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The Causes and Steps Leading to the Introduction and Passage of the Pendleton Act

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**THE CAUSES AND STEPS LEADING TO THE
INTRODUCTION AND PASSAGE OF
THE PENDLETON ACT**

By

Katherine Marie Sauland

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Loyola University
Chicago, Illinois
June, 1946**

VITA

Katherine Reuland was born in Chicago, Illinois, November 29, 1922. She attended Resurrection Parochial School, Chicago, Illinois, from which she graduated in June 1936. She then entered Trinity High School, River Forest, Illinois, from which she graduated in June, 1940.

In September of the same year she entered De Paul University, Chicago, Illinois, from which she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in economics in August, 1943. From 1944 until 1947 she was engaged as a teacher of civics and algebra in the McHenry Community High School, McHenry, Illinois.

She enrolled at Loyola University, in the department of History in June, 1946.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
<p>I. CONDITIONS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE BEFORE 1865.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Purpose of the thesis -- Precedent set by Washington -- Early character of the service -- Jefferson's appointments -- Political strife in 1828 -- Spoils system -- Corruption in the spoils system -- Beginning of reform.</p>	1
<p>II. THE CIVIL SERVICE FROM 1865 TO 1869.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Lincoln's policy -- Andrew Johnson -- Liberal re- construction -- Impeachment -- Tenure of Office Act -- Political decay -- Jenckes and reform -- Radical opposition -- Fight for reform.</p>	8
<p>III. THE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS VERSUS REFORM</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Great expectations -- Disappointment -- Modification of the tenure act -- Jenckes' bill of 1869 -- Reform literature -- Grant's efforts -- Carl Schurz -- The act of March 3, 1871 -- Curtis and the Civil Service Commission -- Campaign of 1872 -- Grant reelected -- Rules revised -- Grant's ultimatum -- Rules suspended -- Estimate of Grant.</p>	19
<p>IV. PRESIDENT HAYES AND REFORM AGITATION</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">The new era -- Disputed election of 1876 -- Hayes the re- former -- First steps -- New York custom-house -- Order of June 22, 1877 -- Congressional opposition -- Message of December 1, 1879 -- Estimate of Hayes.</p>	30
<p>V. THE REFORMERS AND THE REFORM MOVEMENT</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Early days -- Thomas A. Jenckes -- Carl Schurz -- The Liberal Republicans -- Schurz in the cabinet -- George William Curtis -- Edwin Lawrence Godkin -- Jacob Dolson Cox -- Dorman Bridgman Eaton -- New York Civil Service Reform Association -- National Civil Service Reform Association</p>	42
<p>VI. THE PENDLETON ACT.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Garfield's assassination -- President Arthur -- Election of 1882 -- Senator Pendleton's bill -- Opposition -- Passage -- The Pendleton Act.</p>	57
<p>CONCLUSION</p>	63
<p>BIBLIOGRAPHY</p>	65

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CHAPTER I

CONDITIONS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE BEFORE 1865

It is my purpose in this thesis to deal with the civil service reform movement from 1865, when it became a great national question, to 1883 when the Pendleton Act was passed by Congress. Since this reform movement was of little importance before the end of the Civil War, it is not my purpose to give a detailed account of conditions in the civil service before 1865. A very superficial survey of conditions in this period is all that I intend to convey in this introductory chapter. The origin and development of the spoils system in the federal civil service is a thesis topic in itself.

George Washington, as the first president, and in the absence of practically all constitutional restrictions on the executive appointing power, developed a set of principles in regard to appointments made by the president.¹ His method was to nominate a man whom he considered capable of performing the duties of the office under consideration, without any reference to the wishes of the individual.² The nominee

¹ Department of State. The Constitution of the United States of America. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1934, 15. Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution provides for presidential appointments.

² Jared Sparks (ed.). The Writings of George Washington. Ferdinand Andrews, Boston, 1839, X, 40-42.

then had the choice of accepting or refusing the office. Washington, with his vast personal acquaintance which reached all sections of the new country, was able to employ this procedure. His letters indicate that he intended to use it with care.³ He was anxious to nominate only those persons who would best serve the public good. He wished to be guided only by ability, integrity and general fitness of the appointee rather than by ties of relationship or friendship.⁴

During this early period of our national existence our civil service was relatively small. There was always a sufficient number of industrious clerks to fill the lower positions, while the important posts were reserved for an appreciated by men of exceptional talent and ability. Otherwise the then struggling government of the United States would have soon fallen into anarchy.

With the accession of the Republicans to power, Jefferson was besieged with requests for the offices long held by the Federalists. He soon put a stop to the hopes of those who proposed a patronage system based on political affiliation. He refused to discharge those officials

³Ibid., 3: "I anticipate, that one of the most difficult and delicate parts of the duty of my office will be that which relates to nominations for appointments."

⁴Ibid., 24: "My political conduct in nominations, even if I were uninfluenced by principle, must be exceedingly circumspect and proof against just criticism; for the eyes of Argus are upon me, and no slip will pass unnoticed, that can be improved into a supposed partiality for friends or relations."

who were loyal public servants. The only officials he removed were those who had used their power for party purposes, or who had been appointed by Adams in the last hours of his administration.⁵ Jefferson considered ability, integrity and faithfulness to the Constitution the prime requisites in a nominee.⁶

Washington, the president who represented the people, and Jefferson, a president who represented a new political party, set a precedent that was followed, at least superficially, until the administration of Andrew Jackson. It has been impossible to find a single removal for political reasons during the administrations before 1829.⁷ This unusual condition existed because of the absence of strong party lines. Parties existed, but their organization was very elementary. The masses were absorbed in conquering a wilderness and politics held little interest for the frontiersman before 1828. As a result of these conditions, political

⁵Paul Leicester Ford (ed.). The Writings of Thomas Jefferson. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1897, VIII, 27: "Malconduct in office is a just ground for removal: mere difference of political opinion is not." Also Walter R. Houghton. History of American Politics. F. T. Neely and Co., Indianapolis, 1883, 160-161.

⁶Writings: Jefferson, VIII, 70: "I shall...return with joy to that state of things when the only questions concerning a candidate shall be: Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?"

⁷George William Curtis. "Civil Service Reform". Orations and Addresses of George William Curtis. Charles Eliot Norton (ed.). Harper and Brothers, New York, 1894, II, 7.

patronage was not one of the problems of the era.⁸

The campaign of 1828 ushered in a new era in American politics -- the era of political parties and bitter partisan strife. The election of 1828 is considered the first of the great party battles which dot the pages of United States history. The Campaign of 1828 was a "campaign of vilification." Jackson, often considered the candidate of the common man, was "opposed by two-thirds of the newspapers, four-fifths of the preachers, practically all manufacturers and seven eighths of the banking capital."⁹ In spite of this opposition Jackson was elected due to the influence and participation of thousands of people who never before took part in a political campaign. Naturally these men looked to their champion for reward. The campaign of 1828 gave rise to party politics with all of its bitter partisan strife "and the spoils system grew out of the exigencies of party politics."¹⁰

The older authors have accused Jackson of inventing the spoils system, but the more modern authors are beginning to agree that the spoils system grew out of the political strife of the time, and Jackson was

⁸For a more detailed discussion of the use of the appointing power before 1829 see William Dudley Foulke. Fighting the Spoilsmen. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1919, 3-4.

⁹Claude G. Bowers. The Party Battles of the Jackson Period. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1922, 31.

¹⁰Ibid., 67.

merely using a legitimate, political weapon.¹¹ In any event, Jackson is usually known as the father of the spoils system, and the originator of all its evils.

...he established a precedent, which more than anything else, is calculated to keep alive party spirit and degrade the public service. He removed officials, merely because they differed from him in their political views, and replaced them with his own political friends.¹²

The political value of the spoils system with its strong appeal to the masses, was immediately recognized and was perpetuated from 1828 to the present time.¹³ Not only was it perpetuated in the federal civil service, but it invaded state and municipal politics.¹⁴

The evils accompanying the spoils system were many. It destroyed the efficiency of the executive because he had to spend valuable time doling out the spoils of office while important work was neglected. The pressure on officers having the power of appointment was immense. The demands of the party men became so pressing that many times offices were actually created for them. This led to the extravagant spending of public

¹¹Hugh Russell Fraser. Democracy in the Making. The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1938, 112-113.

¹²Houghton, 208.

¹³Bowers, Party Battles of the Jackson Period, 67-68.

¹⁴Truman Smith. The Spoils System. E. Hoyt, New York, 1876, 5.

funds. An oligarchic class in politics soon developed, and became powerful because of public morals concerning politics, and the people were generally disillusioned by the party leaders.¹⁵

The spoils system was considered a necessary evil of democracy, and it was accepted by most people. This fact is obvious because there is no specific mention of civil service reform in the party platforms between 1828 and 1860. In 1860, the Republican party incorporated reform in the sixth plank of its campaign platform. Even then, the purpose of inserting this argument for reform was to expose the corruption of the party in power, rather than reform for any moral cause. This argument, however, indicates the extremes to which the spoils system was being carried in the federal civil service, and the need that existed for reform.

Up until 1860, the nation was busy establishing its independence, settling the land, educating its people, and extending its territory. From 1861 until 1865 the Civil War was all important. The end of the war found the nation ready to devote itself to the reform of the civil service.¹⁶ Cox gives us a good summary of the reasons why the nation

¹⁵For a detailed discussion of the evils of the spoils system see Harold R. Bruce, American Parties and Politics. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1927, 258-261. Also Matthew Josephson, The Politicos 1865-1896, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1938, 100-140.

¹⁶The platform of the Republican Party for 1860 can be found in Houghton, 342-345.

was ready for reform at this time.

