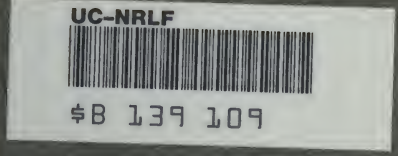

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Civil Service and Connecticut

by

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THE CIVIL SERVICE.

By Henry W. Farnam.

A Glance Backwards.

In one of the outlines of this course the subject of civil service reform is classified among the "newer ideas in government." Novelty is always a question of degree. Readers of Wells' "*Outline of History*" need not be told that the whole recorded history of the race is new compared with the uncounted geological eras that preceded it. Visitors to Great Britain know that the "New Forest" is still called new in that once conservative country, although it was established by William the Conqueror, so that the word new in that case means over 800 years old.

I will therefore not hint that the ladies, whose literary skill and judgment are so manifest in all of their publications, have made an inaccurate statement regarding the novelty of civil service reform. I will merely interpret their phrase by saying that the official recognition of this reform in our country is now fifty years old; that the political principles on which it is based were recognized by all of our earlier presidents and are 130 years old; while its ethical standards go back to the decalogue, since any one who accepts a salary to serve the general public and who consciously uses his time and the labor of his subordinates to promote the interest of a faction, is not scrupulously observing the spirit of the eighth commandment, while the hungry place hunters are clearly violating the tenth. It is, however, true that the decalogue, or at least the observance of it, is new to some people. Indeed, we have become acquainted in the course of our civil service fight with some influential Connecticut tories so conservative that the ninth commandment seems to them an irritating and radical innovation. On no other theory can I account for their persistency in bearing false witness even after the truth has been brought to their attention.

I regret that the limitations of time force me to a considerable condensation. If I were a scenario writer and if this lecture were to be popularized by reproduction in movie form, I should throw upon the screen a series of pictures representing the early presidents of the United States, from George Washington to John Quincy Adams, as observers of the principle of appointment for merit. That would be followed by a picture of Senator

Marcy of New York standing in the senate and proclaiming that the New York politicians "see nothing wrong in the maxim that to the victors belong the spoils." Then would come a picture of Jackson applying the principle in practice; pictures of Daniel Webster, and all the better statesmen of the next decade, protesting against the corruption of the civil service; the funeral procession of President Harrison whose life was sacrificed to the importunities of place hunters. The period following the Civil War would be featured by the tragedy of Garfield, murdered in cold blood by a disappointed office seeker. Pictures of the reformers would then follow: Representative Jenckes of Rhode Island, Dorman B. Eaton, George William Curtis, and those who embodied reform in law, such as Senator Pendleton, the author of the Civil Service Act of 1883, and Senator Hawley of Connecticut, who introduced and vigorously advocated the law in the senate. This part would conclude with the portraits of every president from the time of General Grant on, since every one of them has done something (some more, some less) to advance the application of the merit system.

But I am not privileged to use the condensed presentation of the movie, and as it would take too much of my short time to give the history of the movement even in outline, I will pass at once to the practical problems of the present.

The Merit System Defined.

You, of course, all know what we mean by the spoils system. Its evils are three-fold:

1. Political. It Mexicanizes politics by causing elections to be decided more by the activity of the office holders and office seekers than by the deliberately formed judgment of the electorate.

2. Administrative. Office holders appointed for political service are inefficient and in not a few cases corrupt.

3. Ethical. The system is unjust to the tax payer, who is certainly entitled to get his money's worth in public service. It is equally unjust to the government employees who, however efficient and conscientious, may be turned out at any time to make room for political or personal friends of the appointing officer.

In contrast with the spoils system, what has now come to be known as the merit system is one "under which appointment to and retention in public employment depend only upon proved capacity to perform the public duties involved." This definition was formulated some years ago by Mr. Morris and myself

in an attempt to express the gist of the matter in twenty words and I cannot do better than to quote it here.

If every officeholder believed in and lived up to this principle, it would be unnecessary to pass any civil service laws. If everybody conscientiously observed the Golden Rule we should not need any laws against theft or murder. But as long as people do not live up to these principles, we have to make laws to enforce them, and the type of law by which the merit system is applied is simple and is practically the same everywhere. First of all the execution of the law is put in the hands of a commission of one or more members. This commission provides for competitive examinations to test the capacity of candidates for the various positions involved. These examinations are not academic, excepting for academic positions. They are practical and have to do directly with the duties required. The candidates are marked, usually on the scale of 100, and the commission then certifies to the appointing officer the names of those who stand highest in the list. It has become customary to certify the three highest, but there is no magic in the number, and this is merely a matter of convenience. The appointing officer then makes his selection from those certified and the person selected is appointed on probation for a certain time. The appointment is made definitive, if a candidate proves acceptable, but a definitive appointment does not mean a life tenure. It simply means that he cannot be removed except for cause, and it is customary to provide that this cause must not be political or religious.

