

Just New Spoils Plan

The Washington correspondent of the Kansas City Star, under date of May 11, says: "To all intents and purposes, determination of whom the postmaster will be in the many Kansas and Missouri towns is returned to the congressmen from individual districts, as it used to be, under the presidential order establishing a new civil service plan for first, second and third class postoffices that was promulgated today."

There is this important difference from the old "spoils" system. Then the member of congress or national committeeman or senator, whoever controlled the patronage, named whomsoever he pleased without regard to examinations. Now the congressman can only designate which one he prefers of the top three in the examination.

But as one "hard boiled" G. O. P. leader expressed it today: "If the congressman's choice is such a 'dub' he can't land somewhere in the top three places in the examination, he ought not to get the job anyhow."

Under the Harding order issued today, the Burleson system of civil service is set completely aside. The basis of the Burleson plan was to give the top man in the examinations the place. In several instances Burleson refused to name the winner of the examination, but they were comparatively few. The Republicans always claimed ex-President Wilson did not put the civil service into effect until the offices were filled with Democrats, when it was easier for the incumbent in the office, because of his experience, to carry off top honors in the examinations.

Under the Harding civil service order, put in effect today, the civil service commission is to conduct the examinations for postmaster as it has in the past. Instead of the top man getting the place, the first three names on the list are to be certified by the civil service commission to the postmaster general and that official is to designate which one shall be named postmaster.

And right there is where the congressmen enter. Obviously it is impossible for the postmaster general to know or investigate the three successful candidates for the 12,599 offices that now come under this order. The postmaster general could go right ahead and name the top candidate in the examination. But the way it will work out, as everyone here knows it will, the senator or house member will be called in and given a chance to designate which one of the three he prefers.

Of course, the postmaster general doesn't have to take his recommendation—neither did he in the past. But in all likelihood he will, especially as the candidate has shown enough ability to show one, two, three in the examination. Members of congress accept the situation as such and expect to be largely influential in naming the postmasters, cautioning their friends, however, that they will have to rank in the top three in the examinations. If they do not, then there is no help for them.

Republicans justify the order on the grounds that the regular civil service, under which more than four hundred thousand employees work, provides for this same system—certification of the top three names on the list, leaving the bureau head liberty to pick the one of the three. Likewise, they point out that the civil service commission, not the post-office department, will be in the complete charge of the examinations and will have the rating of the candidates.

The new order will have no immediate effect on Baylis Steele, the

Kansas City postmaster. He has about two years to serve under his present term. While many Republicans would like the job, there would be no way of getting Steele out, except to prefer charges and remove him for cause. And there is no disposition to do that in Steele's case. Missourians here are generally content to let him serve his time out. Likewise, Steele is a close friend of Senator Reed and the Kansas City senator probably stands closer with the administration than any other Democrat. It would be idle for any-

one to try and "get" Steele, and the politicians know it.

In the case of Postmaster Steele at Kansas City, as soon as his term is out, the civil service commission will announce examinations. Steele can take them if he desires, or anyone else can who is under 65 and over 19 years old and has lived in Kansas City two years or more. Unless the qualifications are changed for an office of his size, each candidate must also have had five years' employment in a responsible position involving managerial experience, with some

corporation or business firm, or in the postoffice itself.

In St. Louis former employees already have preferred charges against Colin Selph and asked an investigation with a view of getting him removed before his term is out. But even in this case, those who are familiar with the situation say there is no doubt of Selph being permitted to serve his time out. He, likewise, is a friend of Senator Reed. The first big Missouri office to be filled will be at Sedalia, where there is a vacancy.

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