

Nancy cites Plato as an Early Feminist Icon

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Plato Was The First Rights Proponent

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"Neither shall we forget the women of whom we declared that their natures should be assimilated and brought into harmony with those of the men, and that common pursuits should be assigned to them. . . .

"And I further affirm if these things are possible nothing can be more absurd than the practice which prevails in our own country of men and women not following the same pursuits with all their strengths and with one mind.

"For thus the state, instead of being a whole is reduced to a half but has the same inposts to pave and the same toils to undergo. And what can be a greater mistake for any legislator to make than this."

—From Plato's "Law of Seven"
So here we are 2,000 years after Plato and what have we accomplished in the area of equal rights for women?

THIS QUESTION was posed to a group of Sigma Delta Chi members Wednesday by Nancy Drum, president of the Winston-Salem Chapter of NOW (National Organization for Women.) She addressed the Journalism society at a 7 p.m. meeting at Regional Airport.

The Winston-Salem women's activist gave the group a short historical and cultural review of the women's rights movement and discussed the legal aspects of Title 7 of the 1964 Civil Rights

Act. (Title 7 deals with employment discrimination.) She also expounded on the status of the Equal Rights Amendment (now before the N.C. General Assembly) in the state and in the nation.

If the ERA is ratified by the necessary 38 states Mrs. Drum said the biggest change in the nation would occur in protective legislation now covering the employed woman in many states.

"For example, existing laws in North Carolina state that women can not work overtime. This law is discriminatory and should be stricken from the books because it prevents women from advancing to better positions where overtime is a necessity," she said.

"There is also a state statute which says employers must provide seats for women to use during rest breaks and lunch hours," she added, "We feel this is a basic human right and should be extended to include men as well."

SINCE NORTH CAROLINA has adopted uniform divorce and marriage codes, Mrs. Drum said changes in these codes would be few if ERA is ratified.

"The only change in the state's marriage and divorce laws would be in the support policy," she pointed out. "As the law reads now, a man is automatically considered to be the supporter of a family. If the amendment is ratified he would have to show proof that he is the supporting spouse."

Mrs. Drum also cited a state law which requires a woman to take a private examination if

she is entering into a separation agreement or real estate transaction with her husband. The purpose of this exam is to make sure the woman is not being coerced, she explained.

"I feel this examination should be extended to men because they're being discriminated against by not being offered the same protection," said the NOW head.

HEAD COUNTS sponsored by a coalition of groups working for approval of the ERA in North Carolina show that there will be a very close vote in the legislature, Mrs. Drum said. However, she could not supply any further information Wednesday on the status of ERA. The state pending House action is pending on a bill sponsored by Rep. Tom Sawyer, D-Guilford, calling for a public referendum on the issue.

Mrs. Drum blamed mass controversy surrounding the ERA on arguments from the amendment's opponents. These arguments, she said, also have been responsible for misunderstandings and misinterpretations received by a number of women.

The provisions of ERA are quite simple, says the women's rights advocate.

"It states that 'equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any single state on the account of sex.' This simply means extending a law which applies to one sex to the other sex, or rendering that law unconstitutional, Mrs. Drum explained.

Mrs. Drum emphasized that today's women's rights movement is by far nothing new.

"EVER SINCE WRITTEN history has existed equality for women has been a topic, she said.

The women's activist quoted statistics from the U.S. Census

Bureau to show the strong need for enforcement of Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act.

She said 1970 census figures comparing median earnings of full-time workers showed white men earned \$9,373 while black men earned \$6,598. White women earned \$5,490 and black females earned \$4,674.

Discrimination of women in employment is two-fold, said

Mrs. Drum. "Women do not earn the same as their male counterparts and they do not have the same opportunities for advancement and employment.

"THE MOTHERHOOD aspect has been used as an excuse to bar women from equal professional and economic participation in society, she continued. But as birth control limits families and life expectancy increas-

es, motherhood becomes an unrealistic life-time commitment for women," Mrs. Drum concluded.

Mrs. Drum, a housewife with two pre-school daughters, is a charter member of the two-

year-old Winston-Salem Chapter of NOW. She came from Pennsylvania to Winston 10 years ago as a child development specialist with a federally funded clinic. Her husband is partner in a Winston law firm.

