

Retirement System Attacked: Small Pensions Cause Concern

Articles which have appeared lately in various newspapers indicate that the Oregon Retirement Act for state employees is not well-liked by some.

Surely there can be no quarrel with the intent of the Act which is: to provide for the orderly retiring of older and long-service employees with a life-time pension to insure freedom from want and worry in their later years, and to provide a life-time pension to employees forced to cease gainful work because of permanent disability.

Sources of Complaint

The careless and thoughtless expressions that have been heard and read "that the Act should be repealed" appear to originate from either of two sources: those who are not under the system and have a "sour grape" complex; or those participants who through early retirement will not receive much benefit to themselves! If their sentiments availed, thousands of present employees and thousands of future employees would be deprived of substantial benefits which will accrue to them with the passage of time, and many now employed would find themselves, through disability, unable to work and penniless.

As is usual with all ideas and movements, they are often backed with a measure of truth; and the present dissatisfaction seems to be that "65 year old employees are being compelled to retire, even though in good health and vigor, and well able to do the work required of them," to quote from a letter recently received by the writer from Mr. Saylor, Executive Secretary of the Public Employees Retirement System.

Future Prospects

It seems self-evident that when time has elapsed sufficiently so that an able and healthy person reaches retirement

age with a pension of half-pay per month for life, *that* employee will be happy about the occasion and will look forward to his remaining years with keen anticipation. It also seems apparent that an ailing employee will under like circumstances welcome release from his work when provision for his future has been adequately provided for. Under the retirement system it is not intended that all employees be kept employed until they die. The system contemplates continuous replacement of those who have given of the best years of their life to public service in order that they may enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Present Problem Is Temporary

If our logic is tenable, the present trouble with the operation of the Retirement Act is basically a temporary one wherein present retiring employees do not receive ample pensions, and wherein present high living costs and help shortage combine to present a real, although transitory, problem. The Act is intended to be of benefit to the State and to the employee. We have every assurance that it will be administered to provide the fullest possible benefits. It can and will fulfill its true and full purposes as it continues in operation.

Transition Period Recommendations

During the immediate future, and possibly for a period of two or three years, the following suggested procedures would appear to alleviate present hardships:

1. Administrators could be more liberal in their consideration of present employees nearing retirement age and request retention of able, efficient employees who express a desire to be retained in service. The *employees*, of course, *should be told* of this action so that they may plan accordingly.

2. Administrators could strive for uniformity of policy among themselves,