



# THE STATE EMPLOYEE

Volume I

June and July, 1932

Number 6-7

## Association Committees Urge Sound Retrenchments

Governing committees and officers of the Association of State Civil Service Employees at a meeting on June 23rd pledged full support to executive, legislative, administrative and citizen efforts to effect economies in State Government. No group of citizens is more interested in the sound conduct of public affairs than the men and women enlisted in public service. The necessary functioning of government along all essential lines is a first consideration at all meetings of the Association. Steps to affect economies through revision of hours of service, possible savings through having present employees do the work resulting from vacancies occurring by reason of resignations or deaths, and the economies possible through foregoing increases, are some of the measures now under way by the State which would net valuable savings without seriously impairing public service or reducing the general salary basis. State civil service employees recognize as a first principle that public work must be done and done well under all circumstances. As pointed out in the May issue of THE STATE EMPLOYEE, economical personnel administration rests upon an efficient personnel limited in number to those actually required to perform the necessary tasks. When revenues necessary to carry on public activities are practically cut in half and when the whole citizenry is plunged into anxiety or actual distress by reason of economic depression, generous cooperation toward the rehabilitation of the structure of prosperity may be confidently relied upon from the organized state employees of this Association.

A special committee has been appointed to cooperate with the Division of the Budget, the Civil Service Commission and the department heads in the matters of application of new Civil Service procedure in the classification and allocation of positions throughout the service along the lines adopted in the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1932, and also as to salaries, hours of service, promotions, etc. This Committee is composed of Dr. Frank L. Tolman, Library Extension; William J. Picard, Labor Department; Richard N. Barrett, Public Works Department; J. V. DePorte, Health Department, and Charles A. Brind, Education Department.

No more able group of interested State employees could be found anywhere and employees in every branch of the service throughout the entire State can have implicit confidence in their judgment, wisdom and fairness.

### REMARKABLE EVENT

On the evening of June 23rd, the officers and members of committees of this Association, representing a total membership of 9,500 held a round table conference to which Director of the Budget Mark Graves, and Civil Service Commissioner Howard G. E. Smith were invited. Both gentlemen attended and spoke at length upon civil service and budget matters. This meeting was epochal in State employment history in that it marked a well deserved recognition of the willing and potent source for State service improvement present in a State-wide organization of civil service employees unselfishly devoted to good and efficient public service.

Employees have sought for a long time the opportunity now present for frank, open treatment of employment matters touching so vitally upon efficiency of service and upon the economic and social conditions of State employees.

The fine spirit of cooperation displayed by the Civil Service Commission and the Division of the Budget at this time is prophetic of that real achievement along wise and fair lines desired by all true friends of public service.

### WILLIAM M. THOMAS

On June 14, William M. Thomas, a past President of this Association, and for many years the Special Agent of the Association passed away. In 1922, Mr. Thomas retired from State service in the Attorney General's office. In addition to his work for this Association, he was a member of the State Pension Commission. Mr. Thomas possessed all of the attributes of a good citizen and a good public servant. His loyalty to civil service principles and his faithfulness in attention to the ideals of his fellow-workers, as expressed by this Association which he served so well, endeared him to all who were fortunate enough to enjoy his acquaintance. Civil service employees lose a true friend in the passing of Mr. Thomas.

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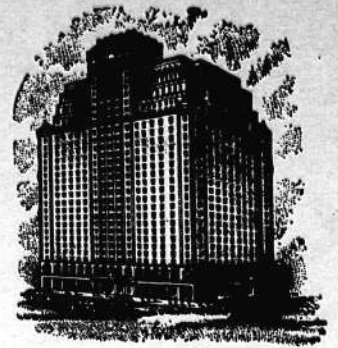


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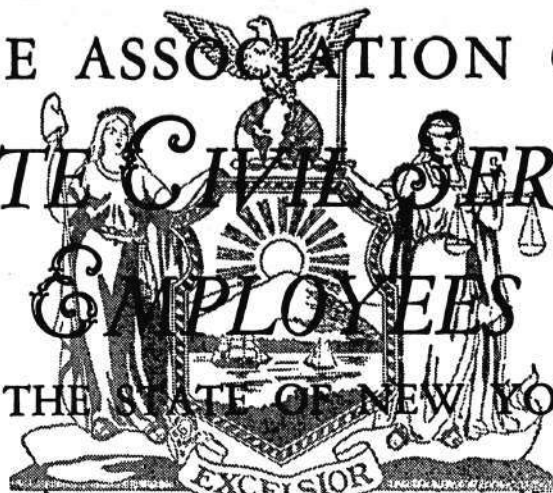
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# THE ASSOCIATION OF STATE CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK



"This Association is organized to extend and uphold the principle of merit and fitness in public employment, to maintain and promote efficiency in public service, and to advance generally the interests of the Civil Service employees of the State of New York."

