

# In Brief

## Opinions on Harassment Differ Greatly

Opinions surrounding the amount of sexual harassment women undergo in the workplace varied greatly at recent congressional hearings.

Phyllis Schlafly, a leading opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment, told the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee that sexual harassment on the job is "not a problem for the virtuous woman." She added that support for equal job opportunities and equal pay by proponents of equal rights for women is a means to "induce wives and mothers out of the home."

By contrast, a spokesperson for the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission told the committee that sexual harassment "is not a figment of the imagination" and may be more widespread than is reflected in current statistics.

## Natural Gas Deregulation Will Cost You Plenty

While most Americans are still reeling from the skyrocketing price of deregulated gasoline, plans for total decontrol of natural gas may add another huge increase to consumers' energy bills.

Even though nearly 60 percent of the nation's families heat their homes and cook their meals with natural gas, the Reagan Administration has indicated it is committed to total deregulation of natural gas prices. Administration officials say that they will do whatever is necessary to obtain their goal—if not by legislation, then by Presidential writ. This campaign was formally begun by a recent cabinet-level report recommending decontrol of natural gas prices.

Natural gas price controls are scheduled to be phased out by 1985 under present law. Even so, current prices are rising faster than the overall rate of inflation.

These officials say that total

### NATURAL GAS



decontrol is necessary to insure adequate supplies of the fuel for the next 20 years. However, independent analysts say that with the present system of partial price deregulation, natural gas supplies from the adjacent 48 states and some imports from Canada and

Mexico will be enough to meet demand from residential, commercial and some industrial customers until well into the 1990's.

Whatever the supplies of natural gas may be though, deregulation will mean dramatic increases in the price of natural gas to the consumer. Most experts concede total decontrol will mean that consumers who heat their homes with natural gas will watch their gas bills triple by 1984. They point out that families with large homes or with homes in cold climates will see their gas bills increase to \$300-\$400 or more in winter months and that the average gas consuming household will see yearly natural gas bills of \$1,100.

In addition, higher natural gas prices would increase the cost of other consumer items like food, clothes, newspapers and automobiles by an average of another \$400 yearly.

## Dutch Workers Take Over Ford Plant

Workers at a Ford Motor Co. plant in Amsterdam, Netherlands have taken over their factory and have locked out management to protest the company's plan to close the plant.

A workers' committee has assumed control of production, ac-

ording to a report in Labor Notes, and has announced that assembly operations will continue as usual. However, workers say they will keep finished vehicles at the factory.

The occupation has the support of the major labor unions in the Netherlands.

## Subminimum Wage Bills Before Congress

Calling for a "bold experiment" to reduce youth unemployment, Sen. Orin Hatch (R-Utah) has introduced legislation allowing employers to pay 25 percent less than the minimum wage for up to six months for workers under the age of 20.

Hatch's proposed legislation is one of three "youth opportunity" bills currently before Congress. One of the two other pieces of legislation would eliminate the minimum wage for all workers under 18. The other bill would lower the minimum wage for youths by 15 percent.



Hatch has admitted that he is not certain any of these bills will help lower teenage unemployment, which is currently just under 20 percent. Many experts testifying on the "youth opportunity" bills said that they would have little impact on youth unemployment and predicted that suburban white teenagers will fill most new openings created by such legislation.

Many labor leaders believe adults will be displaced by teenagers if any of the bills pass. Nearly 70 percent of those receiving minimum wages are adults and 70 percent of those adults are women.

These bills have also been criticized because they would "pit workers against each other." These critics claim that because little new employment would be created by these bills, employers would benefit from lower wages and increased competition among potential workers for minimum and subminimum wage jobs.

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## Public Employee Representation Over 48 Percent

Nearly half the nation's full-time state and local government employes were represented by unions or employe associations in 1979, according to a report released at the end of March by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Of some 10.2-million full-time state and local government workers, 4.9-million or 48 percent were members of labor organizations in 1979, an increase of two percent over 1978, according to the report. Workers were covered by a total of 32,528 collective bargaining agreements during the year.

A majority of state and local government employes were represented by labor organizations in 15 states and the District of Columbia. New York was the most heavily organized, with 77.4 percent of its public employes covered by contracts. Following in percentage of union representation were Rhode Island (73 percent), Connecticut and the District of Columbia (72.2 percent), Massachusetts (69 percent), Hawaii (68.2 percent) and Alaska and Pennsylvania (60.4 percent).

Independent school districts were the most heavily organized (60 percent), while county governments were the least organized (34 percent).

Figures on union representation in Oregon were not available.