

DEAR MR. MERCHANT:

There are some people who take delight or at least find amusement in ridiculing individuals or groups who through the years have been led to believe they dare not return the taunt because they were suckling at the munificent breast of the tax paying public and the nutriment would not be forthcoming if proper respect weren't shown. But darkness is gradually giving way to light, with the dawn comes realization, the mists dispelled, the "ghosts" revealed, and fear no longer prevails.

I am writing of course, about the public employees in general and the Oregon state employees in particular. These people have become a large segment of the great American tax paying public whether the merchant and land-owner wants to recognize it or not. People are demanding more governmental services and consequently more employees are required.

Aside from the fact that these state employees raise families, serve on civic boards and committees; go to church; are elected to school boards and city councils; break the traffic rules; brag about themselves and behave somewhat like the merchants and land-owners, they also pay taxes, buy food, clothing, shelter, drugs, luxuries and entertainment; pay doctor bills and attorney fees, contribute to the Community Chest, Red Cross and polio funds; support their children, and all in sizeable amounts too, as the following facts will show you.

Did you know, Mr. Merchant, that Oregon state employees spent \$4,300,000 in this state in the month of June this year? The federal government and the state and local governments took quite a "whack" out of that but even then that is a lot of money left to spend, and it was spent, right here in Oregon. To bring it

closer to home, let's use Salem, our capitol city, as an example, where 25% of the state employees live.

Yes, 25% of the state employees live in and around Salem and these 25% spent about \$45,350,000 right in Salem during the past 5 years, 1945-1949 inclusive. Where did it all go? It went for the things you sell and for the things America stands for. State employees are pouring almost \$1,000,-000 per month into retail trade channels in the city of Salem alone. Other millions are being spent by employees in Portland, Corvallis, Eugene, La Grande, Klamath Falls and in a host of other Oregon cities and towns. And please remember this, Mr. Merchant, the average salary of your state employees is \$600 less per year than the average salary paid by private industry. You say they have other advantages though, like the 40 hour week, vacation and retirement. Do you know that about one-half of the state employees work 40 hours a week, the rest work 44, 48 and 52 hours? They have two weeks vacation a year just like your employees do, and retirement? Sure, if you call it that. Those retiring now are trying to live on \$50 per month or less. These people pay one-half of the cost themselves, so it isn't prepaid like many of your retirement programs.

I have heard you say that the state employees' income is more stable than in private industry and thus they enjoy more advantages during a depression. Has it occurred to you that the only depression of any consequence began in 1929—and that was 21 years ago? Many of us have grown up and fought a war since then. I might also ask, whose dollars helped keep many of your fellow merchants' doors open during this depression? Yes, we remember