

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers I*, 1885 – 1886 Oct 3, '85 to May 29, '86) The original is very badly faded.

The Latest Move Of the Civil-Service Reformers

The sincerity with which the president has lived up to his promise to enforce the act regulating the civil service, and the nerve with which he has withstood the onslaught of the hungry hordes of his party, have already gained him the confidence and support of most citizens who are not disappointed office seekers or frustrated partisans.

Many a Republican office holder today owes his tenure of office to that 18 inch collar to which he was wont, during the recent campaign to make derisive allusion, but notwithstanding the President's firmness of purpose on the subject of Civil Service Reform, and in spite of the strength of that will which goes with the 18 inch collar, the importunities of office-seekers in general, and of Congressional office-brokers in particular became so unendurable that the Executive Order of October 27th, denying himself in the future to all applicants for office became a necessity, and was at the same time a pitiful acknowledgment of an abuse which every good citizen must regard with humiliation.

On the 30th of November the Several Service Reform League of Philadelphia passed a resolution recommending Congress to pass an act making it a misdemeanor for any Senator or Representative to recommend or solicit the appointment of any person to office. The good people of Philadelphia had been much disturbed by the appointment of Mr. Harrity to succeed General Huidekoper as Post Master. It was not so much the removal of Huidekoper that annoyed them, for he had been a highly respectable but not a thoroughly efficient Postmaster, and his strong feelings as a Republican had so interfered with his ability to properly administer the new civil service rules in the matter of his appointments, that he could not work in harmony with spirit of the Administration.

It was the appointment of Harrity, the nominee and dependent of Congressman Randall that roused the Philadelphians. For many years Mr. Randall had controlled what Democratic patronage there was in his district upon the accession of Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Randall proposed to reap a harvest long deferred but he met with no success until, at last, summoning all his strength, he besieged the president successfully on behalf of Harrity, and the

Civil Service League thereupon passed this resolution.

The subject was immediately taken up by prominent Civil-Service Reformers, a bill was prepared, and on the 18th of this month Sen. Hampton of South Carolina – Wade Hampton, – introduced this bill in the Senate.

Getting rid of office-seekers

A bill, forbidding Senators or Members from recommending Appointments

Washington, the following is the full text of a bill in Dec 18th, introduced by Senator Hampton today, to make it unlawful for Senators or Representatives to recommend any appointments to office.

“Whereas, additional legislation is necessary to carry out the tenth section of the act of Congress of the 18th of January 1883, entitled “An Act to regulate and improve the Civil Service of the United States;’ and

Whereas: The recommending or soliciting appointments to office by Senators or Representatives is not only contrary to the spirit of the 10th section, but it also interferes seriously with the performance of their legislative duties.

Section 1. Now, therefore, be it enacted, etc. that it shall be a misdemeanor for any Senator or Representative of the Congress of the United States to recommend or solicit, directly or indirectly the appointment of any person to an office under the Government of the United States, and that any such Senator or Representative who shall be convicted of making such recommendation or soliciting, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$5000 and not less than \$500, one half of which shall go to the persons upon whose testimony such conviction shall have been obtained, and the other half to the United States.

Section 2. That whenever the appointing power shall call on a Senator or Representative for information as to changing an application for office, he shall do so in writing, and such information as may be given shall be furnished in writing over the signature of such Senator or Representative, and shall be filed in the Department or Bureau of the officer at whose request it was furnished.

Section 3. Nothing in this act shall be construed so as to forbid any Senator or Representative of the Congress of the United States from forwarding to the appointing power any application for office that he may receive but any endorsements he may make thereon shall relate only to the facts of the case or the character of the application.”

Just prior to the presentation of this bill, the New York Evening Post published two letters from Mr. Henry C. Lea of Philadelphia, which set forth very clearly some of the reasons for such an enactment. He calls attention in these letters to the well-known fact that the stronghold of the spoils system is in the halls of Congress. Among Congressmen are found the most violent opponents to any civil service reform.

No right-minded citizen can visit Washington without being disgusted at the sight of Members of Congress singly and in bodies hovering around the President and the Departments in the avowed capacity of office-brokers, and quarreling with each other over their respective successes and defeats. In the special dispatches from Washington the public interests are seldom alluded to, but the never-failing topic is whether this or that Honorable gentleman will succeed in keeping his promise to his heelers.

This claim of Congressmen to control the patronage of their respective districts and states, is a palpable violation of the constitutional adjustment of the functions of the Executive and Legislative Departments of the government.

It enables the Executive to shirk any responsibility for its appointment by sheltering itself behind the Legislature, whose members, as the price of their elections have insisted upon the appointment of their ward workers. And on the other hand, the Legislature, by this usurpation of Executive functions on the part of its members, is rendered unfit to discharge its constitutional duties of supervising the Executive.

The framers of the Constitution foresaw the danger to be feared from this interference by one branch of the Government with the functions of the others. The Federalist teems with arguments for Gen'l Hampton's bill.

It would seem at first as if there could be but little hope of the passage of such a measure. One cynical correspondent writes to an eastern paper that “the weather will be cold indeed when Congress shall gravely legislate that

its members our unworthy of confidence.” Yet when brought to the test, there is reason to hope that the bill will be favorably received by many members, whose hostility might naturally be expected. The writer was in Washington when the friends of the measure were consulting as to who should be asked to present it, and it was feared that a champion could not easily be found; but the Senator from South Carolina, the first choice of the committee, espoused the cause heartily at once.

The Republicans in the Senate can gain much and lose nothing by passing the bill, and as a Democratic measure, it will go well favored to the House. Most members of that body realize that their supposed control of offices in their respective Districts costs more in broken promises and resulting enmity than it pays in any way, and would be glad to have the escape which such a law would afford them from the importunities of political creditors, as well as from the degradation and vexation to which they are constantly subjected as office-brokers under the present system.

And now, if the reports from Washington are well-founded, it is especially fitting that the man for whom Mr. Pendleton's seat in the Senate was purchased, should properly represent those who sent him there by accusing Mr. Cleveland of bad faith and taking advantage, as he naïvely puts it, of his absence in Europe, and appointing Mr. Urner as marshall of this District, and Judge Stalls as Minister to Italy.

Charles B. Wilby

Budget
Wald Editor
Dec. 26th '85