

# Understanding of economic issues goal of Portland teacher's convention

By Jack Zimmerman

Oregon played host to a unique group of educators last week when up to 600 visitors from 49 states gathered for their annual meeting in Portland.

What makes this group so special is the fact that for the most part they were teachers

who teach teachers. And enhancing the uniqueness of this particular segment of the educational community is its

mission—to improve economic understanding. Economics is often referred to as the "dismal science" and

economists are often chided for their inability to achieve consensus on specific issues. But there was nothing dismal about the four-day meeting in Portland and all delegates were in perfect agreement regarding their purpose.

Those delegates represent

the national Joint Council on Economic Education, an independent, nonprofit nonpartisan organization, incorporated in 1948 to encourage, improve, coordinate and service the economic education movement. Its trustees represent all sectors of the economy

and financial support comes from foundations, business, organized labor, farm groups and interested individuals.

The Joint Council's principal medium for expanding and improving economic education is a network of 49 state and six regional affiliated

councils and 172 Centers for Economic Education on college and university campuses.

Oregon has long been active in the Joint Council's activities and its affiliated Oregon Council on Economic Education is headquartered at Portland State University.

The Oregon Council supports three Centers for Economic Education; one at PSU, another at Oregon State University at Corvallis and a third at Oregon College of Education in Monmouth. Each has its own fulltime director, who is charged with the responsibility of providing economic education council, instruction and materials for teachers at all grade levels and for the general public.

Primarily the meeting in Portland provided an opportunity for staffs of all affiliated Councils to exchange ideas to learn from each other the various techniques being used to help teachers explain economics to pupils and students ranging from kindergarten through college.

A highlight was a preview showing of 15 20-minute television film programs produced by the Agency for Instructional Television through a consortium that involved 46 states and four Canadian Provinces. Oregon participated in the consortium and the State Department of Education and OCEE have cooperated to make it available in our public schools this year.

Workshops already have been conducted by OCEE for Oregon teachers and the series is being aired for 9, 10 and 11-year-olds. Themes of the series include such economic concepts as choice (scarcity and opportunity cost), personal decision making, trade offs, increasing productivity, voluntary exchange, buyers and market demand, sellers and market supply, market prices, interdependence of the market system and market intervention.

Title of the series is "Trade-offs" and it may be in use in your particular school district right now. It, like the general purpose of the Joint Council, is designed to help people better understand their individual roles in a changing economic environment; to think through economic problems to reach logical conclusions, and to be aware of costs and benefits involved in economic decision-making.

Michael A. MacDowell, president of JCEE from New York, succinctly explained the fervor with which economics educators approach their task by stating:

"The economic understanding of every citizen determines how he votes on economic issues and how he handles his own and his family's economic affairs.

"Objective tests show that only a small portion of high school and college graduates—the potential decision-makers of the nation—have an elementary knowledge of economic concepts and reasoning."

He said that inadequate economic education is a serious problem because a sound economic climate—which so vitally effects management, labor, the aged, the ill, minorities, stockholders, farmers and every other segment of society—depends on the economic literacy of the voter.

"Economic understanding is essential," MacDowell concluded, "if we are to meet our responsibilities as citizens and participants in abasically free enterprise economy."

## Salem Scene

An exclusive to Oregon's weekly newspapers

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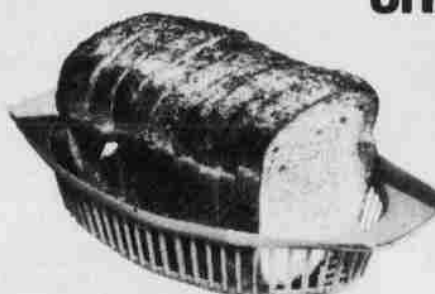


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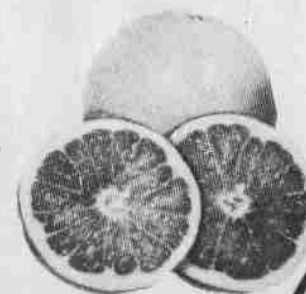


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#### Harvest dance

slated for

Dayville

A Harvest Masquerade Dance will be held Oct. 21 from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Dayville Community Hall, preceded by a community potluck dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. Music will be furnished by the High Mountain Ramblers of Portland, featuring traditional and contemporary sounds.

