

## In negotiations State trying to cut benefits

State negotiators at the central and coalition tables have taken a decidedly anti-union stance in the last four bargaining sessions and are proposing contract language that would take away numerous benefits that state employees already enjoy.

The State's proposals would cut leave or holidays in five areas—including paid leave for all 51 employees involved in the bargaining process—and would seriously erode classification benefits in four areas of the current contract. The State is also proposing to put all classified employees who have had any personnel action in the past two years on a trial-service period.

"This 'take-back' strategy is typical of the anti-union tactics the State negotiators have been using since bargaining began," said Alice Dale, spokesperson for OPEU's Bargaining '81 team. "State employees should not have to fight in bargaining to retain benefits they have gained over the years in their contracts."

There are five areas where the State wants to reduce time-off that employees have under their current contract:

- Employees presently have 11 holidays per year. The State wants to limit this to 10 by taking back the Governor's Holiday.
- Employees now receive one day of personal leave per year. The State proposes to eliminate this day off.
- Presently, the six employees at the central table negotiations and the 45 employees at coalition table negotiations receive time off—with pay—to attend bargaining sessions. The State wants to completely eliminate this provision from its supplemental contract with OPEU.
- Under current contract language, employees receive one day of sick leave per month, which is accrued and credited throughout the month. The State proposal says, "Sick leave is not earned or credited until the end of the month or pay period." This means that if an employee uses up all their sick leave by the end of the month, they would have to wait until the end of the next month before they could leave work for illness and not lose pay.
- Employees who are about to retire currently are allowed to take off three-and-one-half days for pre-retirement counseling. The State wants to totally eliminate this benefit.

In addition, the State has totally rejected OPEU's proposals for bereavement and maternity leave and time off to vote in government elections.

The second major roll back in employee benefits that the State is pushing, concerns classification issues. They are proposing four significant cuts:

- Under the current contract, any employee who works in a higher classification for 15 days must be

paid, at the higher rate, for all time worked. The State is proposing that only after 30 days can an employee be paid at a higher rate for all time worked, and then only if the employee does the full range of duties for the higher classification and if the employee has written approval of his or her supervisor before work at the higher level begins.

- Present contract language says that the State must give an employee

60 days notice of any downward reclassification and that the employee's salary rate will stay the same if his or her new classification is lower than the range of the old classification. The State proposes to give employees only 15 days notice of downward reclassification and an immediate drop in wages to the range of the lower classification.

- In cases of upward reclassification, employees currently receive a salary

increase on the first of the month following the date the reclassification request is received by the Personnel Division. The State wants any salary increases, resulting from upward reclassification, to be on the first of the month following legislative approval of funding for the reclassifications. If the legislature fails to approve the funding, the State wants to prohibit back pay for working out of class, as it is now required to pay under the current contract.

- Under the grievance procedure section of the current contract "unjust and inequitable acts," along with express contract violations, are considered grievable acts. The State is proposing that "unjust and inequitable acts" be deleted from this section of the contract.

OPEU has also proposed that a job evaluation and classification task force be formed under provisions of the new central contract. The primary reasons for this proposal are that the current classification system is more arbitrary than scientific, other states have developed more scientific methods that are fair to both management and employees and there has been no complete study of the state's classification system in over 40 years. The state wants to totally delete this proposal.

One of the State's most alarming proposals to date is its plan that would place many state employees on a two year trial-service period. During this period, employees would be subject to discharge without recourse to grievance procedures. Included in this trial service period would be all employees who achieved their position by "initial appointment, promotion, demotion, transfer, reinstatement or reemployment."

According to Dale, this proposal would effect all classified employees who have had any type of personnel action in the last two years.

"The State admitted at the table that there is nothing in its proposal that would prohibit it from promoting or transferring employees at any time," said Dale. "As a result, it could keep nearly all employees on trial service status indefinitely."

Another personnel change that the State is proposing would create a new category of employees—intermittent employees. This category would include all employees who work on a "irregular fluctuating basis because of conditions beyond the control of management."

Under the State's proposal, these employees would receive no vacation time or leave of any type, no medical coverage, no penalty pay, no overtime pay and would have no layoff rights. State negotiators indicated that employment on a fluctuating basis could run for years. They also said that they hope to include most employees now categorized as seasonal employees under this proposal.



Alice Dale, spokesperson for OPEU's Bargaining '81 team, discusses the progress of negotiations with members at a recent meeting in Portland. Dale has been meeting with members around the state to discuss contract issues and the status of bargaining.

## Reorganization effort focuses on bargaining

Major reorganization of OPEU, according to bargaining units, is now in its final stages.

"We no longer are an organization with a dual personality," said Steve Green, District 2 director and a major contributor to reorganization planning. "Now instead of being organized along both geographic and bargaining unit lines at the same time, we are organized only by bargaining units."

He added that the organization of the union now realistically reflects and is financially supportive of its primary task—bargaining.

Under the new plan, all old chapters (and BURCs) have been dissolved.

They have been replaced with locals that incorporate all members of a single agency.

Thus, some single-district locals—such as the Lincoln City Police—will have virtually no change in membership from their old chapter format. However, bargaining units which are statewide—such as AFS or CSD—have been formed into large locals that include all members of an agency. Each of these locals can

subdivide by districts if they desire.

Previously, these multi-district units were split into chapters with membership restricted to the geographic boundaries of each district.

All six geographic districts will continue to exist, with district directors remaining as members of the Board of Directors.

Until new local constitutions and by-laws have been written by local members and local officers have been elected, the BURC chairperson will serve as presiding officer.

This new organizational structure was prompted when OPEU officials and General Council sought a way to fund the union's new bargaining format—a format that includes over 50 members on the six negotiating teams and allows direct employee input into the bargaining process.

Under the old chapter system, bargaining and bargaining-related activities were guaranteed only \$25,000, while chapter activities—in the form of union dues rebates—were budgeted at \$110,000. It was up to each chapter to determine the

continued on page 9