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TWO CENTS.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION MAKES REPORT

The Seventeenth Annual Statement of the Body Is Sent to President McKinley.

MANY RECOMMENDATIONS

An Interesting Feature of the Report Is a Brief History of the Benefits Derived by the Operation of Civil Service Law Since Its Enactment—The Commission Recommends That Internal Revenue Deputies Should All Be in the Competitive List—Attention Is Called to Continued Violation of Laws Regarding Political Assessments—The Philippine Civil Service.

By Exclusive Wire from The Associated Press.

Washington, D. C., Aug. 18.—The United States civil service commission has sent the seventeenth annual report to the president. The report gives a summary of the work done during the report year. Conspicuous space is given to a discussion of the operation and effect of the presidential rules now in force and to their administration. Investigations made of irregularities and violations, and to the difficulties experienced and the suggested changes which experience shows to be necessary. An interesting feature of the report is a brief history of the benefits derived by the operation of the civil service law since its enactment, and the commission's attitude and policy is set forth as to the greatest practicable publicity concerning matters connected with its work. A brief history of the recently enacted civil service law in the Philippines is given, and the commission repeats its recommendation for extensions of the classified service, makes a strong argument for a material increase of appropriation for a more adequate force of clerks and examiners, and concludes with appropriate expressions upon the death of former Commissioners Dorman B. Eaton and March S. Brewer.

During the year 46,763 persons were examined, of whom 35,025 passed. Of the number who passed 34,400 served for original appointments to the service, of which number 8,839 were appointed, the largest number ever appointed to the classified service through examination in any single year.

The report says:

In this connection the commission desires to call attention to the fact that for the past three years, beginning July 30, 1900, 27,511 persons have obtained their appointments through the examinations provided for in the civil service rules, the period ending June 30, 1901, the date when the civil service act became operative, and terminating June 30, 1900, a total of 78,701 persons have been thus appointed. It is especially gratifying to note that the large increase in the number of appointments made, particularly those made in connection with the test, as shown in the commission's last report, that such an exceedingly small number of removals for all causes has been made of persons who were appointed to the service through the examinations system, advancing the continental term of classified service exclusive of the furloughs and Indian service, but sixty-eight one-hundredths of 1 per cent, per annum. While the number of positions filled through civil service appointments has so rapidly increased, the commission would like to show that persons appointed in this manner are not thoroughly competent for the work to which they have been assigned and to have rendered efficient and satisfactory service, as over 98 per cent of them have received permanent appointment to the classified service.

It must, therefore, be assumed that this method of obtaining government employees fully meets the needs of the service.

Regarding Registers.

The commission states that much of the material it secures in the way of professional and scientific registers of eligibles is wasted owing to the maximum limitation of two years upon the period of eligibility, and recommends that it be vested with authority to further extend eligibility on such registers beyond the period of two years up to a certain limit, and under provisions which would safeguard against abuse. It is also pointed out that the provision of the rules authorizing appointing officers to permanently appoint persons who were serving under temporary appointment on May 29, 1899, is confined, under an opinion of the attorney general, to temporary appointments in classified positions, and does not extend to temporary appointments in the unclassified positions which were made during the Spanish war emergency.

The commission directs special attention to the fact that under the provisions of the rules when any office is classified and brought within the civil service law and rules, persons holding the position thus classified at the time of classification are given the same status as those who enter the service through examination and certification, and to the practice which grew up and assumed serious proportions under this condition whereby an appointing officer, anticipating the classification of an office, could appoint, just prior to its classification, any person he saw fit without examination and certification, and subsequently, upon such appointment becoming classified by operation of the rules, he was at once eligible for transfer to other parts of the service; and it is urged in the report that an amendment, which the commission has submitted, or some other suitable and effective remedy, be approved.

The report calls attention to the large number of positions in the internal revenue service which are excepted from the provisions of the civil service rules, and expresses the belief that the best interests of the service

require that at least all deputy collectors serving at the headquarters of the district, with the exception of the chief collector, and also all deputies who have practically permanent locations at different points in the district, should be returned to the competitive classified service. The report says:

"It is believed that the branch of the government charged with the important duties of the collection of revenue should be placed upon the same business basis as prevails in the railway mail service as a result of a rigid and conscientious application and observance of the civil service law and rules."

An argument is presented in favor of fewer exceptions in the service in general.

Payment of Salaries.

Particular attention is called to the matter of payment of salaries to persons appointed in violation of the provisions of the civil service law, and decisions of the comptroller of the treasury are cited to show "that a person who holds a position contrary to the law in the civil service law may not legally be in the service and should not be recognized by disbursing officers of the government as being entitled to salary."