Speech regarding Plato as Early Feminist Icon

Given by Nancy Drum on Feb. 21, 1973
Sigma Delta Chi Journalism society, Greensboro, NC

I would like to open my discussion with you tonight with a quotation from Plato as written in the Laws: "Neither must we forget the women, of whom we declared their natures should be assimilated and brought into harmony with those of men, and that common pursuits should be assigned to them both in time of war and in their ordinary life.

And I further affirm that if these things are possible nothing can be more absurd than the practice which prevails in our own country, of men and women not following the same pursuits with all their strengths and with one mind, for thus the state, instead of being a whole, is reduced to a half, but has the same imposts to pay and the same toils to undergo; and what can be a greater mistake for any legislator to make than this?"

Why then, if this was so obvious to Plato over 2000 years ago, is it necessary for women's rights organizations to mobilize 100,000s of women and men in a campaign to ratify a constitutional amendment which would merely provide some of the legal framework to enable women to freely assimilate their pursuits with those of men? One historian has expressed the opinion that women have made so little progress in advancing their cause because they are the only oppressed class to have lived for so long in such close proximity with the oppressor. This is a rather simplistic explanation for a complex phenomenon that has historical, physical, cultural, psychological and sociological bases. Many of the cultural sex-role differentiations made today have their foundations in historical necessity and are often mere perpetuations of earlier cultural mores. Now we are at a unique time in our history in which we can evaluate laws and customs affecting men and women and prescribe for ourselves a course that will provide more freedom of choice for each individual in his or her pursuit of happiness and personhood.

The goals of the feminist movement - with its inception in this country at Seneca Falls in 1848 - have to the present been consistent and basically unchanging and expressed themselves in the longest civil rights struggle in the history of this society. Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared the need for the right to own and control property and earnings, serve as guardians of children, get divorces, go to college and earn a living. Likewise and not surprising, the opposition has been basically unchanging. One argument used against the 19th amendment was that its passage would take women out of their homes and away from their children ----- to vote, to serve their communities in elected office.

There is an interesting historical aspect of the women's rights movement - in times of change, reform, frontier conditions, war - when all hands were urgently needed - men and women were motivated toward similar goals. At these times women have achieved their greatest successes - legislatively, educationally and professionally. However periods of slow, orderly economic growth seem to cultivate masculinity and femininity as goals in themselves. The most insidious example of this was written in 1956 by George Lawton, Phd., in an article entitled "Emotional Maturity in Wives" in which he describes the mature woman as " a chaste creature learning from her husband with appropriate wonderment, the facts of life expert interior decorator, roommate, housekeeper, restaurant keeper, cook, waitress, busboy member of household discussion groups or

domestic debate - managing always to be on the receiving end and asking only those questions which the lecturer could answer intelligently practical nurse, psychotherapist mindreader, ambassadress and master diplomat dancing partner.... capable, but not too capable bridge partner confidant, playmate, hostess and grand master of the art of canape making."

Small wonder there was a rebirth of feminism in the early 60s. But progress was seldom even or success easily won. In 1964, the second landmark for women's rights was achieved by the addition of sex to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill. The amendment was made by Rep. Howard W. Smith of Virginia (Chairman of the Rules Committee) in an attempt to defeat the bill. Women were prevailed upon to oppose the amendment on the basis that it would jeopardize the bill altogether for blacks. The strongest opposition for the sex amendment arose from within the ranks of the liberal supporters of the bill. Emmanuel Cellars, D, NY, decried "the upheaval that would result from the adoption of blanket language requiring total equality. Would male citizens be justified in insisting that women share with them the burdens of compulsory military service? What would become of traditional family relationships? What about alimony? Who would have the obligation of supporting whom? What would become of the crimes of rape and statutory rape? Would the many state and local provisions regulating working conditions for women be struck down?"

In spite of the opposition, a verbal coalition of congresswomen succeeded in passing the sex amendment, 168-138.

