

"Across-the-board" ... a fiasco

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A bill has been introduced (to the Legislature) requesting a \$25 across-the-board increase for all State employees. This is NOT sponsored by OSEA, nor is it being supported by OSEA. The reasons it is not are obvious.

In the first place, why \$25? Why not \$50 or \$100? Are the progenitors of this bill hoping for \$10 and so are asking \$25? The policy and goal of OSEA is EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK. It is the only honest, straight-forward, intelligent approach to the salaries and wages issue. Until this goal is reached there will never be equality among State employees, nor will the State employee feel that he is much else but a "left-over" on the labor market.

No "across-the-board" increase . . . no so-called "cost-of-living" increase will solve our basic problem at this point. The FACT is that in most areas the State employee is not receiving a salary equal to the employee in industry and other public agencies doing the same work. Employees must be alert to the issue and refuse to be placated by the hollow hope that next month's pay check may carry a few more dollars.

The "cost-of-living" increase is one of the flimsiest of all pacifiers — a very fragile straw to be grasped by the grossly underpaid. Cost-of-living indexes fluctuate constantly. Perhaps at the present time we can arrive at a figure of 4%. This would have logic only IF State employees had been receiving EQUITABLE PAY and the 4% was, in truth, a cost-of-living increase. The cost-of-living gimmick is a bitter joke to the employee at the low end of the totem-pole.

Consider the "across-the-board" farce, as farce indeed it is. Everyone wants more money and if the \$25 would be whittled down to one dollar, he'd take it. But, what about the employee at the end of the yardstick who isn't within shooting distance of parity pay? Would he be tickled pink to receive a \$25 increase when his neighbor in private industry, doing the same kind of work, brings home \$50 more each month in his pay check? And what about the classifications that are at the present time within "spittin' distance" of parity pay? Should these people get \$25 that belongs in all honesty and decency, to the grossly underpaid classifications? Is this reason — or logic — or justice?

Can any State employee be satisfied with less than EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK? Not only will we NOT be satisfied, but Legislators are busy people and it is insulting to their positions and a waste of their valuable time to present for consideration any plan not supported by factual data based upon intelligent and extensive research. I'm certain they would prefer to consider a sound and permanent program and that is exactly what OSEA has produced and presented. It is one that can finally put Oregon up with other states, such as California, who pay prevailing rates to their employees. Every other year our Legislators are confronted with this problem, so why shouldn't it be resolved now, once and for all? It is sound economics for the people of the State to provide prevailing rates for their employees. The program simply provides from a 1 to a 4-step increase for most State employees. In dollars and cents this amounts to from \$12 to \$50 per month.

We cannot help but wonder if anyone is **seriously** supporting the across-the-board fiasco. It is time we became suspicious of people who offer these highly polished appeasement apples. Has this bill been tossed into the hopper to confuse the issue, or are we State employees being courted for some reason or other? The latter is rather flattering since it indicates our numbers are worth considering. But, brother, it isn't going to work! We will not "sell our birthright for a mess of pottage."

If this Legislature does not step forth with its support of a sound and permanent salary plan which will help recruit and retain employees in dedicated service to the State of Oregon, then some future Legislature will. What we ask is honest . . . it is just . . . it is right. And for these principles, OSEA will not stop fighting. If we do not win this round (and it is our high-hope that we will) then we will go on as we have been — with State employment not being used as a career, but as a training ground — a stepping-stone to provide efficient and qualified help for other public agencies and top-flight employees for private industry. Should the State of Oregon be engaged in so broad a training program for private industry? It's something to think about and something to ACT upon now! CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 224 . . . PREVAILING RATES FOR STATE EMPLOYEES.

Noon Meetings Prove Beneficial . . .



This photo, taken recently at a luncheon meeting of OSEA's Salem Chapter No. 1, shows some of the more than one-hundred members and guests who attended. While they ate and listened, Jay Blair, (seated at left) OSEA president and Gail Williamson, (inset, right) chapter president, informed them of current legislative activities of the Association. Noon meetings, such as this, have proven to be excellent for demonstrating to non-members the benefits derived from group unity.