

Few Small Budgets Hold Back General Pay Raise

By Virgil O'Neil

Since its inception in 1943, the Oregon State Employees Association has been working for the improvement of the state's public service. Its efforts have rewarded every state employee and the public in many ways; we have helped improve the service rendered the public; we have provided tools which can be used to decrease the costs of government. These are proven facts. Any member of the OSEA can explain them to the uninformed. Our capable state administrators recognize the truth of these statements. The state's highest elective officers and our legislators admit the integrity and honesty of purpose which the OSEA has consistently maintained in reaching its objectives.

State Wage Problem

Expressed in a few pointed words, the state's present wage problem is as follows: (a) all salaries and wages are too low, (b) the public service demands better pay, (c) all informed people recognize the need for higher pay, (d) all officials in a position to grant increases say they should be granted, and (e) only a purported lack of money on the part of a very few budgets keeps a general raise from being granted.

Solutions Being Studied

Two-thirds of state employees are employed by self-sustaining departments, able to pay better wages and in most cases quite willing to do so. Of the remaining one-third, a goodly portion are employed by budget controlled departments which have some surplus left in their budgets. Only a very small minority of employees are employed in departments whose budgets in no wise anticipated the increasing costs of doing business.

A general and needed increase in the state's wage scale seemingly is held back

by the very few departments whose budgets are low. Of some 10,000 state employees, probably 800 are employed by these "poor" departments. In the case of the public library employees, the emergency board has recently given its approval to a deficiency appropriation, which will permit the library to increase its salaries NOW!

The pattern by which salaries can be increased has been established and is well known to everyone. Although salary increases on a state-wide basis are rare, yet they *have* been made in the past and when it was *then* said "We have no money!" We now have a Civil Service Commission whose duties under the law include that of recommending parity pay for state employees; parity with pay scales of private industry, other states and the federal service. We do not hear much from this commission, yet they are not oblivious to the facts that state wages remain low.

Our governor has just recently instructed the budget director to survey his budgets to see what can be done. Our OSEA secretary, Forrest, Stewart, with the governor's permission has gone over all of them with the budget director just a few weeks ago!

The OSEA is gratified to know that the wage problem is being carefully studied! We feel confident that the results will prove what we have known for some time: to-wit, the raising of state salaries to a decent standard will cost less and save the taxpayers more than the present wage policy.

What Every Employee Knows

Every thinking state employee knows the following:

1. A low salary scale begets dissatisfaction, repulses high calibre applicants