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Between debaters or about Public Servants and the system of loots

By Professor Const. GE. ATHANASSOPOULOS

The thoughts that are elaborated in the following text, concern the decrease of the number of public servants in the legal entity of the state, as well as the various legal entities that are depended or controlled by the state (Organizations of local self-administration, Public enterprises, Organizations etc.); these ideas are illustrated, having in mind the difficulty of this attempt and the words of Plato who declared in «Phaedo» (XXXV 85 C-D) that: «To know the truth in this life is either impossible or extremely difficult».

It is common to everyone the «size» of the Greek Public Administration and its financial condition; superabundance of: ministries, services, legal persons, organizations, enterprises, as well as a system of different kinds of wages and especially debts. For instance during the year 1996, fees which reached the amount of 80.000.000.000 drs., were deposited in the Greek Railroad Organization (revenues of the organization for the particular year were 30.000.000.000 drs.) while at the same time (March 1997), some enterprises and organizations which had debts that reached the amount of 349.000.000.000 drs. (Greek Post Offices 41.000.000 drs. etc.) attempted to enter in the Stock Exchange.

Under these circumstances there is a logical question which comes in mind: how many public servants occupy the public sector in Greece, at large.

The answer to this question is rather impossible to give, mainly because no one knows exactly what is going on in this particular case. In the year 1996 there were 511.078 employees working in the wider Public sector, which decreased to 480.117 during the year 1992, then increased to 516.318 in the year 1995 and finally they were stabilized to 537.000 during the first trimester of 1996. According to some calculations made by our team of collaborators the public servants which occupy the Greek Public sector in general reached a level which exceeds the amount of 700.000 employees, a number which is considered to be extremely luxurious for Greek reality.

In order to confront this problem, the state announces at times various «measures» beneficial or not, but the number of people serving the Public sector remains

persistently stable or increases, despite the rumor concerning the wave of «departures» of employees from the Public sector due to the uncertainties that are related to the new social security system that is about to be enforced.

If anyone attempts to look for the reasons that rest behind the above situation of increase or non decrease, inevitably he has to record as the first cause, the hiring of employees (with objective criteria or not) which is carried-out «out of schedule» especially in pre-electoral periods. This hiring process does not always serve all the necessities of the state.

The question which raises at this point is, whether there is a «cure» for the necessities of the various Political Parties and those of the state.

The author knows well, both the «problem» and the «cure» as well as, the weaknesses of this attempt. Nevertheless, what is given here is a slight idea of the measures that can be applied, given of course the fact that «Political Will» and «Political Consent» will coexist.

In that manner, what is suggested here in order to cure the «evil», is the introduction of the functional or non functional «system of loots», in hope that the courageous person will be found, which will carry-out the «Aegistean jump»¹ and he will put it in practice, being indifferent for the damage it will probably cause in his personal life.

The system must be applied primarily on a State level and secondly on a level of Local Structures. We have to make clear, that the System (spoils system) which has its origins in the Public Administration of the US, will create a number of posts in the Public Sector for the Party that will win the elections. These posts will be left vacant after each Party's defeat, for any reason, plus those appointed in these positions will not have the right of permanence and of automatic or by using legal means renewal of their service. As it is understood, in this sense those employed in this sector, will not loose, if they wish, their right to go through the usual procedures and if possible to «pass in the other side», meaning to join that percentage of permanent employees occupied in Legal Entities or in Organizations and enterprises of the State.

With this system what is expected, is that the State, etc. will engage the needful permanent employees and each ruling Party will use its top executive members, in a way that will go beyond the level of plain consulting (as it is done nowadays). In this manner for as long as the Party is in reign it will satisfy «loyal» citizens.

All of the above, if combined with a successive decrease of the percentage of hiring new employees, as well as the natural leave from the Services and the hiring of non permanent employees, will lead in time in the «cure» of the patient, the Public administration, in benefit of those, for which this cure theoretically exists, for the citizens, the state's present subjects.

1. According to the tradition, the oracle at Delphi consulted King Midas of Phrygia to throw into a big gap that bisected the land of his Kingdom, thus destroying everything on its surface, the most precious thing that he owned (in order to fill in the gap). Midas threw into the breach what he considered as the most precious thing that he owned, the gold of his treasury; but the gap didn't stop from expanding... His son Aegisteus interpreted the oracle differently; he believed that it referred to the person that would sacrifice himself in favor of the common welfare; so being on horseback he jumped into the breach, thus closing it at once. In the same way acted King Kadmos of Athens, which sacrificed himself in favor of the common welfare and for his country...