FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

RELEASE: January 20, 1984

Equal Pay For Comparable Worth

"Equal Pay for Comparable Worth" has become a new slogan echoing through state legislative debates, Congressional hearings, Federal courts, television talk shows, TV and newspaper advertisements, and politicians' position papers. Since the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, won a $1 Billion lawsuit against the State of Washington in a Comparable Worth case in November 1983, "cost" jitters have been unnerving public and private employers.

The Comparable Worth advocates have developed an ingenious method to force the raising of the pay for traditional women's jobs above the market price. The method consists of (1) persuading (often tricking) the employer to do a "study" or an "evaluation" of all his jobs, (2) hiring "evaluators" who will agree to divorce this evaluation from marketplace factors and instead use a "point system" of job "worth" based on factors which are arbitrarily and subjectively weighted, and then (3) accusing the employer of massive discrimination against women and using the employer's own evaluation as evidence against him.

The methodology of the Comparable Worth process starts with an identification of categories of occupations wherein more than 70% of the jobs are held by one sex or by the other. Occupations are then assigned points according to what the evaluator thinks the occupations are worth.

Once market wages are abandoned as a guide, there is no objective way to determine job worth. The system becomes a subjective assignment of points based on the evaluator's bias about the relative value of education, training, skill, responsibility, and working conditions.

Then comes the essence of Comparable Worth, which is a comparing of the female-predominate occupations with the male-predominate occupations, and the claim of "discrimination" when the female occupations are paid less than men's occupations to which the evaluator has assigned the same number of points (even though they involve entirely different types of work).

When this comparison of occupations allegedly shows that women's jobs are underpaid, which are the men's jobs that are allegedly overpaid? It is clear that the target group which the Comparable Worth advocates believe are overpaid are the blue collar men (who are generally supporting their families). When the Comparable Worth advocates rant and rave about how secretaries, nurses, teachers, and librarians are underpaid, this claim is always in comparison to truck drivers, construction and highway workers, mechanics, maintenance and repair men, and policemen, who are allegedly overpaid.

The immediate goal of Comparable Worth is to compare and equalize these women's jobs with those men's jobs. The Comparable Worth advocates assert that it is unfair that blue-collar men, who may have only a high school education, receive as much pay as a woman who may have a secretarial school or nursing school certificate.

Comparable Worth thus rests ultimately on two direct attacks on the private enterprise system: (1) wage-setting based on the subjective notion of what some outside observer thinks a job is "worth" rather than on the marketplace compromise of what a job is worth both to the employer meeting a payroll and to the employee selling his time and labor, and (2) government wage control by judges and bureaucrats.

The game plan of the Comparable Worth advocates is ambitious. Phase One is to establish the concept for state government employees as a result of lawsuits taken into Federal courts or through bills passed by state legislatures. Phase Two is to catch Federal employees in the Comparable Worth net. Phase Three is a full-scale assault on the private sector. All phases, to some extent, are proceeding concurrently.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which won the $1 Billion lawsuit against the State of Washington in the fall of 1983, issued a press release stating that "the ruling means similar actions can be expected in other state and local governments." Since President Carter appointed 40% of the sitting Federal judges (including the one who handed down the Washington State decision), the Comparable Worth advocates believe they can bring about a massive court-ordered redistribution of wages in our society, and make lots of money for themselves in the process.