

Oil prices and utility hikes attacked in public hearing

By SHIRLEE IDEN
WHO, the What's Happened to our Oil? group, is alive and well and still actively pursuing an investigation of the oil companies by the state attorney general.
The organization has aligned itself with the Consumer's Alliance of Michigan (CAM) and the Coordinating Council on Human Relations.
Mrs. Iris Katz, WHO's presi-



Mrs. Iris Katz ponders suit against oil companies (Photographed by Gary Friedman)

dent, said the groups recently co-sponsored an open hearing on the oil shortage and proposed hikes by the utility companies.
"More than 100 people turned out," Mrs. Katz said. "But we need many more than that."
"WE'RE ALL volunteers, so the only way we could publicize our hearing was through chain telephoning," she said.

Mrs. Katz, CAM president Esther Shapiro, and Don Hill of the Human Relations Council were the principal speakers against the oil and utility companies.

"The Edison Company was conspicuously absent," Mrs. Katz said, noting that representatives of the oil industry, Michigan Bell Telephone Co. and Consumer's Power Co. did attend the hearing.

"We invited the legislature," Mrs. Katz said, "but they were in budget hearings."

MRS. KATZ described the meeting as "pretty hot."
"There was a lot of interest and many questions from the audience, mostly protesting why more people weren't there," she said.

From the hearing came a recommendation to the legislature to demand that Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley convene a grand jury "to prove whether the oil companies are a monopoly or not."

The "angry" audience had to be quieted down several times," Mrs. Katz said.

"Even after four and one-half hours, people didn't want to leave," she said.

"This was an audience angry at the oil companies and utilities. They were people who came to complain, people who have been on

welfare and ADC and have had their utilities turned off," she said.
"Consumer groups are coming into the scene heavily."

SHE CITED THAT Michigan Bell Telephone Co. recently got approval for a \$25.4 million rate hike and is now asking for \$11 million. "This is the largest increase asked by any utility ever," she said.

Detroit Edison has asked for \$93 million and Consumer's Power Co. for \$72.5 million, she continued.

"Why did they all jump on the bandwagon at once?" Mrs. Katz asked.

Also being questioned, she said, are the lower rates for electricity for industry.

"Industry is being charged 1.3 cents per kilowatt while the public is charged 2.5 cents," she said. "Yet industry can write its charges off as a business expense."

"We feel the consumer should be charged the lower rates as industry can afford it and the lower and middle classes can't," she said.

Mrs. Katz is currently a plaintiff in a class action suit against the oil companies.

The suit asks for a roll-back to the prices of the summer of 1973 until an investigation can be made and a preliminary injunction obtained against any further raises.

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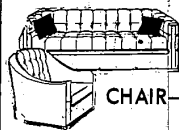
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Doctor named 'boss of year'

The Cranbrook Chapter of the American Business Women's Association (ABWA) held its annual Boss's Night at the Kingsley Inn, Bloomfield Hills, recently.

W. P. Richards, M.D., was named the 1974 Boss of the Year at the annual event held to honor bosses of chapter members. Dr. Richards is a Birmingham physician. He is on the medical staff of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital and is the medical director of the hospital's drug abuse program.

Among the businessmen at the Hawaiian-themed party were Arthur and Lloyd Lake of Lake Jewelers, C. Chamberlain of Chamberlain Realty, Leo Campson of Campson Realty and Kae McClure, owner of the Lisbeth Shop, Birmingham.

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