

NOW envisions ERA passage

CHICAGO (UPI) — Enough Illinois legislators support the Equal Rights Amendment to assure its ratification, leaders of the local National Organization for Women say.

The key to getting them to vote, they said Monday, will be pressure on party leaders.

"If we had a vote next week, we are very confident the ERA would pass," Ann Ladky, chairwoman of the local chapter's advisory board, said at a news conference.

Nancy Shier, executive director of Chicago NOW,

said the economic effect of the group's boycott is a major reason for the turnaround.

Chicago NOW Monday released figures indicating the city has lost more than \$171 million in convention revenue because the state has not ratified the ERA.

NOW is encouraging organizations to boycott convention centers in states that have failed to ratify the proposed 27th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The organization also is urging people not to take vacations in such areas.

"Momentum is swinging toward support of ERA," Ms. Shier said. She cited recent public displays of support for the amendment, such as decisions by Mayor Michael Bilandic and Gov. James R. Thompson to join the Committee for Equal Rights, and vocal support of the issue by labor organizations such as the AFL-CIO and United Auto Workers.

"It's also an election year for a lot of top state officials," Shier said, adding that incumbents may want to go on record

supporting the amendment.

Although the resolution to adopt the amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been approved by a majority of both Illinois House and Senate members, never have both chambers approved the resolution by the necessary three-fifths majority in the same year.

The House has postponed consideration on the resolution. However, Shier said she expects the vote to be held within the next three weeks.

Regarding the House

vote, Shier said, "I think it will be close. We're just looking for the 107 votes we need."

The resolution should be introduced in the Senate by June, Shier said.

The ERA must be ratified by three more states by next March to take effect, unless Congress votes to extend the deadline.

Shier said NOW is concentrating its efforts on support by party leaders, rather than party members.

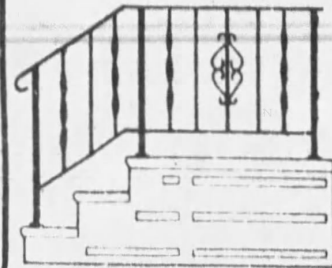
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Byrne retreats on vow; appeals sex bias case

By David Axelrod

RETREATING FROM a campaign pledge, Mayor Byrne said Thursday that Chicago may continue with a partial appeal of a controversial sex discrimination judgment entered against it in Federal District Court last November.

Mrs. Byrne said the city may proceed with an appeal in "some of the cases" concerning female employees who were found by a federal judge to be earning less money than their male counterparts.

Judge John F. Grady ruled Nov. 17 that the city owed \$3 million in back salary and penalties to 225 women involved in a class action suit by the National Organization for Women.

The Bilandic administration filed an appeal Dec. 15, and federal officials have threatened to withhold \$70 million in revenue sharing funds as a result of the court decision.

REPRESENTED in the suit were 175 clerks from the city's Department of Water and Sewers and 50 janitors for the city whom the judge ruled had been underpaid since 1972.

The clerks were found to be earning as much as \$7,000 less than men doing the same work, and the janitors were found to be receiving \$1,000 less than men in virtually identical positions.

"Those women were doing the right thing by filing suit in the first place, so I wouldn't go on with an appeal," said

the mayor March 25 after being urged by her liberal supporters to take a position against the appeal.

But the city filed a brief in support of its position April 19—three days after the mayor's inauguration—and Mrs. Byrne indicated after a Southwest Side appearance Thursday that she has not called a blanket halt to the appeal.

"IT'S A NORMAL practice to continue to file the papers for an appeal as you work out a settlement," said the mayor. "We are trying to do that now, and in some cases we may go ahead [with the appeals]."

"We are extremely upset and disappointed," said Nancy Shier, executive director of the NOW chapter here. "And as for the city looking for a settlement, we have heard not one word from them."

ON ANOTHER MATTER, the mayor defended the qualifications of her nominee to become executive director of the Port District of Chicago. Her choice of Martin McLaughlin, a former assistant Illinois secretary of state, came under criticism Wednesday because he lacks experience in shipping.

