The United States Civil Service Commission was the result of a hard fought battle between group including a number of U.S. Presidents, civil service reformist congressmen, the National Civil Service Reform League and their opponent congressmen. This fight was engendered by Constitution of 1789 which was intended to avoid giving undue powers to the chief executive by giving the power of appointing “Civil officer” to the “United States in Congress assembled.” The President was given emergency power to fill vacancies during the Senate recess “by granting Commissions which shall expire at the end of their next Session.” Later, due to President Washington's influence, the decision of 1789 was made. By this decision, the President received the power of “removals” which was challenged many times after hard by anti-civil service reformists.

The period between 1789 and 1829 is thought to have been period of relative administrative efficiency. The reasons for this are attributed mainly to the small size of government operations and to the strength of character of

the them Presidents. Beside, the public office holders of those days were being appointed of the basis of their character, fitness, and geography.³

Starting in 1829 and continuing to 1865 the “spoil system” was the personnel policy of the time. Every now and then complaints about the spoil system were being heard from a few persons such as Senator Henry Clay who in 1832 called it a detestable system copied from “the worst period of the Roman Republic.⁴ This policy reached its climax under President Buchanan who added to it's the policy of rotation. This policy was an open declaration to completely remain the Federal Civil Service System at the end of every four years or at the end of the term of the President. Lincoln, by refusing to his officials in his second term of office, gave a severe blow to the policy of rotation.

The period between 1865 and 1883 was a period of rising sentiments and significant developments in the civil service reform. By 1868, the spoil system had reduced greatly the efficiency of the government. It made government operations very costly. One of the main issues that helped General Grant to victory in his Presidential election is believed to have been his liberal attitude towards the civil service reform.⁵ Despite Grant’s civil service reform message to Congress, none of the civil service reform bills presented by Jenkes, Trumbull, Shurz, or Henry Wilson were passed. Then Representative H. Armstrong of Pennsylvania drafted a “rider” which was attached to civil appropriation bill which was enacted by Congress. Three month after this “rider,” which empowered the President to “appoint a commission which would prescribe rules of examining applicants” was passed. President Grant appointed the first Civil Service Commissioners.⁶ The Chairman was Grant

³ Paul P. Van Roever, op. cit., p. 18.
⁵ Ibid., p. 35.
appointed the first Civil Service Commissioners. The chairman was George William Curtis who is considered to be the father of the Civil Service Act. At its first meeting in Washington on June 28, 1871, the Commission decided to act as an advisory body and left the executive power of the civil service to the President. The Commission also felt that the “open-competitive examination” that the British adopted in 1870 would be a good example to follow.

Curtis noted at the meeting the difficulty of organizing the Commission as an effective agency without depending on the appropriations to it from Congress were opponents. Although it helped the president strengthen his removal powers, the Commission, which is often referred to as Grant’s Commission. Because defunct when Congress believe its hasty recommendations and introduction of the then new and efficiency ratings were responsible for the denial of any appropriations political and economic, was not yet conductive for its continuation. President Grant, in an attempt to expedite the civil service reforms that were being recommended by the Commission to the Congress, had suggested the formation of a committee in the House which would aid the Commission. This committee was formed in 1873, but there is no indication that any of its members actively supported any appropriations to the Commission in that year. In 1874, Congress approved the existence of a Civil Service Commission but did not appropriate any money for it.

On July 2, 1881, President Garfield, who was well known as a civil service reformist, was assassinated by Charles J. Guiteau, a job-seeker. This led to the rise of the national, state, and local Civil Service Reform Leagurs that were to be very helpful in the civil service reform movement. The main job

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7 Stahl, O. Glenn. op. cit., p. 29.
8 Hoogenboom, Ari. op. cit., p. 88.
9 Cooke Carles. op. cit., p. 39.
10 Hoogenboom, Ari. op. cit., p. 39.
11 Ibid. k, p. 13
of these private organizations was to enlighten the public and the Congress, as well as the government, in matters concerning civil service reform through letters and other news media.\textsuperscript{12} Four months after President Garfield's assassination, Democratic Senator George H. Pendleton of Ohio, Chairman of the Service Reform, assisted by same members of the National Civil Service Reform League, drafted a bill that eventually was do to away with the "spoil system." By this time the Republicans had been in office for twenty years and the Democrats were hoping to take over soon. The Democrats feared that the bill would keep the entire republican appointed civil service intact even if they won a majority, thus minimizing the efficiency of the coming Democratic government.\textsuperscript{13} Those who opposed the bill argued that business firms were not using "competitive examination," that they would favor the young over the old and the college graduates over others, and political parties would not exist unless they could reward their respective supporters, and that it will create a civil service elite which could be a danger to the more efficient and democratic Civil Service System. They argued that it would relieve the Congress and the President of the burden of office seekers without curtailing the President's power of removal. They cited how the introduction of the merit system into the New York City post office had increased its efficiency without excessive increase in cost.\textsuperscript{14} In favor of the bill was the climate created by President Garfield's assassination that was the victim of the spoil system. Even such staunch opponents of the Civil Service Commission, as Republican Senator John A. Logan of Illinois, tried to convince others that "vagueness rather than his own and others opposition, had killed Grant's Civil Service Commission.\textsuperscript{15} It is believed that if it had not been for the public opinion created by Garfield's assassination, most Congressmen would not

