

-Odd Jobs-No. 9-

## U. S. CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM DEALT DAMAGING BLOW BY PREFERENCE FOR VETERANS

Ex-Service Men With Low Grades in Tests  
Given Jobs Requiring Expert  
Technical Knowledge.

EFFICIENCY LOWERED BY RULING  
Applicants With High Marks in Examinations Often Shoved Down List  
for Appointments.

BY TALCOTT POWELL

Preference for veterans has been sapping at the civil service system since the World war until the merit system of appointment has been riddled.

In some cases, veterans who fail in competitive examinations are placed in jobs vital to public health above technicians who turn in nearly perfect test papers.

Police and firemen are able to get promotions over better candidates with higher grades because the government classifies them as "disabled veterans." This despite the fact that the municipality for which they work find them in sound physical condition.

Congress has made it possible for a veteran who has an arrested case of tuberculosis to be preferred for a civil service job over one who has not—this despite the fact that the first man may get 60 per cent on his competitive examination and the second 95 per cent.

Civil service was established after a long battle back in the eighties. The idea was to remove city politics from the appointment of the rank and file charged with carrying on the government's business. There is general agreement that it has heightened efficiency.

Under the system of competitive examinations, the person receiving a civil service appointment is supposed to be well qualified for his job.

### Given Civil Service Preference

In 1919 when the army was disbanded, there were many complaints from ex-soldiers that their jobs had been filled by stay-at-homes. There was considerable justice in the complaint, and congress passed a law giving civil service preference for federal jobs to veterans.

It left it up to the President how this law was to be enforced. President Harding ordered the civil service commission to add five points to the marks of all veterans on competitive examinations for jobs, and if the veteran was disabled he was to receive 10 points.

This not only had the effect of giving the men a higher rating than their knowledge warranted, but it also qualified many veterans who would have failed to pass their tests at all. Passing marks in the civil service are 70 per cent, but a disabled veteran passed at 60 and an ex-soldier suffering no disability at 65.

### Order Is Criticized

There was much criticism of Harding's order and its results. Many ex-soldiers joined in the protest. General John F. O'Ryan, who commanded the Twenty-seventh division in France, said:

"The state should secure the very best capacity obtainable for public service, all qualified according to the necessary standards. Public sentiment supports the proposal that among those so qualified some form of preference should be given the men who served the country with honor and efficiency during the war. Obviously, the thing which would seem to provide for degrees of preference."

In 1928 congress enacted a law giving absolute preference to all veterans for civil service positions. President Coolidge vetoed it, but modified the former Harding order by directing that disabled veterans be put at the top of civil service lists.

The disability could have come from a German bullet or from sinus trouble contracted in a cantonment. No distinctions were drawn. The result was appalling to defenders of civil service integrity. The merit system of appointment went overboard every time a disabled veteran appeared on a list of candidates for office.

### Not Qualified, But Tops Lists

In 1930 the National Civil Service League reported:

That out of sixty lists of persons eligible for civil service appointments, 870 disabled veterans preceded applicants who had qualified at higher marks.

That of these, 269 disabled veterans had failed to earn the normal passing grade on their examinations, yet they had been placed on the civil service lists ahead of 18,000 better qualified applicants.

That to receive preference a veteran need not have been actually disabled in military service. Congress had passed a law which allowed a veteran disabled in civil life to go on the pension rolls along with the man hurt in battle.

That veterans at any time disabled, although cured, may secure the disabled veteran civil service preference.

That qualified candidates with no military record were being discouraged from even trying to enter federal employ with consequent demoralization of the whole service.

### System at Fault

Examples of the inequalities this practice has worked are legion. Take the job of a postoffice clerk in Washington. There were twenty-seven disabled veterans on the list. The best rating obtained by such a disabled veteran who tried for this position was 25th on the eligible list.

Six of them did not even receive a passing grade, yet all got the right to the appointment. For instance, one of the veterans who earned a rating of 65 per cent—five below passing—was entitled to appointment before a non-service man who got 98 per cent. Another important technical examination was for the job of junior

chemist. The holder of such a position is a guardian of the public health. A disabled veteran got a mark of 69.04. If he had had no service record he would have failed.

Under the present ruling he went to the top of the list. His application was preferred above that of a man who made 97.5 in the competitive examination.

