

The Public Service and the Future of Oregon

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The Oregon public service during the last three years has experienced great difficulty in maintaining its personnel at minimum operation level. Hundreds of these employees are now on leave of absence serving with the Armed Forces. The attraction of higher wages elsewhere has operated further to decrease the public personnel. The supply of key and essential men is diminishing. Many of these men have been trained and rendered skillful in their work through years of painstaking effort. Their skills cannot be replaced except at considerable expense for retraining. We have already lost men who will be most difficult to replace, and in the great volume of post-war work which we face, it appears that it is going to be next to impossible to induce these men to return or to recruit others of adequate skill and training unless we can offer them *greater inducement in the way of social security.*

In the past, public service employees, generally speaking, have been inclined to accept public service as desirable career work, recognizing that although wages were not high there was a compensating continuity of employment. All industries and all activities throughout the country have felt the same pinch and shortage of manpower, and in the extreme competition for those trained men not called for military duty, public employees have been offered most attractive positions—not only more attractive in the immediate present, but more attractive in the future. Private industry has offered immediately higher wages and greater opportunity for advancement, greater rewards for success and, in addition, some form of *social security or retirement or pension plan.* Public service workers look about them and observe those

men who have loyally worked year after year for the public and who have grown old and incapacitated in service, having worked at a relatively low wage sufficient to provide a modest living, but not sufficient to permit the accumulation of any reserve for the "rainy day" or the day when their ability to work is gone. They resolve that they want something better and, accordingly, are easily influenced to accept any offer of higher wages, especially if such offer holds out, in addition, the promise of a pension plan for their retiring years.

The State Board of Higher Education, which employs a large staff of professional and trained men, is faced with the same situation. In one of their recent bulletins they placed great emphasis upon the fact that they are unable to recruit and to hold qualified professional men without some further inducement in the form of social security or a retirement pension plan. The Oregon State System of Higher Education Leaflet, Series No. 268, dated November 15, 1943, concludes as follows: "The Board should be permitted to establish a plan of retirement annuities, which plan would make it compulsory for staff members to contribute half of the cost of the annuities. This means that the legislative assembly need only to pass permissive legislation * * *, and the Board of Higher Education could then proceed to help its personnel to help themselves."

The cities of the state are faced with the same problems and the League of Oregon Cities at their conference held May 26, 1944, in Portland, adopted the following resolution: "BE IT RESOLVED that the State legislature be urged

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