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Where Your Taxes Go

How Uncle Sam Spends Your Money in Conducting Your Business

By **EDWARD G. LOWRY**

Author "Washington Close-Ups," "Banks and Financial Systems," etc. Contributor Political and Economic Articles to Leading Periodicals and a Writer of Recognized Authority on the National Government's Business Methods.

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Where will You be At 65?

Out of 100 average men, at the age of 25 today—

- 54 Will be Dependent on Others
- 36 will be dead
- 5 Will be working for a bare living
- 4 Will be well to do
- 1 Will be Wealthy

You may be one of the hundred today, but where will you be at the age of 65? It depends upon how you can answer the following question—

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UP TO YOU AND CONGRESS

At the present time it would be a misnomer to speak of the national government having a personnel system at all. The reform accomplished by the establishment of the civil service commission and the merit system has touched but one phase of the personnel problem, and that but partially—entrance into the government service. Practically nothing has been done in the way of erecting the government services into careers that will attract and retain efficient men. Bad as conditions were in this respect before the war, they have become many times worse during and since that event.

The correction of these evils presents a problem of great complexity. It cannot be achieved by a half-hearted or half-way tinkering with the present system. Nothing but a thorough overhauling of the whole personnel system and the establishment of a new system covering all phases of the question and embodying the most approved principles of personnel administration will meet the needs of the situation. Fortunately a beginning has been made in this direction. It at least furnishes a starting point for action looking to the giving to the government of the personnel system that it must have if government work is to be even measurably well done.

The situation now is that there is an insistent demand on the part of the public that the whole administration of the national government be put upon a more efficient basis, and that the present waste of public funds, resulting from present defective organization and methods, shall cease; that congress is alive to this demand and has made a start toward meeting it; that the fundamental defects in the existing system are well known; and that the direction efforts looking to reform should take are clearly established. The responsibility is thus squarely up to congress.

If the problem that confronts congress in securing this laudable end is analyzed it will be found that the fundamental reforms are: The reform by congress itself of its own organization and methods of procedure; the entire revision of the present system under which the financial needs of the government are determined and provided; the setting up of an agency and procedure through which the expenditure of public funds may be properly controlled and congress be given that information regarding such expenditures which it must have if it is to assure itself that its agents, the administrative services, are properly performing their duties, and to act intelligently in respect to the future grant of funds; the provision of an organ through which the President may in fact, as well as in name, discharge his duties as head of the administration; the reorganization of the administrative branch of the government so as to eliminate the present widespread overlapping of jurisdictions and functions and indefensible duplication of services, organization, plant and work; and the complete recasting of the present system under which the personnel required to man the governmental plant is secured, compensated, promoted, assigned to particular tasks and controlled, to the end that not only justice will be done to the several classes of governmental employees, but that a personnel system will be established that will insure a maximum of efficiency in the actual conduct of public affairs.

A study of action actually had or now under way shows that steps have been taken toward the accomplishment of each of these fundamental reforms. The introduction of a budget system is a long step forward.

I don't mean in the least to give the impression that all private business is perfectly run and that only government business is badly managed, or that all the efficient people are in private employ and only inefficient in the public service. Neither of those conditions exists.

In the common phrase, you have not to find it to Alexander Hamilton for devising a scheme that has stood up since revolutionary days. It has not been fundamentally altered since his day. There has been no readjustment of salaries in the departmental service for sixty years. That implies a certain loyalty and faithfulness on the part of the workers.

My only desire is to disclose the present condition of government employment; that good men are leaving, and that the present tendency, if not checked, will inevitably drive out of the service all of the efficient and leave only the mediocre and incompetent. I have said little myself, but have chosen to let the men working for the government tell the story. Every assertion of fact in these articles comes from some responsible source or authority within the service. I am not making a criticism or attack from the outside, but merely serving as a mouthpiece for your hired men.

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