THE 1967 SESSION of the Oregon Legislative Assembly convened January 9 at the State Capitol in Salem. Oregon's 30th Governor, Tom Lawson McCall, in his inaugural address, said, "Quality in government is related to structure and the caliber of the men and women who provide the services demanded of government. On January 3 of this year, I presented the Joint Ways and Means Committee some proposals designed to maintain and enhance competence of personnel. One dealt with immediate improvement of the salary schedules of most state employees and another with their retirement program. I commend these to you for your earliest consideration." The three members of OSEA's staff who will be working at the legislature are Executive Secretary Thomas C. Enright, Assistant Executive Secretary Edward L. Wilson and Wage and Salary Analyst Everett B. Stiles.

McCall Calls for Early Pay, Better Retirement

Governor Tom McCall made a strong appeal for early implementation of the 1967-69 biennium compensation plan in his testimony to the legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee on January 3.

He asked that salary increases be implemented on February 1.

Commenting upon the budget recommended to the legislature by outgoing Governor Mark O. Hatfield, McCall said, "One large item in the budget is a tempting target for reduction-- salary increases."

"Yet I believe that to make such reduction would be the poorest type of economy," he declared.

"We are in a time of inflation and high employment. I have personal experience with the difficulty of recruiting top quality people at the avaiable salaries and personal knowledge of the real sacrifices made by some who have accepted positions in my administration," he said.

"At all levels our state employment has shown heavy turnover. This requires expensive recruiting and training programs and threatens a real loss of competency if not checked," McCall said.

In reviewing the Hatfield budget, the new governor said, "We are acting on the belief that some new programs and even existing programs should take second place to efforts to insure available funds to retain and recruit competent state employees."

"The salary proposals presented to you today call for full implementation of the civil service salary plan designed to make state salaries competitive with those paid by private industry and other governments last July," he noted.

"Allowing reasonable time for your review, yet recognizing the urgency of the need, I recommend it be placed in effect, together with comparable increases recommended for the unclassified and exempt employees other than academic, on February 1, 1967," McCall said.

One proposal in Hatfield's budget which did not receive the endorsement of his successor was the recommendation for a $2 contribution by the state towards the payment of employee medical-hospital insurance premiums .

"It seems unwise to start this new fringe benefit before providing adequately for the major fringe benefit now offered."

"I am speaking, of course, of retirement. The Legislative Fiscal Committee has just completed an extensive review in this area. I endorse its recommendations for a major revision and improvement in the state retirement plan," McCall said.

Medical-Hospital Bill Introduced by Solon

Legislation calling for a state contribution toward employee health insurance plans has been introduced by Representative L. B. Day (D-Marion County).

The bill does not state the amount of the state contribution.

Rep. Day's bill is essentially the same as the bill sponsored by OSEA in the 1965 Legislative session. It provides that the contribution shall be made part of the pay plan.

Classified, unclassified, academic and exempt employees would be covered by the plan. Elected officials with the exception of legislators would be eligible.

Rep. Day said that much of private industry now provides an employee medical-hospital contribution as a fringe benefit.

Only two western states, Arizona and Oregon, do not make a contribution.

Many Oregon cities and counties provide the benefit, and school districts in increasing numbers are providing the benefit as the result of permisive legislation passed in the 1965 legislative session.

Aid Sought for Retired Persons

Legislation to aid retired public employees will be introduced by OSEA, the Oregon Education Association and the Oregon School Employees Association.

The bill would require that each time retired employees were granted extra "dividend" checks out of increased earnings from the PERS employee contribution fund, an equal amount would be paid to the retired person out of earnings in the employer fund.

AG DIRECTOR TO MEET EMPLOYEES

Employees of the Department of Agriculture will have a chance to meet their new boss at an informal "coffee hour" sponsored by OSEA's Agriculture Chapter 26 on January 30.

Walter Leth, who was recently appointed director of the agency by Governor Tom McCall, will be on hand to meet employees. Mrs. Leth will also attend.

The coffee hour will be held in the agriculture conference room starting at 8:15 a.m.

Gov. McCall Recommends 'Ombudsman'

In his inaugural address, Governor Tom McCall recommended creation of an "ombudsman" in state government.

Such a person would be appointed by the governor to investigate "citizen complaints of public servants' unjustifiable inaction, inefficiency, arrogance or abuse of authority," he said.

McCall said the "ombudsman" system has worked well in Scandinavian countries and New Zealand.

"The 'ombudsman' may criticize, suggest improvements in procedures, propose some specific remedy or reject the complaint. But he would not judge individual guilt or innocence, nor have the power to change administrative decisons," McCall said.

"The very bigness of government carries with it the enlarged risk of blundering into people's lives. The bigger government grows under the demands we place on it, the smaller many citizens are made to feel," he said.

"One of the basic concepts on which our society was founded is the right of the citizen to defend himself -- or be defended -- against unfair, arbitrary, erroneous or capricious government actions."