

GENERAL REFORMS IN CIVIL SERVICE TO EFFECT ECONOMY.

First step towards economy in Civil Service.

Speaking of those departments to which we have not particularly referred, and of the departments generally, the first step towards economy must be the abandonment of all ideas and traditions that now exist as to the Government being required to treat its employés on any different principles from those which would regulate a well-conducted establishment of any large employer; and chiefly that men should be sought for the work required, and not places sought for the men who have been trained to expect them. By far the greater part of the work demanded from the officers and clerks employed in the Government service is of a routine character, requiring no uncommon ability, and the Government ought to obtain men qualified for such work at their market value. The prevalent idea, if not the recognized rule, that every person who is called into the Government service has obtained a footing from which he cannot be removed, and which must necessarily lead him up to constant, regular promotion, with very little regard to his own assiduity and efficiency, and none whatever to the character of the duties upon which he is engaged or which he has qualified himself to perform, has not only removed one of the strongest incentives to effort which lead men to aspire to excellence, but has indefinitely and progressively increased the cost of Government. Departments and heads of departments have been multiplied until the heads have grown out of all proportion to the bodies, and the cost of the Service has been made excessive by paying high salaries to officers who contribute nothing to the efficiency and useful power of the Service. A necessary, and only a necessary, number of officers promoted to a commanding position for their superior qualities would be a most valuable element in any Service, and salaries sufficient to retain such services must be paid. Nothing, however, could be more undesirable than a Service composed of all officers and no rank and file, and departments crowded with those who think themselves entitled to high salaries and commanding positions, but deficient in men who are contented to toil on patiently, yet skilfully, at what must always constitute the great bulk of the work in the Civil Service. There are few employments in which the daily clerical work is so unvaried, or in which all the necessary skill may be more surely acquired by experience and repetition; and the first step towards economy should be to arrange for all such work to be performed by men who do not despise it as beneath their best attention, nor expect the colony to pay more for it than it is worth.

Bad effects of indiscriminate promotion.

Leaders and organizers should rise from the ranks of Service.

At the same time a few, and a very few, men should be selected as leaders, organizers, and directors, and, if their number is not made unnecessarily large, the colony would be a gainer by paying for efficient supervision, whatever may be necessary to retain first-rate men, and to make such a position a tempting prize, worthy of the ambition of every man in the Service. We need hardly say that, in order that it may be looked up to as such, no such position should be filled except by meritorious officers who have risen in the Service.

Services should be paid for at their real value.

With this conviction we cannot recommend any mere automatic scale of reduction in salaries in order to bring the cost of the Service within the means of the colony, but a total reorganization, that will retain all the necessary power and skill, and put all the main work of the Service into the hands of those willing to do it at its market value. Such an arrangement, if unflinchingly and impartially carried out, would greatly decrease the present cost of the Service, and at the same time add to its discipline and its efficiency.

Promotion should mean more work or responsibility.

Really moral or legal claims on the Government by existing office-holders must of course be recognized, but there should be no hesitation in disregarding mere supposititious or traditional claims, and no attempt made to retain men at high salaries to perform clerical work requiring no exceptional ability. Each position in the department should remain at a stated salary, and promotion in the Service should mean removal from a less to a more important or arduous position, and not in any case an increase of salary for the performance of the same services.