P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: July 19

STRAWBERRIES & OSHA

Centralia, Illinois, appropriately situated in the center of that great agricultural state, is famous in the middle west for its strawberries. Located on the Illinois Central Railroad, it was 80 years ago that Centralia strawberry farms began supplying Chicago and the rest of the middle west with that delicious fruit.

Now, at the very time that the price of strawberries has risen to the highest in history, Illinois strawberry farmers are plowing under their plants and planning to discontinue their crop. Next year's strawberry production in Illinois is predicted to be only ten percent of this year's level.

The cause of this impending disappointment to strawberry-lovers is not a plague of insects, a disaster of weather, a failure of soil, or a shortage of labor. The cause is a new plague called OSHA. That is spelled O S H A, and it stands for a Federal bureau called Occupational Safety and Health Act.

What has a Federal bureau got against strawberries? Well, it seems that OSHA sets standards for migratory farm workers' housing, and it has leaked out of the labyrinths of the bureaucracy that, beginning in September, OSHA will enforce rigid housing standards for migratory strawberry workers.

These regulations would require strawberry farmers to provide 100 square feet of living space for each migrant worker, flush toilets and showers in each room, and other amenities. The kind of

(more)

capital investment necessary to provide such improvements cannot be economically justified because the harvest period for Illinois strawberries is only two weeks.

Strawberry harvesters are already protected by the Illinois Migratory Farm Workers Housing Act which requires 60 square feet of living space for each migrant; and strawberry farms already must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

The farmers feel, however, that the new OSHA regulations are so ridiculous and prohibitively expensive that 90 percent of them will either plow under their strawberry farms or convert to U-Pick operations under which individual customers go into the fields and pick their own strawberries.

The strawberry farmers point to one migrant camp built in southern Illinois under a Federal grant which cannot pass the new OSHA regulations. Furthermore, fewer and fewer migrants are coming to Illinois each year anyway, as indicated by the way the number of migratory camp licenses has been dropping drastically in the last three or four years.

The result of Washington bureaucrats trying to run our farms is wholly predictable. Strawberries will be scarcer and more expensive, migrant workers will have lost jobs they needed and wanted, and the only people who profit are the Federal payrollers who stick their meddling fingers in our strawberries.

(end)