

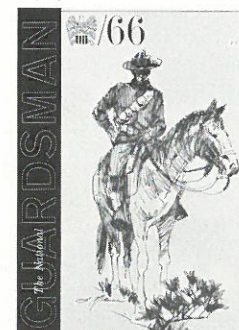
GUARDSMAN

The National

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A wary outrider searches the desert wasteland in a scene from the Guard's Mexican Border Service of 1916.

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JUNE, 1966

STAFF

EDITOR / *Col. Allan G. Crist*
 ASSOCIATE EDITOR / *Maj. Corb Sarchet*
 ADVERTISING & CIRCULATION / *Maj. John Bibb*
 ART DIRECTOR / *Louis James Nolan*

FOR the better part of two decades, this Association has devoted a considerable share of its time and collective thought to obtaining more equitable treatment for the National Guard's fulltime Technicians.

Aided by the States and by thousands of individual Guardsmen, we have sought, and obtained, numerous benefits and protective measures previously denied to our fulltimers. We have suffered setbacks and frustration as we struggled with red tape, official indifference and even some opposition.

Slowly but steadily, however, we have scored gains, each one moving us a little nearer to our eventual goal of full equity in such areas as fringe benefits, career status, and long-range security. Among our successes, perhaps the most significant from the standpoint of long-range security were the Federal agreement, in 1954, to pay the employer's share of the Social Security contribution, and the somewhat similar agreement by the Federal Government in 1961 to make the employer's payments into State systems.

Even while these major improvements were being made, however, we continued our effort to drive through to our ultimate goal: acceptance of all Technicians in a Federal retirement system and the granting of the full range of fringe benefits provided other Government workers.

Although much groundwork already had been laid, the first official step was taken in 1962 when Representative David N. Henderson of North Carolina introduced a Bill into Congress to clarify, for once and all, the extent of the Federal responsibility toward Guard Technicians, and to bring them into the Federal retirement program. It was not a very satisfactory Bill from many aspects but, as Mr. Henderson himself recognized, it was the all-important first step, the foundation upon which a suitable measure could be constructed.

Since that first legislative step was taken, four years ago, representatives of the Association and the National Guard Bureau have wrestled with second and third-generation successors to the Henderson proposal, in an effort to make the final product meet the needs of the Technicians while conforming to the desires of a host of Government agencies with specialized viewpoints towards retirement programs. Negotiations have been conducted repeatedly, conferences held, key points debated, and many segments added, deleted or completely rewritten to make the measure acceptable to all who might justifiably object to its passage.

Today, our goal finally is in sight. The Bill now up for consideration has full Department of Defense backing and has been accepted by such diverse agencies as the Bureau of the Budget, Civil Service Commission, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and others. It is different in many respects from earlier proposals, but it meets the Guard's requirements in full. Fringe opposition to its passage still may develop in some quarters but justice—and the heaviest artillery—are on our side.

Despite all these favorable factors, however, one final factor still may delay final action on the bill: time. The legislative process is slow and deliberate, and not many months remain in the current session. Hearings still must be held by the Armed Services Committees, and Committee recommendations prepared, and final votes taken, first in the House, then in the Senate, before our goal is reached.

Meanwhile, the Committees are deeply involved in hearings which they consider to have greater urgency: Viet Nam policies, matters pertaining to equipment and weapons, etc. It may be that, despite our most strenuous efforts, it will not be possible for both Committees, and both Houses of Congress, to take final action on the measure before the session ends.

We are hopeful that this will not occur, but if it does, we will have to swallow our disappointment and redouble our efforts to get the Bill to the floor for a final vote early in the next Congressional session. If this happens, it will not represent a financial loss to Technicians because, under the terms of the current Bill, its provisions will not become effective until 1 July 1967, even if it passes this year. ♦



JAMES F. CANTWELL
President

National Guard Association
of the United States

Equity For the Technician