"He is an excellent administrator," the mayor said of McLaughlin, a political protege of Michael Howlett, the former secretary of state. "When he was running Mike Howlett's Chicago office, everybody got their license plates on time."

Charges of sexual harassment drop, but the problem lingers

By Kathy Best

Of The Southern Illinoisan

SPRINGFIELD —Three years ago, Gov. James R. Thompson issued an edict barring sexual harassment in state government offices.

This year, not one state worker filed harassment charges with the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

Does that mean the problem is solved?

No, say women's groups and union officials.

Nancy Shier of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees says Thompson's action "established some avenues to deal with the problem." But it was not enough, she adds.

Men and women continue to be propositioned, groped and leered at on the job. Some even lose their positions by refusing to yield to amorous overtures.

However, the options open to mentally and physically abused workers are increasing. More people are willing to listen to their complaints these days, observers say. And the listening ear is increasingly sympathetic.

"In cases where I've been involved with my members, I've been pleased with the response," says Judy Wienman, AFL-CIO representative for contract workers with the secretary of state's office and the human rights department.

"It's been sensitive. There were no chuckles or snide remarks."

She attributes that attitude to training programs designed to sensitize management-level state employees to the hazards of sexual harassment.

The Department of Human Rights was directed in the governor's order to teach "the identification of sexual harassment and the procedures for investigation and resolution of complaints" to workers in almost all state agencies.

"But I also think it's because it's a ticklish issue," Ms. Wienman adds. "If they did handle it badly, they would look so bad."

Ms. Shier agrees Thompson's or-

State

der "certainly didn't abolish the problem."

AFSCME trains its staff members on techniques to deal with the issue — an education that includes informal techniques of settling complaints.

Jacqueline McKissack, spokeswoman for the human rights department, credits such union programs and the department's own training efforts with decreasing the number of sexual harassment complaints that reach the department.

"We trained 1,500 supervisors last year alone," she says. And with better "front-line efforts," fewer cases need be filed with the department.

But even Ms. McKissack was surprised when a count of state employee sexual harassment charges filed since January 1980 turned up only eight.

Proving a case of harassment is difficult. It usually occurs behind closed doors, propositions are seldom put in writing and workers are often afraid or embarrassed.

And for a charge to qualify as a human rights violation, Ms. McKissack said the harassment must be "continuing" and the worker's job, wages or promotion must be either directly or indirectly threatened.

When combined, those strictures encourage complaint resolution before a formal charge reaches the human rights department.

She says early resolutions can range from a harasser agreeing to be transferred, to a disciplinary write-up.

Although the outlook may be brighter today for harassed state workers, the same cannot be said for those in the private sector.

The Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women reports requests for help from sexually harassed women continue to outnumber calls from victims of rape or economic discrimination.

City/suburbs

Prison crowding woes studied

Legislature's inaction leaves state 'no options'

By Daniel Egler

Chicago Tribune

SPRINGFIELD—To Michael Mahoney, the housing of 65 inmates in a chapel and gymnasium in two Downstate prisons is "crazy, ridiculous."

But Mahoney, executive director of the John Howard Association, a prison reform group, conceded that the problem of prison overcrowding faced by Michael Lane, state corrections director, is a problem with no plausible and immediate solution.

"Mike Lane has no other option," Mahoney said. "Because the legislature doesn't want to act, he has no options. None."

Using Lane's figures, the prison system is 47 percent over its "design capacity" of 9,872 living spaces. Because of double-celling, the system has a "rated capacity" of 14,445. The department ended last week with 14,535 inmates, an excess of 90.

AND INMATE intake is increasing. Lane said he expects 220 persons to be added to the system's rolls this week, a net increase in population of 100.

But the problem, Mahoney said, is more than just an administrative nightmare for Lane. The overflow of inmates into areas other than secured cells could be the tinder for a major flare-up.

"The chapel may look somewhat innocent," Mahoney said. "But any time you've got a large number of people in areas where they aren't supposed to be you've got to increase the staff to avoid bigger problems.

