

New Ideas and Improved Methods

By D. J. McLELLAN

In the opinion of Art Marquiss of the State Highway Department, it would be a good idea for the Oregon State Employees Association to budget some of its funds for prizes for those submitting suggestions that would lead to a substantial saving for the State of Oregon. He calls attention to a bulletin of the Public Administration Clearing House, for May 15, 1946, which reads as follows:

DETROIT CONTEST SAVES CITY \$150,000

Annual savings of \$150,000 are expected in Detroit's municipal administration as a result of a suggestion made by a city employee who won the \$500 grand prize in a novel \$2,500 Civic Award Contest.

The international City Managers' Association reports that 85 other cash prizes were awarded to Detroit municipal employees for suggestions aimed at improving efficiency and economy of city services. More than 1,000 entries were submitted in the competition for which some 35,000 city employees were eligible. Only department heads and their assistants were excluded.

The grand prize winner recommended centralizing the purchase and handling of the 400,000 tons of coal used annually by all city departments. It is expected that this practice will benefit the city both by its getting coal at a lower price and by eliminating considerable duplication of effort among city agencies. The suggestion was made by the superintendent of power production for the public lighting commission.

Several top money winners suggested other ways to improve administration by consolidation of effort in various city departments. The \$350 first prize was given to an employee of the controller's office who suggested extending to all municipal departments

the business machine services of the central payroll office.

A municipal high school teacher won \$50 for recommending that uniform text books be used for identical courses in all city high schools. Another winner suggests standardizing street signs specifications to reduce cost of installation and maintenance.

A health department employee won \$150 for the design and construction of a portable methylene blue milk testing unit. The unit will enable inspectors to conduct more accurate milk tests at receiving stations throughout the city.

The contest was conceived by the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research and financed by an anonymous donor. It was approved by the mayor and council and was conducted as a municipal project. Preliminary judgment of the entries was made by the mayor's Administrative Study Committee. Final judges were trustees of the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research.

Closing date of the contest was set to make prize-winning suggestions useful in preparation of the city budget for next year. Each suggestion was subjected to rigid practicability tests and it is expected that most of the winning recommendations will be adopted.

It also appears that the State of New York is in the market for good ideas as Art provides us with an excerpt from the California State Employees Magazine of June, 1946, which states:

The New York Legislature has appropriated \$5,000 for the use of the civil service commission in awarding employees for unusual and meritorious suggestions and accomplishments. In addition to outright cash payments, a special merit award board will issue

(Continued on page 10)