

selves rather than by excessive public taxation. Provision for such retirement will be approved increasingly as the citizenry understands their true objectives, i.e., increased efficiency in government and not retirement of bureaucrats upon sinecures.

No honest protagonist of the merit system of public personnel administration claims that it solves all problems of staffing governmental agencies. However, four outstanding advantages are claimed for the merit system. First, it eliminates the "gang" concept of government, i.e., the situation in which, when one political group wins an election, it takes over the governmental jobs and the members of the unsuccessful group lose theirs. Adherents of the merit system argue that this trafficking in public employment is not conducive to the maintenance of the dignity or stability of government in a democracy. Second, the merit system conserves governmental skills which may have cost the state considerable expense in their development. To spend sums of public funds in the training of a public employee for a given function and then to permit him to be discharged because of a change in political forces is wasteful from an economic standpoint. Third, the merit system makes it possible for a young man or woman to choose a career of governmental service with some reasonable hopes of achievement. As government is required to assume more and greater responsibilities, it will be wise

to enlist superior young men and women for its service. These people should be protected in the vocation for which they have prepared and should not be subject to the hazards of the election returns. Finally, if governmental officers were freed from the responsibilities of dividing the "spoils" of elections, they could be able to give more attention to the problem of governmental policy and administration. State officers have increasingly deplored the time-consuming and nerve-racking necessities of finding governmental jobs for their political supporters.

Honest and intelligent critics of the merit system have called attention to its flaws. First, they argue that the merit system is undemocratic in that it creates an officeholding class. This argument is a carry-over from Jacksonian days when it was felt that the creation of an officeholding class would be dangerous to our liberties. It was urged that every citizen should have a chance at a governmental position sometime in his life. But it may be argued more cogently perhaps that the merit system is more democratic in that it gives every citizen, regardless of political allegiance or fortuitous political developments, an equal chance with all others to aspire to a position in the governmental service. Second, it is charged that the merit system freezes incompetents in office making it practically impossible to get rid of them. If this is a valid argument, it is applied, of course, to the negation of the merit system which seeks to keep only efficient and productive employees in the governmental service.

However, if the merit system law is properly framed, it should be possible to separate incompetents and malinger-

Kimball Brothers Lumber Co.

Douglas Fir and Red Cedar
Lumber

TRENT

OREGON