As long as a rapidly growing nation was comparatively free from taxation, and the abounding wealth of the country made everybody careless of expense, it was easy to shut our eyes to the growth of evils which seemed of little consequence. Now, however, our burden of debt is enormous and our taxation beyond anything we had dreamed of before the war. The necessity for collecting and disbursing an immense revenue has greatly enlarged the machinery of administration; and the mischiefs of a wrong system have multiplied at the very time when we need every help in diminishing the burden that a proper organization of the public service could give. The people are aware of this, and their determination to try what reform can do has become significantly apparent.¹⁷

Thus we see that the spoils system was publicly inaugurated in 1829 during Jackson's administration. By 1865 the civil service of the federal government had become so corrupt that the nation was clamoring for reform.¹⁸

¹⁷ Julius Bing. "Our Civil Service". Putnam's Magazine, New York (July-December, 1868.) II, 234.

¹⁸ Jacob D. Cox. "The Civil Service Reform". North American Review, New York, (1871), CXII, 82-83.

CHAPTER II

THE CIVIL SERVICE FROM 1865 TO 1869

President Lincoln was anxious to reconstruct the South as soon as possible, and though he met with opposition from Congress, he was willing to overlook the means used if the end was in accordance with his own views.¹⁹ Unfortunately President Lincoln was assassinated at the very beginning of his second term, April 15, 1865. Since the assassin was a southerner, new fires of hate were kindled in the North, and the people wanted to avenge the death of the President. The Radicals hailed Andrew Johnson as the savior of the principles for which the war had been fought. His background was such that the Congressmen expected him to have a natural hate for the old class of slave owners who had dominated the South during the period before 1860. Men like Stevens expected to find in Johnson a firm ally for their vindictive policy toward the lately defeated South. Much to their surprise and consternation, Johnson favored the policy followed by Lincoln. In his inaugural address he urged unity between

¹⁹ Arthur Meir Schlesinger. Political and Social Growth of the United States. 1852-1933. Revised edition; Macmillan Co., New York, 1933, 103-106.

the North and South.²⁰ He urged the states of the defeated Confederacy to amend their constitutions so that slavery would be forbidden within their borders. He encouraged them to send representatives to Congress, and to enfranchise the Negro according to the method they thought practical in their own particular situation.

Johnson proceeded to appoint his civil governors, and this was the crux of the trouble between the President and the radical Congress.²¹ The President was in favor of reconstructing the South slowly and in a liberal manner. He was not in favor of extreme methods proposed by the radical Congressmen led by Stevens. These men believed that the South should be ruled by military governors and treated as conquered provinces. They also believed that the Negro should immediately be given all the privileges of citizenship. They did not provide for any means by which this large group of ignorant people could be trained for citizenship.²²

It was on these essential questions of reconstruction that Johnson differed with the ultra-Republicans. This antagonism between Johnson and Congress finally resulted in his impeachment. A member of the Democratic

²⁰James D. Richardson. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents. Bureau of National Literature, Inc., New York, 1897, VI, 353-371.

²¹Don Carlos Seitz. The Dreadful Decade. Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1926, 14.

²²Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer. A History of the United States Since the Civil War. Macmillan Co., New York, 1917, I, 42.

Congressional minority gives us his opinion of this quarrel between Congress and the President.

The Republicans quarreled with President Johnson, ... not because he could be justly charges with political apostasy, but because he failed to keep step with the party in its march on the road of extreme radicalism. That party had an overwhelming majority in both branches of Congress. Its leaders were intolerant of opposition. They determined to get rid of the President.²³

The Radicals contrived to keep the hatreds of war alive and to add new problems that led to " ... rough reprisals and petty civil war."²⁴

Social and racial war developed in the South and the program of reconstruction became one of destruction.

The campaign of 1866 resulted in an overwhelming majority for the Radicals.²⁵

Party organization and party rule of the Government now reached perhaps its highest development in our own history. Tumult and war passion had been artfully prolonged by these "masters of turbulence." After two years of postbellum political conflict, the brilliant, implacable old Stevens at the age

²³Samuel S. Cox. Union-Disunion-Reunion. J.A. and R.A. Reid, Providence, R. I., 1886, 581.

²⁴Seitz, 15.

²⁵Claude G. Bowers. The Tragic Era. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1929, 141.

of seventy-five ruled not only the South but the National Government ... Stevens as a sort of prime minister for Congress virtually ruled in place of the repudiated President, even holding the country's moneybags in his hands.²⁶

It was this radical group of Republicans which struck the federal civil service a severe blow when they passed the ill reputed Tenure of Office Act on March 2, 1867.²⁷ This act forbade the President to remove civil officers - its provisions extending even to the cabinet members. By this act the enormous appointing power of the President was now transferred to Congress. He was impeded in his official duty of executing the laws because he was forbidden to remove officials whom he considered lax or inefficient in their duties. This law made Congress similar to a Parliament where all of the governmental officials rise or fall with their party. Since the officials who really executed the laws depended on Congress for their retention in office, the principle of three distinct and independent branches of government was seriously threatened. More important in this study of the civil service, it prevented the President from removing civil servants whom he considered unfit for their position. Samuel Cox tells us that the "... purpose of the act was to deprive the President of the power to remove civil officers without the consent of the Senate."²⁸ This act

²⁶ Josephson, 38.

²⁷ Congressional Globe, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., III, 1966.

²⁸ Samuel Cox, 582.

worked to the detriment of the civil service because political friends of certain Congressmen could be retained in office regardless of the manner in which they fulfilled their duties as civil servants. It was very clearly the purpose of the legislators to take the power of removal away from the President, who happened to oppose them, and to keep it in their own hands. Thus they attempted to interfere seriously with the civil service and to keep the ranks of federal employees filled with loyal party members. Obviously the Radicals meant to preserve their power at all costs.

The professional politicians, as they prepared the overthrow of the President, were plainly carried away by their lust for spoils. They saw themselves in unchallenged control of all the Federal departments, and Ben Wade, the president pro tempore of the Senate, was already picturing himself in the White House and devising in his mind a new Radical Cabinet.²⁹

This general lack of respect for authority and responsibility toward the people seemed to permeate the governmental machinery and was especially noticeable in the civil service. Politicians willingly gave letters of recommendation to all office seekers. Usually these office seekers carried two entirely different letters - one for the President, and one for the Congress. In the letter meant for the President, the office seeker would be lauded for his loyal services to the administration, and in the letter for Congress he would be labeled the most radical of Radicals. Frequently the official who had the power to appoint these men to office would receive a confidential letter from the politician asking him to disregard the letters

of recommendation because the carrier had none of the qualifications necessary for public service.³⁰ A director of a government bureau tells us that his particular bureau was a refuge for inefficient and aged workers when he took office. The female clerks were kept busy duplicating the work of the men. This duplication was absolutely useless and merely added to the operating expenses of the bureau. Many of the male clerks were so aged that it was physically impossible for them to perform the duties of their office.

In the entire department he found only a few clerks who really understood the work of the department. The others put in time and collected salaries. The only thing his clerks were interested in was holding their jobs, and efficiency was not the usual means used to keep a government job. Attempts on his part to increase the efficiency of the department were practically ineffective because of the general inefficiency and corruption throughout the government service.³¹

Thomas A. Jenckes, a member of the House of Representatives from Rhode Island, was one of the first to voice the need of reforming the federal civil service. He proposed to establish certain requirements for those

³⁰Jacob D. Cox, 84.

³¹Alexander Delmar. "Recollections of the Civil Service". Appleton's Journal, (Jan. 3-June 27, 1874), XI, 781-783. This article gives a good account of conditions in the civil service as the author found them, when he was appointed Director of the Bureau of Statistics in 1866.

minor officials appointed by the President. Since the number of government officials and clerks was now greater than ever before, it was impossible for the President to know the qualifications of each appointee. The method by which the President asked senators for nominations was referred to as "senatorial courtesy", and in the period following the Civil War it was apparent that the senators were considering this privilege a right.³² They abused this privilege in order to keep their own party men in power. Mr. Jenckes advocated a system of examinations which would indicate very clearly those applicants capable of performing the duties of public servants, while those who were unfit for office would be disqualified immediately. Mr. Jenckes presented his first bill in December, 1865, but this bill was too premature and in the face of more vital problems was dropped without debate.³³

Mr. Jenckes presented a second Bill for the Reform of the Civil Service on January 29, 1867. He had been selected chairman of a joint Committee on Retrenchment, and this gave him an opportunity to present his reform bill. The Bill provided that the President appoint a board of three Commissioners, and these appointments were to be approved by the Senate. The duty of the board would be to examine applicants for civil service posts, and the board members would hold office for five years, unless duly removed by the

³²Charles R. Lingley and Allen R. Foley. Since the Civil War. Third Edition; D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1935, 93.

³³Cong. Globe, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., I, 98.

President with the consent of the Senate. By having a term of five years, the board members would not necessarily be the appointees of the party in power, nor would a new President be confronted with the task of making appointments before he was familiar with the duties of his office and the problems facing him. The bill provided that the board examine each applicant as to his mental, physical and moral qualifications for the office he desired. These examinations were to be open to all those desiring employment with the government, and all appointments were to be made from among those passing the test according to their rank.³⁴

Having presented his bill in the House, Mr. Jenckes made a speech urging its adoption. He pointed out the many evils of the civil service as it existed. The corruption in the service was so great that the offices were almost exclusively reserved for party men, while their qualifications for office were never examined in making appointments or removals.³⁵ He lamented the fact that government service, with its indefinite tenure, held little attraction for ambitious young men. Instead, only those men who could not fend for themselves in the business world looked for government employment.³⁶ One of the greatest evils of this spoils system was the time wasted by officials listening to the requests of office seekers. Mr. Jenckes pointed out that " ... the people are deprived of a great portion of the

³⁴Cong. Globe, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., II, 835-836.

