

Highlights of the 1997 OPEU/DAS Tentative Agreement

As this issue of The Oregon Public Employee goes to press, the final version of our state bargaining unit's contract with DAS is being prepared for printing. Copies of the contract will be available by the end of July. Members should contact their worksite organizers about obtaining a copy. The following are some of the highlights of that agreement.

Salary (Article 27)

7/1/97	3%
7/1/98	8th step added to all salary ranges; step increase to all employees topped out 12 months or more as of 7/1/98.
11/1/98	2%
2/1/99	1%

Insurance (Article 31)

State contribution will remain \$386 per month through 12/31/98. Thereafter rate will be increased per interim negotiations starting 6/15/98. State has allocated \$4.2 million All Funds (\$1.3 million General Funds) for these negotiations which with BUBB reserves should provide for an employer contribution of \$474 per month and still leave prudent BUBB reserves. This contribution should allow OPEU to secure insurance contracts in 1999 that provide fully paid family coverage.

No Discrimination (Article 22)

Sexual orientation protection applied to all provisions of the contract, thereby extending health insurance coverage to domestic partners.

Union Rights (Article 10)

Stewards have the right to paid leave to investigate disciplinary grievances. In ODOT, stewards are finally able to file grievances at all steps.

Personnel Records (Article 19)

New Section 6 states that an employee shall be allowed to inspect the working file on him/herself that is maintained by the supervisor.

Grievances (Article 21)

Processed per table at right.

	Time to File	Place to File
Discipline	15 Calendar Days to File	Agency Head
Non-Discipline	30 Calendar Days to File	Immediate Supervisor
		Except: 1) Group grievances involving multiple supervisors/one agency • Agency Head 2) Group grievances involving multiple agencies • LRU 3) Discrimination • Agency Head 4) Reclass up/down • Agency Head 5) FMLA

Worker Militancy, Memory of '95 Strike Brings Contract Win

On May 21, 1997 the members of OPEU's state bargaining unit voted 97% to 3% to accept the tentative agreement reached between our Union and DAS on April 25, 1997. The overwhelming vote brought to a close a contract campaign which had succeeded through escalating militancy in worksites across the state and due to state managers' memory of OPEU's historic 1995 strike. The fruits produced by that struggle offer state workers signifi-

cant gains in compensation and workplace rights (See above).

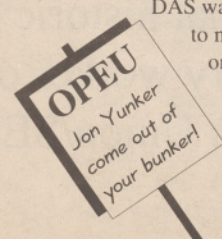
When bargaining began this spring, it soon became evident that DAS was not going

to move easily on the key issues our

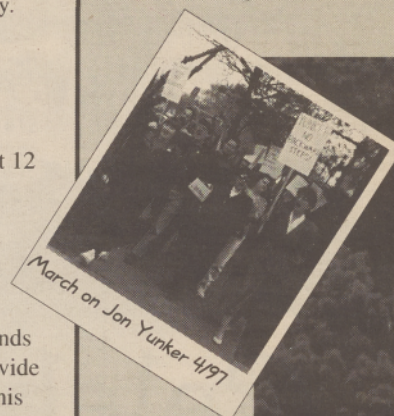
Union had identified – a fair raise, reassertion

of workplace rights and, top of the list for many members, the maintenance of fully-paid family benefits. That's when the OPEU field campaign kicked into high gear.

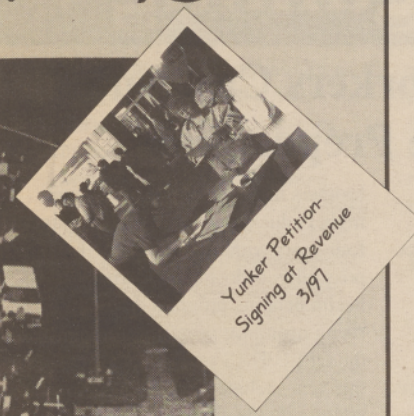
"Experience told us that militancy in the field was essential to creating movement at the bargaining table," stated Alice Dale, Executive Director and Chief Negotiator for OPEU. "We knew that even modest signs of activity in worksites would send a clear



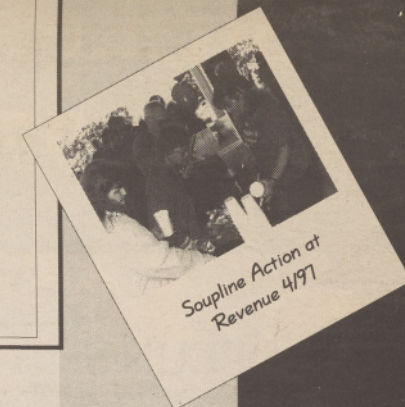
Strike Back '95



March on Jon Yunker 4/97



Yunker Petition Signing at Revenue 3/97



Soupline Action at Revenue 4/97



Bargaining Team Members 3/97

Contract Fight '97

What Did Our Strike Do?

By Margaret Stephens

It assured no out-of-pocket pay loss no matter which way the court ruled on Ballot Measure 8.

It was a defensive strike in a hostile political climate. We didn't lose anything pay-wise and we held our ground.

The strike influenced the court in its decision. Judicial decisions must reflect the community's values in their interpretation of laws.

The strike strengthened the perception of the value of a negotiated contract between an employer and its employees, even if the employer is a governmental agency.

The strike put a face on public workers. It helped people see the difference between public workers and the big bureaucratic governments that make people frustrated.

The strike was noted worldwide and received coverage in the media worldwide.* It helped strengthen and improve the perception of public workers, and of unions in general.

The strike showed the public and ourselves who we are and how powerful we are when we stand together.

The strike gave hope and empowerment to other workers who are organized into a Union and to those who are trying to organize.

The 1995 strike made it easier for us to get a decent 1997-99 contract.

Margaret Stephens works for the Department of Motor Vehicles and is a member of OPEU Local 735. She is a steward and a veteran of OPEU's great strike of 1995.

* OPEU's 1995 strike received coverage in several tabloids in Great Britain as well as being nationally recognized.

"Experience told us that militancy in the field was essential to creating movement at the bargaining table."

Alice Dale, OPEU Executive Director and Chief Negotiator

message to state negotiators that we were serious and that our '95 strike showed how far we were willing to go."

Over the next two months state managers witnessed weekly actions in worksites around the state. Unity breaks, button days, impromptu marches on the boss, delivery of petitions to Jon Yunker – all played a part in firing up a membership tired of DAS stalling them and in raising the temperature

for managers in every agency. The heat that was soon transferred to DAS negotiators.

That did not mean that bargaining became easy during the final stages. Even at the eleventh hour DAS continued to push a list of takebacks that represented a deal breaker. In the end, however, it was DAS that blinked first, recognizing the determination of OPEU members to carry the fight to the next level of escalation, if necessary.

Winning that way – through worksite action – means OPEU can add another level to the foundation members are building for real worker power in every worksite – inside and outside the public sector.

Contract Fight '97 has clearly sent once again the message that "when you take one of us on, you take all of us on." It's a message that state managers will remember when we come to the table again in 1999.