Familiar as this method is to all who have had anything to do with the system, I have thought it best to describe it in outline, because of the many misstatements which are constantly being printed about it by the spoilsmen. Kindly note, therefore, that the civil service commission does not make appointments; it merely limits the range by weeding out the least fit. The merit system does not diminish the responsibility of the office holder, who must still exercise his discretion both in making the original appointment and in deciding whether or not a probationer shall be retained. It does not, for this reason, weaken discipline. It does not give any one a life tenure. On the contrary, it gives him a tenure only during good service.

Under our system of government there are three quite distinct spheres of political power and three classes of officials. We thus have federal, state, and local governments, each with its own functionaries and as a matter of simplicity I shall speak of each in turn.

The Federal Service.

It is in the federal service that the merit system has made the most progress, and although the federal government sometimes seems remote from the individual geographically, in point of fact we touch it constantly in our business and in our pleasure, and I think quite as frequently as the local or state government. Every time you mail or receive a letter you are dealing with the Post Office department and have a direct interest in prompt service. Every time you pay an income tax or a tax on theatres or soft drinks or tobacco you touch the department of Internal Revenue. In a less obvious way you are constantly influenced by the activities of the federal government with reference to agriculture, if you are a farmer; with reference to labor statistics and some labor laws, if you are a wage receiver; with reference to the work of the consular service, if you are an importer or exporter; with reference to inter-state commerce regulation, if you are interested in railroads either as a director, a stockholder, or a passenger. Instances might be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

The merit system in the federal government rests at present upon the so-called Pendleton Act passed in 1883 and as many people do not seem to know just what this act does, I must explain it at the start. The constitution has a paragraph relating directly to appointments for office. After providing for the appointment of justices of the supreme court and members of the diplomatic service, it says that "Congress may vest the appointment of such inferior officers as they think proper in the President alone, in the courts of law, or in the heads of departments." It has been held that under this constitutional provision it would be illegal for Congress to restrict the discretion of the President; therefore the civil service law simply creates a commission with power to conduct examinations for candidates, provides for its financial support, lays down certain general principles, and then leaves it to the President to make rules to carry them into effect. In the words of the act itself it is the duty of the commissioners "to aid the President, as he may request, in preparing suitable rules for carrying this act into effect." It does, however, specifically exclude certain abuses. It provides that no recommendation of any person for appointment shall be made by any senator or congressman except as to the character or residence of the applicant, and it prohibits political assessments or contributions, imposing a penalty upon a violation of these provisions.

Thus the application of the merit system rests, and has rested from the beginning, entirely upon the President.

Beginning on a very modest scale this system has been

gradually extended until in the single year 1918 no less than 213,000 appointments were made under it. It now applies not only to clerkships and other minor offices to which it seemed most applicable in the beginning, but it has come to include positions involving scientific and scholarly attainments (statistics, biology, chemistry). It has also been applied to consular offices, to the diplomatic service, and to postmasterships of the first class. For all of this extension we are indebted, in the main, to the presidents from whom the rules and the extension of the system proceeded.

You will readily see that with so many different positions under civil service rules and with the enormous extension of government activity into the fields of research and science, into the regulation of railroads and health and labor, many problems are constantly presenting themselves for solution and new regulations and new laws may become necessary in order to adapt to modern conditions the general principles of good government embodied in the Pendleton Act.

I shall take up briefly a few of those which seem to me most important at the present time. They concern the post office department, the internal revenue and prohibition service, the subject of veteran preference, and the general reclassification of the service.

The Post Office Department has probably gone further in the application of the merit system than almost any other department of the government. Long ago we reached the point at which the bulk of the clerks, the letter carriers, the employees of the railway mail service, etc., were under civil service rules and more recently we have been making real progress in extending the merit system to postmasters. A beginning was made with the fourth class postmasters by President Roosevelt and President Taft, and examinations have now been applied successfully to them for years. It was a bold step when President Wilson issued, on March 31, 1917, an executive order under which he determined to select postmasters of the first, second and third classes on the basis of merit to be ascertained by an examination into the candidate's qualities whenever a vacancy should occur on account of death, resignation, or removal.