³⁵Ibid., 837.

³⁶Ibid..

time and services of their highest and most responsible officers".³⁷ By increasing the efficiency of the government employees, Jenckes believed that about one-third of the offices could be abolished, thus decreasing the expenses of the federal government.³⁸ He also pointed out that a system of civil service examinations would stimulate the schools to train candidates for the civil service, and that men of a high caliber, mentally and morally, would be attracted to the service.³⁹

This bill gave rise to much debate when the political bosses of the House saw this attempt to take the spoils of office away from them.⁴⁰ Any bill of this type, applicable to the offices that come under the executive's appointing power and therefore under the hand of Congress through "senatorial courtesy", could never pass in the Congress of 1867, controlled by the Radicals. On February 2, 1867 the Bill was tabled.⁴¹

Mr. Jenckes was not easily defeated and on May 25, 1868 he reported a third bill for the reform of the civil service.⁴² This bill was slightly different from the previous one because the Vice-President was made head of a department whose duties were like those of the Board of Commissioners

³⁷ Ibid., 838.

³⁸ Ibid., 839.

³⁹ Ibid., 841.

⁴⁰ Cong. Globe, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., II, 1033-1036.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1036.

⁴² Cong. Globe, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., III, 2069.

mentioned in the previous bill. This bill met a similar fate and was also defeated.⁴³

While the bills for reform offered by Mr. Jenckes were promptly defeated in the House, there was a growing desire for reform among the people. A popular periodical of the day carried an article on the civil service.⁴⁴ The author pointed out the corruption, chaos and partisanship characteristics of the civil service. Under this corrupt system of public service the people were little better than pawns in the hands of despots, who practiced fraud and extravagance with no sense of duty or responsibility toward the people.

With the end of the Civil War and the settlement of the slavery question, the great political parties were looking for a campaign issue in the presidential election year of 1868. The Democrats incorporated civil service reform into their platform.⁴⁵ They promised to end the "... usurpations of Congress and the despotism of the sword"⁴⁶ The Republicans also answered the call for reform and promised that their

⁴³Cong. Globe, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., IV, 4003.

⁴⁴Bing, 233-244.

⁴⁵Edward Stawood. A History of the Presidential Elections. Houghton Mifflin and Co., Boston, 1884, 263.

⁴⁶Ibid.

candidate would abolish the extravagance and corruption fostered by Andrew Johnson.⁴⁷ While the main issues of the campaign of 1868 were concerned primarily with reconstruction, reform of the civil service was an issue.⁴⁸ At last the corruption and inefficiency of the civil service was brought before the public. The fight for reform had begun.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 258.

⁴⁸ For a detailed account of the election of 1868 see: Charles H. Coleman. The Election of 1868. Columbia University Press, New York, 1933.

CHAPTER III

THE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS VERSUS REFORM

In March, 1869 the Republicans were solidly behind President Grant, and they expected many things of him. They expected him to unify the party, pacify the South, and to reform the administrative departments of the federal government.⁴⁹ His inaugural address promised nothing, but the nation hailed his taciturnity as an indication of a prudent and thoughtful man. A leading periodical of the day hailed him as the savior of the nation, a President who would at last destroy the evil spoils system, and who would create a feeling of responsibility toward the people in the men who held civil service posts.⁵⁰

The people were soon disappointed when Grant's taciturnity was recognized as ignorance. He was incapable of understanding the intrigues of the professional politicians who swarmed about him. It seemed to the onlookers that those very qualities which had made him a good soldier, were the ones which would make him a poor President.⁵¹ His choice of cabinet

⁴⁹Allen Nevins: Hamilton Fisk. Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1936, 107.

⁵⁰E. L. Godkin. "The Men Inside Politics": Nation, New York (January-June, 1869), VIII, 165.

⁵¹William Conant Church. Ulysses S. Grant. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1897, 367-368.

members was the first indication of his inability to choose able assistants. He also appointed many friends and relatives to public office, a practice most Presidents tried to avoid.⁵² While no presidential appointments have ever satisfied everyone, Grant was less successful than most Presidents. He surrounded himself with secretaries chosen from the ranks of army officers, and this military clique in the White House was offensive to many people, especially the political bosses.⁵³

Grant's first step on the road to civil service reform was to ask Congress to repeal the Tenure of Office Act. Grant felt that the executive should be entirely free to make his own selection of candidates for office, and that before the final appointment was made the candidate's ability should be investigated.⁵⁴ This method was the one by which army officers were recommended for promotion by their superior officers. Anxious to cooperate with the new President, the House of Representatives voted for the complete repeal of the Tenure of Office Act. The Senate, however, opposed the repeal of the Act for two reasons. The Senators were not anxious to give up the control of the valuable federal patronage which they had wrested from President Johnson after a long and bitter struggle. Not infrequently

⁵² Nelson Cross. Life of General Grant. J.S. Redfield, New York, 1872, 43.

⁵³ William B. Hesseltine. Ulysses S. Grant, Politician. Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1935, 154-155. Also Church, 371.

⁵⁴ Church, 374.

their control of appointments to public office was their only campaign weapon, and they were not anxious to lose this power. Furthermore, the Tenure of Office Act was a good check on wayward and independent Presidents, and the Senators were not at all certain that Grant would be subservient to them.⁵⁵ Senator Carl Schurz, the liberal reformer from Missouri, proposed that the Tenure of Office Act be suspended until the next Congress, hoping that in the meanwhile a definite system for appointments to the civil service could be worked out.⁵⁶ The Senate felt that a suspension of the Tenure Act would appear to be putting the President on probation, therefore Schurz's suggestion was not acted upon. Finally the Tenure Act was modified so that the President had complete control of his cabinet. He could remove civil officers either with the consent of the Senate or by the appointment of a successor satisfactory to the Senate. In the event that the President suspended an officer, he had to name a successor within thirty days after Congress had reconvened. If the successor was not approved by the Senate, the officer who had been suspended retained the office. In reality this modified form of the Tenure of Office Act merely relieved the President of making specific charges against a civil officer whom he wished to remove from office. The President was not satisfied with this modified version of the Tenure Act, but his cabinet, fearing that too much opposition to Congress by the President would result in conditions similar to those which beset

⁵⁵ Nevins, 129.

⁵⁶ Claude Moore Fuess. Carl Schurz Reformer. Dodd, Mead and Co., New York. 1932, 160.

the administration of Andrew Johnson, urged President Grant to sign the Bill. This modification of the Tenure Act was the first step toward civil service reform under Grant.

On April 5, 1869, Mr. Jenckes offered his last bill for civil service reform in the House of Representatives. This bill was very similar to the one he proposed in January, 1868. The provision for the establishment of a Civil Service Department with the Vice-President at its head was omitted. The new bill applied only to those appointments made by the President, and the purpose of the bill was to give the President a means of ascertaining the fitness of applicants for civil service posts. This bill was also defeated.⁵⁷ Though Mr. Jenckes died before the civil service reform movement was successful, he is considered a pioneer in the fight for reform.⁵⁸

The defeat of the Jenckes bill did not destroy the movement for civil service reform. Periodicals called attention to the need for reform.⁵⁹ The entire system was undermined by men who were not interested in serving the government but in exploiting it. The real center of power in the federal government was found in the Senators from strategic states. They controlled the patronage of the nation; indeed they spent more time organizing party machinery and dispensing the patronage rightfully belonging to

⁵⁷Cong. Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess., IV, 3261.

⁵⁸Dumas Malone (ed.). "Thomas Allen Jenckes", Dictionary of American Biography, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1933, X, 41-42.

⁵⁹E. L. Godkin. "Objections to the Civil Service Reform". Nation, New York, (January-June, 1869), VIII, 329-330.

the executive, than in administering the duties of their offices. These abuses and others were pointed out in the crusade of the writers of the day for civil service reform.⁶⁰

President Grant was aware of these undesirable conditions in the civil service, and he seemed anxious to reform the service. In his first annual message of December 6, 1869, he venomously attacked the action of Congress in failing to repeal the Tenure of Office Act.⁶¹ Even in its modified form Grant felt that the Act was " ... inconsistent with a faithful and efficient administration of the Government."⁶² The President asked for a complete repeal of the Act, but there was no action in Congress on this request. Men like Conkling, Carpenter and Chandler, the political impresarios of the day, could not be expected to give up their hold on the patronage so easily. In Grant's second annual message, December 5, 1870, he pointed out the abuses in the method of making appointments.⁶³ After more than a year in office, he was well aware of the intrigues connected

⁶⁰W. H. Babcock. "In the Departments". Putnam's Magazine, New York (January-June, 1870), V, 50-55.

⁶¹Richardson, IX, 3992.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., 4063.

with making appointments.⁶⁴

Civil service reform had supporters in Congress and in December, 1870, Senator Carl Schurz introduced a civil service bill similar to that of Mr. Jenckes, but covering many more offices in the civil service.⁶⁵ The Schurz bill received some support but the opposition was too great. The bill was referred to the Committee on Retrenchment and was "passed over" on June 10.⁶⁶ When it became apparent that Congress was not going to repeal the Tenure of Office Act, another friend of the reform movement came to its aid. Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois inserted a provision in an appropriation act giving the President the power to appoint a commission whose duty it would be to regulate appointments to the civil service. Mr. Schurz did not feel that Trumbull's Bill was comprehensive enough and offered a substitution of his own bill.⁶⁷ The Senate preferred the Bill offered by Trumbull which was passed on March 3, 1871.⁶⁸ The President proceeded to appoint

⁶⁴Ibid.: "There is no duty which so embarrasses the Executive and heads of Departments as that of appointments, nor is there any such arduous and thankless labor imposed on Senators and Representatives as that of finding places for constituents. The present system does not secure the best men, and often not even fit men, for public place. The elevation and purification of the civil service of the Government will be hailed with approval by the whole people of the United States."

