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Classified staff opens picket line

University classified staff will spend their lunch hour today picketing near the University to inform people of the sluggishness of negotiations with the state.

By carrying picket signs with slogans such as, "Don't balance the budget on state employees' backs," "Must we strike?" and "Fairness — An important word to state employees," members of the University's chapter of the Oregon Public Employees Union say they'll try to send a message to Gov. Vic Atiyeh and his negotiating team.

Becky Bragg, an OPEU higher education coalition member, says the union organized the picketing "to be visible to management and to express concerns for the current negotiations."

Last Wednesday, the University's higher education coalition held a preliminary vote on the state's final offers on six key

issues of negotiations, including salary packages and trial service periods, Bragg says.

The results showed that the state's offers are "overwhelmingly unacceptable" to the coalition's members.

"We're state employees, not civil servants. Employees are tired of not being shown the dignity and respect they deserve," Bragg says. "This can be shown through a fair contract."

Bragg says a strike would "cripple" the University because more than 1,200 of the University's employees are OPEU classified staff personnel.

The informational picketing is one of several events planned during May and June to inform the public that state workers are trying to negotiate a reasonable contract. The state's negotiators insist on insulting them with proposals that take back benefits gained in previous years of collective bargaining, she says.

Beres suffers injuries

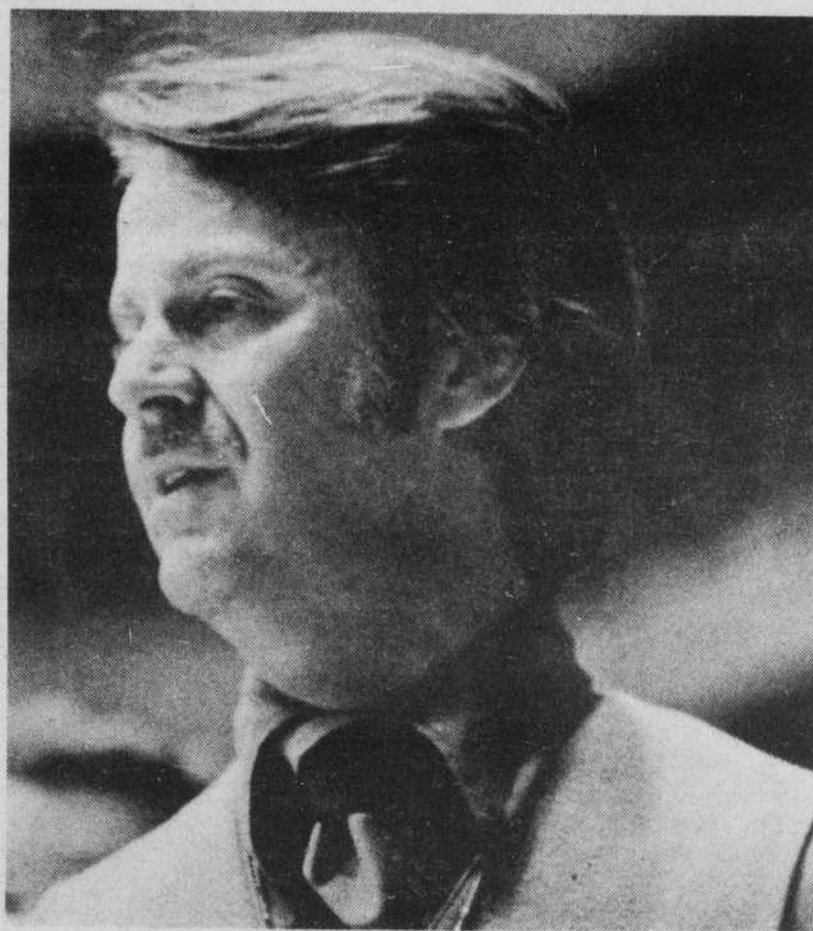
George Beres, director of University's sports information office, was in critical condition Tuesday night following surgery for head injuries sustained after a bicycle he was riding was struck by a car.

Beres was travelling west on 30th Avenue and attempted to make a right-hand turn onto Harris Street. An automobile pulled out of Harris onto 30th, striking Beres as he turned.

Beres was taken by ambulance to Sacred Heart Hospital, where he underwent surgery for several hours for head injuries.

The car was driven by Edward Bosshardt, Eugene. No citations were issued, according to the Eugene Police Department. The investigation is pending.

A graduate of Northwestern University, Beres has been working in journalism for over 30 years with the last five spent as director of sports information at the University. In the past, he has been a basketball commentator for radio and was the editor of Bill Dellinger's book, "Winning Running."



George Beres

Report shows mishandling of Agent Orange

By SALLY HODGKINSON
Of the Emerald

A congressional draft report charges that Dow Chemical Co. didn't warn the government of the possible health dangers of Agent Orange and that the government mishandled data on the toxicity of the herbicide used extensively during the Vietnam War.

"The ultimate delay in the government's response to protect individuals against the adverse health effects of Agent Orange exposure... established a pattern of government inaction and ineptitude," said the 142-page draft report.

The report, written by a subcommittee of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, was released by University Veterans Association Director Dave Isenberg at a Tuesday press conference.

Isenberg said the 1980 report "destroys" claims that Agent Orange causes only minor health problems.

"If dioxin used in Agent Orange is harmless, and if they are confident of their product, then why won't the government release this report?" he said.

"This report just confirms what veterans have known for years."

In a New York Times article on March 29, a representative for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee confirmed the existence of the Agent Orange report. Isenberg said he contacted a college professor in Washington D.C., who obtained a copy of the report from a subcommittee member.

Isenberg said he sent copies of the report to several veterans groups, including the Vietnam Veterans of America, to exert public pressure on the commerce committee to hold hearings on the report and release a final draft.

According to the subcommittee report, the government and chemical companies knew by 1957 that dioxin — a chemical found in Agent Orange — caused "adverse health effects on humans."

The 96 million pounds of Agent Orange sprayed in Vietnam was 14 times stronger than a similar herbicide used in the United States, according to the report.

The report also charges that "while the Department of Defense analyzed the efficacy of Agent Orange as a herbicide, the department failed to test for possible adverse health effects and to take the necessary measures against human exposure."

"Agent Orange was used with no special precautions for limiting or preventing exposure of ground troops, applicators and/or handlers."

The report claims the government downplayed and ignored persistent reports from Vietnam that the herbicide caused human health problems and increased the use of Agent Orange.

In addition, the Veterans Administration has neglected the development of an Agent Orange compensation policy and has been slow and unwilling to distribute information on the health effects of Agent Orange, the report says.

The VA will treat only chloracne as a symptom of Agent Orange exposure. Many Vietnam veterans claim exposure to the defoliant has caused severe medical problems, including birth defects, nausea, cancer, skin diseases and psychiatric problems.

A 1979 class-action suit filed by 52 law firms representing Vietnam veterans and their families against Dow Chemical and four other Agent Orange manufacturers is expected to go to jury trial later this summer. The \$4 billion to \$40-billion suit charges the companies with product liability.

Isenberg described the report as "an account of bureaucratic stonewalling" that "tells us the body count of the Vietnam War is not yet over."

Isenberg said Pres. Ronald Reagan promised him in an appearance last spring at the University that his administration would demand a comprehensive study of Agent Orange health effects.

"To date he has done nothing to fulfill his promise. Many veterans feel once again betrayed."



Graphic by Sioux Anderson