

THE STATE EMPLOYEE

Volume 2

JULY, 1933

Number 6

An Important Public Service Well Done

Dr. Walter N. Thayer
Commissioner of Correction

When one beginning his thirtieth year in State employment looks back over that period of service, and especially when those years have been spent either in institutional work or in close contact with it, experiences a period of depression like that through which the State has been passing recently and listens to the various remedies suggested to relieve the State of some of the expense under which it is laboring, he is bound to be impressed by the lack of understanding on the part of the average man of the status of institutional employees.

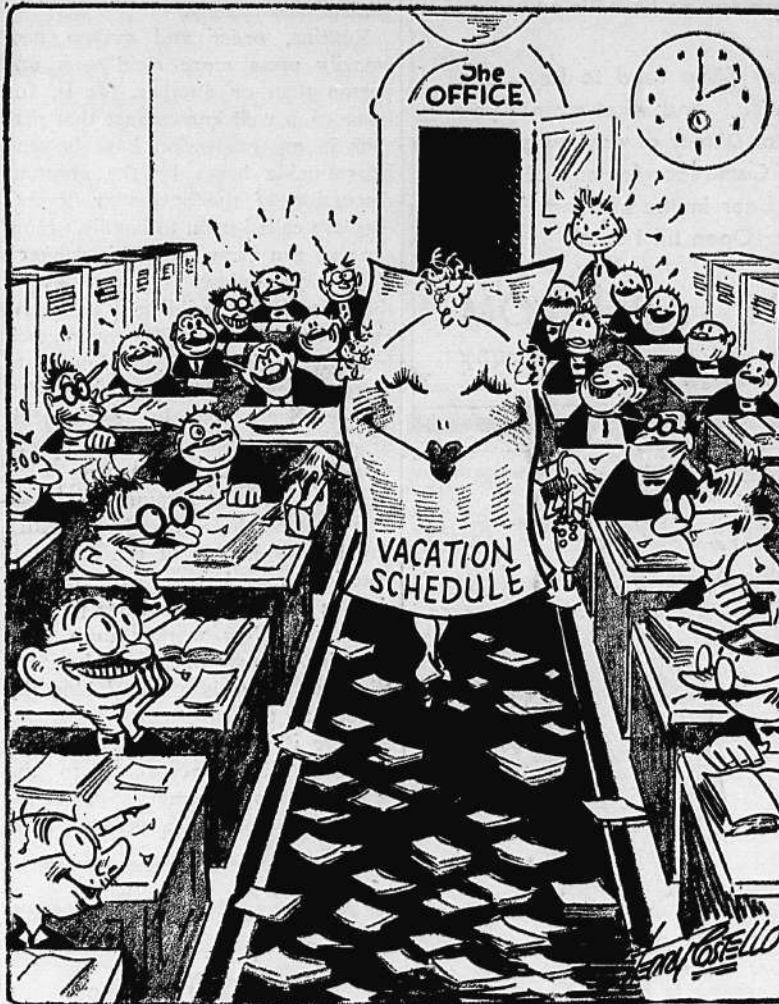
In the tremendously prosperous period antedating the present period of depression, the man on the street, who was enjoying the most prosperous conditions he had ever known, was prone to look with amusement at the State employee who, in no measure, participated in the increased compensation enjoyed by the average worker in civil lines. It was about in the middle 1920's the State recognized that, while practically every other worker had received increased compensation, nothing had been done for the State employee. At this time there were some increases in pay allowed those employees who had remained faithful to their duties, and who had not been lured away by higher compensation in other fields.

The difference between the attitude of the public of the early 20's and the public of today is striking. The amused tolerance of the State employee during the prosperous days has now changed. The security of his position is viewed with envy and recently vociferous demands for pay reduction were heard on every hand.

Speaking more especially for the institutional employees, I do not feel that they ever have been over-paid when one considers the exacting nature of their employment. The

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HERE COMES THE BRIDE - - By Jerry Costello



Courtesy Albany Evening News—A Gannett Paper

Association's Vacation Camp Awaits You. Opens July 9th.