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.255.
\textsuperscript{13} Cooke, Charles, \textit{op. cit.}, p.49.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.53.
\textsuperscript{15} Hoogenboom, Ari. \textit{Op. cit.}, p.239.
have approved the Civil Service Act of 1883. The view of most of the Congressmen was expressed by Senator Plumb who said that they did not legislate on this subject in response to their judgment but in response to some sort of judgment which has been expressed from outside. The expressions from outside that he was referring to are the letters that each congressman received from the National Civil Service Reform League and other state and local association’s pressure groups and individuals.16

On January 16, 1883, President Arthur, a Republican signed Democrat Senator Pendleton’s Act, which was thereafter referred to as the Civil Service Act. The Civil Service Act was covered on the front pages of the leading newspapers of the time, which also included the story of an office seeker who called himself “Charles Guiteau, the Second,” and who was threatening to assassinate the then Governor of Massachusetts. The official title of the Civil Service Act of 1883 was “An Act to Regulate and Improve the Civil Service of the United States.17

The main features of the Civil Service Act of 1883 are the following:
1. It authorized the President to create an independent Civil Service Commission.
2. It endorsed the civil service regulations concerning “open competitive examination,” probationary period and veteran preference.
3. It prohibited Government employees’ contributions for political activities.
4. It required that the Civil Service Commission give annual reports on investigations that it initiated.
5. It called for a “merit system” application to the Federal Civil Service in Washington, D. C., the Custom Houses, and post offices with more than fifty employees.
6. It left to the President the extension of coverage of the classified

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16 Ibid., p.251.
The following states followed the National Civil Service Act by passing merit system law in 1883, Massachusetts in 1884, Wisconsin and Illinois in 1905, Colorado in 1907, New Jersey in 1908, Ohio in remaining states passed their merit system laws after 1935.

With the advice and consent of the Senate, the President appointed the three members of the Commission immediately.

In accordance with the act, two members belonged to one political party, and the third member to the other, and of the three was designated President of the Commission.

On May 7, 1883, the "First Rules" which after 1888 became known as the "Rule of Three" divided the competitive service into the departmental services in Washington, the postal services, and the Pension custom Bureau in Washington D. C.

By 1890, the Commission was developing examinations. These examinations with administered by the various boards of examination. The delegations of power to such agencies by the Commission was provided by the Civil Service Act. The boards were often groups of three or four people who were Federal employees of various agencies in a certain locality. The main job of these boards was to give examinations to recruits and grade the examinations on behalf of the Commission. Often a department nominated its less efficient employees to service on these boards and the Commission had either to accept such nominations or else its work would not be done at all. Because of the inefficiency exhibited by many boards, the Commission was forced to give the job of examining to "regular Commission employees."

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21 Van Riper, Paul P. *op. cit.*, p. 144.
All in all, during its first few years, the Commission exhibited some degree of orderliness and efficiency. In 1880, the Commission began its first significant position classification. In 1887, the first efficiency rating was devised. By 1889, the preference rights of veterans were being strictly adhered to. In 1896, the service Record’s division was month probationary period. This rate probably is very high when compared with recent rates and it could be an indication of how closely people were being supervised. However, the lack of prestige of the Federal Civil Service of that time was a hindrance to the Commission’s activities. Up to 1900, the Commission’s work was mainly that of enforcing the standards of employment and checking the political activities of the Federal Civil Servants. The only way they could control the quality of the civil servants was by giving entrance employed, there was not much that could be done about him.23

