

# Journal of the Canadian Historical Association Revue de la Société historique du Canada



## Getting Hired: The Civil Service Act of 1857

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Volume 3, Number 1, 1992

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/031046ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/031046ar>

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### Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

### ISSN

0847-4478 (print)

1712-6274 (digital)

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### Cite this article

Piva, M. J. (1992). Getting Hired: The Civil Service Act of 1857. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 3(1), 95–127. <https://doi.org/10.7202/031046ar>

### Article abstract

In 1857 the Province of Canada passed the Civil Service Act which made a first attempt to define uniform personnel policies for the emerging bureaucracy. Analysis of applications, examination results and appointments to the inside service between September 1857, when applicants first sat for examination, and the end of 1861, when the government undertook an internal survey of public employees, demonstrates that the reform potential of the Act was only partially realized. The introduction of the examination system strongly favoured applicants who resided in the provincial capital. Applicants were most frequently urban middle-class men born either in the United Kingdom or in Canada East. Many were young, although a significant number were over 30 years of age and had extensive labour market experience. Analysis of the employment histories of applicants shows that middle-class careers commonly involved frequent job changes in which workers moved from one employer to another and often back and forth between salaried employment and independence. The Civil Service examination proved elementary, yet it tested basic skills appropriate for the work of most public employees. Although examination results were sufficiently discrete to be used as a competitive examination, decision-makers treated the exercise as a qualifying examination and paid little attention to examination results. Very few successful candidates found employment in the Civil Service; those few were employed at all ranks within the service. Analysis of public employees in 1861 also demonstrates that, although experience was an important factor, seniority did not govern hiring, promotion or salary decisions. The evidence also suggests that patronage played at best a limited role in hiring decisions within the inside service while nepotism continued to exist. In the end The Civil Service Act proved a modest attempt to reform the bureaucracy by creating uniformity in ranks, procedures for appointment and promotion, and, most importantly, salary structures. Its successes proved even more modest.

# Getting Hired: The Civil Service Act of 1857

MICHAEL J. PIVA

## Résumé

*In 1857 the Province of Canada passed the Civil Service Act which made a first attempt to define uniform personnel policies for the emerging bureaucracy. Analysis of applications, examination results and appointments to the inside service between September 1857, when applicants first sat for examination, and the end of 1861, when the government undertook an internal survey of public employees, demonstrates that the reform potential of the Act was only partially realized. The introduction of the examination system strongly favoured applicants who resided in the provincial capital. Applicants were most frequently urban middle-class men born either in the United Kingdom or in Canada East. Many were young, although a significant number were over 30 years of age and had extensive labour market experience. Analysis of the employment histories of applicants shows that middle-class careers commonly involved frequent job changes in which workers moved from one employer to another and often back and forth between salaried employment and independence. The Civil Service examination proved elementary, yet it tested basic skills appropriate for the work of most public employees. Although examination results were sufficiently discrete to be used as a competitive examination, decision-makers treated the exercise as a qualifying examination and paid little attention to examination results. Very few successful candidates found employment in the Civil Service; those few were employed at all ranks within the service. Analysis of public employees in 1861 also demonstrates that, although experience was an important factor, seniority did not govern hiring, promotion or salary decisions. The evidence also suggests that patronage played at best a limited role in hiring decisions within the inside service while nepotism continued to exist. In the end The Civil Service Act proved a modest attempt to reform the bureaucracy by creating uniformity in ranks, procedures for appointment and promotion, and, most importantly, salary structures. Its successes proved even more modest.*

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*En 1857, le gouvernement de la province du Canada-Uni adopta une loi de la fonction publique par laquelle il essaya pour la première fois de définir une politique d'encadrement du personnel de la bureaucratie naissante. L'analyse des demandes d'emploi, des résultats d'examen et des désignations à des postes de fonctionnaires, pour la période qui s'étend de septembre 1857 à la fin de 1861, c'est-à-dire du moment où les*

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I would like to thank John Taylor and Bruce Curtis who read an earlier draft of this paper and made a number of very useful comments and suggestions.

*postulants furent soumis à un examen pour la première fois à celui où le gouvernement entreprit une enquête interne sur ses fonctionnaires, montre que le potentiel réformiste de la loi ne fut atteint qu'en partie. En effet, le nouveau système d'examen eut tendance à favoriser les habitants de la capitale de la province. De plus, les postulants appartenaient pour la plupart aux classes moyennes urbaines nées soit au Royaume-Uni soit au Canada-Est. Plusieurs étaient jeunes, quoiqu'un bon nombre d'entre-eux avaient plus de trente ans et qu'ils se présenteraient avec une expérience considérable du marché du travail. Un examen plus poussé des emplois antérieurs des candidats indique que les trajectoires professionnelles des membres des classes moyennes étaient marquées par de fréquents changements, soit d'un employeur à un autre soit entre un travail salarié et une entreprise autonome. Les questions de l'examen lui-même étaient élémentaires, d'un niveau toutefois qui permettait de s'assurer que les postulants détenaient les qualifications nécessaires à l'exécution de la plupart des tâches de la fonction publique. Les résultats auraient permis de ranger les candidats selon leurs compétences, comme l'auraient voulu les règles d'un système compétitif, mais les responsables choisirent de ne les traiter que comme un simple exercice de qualification. Au total, très peu des candidats ainsi repérés reçurent une offre d'emploi; et ceux qui réussirent à entrer dans la fonction publique de cette façon se retrouvèrent à des niveaux d'emploi très variés. L'analyse des carrières des fonctionnaires montre que l'expérience professionnelle constituait un important facteur de promotion sans pour autant que l'ancienneté ne prévale dans les décisions concernant ces promotions, l'embauche ou encore les salaires. Ces documents suggèrent aussi que le patronage jouait un rôle limité dans les pratiques d'engagement à l'intérieur de la fonction publique mais que le népotisme continua d'exister. En définitive, il faut voir en cette première loi de la fonction publique un effort modeste — aux résultats encore plus modestes — de changer la bureaucratie, en créant une certaine uniformité parmi les emplois d'un même niveau, les procédures d'embauche et de promotion et, de façon plus importante, au sein de la structure salariale.*

In 1857 the Province of Canada passed the Civil Service Act<sup>1</sup> modelled on similar legislation in the United Kingdom. This Act represented the first attempt to define with some precision the personnel policies governing hiring, salary, and promotion within the nascent provincial bureaucracy. Heretofore, individual departments had hired independently and paid what they — and the Executive Council — chose on an *ad hoc* basis. Henceforth a Board of Examiners would examine and certify qualified applicants for employment, and uniform ranks complete with salary maximums, minimums, specific annual increases, and experience criteria would be imposed on all departments. Finally, the Act limited the circumstances under which departments could hire temporary and extra clerks.

We know very little about the early civil service in Canada.<sup>2</sup> Several historians have commented upon the loose, imprecise and confused — if not chaotic — admin-

1. Province of Canada, *Statutes*, 1857, "An Act for improving the organization and increasing the efficiency of the Civil Service of Canada" [Civil Service Act], 20 Vic., cap. 24.
2. There is remarkably little work on the Canadian civil service during any period, and virtually none on the personnel of that Service. Most studies are institutional and/or deal with a later period. See for example, J. E. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service: An Administrative History*

istration in both Upper and Lower Canada;<sup>3</sup> Sir George Arthur, the last Lieutenant Governor in Upper Canada, suggested that much of the discontent in that colony resulted from these administrative weaknesses.<sup>4</sup> Carol Wilton-Siegel, in turn, picks up this point and argues that administrative reform represented a Tory alternative to responsible government.<sup>5</sup> Similarly Ian Radforth sees Charles Poulett Thomson as a utilitarian unable to resist the challenge of creating rational and efficient administrative structures of civil government.<sup>6</sup> A number of other historians see the Union period as the critical epoch in the process of state formation in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Much of this new historiography follows J. E. Hodgetts' *Pioneer Public Service* and, like Hodgetts, tends to emphasize the growth and development of institutions and structures. Hodgetts, meanwhile, pays little attention to personnel and personnel policy, and his few comments are based primarily upon a single source.<sup>8</sup>

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of the United Canadas, 1841-1867 (Toronto, 1965), R. MacGregor Dawson, *The Civil Service of Canada* (London, 1929), J. E. Hodgetts, William McClosky, Reginald Whitaker and V. Seymour Wilson, *The Biography of an Institution: The Civil Service Commission of Canada, 1908-1967* (Montreal and London, 1972), O. P. Dwivedi *The Administrative State in Canada: Essays in Honour of J. E. Hodgetts* (Toronto, 1982), or J. L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto, 1982). Certainly the best and most challenging work on pre-Confederation civil servants is Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto 1992), although the discussion is limited to the school inspectorate in Canada West. Despite the promise of its subtitle, Bill Doherty's *Slaves of the Lamp: A History of the Federal Civil Service Organizations, 1865-1924* (Victoria, 1991) contains remarkably little material on the nineteenth century and instead focuses attention on the organizing efforts of Frank Grierson. There are no studies in Canada along the lines of Cindy Sondik Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-class Workers in Victorian America* (New York and Oxford, 1987).

3. See for example, Michael J. Piva, *The Borrowing Process: Public Finance in the Province of Canada, 1840-1867* (Ottawa, 1992), 9-16, or Peter Baskerville, ed. *The Bank of Upper Canada: A Collection of Documents* (Ottawa, 1987), lxi-lxii.
4. See for example, Charles R. Sanderson, ed., *The Arthur Papers* Vol. 2 (Toronto, 1957), Sir George Arthur to Charles Poulett Thomson, 9 November 1839, 304.
5. Carol Wilton-Siegel, "Administrative Reform: A Conservative Alternative to Responsible Government," *Ontario History*, LXXVIII (1986): 120.
6. Ian Radforth, "Sydenham and Utilitarian Reform," in A. Greer and I. Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto, 1992), 64-102.
7. Bruce Curtis argues convincingly that "The principles of governance were reconstructed and the state system was radically reformed in the Canadas of the 1840s and 1850s. . . . New agencies and instruments of government and new ideological justifications for political domination were created, struggled over, and entrenched." Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, 15, but see in particular 15-33 and the essays by Curtis and others included in Greer and Radforth, *Colonial Leviathan*.
8. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 37, 43-44, 52.