### Shoved Ahead to Appointments

Here are some typical examples of the workings of the civil service preference theory. They are culled from the records of the Civil Service Reform Association and names of the individuals involved are used only because they already have become matters of public record.

Benjamin Metzger, who said he had received a fracture of the jaw in the service, passed the rigid test for firemen in New York City. In 1928 he passed another physical examination for promotion to lieutenant.

In June, 1930, following enactment of a state preference law similar to the federal one, he applied for promotion to lieutenant. As a disabled veteran, he was promoted to the job over 350 ahead of him. Despite his disability, he is still an active officer of the fire department. Daniel J. Prendergast fell off a truck while doing military police duty in the army. In 1920 he passed the New York City physical examination for police sergeant. In 1928 he passed another examination for police captain.

### Unfit, Yet Fit

The city of New York found him physically fit for his duties. In April, 1930, he got a disability rating from the veterans' administration granting him \$25 a month. He then was promoted to police captain, although he was 144th on the eligible list.

These two cases are cited not because the men did anything unusual or illegal, but because they are typical. Under the present law and administrative rulings they were entirely within their rights.

### (To Be Continued)

## VOTE FOR REPEAL

ALBANY, N. Y., April 16.—The Democratic state committee today went on record for repeal of the eighth amendment.

Leaders said the resolution was approved so as to definitely place the state committee behind any movement in the national convention for adoption of a "wringing wet" plank.

## BREAD AWARDS MADE

36 Persons Given Prizes at General Baking Company Party.

Announcement of the award to fifty-six persons of prizes for testimonials about Bond bread was made Friday by officials of the General Baking Company, following a party for winners Thursday night in the local plant.

Prizes consisted of a fifteen to thirty-day supply of bread. Winners are eligible for prizes ranging upward to \$10,000, to be awarded by national judges in final judging May 9 in New York.

Winners announced Thursday night included five children and fifty-one adults. They were selected for best answers to eight questions pertaining to merits of Bond bread "sunshine vitamin B."

## Federal Workers Prefer Layoff, Not Wage Cuts

WASHINGTON, April 16.—The red-haired stenographer in the White House was talking to the messenger about salary cuts and she disliked the idea very much.

"What I'd rather have," she told him, and the rest of the office force at large, "if they're going to do anything, is a month off. I don't want any salary cut."

"Neither do I," said another girl. "But I hope they make it only two weeks off, if they're going to make us take it without pay."

The talk was typical of similar offices all over the country, for that matter. The many thousands of persons directly or indirectly dependent on Uncle Sam for their livelihood have turned their eyes to Washington, and anxiously await the outcome of the government pay cuts proposed as part of the economy program.

"I wrote to my congressman," one man said. "I told him I thought a pay cut was unfair—but for my part, I'd take the time off. I could do something with my time, at least. But I couldn't with cash I don't get."

"I could sleep, anyway, for a month," another commented, "and save car-fare to work. Give me a month or two weeks' lay-off, but don't cut my pay scale."

## Like Your GIBLETS? They Are Great, Prepared With Noodles



Mrs. Ella Carlisle at her scales and table dispensing the food of foods-giblets.

## TENEMENT FIRE COSTS 6 LIVES

Arrest Painter Who Stored  
Supplies Under Stair.

NEW YORK, April 16.—Six persons were killed in a mysterious fire in a Bronx tenement today and after a preliminary investigation police ordered a painter held on a technical charge of homicide.

The dead included four members of one family, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Doherty and their twin sons, Jacob and Joseph. The other two to succumb were Edith Weinstein, 7, and Philip Weinstein, 10-year-old son of a former boxer, Benjamin Weinstein.

Police discovered a large amount of paint, benzine and other inflammable materials in a locker under the stairway and arrested Benjamin Siegel, who admitted to ownership. The case will be presented to a grand jury.

## Bury Six Blaze Victims

NEW YORK, April 16.—A mother and her five children, burned to death in a tenement blaze, were buried Friday while Socialist speakers called their death, "murder," and the victims "unknown soldiers of an economic warfare."

There was "no religion, no rabbi" at the funeral for Mrs. Sarah Sanders and her brood, exactly as requested by the bookbinder father, "sixteen years employed by the same firm, and then let go for no reason."

Five thousand Socialists attended the public funeral on the crowded east side. They heard the father's bitter comments.

