



New York State Archives

New York State Joint Legislative Committee Appointed to Investigate the Public Service Commissions Investigation Files L0141

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	These records were produced or gathered during a two-year investigation of the Public Service Commission. Most records relate to the "Thompson Commission's" regulation of transportation companies rather than utility companies. The majority pertain to issues involved in constructing the New York City rapid transit system including its design, financing, letting contracts, supervising building, and auditing companies involved in projects. Other records focus on methods of issuing stock and providing security for shareholders in financing large-scale public projects.
Creator:	New York (State). Legislature. Joint Legislative Committee Appointed to Investigate the Public Service Commissions
Title:	Investigation files
Quantity:	6 cubic feet
Inclusive Date:	1913-1917
Series:	L0141

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Arrangement

Organized into 7 subseries: Subseries 1, Correspondence; Subseries 2, Questionnaires; Subseries 3, Audits; Subseries 4, Proceedings and Testimony; Subseries 5, Final Report; Subseries 6, Bills Incurred by the Committee; and Subseries 7, Background Material Used to Compile Final Report.

Chronological within subseries.

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Administrative History

The Public Service Commission Law was enacted by the Legislature in 1907 to provide adequate means for efficient regulation of railroad, gas and electric corporations and their operations within the state. The law provided for the creation of two separate Commissions of five members each, and divided the state into two separate Districts, giving one Commission exclusive jurisdiction over greater New York City and the other Commission jurisdiction over all the other counties of the State.

On January 21, 1915, the Senate appointed a Joint Legislative Committee to make an investigation of the Public Service Commissions of the First and Second Districts to ascertain whether any changes were necessary in the organization, powers, duties and administration of the commissions in the interest of public welfare and efficiency of such commissions. The Committee was responsible for examining evidence that implicated Commissioners of inefficiency, neglect of duty, and misconduct in office. A second Committee was created on April 24, 1915, to succeed the first, and continued until March 6, 1917, at which time it made its final report.

The scope of the investigation included: an investigation of the Public Service Commission of the First and Second Districts with reference to their organization, powers, duties, and their exercise of such powers and duties; an examination into the question of duplication of functions by the Federal Interstate Commerce Commission and the Public Service Commission; an examination to ascertain the advisability of any changes in the organization of the Commissions and of the powers and duties of the Commissioners; a proposal to revise the Public Service Commissions Law and such other laws or parts of laws as may be necessary to harmonize the existing provisions of the statute law applicable to the regulation of public utilities; a submission to the Legislature of such legislative bills as, in the judgment of the Committee, may be deemed necessary and proper.

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Scope and Content Note

The "Thompson Committee," as it was known in honor of chairman Senator George F. Thompson, collected correspondence, questionnaires, audits, testimonies, and other background material to create a working file for its investigation and final report.

Subseries 1: Correspondence. Correspondence includes letters of complaint against the Public Service Commission, acknowledgements to such letters, and letters offering evidence against the Commission. Among the cocrrespondence are bills charged to the Committee for expenses incurred during the investigation.

Subseries 2: Questionnaires. Questionnaires sent out to city, town, or village clerks ask the following questions: whether the municipality had ever been party to a proceeding of any kind before the Public Service Commission; whether the municipality had ever been interested in any proceeding before the Commission upon complaint of a citizen or corporation; if any proceedings had been undertaken, was the municipality required to employ counsel; whether the municipality was put to any other expense by such proceedings; whether the municipality had any information as to private citizens' complaints before the Commission, the disposal of which might have affected the convenience of the people or a considerable portion of the people in the municipality; whether the Commission had made orders in reference to one or more public service corporations in the community which had affected the patrons or the municipality; and whether the municipality could provide further information regarding the administration of the Public Service Laws which might be of value to the Committee or which might be of value in re-shaping the law.

Subseries 3: Audits. Audits include statements of income and profit and loss, cancelled dividend checks, and final audit reports for companies under the supervision of the Public Service Commission.

Subseries 4: Proceedings and Testimony. Proceedings and testimony were compiled from examinations of witnesses during the Committee's investigation.

Subseries 5: Final reports. Final reports of both the first and second joint Legislative Committees review charges against the Public Service Commission, provide testimony, and offer recommendations for changes in the Public Service Law.

Subseries 6: Bills. Bills incurred by the Committee during its investigation include expenses for restaurants, hotels, news bureau services, detective reports, stenographers, printers, and typewriter rentals.

Subseries 7: Background material. Background material used by the Committee to compile its final report consists of: lists of open correspondence complaints and cases, testimonies, examination reports, photographs, newspaper clippings, index of documents, memorandums, subway chronology, case files, blueprints, maps, legislative acts, draft bills, specifications of changes, and recommendations for Legislature in relation to regulation of public utilities.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Container list is available at the repository.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

Access Terms

- Legal documents
- Legislative bodies--Committees
- Arbitrating
- Public service commissions--New York (State)
- Governmental investigations--New York (State)
- New York (State)
- Proceedings
- Public utilities--Law and legislation--New York (State)
- New York (N.Y.)
- Investigating
- Thompson, George F.