In February 1863 Thomas D'arcy McGee, the President of the Executive Council, submitted a long report outlining the origins of public departments.<sup>9</sup> Without commenting on the basis for his opinions, McGee ended his report with a general attack on the Civil Service Act and by implication the personnel practices of the government. His primary complaint involved "sterile seniority," which he believed governed all promotions in the service.<sup>10</sup> He had no faith in the merit potential of examinations which, he asserted, provided neither "a passport [n]or a hinderance" to entrance into the service. In addition, McGee voiced his concerns about the limitations placed on the hiring of extra clerks, limitations which, he asserted, were routinely ignored and evaded. Examination of the Act and its application demonstrates that McGee's criticisms were groundless in most cases. It is time to re-evaluate the impact of the Civil Service Act of 1857 for its significance goes well beyond correcting the errors of D'arcy McGee.

Historians have long acknowledged the sweeping social transformation which began with the emergence of a "new middle class" of salaried employees at the turn of the century. The mark of middle-class status during the Victorian period had been independence: middle-class men were most frequently farmers or businessmen, either large merchants or small shop keepers, working on their own account; they were not, like their more numerous 20th-century counterparts, employees. The state, meanwhile, was the earliest employer of large numbers of permanent salaried workers. As Cindy Aron observes in her study of the American case, "the executive departments of the national government were . . . decades ahead of the private sector."<sup>11</sup> Any changes in their conditions of labour had the potential of establishing enduring precedents. This study will examine the period between September 1857 when applicants first sat for examination and the end of 1861 when the government undertook an internal survey of public employees. It will examine all applications, examination results and appointments to the inside service.

McGee's difficulties begin with what can only be described as a superficial reading of the legislation.<sup>12</sup> Article 32 states that persons appointed had to hold a civil service certificate from the Board of Examiners, and they were to "enter the said Service as fourth class or probationary Clerks." This seems to confirm McGee's argument that appointments could only be made at the lowest level, and thereafter seniority governed

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9. Canada, National Archives [NA], Executive Council Office, RG1 E 7, Vol. 59(a), Darcy McGee, "Report on Origins of the Public Departments, Submission to Council, February, 1863." All subsequent references to McGee's opinions about the Civil Service are based upon this document.

10. McGee argued that the Act "in reality authorizes no appointment of a higher grade than a fourth class clerkship." This combined with seniority in promotions to create "the absurdity of expecting the best men who may apply, to enter the service at the foot of the ladder."

11. Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service*, 5. See Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), and *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977).

12. Civil Service Act, 20 Vic., cap. 24.

all promotions. Article 29, however, states that when vacancies resulted from either death, resignation, removal, promotion, or the creation of new positions the head of the department was to select for promotion the most "suitable person" from among the clerks already employed at a lower rank or salary. The key word here was "suitable." If the head of the department could find no "suitable person" already on staff, appointments would be made as they had always been made, by the Executive Council on the recommendation of the head of the department. This legislation did not prevent appointments from outside the civil service; it simply directed department heads to consider the promotion of current employees before making other recommendations. Moreover, when heads of departments filled vacancies by promoting current employees they were under no obligation to choose the most senior person on staff. The Act does not mention seniority at all.

Article 40, meanwhile, governed the appointment of officers, as opposed to clerks. It instructed heads of departments "to give due consideration to the claims of all the officers and of the clerks . . . in such Department, with a view to selecting the most suitable person to fill such vacancy." If the head of the department could find no *suitable* person already on staff the matter went to Council which "if possible" would try to find a suitable candidate from among the officers and clerks in other departments. Again there was no obligation to promote the most senior employee already on staff, nor was there a prohibition against hiring from outside the civil service. Nor is seniority mentioned in Articles 33 through 39 which, in addition to establishing the minimum salary, the maximum salary, and the annual increase in salary for each rank of clerks, defined the years of experience necessary for promotion from 4th through 1st class clerks.<sup>13</sup>

The most significant departure from existing practices involved the introduction of a qualifying examination. Article 30 provided that:

No appointment to any Office or Clerkship in any of the Departments . . . shall be made except from among those Candidates who having passed their examination shall be registered by the Board of Examiners as proper persons to be employed in the Civil Service of Canada.

Between July and September 1857 the Board drew up regulations covering its own activities, application forms,<sup>14</sup> and appropriate examinations.<sup>15</sup>

13. Promotion to 3rd class clerk required only two years experience, but promotion to 2nd class required an additional six years as a 3rd class clerk. Promotion to 1st class clerk required six years experience as a 2nd class clerk. In addition to having accumulated the minimum years experience for the rank, clerks also had to be "deemed qualified" before they could be promoted.

14. A complete copy of these regulations and forms can be found in NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Civil Service Records, 1764-1874, Vol. 2, "Applications for Employment, 1858," Application of Alexander O'Sullivan. The Provincial Secretary kept a register within the department of all applications which were numbered as they were received. These numbers appear on each application, but they no longer have any use in locating files. Later consolidation of these records have grouped applications in alphabetical order by year, although a number of applications are mis-filed. Each application was to include a letter from

Applicants had to provide basic biographical data including information on their previous employment. Although some applicants made only cursory and ambiguous comments,<sup>16</sup> others provided lengthy employment histories.<sup>17</sup> In addition, applicants had to submit printed medical certificates signed by a practicing physician<sup>18</sup> and two references, both of whom were householders.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly acquaintances proved the referees of choice. (See Table 1.) Fewer than one in six applicants sought references from employers. Similarly, a relatively small number of applicants sought references from provincial politicians. The frequency of references from relatives, guardians, and teachers reflects the relative youth of many applicants.

Printed forms insured that references contained little useful information. Referees were to answer a series of questions;<sup>20</sup> in the overwhelming majority of cases they gave cursory responses, often simply "Yes" or "No doubt" to questions such as suitability for public employment. On a few occasions some useable information was provided.

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the candidate in his own hand, the completed forms provided for referees, a medical certificate, and a certificate of age. On occasion additional correspondence from the candidate is included in the file. On occasion files are incomplete, sometimes the result of a request from the candidate to return baptismal certificates or personal testimonials and sometimes the failure of the candidate to provide requested information. Unless otherwise cited all biographical information on applicants, medical certificates or references are drawn from NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, "Applications for Employment," Vol. 1 (1857), Vol. 2 (1858), Vol. 3 (1859) and Vol. 4 (1860-1861).

15. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, Board of Examiners, 1857, contains what has survived of the Minutes of the Board of Examiners. In general those Minutes of the Board after September 1857 report the names of candidates receiving certificates, being rejected, or being suspended. Vol. 9 contains as well samples of individual examinations.
16. Edwin A. Burrage, for example, mentioned only that he had been employed in several merchant houses. William H. Howard had been "steamboating and railroading." Many had been employed in "commercial affairs" or, even more commonly, "mercantile pursuits."
17. See for example application of George William Cattley, February 1858, application of John Timmins Wright, October 1860 or application of Edouard Simays, April 1861.
18. Only rarely did physicians make any comment on these forms. One interesting case involved John Hopkins, who claimed that while serving in the militia he "contacted an impediment in my hearing which affects me in a close room." Hopkins' doctor described his condition as a "form of deafness," resulting in "a confusion of sounds." Hopkins, as a result, was exempted from the dictation portion of the examination and thus from the spelling examination as well; he received his civil service certificate on the basis of the three remaining portions of the examination. The Post Office Department hired Hopkins as a temporary clerk in May 1858. Later, in October 1861. Hopkins found a permanent position as Post Office inspector in Ottawa at the rank of 3rd class clerk and a salary of \$600. With the exception of John Hopkins, no applicant had any medical problem which could have affected either their performance on the examination or their work as a public employee.
19. If the candidate had left school within the previous two years, one of the referees, if possible, was to be the applicant's teacher. One of the referees, if possible, was to be the applicant's most recent employer.
20. The questions asked were whether they were related to the applicant, how long and in what capacity had they known the applicant, was the applicant sober and responsible, what were the applicant's educational attainments, and was the candidate suited for public employment?

# GETTING HIRED

**Table 1**  
**Referees of Applicants for Examination**

	First Referee		Second Referee		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Acquaintance	262	41.2	279	44.7	541
Employer/Supervisor	111	17.5	77	12.3	188
J.P./Judge	83	13.1	102	16.3	185
Relative/Guardian	35	5.4	41	6.6	76
Teacher	40	6.2	30	4.8	
Minister	32	5.0	18	2.8	50
Civil Servant/Inside	22	3.5	19	3.0	41
Civil Servant/Outside	15	2.4	21	3.4	36
Provincial Politician	17	2.7	17	2.7	34
Municipal Politician	13	2.0	11	1.7	24
Privy Councillor	5	.8	9	1.4	14
Partner	1	.2			1
Total	636		624		1260
Missing Cases	10		22		32

Source: NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 1-4, "Applications for Employment, 1857-1861." All calculations are my own.

Lt. Col. Ermantenger, for example, commented that Robert Lovelace spoke both French and German. A. M. Smith, Thomas Teevin's former employer, commented that "as an accountant & Bookkeeper I believe he [Teevin] is second to none." Both referees for Daniel Makedie commented that he wrote a good hand and was a good accountant. Such references carried little weight in the government's personnel decision beyond qualifying the applicant to sit for examination.

The Board reserved "full discretion as to the evidence of Character which in particular cases they may deem it expedient to require," yet only rarely did it intervene. In a number of cases applicants were allowed to sit for the examination despite incomplete files. On two occasions the Board rejected applicants because they were under-age.<sup>21</sup> In only one case was an applicant summarily dismissed.<sup>22</sup>

21. One of these cases involved 15-year-old Michael Lane who earned an aggregate score of 390 in April 1860. Lane had been working in the Provincial Registrar's Office since December 1859. In March 1861, shortly after his 16th birthday Lane again applied to take the civil service examination. He received his civil service certificate without being required to sit for a new examination.

