

Classified staff may strike

By ANN PORTAL
Of the Emerald

"Must we strike?"

In May, 600 University classified workers wore buttons asking that question.

Today, the Oregon Public Employees Union continues its contract vote that will give University administrators an answer.

The stakes are high in the two-day election that began Monday and concludes today. If the proposed two-year contract is rejected by a majority of the 1,200 University OPEU members, they will go on strike before the end of the summer. Results of the election will be released July 20.

"A vote to reject is considered a vote to strike," said Beckie Bragg, president of the University OPEU chapter and a member of the collective bargaining team.

Bragg said the contract may be approved — by a "very narrow margin" — but the classified staff is geared up for a strike.

"There are some people that are real angry about the lack of settlement," she said.

The strike would be the first among the University's classified staff, which began collective bargaining in 1973.

However, the Central Negotiating Committee has recom-

mended that union members ratify the contract that includes a \$55 per month raise retroactive to July 1 and an 11-percent salary increase over the next 20 months for all OPEU members. Workers in skilled trades would receive an additional 4-percent salary increase in July 1982.

"I don't think this is a fantastic salary package, but I don't think we're going to get more," Bragg told a meeting of the classified staff Thursday.

"We feel that we squeezed every last drop out that we could."

The state originally offered OPEU members a total of \$64 million for salaries and benefits.

Six months of "real tense" negotiations at the "central" bargaining table — which covers wages and benefits — and the "coalition" bargaining table — which covers higher education working conditions — increased the amount to the current level of \$84 million, Bragg said.

The state also agreed — after receiving the results of a fact finders report — to pay the full cost of health and dental insurance.

The University's union membership has risen from 32 to 60 percent of the classified staff in the last five months, Bragg said. In addition to "Must we strike?" button day, the union rallied at the capitol in April, picketed at

the University in May and marched at the capitol again in June.

Bragg said participation has reached a level never seen before at the University, which is another reason members are frustrated by what they see as a poor result of their activities.

The new contract includes a "fair share" provision that would require all classified staff to pay union dues, whether or not they are union members. This clause was included because non-union members come under the same contract as union members, and are receiving the benefits of the union's negotiations, Bragg said.

Although there are nearly 17,000 OPEU employees in the state, each agency holds its own contract vote. So if University members vote to strike, they could be walking the picket line alone, Bragg said.

Even if 50 percent of the agencies vote to walk — and Bragg estimated that's about how many might — that wouldn't be enough to have a successful strike, she said.

Yet Bragg told union members to vote their conscience, as long as they know the consequences.

"I was one of the people who felt there was a pot of gold out there. I don't feel that way anymore," she said.



Friends of the library's fountains, shown here in a 1938 photo, are trying to restore the fountains that were shut down in 1942 when their brass and copper was needed for the war effort.

Fountains' friends revive old basins

For most people, the discolored copper plates and the cracked concrete pools in front of the University library have become part of the scenery — just a piece of the landscape as they rush off to class.

The old basins hold more than old rainwater and moss, however. They are the remains of a group of three fountains that in years past sent streams of water into reflecting pools in front of the main library.

Little is known about the fountains. They originally were installed in 1937, when the front area of the library was used for dances, with the band set up on the top of the stairs.

By 1942, however, times had changed. America had entered World War II, and metal of all types was badly needed for military use. The fountains' brass and copper were sacrificed to the war effort, and the fountains flowed no more.

But now, thanks to the efforts of friends of the fountains, water again may flow in front of the library. The University's Classified Management Advisory Council has recommended that money from the Employees Benefit Fund be used to renovate the fountains.

The Employees Benefit Fund is made up in part by profits obtained from vending machines in administration offices on campus. Money from the fund is used for various projects to benefit students and employees. The fountain renovation is one such project.

However, Muriel Jackson, assistant to Vice-President for Administration and Finance Ray Hawk, says that the fountain renovation is still in the planning stage.

"We need to see how effective the renovation of the Class of 1913 fountain is before the University moves forward on the rest of the fountains," Jackson says.

Workers from the physical plant currently are working on the Class of 1913 fountain, located between Fenton and Dady Halls, in order to make its reflecting pool hold water.

Although no final cost for the project is available, Jackson estimates that \$1,700 to \$2,100 may be used in restoring the library fountains.

Energy class sparks interest

When it comes to teaching about energy, a lot of elementary and junior high school instructors find themselves in the dark.

However, a University workshop in energy education for middle school teachers may have shed some light on the subject.

The three-week workshop, which ended Friday and was funded by the Department of Energy, was designed to help Pacific Northwest teachers increase the energy awareness of their students.

University physicist David Sokoloff co-directed the workshop, which covered the laws of thermodynamics, energy conversion and efficiency, and the basics of solar energy.

"Most citizens — teachers included — are under-educated on the topic of energy," Sokoloff says.

"They realize it is a problem and they are not confident enough to teach about it in front of students."

Sokoloff says he gave a quiz on general energy knowledge to the teachers on the first day of the workshop. They scored an average of only 55 percent correct.

Sharon Boren, a teacher at McCornack Elementary in Eugene, had no background in

physics before the workshop, but she says the material was presented in a manner she could understand.

Boren teaches in Eugene's "Pace" program for gifted students. Prior to the workshop, students would ask her questions on energy she couldn't answer.

"I'm learning valuable information to pass on to them," she says.

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