

Training for Public Service

By Cortez A. M. Ewing

THE School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at the University of Oklahoma was organized in 1927. Three important functions were contemplated by Professor John Alley and its other founders. They were: (1) to instruct students, the real leaders of the morrow, in the principles of political science; (2) to complete research studies upon government in general and the government of Oklahoma in particular; and (3) to train intensively young men and women for government positions.

For the present we are interested primarily in the third category. Because of lack of funds, the efforts of the staff have been expended upon the first two aims. The neglect of the third was, therefore, an unfortunate but necessary alternative. It is hoped that, with return of less critical times, serious efforts may be expended in implementing this important feature of the program.

Considerable confusion exists as to what type of training is planned for the potential public servant. I shall attempt in short space to analyze our problem as I see it. In the first place, the School of Citizenship and Public Affairs can offer little effective training to those who aspire to many types of public office. These special fields of the government service demand expert training in particular fields of knowledge. They include, for instance, the expert agronomists, chemists, metallurgists, architects, engineers, philologists, and many others, that the national, state and municipal governments now find indispensable. Ostensibly, the demands of these specialized positions can be satisfied only with intensive training in particular university departments.

Yet, withal, the preponderant majority of government positions are of an entirely different character. Most are mere routine workers. There are thousands of typists, filing clerks, and stenographers. Few of these will rise to more responsible positions. They are the workhorses of the administration. Few of them will even under the most sanguine circumstances, bring to their tasks much understanding of constitutional law, statistical curves, or ecological principles.

But there are others—secretaries, senior and junior administrators, and the like—who will become the bureau chiefs and the permanent undersecretaries of the future. These are the positions in which

SLOWLY, BUT SURELY, THE IDEA OF SPECIAL TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SERVICE HAS GROWN AT MAJOR SCHOOLS

we hope to install better-trained personnel. There are also the members of the permanent classified foreign service, who must possess knowledge of very diversified character. Language, economics, accounting and statistics, comparative government, and constitutional and international law are disciplines in which successful diplomatic or consular office must have intimate knowledge.

With the appointment of Prof. Leonard White, of the University of Chicago, to the national civil service commission, a new policy was inaugurated in regard to this numerous class of general administrators. Young men and women are being appointed directly from the college and university seminars and lecture halls. They must possess general knowledge in the social sciences, and especially in political science and economics. Their original appointments are to positions of relative insignificance. If they prove capable there, they shall be given every opportunity to advance to more responsible posts.

In other words, the British plan is for the first time being introduced in this country. General basic knowledge becomes superior to specific information or craftsmanship. Under this dispensation, the competitive service promises to develop a new elan, for the promise of promotion will serve as a spur to increased efficiency.

To co-operate with the commission's new policy, the School of Citizenship and Public Affairs now offers a new course of study, the successful completion of which will be rewarded with the degree of Master of Arts of Public Administration. The degree is intended to apply to social science majors who have been awarded baccalaureate degrees. They need not be political science majors.

Running as they do throughout the social science curriculum, the prerequisites are so formidable that few applicants will be able to enter fully upon the gradu-

ate work without completing some undergraduate prerequisites. For instance, both accounting and statistics, survey courses in sociology, American history, as well as fundamental courses in public law and government are required before an applicant can enter without reservation upon his graduate work. The purpose of these formidable requirements is to secure candidates with basic, as against specialized, prior educational training.

At present, in both state and local governmental circles, there appears a distinct tendency to extend the scope of the merit system. To date, this year has witnessed the addition of two new members to the roster of merit-system states. Furthermore, the reform climate of the United States promises continued progress in that direction. This new development derives primarily in the passing of the traditional two-party system in another large bloc of states. Party leaders are finding that the excuse of party welfare cannot easily be sustained in a one-party state.

When the public service becomes a career, rather than an amateur avocation, this problem of training must become one of the primary functions of institutions of higher education. I am firmly convinced that no single development would improve governmental efficiency more than the recruitment of civil servants from the colleges and universities. And when the United States realizes its own national maturity, there is little reason to doubt that this close relation between the government and the universities will come into dynamic existence.



Newspaper executive promoted

Walter Morrow, '17ex, editor of the *Akron Times-Press* for the last six years, has been appointed editor-in-chief of the southwestern group of Scripps-Howard newspapers.

Mr. Morrow was put in charge of the chain's papers in Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, Houston, El Paso, Denver and Albuquerque. In early September it had not been determined where his headquarters would be, but he was expected to spend much of his time in Oklahoma City.

Before going to Akron he was assistant managing editor of the *Daily Oklahoman*.