Ted Thornton heads work force of 86,000

In 1979, Theodore Thornton, Sr., Secretary of Personnel, was the first black appointed to Governor Harry Hughes' cabinet. Now as he oversees a workforce of 86,000 and is directly responsible for an immediate team of 342 employees under the auspices of the Department of Personnel.

Equipped with an operating budget of $225 million for the fiscal year 1984, he is a part of a policy-making body that effects large agencies within the State system.

During work hours, Thornton can be found on the sixth floor of the State Office building on West Preston Street , in his moderately decorated office, amidst mounds of bureaucratic documents and reports with an 11 X 14 portrait of Gov. Hughes watching him like "Big Brother."

Extremely efficient and well prepared when performing daily tasks, Thornton frequently refers to his pool of written reports to provide more detailed information on all facets of his operation.

Describing his job as enjoyable, Thornton is however realistic and admits the position is a difficult one.

"It is difficult because the position carries with it a lot of bottom-line authority. You must do your homework."

For Thornton, doing his "homework" means making sure the system runs smoothly and offers advantages to its workers and to members of the public.

Theodore Thornton, Sr. Secretary of Personnel

Future projections for the State include a renovation of the current job inquiry system. Thornton said he is concerned with eradicating the present, lengthy system for applying for State jobs.

"By 1984, job seekers will not have to wait so long to hear from the State. The system will be computerized," he said.

Instead of keeping applications from six months to a year after the date filed, the new system will only maintain the files of those individuals who are interested in the position long after the filing date has passed.

With 17 other agencies under his guidance and supervision, Thornton sees the competition between the State, the federal government and the private sector as ongoing.

"It costs the State $12.1 million to give a one percent increase, and $90 million for an eight percent increase. It is hard to keep (with the other sectors.)" Thornton added.

In 1981, seven percent of the personnel agency under Thornton were black males, and 17 percent percent were black females. The figures have increased slightly since that time and Thornton said he is presently concerned with certain improvements within the system to make it easier for minorities seeking jobs.

When asked why he chose to accept the position in the Maryland State government Thornton said, "because it provides me with the opportunity to establish policies and run a personnel system with an impact on blacks."

The list of organizations housed under Thornton's structure range from the State Attorney General's office to Employee Development. He influences such non - traditional areas as workman's compensation and collections and claims in the insurance arena.

Orginally from Queens, N.Y., Thornton came to Baltimore from Richmond, Va., where he was that city's counterpart of his current job.

Responsible for a smaller force (a team of 10,000) Thornton fulfilled many of the same functions in the Richmond government as he does now.

Drivers must pass eye test

By John W. Frece

Maryland residents would have to pass an eye examination when they renew their driver's licenses every four years under legislation approved Wednesday by the House of Delegates and sent on to the Senate.

"At age 15-and-a-half you can get a driver's license in this state and you never have to take the eye test again," said Delegate Arthur Alperstein, D-Baltimore County, perennial sponsor of the eye test bill.

"You can legally go blind and no one will ever know it," he said. "You can go legally blind and still drive until you die."

Alperstein's bill was approved by the House, 85-41, but not until a number of delegates said they considered the proposed requirement just another intrusion by government into the private lives of the citizenry.

"This will create another harassment to the drivers of this state," said Delegate Philip Jimeno, D-Anne Arundel.

Jimeno said Maryland drivers have been hit by back-to-back increases in both the federal and state gasoline taxes, that they are already required to have a new photograph taken for their license every four years, that a new annual auto exhaust inspection program is to go into effect next January, and that insured motorists in Maryland must pay a special fee to cover uninsured motorists.

"The government is on the backs of the people and this is just another form of harassment," he said.

The proposed eye examination would take only a couple minutes. Alperstein said, and would not cost motorists any additional fee.

It would, however, cost the state about $33,000 more next year and as much as $50,000 the following year to pay for the additional Motor Vehicle Administration workers that would be necessary to administer the test.

Alperstein said he has introduced similar legislation in ecah of the last five or six years, but it has usually died in the Judiciary Committee, of which he was named vice chairman this year.

Two years ago the bill passed the committee and the house, only to die in a senate committee, he said.

Under provisions of the bill, a motorist may have his or her eyes examined by a private physician or optometrist within a year of the license renewal date and use the results of that test in lieu of the Motor Vehicle Administration examination.

"It is no longer an inconvenience to anyone," said Alperstein.

RAYMOND V. HAYSBERT (right), president of Parks Sausage, received an award from Mayor Schaefer and James A. Flick (not shown), president of the Greater Baltimore Committee Chamber Council, for Park's continuing commitment to the development of minority business.

Paul Wheeler starts new life working for Schmoke

(AFRO Photo by P. A. Greene)

A NEW CAREER—Paul Wheeler is the first person you meet when you enter the State's Attorney's office. After 30 years of employment at Armco Steel Company, Mr. Wheeler is now the receptionist in Kurt Schmoke's office.

