

## Conference on Civil Service Superannuation at Washington, D.C.

The conference called under the auspices of the United States Civil Service Retirement Association to meet in Washington, a short time ago, brought out somewhere in the neighborhood of one hundred delegates.

By some the conference has been referred to as a success; others have characterized it as a failure as far as carrying out the original intent of the conference, which was to discuss the subject of retirement.

### Address by President Taft.

After listening to addresses of welcome and on the subject of retirement by prominent speakers, the convention adjourned on the opening day to the "White House," to meet with and be addressed by President Taft.

It is needless to say the welcome of the President was cordial to the delegates, and his remarks, confined mainly to superannuation, were listened to with deep attention. President Taft spoke as follows:

"Gentlemen,—You are rather a formidable gathering. I am glad to note the interest in the subject of civil pensions and retirement. It seems to attract attention enough by those in the service to warrant the hope that somebody who has the power—I mean Congress—will have their attention directed toward this subject matter.

"I suppose you have been considering at some length the details of the proposition which is to bring about some means of retiring those who are aged in the service so as to aid the service by their retirement, and so as to make it possible in a way consistent with humanity to relieve them from public service. Now, whether that shall be by direct pension or by a contributory system, is a question rather more for experts than for one who occupies the position that I do; but some system must be evolved even if it carry the greater expense of a pension system. I believe from the showing made

that a contributory system would be considerably less burdensome to the government in the end, and it may perhaps be wise to unite what is really a kind of life insurance with the partial contribution by the government to the fund out of which the payments are to be made, so that when the person leaves the service under any condition he shall still have retained some interest in it.

"Something must be done in order to enable the government—and that is the standard from which I approach it—to carry on an efficient public service, and to do the just thing to the public in securing from each individual that service which the public is entitled to have for the compensation paid. Other countries have it. Great corporations are adopting such a system. They are usually regarded as soulless, and therefore we may very well say that the motive which has led them into the adoption of such a system is a motive prompted by a desire to improve the efficacy and the average efficiency of their employes. With that result, there is no reason why the government should not have a similar system and get the same benefit.

"I assume you have passed resolutions and that the result of your labor will be transmitted to Congress. I have done all I can in making my recommendations, but I shall still retain an interest in the manner, and, in so far as I properly can, shall take measures to influence the members of Congress in favor of some such system. It is a matter that Congress has to be educated in. There are other things in which Congress has to be educated. It is natural that it should be so. They come here and their minds are directed toward the particular necessities of the government, and then the discussion of the subject clarifies it.

"I beg you not to be discouraged because in one session it may be discussed a little and then dropped. It will continue to recur because it is a reform that is needed, and ultimately something will be worked out. The prejudice against it arising from the very heavy burden that we have had to carry in military pensions is something that we