Last year the Association fostered the organization of the State Employees' Recreational Club, Inc., the purpose of which was to take advantage of the good cooperation of the State Conservation Department, in the matter of the use of the Camp site on Meacham Lake in Franklin County as a desirable vacation camp for State workers. The Recreational Club conducted a very successful season and many workers enjoyed the cottage accommodations and the exceptional boating, bathing, fishing, tennis, and other recreational activities possible under the delightful and healthful surroundings. The camp is operated on a non-profit basis and every cent paid by guests goes to supply the best possible food, sleeping and necessary accommodations. The maximum charge at the camp will be \$12.00 per week for adults. The rate for children under 10 years \$6.00; and 10 to 14 years inclusive, \$8.00. Make your reservations at once.

Shall We Level Up or Down?

Horatio M. Pollock, Ph.D.,
Director, Mental Hygiene Statistics,

Colonel Leonard P. Ayres, speaking at a joint meeting of the American Statistical Association and the American Economic Association at Cincinnati last December, said that 1933 would be known as the year of the great debate. The topics to be debated were inflation and deflation, or the questions: Shall we level up or down? Shall we increase our money supply or our credit so as to bring prices of commodities up to the level of 1928 or 1929, or shall we reduce wages, salaries, rents, rates for public utilities, fixed charges and debts to the level of commodity prices? The question was partially answered at the recent session of Congress, and the Federal Administration has undertaken to raise the price level in accordance therewith. On its success depends the happiness and well-being of a large part of the people of this country.

It needs but a brief survey of the income and expenditures of ordinary householders to see the striking irregularities and injustices that exist in the present price structure. On the income side we find reductions from 10 to 100 per cent. Practically no wage-earners, farmers or business men now receive the income they enjoyed in 1928 and 1929. Many have lost their positions and are entirely without income; workers, who have been fortunate enough to retain their positions, have suffered severe cuts in wages. Business men until recently were losing instead of gaining. Ten million unemployed means at least ten million impoverished homes and tremendous reduction in national income.

On the expenditure side we find most remarkable conditions. Food and clothing are cheaper than in 1928. Fuel prices remain about the same in spite of poor financial re-

Continued on Page 4



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Making Work More Interesting

By HON. DAVID C. ADIE
State Commissioner of Social Welfare

In these days of pressure of work and increased duties, we are, without special effort, in danger of being in the position of the efficiency expert who so narrowed his interest in life that his very specialization was the means of intellectual strangulation. Nature seems to work that way, too; when a living creature over many centuries specializes in ways of living, nature adjusts his physical organism accordingly.

Routine, order and system necessarily press more rigidly on one person than on another. It is, for instance, a well known fact that persons in my profession have become interminable bores by the constant discussion of the particular "cases" they are called upon to handle. How can one run away from this danger? From my windows in the tower of the State Office Building, I look now and then over the city to the staunch hills of the Catskills. The long vista rests my eyes and my mind, and I can wander pleasantly in the fields of memory. Such pauses are extremely beneficial in escaping what might well be the tyranny of a task. The state employee who has to work day by day in one of the many institutions may have a more difficult time in avoiding a fixed life problem than his fellow worker in a state office in Albany. But everywhere for all of us, there is a bit of blue sky to look up to.

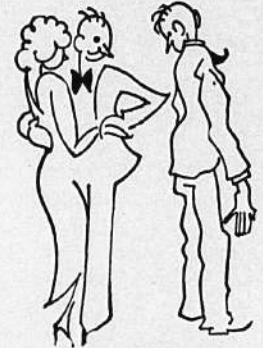
There is, too, our old friend Familiarity which, according to the adage, breeds contempt. System always tends to bind a person. Just

as the treadmill worked on the spirit of the victim, so may we develop a sort of dullness and flatness at our task. The long hours of work, and the necessity of living in constant close proximity to the job seems sometimes an oppressive burden.

It isn't easy to run away from routine, depression and narrowing influences; yet we must all have change and interest. No dynamo is worth shucks until it is connected up and at work. We must not fail to notice that the most interesting people in the world are always interested in other people. "He who would have friends," says Hazlitt, "must first show himself friendly." Friendship soothes many a sore hour.

Continued on Page 6

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Time Service

One of the outstanding problems of State service is the adoption of a compensation plan based upon the principle of rewarding workers according to the character of service rendered.

The peculiar requirements as to efficiency and faithfulness attaching to work in hospital, correctional and social welfare branches of State service have not been fairly evaluated any more than have the responsibilities and training required in hundreds of other positions in various lines of public service.

