



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS¹

BY HON. FRANKLIN MACVEAGH,
Secretary of the Treasury.

This is considered to be a materialistic age, and it is considered so because, beyond any question, it is so. But it is also a spiritual age. We make such tremendous material strides in this country and age—and do it so continuously and conspicuously—that we are apt to overlook the spiritual activities of the time, which are really far more extraordinary. Indeed, they are the most exceptional spiritual activities the world has ever seen. We are not usually compared favorably with the great period of Greece, nor with the early Renaissance of Italy, nor with the times of Elizabeth; but, after all, it is perhaps right to say that none of these great times of the spirit had such general spiritual life and activity as this particular materialistic age of ours.

The general interest in this subject of industrial insurance and retiring allowances is itself a concrete instance of the intellectual and moral activity—spiritual activity—of our immediate time. A very broad matter it is, this question of preventing the bread being taken away from the latter end of our lives. It is a great conception and purpose to complete civilization on that imperative side. It is a great conception of civilization, and it is a great conception of human obligation, this idea of providing industrial and other insurance, like protections and rewards. It is not merely humane; it is an uplifting of character and human standards in its promotion of thrift and foresight in the world. The widespread and acute interest in this question is very evident, and the activities in its behalf are also very widespread. In civil life, in industrial life, in the whole of the varied phases of our life this movement is taking root.

The one place where it is neglected, where the movement has no place, where as yet it has no life, is in the United States Government, and it is of that feature that I am going to speak to you

¹ The address of Secretary MacVeagh, as presiding officer at the opening session of the annual meeting of the Academy, April 7, 1911.

for a few minutes. The situation in the National Government is, so far as retiring allowances or any allowances or pensions are concerned, that we have a perfectly enormous war pension list, a list that is not even a credit to us. It never had a scientific or acknowledged basis from the beginning, although it had a very worthy purpose. It, however, has lost a great deal of that purpose, lost its patriotic quality to a great extent, and has become largely a political pension list. This amounts to from \$150,000,000 to \$160,000,000 a year. Outside of that list, which is mainly, of course, right, just and proper, but in a large measure also an abuse, we have listed for pensions the army and navy officers and enlisted men, the officers and men of the revenue cutter service, the federal judges and some of the public health service. Outside of the few judges and health officers, the whole civil list is left without any consideration whatever, without any protection, without any thought. That is a statement of the situation in our Federal Government.

It is high time and most important that a retiring allowance should be established for the civil service of the Federal Government. The Federal Government itself absolutely needs it. We hear all this current talk about economy and efficiency. We can go a certain length; I have gone a certain length myself in my own department, and am going a certain length, but I am tied up as everybody else is in any effort really to produce economy and efficiency, economy through efficiency, by lack of a retiring allowance for the civil service servants. You cannot throw these people out on the street when they have grown old in honorable service—you would not throw them out on the street, and we do not throw them out on the street, but that is the only alternative. The only thing to do is to throw the old men and old women out on the street, or keep them in employment with their partial efficiency. We accept the alternative of keeping them there with their partial efficiency. It is necessary not only to the Government to have a retiring system, but it is fair and necessary to the clerks and employes themselves. They, too, are entitled to consideration on the part of this Government, and we are the only national government in the world which does not have a retiring allowance for its civil servants. So it is due to them by the universal standards of great governments, as well as due to the government itself.

All the arguments are in favor of it. Every argument in favor

of old-age protection in any form, in favor of any form of industrial or other insurance applies here, every reason that seeks to protect a man or woman in old age anywhere, applies here to these people of our Federal Government.

Now what are the obstacles? My experience, you may be surprised to hear me say, is that Congress is a much more amenable body than it gets credit for being. The trouble with this matter is that there is no wide or great public interest demanding action from Congress. Among the clerks themselves there is nothing but disagreement; among the employes themselves there is disagreement over the method of protection; one set wants a straight pension and the other set a contributory system. As a matter of fact the contributory system is the only one that can or will ever be adopted, and it is the only one which ought to be adopted; but it is an obstacle to us who are trying to get something done by Congress that the employes are divided. They are divided and probably will be, as long as they are left wholly to themselves and to their own disagreement. What we want, I come here to say to you who create public sentiment and study scientific questions and have authority, is public interest and agitation. I have come here to say to you that the thing which is lacking in the propaganda at Washington is public interest throughout the country.

No evidence of this lack is more convincing than the fact that in your program here to-day you have not given a place or a thought to the question of what should be done for our 200,000 government employes. I am speaking to you about it, but you did not know what I was going to speak to you about, for my subject is not mentioned in your program. I did not know myself, very long in advance, what I was going to speak about. I was coming, however, to be with you. Some one hit upon a subject for me at the last moment, because of the fact, I suppose, that I had brought it forward in my report to Congress. This is a most illuminating program, a most delightful one, a most important one, and devoted wholly to the provisions for old age, but none of you ever thought about the 200,000 servants of the United States Government for whose old age nothing is being done, and about whose old age very few are thinking. I hope we shall all think about it.