

Remembering “Mr. Technician”

Vincent J. Paterno

Oct. 18, 1923—Feb. 23, 1982

“Mr. Technician” — that was the name Vincent Paterno earned, deserved and was known by. No single technician ever came close to equaling what Mr. Paterno accomplished. He operated thoroughly, advancing ACT from a humble beginning to a union of national importance, respected by all. Through his leadership, technicians now look forward to earned retirement benefits.

Mr. Paterno was active in every aspect of labor relations from organizing to hearing on representation, unfair labor practices and federal impasse procedures. His representation led to the successful conclusion of the Peoria contract that places technicians in civilian attire, and the order that required management to continue negotiations on uniforms and reduction-in-force in Pennsylvania, after conclusion on the rest of the contract. The latter, bitterly fought by management, was only the third decision and order by the Federal Services Impasses Panel in six years.

Mr. Paterno was well known as a persuasive speaker and proponent of civilian employee rights before any and all audiences. A man of conviction, well-established positions, a strategist and tactician of repute, he could be categorized as a spokesman who carried on the continuing crusade for National Guard employees without peer.

Vince and his wife, Phyllis, moved to the Washington, D.C. area in 1970 to better represent the membership. He retired from the New York National Guard in 1974 after service dating from 1942. He was a 1949 graduate of Long Island University and pursued graduate courses at New York University and Syracuse University.

His frequent appearances before congressional committees was well known. Vince was recognized for his efforts on behalf of technicians when President Johnson presented him with the pen he used to sign into law the National Guard Technician Act of 1968.

Mr. Paterno was a past member of the Board of Directors of the Society of Federal Labor Relations Professionals and addressed groups such as the Society of Government Accountants, Military Comptrollers, Federal Labor Relations Professionals and Federal Pay and Classification Society. In addition, he was a panelist on seminars conducted by the Civil Service Commission and other groups.

At the time of his death, Mr. Paterno was, appropriately enough, working hard for his union and for all technicians, gearing up to fight a planned conversion to Active Guard Reserve positions. To best honor his memory, let us continue the fight.