22. William Wadsworth, a 44-year-old Irish carpenter from Goderich failed to have his second reference from B. MacDougall countersigned by a JP verifying that MacDougall was a householder. This indiscretion led to Wadsworth's rejection: "the Board after a careful examination of the papers submitted by you, regret that your testimonials as to moral character are not satisfactory." The Board added gratuitously that the "orthography" and penmanship of the application suggested that "the result of an examination before the Board would not be satisfactory to you." No other applicant was treated so cavalierly.



The first civil service examination was held in September 1857 in Toronto, the provincial capital. The perambulations of the capital between Toronto and Quebec forced cancellation of examinations in August and September 1859. Between October 1859 and December 1861 the examinations were held in Quebec.<sup>23</sup>

Economic dislocation combined with the introduction of the new certification system to insure numerous applications; during the first twelve months 299 candidates, or 24.9 per month, applied to take the civil service examination. This number fell precipitously toward the end of 1858.<sup>24</sup> Although the number of applicants again rose once the government moved to Quebec, applicants remained less numerous than in 1857-1858. Nor did the number of applicants stay high for long.<sup>25</sup> Although this decline over time no doubt reflected the improved economic conditions at the end of the decade, there was as well a growing appreciation that a civil service certificate, although a prerequisite for employment in the inside service, was neither a probable ticket to a secure job nor a necessity for employment in the outside service.

One of the more significant if unintended outcomes of the examination system was to encourage recruitment from more local labour markets. There was to be only one examination each month held at headquarters. Potential candidates for employment who lived any significant distance from the capital found themselves facing the difficulties and expense of travelling to Toronto or later Quebec to be examined. William Flynn, for example, lived in Percé, and travelling to Toronto posed insurmountable obstacles.

I have not the slightest objection to go to Toronto, in order to undergo my examination before the Board for the office of Preventive Officer, vacant by the death of My Father, but the length of the journey from Gaspé to Toronto at this late period of the season, and my present limited means to undertake it, the absence of friends or acquaintances in that locality to assist me, the fact that I would have to leave behind me young brothers and sisters who would require my utmost exertion and watchful care over them the inferiority of the office which I apply for . . . all these are reasons that I would beg of you the favour of exposing to the Board of examiners and entreat of them the favour of being examined here by the Collector of Customs of the Port of Gaspé.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly John Perrée found it impossible to travel to Toronto from his home in Ste. Anne des Monts, County Gaspé. Perrée, unlike Flynn, had the ear of the inspector general who intervened on his behalf. Although, the Board of Examiners adopted a new policy that

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23. No examinations were held in September 1860.

24. Between September 1858 and July 1859 only 67 people, or 6.1 per month, applied for examination.

25. Between October 1859 and May 1860, 138 people, or 17.3 per month, applied for the examination, but between June 1860 and December 1861, only 130 people, or 6.8 per month, applied.

26. Flynn was 21 years old and wanted to be appointed as preventive officer in the Port. This position had been held by his father until his death, and Flynn was at the time carrying out his father's duties. His referees, a local merchant and the County registrar, commented that he had been doing a good job.

**Table 2**  
**Residence of Applicants for Examination**

	Toronto			Quebec		
	No.	%	%	No.	%	%
Canada West			87.9			18.0
Toronto	151	41.5		6	2.2	
Hamilton	13	3.6		3	1.1	
Kingston	11	3.0		12	4.4	
London	16	4.4		2	.7	
Ottawa	1	.3		3	1.1	
Other Urban	68	18.7		12	4.4	
Other Rural	60	16.5		11	4.0	
Canada East			12.1			82.0
Quebec	3	.8		145	53.3	
Montreal	24	6.6		41	15.1	
Sherbrooke	3	.8		2	.7	
Other Urban	5	1.4		3	1.1	
Other Rural	9	2.5		32	11.8	
Total	364			272		
Missing Cases	5			5		

Source: See Table 1.

candidates not resident in the section of province in which the seat of government is then situated may upon application take the examination at the office of the Chief Superintendent of Education in the other section of the province.<sup>27</sup>

no such examinations were ever offered.

Thomas King's case suggests another reason for not taking the civil service examination. A native of England residing in Anderdon, County Essex, King applied in October 1857 but then decided not to journey to Toronto. He noted that reports in the papers suggested there were far more candidates than jobs:

I think there is but little prospect for fresh candidates at present . . . If the Board think that I may obtain a situation within a short time, I will come and be examined but I cannot afford the expenses without a good prospect.

King was correct; there were far more applicants than jobs. The further one lived from the provincial capital, the harder it would be to justify the expense and time necessary to earn a civil service certificate.

When the examinations were held in Toronto the largest number of applicants came, as one would expect, from that city; very few came from Canada East. (See Table 2.)

27. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, Minutes, Board of Examiners, 14 November 1857.

**Table 3**  
**Place of Birth of Applicants for Examination**

	Toronto			Quebec		
	No.	%	%	No.	%	%
Canada West	82	22.6	28	10.6	110	17.6
Canada East	41	11.3	147	55.9	188	30.0
Canada*	3	.8	7	2.7	10	1.6
Nova Scotia	2	.6	1	.4	3	.5
New Brunswick	1	.3	2	.8	3	.5
Newfoundland	1	.3			1	.1
England	89	24.5	29	11.0	118	18.8
Ireland	79	21.8	29	11.0	108	17.3
Scotland	46	12.7	9	3.4	55	8.8
Other U.K.**	2	.6	1	.4	3	.5
Other British Empire	5	1.4	4	1.5	9	1.4
USA	3	.8	3	1.1	6	1.0
France	1	.3			1	.2
French West Indies	1	.3			1	.2
Belgium			1	.4	1	.2
Russia	1	.3			1	.2
Germany	2	.6	1	.4	3	.5
Unknown Immigrant***	4	1.1	1	.4	5	.8
Total	363		263		626	
Missing Cases	6		14		20	

Source: See Table 1.

\* Some applicants commented that they had been born in Canada but did not identify which section.

\*\* Includes Wales and the Channel Islands.

\*\*\* Some applicants gave the year they arrived in Canada or the number of years they had resided in Canada without providing their place of birth.

Once the capital moved to Quebec that city provided an even larger proportion of applicants while the number of applicants from Canada West fell precipitously. Applicants were, meanwhile, most likely to have been born either in the United Kingdom or in Canada East. (See Table 3.) When the capital was in Toronto British immigrants were particularly numerous: 60 per cent of all applicants between September 1857 and August 1859 had been born abroad either in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the British empire while only 23 per cent had been born in Canada West. This situation changed dramatically once the capital moved to Quebec. Between October 1859 and December 1861, 56 per cent of applicants had been born in Canada East while only one in four had been born abroad in the United Kingdom or the British empire.

The majority of these immigrants arrived at relatively young ages: fully 50 per cent of the immigrant applicants had been 20 years old or younger when they arrived in

**Table 4**  
**Language of Applicants for Examination**

	Number	Per cent
Language of Examination		
English	489	87.3
French	25	4.5
Bilingual French*	34	6.1
Bilingual English*	12	1.9
Total	560**	
Evidence of Bilingualism		
Bilingual	113	17.5
Unilingual	533	82.5
Total	646	

Source: NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 13, "Civil Service Examinations, Results and Reports, 1857-1861," for language of examination. All calculations are my own. See Table 1 for evidence of bilingualism.

\* Candidates who took the examination in both languages were given scores in each language. In determining aggregate scores and certification, the Board took the highest of the two. "Bilingual French" are those who did better in French than English; "Bilingual English" are those who did better in English than French.

\*\* Not all applicants took the examination.

Canada; half of this group had been under 13. Only one in four British-immigrant applicants had been 26 years of age or older when they arrived in Canada. One-third of British immigrant applicants, meanwhile, had resided in Canada for fifteen years or more, although another third had been in the country five years or less.

Linguistically, applicants — like the civil service — were mainly Anglophones. Initially application forms came in English only. Examinations too were in English only. French applications were provided only after the capital moved to Quebec, when applicants could sit for examination in either or both official language. Nearly 90 per cent took their examination in English, only 4.5 per cent took their examination in French. (See Table 4.) Among those who took their examination in both languages, three in four were far more proficient in French than in English.

Evidence based upon the language of the examination understates the number of bilingual candidates, particularly bilingual Anglophones. When the capital was in Toronto, there were few applicants from Canada East and little evidence in the applications that bilingualism was considered an asset. Although some of these candidates may well have been bilingual, applications and examinations even for persons who were in all probability Francophone were in English. The move of the capital to Quebec, meanwhile, insured that most applicants now came from Canada East where linguistic skills were a valued asset. Applications from and examinations of Anglophones continued to be in English, but referees began making far more frequent references to linguistic abilities.

In this analysis applicants were considered bilingual if they a) took the examination in both languages, b) took the examination in a different language than that used in their application, c) passed the optional examination in translation or if d) referees commented that candidates were bilingual. In the case of Francophones evidence of bilingualism most commonly could be found in the languages used in the examination and application. Only rarely did referees comment on linguistic skills even in cases of candidates fluent in both languages. Anglophones on the other hand always applied in English, and almost always took the examination in English. Evidence of bilingualism, where it existed, came most frequently from referees. No doubt some referees failed to comment on the linguistic abilities of some candidates who applied and were examined in only one language, and thus were classified in this study as unilingual.

Table 4 suggests, then, that less than one in five applicants were bilingual. These applicants combined with the small number unilingual Francophones insured that slightly more than one in five had some knowledge of French. This would be a minimum estimate of the linguistic balance as an unknown, although probably small, number of applicants, mainly Anglophones, may well have had some knowledge of the other language despite the failure of referees to note this fact. These figures were considerably lower among the 369 applicants between 1857 and late 1859 who were in the main residents of Canada West, and higher among the 277 applicants between late 1859 and 1861 who were in the main residents of Canada East.

These applicants were, in addition, relatively young, although not so young as one might expect from D'arcy McGee's criticisms. McGee asserted that the Civil Service Act allowed entry into the system only at the lowest rank of 4th class clerk, and this discouraged presumably older men of experience from applying for public employment. Most applicants were young; one third were under 23 years of age. A second third, however, were 30 or older. Primarily designed for young entrance level candidates, the Act and the examination system had not discouraged applications from men with considerable experience in the labour market, often fifteen years or more.