The significance of this action was such that it has been recognized even by prominent Republicans who, in other respects, have allowed their minds to be so poisoned by the venom of the late campaign that they did not think that any good thing could come out of Wilson. It must be understood that this order was a purely "self-denying ordinance." Under the constitution and the statutes the President has the right to nominate and present to the senate for confirmation such persons as he may, in his discretion, select. In this case President

Wilson deliberately elected not to follow the advice of senators or local politicians who might wish to further their political fortunes by putting their henchmen into office, but to accept the results of a careful inquiry made into the business experience, administrative ability, and general character of candidates. That this rule was carried out impartially and in good faith is indicated by the fact that in nearly 2,000 examinations for postmasterships held in the northern states, over 800 Republicans and only 600 Democrats were chosen under a Democratic administration. It will be noticed, however, that this order had its limitations, inasmuch as it applied to vacancies occurring only through death, resignation, or removal, but not through expiration of term.

President Harding, I am glad to report, although strongly urged by party associates to revoke President Wilson's rule, has issued a new one on similar lines. It differs, however, from the former in two particulars. (1) It applies to all vacancies, including those occasioned by expiration of term. (2) It provides that the Postmaster General shall certify to the President, not the highest name on the list, but the three highest. It is clear that this may open the door to partisanship and that even if the President should, in fact, select the man at the head of the list, there is danger that people will believe that he is going to be influenced by partisanship and that very few Democrats will apply. The order is still new and a final judgment cannot be passed upon its operation, but according to a statement issued by the Postmaster General on September 10th, it appears that a total of 878 nominations had been made under the terms of the order; 426 of these had been made as the result of the promotion of the employees in the classified service; the balance, or 452, were made from eligible lists: and of these 345 were the first names on the list, 75 were the second.

The Internal Revenue Department is less satisfactory. While many offices, such as clerkships, have been and still are classified and subject to the civil service rules in the case of others the policy has fluctuated and certain positions have at times been under the rules, at times removed from them.

The classification was carried to its furthest point by President Roosevelt under the order of November 7, 1906, when all deputy collectors who had been taken out of the competitive class in 1903 were restored to it. Unfortunately, an act of Congress, approved October 22, 1913, specifically allowed collectors to appoint their deputies without regard to the civil service act and this opened the way to a large number of political appointments.

Partisanship in the department of internal revenue is peculiarly bad because of its power to penetrate the sanctity of private accounts, in assessing the income tax, as well as through its connection with the collection of the taxes on liquor and other articles of consumption.

Closely allied with the internal revenue department is the enforcement of the prohibition law. Liquor laws have always been peculiarly difficult to apply. Even the old federal tax law was frequently violated by moonshiners in the South, and it is notorious that our state license law although not severe, was not strictly executed. Nevertheless, when the most radical piece of liquor regulation which any modern country has ever adopted was put upon the statute book, it was especially provided by Congress that employees should not be under civil service rules. This was done in spite of the earnest protest of the Civil Service Reform League, which called attention in advance to the evils which we knew would result. While I do not claim that putting the employees under the merit system would have led to the perfect enforcement of the law, I do claim that the scandals and irregularities which have arisen under it have been greatly aggravated by the absence of the merit system.

This is a topic which concerns women as a sex very directly. It is, I think, unfortunately true that the pleasure of intoxication is enjoyed mainly by the men, while the suffering which results falls mainly upon the women and children. Whatever may be one's convictions with regard to prohibition, or any particular method of regulating the liquor traffic, I think that all who do not make money by selling liquor will agree that, whatever law is on the statute book, it should be carried out honestly, impartially, and in good faith. It would insult my audience to argue this point.

Veteran Preference has become a problem which has arisen not only under the federal law but also under state laws. This is a familiar device for weakening the civil service rules. It was abused before the world war and now that the number of veterans has increased by millions, its dangers have grown in proportion. The Deficiency Appropriation Act passed July 11, 1919, made a provision giving unrestricted preference for clerical and other positions in the District of Columbia and elsewhere to honorably discharged soldiers, sailors and marines, and the widows of such, and also to the wives of injured soldiers, sailors or marines, who themselves are not qualified but whose wives are qualified to hold such positions. This is not limited to veterans of the world war, but applies to all honorably discharged veterans, whether they have ever served in any war or not, and includes army field clerks, persons who served in the

army training corps, army nurses, pay clerks, men and officers of the revenue cutter service, etc. In addition to this sweeping preference they are given an advantage in the examinations since the passing mark which for others is 70% is only 65% in the case of veterans. The abuse connected with veteran preference is particularly liable to work injustice to women in certain fields for which women are best qualified. Take as an example, the examination for scientific assistant in the public health service. In the last examination there were two veterans who passed with averages of less than 70%. If the highest veteran were to be appointed, he would be selected over 65 women whose averages were 70% to 95%. This is an illustration of the injustice of this law.

