

## Progress . . . Not Perfection

By ELIZABETH DOTSON

We couldn't resist the challenge! Two women state employees sent a letter to the *Capital Journal* in Salem, saying in part, "It seems that we, the working class, can only look to some fearless editor to champion our cause . . . Look at the persons paid from \$100 per month to \$160, take out deductions, retirement, etc., and a girl hasn't enough to live on. On it goes. People struggle from year to year, living in hopes of something better . . . As a fearless newspaper, check into conditions. Talk to employees and you will detect a wave of resentment and injustice that will reflect into the next election. We don't know what any other "fearless" editor or newspaper is doing about the situation, but we do know what the *Oregon State Employee* is doing about it.

Let us approach women's salaries from this point of view: there is a tendency in all types of work for women's wages to be at the bottom of the scale. Sometimes this means that clerical and professional positions usually filled by women have a lower salary range than those filled by men. Sometimes it means that women receive less pay for doing identically or substantially the same work as a male employee.

There are several reasons for this trend. First, it has long been falsely assumed that women don't need much money. Investigation of living costs of individual employees proves this to be untrue. Second, there is the myth that women are inferior workers. Innumerable production surveys and statements by employers prove this is not correct. Third, because of keen competition for available jobs women will work for less, and they have failed to ask for recognition either individually or through organizations. Fourth, it is always assumed that a woman is only temporarily in the labor mar-

ket, that her expenses are less because she lives at home and that she has no dependents. All of these assumptions are true in some cases, but statistics indicate that out of every 100 women workers, 94 work to support themselves and/or others; 8 work to own a home or to educate their children; and only 8 work primarily because of interest in their jobs. A "Prince Charming" on a white horse doesn't always appear, especially in a generation that has given many of its young men as war casualties. Of every 100 women workers who live in family groups, 15 are the *sole* wage earners contributing to household expenses. Over half of these 100 women contribute more than half of their earnings to the family group. It is estimated that 4 out of every 5 women workers live in family groups. Of the women living alone almost all support themselves and some have dependents.

Boosting of women's wages in general is not a victory to be won in isolated situations in one campaign. Increases come only after years of effort and sacrifice. Equal pay laws, civil service systems, the work of women's organizations and of the Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor have helped. Women employees themselves must strive, with the assistance of fair-minded employers, administrators and law makers, toward a new equality—wage equality.

The foregoing are general statements which must be understood before we can evaluate the salary situation in the Oregon state service. Under the new pay plan, the lowest salary is \$130, an improvement over the previous \$100 base. This represents an annual increase of \$294 after federal income tax deductions. A clerk-typist III and clerk-stenographer III can advance to a maximum of \$225. It seems logical that the clerk-typist I and clerk I positions would be held by in-