

JAMES S. CLARKSON AND THE CIVIL SERVICE REFORMERS,

1889-1893

By Stanley P. Hirshson*

The passage of the Pendleton Act, which in 1883 set up the Civil Service Commission and began the program of appointing candidates to federal posts on the basis of merit, did not permanently settle the civil service question in the United States. Believing in the party and not in commissions, some politicians had little faith in the law and waited for an opportunity to disregard it.

One of the chief defenders of the spoils system in the late 1880's and early 1890's was James S. Clarkson of Iowa, editor of the influential *Des Moines Iowa State Register*, and Republican boss of Des Moines, who, as President Benjamin Harrison's First Assistant Postmaster General, controlled the patronage in that important department.¹ Clarkson's appointment to office in 1889 came as a reward for services rendered to his party during the campaign of the previous year, when he had served as vice-chairman of the Republican National Committee. Considered by Harrison for such important positions as Postmaster General, Secretary of the Interior, and Secretary of Agriculture, and endorsed for the Cabinet upon three different occasions by Senator Matthew S. Quay of Pennsylvania, chairman of the Committee, Clarkson was kept out of Harrison's inner circle by Senator William B. Allison of Iowa, who waited until February, 1889, to decline the Secretaryship of the Treasury. An earlier refusal by Allison would have paved the way for the appointment of his fellow Iowan to a Cabinet post,

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¹ On the functions of the First Assistant Postmaster General, see Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era, 1869-1901, A Study in Administrative History* (New York, 1958), 263. Indispensable on the spoilsmen is Ari A. Hoogenboom, "Outlawing the Spoils, a History of the Civil Service Reform Movement, 1865-1883" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1937). For Clarkson's family background, see Leland L. Sage, "The Clarksons of Indiana and Iowa," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 50: 429-46 (December, 1954).

almost all of which were filled by the time the Senator acted.² Clarkson was then persuaded by Quay to accept the First Assistant Postmaster Generalship in order to help the politically inexperienced head of the department, John Wanamaker, accustom himself to his duties.³

From the beginning the Mugwumps, the country's strongest civil service reformers, were upset by Clarkson's appointment. To the *Nation* he was a ruthless spoilsman who would stop at nothing to enhance the fortunes of his party.⁴ Predicting that Clarkson would replace 28,000 Democrats during his first year in office, the *Civil-Service Reformer* called him "an Iowa politician of the spoils school" who "cannot be expected to regard the small post-offices as anything but the small change of politics."⁵ The *New York Times* labeled Clarkson a "partisan whose only public repute rests on the energy of his campaign work." His selection by Harrison "shows a cynical contempt for the requirements of common decency."⁶

The doubts of the Mugwumps were well founded. Clarkson wasted no time in removing Democrats from the fourth class post offices of the country.⁷ By late March, 1889, after only two weeks in office, he had established a daily routine. Appearing each morning at his desk promptly at 8:30 A. M., the First Assistant Postmaster General invariably checked his mail and then ordered the doors to his office thrown open. A hall jammed with people — Clarkson received more calls from job seekers than did the

² Leland L. Sage, *William Boyd Allison, A Study in Practical Politics* (Iowa City, 1956), 236-9; A. Bower Sageser, *The First Two Decades of the Pendleton Act, A Study of Civil Service Reform* (Lincoln, 1935), 137; Herbert Adams Gibbons, *John Wanamaker* (2 vols., New York, 1926), 1:263-7; *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 2, 3, 1889; *New York Tribune*, Mar. 15, 1889.

³ *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 15, 1889; Dorothy Canfield Fowler, *The Cabinet Politician, The Postmasters General, 1829-1903* (New York, 1943), 210-12; Matthew Josephson, *The Politicos, 1865-1896* (New York, 1938), 440-41.

⁴ *Nation*, 48:235 (March 21, 1889).

⁵ *Civil-Service Reformer*, 5:43 (April, 1889).

⁶ *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 1889.

⁷ The four classes of postmasters at the time were: first class, those paid \$3,000 or more a year; second class, those receiving \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year; third class, those paid from \$1,000 to \$2,000 a year; fourth class, those receiving less than \$1,000 a year. Since 1883 the first three classes were selected by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate and were known as the presidential postmasters. Fourth class postmasters were appointed and removed by the Postmaster General. See *A Bill to Aid the President in Selecting Candidates for Postmasters in the First, Second, and Third Class Post Offices: Report of the Select Committee of the Executive Committee of the National Civil Service Reform League* (Cambridge, 1893), 9.