"Only children of the poor can meet such a death. They are the unknown soldiers of economic warfare," a speaker said.

## NATURE LECTURE SET

"The Lure of the Great Northwest" to Be Riley's Subject.

Illustrated lecture on "The Lure of the Great Northwest" will be given tonight by Frank Branch Riley in the auditorium of the Methodist hospital.

Riley, a lawyer, declaring his object is presenting America to Americans, has a collection of art studies of nature's beauties in natural colors which are projected on a screen to illustrate his lecture.

## HEAVENS POUR FROGS

Rain Changes to Hall of Tiny Creatures in Connecticut.

FLANDERS, Conn., April 16.—Superstitious residents of this village feared today they were being plagued as were the Egyptians in the biblical story after the heavens had rained tiny frogs.

Weather observer Cornelius Doherty at New Haven said the frogs probably had been drawn up with the water into rain clouds and precipitated downward with the rain.

## Wrong Angle-r

NASHUA, N. H., April 16.—If fisherman Herbert Hoover wants to catch the trout raised for him at the local government hatchery, he'll have to transfer his angling operations from the Rapidian to the Rose river.

The 500 eight-inch brook trout, shipped to the President's camp, were put off the train at Orange, Va., by mistake, according to word received here, and dumped into the Rose river by some mountaineers who were expecting a similar consignment.

Virginia trout season began Friday.

## CALL HALT TO LOAN SCHEME

Police Charge Swindle to  
Peru 'Insurance Agent.'

Suspected of perpetrating a fake insurance proposition in which he promised large amounts of money on policies held by victims, Robert F. Erwin, 46, of Peru, today faces a charge of obtaining money under false pretense.

Detectives arrested Erwin late Friday, claiming they seized a large amount of printed matter, receipts, "membership acknowledgment" books and brochures, which Erwin admitted having printed in Cincinnati, they said.

Erwin admitted, detectives claimed, that he is an agent for the "Policy Loan Association of New York City, Inc., a fictitious organization.

Erwin's alleged victims, including nearly 100 railroad workers here and in Peru, most of them unemployed, were told that they could obtain loans equal the total amount of the policy.

The arrest was made after a "prospect" became suspicious and reported to police. Posing as a railroad man in need of funds, two detectives called on Erwin and listened to his "proposition."

## The Age of Science

This is the scientific age. Civilization as we know it today is the child of science. You can not keep up with modern developments without a knowledge of modern scientific thought. Our Washington Bureau has ready for you a packet of eight of its interesting and authoritative bulletins on various phases of science.

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## EXPERTS PROBE OHIO MYSTERY BLAST; 8 DEAD

Origin Undetermined; Gas  
and Explosives Theories  
Are Advanced.

By United Press

COLUMBUS, O., April 16.—Cause of the explosion which ruined portions of Ohio's new state office building, bringing death to eight and injury to sixty, was undetermined today by Governor George White's investigating committee.

Conflicting opinions on the force which wrecked the lower interior of the \$5,000,000 building were offered to the investigators by experts of a powder company and other authorities who examined the places where the explosion might have originated.

Three experts of the Dupont Powder Company reported to the Governor's committee that explosives could not have caused the blast.

Studying the crumbled and broken remains of the interior they said there were none of the characteristics of a dynamite or nitroglycerin explosion.

Another investigating committee, headed by Don Hoskins, Franklin county prosecutor, began examining witnesses today.

Fire Marshal Frank Henry said he believes a gas combustion wrecked the building.

Other experts maintained that an explosion resulting from an accumulation of illuminating or sewer gases could not have been possible.

The building was damaged \$1,000,000, it was estimated.

## WOMAN FACES PRISON

Doris Parks, Branded Communist  
Aid of Miners, to Be Tried.

By United Press

Doris Parks, secretary of the National Miners' Union, faces trial at Pineville, Ky., on charges of violating the state's criminal syndicalism law, having been arrested for making alleged Communist speeches.

The maximum penalty for the offense charged against her is twenty years in the state's prison.

Between sales days, Mrs. Carlisle acts as matron of the canning company and sells groceries to employees.

And when she goes home at night, it's an even bet that she'll be carrying three or four pounds of the goods she sells to make her dish of dishes, "giblets and noodles."

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## Corners Honors

