

STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR OLSON ON H. F. NO. 1725.

I have declined to approve H. F. No. 1725, passed by the Legislature, which reduces the salaries of all state, county, city, town, village and borough officials and employees; and which includes within its scope county officers, policemen, firemen, teachers, nurses, welfare workers, county agents, and other public officers and employees.

By express provision the officers and employees of the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis, and of the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth are excluded from the operation of the Act. The exclusion of the most populous counties and cities of the state and of the highest paid officers and employees makes this bill the most flagrant piece of class legislation enacted by the Legislature. There is nothing to justify the rank discrimination shown between employees outside the large counties and employees within these counties.

It should also be noted that the members of the Legislature are not included in the provisions of the Act.

The salaries of county officers have always been fixed by the Legislature. The salaries of other officers and employees have been fixed by the political subdivisions in which such officers hold office or such employees are employed. The bill applies to both classes of officers and employees, and for that reason ruthlessly disregards the rights of Home Rule. It brushes aside charters and all other acts pertaining to local government. There is substance to the argument of objectors to it that it is purely political in character.

The salaries of all employees of the state government receiving in excess of \$1,200 per year were cut 20% by the legislative appropriation bill. That appropriation bill reached my desk two days after the Legislature had adjourned. State salaries have been based upon classification so as to provide for the payment of the same salary to persons engaged in the same kind of work although in different departments of the state government. That is not true of the salaries of county officers, provision for which has been made by the Legislature. No standard for the payment of the salaries of county officers has ever been adopted by the Legislature.

In examining the salary schedule of the county officers of the various counties it is easily discoverable that there is a variance between the salaries of officers in counties similar in population, assessed valuation, and in other respects, as follows: County auditors, \$1,200; county treasurers, \$900; sheriffs, \$1,800; clerks of court, \$1,300; judge of probate, \$800; county attorneys, \$1,600; highway engineers, \$2,200; superintendent of schools (county), \$1,500; county commissioners, \$1,200. This discrepancy is prevalent in all possible classifications that could be made of the counties.

If the Legislature had desired to make an equitable readjustment of the salaries of county officers theretofore fixed by it, some of which have not been changed since the session of the 1921 Legislature, it could have easily grouped the counties according to population, assessed valuation, and other comparable bases, and provided standard salaries for each officer in each class.

Bills were passed by the Legislature and approved by me reducing the salaries of county officers in particular counties. That could have been done with respect to each county.

Under the schedule provided in H. F. No. 1725 the county officers who have been the least active politically in securing increases in salary in preceding sessions of the Legislature are penalized the most.

While political expediency may dictate a slash in salaries and wages I refuse to become a party to the proceeding.

I have approved a bill authorizing the voters themselves at town meetings to reduce the salaries of town officers by as great a reduction as 50% if they desire. Such authority is the very essence of Home Rule. H. F. No. 1725 is dictatorship by a central organization, without investigation and without regard for previous enactments of the Legislature.

The action of the Legislature is on a par with the action of the so-called Captains of Industry who have been slashing wages and destroying buying power; and who seem to expect that by some species of magic their businesses will improve despite the destruction of buying power in the people. It is a peculiar anomaly when that group demands inflation and the consequent cheapening of the dollar on the one hand, and demands the slashing of salaries and wages on the other.

Date of Governor Olson's veto is unclear; it was written after adjournment.