

Improved Public Service Necessary; Employees and OSEA Have a Responsibility

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When the 1950 Federal census is taken, Oregon will awake to the fact that she has inherited a wealth of new citizens together with heavier responsibilities than she now realizes. More people require more public service; and increasing services call for a new concept of governmental functions. Expansion and reorganization are in order, many present concepts must pass into antiquity, modern and efficient means of rendering good service to the public must be practiced.

Public Service as a Career

As public service depends primarily on the quality of the public employees, it seems appropriate to consider the relative merits of such employment and to prospect the chances of improving the personnel of governmental agencies.

The peculiarity of public service is its variance with practices of private enterprise. Whereas the tangible proof of efficiency in private industry is the profit, public service is most often judged by its cost.

The general public, who are the real employers of public employees, seem inclined to speak derisively of their employees and yet they feel free to expect great things from these employees whom they deride! In my opinion, the merits of public versus private employment appear as follows: (a) Favorable to public service: opportunity to do for others, reasonable tenure of job, relative freedom from personal jealousies and ruthless competition. (b) Favorable to private employment: opportunity to do for one's self, better pay, better working conditions, more incentive for advancement, more personal and organizational power, more praise.

For a class of people who are not too sensitive to derision, who are not

too ambitious and who are willing to sacrifice some of their potential earning power, public service under present conditions offers but fair opportunity. The conditions which hold back efficiency in public service will change, to the profit of Oregon's citizens, as they awake more fully to their responsibilities to the new people and new industries which are coming this way, with or without the consent of the "Oregon mossback."

Why People Work for Oregon

Aside from the possibility that some are State employees because they don't know better, there are a few valid explanations for their seeming poor choice of employers. Chief among these, I would place that of a desire to be of service to a growing state and to have an active part in its development. Within the last five years, through OSEA activities, state wages have been brought to a level more in line with the worth of the job, politics has theoretically been removed from personnel selection and job tenure, a start has been made to provide a fair pension for the aged and disabled employee and a more healthy attitude is being shown towards the mutual interests of administration and employee.

Many of the State employees, especially those of long tenure, have labored always in hopes that their conditions of employment would some day improve and that meanwhile they would patiently do what they could to render the best service possible under the existing conditions. Truly, such are a people with a taste for true service, a conscience and a hope.

On the other hand, there are still those in state employ who find it convenient to use their job as a training ground for a better paying job in private enterprise, some who don't care what they do, and a few who don't do anything at all if they can help it.