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## CIVIL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

(From Informal Remarks of State Civil Service Commissioner Howard G. E. Smith, at Joint Meeting of Committees of this Association, outlining Important Improvements under way in State Civil Service administration. This is the most progressive action taken since the adoption of the civil service system in this State.)

Although Governor Roosevelt vetoed the so-called Classification Bill that was passed by the Legislature last winter, he has expressed an earnest desire that the work of Joint Legislative Committee on Re-classification should not be wasted. I think that, with few exceptions, the principles of classification for the State service are endorsed by every one connected with the service. Pursuant to instructions from the Governor, the Civil Service Commission, in cooperation with the Chairman of the Fiscal Committees of the Legislature and the Director of the Budget, plans to continue the Classification work from the point where it was necessarily stopped by the expiration of the life of the Joint Legislative Committee.

Necessary adjustments in the classification and allocations of individuals affecting the new budget estimates which will be submitted by each Department to the Governor in the early fall, is to be our first objective. In the short space of time available and with the limited facilities at our disposal, some things that we might like to do will have to be postponed until a later date, but, with the exception of the institutions, we hope to bring the Classification in each department, up to date; to iron out certain points of contention that existed between the department heads and the Joint Legislative Committee; and to reconsider, as far as may be possible, cases believed wrongly classified or allocated in the original set-up, so that when the next budget estimates are substituted, they will contain completed classification titles in each main department, and will present an accurate picture of the State service as it exists. The institutional service will be covered as soon as this can be done.

We are already underway in our efforts to reach this

first objective. On June 16th we sent a letter to the head of each department, outlining in general what we plan to do. Obviously, the first step is to bring the Classification of each Department, up to date. As you know, to a very considerable extent, the titles in the budget beginning July 1st are Classification titles. They represent positions as they existed on or about January 15th, with the incumbents at that time. Between January 15th and July 1st, there will have been some changes in Departments, due to changes in personnel, organization, procedure, etc. Our first and immediate concern is to trace through the recent changes in incumbency of positions, so that the Director of the Budget, the Civil Service Commission and Comptroller will be in agreement on the July 1st payrolls of each department.

As far as Budget titles are involved, with the exception of new positions authorized by the finance authorities as of July 1st, the same positions will exist on July 1st as existed on or about January 15th when the Budget was prepared. Actually some of these positions will have changed in character. For some, new duties will have been added, or old duties taken away, so that they may come under a different class altogether. The Civil Service Commission plans to take this matter up with Department and Bureau heads, to make a re-study of those positions, the duties of which have changed materially, and to re-classify them where that is necessary. When a position is found to belong in a different class than that shown in the appropriation for the year 1932-33, we propose to ear mark that position, with its correct title, so that when new budget estimates are submitted, the title can be permanently corrected.

We have prepared a form on which appeals by employees can be made. We urge, for obvious reasons, that appeals of individual employees, wherever possible, be transmitted through the channels of the department employing them. We have just as consistently urged upon each department head that he trans-



mit to the Department of Civil Service, the appeal of any employee who thinks his position has been wrongly classified, even though the Department head himself does not feel that there is the slightest merit in the employee's claim. We urge that appeals come through departmental heads, wherever possible, because we are convinced that real success in this classification work will require a cooperative spirit among employees, department heads, and those who are attempting to administer the classification. The Civil Service Commission's function will be primarily that of co-ordinator. When a question is raised as to a proper classification or allocation of a position, we want all the facts possible, both from the point of view of the employee, and from the point of view of the administrative head of the organization in which that position occurs. We hope to get the fullest cooperation from both employees and department or bureau heads, so that, with all the facts available, we will be in a position to make a fair, just and honest appraisal of where the position belongs.

But the door is not closed to the employee, if he doesn't feel that he can or if he does not want to submit his appeal through departmental channels. Under such conditions we propose to let him come direct to the Civil Service Commission with his appeal, our one requirement being that he must file his appeal on a standard form which we will supply, and we urge most emphatically that employees, in making appeals, keep in mind that classification is of the position and not of the person. Think in terms of the job, and present your arguments in terms of the job and not in terms of personality. It is incumbent upon you to prove your case along these lines. You and I, as employees, may come and go, but the job may go on forever.

