

Excerpt from Message of the President of the United States: Transmitting the Report of the Commission Appointed to Devise Rules and Regulations for the Purpose of Reforming the Civil Service During the early administrations appointments were made from considerations of character and fitness, and removals took place for cause. This practice, as it was the wisest and most reasonable, was also to be, expected, because Washington was unanimously elected to the Presidency, and party divisions, as we know them, were developed only toward the close of his administration. He required of applicants proofs of ability, integrity, and fitness. Beyond this, he said, nothing with me is necessary or will be of any avail to them in my decision. John Adams made few removals, and those for cause. Jefferson said that the pressure to remove was like a torrent. But he resisted it, and declared, in his famous phrase, that the only questions concerning a candidate shall be: Is he honest; is he capable; is he faithful to the Constitution? Madison, Monroe, and John Quincy Adams followed him so faithfully that the Joint Congressional Committee upon Retrenchment reported, in 1868, that, having consulted all accessible means of information, they had not learned of a single removal of a subordinate officer except for cause, from the beginning of Washingtons administration to the close of that of John Quincy Adams. During all this time, however, party pressure for removals was not unknown. Under Madisons administration, Josiah Quincy, in a familiar passage, described with caustic satire the sycophancy and servility of the pressure for office that followed the death of an incumbent. When an auditorship of the Treasury became vacant under Monroe, among the applicants were five United States Senators and thirty Representatives in Congress. John Quincy Adams, who steadily resisted the pressure, said that he was tormented with ceaseless applications for office; and in 1828 Mr. Van Buren said that the chief justice of the proudest and largest State was a candidate for a place in the Treasury Department to which none but third-rate men would aspire. Such facts illustrate the pressure for office under a system of mere personal favor and selection, although it required fitness, and refused to make vacancies by removals in obedience to party influence. Yet there was always a hope that, as the appointing power had established no independent method of determining fitness, a strenuous party or personal pressure might affect its will. A struggle was therefore inevitable. The party pressure was already tormenting, and as the number of offices increased and the power of patronage developed it was to be expected that it would attempt to control the whole civil service for the benefit of a party. This practice was virtually declared as a rule of action in the year 1832. Mr. Van Buren was in that year nominated minister to England, and, in advocating his confirmation, Senator Marcy, of New York, first used the famous phrase in reference to the offices of the civil service, To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy. From that time it has been practically the motto of the administration of every party. As its evil results have been observed, various efforts have been made to obviate them. The most strenuous and continuous of these was that with which the Hon. Thomas A. Jenckes, of Rhode Island, is conspicuously identified. The investigations and reports upon this subject of the Joint Committee of Retrenchment, in the Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Congresses of which he was a member, obtained and recorded a mass of valuable information, which he forcibly presented in his speeches upon the floor. About the Publisher Forgotten Books publishes hundreds of thousands of rare and classic books. Find more at www.forgottenbooks.com

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