



# March on capital pressures Congress to extend ERA

**We can become radical if they force us. The legislators will find civil disobedience in every state in the country.**

**By Carolyn Projansky and Fern Schumer**

WASHINGTON

*As long as you believe that this is the beginning, then it is.*

—Eleanor Smeal, President, National Organization for Women  
July 9, 1978

**I**T WAS A HOT, MUGGY SUNDAY AFTERNOON as 100,000 white-costumed marchers, bearing banners of purple and gold, formed battalions on the grassy mall below the Capitol. The Equal Rights Amendment was at stake and march organizers—mostly National Organization for Women (NOW) volunteers—had brought out the troops for an impressive, well-staged show of strength.

After six years the battlefield for the ERA is again Washington—and the stakes are high. The fate of the amendment may be determined in the next few weeks as Congress considers a bill to extend the ratification deadline another seven years. The extension amendment is pending in the House Judiciary Committee where a close vote is expected soon.

Widespread fear that the simple, 24-word proclamation will die in the states without congressional action on the extension finally galvanized feminists into launching a massive, organized demonstration. Previously, many had given only lukewarm support for ERA, preferring to be active in more controversial causes.

Although NOW organizers and other feminist leaders of Sunday's march told the crowd it was the beginning, not the end, of a movement, the ERA debate has been kicking around recalcitrant state legislatures for years. So far, 35 states have ratified, three short of the 38 necessary for its adoption. Three states have not only had time to ratify, but also time to rescind that ratification. And now the deadline is less than one year away.

Many present on the mall last weekend conceded that without an extension, ERA's prospects are bleak. That danger attracted many to Washington for the extension march.

Said Sen. Charles Percy (R-IL) to a group of ERA lobbyists who came to his office after the march, "Without a deadline, many of you wouldn't be here."

Norma Mendoza of Granite City, Ill., agreed. "It's only when you have the threat of something being taken away that you become concerned. I'm the kind of person who works better with a deadline, and I think a lot of people are the same way." That's the argument for a deadline—a new deadline that gives them sufficient time to garner three more states.

In support of more time, tens of thousands of women and men gathered in the searing heat of Washington for the event. Final newspaper estimates ranged from 40,000 to 100,000. Before the march NOW organizers had hoped 25,000 to 30,000 supporters would appear. NOW president Ellie Smeal had told a press conference two days before the march that it would only be a representational showing, not a mass, "peoples" demonstration. Smeal defended her low expectations, adding that with only two months for preparation a turnout of 25,000 would spell success.

The "processional," as Smeal termed it, included members of more than 325 organizations ranging from "Mormons for ERA" to the National Gay Task Force. A large contingent of "Individuals for ERA" were also represented in the well-orchestrated display. Park police, barely visible during the day, remarked that this was the most orderly demonstration they had ever witnessed.

## Compelling cause.

The surprising diversity of groups, and the sheer numbers who poured out to march illustrate that the struggle to ratify the ERA is now, more than ever, a compelling cause. Passage of the amendment, though its impact on social change is uncertain, is a test of strength of the women's movement as a whole.

Many marchers said they had never before come out for ERA or for any other feminist cause. But people from divergent political perspectives are beginning to recognize that their own movements can benefit from passage of the ERA.

Said John Haer, Pittsburgh member of the democratic socialist New American Movement: "We understand that the

feminist movement is not a socialist movement, but the goals of the feminist movement need to be a part of the goals of the socialist movement. You can't ignore it or you won't build an effective socialist movement."

Others came to the march, not to espouse a cause, but to pay homage to yet another chapter of feminists' arduous history.

"I'm glad I lived to see this day," 81-year-old Gertrude Davenport of New York City said. "I remember when women fought to vote in 1912. I wasn't old enough to march, but I watched the parades go by. The men were heckling the women and telling them to go home and wash their dishes."

Now, almost 70 years later, there were no hecklers. A significant number of men marched alongside distinguished feminists in support of women's rights. Several marchers held up signs proclaiming: "Men of quality are not threatened by women of equality."

The march climaxed in a rally on the Capitol steps. Energy ran high in the crowd as several prominent speakers drove home the message of the day.

"We've had it and we're not messing around anymore," said presidential assistant Midge Costanza to boisterous cheers and applause.

## Easy rhetoric.

Gloria Steinem, long-time feminist spokeswoman and *Ms.* magazine editor, then spoke in sobering, but more political terms.

"The lawful and peaceful stage of our

revolution may be over," Steinem said. "It's up to the legislators. We can become radical, if they force us. If they continue to interfere with the ratification of the ERA they will find every form of civil disobedience possible in every state in the country."