President of the United States — now became visible to him. Exactly at 9:00 A. M. the procession, which ran forty or fifty feet down the corridor, began to move slowly. In turn, each of the applicants reached Clarkson's desk and presented affidavits supporting his claim to office. Typical of the job hunters was a Virginian with a long, shaggy beard who frankly admitted that he needed a post in his home town paying \$500 a year to live. He showed the First Assistant Postmaster General a paper from his Congressman certifying that he had been a gallant Confederate soldier during the war and a loyal Republican after it and that there were no other applicants for the position he sought. After checking the man's file, Clarkson appointed him. Next in line was Frederick Douglass, who pleaded that an office be given to a fellow Negro, a former slave. A large percentage of those waiting to see Clarkson were Southern colored men, many of whom complained: "The man who now has the post-office shot and killed my brother at the polls four years ago," or "The present Postmaster is a leader of the Democratic gang that defrauds us of our votes." Clarkson, of course, acted immediately to correct such situations. Once every three minutes the head of some Democratic postmaster dropped into the Iowan's private basket. In close contact with and subject to constant pressure from the nation's leading politicians, Clarkson during a typical day listened to requests for appointments from visitors like Senators Frank Hiscock and William M. Evarts of New York, James McMillan of Michigan, and Shelby Cullom of Illinois, and Congressmen Jonathan P. Dolliver of Iowa, William McKinley of Ohio, and Joseph Cannon of Illinois. With the full backing of the President, Clarkson exercised complete control over appointments and brooked prolonged or undue interference from no one.⁸

Long a defender of the Southern Negro, Clarkson was particularly ruthless in the South. Arguing that in 1885 President Grover Cleveland had unhesitatingly replaced colored officeholders with white Democrats, he refused to observe senatorial courtesy when it meant retaining Bourbons in office. He had little sympathy for men like Senator Matt W. Ransom of North Carolina, who, while pressing for the selection of white postmasters, told him one day: "You can readily see how unpleasant it must be for the refined, cultured people of the South to take their letters from the hands of coarse negroes." Clarkson answered that Southern white children were

⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 26, 1889.

reared "by black mammy nurses! Does not a colored servant cook your meals, another wait on your table, another shave your face, and still another mix your toddy for you?" he asked. "You admit that. Well, then, I'm unable to see why it is that if as babes you can take your breakfast from black breasts, you can't also take your letters and newspapers from the hands of negro Postmasters. At the office in question, Senator, a colored man will be appointed before night."⁹

Civil service advocates were aghast. *Harper's Weekly* reminded Clarkson that by replacing efficient postmasters with hungry Republicans for purely partisan reasons he was violating the pledges of the last Republican National Convention.¹⁰ The *Civil Service Record* dejectedly reported that Clarkson had appointed an illiterate Negro to the postmastership of Black Mountain, North Carolina. Unable to sort mail, this officeholder emptied the sack containing the town's letters in front of his office each morning and invited the residents of the village to find their own mail.¹¹ The *Nation* pointed out that Clarkson had made a burglar postmaster of one New York town and a "convicted keeper of a disorderly house" postmaster of another; a job in Arkansas had gone to "a man who had been convicted of sending obscene letters through the mails." For Clarkson, the magazine lamented, a typical day's work consisted of removing about 150 fourth class postmasters. Figuring that Clarkson worked eight hours a day, the *Nation* estimated that he made nineteen changes an hour. "Of course," the journal argued, "it is physically impossible for the Assistant Postmaster-General who chops off the head of a postmaster every three minutes every day in the week, to know anything about the merits of any particular case; and he makes these appointments at the demands of those who represent the Republican Machine, without the slightest sense of personal responsibility."¹² In late May, *Puck* joined in with a vivid two-page cartoon showing Clarkson preparing a line of Democratic postmasters for decapitation. "Executions Done with

⁹ *Ibid.*, May 30, 1889. A relative of Thomas Clarkson, the British antislavery leader, Clarkson as a youth had operated a twenty-eight mile stretch on the Underground Railway and had helped over 500 Negroes escape to Canada. On Clarkson's undying interest in the race question, see James S. Clarkson to Elijah W. Halford, May 13, 1892, *Benjamin Harrison Papers* (Library of Congress), Vol. 140; Clarkson to W. B. Allison, Apr. 21, 1890, *William Boyd Allison Papers* (Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines), Box 273; *New York Tribune*, June 1, 1918.