The Civil Service Commission will be somewhat handicapped in taking up this work. Together with the Director of the Budget, we feel there is no question about our legal rights to classify positions on the basis of duties and responsibilities. It is already written into the Civil Service Law. There will be some minor administrative difficulties, due to other old provisions of the law that will temporarily handicap us, but which we hope can be corrected by new legislation next winter. We will also be handicapped by having only a limited staff and limited funds with which to take on this work. We do not claim to be omniscient nor do we expect to be able to satisfy everyone. Whatever we do, we expect will be accepted as being fair and just within the limits of our vision. Between now and the time the next budget estimates are submitted, we have set a limited program. There will be other phases of the work to follow. For instance, we hope to review gradually the specifications of positions as they were originally set up, and in some cases, we shall probably modify them so that they will be free of some of the objections that have been raised against them. On one thing along that line, I think I can give you reasonable assurance at this time. That is, that the Civil Service Commission is not likely to put any unnecessary obstacles in the way of promotion within the service, of employees who are found, by demonstrated ability, to be fit to hold positions of higher rank.

## SUPERANNUATION RETIREMENT

By F. B. Holmes

### Director, Employees' Retirement System

Last month we wrote about contributions. Many employees have taken advantage of making a savings' bank of the State of New York.

Superannuation or service retirement is available to any member of the Retirement System at age sixty regardless of number of years of service. The allowance at age sixty is about one-seventieth of one's average salary for last five years of service for each year of service. This one-seventieth is produced as follows:

Item (c) of Subdivision 1 of Section 63 of the Retirement Law provides that a member will receive for service rendered prior to January 1, 1921, for State employees, and other dates for County, City, Town and Village employees, one-seventieth of final average salary for each year of service prior to date of municipality's entry into the System.

Item (b) of the same subdivision states that a member will receive one-one hundred and fortieth of final average salary for each year of service as a member.

Item (a) provides that the member will receive an annuity purchasable from his contributions. This item will equal as nearly as possible one-one hundred and fortieth of his final average salary for his last five years of service.

One-one hundred and fortieth plus one-one hundred and fortieth equals one-seventieth. If then the member receives one-seventieth of final average salary for each year of service prior to a certain date and also one-seventieth for service subsequent to that date, the retirement allowance at age sixty will be one-seventieth of final average salary for each and all years of service.

A member may, by paying extra contributions, retire at age fifty-five and receive one-sixtieth of final average salary for each year of service instead of one-seventieth. For voluntary retirement prior to age sixty the member pays the total cost for the additional five years (from 55 to 60) of retirement allowance together with the total cost of the difference between one-sixtieth and one-seventieth for his total service, that is for prior and member service.

We have little difficulty with superannuation retirement. The greatest difficulty arises from the fact that members claim service that they never rendered. At times members will claim a full year of service when perhaps only two months' service was rendered. Some members claim that for the reason that they were on Call for the year, although they may have been called only once, that they should receive credit for a full year of service. The Comptroller, under the Law, can determine how much service in any year is equal to a year of service. This point is watched very carefully.

To illustrate the importance of this: If a member retired on a final average salary of \$25,000 claimed full time for service rendered thirty-five or forty years ago at a salary of \$200. per year, the retirement allowance for each year of service at age sixty on a \$25,000. salary would be about \$357. per year. Were full time to be allowed on the \$200. salary, the member would receive more retirement allowance for the year of service than he received salary when he rendered the service.

We have employees whose only work is searching the records determining the service of those who make application for service retirement. When the System was established we corralled all records possible showing salaries and service rendered. When a State employee makes claim for service that we cannot find it is quite safe to state that the service was not rendered.

Quite often service claims are materially reduced for the reason that we cannot find record of the service claimed.

When a member from a municipality retires an official of the municipality certifies to the Retirement System as to the service rendered and the retirement allowance is paid accordingly. Ordinarily the System accepts the certification of the municipality for the reason that the municipality and not the State is paying for the retirement allowance granted.

### CONSIDERATION FOR PERSONNEL IN GOVERNMENT ECONOMIES

Charles P. Mesick

Charles P. Mesick, Chief Examiner and Secretary, Civil Service Commission, State of New Jersey, in a recent statement outlined a policy of personnel administration of interest at this time. Mr. Mesick has been a staunch supporter of efficiency in public service and fair employment practices. Part of his statement follows:

"Problems of promotion and increase in pay in public service will give way to problems of demotion and decrease in pay. The holding of new tests should be almost com-

pletely discontinued. The question immediately before us is not one of bringing new people into the service but of finding places for the present members of the permanent establishment.