Such exhortations may roll easily off the tongue of a seasoned political veteran like Steinem, or Bella Abzug, or Barbara Mikulski, who also spoke to the gathering in powerful terms. And radical rhetoric can be casually applauded by housewives and steelworkers alike on a sunny Sunday afternoon in the park. But it is not so easy to transform that rhetoric into political action. This is the '70s, not the '60s, and Church Women United is not the SDS.

How many among the 100,000 who marched on the Capitol can be mobilized for the continuing campaign next month, or next year, as the fight drags on and the excitement of this "new beginning" is gone? Though they lay their bodies across legislators' doorsteps, how will they deliver those few crucial votes in southern states where the Equal Rights Amendment has met with stubborn resistance?

The turnout for NOW's march indicates that the potential political muscle is there, if only it can be harnessed. But the power of a political movement is not only a function of the crowd count. The stirring speeches and cheers on July 9 may be the beginning of such a movement. The popular basis seems to be there.

*Carolyn Projansky and Fern Schumer are writers in Washington.*

## Rally commemorates 1913 suffrage march

In 1913 eight thousand suffragettes marched here in Washington pressing Congress to support the right to vote. The women, wearing white gowns, were set upon by men lining the parade route. The men spit on them, heaped abuse and refuse on them, slapped them, assaulted them, burned them with cigar butts, and finally broke up the march as city police looked on smilingly.

Sixty-five years later over 100,000 marchers, mostly women, many clad in white, thronged through the nation's capital to urge Congress to extend the March 1979 deadline for ratification of the ERA. As demonstrators passed the National Archives Building, where the earlier march ended in disarray, a single bell rang solemnly to commemorate the earlier movement. But as the crowd surged by their mood was optimistic, not gloomy. Speakers at the rally on the west steps of the Capitol evoked the spirit of earlier suffragettes and spoke with determination.

Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW, told the impressive turnout, "You are

the message.... We're telling Congress that we want the ERA and we want it now!"

Margaret Costanza, aide to President Carter, said, "There is no time limit on human rights. There is no time limit on the full protection of the Constitution. There is no time limit on this administration's support for the ERA."

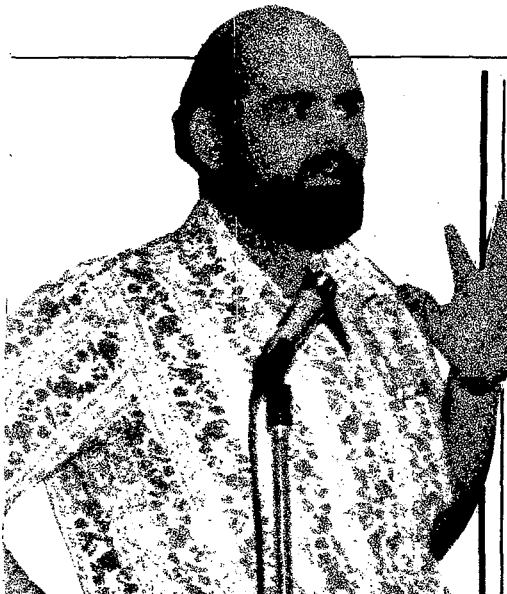
Unlike the march in 1913, opposition to women's rights was conspicuously absent. Phyllis Schlafly's claim that, "...the federal government is using our tax money to ram an amendment down people's throats that they don't want..." evaporated as the day wore on, the pro-ERA crowd swelled, and the anti-ERA prayer meeting at the Lincoln Memorial shriveled by comparison: only 200 people showed up.

Costanza chided Schlafly in absentia: "Our message to you, Phyllis Schlafly, is eat your heart out." And Betty Freidan exulted, "It's an incredible turnout. I don't see now anyone can say there wasn't support for the ERA with this crowd showing up in this weather."



# IN THE NATION

## LABOR



Pete Camarata

### Teamster dissidents go for top offices

By Dan Marshall

**P**ETE CAMARATA, DISSIDENT leader of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), has embarked on a long uphill climb that may help to democratize the nation's largest union. On June 23 Camarata announced his candidacy for Teamster president and challenged incumbent Frank Fitzsimmons to a "debate on the issues" and a union-wide referendum vote.

Jack Vlahovik, former top officer of the Teamsters' largest Canadian local, simultaneously declared his candidacy for Secretary-Treasurer on the TDU slate.

Although Camarata and Vlahovik have very little chance to win—top Teamster officers are "elected" at international conventions whose delegates are overwhelmingly stacked with union business agents and local leaders who have sworn allegiance to the union hierarchy—their campaign may crystallize mounting resentment towards the union's highly-paid, crime-connected international officers.

