OSEA Says Conditions in PWD's Lane Offices Reach Boiling Point

Conditions in the Public Welfare Division's Lane County field office and food stamp office have reached a "boiling point," OSEA Executive Secretary Thomas C. Enright said in requesting an investigation of the agency. (See story on page 1.)

"Similar conditons exist in Linn County and to some extent in Washington County operations," he said.

Communications within the agency have broken down seriously, Enright charged. "A common employe complaint relates to the inability to obtain decisions and direction from local supervisors or management. This appears not to be because these individuals are necessarily unwilling or incompetent, but because they either do not have information or are afraid of making a mistake and having to face reprisal from higher sources."

"Delays in getting administrative direction to the field have resulted in confusion and, we are told, loss of money to the agency and the state," he asserted. "Unclear and contradictory guidelines in agency manuals of operation lead to diverse and inconsistent application of rules in the field, a condition which may even characterize two separate units within the same branch office."

Enright said problems in the fiscal operation of the agency have worsened rather then gotten better after a good faith attempt by OSEA to help employes. "Turnover figures, especially in fiscal pre-audit, appear to bear out this fact dramatically."

"Our dealings with this agency lead us to believe that the atmosphere of fear and intimidation which affects morale and causes excessive turnover and inefficient performance emanates primarily from the level of top administration, but with the agency's administrator apparently kept apart from and ignorant of true conditions by an individual or individuals at the next lower level," Enright said.

OSEA's experience in collective bargaining negotiations have been characterized by delays for a period well in excess of a year, he noted. The Association is now involved in a controversy with PWD over the agency's proposed "excluded list" of employes which was decided adversely to the agency by the Public Employe Relations Board in an action almost three years ago.

"These delays, we are convinced, result from the agency's administrators' desires to keep OSEA away from employes and the employes away from an organization which can give expression to their complaints and frustrations," Enright said.

McCall To Seek Federal Funds To Pay Disputed Moving Costs

Gov. Tom McCall has told OSEA he will seek money from the U. S. Department of Labor to pay the moving expenses of all Employment Division employes who were transferred last year as a result of a cut in federal funds.

McCall's action was in response to OSEA's request that he intervene in a dispute involving refusal by the Employment Division to comply with a ruling by the Public Employe Relations Board that the agency should reimburse a group of employes for their moving expenses.

The request was made after Ross Morgan, administrator of the division, told OSEA staff attorney John S. Irvin that the agency would not pay the moving expenses despite the board's decision that it should.

McCall pledged he will make the "strongest possible case" to the federal agency for the money. If unsuccessful, he said Morgan and Cleighton Penwell, director of the Department of Human Resources, "will do whatever is necessary to find the funds within the existing budget to pay the claims. This may well require a reduction of additional positions later this year if the dollars cannot be secured otherwise."

The governor suggested that OSEA and the Executive Department make the subject of moving expenses an item for negotiation in upcoming collective bargaining talks.

Chapter 51 Voices Concern Over Increased Social Security Taxes

OSEA members of Or-Ga-Co Chapter 51 in Portland are concerned about financing increased social security benefits by means of additional payroll taxes.

The chapter voiced its concern in letters to Oregon's two U. S. Senators, Mark O. Hatfield and Bob Packwood.

"Although our chapter does not oppose the social security concept, we do believe that if additional benefits are granted or benefits extended to those not previously covered, a more equitable and broadly based financing program must be forthcoming," the letter said.

"Everyone, regardless of employer and income, must share in the financial burden of social security programs."

"The middle income worker and his employer have been asked to finance most of the benefits Congress has enacted since 1971," the Senators were told. "For example, the taxable wage base which is subject to social security withholding tax has doubled since 1967 and increased nearly 70 per cent in the last three years."

"In times of runaway inflation and frozen salaries, most working people, particularly those with families, cannot continue to absorb the exorbitant increases in social security taxes."

The letter was signed by Wayne Hug, president of Chapter 51.