Rule Allows Slicing of Special Bargaining Units

A rule which makes it easier for employees to change collective bargaining representatives was adopted by the Civil Service Commission at its Feb. 23 hearing.

The new rule authorizes appointing authorities, under certain conditions, to slice "special bargaining units" from the original unit after an election has been held and a bargaining representative certified.

In the past, once a negotiating unit had been designated, an election held and a bargaining representative certified, the only way to change the representative was to hold a decertification election.

Such action could not take place until 12 months after the representative had been elected. In addition, it required petitions bearing the signatures of 30 per cent of the employees in the unit.

There was no provision for changing the bargaining unit once it had been designated.

Appointing authorities are still prohibited from carving special units from the original unit until the elected representative has served 12 months.

The new rule says the following conditions must be met before severance of a special unit can be authorized:

(1) "The request must be accompanied by a petition bearing the signatures of 30 per cent of the employees in the proposed special unit, stating that they desire to be represented separately, and"

(2) "It must be demonstrated that the employees in the proposed special unit are a distinct and homogeneous group, having an established separate identity while included in the broader unit, with significant problems which can be negotiated and adjusted without regard to the interests of other employees in the agency, and severance would not unduly disrupt the stability of employee-management relations in the agency."

Upon receiving a request for a special unit, the rule requires the appointing authority to furnish a copy to the certified representative and the civil service director.

He must also notify the parties of his decision.

The rule gives the bargaining representative the right to appeal the appointing authority's decision.

Seasonal Workers To Get Fringe Benefits

Seasonal employees working for the Department of Employment will now be granted sick leave and vacation leave on a pro-rata basis as the result of a supplemental agreement to OSEA's basic collective bargaining contract with the agency.

The agreement, negotiated by staff member John M. Schoonover, was signed by Commissioner J. N. Peet last month.

It defines seasonal employees as those who are hired to "meet seasonal work loads." They must work a "full season of not less than three months or 520 hours."

In the past, Schoonover said, seasonal employees were designated as "limited duration employees." As such, they did not accrue sick leave or vacation leave credits.

During negotiations on the agreement, Schoonover pointed out such employees received no fringe benefits, yet some of them worked nearly as many hours as full-time employees.

He said one employee worked in excess of 2,000 hours one year. A full-time employee works 2,080 hours in one year.

The agreement calls for OSEA and the Department of Employment to "compile a work history of all those part-time employees who have not received vacation and sick leave benefits" since January 1, 1960.

"This is a very important part of the agreement," Schoonover said.

"It means that the agency and the association will work together in an attempt to obtain federal funds to pay for fringe benefits earned by employees since 1960, but which were not paid."

Schoonover indicated that a budget will be prepared and submitted to the U. S. Department of Labor for the funds. Work on the budget and work history record of individual employees will being shortly.

Membership Dips During February

For the first time in five months, OSEA lost more members than it gained during the last reporting period.

The February membership report shows a gain of 239 members and a loss of 275, for a net loss of 36.

One has to go back to August 1967, to find a similar net loss. That month it amounted to 43.

The largest membership losses in February were suffered by Districts Two and Nine, which lost 45 and 42 members respectively.

The two bright spots in the gain column were Districts Six and One, with a net gain of 39 and 17 respectively.

The other districts look like this: District Three, net gain of one; District Four, net gain of three; District Five, net loss of one; District Seven, net loss of six; and District Eight, net loss of two.

The last five reporting periods show the following figures: January, net gain of six; December, net gain of 91; November, net gain of 25; October, net gain of 344; September, net gain of 37.

Bargaining Meet Attended by 100

Nearly 100 members from throughout the state attended OSEA's collective bargaining workshop held earlier this month in Salem.

Most of them were members of collective bargaining councils.

A new collective bargaining handbook, prepared by OSEA's Employment Relations Committee and the headquarters staff, was distributed. It served as an outline for discussions.

Hawaii Meeting On Bargaining Wants Enright

The Hawaiian Government Employees Association has invited OSEA Executive Secretary Thomas C. Enright to speak on collective bargaining at an Education Conference in Hawaii March 16.

The conference, sponsored by the HGEA, will be held at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu.

Subject of Enright's talk will be, "An association looks at collective bargaining." He will outline OSEA's position on collective bargaining in state government and discuss the problems that arose in Oregon when the practice was initiated.

Sharing the speakers platform with Enright will be a specialist in labor-management relations from the University of Hawaii and an official of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO.

While in Hawaii, Enright will be the guest of Daniel Ainoa, executive director of the HGEA, which is paying his expenses.

Pension Boost Goal Of Retirement Meet

Action to improve retirement benefits for retired persons will get its formal start March 23 when another Public Employees Retirement Conference gets underway in Salem.

OSEA and the Oregon Education Association are joint sponsors of the meeting.

The conference was organized by the two employee organizations in October, 1965, for the purpose of improving Oregon's PERS.

Its work resulted in adoption of the much-publicized "PERS overhaul bill" passed by the 1967 Legislature. The bill made major changes in PERS which resulted in increased retirement benefits.

It did nothing, however, to help persons who retired before January 1, 1968 -- the effective date of the new law.

Edward L. Wilson, OSEA staff member, and Patrick Maney of the OEA staff will coordinate the campaign to boost pensions now being paid retired persons.

Wilson said the conference will form some basic committees which will be responsible for organizing efforts to obtain the needed legislation.

One committee, he said, will be formed to study various methods of improving retirement benefits that can be supported by all interested groups.

In addition, local committees will be appointed throughout the state to contact retired public employees in each area.

"One of our main problems is to find a method of contacting retired persons," he said.

"Once the various persons and groups interested can be brought together, the most effective way to obtain favorable legislative action will be to form an organization headed by retired persons and assisted with full resources of the associations," he said.

"This will require the active participation of many people," Wilson commented.

Two legislators will attend the conference to explain the problems the group will face in the 1969 Legislature. One is Sen. C. R. Hoyt (R-Corvallis). The other is not yet known.

OSEA's participation in the conference was authorized by a resolution adopted by the 1967 General Council.

Fringe Benefits For Part-Time Employees OKd

Part-time state employees who work 32 hours or more per month will now receive fringe benefits computed on a pro-rata basis according to the number of hours they work each month.

The new benefits are the result of a civil service rule change proposed by OSEA and adopted by the Civil Service Commission last month.

In the past, part-time employees had to be "regularly scheduled" before they received any portion of the fringe benefits given to full-time employees.

OSEA representatives complained to the commission that many state agencies abused the designation of "regularly scheduled" employees. For that reason, they said, most of the state's part-time employees were not getting any fringe benefits.

OSEA cited numerous examples of part-time employees who were working many hours and not receiving benefits.

In one instance, an institutional employee worked in excess of 2,100 hours in one year without receiving any fringe benefits. The average number of hours worked by a full-time employee in one year is 2,080.

The commission adopted the 32 hour minimum figure since it covers employees working one day per week per month. It indicated that employees working less than the 32 hour minimum were "casual employees" and should not accrue benefits.