

the OSEA news

The monthly publication of the Oregon State Employees Association

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OREGON
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"My patience is beginning to wear thin."

From the Executive Secretary



Separation of Powers

It was once assumed that it was the executive's role to administer the state's personnel system, and the fiscal bodies of the legislature to fund salary requirements to the extent they found feasible. This is consistent with the "separation of powers" theory of government.

Attempts in the 1969 and current legislative sessions by certain Ways and Means Committee members and the legislative fiscal staff to dictate details of the state's salary administration system indicate how far we are straying from that concept.

The ill-advised Executive Department revised salary administration plan, now under debate, is the most dramatic illustration of what has been happening. It results from an executive commitment to Ways and Means members, made in 1969 to ward off imposition of a fiscal staff proposal to stretch out the time between pay steps.

We were struck just as strongly, however, by fiscal staff recommendations to Ways and Means last week which contained such gems as:

- (1) Special treatment of specific job classes as decided by the legislative group;
- (2) Participation by the fiscal staff in any plan submitted by the Executive Department to the Emergency Board for mid-biennium salary adjustments; and
- (3) Control by the Emergency Board of any requested reclassifications of employees between legislative sessions.

Certainly nobody questions the right of the legislature legislatively to determine what the state's personnel system should be. But it should be open and above board, in bill form with all legislators having a vote, not by "budget votes," "policy decisions," and deals and "commitments" extracted by a committee's implied threat to withhold funds.

The posture of the Executive Department in the current salary plan fiasco has called into question on the part of many employees, the employee support of the 1969 law change which took personnel administration away from the Civil Service Commission and gave it to the executive. They seem to recall that the "three worthy men" on the old commission stood much firmer on such matters.

Support of the change was on the basis that personnel administration is properly a management function. It should have made some executives squirm when they heard a fiscal analyst tell Ways and Means members this week that they were going to be called upon to make "management decisions" on salaries.

No doubt the people who will be irritated by this column feel they are doing the right thing. But, with all due respect, we are convinced that when managers manage and legislators legislate, and each respects the other's proper role, the interests of both as well as employees and the public will best be served.

Then It's Not So Good

Salaries for Oregon state employees are "only" about 10 per cent below those paid for comparable jobs in private industry. The Pendleton East Oregonian says this is "very good." And it is, unless you are one of those who is 10 per cent behind. —Editorial from the Eugene Register-Guard.

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