

matic service; the career lines that had developed over long years in forestry, public health, and engineering, for example, he knew less well. One of his long-range objectives was to develop a career service in all phases of government work, and in his first conversation with me he invited me in general terms to give attention to this problem. The first foundation—permanent, non-partisan employment—he succeeded in fully achieving, in principle; the junior civil service examiner examination, later transformed into the option in administration of the junior professional assistant examination, was another promising lead; the remarkable development of in-service training facilities during the years from 1933 to 1940 and with even greater volume since, established still another base; the report of the Committee on Civil Service Improvement set out a plan for a career in the specifically administrative positions.

The President watched these and other pieces of a complete career service take shape with satisfaction, but he never formulated a systematic program of his own. In general he wanted a system that would be democratic, with no barriers to the recognition of men and women of capacity. He also wanted a system that would automatically eliminate its own deadwood.

In a conversation on this subject, the President called to my attention the Navy "plucking system" and suggested that it might be adapted to the civil service. A naval officer who is three times passed over for promotion is retired from active service. The President was conscious of the fact that in many parts of the federal government there is no promotion system, and that in consequence some rise to relatively high position propelled by no other force than the passage of time.

Mr. White's description of Franklin Roosevelt's views on the extension of

the merit system to state services jointly supported by the federal government is as follows:

In 1939 the President recommended and Congress approved amendments to the Social Security Act which specifically authorized the Board to require "the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis." In the message supporting this delicate matter was one of his deftest paragraphs.

"Much of the success of the Social Security Act is due to the fact that all of the programs contained in this act (with one necessary exception) are administered by the states themselves, but coordinated and partially financed by the Federal government. This method has given us flexible administration, and has enabled us to put these programs into operation quickly. However, in some states incompetent and politically dominated personnel has been distinctly harmful. Therefore, I recommend that the states be required, as a condition for the receipt of Federal funds, to establish and maintain a merit system for the selection of personnel. Such a requirement would represent a protection to the states and citizens thereof rather than an encroachment by the Federal Government, since it would automatically promote efficiency and eliminate the necessity for minute Federal scrutiny of state operations."

The importance of this amendment to the steady improvement of personnel standards in the state and county government cannot be exaggerated. This provision may well be recognized, over the perspective of the years, as one of the two or three principal contributions of Franklin Roosevelt to a better public service.

Franklin Roosevelt's views on the role of organization of government employees are given by Mr. White thus:

The views of the President on civil
(Continued on Page 21)