⁶⁵Fuess, 161.

⁶⁶Ibid., 162.

⁶⁷Cong. Globe, 41st Cong. 3rd Sess., I, 779-780.

⁶⁸Cong. Globe, 41st Cong., 3rd Sess., III, 1997.

a Civil Service Commission under the chairmanship of George William Curtis, for the purpose of establishing a system of rules and regulations for admission into the federal civil service.

This committee, under Mr. Curtis, began its work immediately and on December 18, 1871 sent in its first report to the President.⁶⁹ The rules provided that the President choose boards of three examiners from each department of the public service, and that these boards examine applicants for positions and recommend those most capable to the President for appointments in the civil service. This system would eliminate the incompetent and insure the tenure of those capable of performing the duties of public office. Grant put these rules into effect on January 1, 1872, but only eleven days later they had to be suspended due to the opposition from Congress. The political bosses in both Houses objected to this system which would destroy their hold on the patronage and put honest, intelligent men into government positions.⁷⁰ A new set of rules went into effect on April 16, 1872, but they served only to make the civil service reform a deceit.⁷¹ According to the new rules, the President could make appointments from among those applicants

⁶⁹For a complete account of this report and the rules proposed by the Civil Service Commission see: Curtis. "The Reform of the Civil Service". Orations and addresses. II, 31-85.

⁷⁰Cross, 137.

⁷¹For a complete account of this report and the rules see: Curtis. "Report of The Advisory Board of the Civil Service." Orations and addresses. II, 92-116.

passing the civil service examinations if he chose to do so. If he felt that none of the applicants recommended by the examiners were satisfactory, he could appoint whomever he wished. The bosses of the Senate could still control the patronage through the prerogative of the President.

The campaign of 1872 saw the Republican party split into the Liberals and the Stalwarts. The Liberals were led by such reformers as Carl Schurz and Jacob Cox.⁷² The real aim of the Liberals was not only to defeat Grant, but to wipe out the tyranny which they felt was the result of one party government as it existed since the Civil War.⁷³ These men wanted to forget the "bloody-shirt" politics of the era, and renovate the federal government. The battle of the Liberals versus the Stalwarts is interesting in all its aspects, but important in this paper only as it concerns civil service reform. The Democratic party ignored civil service reform in its platform, but the Liberals and the regular Republicans both used it as a campaign issue. The regular Republicans wanted to "... abolish the evils of patronage and make honesty, efficiency, and fidelity the essential qualifications for public position."⁷⁴ The Liberal Republicans decried the tyranny of one party government whereby the patronage was an "... instrument of partisan tyranny and personal ambition..."⁷⁵ They promised to make "... public

⁷² Feuss, 185.

⁷³ For an account of the aims and activities of the Liberal Republicans see: Feuss, 185-201.

⁷⁴ Stanwood, 1291-1292.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 287.

station ... a post of honor."⁷⁶

The Republicans succeeded in reelecting Grant, but this victory did not kill the reform movement. It had suffered a severe blow but at the same time many men of culture and influence, who had joined the Liberal Republicans identified themselves with the reform movement.⁷⁷ Nevertheless the reelection of Grant was a defeat for the reform movement. The Stalwarts, who were the leaders of the Republican party, now assumed that the people were in favor of their methods. A contemporary author tells us that the Stalwarts proceeded to use the civil service as a means of preserving their party in power.⁷⁸ Political affiliation with the Stalwarts was a prerequisite for appointment to government posts, while ability was completely ignored. The efficiency of the governmental machinery was never considered by these men. Congress exercised almost unlimited power, and wished to keep its power at any cost.⁷⁹

On June 4, 1873 a revised set of civil service rules went into effect.⁸⁰ In the annual message of December 1, 1873, President Grant urged Congress to

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ For a list of prominent Liberal Republicans see: Josephson, 159.

⁷⁸ Orrin Skinner. The Issues of American Politics. J. B. Lippencott and Co., Philadelphia, 1873, 344.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 345.

⁸⁰ For an account of the revised rules and the order putting them into effect see: Richardson, IX, 4184-4189.

appoint a committee to confer with the Civil Service Commission so that a set of rules which would be agreeable to Congress could be established.⁸¹ Grant wanted definite legislation concerning civil service reform. In spite of this request for legislation from the President, opposition to reform continued. The abuses seemed greater than ever before.⁸² In the annual message of 1874, Grant delivered an ultimatum to Congress.⁸³ He pointed out the great benefits which had been derived from the civil service rules. But he said that in spite of these benefits, the rules were useless unless they were actively supported by legislation. Unless Congress passed positive legislation he would consider the rules devised by the commission as undesirable, and would abandon the system. Congress failed to legislate in favor of reform so Grant dispensed with the civil service rules on March 9, 1875.⁸⁴

Grant's efforts at reforming the civil service seemed to be sincere, but not very successful. The only concrete achievement of his administration in regard to civil service was the establishment of a Civil Service Commission. Finally, even the rules of this Commission had to be suspended because of Congressional opposition. President Grant always seemed to be

⁸¹ Ibid., 4208-4209.

⁸² For a discussion of conditions in the civil service at this time see: Skinner, 346-389.

⁸³ Richardson, IX, 4254-4255.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 4281.

swayed by the politicians like Roscoe Conkling, who were the arch-enemy of reform, rather than by the reformers themselves. Some authors believe Grant was anxious for reelection and political popularity, and therefore sided with the men who could give him these things.⁸⁵ Another author felt that Grant was fearful of criticism and therefore hated the reformers.⁸⁶ Judging the man by his actions we can say that Grant urged reform on the Congress, but when he saw the strength behind the opposition, he gave up the fight.

⁸⁵Hesseltine, 254. Also Josephson, 172.

⁸⁶Nevins, 134.

CHAPTER IV

PRESIDENT HAYES AND REFORM AGITATION

Reform was the keynote of the campaign of 1876. The policies of the government as well as the machinery of government seemed to call for reform. The southern question was the one most in need of solution. The radical Congress which had dominated President Grant's administration encouraged the carpet-baggers and scalawags who attempted to dominate the governments of the southern states. Interested only in their own welfare, these unscrupulous individuals attempted to exploit the Negro and deprive the intelligent, white, southern group of a voice in the government. Angered and disgusted, the whites formed secret organizations for the purpose of protecting their own rights and abusing the Negroes, so they would not attempt to exercise their political rights. These conditions in the South were the natural outgrowths of the vindictive policy of the radical Republicans in Congress, who desired to keep the ex-Confederates politically inactive as long as possible. The Civil War had been over for a decade and the people as a whole, and especially the middle class business men, were anxious to settle the southern question and turn the nation's energy toward the new problems of the new era. This same middle class was anxious to end the spoils system which was becoming a drain on their finances while the favors politicians were able to render were becoming less and less important. Furthermore, these corrupt conditions in the federal government turned

foreign capital to other countries. In 1876 the nation wanted to break with the old Republicans who still waved the "bloody shirt;" they wanted to bury the past and look to the future with its promise of commercial and industrial prosperity. In 1876 the Democrats chose Samuel Tilden while the Republicans put their hopes in Ohio's favorite son, Rutherford B. Hayes. Both parties bid for support by offering reforms to the public. Next to the southern question, reform of the civil service was most important. The Democrats promised not to use appointments to public office as rewards for party loyalty, but rather as honors reserved for competent and faithful workers. They resolved to abolish the spoils system and substitute a system which would put honest officials into public office.⁸⁷ The Republicans also decided that reform was necessary.⁸⁸ They promised not only to put honest and efficient men into office, but to punish those who betrayed this public trust.⁸⁹

The campaign was a long debate on measures and policies with the Republicans on the defensive for the first time in many years. Due to dual governments in certain southern states, the final results of the election

⁸⁷Stanwood, 377-378.

⁸⁸Carl Schurz. The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz With a Sketch of His Life and Public Services from 1869-1906. by Frederick Bancroft and William Dunning. McClure Co., New York, 1908, 367. In the election year of 1876, Carl Schurz was the leader of a group of independent voters who urged the Republican party to include a reform plank in its platform.

⁸⁹Stanwood, 370-371.

were open to question and had to be settled by a Commission chosen for that purpose. The Commission cast a strictly party vote, thus giving the election to Hayes, the Republican candidate.⁹⁰

Hayes was hailed as the champion of civil service reform. In his letter accepting the Republican nomination he had promised to use the executive appointing power to fill the civil service with honest and efficient workers and not to permit Congressmen to dictate appointments for the purpose of rewarding party men.⁹¹ His inaugural address gave new hope to the people. Hayes not only wanted to make good appointments, but he also wished to establish a civil service system which would remove the patronage of the federal government from the control of unscrupulous Congressmen forever and place it in responsible hands.⁹²

⁹⁰ A detailed discussion of the disputed election of 1876 is found in: Stanwood, 380-393.

⁹¹ J. Q. Howard. The Life, Public Services and Selected Speeches of Rutherford B. Hayes. Robert Clark and Co., Cincinnati, 1876, 157-158.

⁹² Richardson, X, 4396. "...I ask the attention of the public to the paramount necessity of reform in our civil service -- a reform not merely as to certain abuses and practices of so-called official patronage which have come to have the sanction of usage in the several Departments of our Government, but a change in the system of appointment itself; a reform that shall be thorough, radical and complete; a return to the principles and practices of the founders of the Government. They neither expected nor desired from public officers any partisan service. They meant that public officers should owe their whole service to the Government and to the people. They meant that the officer should be secure in his tenure as long as his personal character remained untarnished and the performance of his duties satisfactory. They held that appointments to office were not to be made nor expected merely as rewards for partisan services, nor merely on the nomination of members of Congress, as being entitled in any respect to the control of such appointments."