The veterans of all wars who have suffered injury or disability should be cared for liberally at the expense of the tax payer, but they should not be cared for at the expense of the efficiency of the service or at the expense of fair play to those who have qualified themselves for government positions by study and education.

Trade unionism among federal employees is another subject which is liable to produce trouble in the future. There is no logical reason why this should be necessary. Uncle Sam is not obliged to run his business at a profit. He pays his way by taxation; he is like the spendthrift son of a rich father who, whenever he wants more money, goes to the old man and asks for it, the old man in this case being the patient tax payer. Uncle Sam should, therefore, be an ideal employer. Unfortunately, he is not, and the inadequacy of salaries in many divisions has brought about the formation of the Association of Federal Employees, which is now affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It is my belief that most of the employees have no desire to go on strike or to engage in labor agitation, and that all danger could be removed by provision for a proper and impartial investigation of grievances and a reasonable adjustment of salaries.

Reclassification is another important problem now before us in connection with the federal civil service. It would weary you were I to discuss this at length. I will merely say that in the course of years the federal service has grown rapidly until it has become a veritable maze. New offices have been created, new titles introduced, new salaries appropriated, with little reference to uniformity or system. This is, of course, not the result of the merit system, but a proper execution of the merit system demands that greater consistency and uniformity shall be introduced. Congress has been studying the matter for years and a special expert committee of the Civil Service Reform League has made a valuable report upon it.

The State Civil Service.

There is clearly no time to speak of the civil service in other states than Connecticut. Suffice it to say that New York and Massachusetts introduced state civil service laws shortly after the passage of the Pendleton Act. There are now ten states which have state laws, and in some of them, as New York, Ohio and Colorado, the merit principle is incorporated in the constitution.

The history of the civil service in Connecticut is a study in political pathology. It has all of the interest that a hospital has for a physician. It is a very good illustration of how not to do it. As the details have been recorded at some length in the publications of the Connecticut Civil Service Reform Association, I will content myself with giving a bare outline, only saying that my statements are not based on hearsay, nor upon memory, nor upon the imagination of a humorist, but upon contemporary records. They have this advantage over many statements which you may have heard in the lobbies of the capitol or in the columns of a very few newspapers.

The state law was voted by the legislature of 1913. It passed both houses without a dissenting vote, and it was advocated on the floor of the senate, both by the Democratic and by the Republican leaders. It contained nothing radical but was similar to the law of New Jersey and of other states, though it differed in some minor particulars from the bill which the Connecticut Association had been advocating for some four years. Governor Baldwin appointed an excellent commission and no criticisms were heard of the law until after the elections of 1914. Governor Baldwin was, as you all know, a Democrat, and of the two houses the Senate had a Democratic majority, the House, a Republican. In 1914 the elections gave the control of both houses, as well as the governorship and the other state offices, to the Republican party. Before the elected officials had entered upon their duties, in December, 1914, Mr. Morris C. Webster, the comptroller-elect, notified the superintendent and assistant superintendent of the state capitol that their services would not be required after January 6, 1915, and gave to the press the names of the men whom he proposed to appoint in their places. This was so obviously a violation of the law passed when Mr. Webster himself was the speaker of the House, that the Attorney-General, elected upon the same ticket, declared his action to be illegal. *The Hartford Courant* then began its attack upon the law, declaring editorially on January 8, 1915, that "State officers responsible for their departments, should name their own employees, and public commissions should have the same rights." And it added, "It may be partisanship,

but it is human nature to resent seeing a candidate of the Progressive Party and a life-long Democrat demand that a Republican comptroller, elected by 17,000 plurality, ask permission of them to name his own subordinates." And a few days later it said. "Whatever Mr. Webster may have done, or may do, in the way of making the appointments to office in which his responsibility is involved, will be strictly within the law before Wednesday's sun sets."

These statements are very important, because they contain a clear acknowledgment that it was partisanship which led to the attack upon the law, and that the movement to change the law was designed to legalize an act clearly illegal on the part of a state official sworn to obey the law.

Incidentally, I should like to call your attention to the phrasing of this quotation, which is typical of much that we have had to encounter throughout the controversy. The editorial says that state officers "should name their own employees." The implication is that under the civil service rules he cannot name his own employees. As I explained in the beginning, the civil service rules do not take the appointment out of the hands of the responsible official; all they do is to limit the appointment to the most fit. This specious plea for the discretionary power of the state officer or commission was particularly misleading in the case of Connecticut, because with a broadmindedness, which is worthy of all praise, the Connecticut rules provided that any department might conduct its own examinations, as long as they provided proper tests of fitness. Thus if the comptroller, or the Cheshire Reformatory Board, or any other department felt that the examinations of the commission were unpractical, or arbitrary, or in any way unsuitable, they could have provided for their own tests. But this they never attempted to do. It is clear that at the very outset, the question was not whether the law should be more or less strict, or whether the details of its administration might be improved. It was whether the state should recognize the principle of merit or that of partisanship in filling ministerial offices.