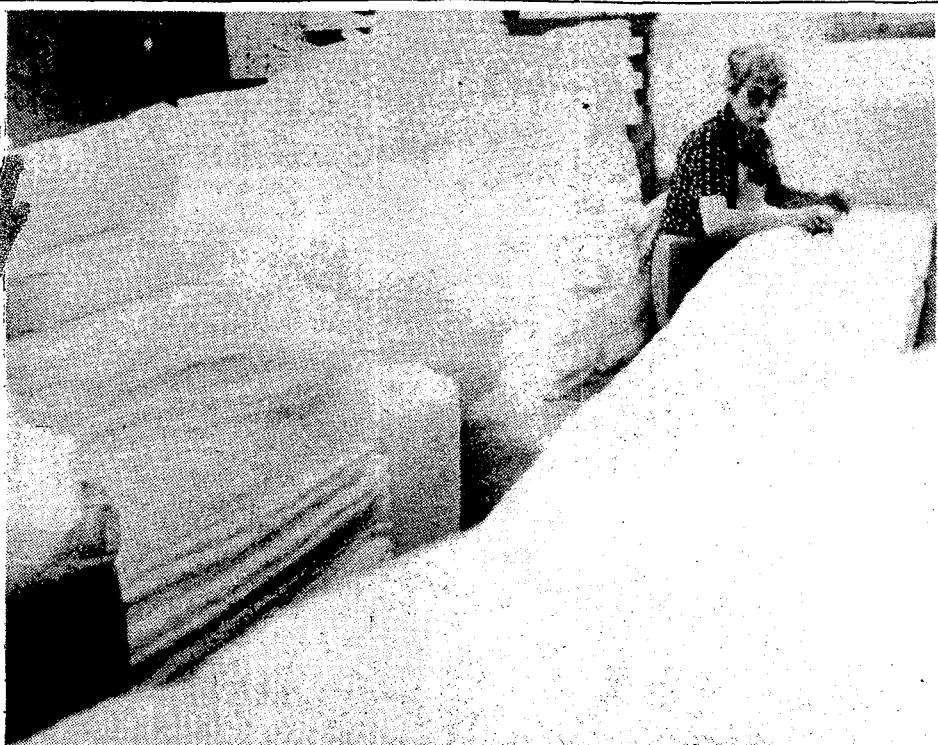
A significant aspect of their efforts is the attempt by the TDU to obtain "equal access" to the *International Teamster*, the union's national publication, which currently is little more than a glossy public relations sheet that Fitzsimmons and other top-level officers use to espouse their accomplishments and attack intra-union critics.

"Under the Landrum-Griffin Act, a union is not supposed to favor incumbent candidates by providing them with union funds to win re-elections," says TDU attorney Craig Livingston. "But if union publications, which are paid for with union funds, are used to promote the candidacies of certain officers, then the rank and file have the right to present another viewpoint."

The union's Executive Board will consider the equal access question at a meeting later this month. If the TDU's request is rejected, as observers are certain it will be, TDU lawyers will file a suit in federal court to open up the publication to Camarata's campaign material. (To press their case, the TDU has retained the same law firm that represented Jimmy Hoffa in his unsuccessful attempt to lift legal restrictions on holding union office.)

Camarata launched his campaign three years before the next convention because "we are going to use that time to build a movement of the rank and file, and, increasingly, of local officers who are willing to speak out," he says.

Because delegates to that convention



### Unions take on southern furniture

*The union goal is the same as at J.P. Stevens in the textile industry—unionize one company and move on to the rest.*

Tony Soluri

By Bob McMahon

WEST JEFFERSON, N.C.

**A**BOUT 15 MINUTES AFTER the ballot counting began union organizer Ted Davis flashed a victory sign and a big smile. "This will make North Carolina furniture workers take notice," he said.

The United Furniture Workers had just won a representation election at Thomasville Furniture Industry's Phenix Chair plant, 267-223.

The union win in the June 23 election at Phenix Chair was an important first victory in a new campaign by the AFL-CIO to organize Southern labor. The United Furniture Workers, membership 26,000, joined by the 45,000-member Upholsterers International Union and the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department was making an effort to crack the 99 percent non-union North Carolina furniture industry.

According to United Furniture Workers president Carl Scarborough, North Carolina is the largest furniture-producing state in the country, with 88,000 of an estimated 300,000 workers in the industry. It is also the least unionized.

After a decision last year to launch a cooperative organizing drive in furniture, Thomasville Furniture Industries (TFI), a subsidiary of Armstrong Cork Co., was chosen in March as the initial target when strong support for the union became apparent at its Phenix chair operation.

"Our goal is the same as it is with J.P. Stevens," said Harold McIver, organizing director of the Industrial Union Department, when the campaign was announced. "Organize a major company in the furniture industry, negotiate a contract, and move on to other companies."

McIver would not say after the Phenix Chair vote where among TFI's 21 plants and 5,800 employees the union would next seek a vote. He did note that organizing was "going well" among 13 plants in the Thomasville area.

