

CHAPTER X

The Secretaries of State Section of the Council of State Governments

The Section of the Central Secretariat which Serves the National Association of Secretaries of State

AT ITS Eighteenth Conference, in July, 1935, the National Association of Secretaries of State, by resolution, authorized the executive officers of the Association to establish a secretariat in cooperation with the Council of State Governments, to serve as clearing house and research bureau.

In April, 1936, a permanent staff member of the Council of State Governments was assigned to the Secretaries of State Section.

Services

The Secretaries of State Section serves the Council of State Governments to a considerable extent. Much of the information which is required by the other organizations of governmental officials served by the Council is obtained by them from secretaries of state through this section. By the cooperation of the secretaries of state information and statistics concerning the several states are furnished for numerous inquiries which are received by the Interstate Reference Bureau.

The Section serves the National Association of Secretaries of State as an organization, and all the individual secretaries of state's offices. These services are of four types: research, organization, publications, and public relations.

Research

Research work done by the Secretaries of State Section includes both inquiry service and special research projects. In many states, the department of state itself serves as an informational clearing house for other departments of the state government. The

Secretaries of State Section is being used increasingly for the purpose of assembling information from the several states which individual departments of state may wish. The Committee on State Publications of the National Association has requested all secretaries of state who edit state manuals to secure information concerning "the other forty-seven" from this section. Information concerning administrative officials and legislators in all of the states is kept in up-to-date form by the Council of State Governments. This information is instantly available to Departments of State, and its use avoids duplication of effort involved when each state must communicate directly with each of the other forty-seven. Departments of state have recently requested from this section compilation of lists of cabinet officers in all of the states, including their terms and salaries, for use in state rosters. For departments of state this section has also recently assembled information concerning the use of voting machines in the several states, and has collected reports of legislative interim committees on various subjects which have been requested. Special research projects are undertaken by the Section from time to time as the National Association may request, or which may be of particularly timely interest to secretaries of state.

The first project which the section undertook was a detailed survey of the functions of secretaries of state in all of the states. From this study it is possible for the National Association to determine exactly to what extent its membership may be concerned in particular problems as they arise.

Extensive research concerning state year-books or manuals is being conducted at the

request of the standing committee on state publications of the National Association. This study is being undertaken in considerable detail, to serve as a basis for recommendations by the committee as to a uniform standard of contents of state manuals. For comparative purposes, all state manuals are being studied, rather than only those which are published by secretaries of state only.

The Executive Committee of the National Association has requested a detailed survey of the trade-mark and trade name laws of all of the states. Since the secretaries of state administer the trade-mark and trade name laws in every one of the states, the National Association is hopeful that the Twentieth Conference may be able to formulate a uniform act which will be of value and convenience both to the states concerned and to the businesses using the registration facilities of the states.

The Secretaries of State Section has further been instructed to survey the requirements imposed by the several states for the filing of party and individual election petitions. In forty-four states, election administration, in so far as the states have assumed power in this field, is lodged in the department of state. The National Association is interested in finding some means whereby no citizen, who files with serious intent, shall be barred from participation in elections, but some system which will at the same time reduce confusion, inaccuracies, and overburdening of departments of state. Due to the extremely large number of frivolous filings, both by individuals and by parties in 1936, many departments of state were unduly burdened. It is the hope of the National Association that it may be able to formulate some uniform legislation in this regard at its Twentieth Conference.

Organization Work

The Secretaries of State Section assists the National Association of Secretaries of State in any way possible in the conduct of organization affairs. Activities in which the section has participated in the past year include assistance in arrangements for the meetings of the executive committee and the standing committee on publications, held in conjunction with the Third General As-

sembly of the Council of State Governments. The Section stands ready at all times to assist the officers of the National Association in any manner which they may see fit to request.

The section maintains a complete directory of secretaries of state, their terms, salaries, and functions. It endeavors to keep also a complete directory of deputy secretaries of state and heads of divisions or bureaus within departments of state.

Publications

The results of research which is conducted upon request of the National Association or of any secretary of state are published in the form of secretaries of state's bulletins. During the past year the following bulletins have been issued:

1. "Election Administration." This study surveyed the control exercised by the secretary of state over elections in each of the states. It included charts showing comparative action in this field by the several departments of state. As part of this bulletin, four sample publications on the subject of elections, issued by secretaries of state, were attached. These included: "Manual of Instructions for Election Officials on the Conduct of Registrations in Elections in Michigan"; "Election Dates and Signatures Required, 1936," published by the Department of State of Wisconsin; "Proposed Constitutional Amendments and Measures (With Arguments)," published by the Department of State of Oregon; and "Citizenship and Election Methods in Wisconsin." These four publications were included as excellent examples of the most useful types of publications concerning elections.

2. "Statutory Fees Collected by Secretaries of State." This bulletin summarized the results of an extensive survey of miscellaneous fees collected by departments of state. It was found that miscellaneous fees might readily be classified in four groups: (1) Certificates signed and charges for issuing commissions; (2) secretarial fees; (3) charges for issuing formal documents; (4) registration and license fees. Complete lists of all fees collected by each of the forty-eight departments of state were included in this bulletin.

3. "The Office of the Secretary of State."

In this study were summarized the results of the Section's first project—a survey of the functions of each of the forty-eight secretaries of state. This study included methods of appointment or election, and terms and salaries. This bulletin also listed all miscellaneous duties performed by secretaries of state, as well as all secretaries of states' ex-officio membership on state boards.

4. "Constitutional Amendments and Direct Legislation Voted on in 1936." This bulletin contained complete lists of constitutional amendments and initiated and referred statutes submitted to the voters during 1936, noting adoptions and rejections, and giving the count of votes wherever available.

In November, 1936, a Secretaries of States' Exchange Bulletin was inaugurated as a clearing house service. Items which appear in the Exchange Bulletin are contributed by the several secretaries themselves, and the publication serves as a medium for the exchange of information. In this bulletin are included administrative decisions reached in the several departments, together with new office practices, and news items concerning any of the secretaries of state's offices or the National Association. Recent legislation affecting departments of state is reported, as well as

information which bears upon problems of especial interest to secretaries of state.

Public Relations

Through the Public Relations Division of the Council of State Governments, the Secretaries of State Section maintains a publicity bureau for the National Association of Secretaries of State. It issues nationwide press releases concerning activities of the Association and the individual secretaries of state. Included during the past year have been releases concerning the Nineteenth Conference of the National Association, election administration in secretaries' offices, state publicity bureaus, and functions of departments of state.

Future Development

The work of the Secretaries of State Section is yet in its infancy. Already specific requests from the National Association indicate the possibility of further use of standards and methods developed by this section. In administrative practices, the work that may be done in standardizing state publications, so that they may be of greater usefulness as references on state government, indicates a specific accomplishment in the near future. Others may well follow with expanding staff facilities.