The controversy over the civil service law occupied the attention of the legislature for about two months. Even with a good majority, it was clear that the brutal wiping out of the whole merit system was too much for the dominant party. The leading newspapers of the state, with very few exceptions, supported the merit system. They held with us that it is not necessary that a man shall share the views of the dominant party on the tariff, or the currency, or other questions of national politics, in order to be able to keep the state capitol clean and warm. We claimed that there was not a Republican method

of housecleaning distinguished from a Democratic method, and that an honest and efficient man could take care of the state capitol, even though he might be a Democrat in politics or even a Prohibitionist. In fact the experience of the year proved our contention, for the Democratic superintendent could not be removed until the law had been changed. He thus remained in office for two months, in spite of the fact that he did not share the political views of Mr. Webster, and during all that time no complaint was ever heard against the administration of his office. You, of course, understand that the civil service law never gave an office-holder a fixed tenure. It merely provided that he should not be discharged except for cause and that the cause should not be political. Mr. Webster could easily have removed the superintendent, if there had been any complaint, however trivial, of his work, such as the failure to clean out the spittoons or to maintain the fire in the furnace, and there would have then been no violation of the law. The fact that he did not make any charge whatever is the best proof that no charges could be made and that the aim was to make the office a political one.

I will not weary you with the details of the discussion in which William H. Taft and many of our leading manufacturers, such as Mr. F. J. Kingsbury, Irving H. Chase, the late George A. Driggs and others strongly supported the contention of the Civil Service Reform Association. The outcome was the passage of the so-called Isbell amendments, the general effect of which was to make the law optional. For while retaining the commission, it provided that any official elected by the people could exempt himself from the operation of the law by simply declaring his "policy," while state boards and commissions could secure exemption by obtaining the consent of the governor without any reference to the Civil Service Commission.

A feature of the bill which showed its purely partisan character was the provision increasing the membership of the commission from three to five. This had the effect of giving the Republicans a majority. It should be said, however, that this has played no part whatever in the civil service fight in Connecticut. Though all of the governors since 1915 have been Republicans, and though the Republicans have for six years had a majority on the Board, all of the men appointed, whether Republicans or Democrats, have been men of high grade, and there has never been the whisper of a suggestion that they have misused their office for partisan purposes. We have had the interesting experience that some of these appointees who began by being rather indifferent to the merit system and not especially well informed upon it, became its strong advocates, after they

had seen how it worked, though they thus put themselves in opposition to some of the dominant men of their own party.

There have been three sessions of the legislature since 1915. In 1917 and 1919 our association made an effort to restore at least some of the features of the original law by requiring that any requests for exemption should be passed upon by the Civil Service Commission and only go to the governor on appeal. We failed to get any of these changes made. In the meantime the Civil Service Commission was carrying on its work efficiently, economically, and tactfully. It pursued the policy which many of us thought wise, though it proved in the end to be futile, of commending itself to the public by proving its usefulness to those who administered the affairs of the state. It succeeded in this aim to such an extent that in the beginning of 1921, although every department of the state might, if it had wanted to, have secured exemption by asking for it, inasmuch as the governor had never denied a single request of this kind, only nine commissions and departments had been exempted as against some thirty-four working under civil service rules, and about two-thirds of the employees of the state were still appointed after competitive examination, carried on by the commission. In two cases commissions which had asked for and secured exemption from the governor voluntarily came back under the system; while some institutions which were exempted applied to the commission for permission to use its list of eligibles in filling positions.

To have brought about such a state of things reflects no small credit upon the commission and its staff, and it is only right that in this place I should mention the names of Commissioners Charles G. Morris, John C. Brinsmade, Henry G. Phelps, Ulysses G. Church, Hugh M. Alcorn, William Brosmith, Thomas Hewes and C. Denison Talcott, in order that we may give them full credit for having, conscientiously and without compensation, carried on the work of the civil service department. To these should be added, with special emphasis, the name of Miss Alice R. Taylor who, having herself been appointed as the result of a competitive examination under application of the civil service rules, managed the affairs of the office with great tact and skill, a fact generally recognized by those who had dealings with the commission.