As to investigations, it is stated that "owing to the inadequate force of the commission and appropriation for the purpose, it has not been possible to satisfactorily make investigation and inspection in many cases requiring the same in order to secure a full observance of the law." Special mention is made of the investigation of the case of alleged violations of the provisions of law against the political assessments during the Ohio state campaign of 1899, which investigation continued over from the previous year. The commissioners had before them the facts, and the facts which it found and raised two questions for the consideration of the department of justice, if whether the fact of membership of the political committee which makes solicitations from government officers constitutes a solicitation within the meaning of the civil service act, and (2) whether the sending of letters of solicitation into Federal buildings constitutes a solicitation in a Federal building within the meaning of the civil service act. The report states: "The commission deemed it particularly important and desirable that a judicial determination be secured of this second question, and however, the same might be had from this source." The facts are given in the case of Wallace L. Turner, which was investigated by the commission and reported to the department of justice, and Turner was indicted and convicted for a violation of the provisions of law against solicitation of contributions for political purposes.

In giving a summary of the result of the investigation of alleged irregularities, including political assessments, in the Fifth internal revenue district of Kentucky, the report says:

The investigation also seemed to show knowledge and tacit approval of the system of assessments by the party in power, the president with the recommendation for the removal of the collector and of the assignment clerk. The matter was also submitted to the attorney general for appropriate action. The commission informed the attorney general that this case was presented to him on Nov. 1, 1900, and that he, after a most thorough investigation of the case, decided to ignore the complaints.

Should Keep Out of Politics.

Special commendation is given to a circular issued by the attorney general under date of Aug. 20, 1900, containing the following clause:

"It is recommended that all officers and employees of the departments refrain from membership and service on political committees charged with the collection and disbursement of campaign funds."

After reciting the circumstances which led up to the passage of the civil service act and setting forth the provisions of that act for open competitive examinations for testing the fitness of applicants for the public service and for filling positions in the service by selection from those graded highest as a result of such competitive examinations:

Under these provisions open competitive examinations have been organized to grow more and more extended, and finally practically every character of ability required in the administration of the government service is obtained by this means.

The number of appointments from the examinations, as shown by the statistical matter in the report, has increased each year since the classification until for this report year nearly ten thousand persons, whose capacity and ability have previously demonstrated, were added to the ranks of government employees. The aggregate salaries of the men now in the service, including those numbering about 90,000, will be reached only through competitive examinations, approximate \$75,000,000 per annum, while the salaries of all unclassified positions in the executive branch of the government, probably including those in the post office, will not exceed \$80,000,000, of which over 60 per cent is for the compensation of the 4,422 postmaster postmasters and the 72,000 postmasters of fourth-class offices."

"The increased efficiency of the civil service and postoffice services is due, in part, to the fact that the service is known and recognized by the public at large. Many other parts of the service also present excellent showings as to the economy secured from the increased efficiency of their employees, as shown in the annual statement of the financial annual report, page 15. It has been estimated that less than \$10,000,000 per annum has been saved in the salaries of government employees as a direct result of the enforcement of the civil service act.

The report states that while of course there is by no means an entire absence of irregularities and violations of the laws and rules, and that while the system is not yet working with entire satisfaction, yet, taken as a whole, it has been a decided improvement, naturally being most conspicuous in those parts of the service which have been longest under the operation of the law. Upon the general subject of political assessments:

Since the passage of the civil service act the growing frequency of attempts to levy political assessments or solicit contributions from federal employees in violation of the law has been periodically gratifying."

The efforts of the commission and the heads of departments to increase the enforcement of these provisions of the law and rules and to secure their enforcement have no doubt done much to discourage attempts to collect political assessments.

Philippine Civil Service.

The report frankly states that efforts will probably always be made to secure contributions from govern-

ment employees for the furtherance of political objects, but points out that the protection which has been given to the law and rules, especially since reinforced by the rule of July 27, 1897, prohibiting removals except for just cause, and after full opportunity for defense, should be a sufficient check upon any involuntary response to solicitations and an ultimate discouragement to the practice of assessment and solicitation.

In discussing the Philippine civil service act which distinguishes it most conspicuously from most national and local laws of broad scope, underlines not only the efforts of the general or central government, but also those in the various branches of the provincial and municipal governments and ultimately including every officer and employee from the heads of departments to the lowest laborer, the provisions requiring nomination to be made to a competitive examination from the lower to the higher ranks, including all positions except the heads of departments and private secretaries of members of the Philippine commission, and in the case of the civil service law, the class to be composed of the first, second and third assistants to the heads of departments.

Although several months have intervened since the passage of the Philippine service law, little or no criticism has been made by the opponents of the merit system in the United States of the law, and the law has been well received.

This fact is evidence of popular belief that a system of appointments based upon merit was necessary to insure the establishment of a stable and honest civil government, the principles of which do not detract from the law.

It is also believed that the law contemplates not only a system of appointments as a result of competitive examination, but also a complete merit service, and for this its framers are to be commended.

It is also believed that the law will depend wholly upon demonstrated capacity, and that even the highest offices may be attained in this way without the necessity of personal or political favor.

As to investigations, it is stated that

"owing to the inadequate force of the commission and appropriation for the purpose, it has not been possible to satisfactorily make investigation and inspection in many cases requiring the same in order to secure a full observance of the law."

Special mention is made of the investigation of the case of

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