"You are taxing the resources of

that institution."

Mahoney and Steve Culen, executive director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees [AFSCME], which represents the correctional officers, said they have sensed more tension in the prisons since a ruling by the Illinois Supreme Court on July 12 that prohibited the department from giving early releases to prisoners.

STARTING IN 1980, more than 10,000 inmates were granted early releases—generally 30 to 90 days early, but sometimes up to 9 months.

"It's one of those things that happen when they start crowding too many people into an institution," said Culen, who added that the number of reports of assaults on guards appears to be rising.

Said Nancy Shier, AFSCME's political action director: "Overcrowding does create more tension, more opportunity for violence. And for our people, it became more stressful after the end to early releases because the incentive for good behavior was gone."

Since July, there have been five prison escapes from Illinois prisons, including one from a maximum-security institution.

TWO CIVILIAN employees—one each at Pontiac and Menard—have been killed in the last year in situations where violence would not have been expected. One was a supervisor on a prison farm; the other was a food service worker.

"I don't think you can ignore overcrowding as one of the reasons for those cases, and I don't think the

system has ever had that kind of rash of incidents," Mahoney said.

Lane and James Thieret, warden of Graham Correctional Center, said there have been no additional security problems caused by the 25 inmates sleeping for a week on the chapel floor near Hillsboro.

Other possibilities for easing the overcrowding problem have been closed.

THE TRANSFER of Illinois inmates to out-of-state institutions has been prohibited by a court ruling that Lane, who earlier sent 20 inmates to Nevada, is fighting.

Three county jails have taken some prisoners. But other jails that might be willing to take prisoners lack facilities for recreation and access to television by the inmates, which are required by the state.

Inmates are manufacturing beds for the prisons through a prison industry program, but Lane has no place to put them. Lane said the department had hoped to have beds available at Dixon, a mental health center being converted into a prison, but work was delayed when laborers set up a picket line to protest the use of workers from outside the area.

Lane last week spent two days exploring sites for work camps to take additional overflow of prisoners if the money for them is made available.

Lane said that until the legislature gives the department help, dealing with overcrowding is a "week-to-week decision."

"For a while it looked like the intake was going down, but now it's right back on schedule," he said.

Would determine if sexes paid equally

Panel rejects 'worth' study

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (UPI) — A House panel has rejected a measure that would have created a \$400,000 study to determine if women and men are paid equally for different state jobs involving comparable levels of skill.

Sponsoring Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie, D-Chicago, said she would look for other ways to gain approval of the "comparable worth" study legislation after the House Labor and Commerce Committee Wednesday voted 5-6 to hold the measure in committee.

Ms. Currie called the measure a "modest, reasonable step" to determine if pay inequities

based on sex or race exist between different state job classifications, although the skill levels needed for the jobs may be similar.

"Our interest in doing the study is to find out if there is a pattern of wage disparity between men's and women's jobs involving comparable levels of skill and difficulty," Ms. Currie said. "The point of this bill is to say 'let's see what we'll find.'"

The measure was prompted by a pilot study authorized by the state Commission on the Status of Women that found a 20 percent difference in pay between men and women working in state government, Ms. Currie

said.

In addition, the plan was prompted by a federal court ruling late last year that ordered the state of Washington to pay more than \$800 million in raises and back pay to workers following a study of the comparable worth issue.

Opponents of Ms. Currie's plan argued taxpayers would be paying for a study that could be used against the state in court if pay inequities were found.

"It appears to me this is not so much a study but a witch hunt," said Camille Gibson of the Central Illinois Industrial Association. "The state is apparently expected to pay for the

privilege of being prosecuted in court."

But Ms. Currie said Washington lawmakers ignored the results of their study. An Illinois study would not only determine if pay inequities exist, she said, but would show a court that the state was working to correct any problems.

Proponents, representing state employees' groups and women's organizations, frequently cited studies stating that women are paid 59 cents for every \$1 earned by men.