It will be remembered that the first attack upon the merit system came after the Republican victory of 1914. The second attack came after the Republican victory of 1920 when but a single Democrat found his way to the senate and the Republican majority in the house was overwhelming. The very first bill introduced in the house by the house leader, Major John

Buckley of Union, was a bill to repeal Chapter 105 of the Revised Statutes, in other words, the entire civil service law. He secured the passage of this under the familiar parliamentary device of asking for a suspension of the rules, which meant that the bill was not referred to any committee but was rushed through without debate, before many of the members knew what was involved, and sent at once to the senate. The senate showed a greater sense of fair play than the leader of the house, and on motion of Senator Delaney of Bridgeport it was referred to the Judiciary Committee.

Senator Bakewell of New Haven also introduced a bill which had been drafted by the State Civil Service Commission and which was similar to the bills advocated in recent years by the Civil Service Reform Association in that it aimed to stiffen up the law and increase the dignity of the commission by providing that applications for exemption should be acted upon by the commission in the first instance, subject only to an appeal to the governor. A well attended hearing was held at which a large number of influential men and women from different parts of the state appeared on behalf of the bill to strengthen the law. Almost all of the few who appeared for the repeal were either officeholders or men in politics. The final outcome was that the Judiciary Committee recommended the rejection of the Bakewell Bill and the passage of the bill to repeal. After a short debate, the senate ratified this action by a vote of 17-14. As was stated at the time, the division was, in fact, closer than this vote indicated, and there is every reason to believe that had it not been for the absence of certain senators the result would have been a tie.

Our Association made a final effort to secure reconsideration through the medium of a petition which was signed by many prominent people, mainly Republicans, throughout the state, received the endorsement of many women in the Connecticut League of Women Voters, and was introduced by Senator Seymour of Hartford. It was, however, not passed and the legislature adjourned with the repeal of the civil service act to its discredit.

Two points are to be noted in estimating the meaning of the repeal of the civil service law.

(1) It was not a measure of the Republican Party but of a faction only. As no vote was ever recorded in the house and as the subject was never debated by it, we cannot say definitely how the members of the house stood, but in the senate all of the senators present from New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, Meriden and Norwich, and one of the three from Bridgeport, voted for the retention of the merit system. Likewise, both of the representatives from New Haven, Messrs. Perry and Ford,

sustained the merit system whenever occasion offered, and Mr. Perry rendered us great service as a member of the Judiciary Committee. In other words, the senators from the large cities in which the problem of good administration is best understood were on the whole for the merit system, and they represented nearly half of the population of the state. But it is fair to say that a large majority would favor the merit system if the issue were put before them for while resolutions were passed by Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs and the League of Women Voters, and while a large petition was circulated in favor of a civil service law, there was no popular movement against it.

(2). The law having already been made optional through the Isbell amendments, its repeal did not mean that office holders were relieved of possibly irksome restrictions. It meant that those officials who wanted to run their offices on business principles were to get no help from the state in so doing. As we repeatedly showed, some of the best managed departments of the state elected to be under the merit system, and such men as Highway Commissioner Bennett and Superintendent of Education Meredith, testified before the Judiciary Committee to the advantage which they found in the merit system.

In view of these facts you naturally ask what were the arguments for repeal. A curious feature of the situation was that so few were offered. Mr. Buckley did not take the trouble to present any when he rushed bill No. 1 through the house under suspension of the rules, and the debate in the senate was remarkable for the brevity of the remarks of the senate leader.

The only serious argument that I heard was that such a virtuous state as Connecticut did not require any civil service law. Some people said that, if we were as corrupt as New York, they would be strong for civil service reform, but that in a good little state like Connecticut nothing of the kind was needed. It is true that we have not suffered in Connecticut from the very gross abuses of the spoils system which have existed in some other places. We have never had our governor murdered by a disappointed office seeker. The spoils system has not corrupted our state philanthropic institutions and even among the departments in Hartford, there are some which are managed on a non-partisan basis. But there are others which are not.

The very incident which brought about the agitation in 1915 involved an application of the spoils system, and the law was avowedly changed in order to allow the comptroller to put his own man into office.

The final repeal of the civil service law brought to light incidentally another application of the spoils system in one of the state departments. The repeal of the civil service law threw

out of work the employees of the civil service office. One of them applied at this capitol department for a clerical position. According to a statement made in the *Hartford Times* an official there said to her, "What are your politics?" When she said that she did not know much about politics, he said, "Who did you vote for last year?" She replied, "I voted for Harding." Whereupon he remarked, "That's right, it's just as well for persons around here to vote the straight Republican ticket." Although given by the *Times* an opportunity to deny this story, the official refused to do so, but a week later he was quoted in the *New Haven Register* as saying that the statement was incorrect. His own words as printed are: "To say that membership in any political party is a requirement for employment in any of the positions for which I am responsible is of course absurd, as may be seen from the fact that in my own office organization of about ten people, there are at least two of opposite political faith from myself." This statement which I quote, as given in the *Register*, suggests two questions:

(1). If he did not inquire into the party affiliations of his appointees, how does he know what they are?