The Civil War had given the President unprecedented power, and the impeachment of Andrew Johnson and the loss of executive prestige during his administration had made the Congress powerful. Hayes intended to re-establish the equilibrium of the three branches of government which is inherent in our political philosophy.⁹³ He hoped to accomplish this by urging Congress to pass legislation that would increase the length of the presidential term to six years and limit the President to a single term. He hoped to curb the power of Congress by inaugurating a civil service system. Since this study is concerned with civil service reform it is important to note that in his inaugural address, the first official speech of the new President, Hayes declared the executive independent of the Congress regarding appointments. His attitude was based on provisions in the Constitution regarding Presidential appointments.⁹⁴

As soon as President Hayes settled the southern question, he turned his attention to the reform of the civil service. Carl Schurz, whom the President had appointed Secretary of the Interior, was the champion of reform and the President's chief advisor in this regard. An idealist and reformer, Schurz was the guiding light of the administration.⁹⁵ With his aid, President Hayes began to fulfill his campaign promises regarding reform. On

⁹³ John W. Burgess. The Administration of President Hayes. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916, 111-112.

⁹⁴ Edwin Erle Sparks. National Development, XXIII, Albert Bushnell Hart (ed.). The American Nation Series, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1907, 154.

⁹⁵ A more detailed account of the work of Carl Schurz regarding civil service reform will be given in the next chapter.

April 22, 1877, he made this notation in his diary regarding reform:

Now for civil service reform. Legislation must be prepared and executive rules and maxims. We must limit and narrow the area of patronage. We must diminish the evils of office-seeking. We must stop interference of federal officers with elections. We must be relieved of Congressional dictation as to appointments.⁹⁶

With these ideas in mind he began his efforts at reform by appointing a commission to investigate conditions in the New York custom-house.

John Jay, an ardent civil service reformer, was chairman of the commission appointed to investigate the abuses in the New York custom-house. This custom-house had long been the source of illegal revenue for the political party which controlled the patronage there. About three-fourths of the goods entering the United States came through the customs at New York, and most travelers returned by way of New York. These conditions made posts in the custom-house most lucrative, and no official missed his chance to practice petty graft.⁹⁷ During the first part of Hayes's administration, it was considered the most valuable piece of federal patronage.⁹⁸ On the merits of a preliminary report by Jay's committee on the abuses in the

⁹⁶Rutherford B. Hayes. Diary and Letters of Rutherford B. Hayes. Charles Richard Williams (ed.). F. J. Heer Printing Co., Columbus, 1924, III, 430.

⁹⁷E. E. Sparks, 157.

⁹⁸Josephson, 94.

custom-house, Hayes issued his famous executive order of June 22, 1877, to the heads of all departments.

No officer shall be required or permitted to take part in the management of political organizations, caucuses, conventions, or election campaigns. Their right to vote and to express their views on public questions, either orally or through the press, is not denied, provided it does not interfere with the discharge of their official duties. No assessment for political purposes, on officers or subordinates, should be allowed.⁹⁹

These orders were faithfully followed except in the Treasury Department, where Sherman seemed unable to break with the old political practices.

This order came only six months after the President took office, and it seemed to indicate that he really intended to reform the civil service. This action came as an unpleasant surprise to the party members in Congress because they were accustomed to Presidents who considered campaign promises empty words. They expected Hayes to forget his promises as soon as he was elected to the Presidency, and to appoint to office those loyal party men who had worked for him during the campaign. Hayes did not mind opposition by his party, and entries in his diary during the latter part of 1877 show that he had every intention of carrying through a program of reform. On October 13, 1877, he noted four points to be followed in reforming the civil service.¹⁰⁰ He felt that it would be necessary to forbid office hold-

⁹⁹ Hayes, Diary and Letters, III, 438.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 448.

ers to take an active part in political activities. The idea of "senatorial courtesy" should be abolished and the Senate should be restricted to confirming appointments, not making them. His third point was to establish a set of rules and regulations for appointments and for removals. On October 24, 1877, President Hayes noted in his diary that his activities regarding reform were obnoxious to the Republicans in Congress and that they were opposing the administration.¹⁰¹ This attitude of Congress toward the President was not new. A few weeks after his inauguration his lenient southern policy estranged the President and Congress. Hayes's efforts at civil service reform increased this opposition. There was never so much opposition to a President by his own party since the time of Andrew Johnson.¹⁰² Nevertheless, President Hayes continued the fight for reform. On November 3, 1877, he listed five more points on reform in his diary.¹⁰³

In his first annual message of December 3, 1877, he pointed out that the civil service reform was a vital issue of the day.¹⁰⁴ Both major political parties had inserted civil service reform in their platforms, therefore Hayes felt that the time had come for the President and Congress to do something about reform. Hayes promised to be impersonal in his appointments and to consult Congress concerning nominations in cases where

101 Ibid., 449.

102 Stanwood, 400.

103 Hayes, Diary and Letters, III, 351.

104 Richardson, 3, 4417-4418.

he needed advice. Where special abilities were needed he felt that a system of examinations should be established. Hayes pointed out the good work which had been accomplished by the Civil Service Commission which had been appointed by President Grant, and he asked Congress to make an appropriation for the purpose of reviving that Commission.

There was considerable opposition to President Hayes's policy of reform,¹⁰⁵ but this did not stop the President from continuing with his work of reform. The report of the Jay committee exposed the abuses in the New York custom-house¹⁰⁶ and on the basis of this report the President suggested to Mr. Arthur, the collector, and the naval officer, Mr. Cornell, that they either follow the recommendations of the order of June 22, 1877, or resign their posts. When it was apparent that these men intended to continue their political activities the President removed them from office on July 11, 1878. President Hayes then nominated James Roosevelt for the post of collector. Since Chester Arthur was a political protege of Roscoe Conkling, the Senator boss of New York state politics, there was decided opposition in Congress to Hayes's action. The Senate refused to confirm Roosevelt's appointment. When Hayes nominated E. A. Merritt, the Senate confirmed this nomination only after Secretary of the Treasury Sherman had used his

¹⁰⁵ Hayes, Diary and Letters, III, 477-479.

¹⁰⁶ John Jay. "Civil Service Reform". North American Review, New York (September-October, 1878), XXVII, 271-287.

influence.¹⁰⁷ The reform accomplished by Mr. Merritt in the New York custom-house was an outstanding accomplishment of the Hayes administration.¹⁰⁸

By August, 1878, President Hayes was able to note in his diary that some progress had been made in the fight for reform.¹⁰⁹ Assessments on office holders were no longer allowed, and office holders seemed to have ceased their political activities. The Senators no longer considered it their right to make political appointments, and Hayes noted that he himself refrained from appointing relatives to office. Furthermore, the administration did not defend lax or inefficient officers, appointments were less partisan, and the officers were not required to serve their party but rather the welfare of the nation.

Hayes made no mention of civil service reform in his annual message of 1878 but this was due to the fact that he was having trouble with Congress over the suspension of Arthur and the confirmation of Merritt's appointment to the post of collector in the New York custom-house. This opposition did not interfere with his efforts for reform and his work in its behalf. He

¹⁰⁷For a complete study of the significance of this reform in the New York custom-house see: Venila Lovina Shores. "The Hayes-Conkling Controversy". Smith College Studies in History, Northampton (October, 1918-July, 1919), IV, 215-277.

¹⁰⁸For an account of the official correspondence between Mr. Merritt and his superior, Secretary Sherman, together with the rules governing appointments and promotions in the New York custom-house see: Richardson, VII, 550-556.

¹⁰⁹Hayes, Diary and Letters, III, 495.

felt that the most difficult part of reform was reeducating the public to the fact that Congress did not have a constitutional right to control appointments to office. The people must be taught not to expect their Congressmen to get them offices because of party affiliations, but that appointments to office should depend on passing civil service examinations.¹¹⁰

In his third annual message of December 1, 1879, he devoted a great amount of space to civil service reform.¹¹¹ He reviewed the efforts made by President Grant and the Civil Service Commission, and he again urged Congress to make an appropriation so that the commission could be revived. He hoped to convince Congress of the good results of a system of examinations for appointments and promotions in the civil service by including with his message the report of Dorman B. Eaton¹¹² concerning the civil service in Great Britian. Furthermore he urged Congress to make laws that would protect government employees from the political parties which were in the habit of taxing the salaries of those workers whom they felt were holding office due to their influence. Since Congress failed to take action, the question of civil service reform was also included in his last annual

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 513-514. This entry, and others of this type, mention the principle that Hayes held to be true regarding appointments, that is, Congress had no right to control the federal patronage.

¹¹¹ Richardson, X, 4513-4518.

¹¹² This report came out in book form. Dorman B. Eaton. Civil Service in Great Britian. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1880.

message of December, 1880.¹¹³ In this message he told Congress that the dangers inherent in the spoils system were so serious that they actually threatened the government with destruction, and could no longer go unheeded. Furthermore public application of civil service rules in the New York custom-house had proved so successful. The President concluded the section on reform by asking Congress to make an appropriation for the Civil Service Commission so that a permanent civil service system could be established.

In spite of numerous efforts, President Hayes was not able to convince Congress of the necessity for legislation to establish a civil service system. His only positive accomplishment in regard to reform was in the New York custom-house and postoffice. During his entire term, Hayes was persistently opposed by Congress, with an enmity remarkable because the President and Congress were of the same party. Within six weeks of his inauguration his lenient southern policy had alienated the Republicans. The southern Democrats felt that Hayes had no choice regarding his southern policy, and therefore the President received no grateful support from the Democrats. His efforts toward civil service were not supported either by the Republicans, to whom it meant the loss of the valuable federal patronage, or by the Democrats who did not wish to see Republican office holders assured of their posts by reason of a civil service system.

