

# Contract Vote Begins July 13



Fifty OPEU members negotiated the central and coalition contracts along with OPEU staff. Four members who participated in both central and coalition

bargaining were (left to right) John Clapp, ODOT; Stephanie Hellinga, PUC; Yvonne Stubbs, McLaren and Dick Myers, State Library.

OPEU has reached tentative agreement with the State on a two-year contract that includes an average 15.6 percent pay increase, fully-paid health and dental insurance, no take-backs of provisions won in previous contracts and major gains in many areas of job security and employe rights.

Contract ratification ballots have been mailed to all OPEU members. Voting will take place at worksites on July 13 and 14. Results of the balloting will be announced on Monday, July 20.

The pay increase is spread out over the two years of the agreement:

- \* \$55 retroactive to July 1, 1981;
- \* 2 percent increase on Jan. 1, 1982;
- \* 3 percent increase on July 1, 1982;
- \* 3 percent increase on Nov. 1, 1982; and
- \* 3 percent increase on March 1, 1983.

"No one is happy with the salary increase, but we recognize the economic facts of life," said OPEU Executive Director Thomas Gallagher. "However, in achieving fully-paid health and dental insurance and other aspects of the fringe benefit package, we squeezed out every nickel that is available."

He added, "You don't strike when there is no more money to be gained except the wages you lose by going out on strike."

The pay package—which is not compounded—is a 15.6 percent increase for the average state salary. Overall, the salary increases range from 19 percent for the lowest-paid employes, including clerks and secretaries, to 14 percent for the highest-paid employes.

Employes can figure their own percentage increase by dividing the \$55 by their own salary and then adding the additional 11 percent increase they will receive over the term of the contract.

In addition to this overall pay increase, selected salary increases were won for many classes of employes. Certain "skilled trades"—such as electricians, plumbers, welders and carpenters—are the largest classification of employes listed. They will receive an additional four percent in the second year of the contract.

"We were successful in gaining additional salary adjustments for many classifications," said Gallagher in discussing the selective increases. "But the factfinder (William Dorsey) ruled against us on part of the trades and maintenance classifications and on teachers, because of the very low turnover in these positions."

"However, in one of the major social goals of this union—getting more money for lower paid employes—we were successful in principle," he added. "We're only sorry there wasn't more money."

Maintaining fully-paid health and dental benefits was a major gain for

OPEU employes. The State will pay \$95.17 for each employe for first-year health and dental coverage and \$107.83 for each employe for the second year of the contract.

Compared to the State's present insurance payments for each employe, the first-year contributions will be a 59.6 percent increase and its second-year contributions will be a 80.9 percent increase.

The State tried unsuccessfully during the course of negotiations to take-back many provisions—especially in job security and workers' rights—which OPEU members had won in previous contracts.

"Obtaining a contract with no take-backs is a major accomplishment for state employes, because it (take-backs) was one of the Executive Department's principle strategies," said OPEU's chief negotiator Alice Dale. "Not only were we able to prevent any significant take-backs, we were able to make numerous major gains in job security and

employe rights."

OPEU's and the State's biggest area of contention in job security and employe rights was over layoffs.

While the State was awarded the elimination of statewide bumping by factfinder Dorsey, OPEU negotiators were able to win two significant improvements in layoff rights for state employes:

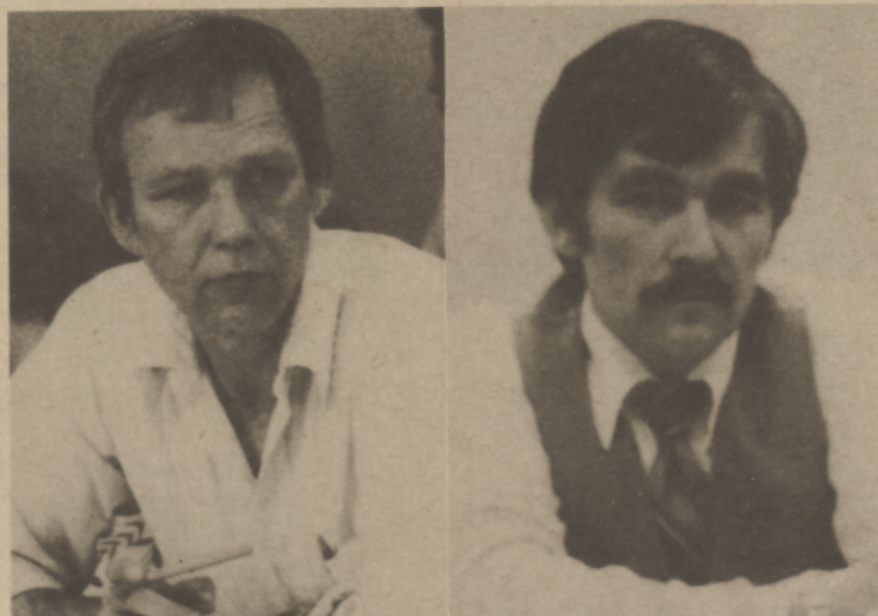
\* **Seniority**—Seniority will be the only factor used in determining service credits that define bumping order. This is a major gain, since nearly all state employes have limited bumping to their geographic area.

\* **"One Right Over Refusal"**—State employes will be offered at least two jobs before their names are removed from the layoff list.

Other important gains made in job security and employe rights in the new contract are in complete agreement and past practices, contracting out, discipline and discharge, holidays, leadwork differential, leave with pay, no discrimination, reclassification upwards, salary administration (performance appraisal system), union rights and work out of class. (A short explanation of each appears on page 3.)

In the final analysis, the six-month 1981 bargaining process must be measured against the political forces that OPEU had to fight.

"It was not only the governor that we were bargaining against, but also the political process," said OPEU Government Relations Director Chuck Mendenhall. "Despite the precarious fiscal posture of the State, the two sacred cows—basic school support and property tax relief—basically remained untouched. In the future, if we are to overcome these political obstacles, we must increase the political maturity and the political strength of this organization."



Bob Gourley, OSU (left) and Steve Teters, Health Division (right) negotiated both at the central and coalition levels.