(2). If he pays no attention to politics why do the Republicans, according to his own statement, hold 80% of the offices under him?

These two cases are singled out because they happen to have been the subject of newspaper discussion, but there are plenty of other cases of spoils politics, and there are plenty of cases of slackness which a good civil service examination would help to remedy. While, therefore, it is true that we are not as bad as we might be, it is also equally true that we are not as good as we ought to be. But all this really had no bearing upon the repeal of the law as it stood under the Isbell amendments, because that law did not require any one to be better than he wanted to be, nor did it hamper any person who thought that he could test candidates for appointment better than the commission. I never heard any reason given for depriving those who wanted to run their offices on a non-partisan business basis of the facilities for doing so.

In the last analysis the two sides of the civil service controversy run parallel to the two sides of the debate between the wolf and the lamb in the old fable. When the wolf complained that the lamb was muddying the water which he was drinking, the lamb replied, that he could not do so, since he was further down the stream. The wolf then said, "You did it last year." To which the lamb replied, that he could not have done it last year, because he was not then born. "Well," said the wolf, "It was your brother who did it." "That," said the lamb, "is impossible,

because I have no brother." "Well," the wolf said, "I am going to eat you up anyway!"

The first complaint was that a Republican office holder could not "bend the knee" to a commission which consisted of one Progressive, one Democrat, and only one Republican. When this objection was met by giving the Republicans a majority of three to two, we were told that the rules were too arbitrary and an interference with the discretion of the office holders. When it was pointed out that the law has been so modified as to make it practically optional, subject only to the consent of the governor to grant exemptions, we were told that the law was so weak as to be a farce and should therefore be repealed, and that the governor ought not to be burdened with such a heavy task as granting exemptions. When we expressed our willingness to relieve him of this task, the argument was actually urged in the senate, by the senate leader, that he could not consent to depriving the governor of this privilege. In other words, the wolf had the power and exercised it.

The Civil Service in Cities.

To make the story complete I should say something regarding the merit system in cities, but I have already taken up so much time that I can do no more than touch upon this part of the subject. In the country at large, there are some 123 cities outside of Connecticut and Massachusetts which have civil service commissions of their own. Massachusetts is not included in this list because the recruiting of municipal employees is in charge of the state commission. A list of cities which apply the merit system would, therefore, be much greater than these figures indicate. In Connecticut, New Haven is the only city which has a complete merit system. It was first introduced in the charter of 1898 and has been in operation ever since. We have had our lapses and there have been times when the commission itself was not unjustly, I believe, charged with partisanship. For many years no complaints have been heard and under the chairmanship of Mr. E. R. Sargent, and with Mr. Eliot Watrous and Mr. Charles E. P. Sanford as the other members, the law is judiciously applied not only to the police and fire departments, but to practically all of the employees of the city with the exception of the teachers, who are selected under tests applied by the Board of Education.

Some other cities have introduced tests covering a limited number of positions. New London, New Britain and Enfield are in this class. New London has recently adopted the city manager

plan and as that always implies the merit system of appointment, it is undoubtedly on the right track.

There is a state law which has been on the statute books for ten years which makes it easy for any municipality or any other political division of the state to introduce the merit system by a referendum vote. The provisions of this act are incorporated as sections 2023-2042 in the revised statutes, but the town of Enfield is the only one which, as far as I am informed, has made effective use of it, and I am informed that the repeal of the state law has made it difficult to maintain the merit system in Enfield, so easily does the lowering of standards spread.

The Merit System and Scientific Progress.

Before concluding, I must call your attention to the peculiar character of the civil service issue. It is not one on which parties have, as a rule, been divided in our country or elsewhere. There are no great economic interests involved, as in the case of the tariff, the currency, the banks, the railroads, the labor question; hence we have the peculiar situation that for some fifty years both national parties have, with few exceptions, declared in their party platforms for the merit system. As a consequence, the question very seldom, if ever, is put to a popular vote, unless on a proposition to insert a civil service clause in a state constitution, and in every case in which such an amendment has been laid before the people, they have adopted it. Therefore our main task consists in persuading public men to live up to their party professions, which means that we have to work to secure proper laws to extend the merit system, and when the laws are passed we have to see to it that our officials execute them in accordance with their spirit. In short, if we view the matter in its broader aspects we see that the movement for a better civil service is a phase of the general application of science to the affairs of life, as exemplified more particularly in the development of engineering, of chemistry, of scientific agriculture, of medicine and public health. The old fashioned idea of using strong drugs as specifics for a particular disease is rapidly giving away to prophylactic medicine. With the knowledge that many ailments, if not all, are caused or aggravated by failure to keep the body clear of microbes and poisons and other harmful invaders, the physicians are giving more and more attention to nursing, and less to the pharmacopoeia. This, however, involves training in chemistry and bacteriology, and nursing.

