

the OSEA news

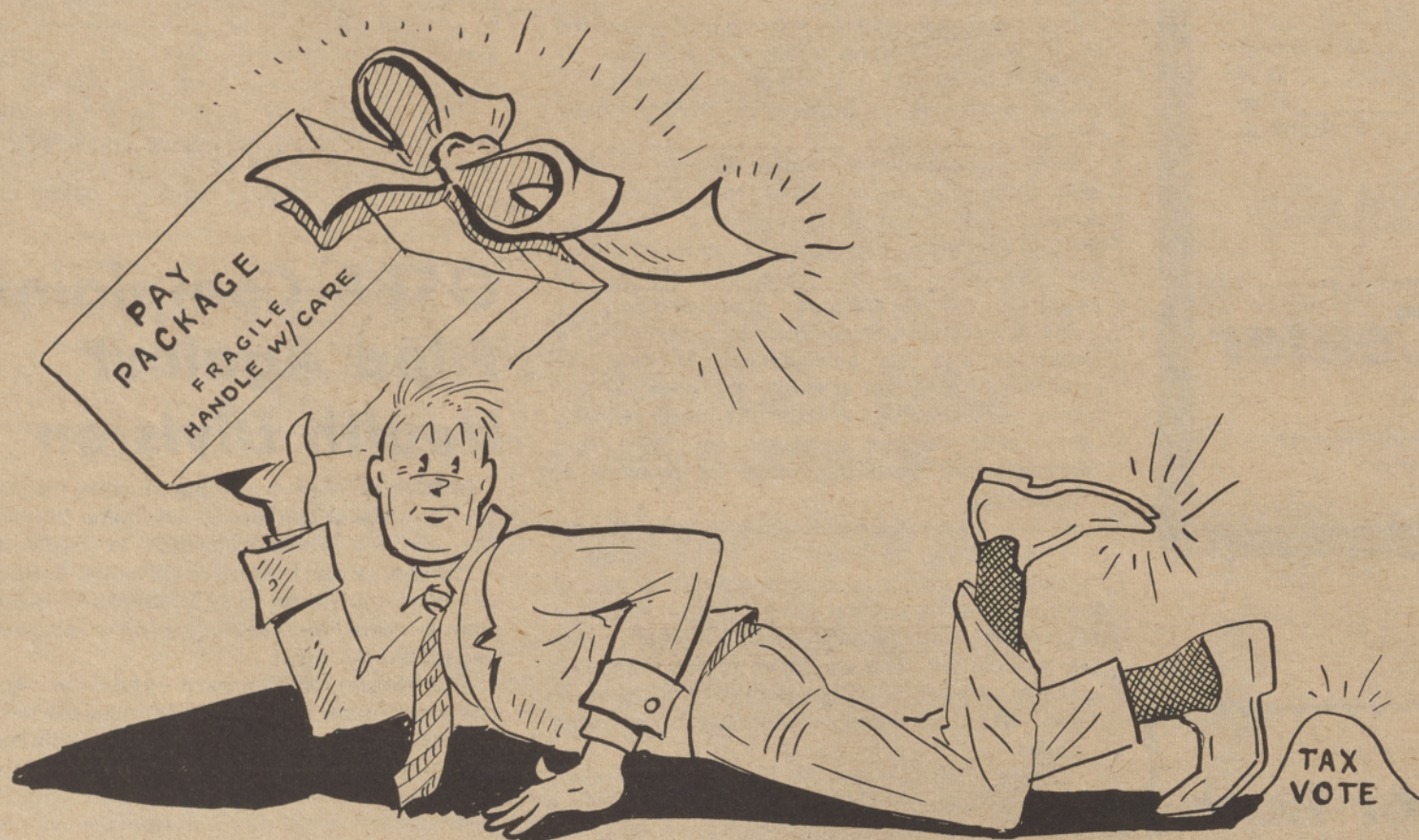
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OREGON
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5-24-73 H. HAYES

From the....

Executive Secretary

May 1 Vote Made Job Tougher

If some members wondered why OSEA strongly supported the governor and the legislature's tax proposal, it was not only because the Board of Directors thought it was a good measure for state employees as lower income workers. It was also because the board had some insight, based on experience, regarding what could happen if the measure were defeated.

Failure of the measure to be accepted by the people has not sunk OSEA's pay and benefits package or other bills. But it has made the job of getting them much tougher.

The May 1 vote took a lot of "zip" out of the legislature. It created frustrations and negative reactions, polarized some of the election opponents and created some odd informal coalitions. All of these things make it hard for a leadership, in either party, to keep the ship on a true course.

Part of the reluctance of some legislators to go along fully with the negotiated pay and fringe benefits package ties in with the vote. There has been the temptation for some to look to the budgeted monies as a source for funding property tax relief through increased basic school support, an approach well to be remembered from two years ago.

After a bad couple of weeks, legislative moods and actions appear to be on the up-swing. Things are beginning to happen again, and this bodes well

for OSEA's program. It was rough for a while, and we're still not out of the tunnel, but an optimist can see a brighter light down there at the other end.

Medical Costs Rise

Editor Dale Leach's interview with Ralph Bolt, the state's insurance manager, comes at an appropriate time. It should also serve to let state employees know that what happens on the medical-hospital insurance programs is not all OSEA's or even the SEBB's responsibility.

A good part of our mail for the past year has been complaints from members who claim they didn't get anything from the \$10 a month employer contribution for medical-hospital insurance lobbied for by OSEA and voted by the 1971 legislature, because of higher premiums. The letters are beginning to come in again as it appears the OSEA-negotiated \$5 a month increase will barely cover higher insurance rates.

OSEA has not always agreed with the State Employees' Benefit Board. We have questioned the richness of the benefits in the most popular plan, which makes for higher premiums. The board says its polls show most employees are willing to pay more for better benefits, and the popularity of the most expensive plan may prove its point. The real problem is that doctor and hospital costs keep going up, with nobody seemingly able to stop them. Premiums have to rise to pay for them.

The state employee didn't see much of the \$10 state contribution in his take-home pay, and the same may be true regarding the \$5 increase. But if he hadn't gotten them, he'd have been that much out-of-pocket as doctor and hospital fees continued to climb. This is the reason OSEA's General Council directed support of House Joint Memorial 10(now in the Senate State and Federal Affairs Committee), which memorializes Congress to support a national health plan.

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