With the election of President Cleveland, a period of exemption and “blanketing in” was ushered in. Cleveland, a Democrat known for his hatred of the spoil system, was forced to remain those positions that were then not covered by the merit system. For example, within 16 months and 6 1/2% of those which were under the merit system.24 When his chance for re-election seemed to be lost, he “blanketed in” some 30,000 positions in the Railway Mail Service. This situation led to President McKinley’s “Order of 1899.” This order was a Commission approved order of May 29, 1899, that exempted 10,000 positions. For the first time the Commission approved exemptions advocated by Republicans. The National Civil Service Reform League blamed the Commission for its support of the spoil system and called the Commission’s approval of McKinley’s order “most unfortunate.” President Harrison also “blanketed in” the Indian Service, the Fish Commission and the Weather Bureau, and all free delivery post offices when he failed to be

23 Van Riper, Paul P. op. cit., pp. 144-56.
reelected. Harrison made Theodore Roosevelt a Civil Service Commissioner, and when Cleveland became the President again he kept Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Lyman, the two Republicans of the commission. This Commission was strengthened by two factors. First, Roosevelt and his colleague Commissioners were able and experienced people. Secondly, when the War Department was given permission to by pass the Commission and handle its own Civil service problems during the Spanish-American War in 1898, the military operation, from and administrative point of view, was believed to be a fiasco. This was a lesson to the Congress which gave the War Department the permission to bypass the Commission.

The Commission was further strengthened when Theodore Roosevelt, the ex-Civil Service Commissioner, became President in 1901. Since the Republicans had been in power four years before him, he did not have to make too many removals, exceptions or blanketing in. Besides, he was dedicated to the merit system and to the civil service reform. The first thing that President Roosevelt did was to order the Treasury Department not to make any payment to an employee if the Commission had found any violation of the civil service laws and regulations concerning an incumbent. This gave the Commission a positive method of control and check to assure the correct implementation of the civil service laws and regulations. The rapport existed between President Roosevelt and the Commissioners made the functions of the Commission more productive and also in line with the spirit the merit system.

In 1903, Congress, for the first time, made sufficient appropriations for the Commission to have an adequate staff. The “Rules of 1903” gave the Commission more discretionary power over such factor as age limits. Appointing officers were authorized to require an examination by the Commission. The

25 Van Riper, Paul P. op. cit., p. 172.
27 Van Riper, Paul P. op. cit., p. 175.
so called Schedule A of excepted positions was revised.\textsuperscript{28} By 1904, the number of the examining boards had reached 1,250. The Commission found out that these boards were not adequately supervised and that they were "conducive to evasion and fraud." Therefore it organized them into thirteen districts under district secretaries, responsible to the Commission alone.\textsuperscript{29} These district secretaries were responsible for the supervision and training of local boards of examination. They were responsible for the grading of examinations and registering of eligibles which were to be available to the appointing officers in their areas. The examinations were prepared in Washington. The district secretaries reported to the Commission periodically their activities in their areas.\textsuperscript{30} The District Offices were to be "Miniature United States Civil Service Commission," serving their areas as central personnel agencies under the supervision and direction of their headquarters in Washington.

Under Theodore Roosevelt, major governmental expansion took place. To help and encourage the Civil Service Commission in its work, he formed the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, which later (1956) was divided into the Public Personnel Administration and the Committee on Departmental Methods. The latter was the committee which made the first federal job survey and position classification plan. During Roosevelt's time 63.9\% of the Executive branch was under the competitive service. It was during Roosevelt's time also that the number of jobs under the merit system for the first time became more than those under the spoil system in the Executive branch.

During the early part of the twentieth century, there was a clear concern about "administrative efficiency" in government. Scientific management ideas began to appear in the government administration. The Civil Service Commission was among the first to feel the impact of these ideas. For example, in

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 65-7.
\textsuperscript{29} Cooke, Charles. \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 65-7.
\textsuperscript{30} Hoogenboom, Are. \textit{op.cit.}, p. 196.
the spirit of scientific management it created a Division of Efficiency and started engaging studies concerning retirement, salary scales, and position classifications. World War I was the period during which the concern for administrative efficiency reached its peak. The was the Commission war showed its strength and weaknesses. By 1917 the following exceptions were made with the approval of the Commission: Food Administration, Fuel Administration, Bureau of Printing and Engraving, skilled laborers of the Government Printing Office, and War Labor Administration Offices. The Civil service Commissioners were at odds with each other during this period. The Civil Service Reform League, which aided in several types of recruitment at the request of the Commission and the Ordinance Department, was very critical of some of the Commissions work. For example, it recommended that the five and one-half hour typist test be reduced to one hour. At the same time, the Commission's work on examination and selection procedures was being adopted by many private firms. In some instances firms even asked the Commission to help them in organizing their central employment bureaus.