¹⁰ *Harper's Weekly*, 33:669 (August 31, 1889).

¹¹ *Civil Service Record*, 9:36 (September, 1889).

¹² *Nation*, 48:495 (June 20, 1889), and 49:21 (July 11, 1889).

Neatness and Dispatch at the Rate of 200 a Week," read the sign held by the bloodthirsty First Assistant Postmaster General.¹³

The subject of a bitter controversy, Clarkson in September, 1889, complained to a reporter that he was not "enamored of my official duties. No man gets much enjoyment out of a job that requires him to work twenty-six hours a day, be responsible for the sins of nearly 60,000 postmasters, attend personally to a correspondence that involves reading and answering upward of 150,000 letters in a period of six months, and for which he received the munificent compensation of \$4,000 a year." "Still," he continued, "I accepted the place and it is my intention to remain in it as long as my services, in the estimation of the administration, are required."¹⁴

Six months later Clarkson announced that he had "very nearly served out my sentence" and that he would soon retire. Particularly proud of the fact that he had already "changed 31,000 out of 55,000 fourth-class postmasters," he hoped "to change 10,000 more before I finally quit. I expect before the end of the month to see five-sixths of the Presidential postmasters changed. Then I can paraphrase old Simeon and say: 'Let thy servant depart in peace.'"¹⁵

Before departing in peace Clarkson made a series of widely publicized speeches in which he defended his policies and denounced those of the reformers. In April, 1890, he told an audience of Pittsburgh Republicans that "The American theory is for frequent changes in all public offices, and for every American boy to have an honest chance whether he seeks it in politics or elsewhere." He believed that there was "no American sympathy for a life-holding class in office, and no real American sympathy attends the present experiment of creating a profession of officeholders." The civil service advocates were encouraging "the people to be indifferent in public affairs." The First Assistant Postmaster General was certain "that the claim of the mugwump, that the people favor a life-holding class in office, if submitted to the people themselves, would be rejected by ten millions of votes."¹⁶

A Boston address by Clarkson a short time later was along similar lines. He was convinced that each party could carry out its campaign pledges only

¹³ *Puck*, 25:232-3 (May 29, 1889).

¹⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 14, 1889.

¹⁵ *Nation*, 50:168 (February 27, 1890). Simeon was the devout man of Jerusalem who recognized the infant Jesus as the Christ. His canticle begins: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." See Luke, 2:25-35.

¹⁶ *Des Moines Iowa State Register*, Apr. 29, 1890.

by putting its members in office. "Here," he announced, "I must part company with our esteemed friends, the Mugwumps. . . . I do not believe that Democrats can administer the affairs of a Republican administration as well as Republicans, any more than I believe that Methodists can carry on the affairs of a Baptist church better than Baptists. . . . All administration offices, those that are in any way to carry out the principles in government approved by the people at the polls, ought to be of men belonging to the party that was approved at the polls." To him, "the United States Government is a political and not a business organization." To be strong, a party needed patronage.¹⁷

A few days after the speech Clarkson complained to his close friend Louis T. Michener of Indiana that the Mugwumps had created a false issue. He termed the civil service problem "the toy of a child, the trifling thing of hobby riders, thrust in to keep the Republican party away from its duty under conscience of settling" the "great overshadowing question" of the day: human rights.¹⁸

Even members of Clarkson's own party disapproved of his stand. In a long interview Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts said that Clarkson had completely misrepresented the case for civil service and was not even aware of the basic aims of the reformers. According to him, the First Assistant Postmaster General was defending an archaic and corrupt system. Clarkson, Lodge felt, really had little to say in patronage matters. He merely carried out the orders given to him by Congressmen and Senators, who, influenced only by political considerations, controlled all appointments in their constituencies. The Mugwumps were justified in wanting to take federal offices out of politics entirely. Disagreeing with Clarkson's assertion that patronage was a source of party strength, Lodge pointed out that parties controlling offices frequently lost elections to those which did not. In the recent canvass in Clarkson's own state of Iowa, for example, the Republicans, who had scores of jobs at their disposal, were overwhelmed by the Democrats, who had none. The spoils system, Lodge concluded, was unjustifiable.¹⁹

The Mugwumps joined in the attack. The *New York Times* urged Clark-

¹⁷ *Philadelphia Press*, May 24, 1890.

