission. The law was intended to cure in part the evils traceable to the spoils system, which grew out of the four-year-tenure-of-office act of 1820.

During the first 40 years after the organization of our government, administrative practice with regard to the civil service seemed to conform to the intention of the founders. The Constitution fixed the term of no officer in the executive branch of the government except those of the President and vice president. It was the established usage during these first 40 years to permit executive officers, except members of the cabinet, to hold office for an unlimited period during good behavior. The practice was changed in 1829 by the four-year-tenure act. The spoils system, as it was officially described as early as 1835, was introduced and extended until it permeated the entire civil service of the country.

The fundamental purpose of the civil service law was to establish, in the parts of the service covered by its provisions, a merit system whereby selection for appointment should be made upon the basis of demonstrated relative fitness, without regard to political, religious, or other such considerations.

The act requires that the rules shall provide, among other things, for open competitive examinations for testing the fitness of applicants for the classified service, the making of appointments from among those passing with highest grades, an apportionment of appointments in the departments at Washington among the states and territories, a period of probation before absolute appointment and the prohibition of the use of official authority to coerce the political action of any person or body.

In 1883, the year in which the civil service law was enacted, 13,924 positions in the civil service were made subject to competition. The entire number of positions in the federal executive civil service on June 30, 1916, was 480,327. At the height of the war expansion there were approximately 1,000,000 men and women employed in the federal executive civil service, about 700,000 of whom held positions subject to competition. On July 31, 1920, the entire number of federal executive civil positions, as nearly as can be estimated, had been reduced to 691,116. Approximately 450,000 of these were subject to competition, or, in other words, in the classified service. The force is still slowly but steadily decreasing.

During the 19 months of our participation in the war the civil service commission gave competitive examinations under the civil service law and rules to slightly less than 1,000,000 persons, and about 400,000 persons with tested qualifications were supplied by the commission to the service. A normal year's business is about 200,000 persons examined and about 50,000 appointed.



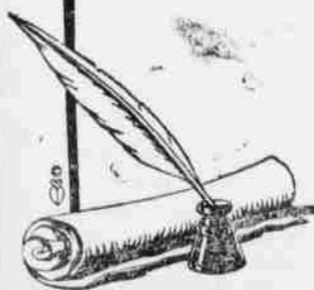
Resources

An object lesson of practising Economy and Thrift to achieve Independence can be learned by studying the methods that George Washington employed.

During the trying days of the Revolution, the great leader was called on time and again to admonish the colonies to economize and save so that they might have the resources to attain that goal they sought, How well they succeeded is a matter of history.

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