

Linn County Scapegoats Union for Layoffs

Two months ago OPEU members led the campaign to pass the Linn County Sheriff's Levy – a measure aimed at stopping drastic cutbacks in the sheriff's office, the district attorney's office and the Juvenile Department. OPEU members of Local 390 worked closely with other OPEU members and staff to coordinate one of the few successful levy efforts in post-Measure 50 Oregon. When the votes were counted on election day and the levy clearly had passed, many in Linn County government expressed their appreciation for the efforts made by OPEU and acknowledged that the Union was critical to this success.

Those achievements, however, were quickly forgotten. When Local 390 members voted to exercise their contract right to a COLA, Linn County officials began acting like the Union had betrayed them.

The Linn County Sheriff and some county commissioners indicated publicly that the Union's request to implement their raise was jeopardizing other workers as well as county programs.

But as OPEU Local 390 President Bessie Reynolds pointed out in her letter to the Albany

Democrat Herald, the problem is, in part, caused by the county assuming that OPEU members would be willing to forego their raises. The issue, however, goes beyond that. OPEU members spent hours reviewing the county budget before casting their vote for a raise. What they found was \$500,000 in the budget for remodeling and another \$270,000 for temporary help. These dollars, OPEU leaders insist, could easily be used to stop the layoff of 12 people. The discovery of 11 new/proposed positions in the budget only underscores the availability of funds.

OPEU members are successfully reaching out to the community to mend the rift caused by a few public officials. In a recent editorial board visit with the Albany *Democrat-Herald*, editor Hasso Hering agreed that the paper's representation of the story had been unnecessarily divisive. Some on the county commission have also backed off scapegoating the Union for the funding crunch.

As Measure 47/50 plays out around the state, Union-government cooperation of the type that happened in Linn County is essential to preserve basic services and living wage jobs for communities.



What do we want? How do we achieve it? These questions are universal, but the answers aren't.

As professionals working in a complex system, it's difficult to arrive at answers to our daily frustrations. OPEU can help, but first you have to "ask the questions."

Our Union doesn't know what all the questions are, but we want to help. To do that, however, we need every professionals' help.

We want professionals in our Union to come to a Professional Employees Council meeting so we can organize around these important questions and answers.

Here are just a few questions of concern we need to ask:

- ◆ Comp Time only – no overtime cash compensation?

- ◆ Why should we pay for the license requirement?

- ◆ Is training an extra, not a right anymore?

- ◆ Does your employer help with your workload increases?

- ◆ Are you getting pay that is comparable to others in your field in the private sector?

Please get involved in OPEU's Professional Employees Council. We encourage you to attend Council meetings to discuss these and other important issues.

Our Union's program reflects member needs but we need to get our Union's issues on the table.

State Bargaining Brings Review of Licensure Issues for Professionals

An agreement was reached during this last bargaining campaign addressing licensure issues that the Professional Employees Council brought to the Central Table. This agreement establishes a joint Labor/Management work group to review agency licensure procedures for the next round of bargaining. Many employees are required to obtain specific licenses to maintain certification in their field. The work group would also analyze budget impacts relating to licensure and certification.

The Professional Employees Council is in the process of filling our positions on this Labor/Management committee and inviting anyone who would like to partici-

pate in this committee to submit your names to Jackie Pierce. We would like to see representation from differing occupations requiring licensure.

Please share any licensure requirements, agency practices you have experienced or whether your agency routinely offers and funds licensure renewals or ongoing educational opportunities. This information can also be forwarded to Jackie Pierce.

Jackie Pierce
1991 West Port Ct. NW
Salem, Oregon 97304
Home tel: 503-362-5524
Work tel: 503-945-9957

PERS Headquarters Moves to New Site

The Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) relocated its headquarters at the beginning of June, moving from its downtown Portland location to Tigard. The street address, mailing address and telephone numbers for the new facility are as follows:

Street Address:	11410 SW 68th Parkway, Tigard
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 23700, Tigard, OR 97281
Main PERS Number:	598-PERS (598-7377)
InfoLine:	603-7600
Member Counseling:	603-7777
Personnel:	603-7794
TTY:	603-7766
General Fax:	598-0561
Director's Fax:	598-1218
Personnel Fax:	598-0262

PERS business hours are from 8 A. M. to 5 P.M. Monday through Friday, except holidays. Visitor and handicap parking are available.

So much for the golden rule... Medford, Oregon's Postmaster didn't appreciate a revision to the list of New Year's resolutions he had posted. He blamed a union official for adding a fourth item to a list that urged workers to get the mail out on time. The fourth item read "Treat others as you want to be treated." APWU reports the postmaster erased the item from the list. (Labor Notes 6/97)