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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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INCOMPETENTS ARE KEPT

The annual turnover in the government service is something almost incredible. No business corporation, however strongly established, could long endure the heavy annual drain on its resources. Hundreds of men leave the government service daily; and new, untrained people have to be taken on and taught to do the work. This costs money, as every employer knows.

The resignations from the government service are chiefly from the supervisory and most highly paid positions and from the very lowest grades. The men at the top, if they have any initiative or ability or ambition to make a name for themselves, are offered private employment at double or treble or more what the government can pay them. The people in the lowest grades leave for private employment when opportunity affords because in too many instances they actually cannot keep body and soul together on their government pay.

It is the people in the middle class who stay on the longest. The whole constant process makes for a steady deterioration in the quality of the government service and tends to retain the mediocre in public employment.

The civil service commission, through which the great bulk of government employees are brought into the service, is acutely aware of this condition. Its reports give emphasis to the difficulty constantly experienced in securing and retaining competent employees. The rotation in office has become increasingly frequent and vitally impairs the efficiency of the service.

During the war there was a lower rate of turnover in the mechanical forces than in outside establishments. The proposition of separations, however, is excessive in clerical, professional and technical positions, in which the rate of turnover sometimes amounts to a third of the force in a year.

During the nine months preceding the armistice more than 60,000 appointments were made in the civil service and about 28,000 separations occurred—that is, for every two appointments made one person left the service. For a period of similar length following the armistice only 60 per cent as many appointments were made, but there were nearly 33 per cent more separations. In this period almost as many positions were vacated as were filled.

The exigencies of the war required a great expansion of the clerical forces at Washington and elsewhere and this was accomplished by a labor turnover several times above normal. The percentage of declinations of appointments among eligibles on the civil service register increased in many instances from 30 to more than 50 per cent—that is, more than half the men and women who successfully passed civil service examinations and were offered jobs under the government refused to take them. It is estimated that more than 350,000 of those who met the test were appointed during that time.

The civil service commission says flatly:

"Those familiar with the federal service at Washington know that the service is now hampered by the retention of incompetents whose removal is rendered difficult by influences which are incompatible with the efficiency of the service. Preferences and exemptions increasingly clog the departments with persons who, no matter how inefficient, are difficult to remove, and whose retention tends to destroy the discipline of the service."

Among these inefficient, of course, are the superannuated and the physically incapacitated. The bureau of efficiency estimated, before the passage of the superannuation retirement law, the number of employees in the civil service of the United States seventy years of age and over as follows:

	Number
Railway postal clerks.....	197
Rural letter carriers.....	454
City letter carriers.....	230
Post office clerks.....	397
Mechanics.....	328
General employees, Dist. Columbia.....	1,494
General employees elsewhere.....	1,613
Total.....	4,609

The commissioner of pensions supplies the following compact statement of the age of the employees in the pension bureau:

Number in the classified civil service, 874; age of the oldest employee, eighty-eight; number over eighty years of age, 26; number between sixty-five and eighty, 266; based on age of sixty-five, number eligible for retirement, 292; percentage of employees eligible for retirement, 33.4; average age of all employees, July 1, 1919, fifty-eight.

These old men and women bear the burden of the administration of the complex, intricate and involved procedure under the pension laws having to do with the disbursement of \$222,159,292 in 1920 to 600,000 and some-odd beneficiaries.

STANFIELD ON WAY HOME

WASHINGTON D. C. March 30.—Senator Stanfield left tonight for Portland to spend at least two weeks in Oregon. His plans, he said this afternoon, call for conferences in Portland and the eastern part of the state with representative farmers desiring loans from the war finance corporation on growing crops.

The senator had originally planned his departure for an earlier date, but delayed it in order to cast his vote for the four-power treaty.—Oregonian.

CUSTOMER OWNERSHIP IS GROWING

Customer ownership of utilities is equivalent to public ownership, as Samuel Insull interprets it. Government ownership means that recognized governmental agencies, those established for other purposes, take on ownership and management of industrial enterprises as a side-line. Customer ownership means that those who are the users of the industries are the business partners, their interest being represented by the stock they hold. Customer ownership has increased tremendously since 1914 and is the recognized best means of hearty co-operation between management and customers.—The Manufacturer.

EASTERN STAR MATRON WILL VISIT LOCAL CHAPTER

Mrs. Minnie C. Letson, of Ontario, Grand Worthy Matron of the Order Eastern Star of Oregon will visit Ruth Chapter 32 officially next Thursday evening, April 6th at 7:30 at Masonic Hall.

Initiation and refreshments. All members are requested to attend.

SIX HUNDRED MILLIONS FOR ROADS DURING PAST YEAR

The Bureau of Public Roads of the United States Department of Agriculture estimate the total expenditure for construction and maintenance of roads in the country in 1921 to be \$600,000,000.

The sources of this fund are approximately as follows: Motor vehicle revenue 19 per cent; State road bonds, 7 per cent; local road bonds, 33 per cent; State taxes and appropriations, 12 per cent; Federal aid 14 per cent; county, township and district taxes and assessments, 14 per cent; and miscellaneous one per cent.



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