

Efficiency of State Employees Stressed; Improvement Expected In Public Services

By Virgil G. O'Neil

As a direct result of actions taken by the recent legislative session, public attention has been directed to the efficiency of public services rendered the people by State agencies. There is a definite trend to survey governmental costs and to clamor for their reduction; the taxpaying public dislike high taxes and want more service at less cost.

Signs of the Times

At the State level, many actions and expressions give us an idea of what is in the wind as affecting State employees. These include, among others, the following:

1. A general idea that employees in all classifications are to be paid handsome wages starting July 1, 1949 and that everyone is to receive a large increase at that time.
2. A belief that with an assured marked decrease in the cost of living, all of us will be well provided for and we will all get rich at the taxpayers' expense.
3. The widespread idea that all State agencies can now readily recruit well-trained and experienced help to replace the inefficient or to augment present forces; and that the State is flooded with qualified people in all lines, out of work and eager for a State job.
4. A widely held opinion that the State appointing authorities can now insist on increased production from the employees and put on the pressure when desired; and that personal qualifications for classified positions under Civil Service and department rules can now be raised with an automatic increase in efficiency.
5. The proposed actions of the Civil Service Commission and appointing authorities to reduce the number of employees who will receive the small salary step increases provided under Civil Service. These are intended re-

wards for faithfulness of the employee and as an incentive for the employee to continue to perform good work and stay on with the State.

6. The directive of the legislative Ways and Means Committee to arbitrarily reduce budgets 5%, and the present moves to do the cutting by holding down employees pay.

It is apparent to any thinking person that the above ideas and actions are destined to fail if their true purpose is to increase the efficiency of State services, to improve public service and to save the taxpayer's money.

Wishful Thinking Is a Tragedy

The above trends of thought and action boil down to a major error; namely, that the way to save money is by squeezing it from the livelihood of the employees, by scaring them, by confusing them and by treating them like cogs in a machine.

The employees are being told, in effect, "You employees are getting plenty, and now you had better speed up or we will get some experts to take your job." To clinch the argument, the employee is also being told, in effect, "If you know which side your bread is buttered on you will spend your spare time studying subjects which we think you should know (even though they have no bearing on the job) and maybe you will get a small raise in pay every second or third time you become eligible by length of service in your present job; but, of course we can't promise any raise as we haven't got any money!" It is wishful thinking to expect an improvement in work from any employee under such treatment or implied threat as the above, yet an analysis of the present trends and actions point to just such an attitude.

The tragedy of such a situation lies in the fact that it misleads the public who pay the bills and gives them a false idea that present functions of