In the pioneer days when every settler had to be a jack of all trades, it was a common belief that any man could easily fill any office to which the people saw fit to call him, just as almost any man could treat disease by giving drugs. To a certain extent, this was true. At least he could fill the office to the satisfaction

of those who elected him. It is no longer true at the present day. It is no more true that any one who has push and gumption and a certain adaptability is qualified to fill public office than it is true that "Sairey Gamp" could do our nursing satisfactorily. To keep pace with science and with the increasing need of scientific work, as a part of our government it is absolutely necessary that we shall have trained and carefully selected officials to do the work. The day of the political "Sairey Gamp" is over, although there are quite a few men of influence in the state who do not realize it.

As nursing is best done by women, and, in general, the task of keeping the world clean usually falls upon them, so it seems to me that they are peculiarly fitted to maintain the administration in a clean and healthy condition. They also have, as a sex, a special interest in the results of the merit system. The execution of factory laws, the protection of labor of women and children, the maintenance of sanitary conditions, the enforcement of liquor laws, all require the merit system, and failure to put properly trained people into the services dealing with these topics will react directly upon the welfare of women, as well as upon that of the community at large.

Therefore as far as women have special interests apart from men or as far as they may have special aptitudes different from those of men, the subject of civil service reform is one which should, and I know does, appeal to them strongly. I may observe parenthetically, however, that the more experience I gain, the mose distrustful I am of the broad generalizations in which so many people indulge regarding the peculiar psychology of women, or other sex attributes. Most men are just stupid enough to generalize from their own experience. The man whose wife is nervous and emotional is very apt to believe that woman is "uncertain, coy and hard to please, and variable as the shade by the light quivering aspen made." The man whose wife is domineering and pushing, is sure that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male." We are often told that women are unbusinesslike, and yet in my experience with philanthropic organizations I have found that many of those which are best managed are managed by women. We are told that women are temperamental and unstable,and yet they have shown an amount of calm judgment and farsightedness in fitting themselves for their political duties which very few individual men and no group of men have, as far as I know, ever displayed.

I wish that the example set by your League could be followed by groups of young men, who are also about to vote for the first time, and who need far more than the women of the League to inform themselves regarding the questions which they will help decide.

Practical Steps.

I have tried to sketch the present status of the merit system under the federal government and in our state, but I understand that you desire to have me say something regarding the practical steps which the League of Women Voters can take to help forward the movement.

The kind of work which I have described can be effective only if carried on through some organization. Knight errantry is as much out of date in politics as in war, and we are fortunate in having both national and state organizations working for the reform of the civil service. The Connecticut Civil Service Reform Association is a branch of the National Civil Service Reform League organized forty years ago. It is, I believe, the oldest organization working for civic or social betterment in the country. Since it was formed, many other societies have come into existence, such as the National Municipal League, the Civic Association, the Short Ballot Organization, the Association for Labor Legislation, the American Public Health Association, the Child Hygiene Association, etc. These are all younger and deal with specific needs. The Civil Service Reform Associations deal with something which is fundamental to them all, for you cannot profit by good health laws, nor labor laws, nor a good city charter, unless you are sure that those who have the execution of the laws will be appointed for merit, and I doubt if you will find any organization which has accomplished such far reaching results on such a very modest budget, and in such a quiet and effective way as the National League. We have by no means reached our objective, but we have accomplished many things which we ourselves should have thought impossible when we began. Our success has been due, I think, primarily to the fact that the movement is based upon ethical and political principles so sound that both parties have officially endorsed them, however far individual members of those parties may have strayed from the straight and narrow path. A further reason for our success is that we have adhered to our one aim consistently and persistently. We have not allowed ourselves to be discouraged by abuse, ridicule, or misrepresentation. We have not tried to tie up with any selfish interests. We have stood from the beginning for what we believed to be right! The National League may be said now to consist of a body of men and women, many of whom are experts in the subject of the civil service. Through our office in New York we are kept informed of the various movements to improve the present law, as well as of the various attempts to undermine or weaken it. We publish a monthly paper called *Good Government* which is our organ and which helps to keep us posted. With a minimum of labor, the member can inform himself easily on the subject, and by writing or speaking to congress-

men, members of the state legislature, and administrators, make his influence felt on behalf of what is right. There is no more practical way to further the cause of good government than to join the Connecticut Civil Service Reform Association and, through it, the National League.