

National Civil Service League Report of Committee on Demobilization and Stabilization of the Civil Service

By LEONARD D. WHITE

At the close of World War II the civil service will return to its peacetime duties and responsibilities. The greatest care needs to be taken to preserve and extend the basic principle of merit and fitness.

The federal executive civil service on July 1, 1940 totaled 1,002,820. It has expanded greatly during the war period, and on January 1, 1945 totaled about 2,860,000.

Different estimates have been made of the probable size of the public service after the war. There is agreement that the federal service will not shrink to its 1940 level, but may be stabilized at about 1,500,000 employees. State and municipal services will probably expand considerably beyond the 1940 level. The federal service, will probably release about 1,500,000 workers.

A survey is now being made by the Bureau of the Budget to determine what agencies are likely to be discontinued or considerably curtailed, what agencies may expand, and what new agencies may be needed. A plan should be devised for making talent already in the government service available to agencies that can best use such talent, rather than recruiting new employees from outside the service. It will be necessary also to give consideration to the claims of returning veterans for special consideration for opportunities to compete for public positions filled on a temporary basis during the war period.

The principal consideration governing the rate of demobilization of federal civilian personnel must be the essential needs of the departments and agencies. Employment should not be continued under pressure from employees except as sound economy and

efficient service may require. The civil service should not be made a means of unemployment relief.

A study should be undertaken to ascertain what changes introduced during the emergency should be retained or adapted to peace-time conditions, and what changes in legislation are needed to promote efficiency, economy and responsibility in personnel management.

States and municipalities have been forced to postpone or abandon many projected or planned public works or public services as a result of war economics or inability to obtain construction material. We believe that the trend in state and municipal governments will be toward considerable expansion in post-war construction projects and continuation of new public services started in pre-war periods. This may involve the expenditure of billions of dollars which must be made economically and effectively if the public is to get the real value it deserves.

States and municipalities which were called upon during the war period to release many of their key executives and administrators for the war effort will need to be rehabilitated. Many of those lost to the federal government and to private industry may not return. Our local public services will need the best talent which can be recruited to guide, supervise and carry out the vast post-war projects. To assure the public that only those of demonstrated merit and fitness necessary for effective administration of our governmental affairs are recruited and selected, we urge the strengthening of the merit systems where they now are operative and the adoption of merit sys-