In state institutional service, the pay for a twelve hour day starts at \$54 per month or \$646 a year, with moderate allowance for maintenance. Strenuous efforts over many years to obtain recognition of faithful work resulted in appropriations to accord increases of \$4.00 per month at the end of three, five, ten, fifteen and twenty years, as an award for continuous time service.

For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1933, these time service rewards were eliminated, under law prohibiting increases of any sort. It is difficult for employees in any branch of the service to subscribe to the necessity for the small economy involved. This Association believes it to constitute disregard of a very important labor principle. If the employees concerned were highly paid the matter would not be so important. Unless continued devotion to duty is recognized, initiative and zeal are placed upon a par with indifference and slothfulness. One of the greatest assets to progress is the response in human hearts to appreciations of good work. The State cannot afford for the pittance of saving involved to overlook the great moral value inherent in honest recognition of faithful and interested service.

Every proper effort will be made by this Association to secure a deficiency appropriation by the Governor and the Legislature to restore for the fiscal year the abandoned time service allowance.

The Civil Service System

It would be strange indeed if any institution in American life so important as the civil service system escaped entirely the demoralizing effect of the depression. In the panic occasioned by fear and in the haste of experimental adventure for recovery, not only have policies and agencies long suspected of inefficiency been attacked, but popular education, the rights of labor, and other well recognized theories have been threatened.

Public service from the standpoint of efficiency and economy is much the same as private enterprise. But from the standpoint of selection of personnel it is vastly different. Every citizen regardless of political affiliation, of religion, of race, whether rich or poor, has the right to serve the people as a public officer or employee, providing he possesses the requisite merit and fitness. The civil service system was founded to assure that political favor, personal friendship, racial or religious preference, snobbery or intolerance of any sort would not interfere with the inherent rights of citizens to prove in a common and intelligent way their merit and fitness to serve the State.

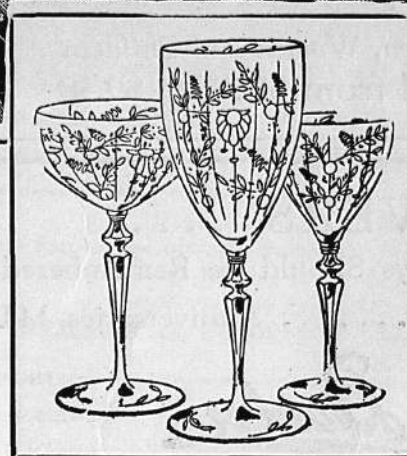
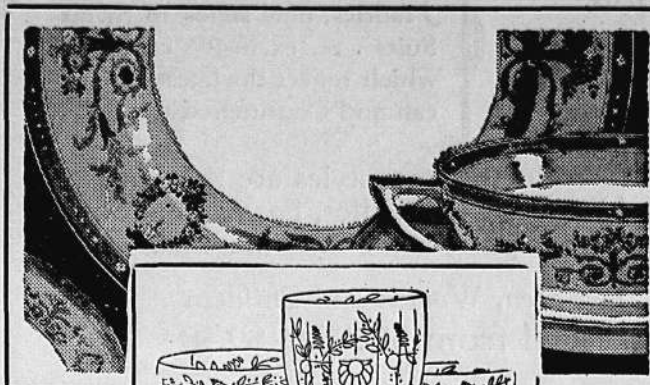
Legislation to improve business and industrial conditions, however, honestly conceived or carried out, will fail of its purpose if it destroy the principle of fair play embodied in the civil service system.

No intelligent human being expects permanent well-being for the majority of mankind unless the salaried and wage earning populations are prosperous. Making up as they do the vast preponderance of the citizens of this country, they will always be the final arbiters of the country's fate. Political, religious and racial freedom cannot be achieved without the civil service plan of public personnel administration. It is a deep and far reaching matter. Truly, as the great Theodore Roosevelt once proclaimed, the civil service system is as necessary as the common school system itself.

Everyone of the State and Federal employees is vitally interested, not only in the preservation of the civil service system everywhere throughout the United States, but also in its development along wise and practical lines, because they are an integral part of that system. But they are most interested as part of the whole citizenry who cannot without loss of patriotism forsake the principle involved in firm adherence to the principle of an equal opportunity to qualify for any post within the public service.

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Level Up or Down?