¹⁸ Clarkson to Louis T. Michener, May 29, 1890, *Louis T. Michener Papers* (Library of Congress), Box 1.

¹⁹ *Springfield Republican*, May 26, 1890; *Civil-Service Reformer*, 6:65 (June, 1890).

son "to make his habitual speech against civil service" more often. "In no other way," it commented, "can he contribute so much to the enlightenment of public opinion as to the character and tendencies of the party of which he is, if not the executive, at any rate the chief executioner."²⁰ The *Springfield Republican* said that the First Assistant Postmaster General's remarks amounted to "the little and familiar claim of the spoilsman that the offices must be used to reward political workers." The Boston address was "pretentious buncombe, which his own practices as a spoilsman show to be empty nonsense from beginning to end."²¹

The reformers did more than just complain. The National Civil Service Reform League selected five prominent members — William Dudley Foulke, Charles J. Bonaparte, Richard Henry Dana, Wayne MacVeagh, and Sherman Rogers, four of whom had voted Republican in 1888 — to investigate the condition of civil service under the Harrison administration. After an exhaustive study the group found that Wanamaker and Clarkson had violated all the rules of fair play. During their first year in office the two spoilsmen had replaced nearly 64 per cent of the presidential postmasters, about one-third of the removals having been illegally obtained by coercive means solely for partisan purposes. The committee concluded that "It is not the Postmaster-General and his First Assistant who, in the last analysis, are responsible. It is the President, who appointed Wanamaker and Clarkson, and who permitted these things to be."²² The results of the investigation so incensed the members of the League that, through a special committee on which Foulke, Carl Schurz, and Moorfield Storey served, they drew up a bill prescribing the ideal conditions under which first, second, and third class postmasters should be chosen.²³

Fighting back, Clarkson denounced both the League and its committees. "No political capital can be made out of these changes [in the Post Office]," he told an Associated Press reporter. "The President has made no removals except for cause, — for delinquency in official duties, inefficiency of service,

²⁰ *New York Times*, June 2, 1890.

²¹ *Springfield Republican*, May 24, 1890.

²² *Civil Service Reform in the National Service, 1889-1891: Six Reports of the Special Investigating Committee of the National Civil Service Reform League* (Boston, 1891), 30-33; William Dudley Foulke, *Fighting the Spoilsmen, Reminiscences of the Civil Service Reform Movement* (New York, 1919), 57-63.

²³ *A Bill to Aid the President . . .*, 1-8. See note 7.

or violation of law. He has refused to make any changes for partisan reasons."²⁴

In poor physical as well as political health, Clarkson, after announcing once more that he had "no liking for office holding" and that he preferred "private life and its independence," resigned on September 1, 1890. During his eighteen months in the Post Office Department he had established a record by appointing 32,335 fourth class postmasters, an average of about 72 a day. Of the 2,617 presidential postmasters, all but 400 were changed during the same period.²⁵

Undaunted by the criticism which had been heaped upon his head, Clarkson wrote a lengthy defense of the spoils system for the May, 1891, issue of the *North American Review*. Stating that the American government was representative and was "based on party responsibility," he emphasized that when voters elected a Republican president they endorsed Republican principles and wanted them carried out. Similarly, the people selected a Democratic president when they wanted Democratic doctrines to hold sway. The Founding Fathers, Clarkson stressed, had devised this procedure and had actually endorsed the spoils system. During the first one hundred years of the Republic "partyism was encouraged and applauded; not discouraged and flouted according to the new intellectual fashion of this latter day." The Mugwumps, or Pharisees as Clarkson now derisively dubbed them, were responsible for the widely held notions that political activity was harmful, that party rule was evil, and that politicians were despicable. Clarkson made no distinction between a politician and a statesman. No matter what he was called, the politico served his country as well as his party. "The people themselves have no fear of the politician," Clarkson continued. "He is the man nearest to them. He has to renew his life at every caucus and in every convention and at every election. The more publicity in politics the better; the more activity the better. When the white light of publicity is on anything the danger is gone."

Politicians were honest men, Clarkson argued. During the past twenty-five years he had met "scarcely any men who have made money in politics." He was convinced that ninety-nine out of one hundred men spent more money in public service than they ever made out of it. Defying the reformers to reveal the names of any dishonest politicians with whom they were

²⁴ Foulke, *Fighting the Spoilsmen*, 60.