Reductions in the forces of public employees undoubtedly will be made. In many jurisdictions this has already been done. In others the movement is in process and in yet others provision has been made for no new appointments but present forces are being maintained. The trend is toward a reduced number of employees and a consequent reduced expenditure for personal service.

The Government should exercise that same justice and consideration with respect to its working forces as are exercised by the best and most enlightened industrial employers.

In such reductions as must be made our first step should be to place, by assignment and transfer, surplus workers in one division of the government in other divisions where their services can be used.

Next there must be considered shorter working hours and in some instances staggered employment.

The final step, taken only when dictated by necessity, should be the lay-off of permanent help. Such lay-offs should be made with the greatest care and only after every factor bearing on the rights of the employee, the effects on the departmental activities and the community, have been considered.

Seniority, the value of the service rendered as determined by dependable service ratings, and the economic need of the individual employee should be carefully weighed.

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The personnel agency and the budget bureau must draw closer together under the immediate direction of the executive authority to the end that better budgeting and more economy shall be exercised not only in the purchase of materials and things but in the purchase of personal service.

Personnel administration today embraces human problems as well as economic problems. There ought to be developed in all divisions and in the whole Government a standard of cooperation, of understanding and mutual helpfulness which has not been heretofore attained.

Responsible administrative authorities are searching for ways and means of maintaining Government in an effective status. The personnel agency should point the way in so far as it lies in the field of personal service."

### EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMY INSURED BY MERIT SYSTEM

By Thomas E. Campbell

President, United States Civil Service Commission.

A maxim of good government is "The best shall serve the state." Appointment and retention upon the basis of merit alone is the only method whereby honesty, efficiency, and economy in government, Federal, State, or local, may be assured.

The waste and corruption in government in our country prior to the enactment of the Federal civil-service law of 1883 are generally known. It is not too much to say that the Government would have been destroyed if corrective measures had not been applied. Lincoln said that he felt like a man who was letting offices in one end of his house while the other end was burning down. Once, pointing out to a friend the eager multitude of office-seekers which thronged the White House, he said, "There you see something which in course of time will become a greater danger to the Republic than the rebellion itself." And to Carl Schurz he observed, "I am afraid this thing is going to ruin Republican government."

Of the States, New York was the first to place a civil-service law upon its statute books. A law was passed in May, 1883, which related to the State service, and this was soon supplemented by one providing the same system for the larger cities of the State. The operation of the merit system in the State of New York was such as to enable its supporters to contend successfully in the constitutional convention of 1894 for a clause writing the principle into the constitution of the State.

Every man, woman, and child in the United States has a direct concern in the kind of men and women who are employed in our public offices and in the number of our public servants. First there is the matter of cost. The second and even more important consideration is the vast number of things that the employees of the public are expected to do for the public.

Government today is a complex machinery. It has evolved through the ages from the beginning of government, when, before the time of recorded history, man realized that he could no longer exist solely as an individual and banded together in tribes for mutual protection and general well-being.

To our civil servants we delegate a great variety of duties. Under our modern economy it would be the height

of absurdity for any man to try to perform for himself every duty necessary to his maintenance. A civil office, therefore, is an office of trust, however humble it may be, and a civil employee should feel honored that his fellows place this trust in him.

There is not a single second, day or night, in which our safety, our health, our comfort, our convenience, our business transactions are not affected in some degree by the activities of our civil servants. This applies to the boy in the street, to the president of a bank, and to everyone else.

We want our sanitary conditions to be of the best. We want our persons and our property protected. We want our mail collected and delivered promptly and economically. We want our children to have adequate educational advantages under competent instruction. We demand, and have a right to demand, in return for the taxes we pay, a thousand services. And we are entitled to efficient and economical service.

The competitive-examination system for the appointment of civilian employees has been a success wherever it has been given a fair trial in the United States. A civil establishment can be operated with fewer employees under the merit system than under the spoils system, and under the merit system the work will be done vastly more satisfactorily. This is no mere theory. The assertion can be backed with concrete facts and figures. It stands to reason that it is true, for under a system of appointments through political or personal favor the tendency always has been and always will be to create jobs to hand out as reward for political or personal service. There is no sort of economy in any such system. Neither is there economy in making appointments, even to the extent of necessity, on any basis other than that of demonstrated ability. William H. Taft put it about right when he said, "If we selected employees according to the length of their noses it would be better than the political spoils system of appointment."

