Employees Favor Independent Associations, 6 to 1

Membership in independent state employee associations throughout the country outnumbers membership in AFL-CIO affiliated unions by nearly 6 to 1.

Those figures were taken from a recent survey conducted by Thomas C. Enright, OSEA executive secretary and president of the Assembly of Governmental Employees.

The AGE is a national federation of 26 independent employee associations ranging from California to Maine, from Washington to Florida.

OSEA has been a member of the AGE since its founding in 1952.

The survey shows that AGE affiliates now have a membership of nearly 430,000. That is an increase of about 67,000 since 1964.

Almost all of the union membership is concentrated in three unions--the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the Building Service Employees International Union and the United Public Workers.

AFSC&ME is the biggest with slightly over 68,000 members. The BSEIU has about 4 ,800, and the UPW some 3,000.

In his report, Enright said, "Recent union growth appears to be in states where a political climate favorable to the AFL-CIO has resulted in increased membership by employees seeking a presumed increase in influence with state legislatures."

"It also has appeared to take place in states where the unions have tied membership drives to efforts to enact collective bargaining statutes or have taken advantage of new collective bargaining statutes or rules," he noted.

Enright expressed confidence that the associations will maintain superior membership "where the employee decision as to membership is based on performance of the organization rather than political pressures or demigogic appeals to the lowest income groups."

Enright said the independent associations are much better equipped, by attitude and experience, to represent public employees.

"Developments in the representation field in recent years and at present justify this confidence," he said.

OSEA Sole Bargaining Agent, Opinion States

OSEA is the exclusive representative of all employees in bargaining units where it has been elected and certified by the Civil Service Commission, according to a recent attorney general's opinion.

The opinion was written by Walter L. Barrie, assistant attorney general.

It was requested by Melvin H. Cleveland, civil service director, as the result of an inquiry by the AFL-CIO affiliated American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Walter L. Barrie
Writes Opinion

The union apparently sought to represent an employee at the Oregon State Hospital in a grievance matter.

". . . where a bargaining representative has been chosen, an employee in the unit represented must either present his grievance personally or appear through the elected bargaining representative," the opinion stated.

That portion of OSEA's contract which provides for exclusive representation of employees at the institution is valid, the opinion noted.

"We think the other labor organization would agree that to allow it to represent the employee would be tantamount to holding that an exclusive bargaining agent cannot exist in public service which, of course, is contrary to the basic purpose of collective bargaining," it concluded.

OSEA Thanks Musa

State Senator Ben Musa (D-The Dalles) recently announced that he will not be a candidate for re-election this year.

OSEA Executive Secretary Thomas C. Enright, on behalf of the association, thanked Musa for the support he gave state employees on salary and retirement bills while he was in the Senate.

Faculty Employees: Here Are Your Options Under PERS, TIAA-CREF

(Editor's Note: The January issue of the NEWS contained a special section of questions and answers about the new retirement law. Two questions concerned the TIAA-CREF supplemental retirement program for faculty employees of the State System of Higher Education. One of the answers was incorrect, and the other should be qualified. We hope the following article, written by former OSEA Retirement Director Jerry Liebertz, will clear up the matter.)

Academic employees participating in TIAA-CREF must also participate in the PERS, at least as far as the first $4,800 of salary is concerned. In that respect, employees will participate in both systems.

As for leaving the TIAA-CREF program and participating fully in the PERS, employees may do so at any time.

It might, however, be advantageous for them to do so during the first 60 days of 1968. In that way, all of the years of membership will be credited under the formula program.

Under the new PERS law, academic employees have two options:

Option 1

Under this option, employees may elect to place all contributions in the PERS.

Employees who do this will qualify for the new formula benefit based on highest average salary (as defined in the law) and can count all of their years of membership in the system since 1946 in the formula. (Limited to 30 years and through the end of the academic year in which they attain age 65.)

The option also allows investment in the variable annuity program when it is available.

This option appears to be most attractive to faculty with many years of service and those who may have only a few years to go before retirement.

Contributions to PERS can be withdrawn with interest (to age 60) upon termination, but pension benefit is forfeited.

Option 2

Under this option, called the Supplemental Annuity Option, academic employees may elect to have all contributions on the first $4,800 of salary invested in the PERS.

Faculty who elect this option at retirement will receive a benefit from both PERS and TIAA-CREF, although the state pension will be less than if they participated fully in PERS.

At this time, it is uncertain whether the Supplemental Annuity Option will continue to be tax deferred.

If a faculty member participates in the Supplemental Annuity Option, he will not be allowed to participate in the variable annuity program under PERS.

If he is new to the state, his funds in TIAA-CREF will not be matched until he has contributed in each of five calendar years. TIAA-CREF will not refund account balances upon termination.

On the other hand, the TIAA-CREF program does have mobility that the PERS does not afford. Employees are also allowed to place a larger portion of their retirement funds into equities under TIAA-CREF.

Faculty members who are now participating in the TIAA-CREF program will lose all previous years of service for formula computation unless they cancel their TIAA-CREF program during the first 60 days of 1968.

This will be the only time that a cancellation will protect the past years of service.

Facuty members who are undecided at this time might well consider cancelling their TIAA-CREF program during the first 60 days of 1968.

In this manner they could protect their past years of service, bearing in mind that at a future date they could again elect to participate in TIAA-CREF.

This is a very complex program that affects each individual differently. For more detailed information, please contact the Director of Retirement, OSEA, 1515 State Street, Salem, Oregon, 97301.

Salary Suit Hearing Set

Circuit Judge George A. Jones of Marion County has set Feb. 13 at 1:30 p.m. as the time for taking testimony and hearing arguments in a suit by OSEA against the Oregon Civil Service Commission, Oregon State University and the Board of Higher Education.

The association suit seeks to require the payment to crewmen of the Yaquina, OSU's oceanography vessel, of step-to-step salary adjustments as provided in the civil service compensation plan adopted July 1, 1967.

At the Jan. 29 hearing on the suit, assistant attorneys general representing the state agencies asked dismissal on the grounds that the refusal of step-to-step adjustments had not been appealed, and that the Civil Service Commission had approved a special salary implementation procedure.

Thomas C. Enright, OSEA legal counsel, said the suit had followed a long series of meetings with university and civil service representatives. He said that the commission had never acted formally on any deviation from the pay plan.

Judge Jones said that he expected to render a decision immediately after the Feb. 19 hearing in his court.

About $5,400 in salaries for the biennium is involved.