²⁵ *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1890; *Civil Service Record*, 10:21 (September, 1890).

acquainted, Clarkson estimated that for every crooked public official there were twenty men who earned in government less than one-third the sum they could have made in private life. Former Speaker of the House Samuel J. Randall, a Pennsylvania Democrat, and Republicans such as former Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, ex-Senator John A. Logan of Illinois, and former Vice President Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, all now dead, were typical politicians.

Clarkson insisted that the Mugwumps were more dishonest than the spoilsmen. When attacking Harrison, the Pharisee had purposely ignored the many civil service reforms initiated by his administration. The President had retained Democrats in over half the federal posts under his control — about 10,000 in number. These men were kept in office despite the fact that they still said that the Rebellion had been right, that Harrison had been elected President in 1888 by fraud, and “that the honest people of the United States will come into power again in '93.” No Mugwump mentioned that the Interstate Commerce Commission was still Democratic or that President Harrison had cheerfully delivered the commissions of ninety-eight Democratic postmasters appointed late in the term of Grover Cleveland. Although Republican in make-up, the Civil Service Commission was unfriendly to the President and was closer to the Democratic party than to the administration. True Republicans, Clarkson declared, “do not like the Mugwump or his fads. They have seen that a man in becoming a Mugwump first becomes better than his party, and next better than his country.” The Pharisee would deprive the people of their “interest and education in politics, would take away from the million Americans holding office every year the education they thus gain in government, and would teach the masses of Americans to be indifferent to public affairs.” Clarkson said that he would not be surprised if the reformers were really paid hirelings of the Democrats. He did not believe that public officials should be selected by civil service commissioners who were responsible to no one, who were not mentioned in the Constitution, and who knew nothing of the practical duties of the officeholder. Only parties could successfully govern the United States.²⁶

The civil service reformers were appalled. Calling upon all men to denounce the article, the *New York Times* stated that Clarkson's views directly contradicted recent Republican platforms on the subject. The ex-First As-

²⁶ James S. Clarkson, “The Politician and the Pharisee,” *North American Review*, 152:613-23 (May, 1891).

sistant Postmaster General was "doing great injury to his party, and . . . his party cannot afford it."²⁷ According to *Harper's Weekly*, intelligent people would not stand for arguments like this one. Clarkson was undoubtedly pushing young voters into the Democratic ranks.²⁸

Especially piqued by the spoilsman's blast was Theodore Roosevelt, the young New York Republican who was serving as a Civil Service Commissioner. In a St. Louis speech he denounced both Clarkson's articles and methods. Particularly irritated by Clarkson's assertion that the Commission was more unfriendly to the Republican party under Harrison than it had been to the Democratic party under Cleveland, Roosevelt asserted that "Mr. Clarkson is suffering under a confusion of ideas. He is mixing up himself and his friends with the Republican party. . . . The Civil Service Commission is most undoubtedly hostile to Mr. Clarkson and the idea which Mr. Clarkson represents. We should fail in our duty if we were not. We can no more retain the goodwill of the spoilsman than a policeman who does his duty can retain the goodwill of the lawbreaker." Far from being hostile to the Republican party, the Commission, Roosevelt believed, was carrying out the pledges of the last Republican national convention, "which Mr. Clarkson and his friends are striving to have us break." The former First Assistant Postmaster General was "against 'Mugwumpery,' but does not Mr. Clarkson see that in writing articles of this nature he affords the very best argument — the strongest justification possible — for Mugwumpery?" The Commissioner denounced the Iowan's assertion that the Democrats had bought off the reformers. "It is just as foolish to make that statement as it would be to make the statement that the Democratic Party purchased Mr. Clarkson to write his article, which is more fitted to do damage to the Republican Party than any possible Mugwump editorial. Mr. Clarkson wants the young men of integrity and ability to come into the Republican Party. Then why does he scare them out by writing such stuff as that?" Defending the Civil Service Commission's examinations as practical, Roosevelt charged that Clarkson, when in the Post Office Department, had fired qualified as well as unqualified men. Clarkson's article, interpreted the Commissioner, proved that men of his ilk went into politics for rewards. "There is a certain difference," Roosevelt suggested, "between being paid with an office and being paid with money, exactly as there is a certain difference between the sav-

²⁷ *New York Times*, May 7, 1891.