President Hayes left office feeling that his administration had

¹¹³Richardson, X, 4555-4557.

accomplished nothing in regard to civil service reform, but this was not true.¹¹⁴ His work in the New York custom-house was a fatal blow to powerful party organization which was responsible to a great extent for the spoils system. His constant agitation for reform awakened the people to the need for such a movement, while his administration policies as they were carried out in the governmental departments, notably in the Department of the Interior under Secretary Schurz, showed that a civil service system was practical. During his administration the civil service reform movement gained such importance that the following administrations could not ignore it. Instead, the movement gained so much public support that it soon resulted in positive Congressional legislation. It can be said that President Hayes did more for civil service reform than any of the preceding Presidents, and that much of the credit for the successful passage of the Pendleton Act can be given to President Hayes, who laid the foundations for it from 1877 to 1881.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Mr. Godkin, who had opposed Hayes at the time of his election, admitted that Hayes left behind "...some good precedents..." regarding civil service reform. E. L. Godkin. "Mr. Hayes' Administration". Nation, New York (January-June, 1881), XXXII, 144.

¹¹⁵ James Ford Rhodes. "A Review of President Hayes' Administration". Historical Essays, Macmillan Co., New York, 1909, 243-265. This essay contains a brief survey of Hayes's work regarding civil service reform.

CHAPTER V

THE REFORMERS AND THE REFORM MOVEMENT

One of the most effective reform movements this country has ever known was the civil service reform movement. Like all movements of historical importance, it was not organized in a moment. As a matter of fact more than a decade passed from the time Thomas Jenckes introduced his first reform bill in 1865 until the formation of the first reform association in New York in 1877. Almost twenty years passed before a positive civil service bill was passed by Congress.¹¹⁶

A little group of men inspired by patriotism and anxious to raise the political morals of the nation have linked their names eternally with the cause for which they fought. No movement seemed to have more distinguished adherents than the civil service reform movement. It is impossible to trace the development of the causes leading to the passage of the Pendleton Act without devoting some study to the men who were responsible for the first success of the movement. The reformers seem to me to be unusual men in a period notorious for its politicians of the worst type. As the student studies the reform movement, certain men, because of their talent and ability, stand out as the leaders in the long fight for civil service reform. Among those leaders I believe that Thomas A. Jenckes, Carl Schurz, Jacob D. Cox, Edwin L. Godkin, Dorman B. Eaton and George William Curtis

¹¹⁶
Foulke, 1-3.

deserve special consideration because each one contributed valuable services to the movement. These six names by no means complete the list of reformers. There were many others like Richard H. Dana, Henry D. Foulke, Everett Wheeler, and Charles J. Bonaparte who associated themselves with the movement but whose chief efforts were made after the passage of the Pendleton Act. Since this paper is concerned with the steps leading to the passage of the act, the work of these latter reformers must be omitted.

Thomas A. Jenckes is generally considered the pioneer of the movement for civil service reform. In 1862 he was elected to the House of Representatives from the state of Rhode Island and re-elected three times. He was considered one of the ablest lawyers in the House, and his legal talents were generously given to the fight for civil service reform. His rare intellectual capacity and his keen appreciation of the need for a civil service system enabled him to frame bills for the establishment of a system that were obviously the basis of later bills. I have discussed the bills offered by Mr. Jenckes in previous chapters and a repetition of them is unnecessary. Unfortunately Mr. Jenckes died in 1875, and therefore did not enjoy the satisfaction of seeing his work result in the passage of the Pendleton Act. Nevertheless, Mr. Jenckes is considered the pioneer of civil service reform, and it is impossible to omit his name from a study of the reform movement.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷There seems to be very little biographical material available on Thomas A. Jenckes. The sources used in this study are: "Thomas A. Jenckes", Dictionary of American Biography, X, 41-42. Also a collection of obituaries published under the title, In Memoriam Thomas A. Jenckes. No other facts of publication could be found.

One of the most distinguished adherents of the reform movement was the immigrant, Carl Schurz. A liberal and a cosmopolite, Schurz was one of the men most responsible for the success of the movement. Disappointed in the political affairs of his native Germany, he became a citizen of the United States. Having a personal acquaintance with a number of European civil service systems, he was quick to see the defects of that system in the United States. Because he was an idealist, he was anxious to correct the evils of the system. In 1869 he was elected to the Senate from the State of Missouri, and during his term in office became allied with the reform movement, which was to be one of the most important motivating forces in his political life.¹¹⁸

By 1869 the civil service was almost synonymous with scandal. Whiskey rings, custom-house frauds, assessments on office holders and many similar crimes were examples of the need for reform in the civil service.¹¹⁹ Carl Schurz immediately associated himself with the cause of reform. When President Grant asked for the repeal of the Tenure of Office Act, Schurz proposed that the act be suspended until a definite system of civil service rules could be established.¹²⁰ Though this proposal was not acted upon by the radical Congress of 1869, Schurz was appointed to the Joint Committee

¹¹⁸ Fues, 159.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 160.

on Retrenchment. The new Senator from Missouri was recognized as a foe of the spoils system. One December 20, 1869 Schurz introduced a civil service bill similar to the bills introduced in the House by Representative Jenckes. Schurz's bill, which covered many more offices than the Jenckes bills, was passed over on June 10, 1870. This defeat did not come as a surprise to Schurz.¹²¹ Again, on January 27, 1871, Schurz proposed inserting his bill in the appropriations act which later was to give the president power to set up a civil service commission. Schurz's bill was no more successful in 1871 than it had been in 1870. Obviously the radical Republicans were not going to reform a system which gave them immense power through the control of the federal patronage.¹²² However Schurz's speech in the Senate, which he delivered on January 27, 1871 in support of the bill, labeled him as a reformer, a man who intended to do his utmost for reform.¹²³ This speech also labeled Schurz as a man who would fight for his principles rather than support his party when he believed his party to be wrong. In a letter to E. L. Godkin written in March, 1871, Schurz deplored the fact that the Republican party was controlled by men who would support the administration at any cost.¹²⁴ Schurz continued to oppose the principles of the Republican

¹²¹Schurz, *Reminiscences*, III, 177.

¹²²Fuess, 162.

¹²³Carl Schurz. Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz. Frederick Bancroft (ed.). G. F. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1913, II, 122-156.

¹²⁴Ibid., 252-253.

party of the day and to fight for reform. At Nashville, on September 20, 1871 he told his audience that " ... the system of government patronage has scandalously demoralized our political life"¹²⁵, and he called for a reform of the civil service to correct this corruption. Schurz finally became so disgusted with Grant and his radical Republican supporters, that he began making plans for a third party movement for the elections of 1872.¹²⁶

The third party fostered by Schurz and a little group of reformers, was called the Liberal Republican Party.¹²⁷ Its managers were men of high ideals who hoped to bring about governmental reform by democratic means in a nation where democracy was only theoretical.¹²⁸ They refused to stoop to political intrigue and compromise, and thus their purpose was defeated by practical politicians almost before the party had a chance to exist.¹²⁹

Carl Schurz was a leader of this third party and he was chosen permanent president of the convention. In the opening speech he voiced the aims of the Liberal Republican party.

We have a grand opportunity before us, grand and full of promise. We can crush corruption in our public concerns: we can give the

¹²⁵ Ibid., 259.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 311-314.

¹²⁷ An account of this history of the Liberal Republican Party can be found in: Earle Dudley Ross. The Liberal Republican Movement. Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1919.

¹²⁸ Fuess, 185.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Republic a pure and honest government; we can revive the authority of the laws; we can restore to full value the Constitutional safeguard of our liberties; we can infuse a higher moral spirit into our political life; we can reanimate in the hearts of the whole people in every section of the land a fraternal and proud National feeling. We can do all this, but we can do it only by throwing behind us the selfish spirit of political trade.¹³⁰

These hopes that Schurz had for reform came to nothing when the Liberal Republican convention nominated Horace Greeley as its presidential candidate. Because of the nomination of Greeley, that " ... conceited, ignorant, half-cracked, obstinate old creature...."¹³¹, the hopes of the reformers were dashed to pieces, and the civil service reform movement suffered a definite defeat. The Liberal Republicans were defeated in the elections of 1872 and when Schurz returned to the Senate in December, 1872, he was a representative of a defeated party, a member of the minority in a radical Senate. He continued to fight for reform but was opposed on all sides. He left the Senate at the end of his term in 1875, a man without a party.¹³² His six years in the Senate had been fruitless years in regard to civil service reform. In the face of extreme opposition from the radical

¹³⁰Schurz, Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers, II, 356-357.

¹³¹Taken from a letter from E. L. Godkin to Schurz dated May 19, 1872, concerning the nomination of Greeley, quoted in: Ibid., 376.

¹³²After its defeat, the Liberal Republican Party was disorganized.

Republicans the President had abandoned even the pretense of reform. Carl Schurz continued to fight for reform.

In 1876 Schurz was the instigator of an Independent Movement whose purpose was to arouse the voters to the need for administrative reform and the regeneration of political parties.¹³³ Schurz, an outcast of the radical Republican party, hoped to bring about reform by urging the voters to cast their votes for candidates who promised civil service reform, regardless of party affiliation. This movement of the Independents was definitely a movement for reform and it was echoed by both political parties. When the Republicans nominated Rutherford B. Hayes, the Independents flocked back to the party. Referring to the Republican nomination, Schurz said that the Republicans had "... nominated our man without knowing it. He is a man of more than average ability and decidedly unspoiled as a politician."¹³⁴ During the campaign of 1876 Schurz acted as a political advisor to the Republican nominee.¹³⁵ He campaigned for Hayes in the summer of 1876, endorsing him as the candidate of the reform movement.¹³⁶

I have discussed the disputed election of 1876 and the final inauguration of President Hayes. Carl Schurz was appointed Secretary of the Interior, a distinct blow to the old radical Republicans who had hoped to see

¹³³ Schurz, Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers, II, 367.