These applicants were overwhelmingly urban, middle-class men.<sup>28</sup> As we saw in Table 2, most applicants resided in the largest cities and towns; very few resided in rural areas. Not surprisingly only 2.5 per cent were farmers while another 2.7 per cent had manual occupations, usually skilled. (See Table 5.)

There were, meanwhile, 88 applications from men already employed by the provincial government. In almost all cases those employed in the outside service were either clerks in a local post office or at a local customs office. Only 22 of these applicants worked in the inside service in almost all cases as temporary or extra clerks.

The large category of "mercantile pursuits," meanwhile, is difficult to define. Some applicants used this term with no explanation. In some cases these men were clerks or salesmen; in other cases the evidence suggests that they were small businessmen working on their own account. John Baillie, for example, was 28 years old when he

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28. There were no applications from women, and no women were employed in the inside service in 1861.

**Table 5**  
**Occupation of Applicants for Examination**

	Number	Per cent
Professional	24	4.1
Businessman	58	9.8
Teacher	25	4.2
Civil Servant/Outside	66	11.2
Civil Servant/Inside	22	3.7
Clerk	124	21.0
Bookkeeper/Accountant	64	10.8
"Mercantile Pursuits"	41	6.9
Other Non-manual	43	7.3
Manual	16	2.7
Farmer	15	2.5
Student	49	8.3
No Previous Employment	43	7.3
Total	590	
Missing Cases	56	

Source: See Table 1.

applied in November 1857 and commented that "I have been in the mercantile Business for upwards of thirteen years." One of Baillie's referees, James Hindson, added that they had been clerks together for two years prior to becoming partners. Such cases, combined with the relatively large number of merchants, businessmen, and professionals, suggests that our usual assumptions about "middle-class" careers need modification.

Historians generally consider the hallmark of "middle-class" occupations in the mid-nineteenth century to be independence.<sup>29</sup> Before the white-collar revolution salaried employment was frequently seen as a form of apprenticeship prior either to forming a partnership or going into business on one's own account. Among applicants for civil service appointments, however, a larger proportion appear to have been permanent salaried employees. This is only partially explained by their relative youth.

Forty-three applicants had never held a job; most were very young. Eight per cent were still in school — eleven in law school — and many others had left school within the year. Sometimes they turned to the provincial government because they were unable to secure employment in their chosen field. Such was the case with 22-year-old Léandre Dugal who, following studies at the Quebec seminary had trained in naval construction:

Je chercherais en vain dans la construction des vaisseaux un avenir un tant soit peu favorable: je tourne alors mes regards vers le gouvernement, et c'est là qui [j'oserai] demander protection pour un jeune homme sans emploi et peut-être bientôt sans soutien."

29. See page 000.

The vast majority of applicants, even among those under 23, however, had already held several positions as clerks, bookkeepers and accountants before applying to take the civil service examination.

Although a third of all applicants were under 23, another third were over 30. Many were professionals and businessmen prepared to exchange their independence for secure salaried employment. William Cornwall and George Ralph Niemeier were both physicians and surgeons.<sup>30</sup> Louis Alfred D'amour and Edouard Moreau were both notaries. William D. Pollard had been a lawyer and solicitor in Chancery in both England and Canada before getting involved in the "manufacture of oil from bituminous Shale, for which I hold the Canadian Letters Patent." James Price had worked first as a foreman, then as a clerk, and then as a superintendent on construction sites in Peterborough before going into business for sixteen years as a builder and contractor on his own account. These and other examples suggest that many small businessmen had careers in which they moved back and forth between salaried work for others and work on their own account.<sup>31</sup>

Despite wide variations in detail, the employment histories of the 650 men who applied for the civil service examination all suggest one over-riding reality: in the nineteenth century middle-class employment, either independent or salaried, could be as precarious as working-class employment. Cyclical depressions frequently disrupted careers. Charles A. Clarke, Jr., for example, had been employed in the Commissariat Department before government retrenchment cost him his job in 1851. He then worked as a bookkeeper with the Great Western Railway until 1855 when he went into business on his own account as a land agent and broker. During the depression of 1857 he lost "considerable capital"; in March 1859 he was "anxious to obtain regular and permanent employment." Similarly, George Railton, who possessed a law degree from the University of Edinburgh, had held a number of positions including collections clerk at St. John's, CE, chief clerk and bookkeeper with Messrs Gilmour and Company in Quebec, and Manager of the Quebec Water Works, before forming a partnership in a wholesale and forwarding house. "Reverses in business" caused him to leave Quebec for London, CW where he articulated in a law office. In May 1858 he applied for the civil service examination commenting that he was "reluctantly compelled to abandon the study of the Law in order to procure instant means to educate and maintain my family." Clarke, Railton and other applicants were not ne'er-do-wells drifting from job to job. Many, such as Edouard Simays, were qualified applicants.

Simays, a native of Belgium, was 34 years old when he applied for the civil service examination in April 1861. He had immigrated to Canada eleven years earlier and had worked as a "commis-libraire" organizing a private collection, and as Secretary-Treas-

30. Cornwall was also a merchant; Niemeier had been Waterloo County Coroner since 1854.

31. See for example application of F. B. Hayes, September 1857, application of Henry Jackson, December 1857, application of George Francis Dow, August 1858, application of Thomas French, April 1858, application of Vital Baillageon, July 1860, or application of Thomas Holt, February 1860.

urer of the municipality of Ste. Geneviève de Jacques Cartier. For three years he worked as a merchant on his own account before taking a position as superintendent of the Cemetery of Notre Dame de la Côte des Neiges in Montreal. He then began studies to become a notary but found that "ses revenus étant insuffisants." Simays turned to the provincial government, as he explained,

n'aimant pas sa profession actuelle et craignant les éventualités, il désire tant en se rendant utile et assurer son avenir et obtenir un emploi permanent dans quelque'un des bureaux publics de cette Province.

In addition to his work experience, Simays, according to his referee, Charles Payette, was "l'auteur d'un ouvrage scientifique bien estimé, 'L'Almanach des connaissances utiles, [sic] publiée en 1859.'" Simays earned a very high aggregate score on his examination and was one of only a handful of candidates who received a ranking of "Very Proficient" in translation. He had also been given a "Proficient" rating in geography, although he was judged "Not Proficient" in making abstracts.

The Civil Service Act and the examination system had, then, encouraged youthful applicants. At the same time there was no shortage of capable and qualified men at mid-career ready to take positions with the provincial government. Most had held several jobs. Some were permanent salaried employees while others had careers in which they had moved back and forth between independent activities and salaried work. Although the return of prosperity during the 1860s reduced the number of applicants particularly among those who reported experiencing "reverses in business," there were no significant differences in the career patterns of applicants at the height of the depression in 1857 and 1858 and at the height of prosperity in 1861 and 1862. In good times as in bad careers commonly involved frequent job changes in which workers moved from one employer to another and often back and forth between salaried employment and independence. There were numerous variations, but the theme remained constant.

Once the Board approved an application the candidate sat for examination on the fourth Monday of every month at 10:00 a.m. at the office of the Provincial Secretary. The job of most government clerks, particularly at the junior grades, involved copying documents and correspondence. A smaller group kept account books. The essential skill necessary for these tasks was basic literacy; the civil service examination was well suited to test these skills.

The examination began with writing from dictation. This exercise would be scored for both penmanship and spelling as well as dictation. Candidates then sat for examinations in elementary arithmetic and grammar.<sup>32</sup> The dictation section was a paragraph of appropriately patriotic material such as a description of the British constitution which stressed the autonomy of the colony in all matters of local concern.<sup>33</sup> The elementary

32. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee appointed for the preparation of Examination papers and for making the necessary arrangements for the examination of candidates held on the 26 September 1854."

33. See for example, NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, Examination of Eliezer Roberts.



arithmetic examination contained ten questions on addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of large numbers, such as "Divide 68790436 by 189."<sup>34</sup> The grammar examination consisted of six sentences to be corrected, such as "This is the person who I spoke to." and "There were two Major Generals, and two Attorney Generals present on the occasion." There were also six words which the candidate was to parse: hardship, to, idle, like, of, and present.<sup>35</sup> Each subject — penmanship, spelling, grammar, arithmetic and dictation — was scored out of 100. The minimum score to qualify for a civil service certificate was 30 in each subject and an aggregate score of 300.<sup>36</sup> On occasion certificates were granted to candidates who fell short of the 300 score, although such exceptions became increasingly rare with time.

There were, in addition, five optional examinations in translation, advanced arithmetic, bookkeeping, geography, and making an abstract of a document, each scored out of 100. On optional examinations grades of 90 were rated as "Highly Proficient," 75-89 as "Very Proficient," and 50-74 as "Proficient."<sup>37</sup> Optional examinations were much more difficult than the standard examination, and with time fewer and fewer applicants took them.

The translation examination required candidates to translate a long page of text. Initially candidates were asked to translate both English into French and French into English; later candidates could choose one or the other. In 1857 and 1858 most reports contained only a single grade, although in a few cases separate grades were assigned to each exercise.<sup>38</sup> With time, reporting separate scores for English into French and French into English became the standard practice. What is clear from the few samples of examinations remaining in the Provincial Secretary's files is that a very high level of fluency was required to pass the translation examination.

