

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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October 15, 1937

Clifford A. Somerville, Chairman
Unemployment Compensation Commission
Augusta, Maine

Dear Mr. Somerville:

The recent conferences which you and I have been having, together with Mr. Owen the State Purchasing Agent and Mr. Runnells the State Controller, have very clearly demonstrated to me and to the other gentlemen involved that there is urgent need of clarification of the question as to whether or not your Commission is a State Department.

Until this matter is finally decided there are bound to be innumerable questions that will arise, which cannot be settled unless we have a clear definition of the rights and responsibilities of your Commission and the State Departments involved.

You will have in mind, that last winter when our Legislature was in session attempts were made to clarify the situation and a bill was introduced in the Legislature clearly providing that your purchases and contracts should be handled by our State Purchasing Department. At the hearing on this bill Mr. Chapman, who was then acting as attorney for you, appeared in opposition and presented a letter from Mr. Wagenett outlining objections to the bill and it was not passed.

I have in mind also, discussions you and I have had over Workmen's Compensation for your injured employees. You will recall that I told you that in the event one of your employees was injured my department would be very agreeable to making investigation and handling the legal aspects of the case, provided your department would undertake to pay such awards for loss of time and hospitalization and medical bills as our Industrial Accident Commission should decree. You later informed

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informed me that you had been advised that the Social Security Board could not agree to this arrangement but would reserve the right to review the awards of our Industrial Accident Commission and modify them if they found them not in compliance with their own regulations.

I wish to assure you that my department and all the other departments in the State House are ready and anxious to cooperate with your Commission in every possible way, but I am very definitely of the opinion that until the Social Security Board will say that your Commission is a state department, and that we may handle matters such as Workmen's Compensation, Purchases and Accounting in accordance with our own very carefully worked out systems, we will not be able to cooperate fully with you.

I have discussed this matter on several occasions with Mr. Fessenden, your present attorney, and I hope that you will soon be able to work out something that will clearly define the limits of jurisdiction of the various departments involved, and that we can all work together to help administer Unemployment Compensation to the best interests of the State.

Very truly yours,

Francis U. Burkett
Attorney General

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