¹³⁴ Ibid., III, 259.

¹³⁵ An account of the correspondence can be found scattered through: Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 290-336.

the party man Zachary Chandler given a place in the cabinet.¹³⁷ Schurz was recognized as the administration's expert on civil service systems, and during his four year term he inaugurated civil service rules in his own department and was instrumental in establishing them in the other departments. Through his influence and with his aid, the President was able to carry out his reform.

When Garfield took office in 1881 Schurz found it necessary to resign, but he did not give up his work in favor of civil service reform. He was one of those most active in the formation of the National Civil Service Reform Association, and was its president from 1893⁸ to 1900. He also served as president of the New York Civil Service Reform Association.¹³⁸ The work of Carl Schurz was an important phase of the civil service reform movement in the United States.¹³⁹

George William Curtis was a leading essayist of the later part of the nineteenth century, and he devoted his literary talents to the cause of reform. It was his belief that a good citizen should take an active part in the government of the nation.¹⁴⁰ His pen was the weapon with which he fought

¹³⁷Schurz, Reminiscences, III, 375.

¹³⁸Frank Mann Stewart. The National Civil Service Reform League.
 University of Texas, 1929, 13.

¹³⁹The best study of Schurz as a reformer is the work by Claude Moore Fuesz.

¹⁴⁰"George William Curtis", Dictionary of American Biography, IV, 615.

for reform. In 1863 he became political editor of Harper's Weekly, and through the columns of this periodical he shaped public opinion for many years.¹⁴¹ One of his favorite topics was the need for reform in the civil service.

In 1869 he delivered an address on the need for reform in the civil service before the American Social Science Association in New York.¹⁴² This was the beginning of his long career as a reformer. In 1871 he was chairman of the commission appointed by Grant to investigate the civil service in this country.¹⁴³ He resigned the chairmanship in 1874 after he felt he had accomplished as much as was possible under President Grant's leadership.¹⁴⁴

Curtis was one of the nation's most popular lecturers but after an illness in 1873 he found it necessary to give up this work. From that time on he spoke only on occasions of great importance, and these occasional speeches were usually made in behalf of civil service reform.¹⁴⁵ In 1878 he was a delegate to the Republican State Convention of New York. At this convention he praised President Hayes and his reform program, thus drawing down upon

¹⁴¹ William Morton Payne. "George William Curtis". Leading American Essayists, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1910, 571.

¹⁴² Curtis. "Civil Service Reform". Orations and Addresses, II, 1-29.

¹⁴³ A record of this report can be found in: Curtis. "The Reform of the Civil Service". Orations and Addresses, II, 29-87. The revised report follows, 87-121.

¹⁴⁴ Curtis' work as chairman is discussed in: Edward Cary. George William Curtis. American Men of Letters Series. Houghton, Mifflin and Co., Boston, 1896, 216-226.

¹⁴⁵ These speeches can be found in: Curtis, Orations and Addresses, II.

himself the bitter denunciation of the anti-reformer, Roscoe Conkling.¹⁴⁶ Always a party man, Curtis advocated independent voting in 1880 in order to break the power of the party machines.¹⁴⁷ His efforts for reform did not stop with the passage of the Pendleton Act, but continued until the end of his life. He served as president of the National Civil Service Reform Association and also of the New York Reform Association. Each year his speeches before these associations gave the movement a moral boost.¹⁴⁸ This brief account of the efforts of Curtis in behalf of reform is sufficient to show that he was one of the men to whom the movement owes much of its success.¹⁴⁹

Edwin Lawrence Godkin was another editor whose literary work served the cause of civil service reform. As editor of Nation from 1865 until 1881, and then as editor of the Evening Post until 1900, he shaped the thought of the reading public of the country with his articles on reform.¹⁵⁰ Men from every walk of life read the Nation, and depended on it for accurate infor-

¹⁴⁶Payne, 385.

¹⁴⁷Curtis. "Machine Politics and The Remedy". Orations and Addresses, II, 147-171.

¹⁴⁸Payne, 388.

¹⁴⁹Sherman S. Rogers. "George William Curtis and Civil Service Reform", Atlantic Monthly, Concord, N.H. (January-June, 1893), LXXI; 15-25. This article gives a brief account of Curtis as a reformer.

¹⁵⁰"Edwin Lawrence Godkin", Dictionary of American Biography, VII, 347-350.

mation. Godkin's candid and unbiased treatment of national questions places him among the nation's greatest journalists.¹⁵¹ Especially on the question of civil service reform was his influence very great. Country editors helped spread his opinions, while city businessmen were convinced of the need for reform by his sound arguments.¹⁵²

Jacob Dolson Cox's brave efforts for reform as Secretary of the Interior under President Grant gave him a place among the reformers. He was a man of importance in the business world and in politics, and in all his dealings he was considered "... scrupulously honest and truthful...."¹⁵³ When President Grant appointed him Secretary of the Interior Cox, was considered a liberal Republican, and was one of the most popular members of the cabinet. He believed that a system of examinations should be set up to determine appointments and promotions in the civil service; and as Secretary of the Interior he inaugurated such a system in his own department. He reported the success of the merit system to Grant and urged the President to establish that system in all of the governmental departments. His chief thesis was that party affiliations should be ignored in the civil service.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Ibid., 349.

¹⁵²Rhodes. "Edwin Lawrence Godkin". Historical Essays, 265-299. This essay seems to contain the best biographical material on Godkin.

¹⁵³Rhodes. "Jacob D. Cox". Historical Essays, 188.

¹⁵⁴James R. Ewing. Public Services of Jacob D. Cox. Neal Publishing Co., Washington, 1899, 21-22.

He was keenly disappointed by what he felt was opposition from the President. He felt that Grant was trying to administer the government as he would an army; at the same time Grant considered Cox an insubordinate officer with the result that Cox resigned his post.¹⁵⁵ At the time of his resignation he published an article in the North American Review in which he insinuated that he had to resign because he was a reformer among spoilsmen.¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately for the Republicans, the sentiment aroused over the question of civil service reform lost them their two-thirds majority in the House in 1872. The Republicans never regained that majority. This action of Cox's labeled him a reformer, and made him an enemy of the spoilsmen.

Cox was associated with the Liberal Republicans in 1872 and was considered a possible presidential candidate. In 1876 he was a member of the House of Representatives, but was not able to aid the President due to the indifference or enmity of the House regarding reform.¹⁵⁷

Dorman Bridgman Eaton, together with Schurz and Curtis is considered one of the foremost civil service reformers. His first interest was in regard to the correction of local corruption. He was active in crushing the Tweed Ring, actually suffering bodily injury because of his efforts at local reform.¹⁵⁸ He had already studied civil service systems in Europe, when he

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁵⁶ Jacob D. Cox. "The Civil Service Reform". North American Review, New York (1871), CXII, 81-113.

¹⁵⁷ Jacob D. Cox". Dictionary of American Biography, IV, 476-478.

¹⁵⁸ Stewart, 14.

was appointed head of the Civil Service Commission in 1873 after Curtis had resigned. His work on the commission was short-lived because Congress cut off appropriations in 1875. It was at his home in 1877 that a small group of reformers decided to form the New York Civil Service Reform Association.

President Hayes asked him to study the civil service system of Great Britain. This investigation was carried out at Eaton's own expense, and his report was issued in book form in 1880 under the title, Civil Service In Great Britain. This work was so significant that Eaton was asked to draft the act which is known today as the Pendleton Act. He was noted for his ability to draft civil service acts.¹⁵⁹ Eaton was active in the National Reform Association from its inception until his death in 1899. He served on the Civil Service Commission of the United States during the administrations of Grant, Hayes, Arthur and Cleveland and was appointed chairman by President Hayes.¹⁶⁰

These reformers and many others worked individually for years. Editors like Curtis and Godkin supported the movement because they realized the necessity and value of it. Eaton donated his time, energy and money to the cause because he recognized its importance. Schurz made reform the driving

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁶⁰ Dorman B. Eaton. "The First Steps". Good Government, Washington (July, 1893-June, 1894), XIII, 107-108. This article is an excellent review of the first steps taken by the reformers in their crusade for the establishment of a federal civil service system.

force of his political career. Soon these reformers found that mainly through their efforts others were becoming interested in the movement. The first formal association of reformers was organized in New York on May 16, 1877. This first association was active for only one year. On October 11, 1880 another organization called the New York Civil Service Reform Association came into existence. George William Curtis was chosen President in recognition of his long labors for reform.¹⁶¹ This organization was very active and before long other organizations of this type were formed in other cities. The efforts of President Hayes were greatly responsible for this popular interest in reform. Realizing that if the movement was to exert its full strength, these numerous organizations must cooperate with each other, the New York Association instigated the formation of a National Civil Service Reform Association. Delegates met at Newport in 1881 for the purpose of forming a national organization. Thus the National Civil Service Reform Association came into existence. Curtis was chosen as the first president. The purpose of the association was to serve "... as a center of correspondence and of facilitating such united action as circumstances might demand...."¹⁶² More particularly the association set out to gain support for reform through publicity and education. It hoped to secure both local and national legislation in favor of reform. The association intended to fight the practice of political assessments by exposing and prosecuting violations

¹⁶¹ Stewart, 23-24.

¹⁶² Ibid., 28.

of this type. Their chief aim was to elect a reform President.¹⁶³

¹⁶³Civil Service Reform Association. Purposes of the Civil Service Reform Association. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1881, 1-11. A copy of the constitution follows, 13-15. The immediate action taken by the association is discussed in Stewart, 30-45.