The advanced arithmetic, geography and bookkeeping examinations also required a high level of competence and were clearly designed with the work of a civil servant in mind. The arithmetic examination lasted one hour and had ten questions of varying

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34. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, Examination Paper, 1858, Elementary Arithmetic.
  35. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, "Civil Service Examination, Grammar." Some candidates clearly did not know what parse meant.
  36. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee appointed for the preparation of Examination papers and for making the necessary arrangements for the examination of candidates held on the 26 September 1854."
  37. See NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, "Minutes Meeting of the Board of Examiners held for the examination of Candidates for employment, 28 September 1857 and 29 September 1857," and "Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee appointed for the preparation of Examination papers and for making the necessary arrangements for the examination of candidates held on the 26 September 1857."
  38. Robert H. Mackay, for example, was judged "Proficient" translating French into English, but "Not proficient" translating English into French. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9.

difficulty.<sup>39</sup> The geography examination also involved ten questions with a similar balance.<sup>40</sup> The bookkeeping examination required the candidate to answer eight questions and to make sample entries in both ledgers and journals using double entry.<sup>41</sup> Finally, applicants were given a government document and asked to prepare an abstract to test their abilities in this particular skill. What the optional examinations shared in common was their difficulty when compared to the standard examination, the low number of participants, and the very low success rates.<sup>42</sup>

The standard examinations, meanwhile, proved difficult enough for many applicants. Among those who sat for their civil service examination, only three in four succeeded in earning their certificates.<sup>43</sup> With a failure rate of 25 per cent, grades on these examinations were relatively low. (See Table 6.) Grammar consistently produced the lowest scores; arithmetic produced the highest scores. Mean scores rose sharply between 1857 and 1860 but then fell in 1861.

Among successful candidates, meanwhile, half received aggregate scores above 370. (See Table 7.) A score of 420 put the candidate in the top 20 per cent of successful candidates. Thus the government could choose its employees, if it wished, from among a relatively large group who had done very well on their examinations.

Only a minority of candidates sat for optional examinations, usually for more than one. (See Table 8.) The most frequent choice was arithmetic; the least frequent choice was translation. (See Table 9.) In all cases the majority of optional examinations were

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39. A question such as "What is the discount on a note for £2,258, payable in 8 months, when the rate of interest is 7 per cent.?" proved relatively easy compared to more complex questions such as "Three persons with a joint stock of £3,650, the first advances 1/3 of the capital for 1/4 of the time, the second 1/4 of the capital for 1/2 of the time, and the third person the remainder of the capital for the whole time: — Find their shares." NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, Board of Examiners for the Civil Service, Optional Examination Paper for August, 1858, Higher Arithmetic.

40. The examination included technical question such as "What is the difference in time between two places one of which is 30 [degrees] East, the other 50 [degrees] West of a given meridian," straightforward questions on Canada such as "Name the principal Rivers that empty themselves into the Saint Lawrence," as well as obscure questions such as "State the Countries through which the following Rivers flow and the Seas into which they empty themselves respectively: 1. Volga, 2. Orinoca, 3. Lena, 4. Niger, 5. Duoro, 6 Vistula." NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9.

41. NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 9, "Questions on Book-keeping (by Double Entry)"

42. Unless otherwise cited all references to examination scores and results are from NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 13, "Civil Service Examinations, Results and Reports, 1857-1861." All calculations are my own.

43. Seventy-one of the 646 applicants did not take the examination. Thirty-eight of those rejected took the examination a second time; half of these men received certificates on their second try. Three candidates were persistent enough to take the examination a third time, two of whom were rejected again only to take the examination a fourth time with the same result.

**Table 6**  
**Mean Scores on Civil Service Examinations**

	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	Total
Penmanship	60.3	58.4	62.6	63.3	68.0	61.7
Spelling	71.1	69.6	71.9	67.7	75.1	70.5
Grammar	55.2	49.7	67.2	69.6	53.5	58.2
Arithmetic	61.5	72.2	70.2	78.1	67.9	71.2
Dictation	66.4	68.1	68.6	68.0	68.4	67.9
Aggregate Score	309.9	316.7	340.4	346.6	332.8	328.6

Source: NA, Provincial Secretary's Office, RG4 B 33, Vol. 13, "Civil Service Examinations, Results and Reports, 1857-1861." All calculations are my own.

**Table 7**  
**Percentiles on Civil Service Examinations of Candidates who Received  
their Civil Service Certificates**

Aggregate Score	Percentile	Aggregate Score	Percentile
310	10th	380	60th
324	20th	400	70th
337	30th	420	80th
350	40th	435	90th
370	50th		

Source: See Table 6.

**Table 8**  
**Number of Applicants Taking One or More Optional Examination**

Number of Examinations	Number of Candidates	Number of Examinations	Number of Candidates
1 Examination	94	4 Examinations	42
2 Examinations	85	5 Examinations	21
3 Examinations	48	6 Examinations	3

Source: See Table 6.

**Table 9**  
**Results on Optional Examinations**

	Not Proficient	Proficient	Very Proficient	Highly Proficient	Total
Translation	31	9	2		42
English/French	14	18	3	1	36
French/English	5	21	9		35
Arithmetic	114	41	18	6	179
Bookkeeping	68	31	23	13	135
Geography	73	38	15	4	130
Making Abstracts	98	29	10	5	142

Source: See Table 6.

judged Not Proficient. Very few candidates attained a rating of Very or Highly Proficient. These few also tended to have high aggregate scores on the standard examination.

Hodgetts comments that one weakness of the new system was the examination itself, which he describes as "elementary and set up on a non-competitive bases." He suggests that they "were scarcely capable of discriminating between good and bad candidates."<sup>44</sup> This view does not bear scrutiny. Although they were "elementary," the examination tested essential skills appropriate to the job description of public employees. A failure rate of 25 per cent and scores widely distributed with the top third of successful candidates gaining scores markedly superior to the general mean suggests that the examination was sufficiently discrete to be used as a competitive examination. Analysis of those candidates whom the government hired, however, demonstrates that decision-makers paid little attention to examination results. The civil service examination proved to be a qualifying rather than a competitive exercise by choice rather than because of any inadequacy in the examination itself.

Of the 646 applicants only 451 candidates received their civil service certificates between September 1857 and December 1861. Of these men only 80 were hired: 45 as permanent staff, 29 as temporary staff and six as Extras.<sup>45</sup> This is a very small number considering that 88 applicants were already employed by the provincial government — primarily in the outside service — when they sat for the examination.<sup>46</sup>

The large numbers of applications from men already employed in the outside service suggests that the Act remained ambiguous on one critical issue: for which jobs were civil service certificates a necessary condition of employment? The primary intention of the legislation was to regulate the hiring and promotion of clerks in the inside service, but nothing in the Act explicitly included or excluded the outside service.<sup>47</sup> Many job

44. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 43.

45. Information on appointments is taken from Province of Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1860, Sessional Paper (No. 40), "Return to an Address from the Legislative Assembly, dated 12th March 1860. For statements of appointments to Public Offices since July, 1858. By Command, C. Alleyn, 20 April 1860," *Sessional Papers*, 1862, Sessional Paper (No. 37), "Return to an Address from the Legislative Assembly, dated 8th April, 1862, asking for a Statement of the New Offices created since 1861, in the Public Offices. By Command, A. A. Dorion, 2 June 1862," and NA, Executive Council Office, RG1 E 14, Correspondence and Records of the Clerk, Vol. 40, "Return of Government Office Staff, 1861." Unless otherwise cited all information on appointments is taken from these three sources.

46. Some of these public employees failed their examination. Of those who earned their civil service certificates, 45 worked in the outside and 19 in the inside service. Most of these men were in temporary positions or were extra clerks. Some, however, held permanent positions in the Outside Service and were applying for appointment to a position in the Inside Service. Among those in the outside service only ten were reported to have been hired after 1857 or were still on staff in the inside service in November 1861. Those already working in the Inside Service fared a little better: ten of 22 were reported as hired or were still listed as on staff in 1861.

47. Article 40 which dealt with the appointment of officers specifically excluded "landing waiters and Railway Mail Clerks." Article 43 excluded "the Survey Branch of the Crown Lands Department," engineers, assistant engineers, architects and draughtsmen in Public works,

seekers believed that a certificate was necessary for appointment in the outside service, and large numbers of men applied specifically for an appointment in local post offices or customs houses.

Although returns from the Customs Office do not always distinguish between outside and inside employees, the Post Office hired 33 men between July 1858 and March 1860, eighteen of whom held civil service certificates.<sup>48</sup> Most of these appointments were in the outside service. The Crown Lands Department hired 36 men during this period, only six of whom held certificates. Again most of these men worked in the outside service. Neither department, then, made a certificate a necessary qualification for employment in the outside service, although equally clearly possession of a certificate aided a candidate in securing a job. No doubt possession of a certificate also greatly facilitated movement of individuals from the outside to the inside service.

Most of the candidates hired, meanwhile, secured appointment either during the first twelve months following the introduction of the new system or during the first months following the move of the capital to Quebec. Thirty-six of the men hired took their examinations between September 1857 and July 1858; 23 of the men hired took their examinations between October 1859 and April 1860.

**Table 10**  
**Aggregate Scores on Civil Service Examinations for Those Certified**  
**and Those Hired**

	Certified	Hired		Certified	Hired
10th Percentile	310	303	60th Percentile	380	390
20th Percentile	324	318	70th Percentile	400	415
30th Percentile	337	335	80th Percentile	420	430
40th Percentile	350	362	90th Percentile	435	449
50th Percentile	370	380			

Source: See Table 6 and Province of Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1860, Sessional Paper (No. 40).

"Return to an Address from the Legislative Assembly, dated 12th March 1860. For statements of appointments to Public Offices since July, 1858. By Command, C. Alleyn, 20 April 1860," *Sessional Papers*, 1862, Sessional Paper (No. 37), "Return to an Address from the Legislative Assembly, dated 8th April, 1862, asking for a Statement of the New Offices created since 1861, in the Public Offices. By Command, A. A. Dorian, 2 June 1862," and NA, Executive Council Office, RG1 E 14, Vol. 40, Correspondence and Records of the Clerk. "Return of Government Office Staff, 1861.

Little distinguishes this select group of successful candidates from their less successful competitors who gained certificates but not work. Examination results for the sub-group of men hired look remarkably similar to results for the larger group of can-

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and "the Office of Book-keeper." Schedule B, however, included outside workers in the Customs Branch as well as local postmasters and assistant postmasters and those employed as railway mail clerks. Other outside workers were not included in Schedule B. The primary object of Schedule B, meanwhile, was to establish salaries attached to specific positions.

48. *Sessional Papers*, Sessional Paper (No. 40), 1860.

