As one of a handful of men from Liberal Arts who formed a chapter of the American Federation of Teachers at OSU in 1967, I have followed with interest and amusement the recent palaver about collective bargaining. When we formed AFT, we received considerable vituperation from some of those who have most recently joined the cry for collective bargaining.

In those earlier days these critics hollered that AFT was a divisive force because it refused to accept that administrators and faculty were cozy colleagues working for the same ends. AFT's position was, and is, that administrators work for their own power, prestige, and salary increases and they will sell out the faculty to achieve them.

With the ascension of MacVicar, the validity of AFT's position has become increasing evident. In a variety of ways he has demonstrated both by acts and by words that he is working for the bosses above who hold him responsible, and he in turn is the boss who holds the minor foremen--deans and chairmen--responsible. They are his men, working for him, not for the faculty.

I appreciate the honesty of the man in making that position clear. He did so the first time he met with the Liberal Arts faculty and told us he would not tolerate our system of electing chairmen. He might, he said, go so far as to permit some secret consultations, but he would not allow any public voting because the faculty might choose someone who would not do his bidding and he would have to veto the choice.

One small group of sycophants, singing a tune of economics, chorused the superior wisdom of MacVicar. Although they did not represent the majority, the Liberal Arts faculty--the torch-bearers of Thoreau, Jefferson, Veblen, Socrates, and Christ--did not have the guts to refuse. So today we have secret consultations followed by a preferential vote, the results of which are never reported to the voters. In short, we can all prefer Moe, Joe, and never know.

Now that the message of just who it is the administrators work for has gotten through to a number of faculty who refused to believe it seven years ago, we hear a cry for collective bargaining. Furthermore, we receive a clarion call to rally
around the white knight who will carry our banner into battle—none other than OSEA, some of whose illustrious leaders deplored the "unionism" and "unprofessionalism" of AFT back in 1967.

Before I join this latecomer on the field of battle, I want to know what weapons it is prepared to use. Talk? Even the students don't listen to most of us. Political clout? A total of 7,000 or fewer faculty throughout all of Oregon? Come now! The combined clout of OSEA? Maybe, but will the faculty really benefit from joining its interests with those of other state employees? I can't forget that as a consequence of being thrown into a state-wide employee group I now pay, in addition to the state contribution, twice as much as I did before for practically the same medical coverage.

Besides, labor history seems to show that numbers alone are not effective. The numbers must be matched by weapons and guts. Will OSEA use the weapon found effective by auto workers, truck drivers, teamsters, aerospace workers, farmers, housewives, and filling station operators? The STRIKE! And the threat of STRIKE! When faculty requests are ignored by the bosses will OSEA call us to strike? And if it does, will we have the guts to answer the call?

Tell me no tales about public employees being barred from striking by state law. Public school teachers in the past ten years have defied such unequal laws. Their leaders have been beaten, arrested, jailed, and fined. But they have continued to win contract after contract improving the lot of teachers and students alike. These successes were not won through the namby-pamby efforts of the old National Education Association, but through the militancy, be it good or bad, of the American Federation of Teachers. Its thrust has been so strong over the past few years that even the NEA has now become as militant or, in some instances, more militant in order to revitalize its sagging organization.

This letter is not, however, a plea for you to join AFT. Our local chapter is presently inactive. Nor is it a plea not to join OSEA. It is simply to suggest that before voting for collective bargaining or choosing OSEA as your bargaining agent, you ask yourself what weapons you expect OSEA to exercise in your behalf and what weapons you are prepared to exercise in your own behalf. If neither OSEA nor you are willing, if necessary, to use the STRIKE as a weapon against the bosses, then I suggest both of you will have capitulated before the battle begins.

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