²⁸ *Harper's Weekly*, 35:338 (May 9, 1891).

agery of an Ashantee and that of a Hottentot, but it is small in amount."²⁹

Another important denunciation of Clarkson came from Dorman B. Eaton, the first president of the Civil Service Commission. In an article which appeared in the July, 1891, number of the *North American Review*, he asked the former First Assistant Postmaster General to explain why, if nothing was wrong with the spoils system, the civil service reform movement was so powerful and why it was constantly gaining strength. The merit system, Eaton wrote, had greatly increased the competence of government workers and had opened the way for young men of "character and capacity" to enter government service. The bosses alone despised it. Disagreeing with the report of the National Civil Service Reform League, Eaton happily noted that the President and most of the Cabinet had sustained reform: Harrison had greatly enlarged the civil service list; Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy had enforced the Pendleton Act in several navy yards; and Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble had extended the merit system to the Indian Service. Of the leading officers of the present administration only Clarkson had rejected reform.

To Eaton, Clarkson represented a new type of Mugwump. Like the original breed, Clarkson stood ready to criticize his own party. But unlike the old Mugwump, who denounced the vices of his party, the new variety condemned its virtues. Clarkson, Eaton went on, really was angry because the Republican organization had kept the civil service pledge it had made to the voters in 1884 and 1888. The reformer challenged Clarkson's assertion that the Founding Fathers and the first Presidents had envisioned and endorsed the spoils system. Thomas Jefferson, for example, had made only fifty removals upon becoming President and, insisting that he disliked partisanship, had justified these on the basis of necessity. Jackson, complained Eaton, had started the disgraceful practice of party replacements.³⁰

Mercilessly denounced by the reformers, Clarkson began to yield. In 1893 he outlined to the National Republican League, of which he was president, his own civil service plan. Each officeholder, he believed, should have a fixed tenure of office. "This would preserve the self-respect of the occupant of every office, and protect all public places from the danger of too sudden or too general changes." Clarkson also recommended that all post-

²⁹ *New York Times*, May 20, 1891.

³⁰ Dorman B. Eaton, "A New Variety of Mugwump," *North American Review*, 153: 44-53 (July, 1891).

masters be elected. "Better than anybody in Washington do the people in every community know who would make their best and most satisfying postmaster," he said. In a blow aimed directly at the Mugwumps he expressed the hope that any Republican plan of reform would "not have the ugly worm of hypocrisy in its heart, nor in any way pander to the new and diseased fashion of the time, that a man should set himself up to be better or more honest than his party as soon as he is elected to office, and that superior morality demands a choice of democrats rather than republicans to carry out republican ideas and republican pledges."³¹

The years passed, but the civil service advocates never forgot Clarkson's record as First Assistant Postmaster General. In opposing Clarkson's appointment in 1902 as Surveyor of the Port of New York, papers such as the *New York Times* and men like William Dudley Foulke, now a Civil Service Commissioner, cited his record as Harrison's chief "headsman."³² Even President Theodore Roosevelt, who personally selected Clarkson for the New York post, clearly remembered their dispute during 1891 and warned the new appointee "to be particularly careful not to get into any conflict with the Civil Service Commission. As you know, I am rather a crank on the Civil Service law."³³

In the broad perspective of time, Clarkson's fight with the reformers stands out as one of the last attempts of the spoilsmen to revive an era in which the party ruled without interference. Even in the 1890's, Clarkson's course was unpopular with important segments of his own party. During the period in which he quarreled with the reformers, such Republican regulars as Lodge and Roosevelt — men who had never bolted the party — joined forces with the civil service advocates, while not a single Republican publicly came to Clarkson's defense. The Iowan was fighting a battle which he could not possibly win, a fact which he unquestionably realized in 1910, when, upon retiring from the Surveyorship of the Port of New York, he announced: "The Customs Service will never attain its rightful and possible efficiency until it is completely separated from political influence."³⁴

³¹ *Annual Address of James S. Clarkson, President of the National Republican League of the United States . . . May 10, 1893, 10-11, in James S. Clarkson Papers (Library of Congress), Box 1.*

³² *New York Times*, Apr. 18, 1902; Foulke, *Fighting the Spoilsmen*, 154-5.

³³ Theodore Roosevelt to Clarkson, May 5, 1902, in Elting E. Morison (ed.), *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (8 vols., Cambridge, 1951-1954), 3:256.

³⁴ Foulke, *Fighting the Spoilsmen*, 155.