## GETTING HIRED

didates.<sup>49</sup> (See Table 10.) Aggregate scores among those hired ranged across the spectrum. Although aggregate scores on the general examination were marginally higher among those hired, differences were slight. Remarkably the 10th, 20th and 30th percentiles among those hired were lower than the 10th, 20th and 30th percentiles among all candidates who earned a certificate.

The two groups were virtually identical in terms of age: 50 per cent of all candidates and 50 per cent of those hired were under 24 years old while 30 per cent of both groups were over 28. Similarly other variables such as bilingualism or place of birth fail to produce any significant differences between those hired and the larger population of certified candidates. (See Tables 11 and 12.)

**Table 11**  
**Place of Birth of Candidates Certified and Those Hired**

	Certified		Hired	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Canada	6	1.4	3	3.9
Canada West	72	16.5	15	19.7
Canada East	139	31.8	23	30.3
New Brunswick	3	.7	1	1.3
Nova Scotia	2	.5		
Newfoundland	1	.2	1	1.3
England	87	19.9	16	21.1
Ireland	68	15.6	13	17.1
Scotland	36	8.2		
Other U.K.	2	.5		
Other British Empire	9	2.1	2	2.6
USA	3	.7	2	2.6
French West Indies	1	.2		
Russia	1	.2		
Germany	2	.5		
Belgium	1	.2		
Unknown Immigrant	4	.9		
Total	437		76	
Missing Cases	14		4	

Source: See Table I and Table 10.

Only when one considers place of residence does one find any divergence in the pattern. (See Table 13) The advantage of living first in Toronto and later in Quebec

49. Unless otherwise cited, the comparison group — "candidates" — includes only those who passed their examinations and received their civil service certificates rather than the total sample of all applicants, many of whom did not sit for the examination and over one-quarter of whom failed that examination.

**Table 12**  
**Languages of Candidates Certified and Those Hired**

	Certified		Hired	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Language of Examination				
English	378	86.5	68	88.3
French	24	5.5	3	3.9
Bilingual French	27	6.2	4	5.2
Bilingual English	8	1.8	2	2.6
Total	437		77	
Missing Cases	14*		3	
Evidence of Bilingualism				
Bilingual	84	18.6	14	17.5
Unilingual	367	81.4	66	82.5
Total	451		80	

Source: See Table 4 and Table 10.

\* Notations on application forms indicate a number of cases where certificates were granted to candidates whose examination results could not be found. None of the examination results in March 1861, for example, were reported.

**Table 13**  
**Residences of Candidates Certified and Those Hired**

	Certified		Hired	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Canada West				
Toronto	123	27.6	27	34.2
Hamilton	10	2.2	1	1.3
Kingston	17	3.8	3	3.8
London	12	2.7	2	2.5
Ottawa	2	.4		
Other Urban	47	10.5	5	6.3
Other Rural	36	8.1	4	5.1
Canada East				
Quebec	122	27.4	25	31.6
Montreal	41	9.2	9	11.4
Sherbrooke	5	1.1		
Other Urban	7	1.6	2	2.5
Other Rural	24	5.4	1	1.3
Total	446		79	
Missing Cases	5		1	

Source: See Table 1 and Table 10.

## GETTING HIRED

following the move of the capital became even more pronounced when hiring decisions were made. Among those hired between September 1857 and the end of 1861, two in three lived in either Toronto or Quebec.<sup>50</sup>

We have already noted D'arcy McGee's assertion that the Civil Service Act restricted appointments to 4th class clerks. This combined with seniority insured, according to McGee, that older, experienced and presumably capable men would neither apply for positions nor be hired. An analysis of applicants, as we have seen, demonstrates that this assertion is not born out. Analysis of appointments between 1857 and 1861 indicates that, contrary to McGee's assertions, these men were hired at all ranks. (See Table 14). Examination of the inside service in November 1861 also confirms that seniority played at best a minor role in personnel decisions.

**Table 14**  
**Jobs of Candidates Hired**

	Number	Per cent
Assistant Secretary	1	1.5
Surveyor	1	1.5
Inspector, Public Works	1	1.5
Bookkeeper	1	1.5
Assistant Bookkeeper	1	1.5
1st Class Clerk	3	4.5
2nd Class Clerk	15	22.7
3rd Class Clerk	12	18.2
4th Class Clerk	16	24.2
Railway Mail Clerk	7	10.6
Other	7	12.6
Total	66	
Missing Cases*	14	

Source: See Table 10.

\* Missing cases involve people whose job description was not included in returns to the Legislative Assembly.

In late 1861 the government, concerned with retrenchment during a period of large budgetary deficits, demanded a return from each department comparing salaries paid with salaries authorized either under the terms of the Civil Service Act or an Order-in-Council.<sup>51</sup> All departments save the Attorney General, Canada East responded.<sup>52</sup> In

50. Three in four lived in Toronto, Quebec and Montreal.

51. NA, Executive Council Office, RG1 E 14, Correspondence and Records of the Clerk, Vol. 40, "Return of Government Office Staff, 1861." There is nothing in the documentation on the motives for this survey. We do know, however, that the Ministry of Finance was already moving toward retrenchment in spending. Although the Act set maximum salaries for all officers and clerks, existing salaries were not to be rolled back.

52. It should be noted that neither the Office of the Attorney General East nor West was covered by the Civil Service Act. Schedule A lists departments covered by the legislation.



addition to salary data, these returns included information on the date each employee entered the civil service, the date they had been appointed to their current position, their years of experience with the civil service, the date of authorization for their current salary, and the authorization for that salary. This return, then, provides our single best source of information on the pre-Confederation civil service. It allows us not only to analyze salary levels and job structures in the inside service but also to test more concretely D'arcy McGee's assumptions about the impact of the Civil Service Act and the prevalence of seniority.

These returns list 275 men as employed by the provincial government in the inside service. Over 87 per cent (240 men) were permanent employees. Only six men were full time temporary employees; eight were full-time "Extra" employees. Another 18 were extras employed on a per diem basis. One was listed as resigned, and two were on sick leave.

**Table 15**  
**Public Employees by Rank, November 1861**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Mean Salary*</b>
Management	47	17.1	\$2,093
Professional	9	3.3	1,613
Clerical	186	67.6	966
Unskilled	33	12.0	434

Source: NA, Executive Council Office, RG1 E 14, Vol. 40, Correspondence and Records of the Clerk, "Return of Government Office Staff, 1861." All calculations are my own.

\* Excludes those paid on a per diem basis, resigned or on sick leave.

For purposes of analysis these public employees can be grouped into distinct ranks according to their jobs. (See Table 15) At the management level there were 47 individuals whose job required some level of supervision.<sup>53</sup> These would include chief clerks, corresponding clerks, confidential clerks, most inspectors, and deputy and assistant deputy ministers or their equivalents in various departments. There were also nine individuals — surveyors, engineers and architects — whose job required some professional training. At the other end of the scale were 33 unskilled manual and non-manual workers: messengers, door keepers, house and office keepers, woodmen and labourers. Finally there were 186 employees who held clerical positions of various sorts. These men accounted for two-thirds of the work-force in the inside service.<sup>54</sup>

53. The definition of management used here is broader than the group of officers defined by the Civil Service Act and includes 50 per cent more people.

54. The most problematic group in this scheme were bookkeepers and accountants in various departments. The vast majority simply entered numbers in account books much as clerks copied correspondence into letterbooks. For this reason all bookkeepers and accountants have been included in the "Clerical" category. This decision has, however, produced one anomaly, T. C. Bramley in the Receiver General's Office. Although his position had been designated as an officer in Schedule B, Bramley, like all bookkeepers, is classified in this study as "clerical" rather than "management."

## GETTING HIRED

Mean salaries for these ranks clearly indicate the hierarchy. Among managers salaries ranged from \$900 to \$4,200 with 50 per cent of all salaries falling between \$1,800 and \$2,200. Among full-time clerical workers the range was also wide, from \$140 to \$2,000 with 50 per cent of these workers earning between \$800 and \$1,200. Half of all unskilled workers, meanwhile, earned between \$450 and \$495, and none earned more than \$502.

Analysis of years of experience demonstrates some correspondence between experience and position within the hierarchy, but the picture is confused. (See Table 16.) Among clerical workers a close correspondence existed between experience and rank. This evidence is precisely what one would expect if seniority governed promotion. At the same time there is a remarkable discontinuity between the highest clerical positions and the lowest levels of management. Assistant secretaries and chief clerks had significantly less experience on average than confidential and corresponding clerks who in turn had less experience on average than 1st and 2nd class clerks. Clearly some men rose into the ranks of managers and supervisors very quickly leap-frogging over other clerks frozen at either 2nd class or 1st class ranks. Some entered the civil service at this level.

**Table 16**  
**Years of Experience of Public Employees by Selected Job Descriptions**

	Mean Years of Experience	Number
Management		
Deputy Minister or Equivalent	21.7	16
Assistant Deputy or Equivalent	37.7	3
Secretary or Inspector	13.3	9
Assistant Secretary	7.1	8
Chief Clerk	7.6	5
Confidential/Corresponding Clerk	11.9	7
Clerical		
Bookkeeper	9.7	6
Assistant Bookkeeper	5.0	1
Accountant	12.5	4
1st Class Clerk	12.6	52
2nd Class Clerk	6.4	40
3rd Class Clerk	4.0	33
4th Class Clerk	1.8	21

Source: See Table 15. All calculations are my own.