CHAPTER VI
THE PENDLETON ACT

The campaign of 1880 was almost as corrupt as those campaigns of the 1860's.¹⁶⁴ In spite of the fact that both major political parties carried reform planks in their platforms,¹⁶⁵ office holders were assessed, and all of the old-time campaign tricks and threats were used.¹⁶⁶ The Republicans were successful in 1880, and many reformers welcomed the election of James Garfield who had supported civil service reform since it was introduced by Jenckes in 1865, but they were disappointed in his inaugural address. He did not make a strong appeal for reform, but only promised to ask Congress for legislation regulating the tenure of minor officials and prescribing the system by which removals should be made.¹⁶⁷ Just how much Garfield would have done for the reform of the civil service will never be known.

¹⁶⁴ Schurz, Reminiscences, III, 396.

¹⁶⁵ The platform of the Democratic party promising "... a general and thorough reform of the civil service" can be found in: Stanwood, 367. The resolution regarding reform adopted by the Republicans stated that "... the reform of the civil service should be thorough, radical and complete." Ibid., 360.

¹⁶⁶ E. E. Sparks, XXIII, 163-164.

¹⁶⁷ Richardson, X, 4601-4602. "The civil service can never be placed on a satisfactory basis until it is regulated by law. For the good of the service ... I shall at the proper time ask Congress to fix the tenure of the minor offices of the several Executive Departments and prescribe the grounds upon which removals shall be made during the terms for which the incumbents have been appointed."

His unfortunate death may have done more for reform than would have been accomplished by his administration.¹⁶⁸ In any event, the assassination of President Garfield by Charles Guiteau, a demented, disappointed office seeker, gave great impetus to the reform movement.¹⁶⁹ Just one month later the National Civil Service Reform Association was organized.

The association seemed to play the part of an agitator. Corruption in the civil service was blamed for the murder of the President. Men of literary talent took up the cry for reform, and the nation was bombarded with reform literature as the reformers battled desperately.¹⁷⁰ The National Reform Association seemed to coordinate the efforts of all reformers.

The succession of Arthur to the presidency was considered a blow to the movement by most reformers. Arthur was a political protege of Roscoe Conkling, the old spoilsman from New York. Furthermore, he had been collector of the port of New York at the time President Hayes had conducted his investigation there. His record did not satisfy the reformers and therefore his first annual message came as a surprise to them. President Arthur devoted a great deal of time to civil service reform, especially recommending the British civil service system. His message contained this

¹⁶⁸ James Ford Rhodes. History of the United States from Hayes to McKinley. Macmillan Co., New York, 1919, VIII, 161-162.

¹⁶⁹ S. S. Cox, 675-676.

¹⁷⁰ E. E. Sparks, XXIII, 162. This author tells us that as many as one hundred articles on reform appeared in a single year.

hopeful passage:

Original appointments should be based upon ascertained fitness. The tenure of office should be stable. Positions of responsibility should, as far as practicable, be filled by the promotion of worthy and efficient officers. The investigation of all official misconduct should be prompt and thorough.¹⁷¹

This was indeed hopeful, coming from a man who had been disgracefully removed from public office because he had followed the creed of the spoils-man.

The elections of 1882 were occasions for more corrupt political activity. This time the politicians were confronted by the organized opposition of the National Civil Service Reform Association, and their activities received some death dealing publicity.¹⁷² The Republican political activity had been especially corrupt and the Democrats carried the elections in many places. The defeat of the Republicans seemed to indicate that the general public was aroused over the question of reform and intended to use its voting power to bring about reform.¹⁷³

During this period the reformers had been doing more than exposing corruption. In December, 1880, George H. Fendleton, a Democratic Senator

¹⁷¹Richardson, X, 4647.

¹⁷²For an account of the activity of the reformers regarding the corrupt practices in the elections of 1882 see: E.E. Sparks, XXIII, 197-198.

¹⁷³Curtis. "The Progress of Reform". Orations and Addresses, II, 228.

from Ohio, had introduced a bill to reform the civil service and to prohibit political assessments.¹⁷⁴ As I have mentioned, one objective of the National Reform Association was to promote reform legislation. The reformers were convinced that this Pendleton Bill of 1880 was unsound, even unconstitutional in certain parts. Therefore they asked Pendleton to substitute a bill drawn up by Dorman B. Eaton. As Eaton later said, the Senator "patriotically and magnanimously" withdrew his bill and substituted this newer one.¹⁷⁵ This second bill was also called the Pendleton Bill. This bill was sent to the Hawley Committee and reported back very favorably, but the Senate took no further action on it during that session.¹⁷⁶

It was at this point that the elections of 1882 took place and their complete corruption publicized by the reformers gave added impetus to the popular cry for reform. As Curtis said "... the Congress which had adjourned in August laughing at reform heard the thunder of the elections in November ...",¹⁷⁷ and returned to Congress in December aware that some kind of action must be taken. Furthermore, President Arthur was urging Congress to legislate for civil service reform in his second annual message.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴For a summary of this first bill see: A. Bower Sogesser. "The First Two Decades of the Pendleton Act." University Studies, University of Nebraska, Lincoln (1934-1935), XXXIV - XXXV, 37-38.

¹⁷⁵Eaton, "The First Steps", 107-108.

¹⁷⁶Curtis, "The Progress of Reform", 227-253 give an interesting account of the progress of the Pendleton Act through Congress.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 228-229.

¹⁷⁸Richardson, X, 4732-4734.

The Pendleton Bill came before the Senate again in December, 1882.¹⁷⁹

There was considerable opposition to it as the debates which took place almost every day until its passage testify. It was finally passed on December 27, 1882 in the Senate.¹⁸⁰ There were 38 votes cast in its favor, 5 votes cast against it, and 33 Senators were absent.¹⁸¹ This large number of absentees seems to me to indicate that while a great many Senators opposed reform, they were afraid to vote against it in the face of public sentiment for reform measures. The events immediately following its passage in the Senate show the reason for this opposition. Senator Brown rose to offer an amendment to the title of the new bill. He proposed to change it to, "... a bill to perpetuate in office the Republicans who now control the patronage of the Government."¹⁸²

The bill was sent to the House where it was passed on January 4, 1883.¹⁸³ In the House, 155 votes were cast in favor of the bill and 47 votes cast against it, while 87 Representatives did not vote.¹⁸⁴ The President signed the bill on January 16, 1883. George William Curtis said that he knew " ... no more amusing and significant story in the history of American

179 Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 2nd Sess., 202-211.

180 Ibid., 661.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid., 867.

184 Ibid.

politics...¹⁸⁵ than the debates and discussions in Congress aroused by the Pendleton Act.

The Pendleton Act was passed in order to regulate and improve the civil service. The act was a blow to the spoils system and made many of the old political practices illegal. The act provided that the President appoint a Civil Service Commission of three persons, not more than two of whom were to be of the same political party. These commissioners were to aid the President in setting up a system of rules which would make the act effective. According to the act, the rules should provide for competitive examinations, conveniently held and open to all persons desiring to take them. Bribery of all kinds was made illegal and punishable by fine or imprisonment or both. Civil servants were to be classified and appointments were to be made on the basis of grades received in the examinations. The assessing of public servants for political purposes was made illegal. This act was to go into effect six months after its passage.¹⁸⁶

The success of the Pendleton Act depended on the President. True to his word, President Arthur aided it in every way. The first commissioners appointed by him were Dorman B. Eaton of New York, John M. Gregory of Illinois and Leroy D. Thomas of Ohio. Under these able men the reform of the civil service was well under way; the Pendleton Act was the first real threat to the spoils system.

¹⁸⁵Curtis, "The Progress of Reform", 233.

¹⁸⁶Civil Service Commission. Civil Service Act and Rules. United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1883 contains a copy of the act and rules suggested by the first commission.

CONCLUSION

The civil service system of the United States was not completely reformed by the passage of a single act by Congress. The reformers continued their efforts, and are an organized group today. A system as pernicious as the spoils system could not be wiped out with one stroke of the President's pen. The spoils system had been entrenched in our political philosophy since the Jackson era, and could not be eradicated in a moment.

The system commended itself to many men who looked for fame and wealth in a political career. To these warriors of the political arena the spoils system was their best weapon, for it could be used both to reward and punish subordinates. To say that the spoils system resulted in political corruption is an under-statement. The lack of morals in politics was probably never so pronounced as in the period following the Civil War. Men like Roscoe Conkling, who would have been insulted if offered a money bribe by any group interested in the passage or defeat of certain legislation, accepted and dispensed political favors without any qualms of conscience. The same man, to whom Grant offered the post of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, might, I believe, have been president of the nation had he not been so intrigued with the sordid side of politics. Today his chief claim to glory lies in the fact that he controlled the politics of New York state during the most corrupt era of our political history. Conkling is only one of a large number of men who had the ability to rise to the heights of statesmanship, but who chose to grovel in the depths of corrupt politics.

Our newspapers and radio commentators of today remind us all too frequently that the modern politicians are not the moralists of the day. The Pendleton Act was the first inroad on the spoils system and it was followed by more legislation that has remarkably reformed the federal civil service. However, local civil service systems, both state and municipal, offer a fertile field to the reformer. As long as politicians are human we will probably have at least some of the aspects of the spoils system in our civil service systems, but the ever watchful eye of the reformer can keep this corruption at a minimum. I believe the historian can do much to make the public aware of the efforts made in past years toward the goal of good government and to point out the need for reform when it exists. The historian could hope to be rewarded by the demands of an awakened public for civil service reform.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Katherine Reuland has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

May 18, 1948
Date

Paul Kinney
Signature of Adviser