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 Guardians, we have sought, and obtained, numerous benefits and protective measures previously denied to our fulltimers. We have suffered setbacks and frustrations 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-Berenson 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 filed for a 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

CONTENTS

DRO MONET 2
The trials and tribulations were great, but the lessons of the Mexican Border mobilization of 1916 paid off in World War I.

ALASKA OR CAROLINA 18
Air Guard Tactical Fighter and Reconnaissance units play a busy role in exercises stretching from Alaska to the Carolinas.

THE SWISS RESERVE SYSTEM 22
A heritage of freedom promotes a vigorous Swiss military system.

PARASAL JUNE 27
A novel way to train pilots in parachute falls into water is tested in Hawaii.

RAPID REPAIR 55
Fast action keeps Air Guard Transports flying.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR HUSBAND MISERABLE WHILE HE'S AT SUMMER CAMP
A word to the wise for wives from a Guardsman's wife.

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June 66