The role of seniority, or more precisely its absence in personnel decisions beyond the lowest ranks, can best be illustrated by looking in more detail at a few departments. The Ministry of Finance and the Receiver General's Office provide good case studies. These were moderately sized departments and included only inside employees. Both had long traditions and both hired relatively large numbers of candidates between 1857 and 1861. Thus they provide good examples of seniority as well as the effect of new

**Table 17**  
**Ministry of Finance and Receiver General's Office, November 1861\***

Name	Position	Date Hired	Years of Experience**	Salary	Employment Status
Ministry of Finance					
J. Cary	Deputy	06/42	19	\$2,907	Permanent
W. Dickenson***	Deputy	04/43	18	2,600	Permanent
N. Goddard	Confident	05/45	16	1,800	Permanent
J. Drysdale	Bookkeeper	10/42	19	1,600	Permanent
A. Cary	Bookkeeper	09/47	14	1,600	Permanent
F. G. Scott	1st Class	02/55	6	1,200	Permanent
J. R. Nash	1st Class	06/57	4	1,200	Permanent
C. J. Anderson	1st Class	11/58	3	1,200	Permanent
R. W. Baxter	2nd Class	02/58	3	1,000	Permanent
G. S. Lay	2nd Class	01/58	3	840	Permanent
R. H. Mackay	2nd Class	02/59	2	840	Permanent
P. C. Ryan	4th Class	09/60	1	360	Permanent
Receiver General's Office					
T. D. Harington	Deputy	—/32	29	\$2,600	Permanent
T. C. Bramley	Bookkeeper	04/58	3	1,600	Permanent
T. Dufort	Bookkeeper	01/49	12	1,610	Permanent
G. Reiffenstein	1st Class	—/47	14	1,600	Permanent
J. B. Stanton	1st Class	05/41	20	1,600	Permanent
W. Hedge	1st Class	—/47	14	1,400	Permanent
J. Pellant	1st Class	—/49	12	1,200	Permanent
L. Dufresne	1st Class	01/53	8	1,300	Permanent
C. W. Shay	1st Class	05/48	13	1,100	Permanent
F. Lewis	1st Class	01/58	3	912	Temporary
F. Hunter	1st Class	03/58	3	912	Temporary
G. M. Sherwood	3rd Class	05/61		730	Temporary
J. Neeve	3rd Class	09/61		730	Temporary

Source: See Table 15.

\* Excludes unskilled employees.

\*\* Years of Experience has been rounded to the lowest integer.

\*\*\* In the absence of Joseph Cary, William Dickenson carried out all of the duties of Deputy Minister, although his position in 1861 was listed as "Acting Deputy."

appointments under the terms of the Civil Service Act on the existing hierarchy both in terms of seniority and other measures of rank and status.

Experience, if not "seniority," did matter in the civil service. In any large buroaucratic organization the expectation would be that movement up the organizational ladder took some time. An examination of any organization should demonstrate some correspondence between rank and years of experience even in cases where rules of seniority were not part of the promotion process. The Ministry of Finance demonstrates within limits such a correspondence; the Receiver General's Office suggests clearly that seniority played a minor role. (See Table 17.)

The Ministry of Finance at first glance seems to demonstrate a near perfect correlation between seniority and position within the hierarchy. The exceptions to the "seniority" principle, however, occur at the top of the hierarchy. Both Acting Deputy Minister William Dickenson and Confidential Clerk Norris Goddard had been promoted over Chief Bookkeeper John Drysdale, who had more seniority. Examination of the clerks hired after the introduction of the Civil Service Act further undermines the seniority hypothesis. Gregory S. Lay, the first of this group to be hired in January 1858, was appointed as a 2nd class clerk at \$840. A month later the department hired Richard Baxter at the same rank but at a higher salary, \$1,000. Later in November 1858 the department hired Charles Joseph Anderson as a 1st class clerk at \$1,200. The last two appointments in the department, Robert H. Mackay and Patrick C. Ryan in February 1859 and September 1860, were as 2nd class and 4th class clerks and at very moderate salaries of \$840 and \$360. Clearly seniority was not taken into account in hiring procedures and salary determinations.

The role of merit in these decisions is also ambiguous. Lay was a 45-year-old British immigrant who had come to Canada nine years earlier and had worked in "commercial pursuits." His aggregate score of 351 on his examination was below the mean for candidates who took their examinations between 1857 and 1861, but he also earned a rating of Proficient in both bookkeeping and geography. Baxter, a 20 year-old native of Toronto who had already been teaching in a common school for four years, also did modestly on his civil service examination which he took in October 1857. None of the October candidates had been examined in arithmetic; Baxter gained an aggregate score of 266 on the other four sections. He had also been judged Highly Proficient in advanced arithmetic and Very Proficient in both geography and making abstracts, although he was Not Proficient in bookkeeping. By comparison C. J. Anderson, an English immigrant who had been in the country only a few months, but who had the support of Frederick J. Rocke in the Crown Lands Department, did relatively poorly on his examination. He earned an aggregate score of 330 which placed him in only the 20th percentile of those who took the examination between 1857 and 1861, although he was judged Very Proficient in bookkeeping. Despite his lackluster performance he was appointed to a higher rank and a higher salary than either Baxter or Lay.

The department's last two appointments went to extremely strong candidates. Mackay had earned an aggregate score of 430, and, perhaps more importantly, was one of only a handful of candidates judged Proficient translating French into English.<sup>55</sup> Ryan, meanwhile, was a 16-year-old resident of Quebec who had just left school. He earned an aggregate score of 420 and was judged Proficient in advanced arithmetic, bookkeeping, geography and making abstracts. It is difficult to square Ryan's outstanding performance on his examination with his position of 4th class clerk at only \$360 other than to observe that he was very young — although only four years younger than Mackay who was appointed two ranks above him and paid more than twice as much — and was

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55. Mackay's application could not be located in the files of the Provincial Secretary. In 1871 Robert Hugh Mackay was a clerk in the Customs Department. At that time he was earning a salary of only \$540. He is listed in the 1871 manuscript census as 34 years old.

hired late. This, no doubt, was the only position available in the tough budget years of the early 1860s.

In the Receiver General's Office there was even less correspondence between rank, salary, experience and merit as measured by the civil service examination. T. Douglas Harington, who had entered the Service at age 16 in 1832, enjoyed extensive experience. The department, however, appointed T. C. Bramley as the chief bookkeeper in April 1858 over the claims of T. Dufort, an experienced and respected member of the department. Although George Reiffenstein held the rank of 1st class clerk, he did the job of a corresponding clerk,<sup>56</sup> yet he had much less experience than J. B. Stanton. L. Dufresne was paid more than both J. Pellant and C. W. Shay despite the more extensive experience of both. But of all these anomalies from the seniority principle the case of F. Lewis, F. Hunter, and Bramley, all hired between January and April 1858, proves the most interesting. A case could be made that of the three Bramley was the least qualified.

Francis Lewis, the first person hired in the Receiver General's Office following the introduction of civil service examinations, was certainly qualified for his position. Lewis, 42 years old in 1857, had been born in England and emigrated to Canada as a teenager in 1834. Later he would spend five years in the United States before returning to Canada. Although his application provided few details, he had worked primarily as a bookkeeper. He also enjoyed excellent connections; the Hon. Joseph C. Morrison, the Receiver General, and "an acquaintance of many years," provided a reference. Although such patronage no doubt improved his employment prospects, Lewis was perhaps the most qualified of the men who took the civil service examination with him in October 1857.

When Lewis took his examination no grades were recorded for elementary arithmetic. His aggregate score of 336 on the remaining four parts of the examination was the third highest in the group. In addition, he had been judged Highly Proficient in bookkeeping, Very Proficient in making abstracts and Proficient in geography, although he was Not Proficient in advanced arithmetic. He was, then, the best qualified of the October candidates and was given a temporary position at an appropriate rank and a very moderate salary.

Francis Hunter and Thomas Charlesworth Bramley both sat for the civil service examination in February 1858. They earned aggregate scores of 395 and 380 respectively. These scores placed them in only the 60th percentile of candidates. Hunter had been born in Bowmanville, Canada East; at 52 he was unemployed and once again residing in Bowmanville. For many years he had been a merchant working on his own account but later became a salaried employee. Working primarily as a cashier and a bookkeeper, he had been employed by "some of the first houses in Montreal" including John Young and Company, and John Young was one of Hunter's two references. In May 1857 Hunter left Young and went to work for J. Boswell, but then Boswell had

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56. This judgement is based upon my research in the records of the Department while preparing *The Borrowing Process: A Financial History of the Province of Canada, 1841-1867*.

“been obliged to succumb to the present crisis in business.” Hunter, left without employment, now sought “something permanent.” In addition to John Young, Hunter’s second referee was a Judge of Queen’s Bench. In addition to earning an aggregate score of 395 Hunter was judged Very Proficient on the optional examination in bookkeeping, although he was judged Not Proficient in making an abstract of a document. In March he, like Lewis, was hired as a temporary 1st class clerk at a moderate salary.

Thomas Charlesworth Bramley, meanwhile, had been born in England and emigrated to Canada only three years prior to applying for public employment at age 46. A member of the Law Society of England, he worked as a broker and general agent in the import business after coming to Canada before becoming Financial and Confidential Manager of a Toronto brick company. His letters of reference were very spare on useful information; Thomas G. Ridout<sup>57</sup> commented only that “He has received the usual course of education for a gentleman.”

Bramley did well, but not that well, on his examination. He earned a score of 380, despite poor scores in penmanship (55) and grammar (48). He took the optional examination in advanced arithmetic, bookkeeping, geography, and making an abstract with mediocre results. He was graded “Not Proficient” in arithmetic and making an abstract, and only “Proficient” in book-keeping and geography. Despite this Bramley was hired as a permanent employee in April 1858 at a very high salary of \$1,600. No doubt Bramley’s professional training in law as well as his albeit limited managerial experience provided qualifications not possessed by either Hunter or Lewis, yet his job, unlike most others in the civil service, required specific technical skills. In those portions of the examination designed to test these specific skills, advanced arithmetic and book-keeping, Bramley’s performance left much to be desired. Bramley’s civil service examination results were significantly less than the examination results of the department’s two most recent appointments, Lewis and Hunter, both of whom had worked for years as bookkeepers. Bramley would now be supervising both Lewis and Hunter as well as Dufort, a respected member of the staff with nine years experience in the civil service.

Bramley’s appointment, particularly in light of the department’s failure either to promote Dufort or to give permanent positions to Lewis or Hunter, both of whom were at least as qualified for the position, tells us that examination results, work experience and seniority, either singly or in combination, cannot adequately explain the decision-making process. In April and September 1861 the Receiver General’s Office would hire two 3rd class clerks; these appointments suggest at least one other variable which could come into play.