In 1923, the first most comprehensive Classification Act passed and it was a symbol of the Commission's success with the Congress. This Act authorized that positions be classified according to duties and responsibilities and that pay was to be commensurate with the work. Unlike the days of Curtis, during which Congress authorized duties and responsibilities of the Commission without subsequent appropriations to enable it implement them, a year after this Act was passed the Commission's appropriation was five in increased five times. In 1931, by making the President of the Commission Chairman of the Council of Personnel Administrating, the Executive Order No. 5612 recognized that the Commission had the leading role in Federal personnel management.

31 Hoogenboom, Are. op. cit., p.196.
The Great Depression of 1932 and the early 1930's increased governmental activities. Despite the Commission's opposition, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made the new agencies exceptions to most of the civil service requirements, arguing that they were of a temporary nature. By 1936 the merit system coverage decreased to 60.5% of the Executive branch.33

The period beginning in 1935 is referred to as the period of positive public personnel administration. Up to this period the Commission's emphasis was on control of patronage and corruption. Even in this negative effort of solving public personnel problems, the Commission was not equipped with the necessary force and techniques required to effectively control in the civil service.34

In 1938, President Roosevelt issued an Executive order requiring that all Federal departments and the thirteen largest agencies create divisions of personal headed by a director. This order is believed to have been the first genuine attempt by the government to make the civil service more responsive to the demands of the complex society. President Roosevelt also gave more powers to the Commission to aid agencies in their in-service training programs. A year later he created a Liaison Office for Personnel Management in the White House.

During the early days of World War II, President Roosevelt authorized departments to make temporary appointments if the Commission was able to supply a list of eligibles. The Civil Service Commission also set aside most of its requirements of examination and certification and loosened up in its application of most of the Classification Act. Had it not been for Arthur S. Fleming, one of the Commission would have crippled the central authority of the Civil Service System. The war-time situation of labor demand and supply laid the competitive examinations aside, and the examining boards took most of the Commission's responsibility of recruitment.35 However, throughout the

34 Stahl, O. Glenn. op. cit., p.29.
war, the Commission was given practically absolute control over interagency transfers, with authority of approval or disapproval on either or both grounds of unsatisfactory qualification or contribution to war. Arthur, Fleming Who was a member of both the Civil Service Commission and the War Manpower Commission, concluded that the Civil Service Commission as a whole, in its Annual Report of 1945 indicated that the major effect of the war was the strengthening of the Commission as the government central personnel agency. However, Gladys M. Kammerer, in her book, Impact of War on Federal Personnel Administration 1939-45, recommended that adequate “control” systems over the personnel operations in the Federal civil service system were badly needed.

The conversion from war to peace under President Truman was as difficult for the Commission as it was for any other agency. The Commission was ordered to return to its pre-was practices of examination and strict adherence to the civil service acts. So individual promotions, re-assignments, and transfers were to be delegated to agencies and departments but would remain subject to Commission standards. Executive Order No.9830 of February 24, 1947, besides creating the new inspection program, reaffirmed the Federal government.

The first Hoover Commission, in its 1949 Report on “Organization of the Executive Branch of Government,” recommended that the head of the Civil Service Commission be referred to as the Chairman and not as the President of the Commission and that he should take all responsibility individually for the Commission’s administrative operations.

In June 1950, the Korean War disturbed the Commission’s operations. But this time the Commission was ready to use the lessons it had learned from World War II. Within a few days, it entered into agreement with the defense

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37 Cooke, Charles. op. cit., pp.01-94.
38 Idem.
agencies, such as the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, entitling them to make "emergency indefinite appointment," which would not lead to any permanent employment status.³⁹

By 1952, 82% of the Executive branch's civil service was covered by competitive service. In 1953, the Civil Service Commission was reorganized in order to be effective in its "management control, planning and standard setting functions."⁴⁰ The Chairman of the Commission was made to service as Presidential Adviser on personnel matters. The Federal Personnel Council was abolished and its functions were given to the Commission's Executive Director. Thus its leadership in Federal personnel management became undisputable. The fourteen regional offices were reduced to eleven in order to decrease the span of supervision by the Commission. The twenty divisions of the Commission were put into five bureaus and three staff offices for reasons that will be discussed later. In 1958, while celebrating its Diamond Jubilees, the Commission through its official voice, the Public Information Office, declared that it had demonstrated its ability to "conserve" and "utilize" manpower efficiently during the fifteen years of upheaval. These fifteen years include the period of the economic depression, the defense emergency just prior to World War II, the post-war reconversion, and the Korean War.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 96-7.