

School Retirement For Kansas

A Report by R. V. Phinney, Superintendent of Schools, Larned, Kansas

THE AMERICAN RETIREMENT PROGRAM

THE federal government has recently adopted a national policy of providing old-age annuities for all wage earners on a business basis, and many of the states have already applied this policy so that two-thirds of the public school teachers and some 80 to 90 per cent of all the wage earners of the nation are under some form of retirement plan. The earlier teacher retirement laws date back to 1908. Retirement has long been an established procedure in the post office and throughout the federal civil service; also with the railroads, other corporations, and with the churches, etc. In 1935 the National Social Security Act organized and systematized this movement under government management, and vastly extended it. This law announced old-age benefits based on "any service, of whatever nature, performed within the United States by an employee for his employer." The government then proceeded to provide for this protection for clerks, janitors, barbers, bank cashiers, factory workers, typists, laundry women, Hollywood actors, Mexican section hands, Chinese in the salmon canneries, non-naturalized Polacks in the steel mills, Japanese employees in Hawaii, auto mechanics, supreme court justices, Pullman porters, floor walkers, southern mill hands, lumber jacks, corporation executives, saloon bar tenders, etc.

Having planned this gigantic and revolutionary program, the federal government did a strange thing: it picked out three minor groups of wage earners, who are not otherwise protected, and declared them to be ineligible to participate like other wage earners. These three groups are farm hands, hired girls in the homes, and the teachers and other employees of the states and their subdivisions.

For the teachers and other state employees there is a legal technicality which the Congress did not bother to avoid. The federal retirement program is financed by payroll taxes. Under our federal system state pay rolls are not subject to national taxation. So for redress, the school people must apply to the state legislature. Half the states have already taken care of their school employees. Kansas has not.

The retirement movement is no longer a theory. It did not originate in the schools, and it was not brought to Kansas by the teachers. The arguments about retirement are, relatively speaking, accepted. The methods have been established by American business and the American government. The system is in operation. There are only two main questions at issue: (1) Are Kansas school employees to get what wage earners in other lines almost universally get now; or are teachers ineligible to the rights so generally enjoyed by other American citizens? (2) Will the employing school system of Kansas accept its responsibilities, as a modern employer of labor, for the welfare of its school employees, or will it refuse?

This bulletin, then, is devoted to listing the accepted principles and procedures of modern retirement and to presenting the significant facts and problems peculiar to the Kansas school situation. Our plan of campaign is to get the facts before the teachers, the public, and the