

Proposed Amendments Threaten Civil Service Benefits

It is of interest to all who are concerned with making the Civil Service Act of real benefit to the State to observe some of the legislation proposed before the last legislative assembly and its potential effect on the merit system of personnel administration which the 1945 Legislature passed and which the 1947 Legislature preserved in the interests of good government.

An illustration of such proposed legislation are Robert S. Farrell's recommended amendments to Senate Bill 266. The original bill was intended to broaden the unclassified positions with references only to the State Police. The proposed amendments read as follows:

AMEND SECTION 11, CHAPTER 400

3. No such classification plan may be adopted by the commission affecting positions in the offices of the secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, or department of labor except by and with the consent and approval of said elective officer listed above, and no such classification plan shall be adopted by the commission affecting positions in state institutions or in the office of the board of control or state land board except by and with the consent and approval of said board of control and state land board.

AMEND SECTION 12, CHAPTER 400

2. No such compensation plan may be adopted by the commission affecting positions in the offices of the secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, or department of labor except by and with the consent and approval of said elective officer listed above, and no such compensation plan shall be adopted by the commission affecting positions in state institutions or in the office of the board of control or state land board except by and with the consent and approval of said board of control and state land board.

Commenting on this matter, the

Oregon Statesman, a paper which has constantly maintained a position of interest in good government commented editorially on Friday, March 7, 1947 as follows:

"Secretary of State Farrell has submitted amendments to SB 266 now in the hands of a house committee which should be carefully considered because they appear to constrict seriously the operation of the state civil service act. They would require that any plans for classification or compensation of employees in the offices of secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general or labor department, must first be approved by the elected head of the department, and for employees in institutions and offices under the state board of control or state land board by the governing board.

The argument for the amendments is that the elected officials are responsible to the people and so should have the final say on classification and compensation of their employees. The effect would be, however, that lack of uniformity which previously had plagued the state government would be revived and continued. Naturally an executive would like to have full and complete authority in the hiring and firing of employees. That is true for appointed as well as elected officials. And probably he thinks he could do a better job if he had that authority. But the state having long consideration has gone in for civil service. And if we are to have civil service it should be general for the administrative departments with the minimum of exemptions.

It is true that the civil service commission is appointed by the governor but both the traditions of civil service and the standards of the act would prevent a governor from using it to hamstring offices of other elected of-