George McC. Sherwood was 19 years old,<sup>58</sup> had been born in Toronto and now lived in Quebec. He had worked for the Provincial Insurance Company for 18 months, but “certain changes in the arrangement of the Office” had eliminated his job. He took

57. Ridout was a local JP, and it is not clear if this was Thomas G. Ridout, cashier of the Bank of Upper Canada.

58. Sherwood failed to include an age certificate with his application, nor did he give his age or birth date in his covering letter. Information on his age is based upon the 1871 manuscript census.

the civil service examination in May 1861 with decidedly mediocre results. Sherwood earned an aggregate score of only 335, including a score of 40 in arithmetic, placing him in only the 30th percentile of candidates. Were it not for a score of 90 in penmanship he might not have passed the examination at all. He sat for none of the optional examinations.

Sherwood's success in gaining employment certainly did not result from his performance on his examination. His connections, however, had opened doors. His uncle, the Hon. George Sherwood, was the Receiver General and provided one letter of reference. The minister had faint praise for his nephew's accomplishments: "I think, his education and acquirements are reasonably fair." Sherwood's second referee was Sir Allan N. Macnab, Baronet. He too had little to say beyond commenting that he knew young Sherwood from meetings "before and since the death of his father."<sup>59</sup>

The nephew of the minister had the inside track so long as he passed the examination. All he needed was the minimum score of 300. The same was true of John Bourner Harington Neeve. Neeve was hired as an extra clerk at \$2 per diem on 15 September 1861. He immediately applied for and took the civil service examination and earned a score of 300, the minimum necessary to receive his certificate. He sat for none of the optional examinations.

Neeve had been born 26 years earlier in Hyderabad, East India, the son of a Lieutenant in the 37th Regiment. Although the details of his life are not clear, he had at some point in his childhood become an orphan under the care of the Bourner family of Quebec. The Very Reverend R. B. M. Bourner would be one of his referees. Neeve would spend some time in Toronto as well attending Upper Canada College. The evidence suggests that while at Upper Canada College young Neeve lived with another relative, T. Douglas Harington.<sup>60</sup> Neeve then left Canada as an officer — Third Mate — in the British Merchant Naval Services. During the India Mutiny he again found himself in East India, served ashore during the Mutiny and received the India Medal. In the late summer of 1861 Neeve left the Merchant Navy and returned to Canada. Within the month he was hired as an extra in the Receiver General's Office. The deputy minister at the time was T. Douglas Harington who, having already hired him as an extra clerk, now provided a letter of reference for his application for the civil service examination. Two months later he was being recommended for a permanent appointment as a 3rd class clerk.

59. Macnab's comment suggests that Sherwood's father was probably Henry Sherwood, a former attorney general and government leader (1847) from Canada West. Henry Sherwood, a long-time political friend of Macnab's, died in July 1855. See Ian Pemberton, "Levi Peters Sherwood," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VII, 1836-1850 (Toronto, 1988), 794-796 and Donald Robert Beer, "Henry Sherwood," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VIII, 1851-1860 (Toronto, 1985), 796-801.

60. Harington's letter of reference states only that Neeve "was with me for some time and I know all about him since then." Neeve's application comments that he had been a resident of Toronto and a student at Upper Canada College. Neeve's age suggests that he would have been a student when Harington was in Toronto. I am assuming a distant kin relationship on the basis of Neeve's name.

Sherwood and Neeve were not alone. There was, for example, the case of 16-year-old William Horace Lee hired as a 4th class clerk in the Executive Council Office in January 1861. Lee's father, William Henry Lee, was the dean of the provincial civil service. He had been hired in 1820, and had served as the Clerk of the Executive Council since 1851. Father and son now worked in the same department.

Sherwood, Neeve and Lee demonstrate that nepotism continued to influence hiring decisions, although it is extremely difficult to determine how pervasive an influence. In 1861 there were seventeen surnames which appear at least twice in the returns of civil servants. Without complete personnel records it would be unwise to conclude that kin relations existed in all these cases, but in some the circumstantial evidence is very strong. George Henderson Holt, appointed as a permanent 4th class clerk in the Post Office Department in May 1858, for example, commented in his application that he moved "with my father when the government was transferred to Toronto in 1855." Peter Holt, meanwhile, was a 1st class clerk in the department. Other cases, however, are less clear. There is no direct evidence that twenty-one year old Hector B. Dufort, employed as an extra 4th class clerk in the Crown Lands Office in May 1861, was related to T. Dufort, the 1st class clerk in the Receiver General's Office. At the same time, Neeve reminds us that nepotism could come into play in cases where surnames differed. Kin relations, meanwhile, did not guarantee appointment. C. E. Anderson Jr., son of the former Deputy Receiver General, for example, was not hired despite references from two senior civil servants, Thomas Worthington and J. R. Audy. Nor was Albert Duffill, son of H. H. Duffill, 1st Clerk in the Customs and Excise Branch of the Inspector General's Office. Of equal importance as the number of examples of nepotism is those involved. With the exception of Sherwood all other definite and probably kin relationships were among civil servants rather than political figures.

We have long known that political considerations exerted a pervasive influence on government appointments during the Union period. There is no shortage of evidence that party considerations governed the appointment of judges, J.P.s, magistrates, coroners and others. Although he does not cite much evidence, Hodgetts is unequivocal: "patronage governed entrance to the service."<sup>61</sup> Yet analysis of applications, examinations, and appointments to the inside service yields almost no evidence of patronage.

Recommendations from political figures were few. (See Table 18.) So too were recommendations from civil servants, although they were far more numerous than recommendations from members of the cabinet or from members of the Legislative Assembly. In neither case, however, did such recommendations improve a candidate's employment prospects. Remarkably the percentage of men hired with recommendations from politicians or civil servants is virtually identical to the number of applicants with such recommendations. Moreover, in most cases, there is no evidence that recommendations from cabinet ministers, other politicians or powerful men with close political ties to the government carried undue weight. Francis Lewis, for example, had the recommendation of the minister, Joseph C. Morrison, yet Lewis was an experienced book-

61. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 53. Hodgetts adds, however, that "there was no indication of wholesale house-cleaning with each change of government."



**Table 18**  
**Percentage of Applicants and Those Hired Recommended by Politicians**  
**and Civil Servants**

Referee	First Reference		Second Reference	
	Among all Applicants	Among those Hired	Among all Applicants	Among those Hired
Politicians				
Municipal	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.7
Provincial	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7
Privy Council	.7	.8	1.3	1.4
Civil Servants				
Inside	3.4	3.5	3.0	3.0
Outside	2.5	2.4	3.6	3.4

Source: See Table 1 and Table 10.

keeper who had done very well on his the examinations. A case could easily be made that he was the most qualified candidate available for appointment. Nor is there any indication that Morrison's recommendation was politically motivated. Similarly Francis Hunter had the recommendation of John Young, but Young was Hunter's former employer. T. C. Bramley was appointed after Lewis and Hunter to a more senior position and a much higher salary, yet there is no evidence of any kind to suggest that he enjoyed the patronage of politically powerful men. What "patronage" did exist in the inside service seems to have been wielded by senior civil servants more in the sense of jobs at their disposal, a reflection of their existing status in the hierarchy, than appointments designed to gain or enhance political power or reward faithful supporters.

A re-examination of the Civil Service Act of 1857 and its impact on appointments, in conclusion, has produced a number of surprising findings. Very little has been written about the pre-Confederation bureaucracy, and it all suffers from being written from the top down: the evidence on the workings of the bureaucracy tends to come either from governors and politicians or strident critics in special legislative or executive reports. Beyond counting numbers reported in *Blue Books*, Hodgetts — still the standard work on the topic — has only ten pages of comments on public employees and their conditions of labour, and only part of this material deals with how they were hired and promoted. His discussion relies almost exclusively on reports in *Appendix to the Journals* or comments of politicians, in particular Thomas D'arcy McGee. McGee, however, was ill-informed.

McGee's criticisms of the Civil Service Act and the personnel policies of the government were scathing. A careful reading of the Act, analysis of applications, examinations, appointments, existing ranks in the service, salaries and years of experience demonstrates that he was also dead wrong on virtually every point. Acquired experience on the job counted in pre-Confederation personnel decisions, but there was no seniority principle or rule governing promotions. There was no mention of "seniority" in the Civil Service Act, and analysis of existing staff demonstrates conclusively that some employees were regularly hired and promoted over others with more experience. Such

promotions occurred both within the ranks of clerks and between clerks and officers. Nor did the Act limit entry into the system only at the rank of 4th class clerks. It is impossible to tell if the Act, as McGee asserted, discouraged some older and more experienced men from applying, yet there remained many more applications from experienced men in their 30s and 40s than there were jobs. Some of these more experienced applicants were hired as 1st class clerks or Officers and at very good salaries.

Similarly the civil service examinations may have been, as Hodgetts contends, elementary, yet the examination nevertheless tested skills essential to the job descriptions of public employees. The results of the examinations demonstrate that it also sorted candidates across a wide spectrum of accomplishments. If the examination was "non-competitive,"<sup>62</sup> the fault lay not with the examination nor with the Board of Examiners. It lay with the government which treated the examination simply as qualifying a candidate for employment. The employer chose to ignore examination results when making personnel decision. McGee asserted without citing evidence or examples that "in making some of the most important appointments during the last five years, the Act was consequently set aside, by its many authors, as inconvenient and impracticable." Analysis of appointments suggests that the Act was not "set aside" as much as its reform potential was allowed to remain dormant.

Hodgetts, meanwhile, does identify the central weakness of the Act: the Board of Examiners had not "been granted powers to compel departments to submit candidates for examination."<sup>63</sup> Departments traditionally had operated quite independently. Not until the late 1850s did the government begin introducing reforms to bring departmental budgets under the control of the Ministry of Finance and not until 1864 did the Ministry of Finance acquire comptroller powers over departments.<sup>64</sup> As part of the same thrust for administrative reform, the Civil Service Act of 1857 tried to create some degree of uniformity in ranks, procedures for appointment and promotion, and, most importantly, salary structures. It was a very modest attempt, and its successes proved even more modest.

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62. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service*, 43.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Michael J. Piva, "Government Finance and the Development of the Canadian State," in Greer and Radforth, *Colonial Leviathan*, 265-267.