Tom Finch, TFI president released a statement after the Phenix victory, say-

ing, "If organizers from the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department pursue their announced intention to unionize other Thomasville Furniture Industries plants, we will strongly resist their efforts and we will use every legal means to do so."

The Furniture Workers had represented TFI employees once before in plants in the Thomasville area—from 1946 to 1952. After a three-month strike in 1952, which saw numerous arrests of strikers by police—together with bombardment of picket lines by scabs inside the plant—the union was broken.

Winning the first election was essential for the credibility of the organizing drive at TFI. A separate organizing effort, by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, had increased skepticism that the unions could make a dent in the North Carolina furniture industry.

In a year of effort the Carpenters filed for elections in 15 plants, only to withdraw the petition in 12 cases. In the three elections that were held, the union lost heavily.

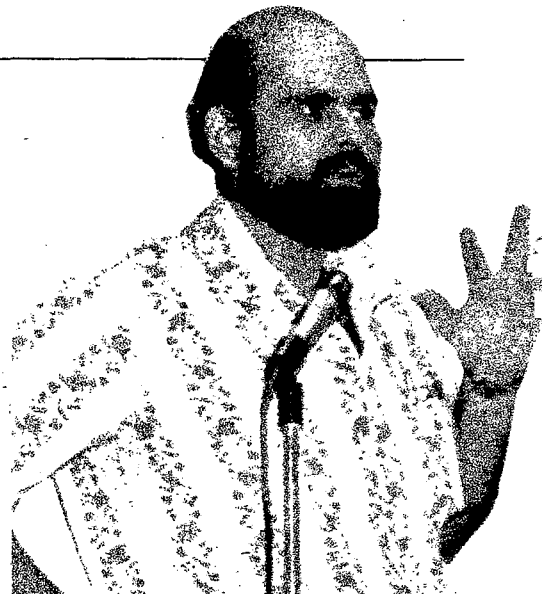
The AFL-CIO organizers found out about the strong interest in a union at Phenix Chair almost by accident. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) had been seeking to organize the Jefferson Apparel plant in the same county. Virginia Diamond, an ILGWU organizer, decided to try dropping off some union cards in the Phenix Chair plant.

The response, she says, "was overwhelming." She scheduled a meeting, hoping 30 workers might come; about 150 overflowed the room.

Wages were a key issue at Phenix Chair. The union discovered that workers at the Phenix plant in West Jefferson were being paid an average of \$3.53 an hour. The union estimates workers in the 13 Thomasville plants are paid \$3.83 an hour. (TFI claims its workers are paid "on the average" more than \$4 an hour. The average industrial wage in North Carolina is \$4.34 an hour, while the national average is \$5.71 an hour.)

Robert Holladay, a TFI vice president, conceded West Jefferson workers were

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In addition to Camarata's candidacy TDU hopes to run candidates for local offices around the country in order to build support.

will consist largely of officers elected over the next three years the TDU also intends to field candidates around the country in the hopes of cohering an opposition bloc that will back Camarata. (Teamster dissidents in TDU and PROD, another rank and file reform group, have met some success at winning leadership positions on the local level. In Wisconsin Local 30, for example, TDU-backed candidates swept an election earlier this year.)

To counter consistently negative publicity and this growing rank and file movement, the Teamster hierarchy has initiated a new "open communications" policy towards the press. In June the international added two public relations men to its Washington staff. On the same day as Camarata's announcement and a 150-person picket line in front of the international headquarters Fitzsimmons held his first press conference in almost three years.

Calling the union "the greatest organization God has ever created," Fitzsimmons defended the Teamsters from widely-publicized charges of corruption, nepotism, use of union dues for personal purposes and connections with organized crime figures. The government has investigated the union "from top to bottom, from hell to high water," Fitzsimmons said. If there is any evidence of wrongdoing, he challenged, let the Justice Department "go ahead and prosecute."

The next major test of Fitzsimmons' leadership will be the renegotiation of the National Master Freight Agreement, which covers over 450,000 over-the-road drivers. As negotiations on the contract, which expires on April 1, 1979, commence in several months, Fitzsimmons will come under a variety of conflicting pressures that will likely weaken his hold on the union's top office.

President Carter is demanding that trucking union/industry bargainers restrain wage increases in accord with the administration's voluntary anti-inflation program. (At his press conference, Fitzsimmons backed down from an earlier statement, quoted by the *New York Times*, that he would not go to the bargaining table for "anything less" than the 37 percent wage/benefit increase won by the United Mine Workers. He declined to specify the union's opening wage demands.)

Teamster members, meanwhile, are pushing for wage gains high enough to compensate for inflation and for measures to halt deteriorating working conditions. If Fitzsimmons fails to deliver it will strengthen the hands of other top-level officers who are searching for leverage to push him out of office. (ITT, May 17.) ■