Continued from Page 1

ports by coal and oil companies. Railroad rates for passenger and freight service remain at practically the former level. Telephone rates have not materially changed. Gas and electricity rates stay about where they were in 1928; hospital rates are maintained at former levels. Doctors, dentists and lawyers charge the rates established in boom times, even though they cannot collect them.

It is thus evident that in spite of greatly reduced income the average householder has to meet many changes that were fixed on a much higher level than that which prevails today. Naturally, he and his family save in every possible way. Thus the general standard of living is lowered.

Assume we had adopted the policy of leveling down as advocated by Colonel Ayres and had decided henceforth to do business with less money and lower prices, what would have happened? All agree that if such a policy had been adopted the present depression would continue until a great many adjustments had been made. The serious nature of these adjustments can easily be imagined. The following may be mentioned as typical of the economic disturbances that would have taken place: Debts of individuals, corporations, municipalities, states and perhaps those of the Federal government would have been scaled down or repudiated. Bankruptcies and reorganizations of corporations would have been multiplied. Railroads would have defaulted on their bonds and eventually would have fallen into the hands of the government. Rates of all public utilities would have been reduced and all corporate incomes lessened so that dividends would have become smaller and scarcer. Public enterprises and charitable institutions would have been neglected, and regression to more primitive conditions would have followed. The abandonment of land and houses already common in many places would have become widespread. Insurance companies would have been unable to meet their obligations and the security planned for by millions would have disappeared. If readjustment had been pursued to the bitter end, our civilization might have collapsed.

Fortunately the leveling up process

will be fraught with much happier consequences. The only danger is that the process may be carried to extremes. Excess of this kind, however, is not likely to occur in this country in times of peace.

In leveling up the price structure the amount of money in circulation will have to be increased and confidence in the future will have to be restored. Various safe ways of increasing currency in circulation may be used: Bonds may be purchased by Federal reserve banks; loans may be made to corporations and individuals at low rates of interest; gold or silver certificates may be issued directly by the Federal treasury and be used to defray government expenses; bank note circulation may be expanded. Some of these methods are now in use.

What will happen during the process of leveling up? The first result will be the restoration of hope in the hearts of producers and merchants. They will prepare for the expanding market that will certainly follow. Merchants will stock up; factories will resume operations; laborers will be employed. The demand for farm products will increase; wages will be restored, and the normal cycle of production and distribution will again operate. Many doubtful debts will be paid in full and taxes will cease to be an intolerable burden. Railroads and other public utilities will again be freely patronized. The standard of living will again rise. The happy state that existed in 1928 will gradually be restored. *Steps should then be taken to prevent the vicious changes in the price level that have always been so productive of misery.*

It is believed that means are at hand for the control of the price level. It certainly should not be allowed to get unreasonably high or unreasonably low. A constant uniform price level constitutes an enduring basis for prosperity. It makes for confidence and security and encourages economic planning for the future.

Inflation and deflation are both forerunners of evil days.

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The Public Should Know Their Servants

Hon. WILLIAM GORHAM RICE,
President State Civil Service Commission

(From Address at Annual Meeting of the Civil Service Reform Association)

As to the future, of civil service, I desire to offer what may at first seem to be a radical proposal. But I feel my proposal has a sound foundation, for its basis is in the State Constitution which at the beginning of Article V, Section 6, contains the following words: "Appointments in the Civil Service of the State and all of the civil divisions thereof shall be made according to merit and fitness . . ."

The time has arrived, I believe, when this merit and fitness declaration of the Constitution should be definitely applied to exempt and unclassified appointments as well as to competitive positions. Possibly you may regard such a suggestion as visionary and outside the pale of practical administration. But if careful consideration is given to the suggestion, it seems to me you will be convinced of its usefulness and value, particularly at this time when attention is much directed toward the constantly enlarging scope of State activities.

Concretely, I hope to see in the immediate future public sentiment so awakened that it will require that all exempt and unclassified appointments shall be accepted only when such appointments are made according to disclosed merit and fitness definitely recorded. This record, substantiated by the signature of the appointing authority, ought to be filed in some public office where it will be accessible to all citizens and taxpayers. In other words, the recording publicly of the qualifications of every exempt appointee should hereafter be an understood obligation on the part of the appointing officer making such exempt appointment.

The Governor of New York State already essentially follows this course in the case of officials appointed by him. By means of a newspaper press statement, which promptly reaches readers throughout the State, he announces not only the name but also the qualifications, that is to say the merit and fitness, of each person whom he selects for appointment.