"The more an occupation is dominated by women, the less it pays," said Nancy Shier of the

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. "The fact that it is dominated by women accounts for the fact that it pays less."

But opponents said such a study would fail to consider such worth factors as the demand for some types of job and what the marketplace will bear for wages.

"I think adoption of comparable worth would be a mistake," said Elizabeth Landis, an economist with a business group called the Ad Hoc Committee on Compensation.

· BRIEFS

From H&R Springfield Bureau
and wire reports

Child advocates push for change

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois provides fragmented, inefficient services to children and families and should create a post under the governor for comprehensive care, a child-advocate told a House task force.

“If the future of Illinois depends on the health of our children, the future does not look promising,” Nancy Shier, project director for Kids’ Public Education & Public Policy Project, said Thursday.

Shier and other children advocates painted a troubling picture of the state of children and families in Illinois during testimony before the House Speaker’s Task Force on Children.

Edgar's proposal for teen moms reaps praise—and a few doubts

By Penny Roberts
and Julie Irwin
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITERS

Politicians and welfare advocates agree the best place for a teenage mother is in school; what they can't agree on is how to get her there.

Gov. Jim Edgar's newest plan—outlined in his State of the State Address last week—would require mothers up to the age of 18 to attend school and earn a high school diploma as a condition of receiving public assistance.

The governor said the state would provide child-care and transportation assistance at a cost of about \$10 million, as well as workshops on parenting and self-esteem and individualized counseling.

Advocates say the Illinois measure could be the first step in breaking the so-called cycle of dependency, encouraging mothers to work toward self-sufficiency.

But others are concerned that needy mothers unable to meet the requirement will be penalized along with their children, making their situation even more arduous. Several said affordable child-care options in areas like Chicago are limited and must be improved if the program is to succeed.

Teenagers gave birth to 24,601

babies in the state in 1992—more than 80 percent of them to single mothers, according to the Illinois Department of Health, accounting for nearly 13 percent of all births in the state. In Chicago, there were 11,110 births to teenage mothers; in suburban Cook County, 2,627.

Of the state total, about 9,500 were recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, accounting for roughly 4 percent of the total caseload.

Edgar's proposal comes as the federal government and many states are pushing welfare reforms, many of which target teen mothers.

President Clinton's welfare reform task force reportedly is considering requiring teenagers with children to live in their parents' homes to be eligible for welfare benefits. And Wisconsin requires children receiving aid to stay in school, or their families will be removed from welfare rolls.

Supporters of the proposal point to the rising cost of supporting families headed by teenagers as proof of the need for reform. In 1991, the federal government spent an estimated \$29 billion on such families, up from \$25 billion in 1990, according to the Center for Population Options, an advocacy and research organization.

"This sends a message to teen

mothers about the importance of completing their high school education," said Dean Schott, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Public Aid. "Studies show that mothers with a diploma or GED or job training have a much better chance of finding employment. And a job is key to breaking what can be an intergenerational dependence on assistance."

The Public Welfare Coalition, a Springfield-based advocacy organization for public-aid recipients, supports the governor's plan to provide transportation and child-care for teen mothers, but believes they should use incentives, rather than sanctions, to encourage education.

"[This] may punish young mothers on public aid in high school who drop out," said Doug Dobbmeyer, executive director of the coalition.

"We strongly support educational efforts for public-aid participants, but do not support sanction-driven programs that potentially harm a baby because of the intentional or unintentional action of the mother."

Nancy Shier, a project director with Ounce of Prevention Fund, said that unless support measures are included and child-care offerings are improved, such a program won't work.

"Any plan is going to have to have a lot of different com-



Tribune photo by Milbert Orlando Brown

A teenage mom holds her son aloft at Orr Community Academy, the only high school in the city to offer day care on campus.

ponents, like counseling, parenting training and case management," she said. "And we must expand the supply of quality child-care to do the kind of pro-

gram he's talking about."

Day care is perhaps the biggest obstacle to returning to school, say the teen mothers who would be affected by the program.