OSEA Says Oregon's Academic Salaries 'Heading Down Pathway to Mediocrity'

Academic salaries in Oregon have "passed the crossroads and progressed some distance down the pathway to mediocrity," Dr. Paul H. Weswig, director of OSEA's Academic and Unclassified Services Committee, told the Ways and Means salary subcommittee last week.

To help the state move back toward the crossroads, he said, Oregon's academic employes need nearly 50 per cent more money for pay raises during the next biennium than has been proposed by Gov. Tom McCall in his 1971-1973 budget recommendations.

Weswig said OSEA's academic pay plan calls for a 5.5 per cent "across-the-board" increase during each year of the next biennium, plus an added 2 per cent a year for merit increases. He said the plan was drafted by his committee and is based upon the results of a questionnaire it mailed to more than 6,200 academic employes throughout the state in 1970.

A 5.5 per cent pay raise should be given to every faculty member during the next two years as a cost of living increase, Weswig said, and the 2 per cent merit pay hike should be given to "those whose salaries have fallen behind in spite of their many years of satisfactory service and those whose service to the institution has been outstanding."

"Obviously neither of the latter categories can be well defined," Weswig said, and proposed distribution of the money be left to administrators.

"Taxpayers and legislators must recognize that a certain number of classrooms plus a certain number of faculty is not equal to a system of higher education," Weswig told the legislators.

"Undoubtedly our system could have been fully staffed throughout the last decade at even lower salary levels if the quality of incoming personnel had been of no concern," he said.

"Since about one-half of our existing faculty will resign or retire during the 1970's, the people of Oregon should decide how low they wish the quality of their colleges and universitites to fall in the coming decade," he declared.

State Fair Hits on Plan to Save Money: Don't Pay Employes for Overtime Work

Oregon State Fair employes apparently are going to be made scapegoats for the fact that the agency overspent its current budget to the tune of some $180,000 because they asked for a benefit due them under federal law and state personnel rules: overtime pay.

But that's not all. Apparently State Fair officials, angry because OSEA and individual employes submitted overtime claims, have asked the Marion County legislative delegation to introduce a bill to take the agency's part-time and seasonal employes from the classified service and place them in the exempt service.

Why? Because such a move would make such employes ineligible for overtime pay. In addition, they would lose all other benefits and rights provided to classified employes under Personnel Division rules.

A Ways and Means subcommittee recently ordered State Fair officials to sharply cut back overtime pay as it approved a bill to raise the agency's spending limit by $64,000.

That increase came on top of one for $116,000 which the State Emergency Board approved last January.

However, less than one-third of the overspending was due to the overtime claims. State Fair officials said only $53,000 was for overtime pay, and some of it went back several years. Officials said accrued overtime checks of more than $2,000 were paid to some employes in 1969.

Subcommittee members took exception to that, and agreed to attach a policy statement to the Fair Commission's final budget bill directing it to give compensatory time off for overtime work, instead of cash payments, whenever possible.

"This is inexcusable," Rep. Stafford Hansell (R-Hermiston) said. He said if compensatory time off can't be worked out, more help should be hired during high workload periods.

Robert L. Stevens, manager of the State Fair, said the agency has been bound by federal wage laws and state rules on paying overtime. He said he plans to get the part-time and seasonal employes classified as exempt employes so they would not be eligible to collect overtime pay.

Apparently he did just that because the Marion County legislative delegation recently introduced a bill which takes part-time and seasonal State Fair employes from the classified service and places them in the exempt service.

It was introduced in the legislature by Reps. Jack Anunsen (R-Salem), Walter Collett (R-Salem), Morris Crothers (R-Salem) and Norma Paulus (R-Salem), and Sens. Wallace P. Carson, Jr. (R-Salem) and Keith Burbidge (D-Salem).

OSEA Asks Federal and State Agencies For Audit of State Hospital Time Records

OSEA has asked the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Personnel Division of Oregon's Executive Department to "investigate and audit" the time records of psychiatric aides employed at the Oregon State Hospital.

The action grew out of complaints made by several employes that the hospital was not complying with OSEA's collective bargaining contract, Personnel Division rules, or the Fair Labor Standards Act in paying psychiatric aides for overtime work.

OSEA staff members Everett B. Stiles, William D. Kalibak and Dale E. Leach investigated the complaints. "We attempted to review the time records and found the agency extremely deficient in its time keeping records," Stiles said in a letter requesting the Wage and Hour Division in Portland to perform an investigation and audit of hospital time records.

He noted that the Fair Labor Standards Act requires the employer to maintain time records as well as to retain those records on file. "The hospital was unable in several instances to reconstruct the hours worked by the employes on duty as psychiatric aides," Stiles declared. "In cases where the record could be reconstructed, there was unpaid overtime ranging from 37 minutes to 13 hours per week."

"It is not OSEA's intention to create a 'witch hunt,' but rather to assure that overtime is compensated in accordance with the provisions of the federal law," Stiles said.

The Fair Labor Standards Act defines overtime as time worked in excess of 40-hours per week, and says such time must be paid in cash at the rate of time and one-half.

In a separate letter to William G. Hughes, administrator of the Personnel Division, Stiles noted that a division rule requires each agency head to keep a record of all overtime worked. "From the records we were capable of reconstructing, it was apparent all of the overtime had not been compensated, nor had time records been kept on the overtime worked," he said.

He asked the Personnel Division to investigate the failure of the hospital to comply with the rules.

Personnel Division rules define overtime as time worked in excess of eight-hours per day or 40-hours per week, but say employes may be paid in cash or compensatory time off, at the discretion of the agency. Regardless of how employes are compensated for overtime, however, the rules say they must be paid at the rate of time and one-half.

PERS Earnings Said 'The Highest Ever'

Interest earnings on the Public Employes Retirement System fund for 1970 were made public by PERS Executive Secretary James L. McGoffin just before this issue of the OSEA News went to press.

McGoffin said the earnings on the fund are the highest ever reported by the PERS.

He said the "fixed" portion of the fund, which is invested primarily in long-term bonds and mortgages, earned 5.09 per cent for the year.

The "variable annuity" portion of the fund, which is invested primarily in common stocks and short term notes, earned 7.47 per cent in 1970, he said.

According to McGoffin, the PERS will soon send all employers an individual statement for each member of the retirement system. The statements, which will be distributed to individual members by the state agencies, are self-explanatory and will enable each member to keep an accurate account of his money in the retirement fund.

The PERS has distributed the gains that were earned during the 1970 calendar year, McGoffin said, which means each member began 1971 on an equal basis insofar as the two funds are concerned.

Specific information regarding the funds may be obtained from the Public Employes Retirement System, 1400 S.W. Fifth Ave., Portland, 97201. Its telephone numbers are listed the the state directory.

Bill Allows Stock Investment Boost

A bill to allow the state to invest 25 per cent of the Public Employes Retirement System fund and the State Accident Insurance Fund in common stocks has been passed by the Oregon House of Representatives.

Present law allows only 10 per cent of the funds to be invested in the stock market by the State Investment Council. Last year the council earned $3.5 million for the funds through investment in stocks.

The bill, HB 1166, which has been sent to the Senate, would authorize a total investment by the two funds of $90 million in stocks.