One purpose of a civil-service law is to give to every citizen an equal right to demonstrate his qualifications for employment by government. It is therefore in harmony with the principles of popular government. The other purpose is to insure that the persons appointed shall be those best qualified among the ones who seek government employment. It needs no argument to show that more and better work will be done by a given number of employees if they are the most capable that can be secured than would be done if the mediocre and inefficient were mixed with the efficient. The better the quality of the employees the smaller their number will be. An employee appointed through open competition owes no debt to anyone; his whole duty is to the public.

I have been asked more than once whether, in my opinion, a government employee who does more than perform the work allotted to him in the ordinary routine may expect to receive recognition for his interest and energy. I have replied, and emphatically, that I do think so.

I could fill a good-sized volume with brief biographical sketches of former government messenger boys, minor clerks, and scientific assistants who are now holding important executive and professional positions under some branch of government. These men and women were not clock-watchers. They did not know or care whether it was 2 o'clock, or 4 o'clock, or 5 o'clock. They had an interest

in their work and they were rewarded for their industry. Would this be so if they had felt that their jobs depended upon personal whim or a change in political fortunes? The question answers itself.

### THE PENSION COMMISSION

The sad death of William M. Thomas, creates a vacancy on the State Pension Commission.

There is need for the very highest type of public spirited man on this Commission. It is imperative, also, that the appointee understand the actual problems of superannuation insurance and that he have a sympathetic understanding of the large part the retirement system plays in the efficiency and well-being of salaried workers.

This Association has urged upon Governor Roosevelt the vital need at this time of special consideration to the fitness of the person appointed to fill the vacancy now existing in this Commission. Employees may well address the Governor on this important matter suggesting the very great importance of maintaining fair and intelligent counsel on this Commission at all times and especially at the present time when so much propaganda of a destructive kind socially is being thoughtlessly directed against the great mass of citizens, the salaried workers.

### DEPARTMENTAL CHANGES

Commissioner Berne A. Pyrke, who recently retired after 11 years of State service as Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets, will be remembered by Civil service employees as a staunch friend of civil service principles. He was one of the State's department executives who lent active support to the betterment of State service as sought by this Association through the adopting of recent recommendations of the Legislative Survey Committee.

The Association will always cherish a sincere gratitude for the effective aid rendered to the cause of good civil service by Commissioner Pyrke.

Civil service workers are rightfully pleased with the deserved recognition of merit and excellence of service during many years shown in the selection of Charles H. Baldwin as the new Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets. Commissioner Baldwin began his public service under competitive Civil service appointment and by reason of indefatigable industry and study, advanced step by step through important state posts.

The selection directly or by promotion from the ranks to the leadership of governmental departments on the basis of merit and fitness offers the best known method of recruiting public servants. It is the logical and business-like way of securing needed personnel. A considerable number of men who have attained high positions in public life, entered State service under the rules of civil service and they have given remarkable evidence of exceptional ability and constructive work in public office.

### YOUR ASSOCIATION

State employees wherever located are assured of continual representation throughout the year in all employee matters through this Association. Headquarters at Room 156, State Capitol, are always open, and committees are always on the job.

### THE ASSOCIATION PROMOTES VACATION OPPORTUNITIES

Recent circulars distributed by representatives of the Association throughout the various departments and institutions setting forth facts concerning a State employees' vacation camp at Lake Meacham in the Adirondacks brought the usual hearty response from members scattered throughout the State. Accordingly, the State Employees Recreational Club, Inc., was formed and began operations on July 3. The camp will be conducted wholly on a cooperative non-profit-plan. The cost per week will not exceed \$12.00 per person and if cost of operation is less refunds will be made. The following directors and officers of the State Employees' Recreational Club, Inc., all State workers and active in this Association, are giving personal attention without compensation of any kind to the success of the camp:

President, Webster J. Birdsall, Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Secretary and Treasurer, Stephen A. Smith, Jr., Public Works Department.

Vice President, Chas. A. Brind, Education Department.

Director, Arthur S. Hopkins, Conservation Department.

Director, John J. Higgins, Division of Standards and Purchase. The board of directors includes the officers mentioned and W. F. McDonough.

Reservations may still be made and will be filled in order of receipt. The capacity of the camp is limited to between 60 and 70 and therefore immediate reservations is important. Send reservations to Box 48, Capitol Sta., Albany, N. Y.

Commissioner of Conservation, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., has cooperated cordially with employees in promoting this further use of State lands by citizens of the State for their enjoyment and recreation.

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When you have finished reading your copy of The State Employee pass it along to your friends and neighbors.

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