By Pam Widgeon
AFRO Staff Writer

At 60-years-old Paul Wheeler has started a new career. In February 1976 he retired from Armco Steel Company as a foreman after 30 years of service.

Today, Mr. Wheeler is the receptionist for the State's Attorney's office. "It's a pleasure to come to work. I believe in keeping my mind physically and mentally active. It helps me a great deal," Mr. Wheeler told the AFRO.

Mr. Wheeler greets you at the front desk in the State's Attorney's office with a smile. He says after seeing Kurt Schmoke on television doing his campaign, and hearing his campaign manager Larry Gibson ask for volunteers, he decided to work in the campaign as a volunteer.

"The man (Kurt Schmoke) appealed to me so much as a gentleman and a scholar and I was going to assist him in any way I could possible towards him winning the election."

Since retiring in 1976, Mr. Wheeler says he has returned to school and now has 53 credits in business administration towards his bachelor's degree. He attends Morgan State University one night a week and jogs five miles around Lake Montebello once a week.

After 18 months of retirement, Mr. Wheeler says he became bored and started doing volunteer work at Morgan State University.

"This is a new and second career for me," said Mr. Wheeler. He believes that working and keeping active prolongs one's life. While he was working at Armco Steel Company, Mr. Wheeler said he could not attend college because of the swing shift he worked.

"I strongly recommend returning to school. To those not able to obtain an education early in life and now retired, they can receive a tuition waiver," said Mr. Wheeler.

As the first male receptionist in the State's Attorney's office, Mr. Wheeler assists public officials, screens all of the state's attorney's calls , receives all visitors and assists accordingly and performs all related duties as required.

In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with his wife Mrs. Rosalie Wheeler, three children and grandchildren. Mr. Wheeler also swims, and goes fishing.

When he first started as a volunteer in Schmoke's campaign, he says , "I was not looking for employment. I did computer work for Mr. Schmoke on a street survey we programed. Every morning from 7:30 a.m. until 9 a.m. I met Mr. Schmoke at various locations while he was campaigning and on Saturdays I worked at his headquarters and picked up contributions from citizens on Sunday.

"Thank God I feel fine and if God gives me health and strength, I will get my bachelor of science degree. I do not intend to draw social security if I can possibly help it . I just can't sit idle. I would not last to long," said Mr. Wheeler.

Mandel pays state $10,000 for goods

By Carole Corlew

Former Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel today announced that he has agreed to pay the state $10,000 to settle a long-standing legal battle over property in the Governor's Mansion.

Under the agreement with the State Attorney General's Office, Mandel would also receive some property he left in the Governor's Mansion following his 1977 conviction on federal corruption charges.

In 1980, the state filed a civil suit against Mandel seeking to reclaim 57 pieces of furniture and other items said to be worth more than $20,000. In addition, it asked him to pay $3,800 for food, liquor and other supplies.

Prosecutors charged Mandel and his wife moved those state-owned items out of the governor's mansion along with their own property.

The suit also sought $20,000 in punitive damages from the former governor, who served 18 months in prison after his conviction.

The Mandels later filed a counter suit against the state, claiming the government had not allowed them to move thousands of dollars of their own furniture out of the Governor's Mansion.

In a press conference at his attorney's office, Mandel said he agreed to the settlement in order to end the cost of the litigation. He added, "I'm getting anything I could get from the court anyhow."

Mandel, who claimed that an inventory was taken of the items which belonged to him and to the state in 1977, had asked the state to reveal whether any previous Maryland Governor has been allowed to purchase state property, what they bought, and how much it cost.

He maintained that it was common practice for elected officials to take desks, chairs or other furnishings with them when they leave office.

The state charged that Mandel illegally took from the mansion 87 pieces of furniture, antiques and other items, including 350 bottles of liquor and wine valued at $1,750 and 43 cases of household supplies worth $1,544.

The former governor returned 23 pieces of furniture before the suits were filed. Prosecutors claimed the state-owned items remaining in his possession included: an oak rolltop desk, waterford crystal, coffee tables, mahogany chairs and sterling silver.

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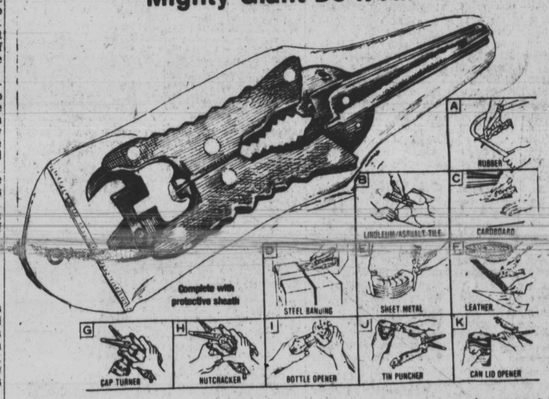

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