My proposal is that a record for subordinate departmental appoint-

ments should be required from and be filed by all appointing officers. The principle can well be applied to all exempt appointments in cities, counties, towns and villages.

Public sentiment, it seems to me, can be so awakened at this time that it will become the natural thing to expect always such an authoritative statement, filed in a public office, available to the press, giving the qualifications of all civil appointees. The publication of such a statement would be a matter of news quite as interesting as the name of an appointee. The procedure suggested would honor those who are qualified; equally it would disclose those who lack fitness.

Is not the proposal reasonable? In exempt and unclassified appointments, the appointing official is allowed entire freedom of choice. Should he not, in proper regard for the taxpayers whose money pays the salary of his appointee, tell why he chooses a particular person? And is it not desirable that all citizens should know from each appointing agent of the State exactly what kind of merit and fitness has moved him to a choice? Indeed should not every appointing officer count it a privilege to admit his fellow citizens to his confidence in this matter of appointments?

Finally I would specially call to your attention that each appointing officer of this State has solemnly sworn upon assuming office to obey the constitutional provision requiring appointments to be according to merit and fitness. Is it anything out of the way to ask that in every case such qualifications as are found existing should be definitely and openly recorded. To me this seems only a proper administrative requirement.

While the idea which I have just presented may at first seem a counsel of perfection, nevertheless I think reflection will justify it as a reasonably progressive step in civil service procedure. I believe it to be an advance step which will assuredly vivify an existing constitutional declaration, a step which will surely raise the standard of all appointments, a step which will make more effective the whole organization of the State government.



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Making Work Interesting

Continued from Page 2

It is impossible for me to be specific about the different avenues of interest that surround the state employee in institutions; one might begin by developing a certain attention to things outside of the job itself, and before long the job will begin to have new aspects. Find a hobby—get away from the ego centric or the over concern with the pathological, and you will be surprised at what happens to your environment. There is also a lifetime study in any phase of institution life, as well as in life outside the institution.

The New Deal and Membership

This is the most important period in American history so far as salaried employees are concerned. National measures to stimulate business recuperation inevitably deal with labor matters. State employees in common with all other employees must depend upon organization not only to protect sound employee practices but to be in a position to help with the Nation's new deal. You owe it to yourself and fellow workers to join this Association and support its program.

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Business indices are showing a healthy response to an awakened public confidence.

The Federal administration is appealing to citizens everywhere to cooperate toward the successful application of the laws recently enacted. This legal machinery needs men. The human element capable of coping with each of the tremendous problems which it is sought to solve is the indispensable necessity of the times. The success or failure of the government's efforts will rest wholly upon the integrity and ability of the human beings selected. This is a 100 per cent civil service function. Government is in its most vital parts a personnel problem. Everything good and everything bad that results from government is a reflection of human action. Salaried workers everywhere and in every line of human endeavor will be affected by the new Federal Laws. Organizations are the means of giving life to cooperation. Civil service employees, fully organized in a solid, state-wide Association is needed at this time as never before.

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Important Public Service

Continued from Page 1

average Correctional institutional employee, for instance, is working from ten to twelve hours per day, many of them without one day in seven to themselves. It is true that these employees are entitled to, and receive, two weeks vacation with pay. It is true that after they have labored for thirty-five years they may be retired on half-pay. It is true that there are several other options about retirement, or in connection with it, but nowhere, to my knowledge in industry, are men required to work longer hours.

It might be said in passing, as well, that the nature of the employment of many institutional employees places them in the hazardous class, insofar as life and limb are concerned, and their work is so viewed by insurance companies.

It seems to me it is highly proper, therefore, for some one to say a word about these faithful servants of the State, and that the impression held by many uninformed individuals that the State employee occupies an easy berth with short hours and long vacations be dispelled by a statement of the facts. The success of our institutional programs depend upon the loyalty and intelligence of the staffs of the institutions. That these programs have been so successful indicates that the employees have performed, and are performing their duties in a splendid way.

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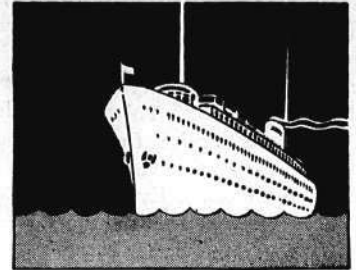
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