

JCF before hearing on Forand's bill in
5/23/46
Civ. Serv. Comm.

In urging a favorable report on Mr. Forand's proposal I do not consider that I am asking for special favors for any group of Federal employees. I am sincere in saying to you gentlemen that this proposal of Mr. Forand merely contemplates doing ordinary justice to men who have given the best years of their lives to the service of the American people relying on the assurance that such service would be appreciated.

Strongly as I feel about the situation I am not going into the facts surrounding the action of the Navy Department in Newport, Rhode Island. We are endeavoring to cover that situation elsewhere. However, I have to say that the ~~redu~~ drastic curtailment of operations at the Naval Torpedo Station in Newport has caused acute hardship to many men who have been faithful and loyal employees of the Navy for ~~twenty-five years and more~~ many years. They are entitled, in simple justice, to special consideration and it is this consideration which they will receive if the House will act favorably on the measure you gentlemen have before you this morning.

There are many men who have worked for the Navy in Newport for periods ranging from ten to fifty years. They are now thrown out of work. We are asking for consideration for those men who have been employed for 25 years or more. They can find help no where else.

We are all familiar with the fact that many skilled mechanics went to work for the Federal Government at wages lower than were being paid in Private Industry. Men did this because of the promise of security that was an integral part of Federal employment. They were willing to make the sacrifice in wages in order to obtain the guaranteed employment plus the security that came in knowing they would receive a pension after a prescribed period of time. Now these men are forced to remain idle - through no fault of their own. Their employment - their retirement income - are

denied them. All they bargained for is taken away and they have no remedy.

The men who worked at the Torpedo Station were experts in their line. They bought homes in the City of Newport. They raised families there and sent their children to Newport's schools. They are the men who have formed the backbone of Newport's economic life.

They are now either past fifty or rapidly approaching that age. They cannot tear up their roots and tramp on to new cities seeking employment. There is no other industry in Newport which can provide them with employment.

It has been said that the Navy offered employment to these men at other Naval Stations. I have had some personal experience in this respect. It is a fact - borne out by the Naval Appropriation Bill now before the House - that all Naval establishments have been curtailed considerably. Each community in which these naval establishments were located has presented its own peculiar problems. It is silly to think that these men could readily find employment in any Naval facility. Even if all were willing to make the very great sacrifice involved there were not sufficient jobs to go around. Some of the opportunities offered - on paper - were in such places as Porto Rica. When inquiries were made it was learned that men on the ground - men with intimate knowledge of the local working conditions, climate, etc. were being employed to the extent that no vacancies remained.

Under the Geographical area ruling - intended to protect the seniority of old time employees - it has developed that men with many years of loyal faithful service to the Government must be displaced if employment is to be found for these men cast adrift at Newport. Even then - it is but a question of degree. A man with many years of good service - must be cut lose in order to find a job for another with slightly more good service. This is expediency, not justice.

There are men who worked at peculiar - in the unusual sense - types of trades. An example is /explosive handlingx These men were skilled in mechanical operations which involve handling their trades and rendered valuable service to their Government. But they ~~we~~ know no other trade and no where else is there anyone to provide them with employment.

These men have become liabilities of the Government - and I feel they have right to look to the Congress for rescue. They are not seeking something for nothing. In all fairness - they bargained for something which is being denied them. I grant it is an unusual situation brought about by the curtailment of operations as a result of the ending of the war. But, because it is an unusual situation I feel we are justified in asking an unusual method of providing a remedy. We are obliged to keep the word of the Federal Government to these faithful employees.

The passage of this measure will do justice to honorable men and will guarantee to all federal employees that their government will not shirk its duties to them. ~~It will~~

It will do injustice to no one. It might be argued that others work a longer time than 25 years before being entitled to retirement. This proposal does not hurt such people. The skilled artisans of Newport would gladly - yes eagerly - go on working for another ten years in order to get the retirement for which they bargained when they entered the employ of the Government 25 years ago. The trouble is there is no employment for them.

They do not want to go on the beach they want to work. The choice has been taken away from them. They should not be cast adrift. Their years of faithful service should not be ignored. They are entitled to respect. They are entitled to fair play. That is all that is asked. This measure provides just that - and no more.