Title VII has been taken seriously and is perhaps the single most important legal aid available to women in their pursuit of employment opportunities --- and social chaos and upheaval have not followed in its wake. The need for enforcement of Title VII is well illustrated in the 1970 Census Bureau statistics on median yearly earnings of full time workers :

WM	\$9,300
BM	\$6,500
WW	\$5,400
BW	\$4,600

Breakdown by educational achievement

	Men	Women
8 yrs	\$7,500	\$4,100
HS	\$9,500	\$5,500
College	\$13,200	\$8,100

Breakdown by families in poverty by heads of household

WM - 6.0%, BM - 17.8%, WW - 25.4%, BW - 53.2%

Discrimination against women in employment is twofold - women do not earn the

same salaries as their male counterparts and do not have the same opportunities for advancement or employment in traditionally male-dominated fields. There are 31 million women in the labor force - one half of all the women between the ages of 16 and 64. A large percentage of these women are working because of economic necessity and not as optional supplemental family income, a belief popularly held and expressed. As life expectancy increases and birth control is available to limit families, motherhood becomes an unrealistic lifetime commitment for most women. Yet this rational continues to be used to justify barring women from equal professional and economic participation in our society.

Women have not had much success in legal recourse up to this point as the Supreme Court has been unwilling to hear sex discrimination cases. There is no place in the Constitution of the United States - no place in any major court decision that clearly states that discrimination on the basis of sex is illegal. There have been a few court decisions that have ruled against sex discrimination, but these have been limited to specific instances and statutes. In reviewing this we must take into account the fact that the Constitution was written at a time when women did not have full citizenship and it was not the intention of the writers to include women. The Constitution was based on English Common Law. Blackstone wrote in his Commentaries on Common Law of the married woman as being incorporated and consolidated with her husband and that "a man cannot grant anything to his wife for the grant would suppose her separate existence." Therefore, the extent to which women could invoke the protection of the Constitution against laws which discriminate on the basis of sex is unclear.

Hence the introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment to Congress in 1923. The amendment as it finally passed both the House and the Senate (by overwhelming majority) in 1972 reads:

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

The amendment would not nullify all laws distinguishing on the basis of sex, but would require that the law treat men and women equally. Equal treatment can be accomplished either by extending the law which applies only to one sex to the other sex - or by rendering the law unconstitutional.

In North Carolina there is protective legislation regulating the employment of women that would be affected if the amendment is ratified. The statute which prohibits women from working any overtime would be interpreted as unconstitutional - it clearly discriminates against women in the labor force by effectively barring them from supervisory positions which often require overtime work. The statute which requires employers to give women a half an hour lunch period if she works more than six hours and a chair for rest breaks clearly should be extended to men or declared unconstitutional.

In divorce and marriage laws, North Carolina has already adopted the Uniform Marriage and Divorce Code - so we will not see much change in this area. It is already possible for a man to receive alimony in this state and custody is

determined on the basis of the child's welfare. However, under North Carolina law, the man is considered to be the supporting spouse in marriage - a bias obvious on the N.C. tax forms. If the amendment is ratified, this assumption would not be constitutional.

With respect to employment, the amendment would have little effect beyond the provisions of Title VII. Those areas affected would involve federal, state and local government agencies.

In education, the restriction of public schools to one sex would be prohibited as would different admission standards for men and women.

The ERA would extend Social Security benefits to widowers of covered female workers, now provided only to widows of covered male workers. Other Social Security inequities would be addressed as well as insurance actuarials.

The ERA opponents' argument that women would be forced out of their homes and into the work force is totally unfounded and ludicrous. In reality, the amendment would extend far more protections to women than they now have. It is again important to recognize the similarity of argument used against the 19th amendment, Title VII and the ERA. All three invoked the same fear of domestic destruction and child neglect, yet neither the 19th amendment nor Title VII have satisfied the predictions.

The ERA has been ratified by 33 states and 5 more need to ratify it before it can become the 27th amendment to the Constitution. Among its supporters are the President of the United States; 354 Congressmen; 84 Senators; numerous governors, including George Wallace; labor unions such as the AFL-CIO, United Auto Workers; women's organizations including AAUW, BPW, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Church Women United; and the Democratic and Republican party platforms.

This is a challenge to the state of North Carolina - its men and women - to make a progressive move to ratify the amendment. It is even more importantly a time for re-evaluation and self-examination. It is a time when we as women must create a new image of ourselves by acting and speaking on behalf of our own equality, freedom and human dignity, not in pleas for special privilege, nor in hostility toward men, but in active self-respecting partnership with men.

I would like to close with another quote - this one from a woman - a remarkable black woman - Sojourner Truth, at the first Seneca Falls Conference: "The man over there says women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches. Nobody ever helps me into carriages or over puddles or gives me the best place - and ain't I a woman? Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me - and ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen most of them sold into slavery and when I cried out my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me - and ain't I a woman?"