

Oregon's Civil Service Commission



NILS HULT

MONFORD A. ORLOFF
Chairman

GEORGE P. LORD

Changes Asked in Oregon Civil Service

(Editor's Note: The Civil Service Commission last month recommended some major changes in Oregon's civil service system to Sub-Committee No. 2 of the Legislative Fiscal Committee.

The sub-committee was directed to study the system by the 1967 Legislature and report its findings and recommendations to the 1969 Legislature.

Sub-Committee members include Reps. Morris Crothers (R-Salem), chairman, and Jason Boe (D-Reedsport); Sens. Al Flegel (D-Roseburg) and C. R. Hoyt (R-Corvallis).

Since last August when the sub-committee met for the first time, representatives of the Oregon State Employees Association have appeared twice. Each time they recommended basic changes in the system, and each time those recommendations were reported in detail in the NEWS.

In its continuing effort to keep OSEA members informed of the recommendations being made to the sub-committee, which may or may not result in legislation changing Oregon's civil service system, the NEWS is printing the commission's testimony.)

Oregon's Civil Service Act was given considerable attention throughout the United States in 1945 because, as a model law, it provided far

more flexibility than the older civil service laws in other jurisdictions. It was an outstanding law for its time. Basically, it still is a good law.

Gradual Shift in Role

Through the years there has been a gradual shift in the role of the department and in the emphasis of its program. During the 1940's and early 1950's the emphasis was upon installing the system and assuring compliance with it. Both civil service commissioners and governors of the period treated the activity as a semi-autonomous program responsible primarily to the legislature and the public. It was as late as 1959 before even such a basic matter as the commission's salary recommendations were included in the governor's budget.

Increased Awareness

As the civil service program matured, and as state government grew and management problems became more complex, there was an increased awareness that personnel management is an integral part of the management process. Governors found an increasing need to use the Civil Service Department as their central personnel

agency. The management of operating departments began to look for and expect more personnel services from the department.

New Look Needed

The resolution asking for this study was most timely. The state's personnel program has reached a state of maturity where a rational look needs to be taken at where we go from here. The technological revolution and new specialized programs have established a need for a more highly skilled work force than ever before. Employee-management relations are changing rapidly and are entering a far more formal phase.

Meet Future Needs

Our present Civil Service Act is a good law. It has met the needs of the state and it has provided a base for sound personnel administration within the state service. However, the state government, its programs and its policies are growing and changing. The Civil Service Commission's recommendations are designed to use the present law as a base, but provide some changes in procedure and in emphasis to better meet present and future needs.

Organization for Personnel Administration

A. The Civil Service Commission: It is recommended that the title of the commission be changed to the State Personnel Board and the title of its director be changed to State Personnel Director. This would recognize the fact that the Civil Service Department increasingly is becoming the central personnel agency for the state government and it would be more descriptive of the function.

Give Director Authority

B. Authority of the State Personnel Board: It is recommended that the board be constituted, appointed and given the same authority and responsibility that it now has, but that the board, through its rule-making authority, be authorized to delegate decision-making authority to the director on all matters but rule-making, salary-fixing, adoption of new classes, and final decisions on appealable matters.

Hearing Officer

Further, it is recommended that in the case of appealable matters, the department be permitted to use a hearing officer who would conduct hearings,

make findings of fact and a recommendation to the Personnel Board. The board would then make its final decision based upon the record. This recommendation would involve some additional cost.

Director's Authority

C. The State Personnel Director: The director's authority should encompass those matters now assigned to him, plus all other matters delegated to him by the Personnel Board. It is recommended that the director be given statutory authority to make broad evaluation surveys of personnel management in state agencies and that his findings be submitted to the appropriate agency head, the governor and the Personnel Board.

No Useful Purpose

ORS 240.125 now provides that the director shall hold no other public office or employment. It is recommended that this provision be deleted. It has prevented the director from serving on the Suggestion Awards Board and similar posts with the city and county. The prohibition serves no useful purpose.

Agency Heads

D. Authority of Agency Head: Agency heads should continue to manage the employees in their departments within the provisions of law and rules fixed by the Personnel Board, Department of Finance and the Public Employees Retirement Board.

Theory Differs From Practice

ORS 240.160 provides that a department head may appoint a division personnel officer to carry out training programs and such other functions of the Civil Service Department as authorized by the commission or director. In theory the departmental personnel officer is an arm of the Civil Service Department. In actual practice, and properly so, he is the staff assistant for personnel to the agency head. It is recommended that the law be changed to reflect the true role of the personnel officer and further provide that the agency head may carry out such functions of the State Personnel Department as may be authorized by the State Personnel Board or State Personnel Director.