

Features

Looking back on 'The Year of the Ms.'

How much progress did women make during 1972 — in politics, education, job opportunities, pay, civil rights? What should be realistic goals for women in 1973? Here's a New Year's Day status of women report, compiled by Stephanie Fuller, Carol Kleiman and others.

By Stephanie Fuller

MORE WOMEN entered into politics on all levels, more women assumed jobs in which they get their hands dirty, and more women fought "sexegregation" in 1972. It was the year of Ms.

"I hardly get any mail anymore that isn't addressed 'Ms.,'" said a member of the National Organization of Women.

In Illinois, women captured an all-time high number of seats in the General Assembly—three in the Senate and eight in the House. Illinois also had a record number of women delegates to both national conventions, where about 40 per cent of Democrat and 30 per cent of Republican delegates were female.

Among individual women to win important posts in 1972 was Jewel Lafontant, black Chicago lawyer, appointed deputy solicitor general by President Nixon. She is the first woman to be named to a top level post in Nixon's new administration. Mrs. Lafontant was a U. S. representative to the U. N. General Assembly.

Three women were elected state's attorneys. They are Mary Jane Reynolds Webb in Johnson County; Patricia Fehrenbacher in Jasper County, and Dolores J. Johnson in Pope County, whose election is being contested because she won by a slight margin and the recount showed more votes for her opponent. "To our knowledge, they are the first women in the state to be elected to the office," said Bob Hutchison of the Illinois State's Attorneys Association.

"It's been a landmark year for women's rights," declared State Rep. Eugenia Chapman. "The most important happenings in the government was the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment by Congress and ratification by 22 states. Thirty-eight are required."

THE ILLINOIS Senate adopted a resolution for state ratification of the proposed women's equal rights bill by a vote of 30 to 21, but to vote was postponed in the House when it became clear to supporters of the amendment they did not have enough votes for passage. The bill remains in the House and will come up after the new legislature takes office this month.

"This year we will work for approval by both of the houses," said Mrs. Chapman. "I believe the people who opposed the bill made a mistake. They should have let it be ratified with no sweat."

"Now women's groups, civil rights groups, groups concerned with equality under the law, all sorts of groups are working together for the first time. It has been the violent



Jean Westwood: The First woman to head the Democratic National Committee, she was ousted from the post during 1972.



Ann Armstrong: As a counselor to the President she will be the highest ranking woman in the Nixon administration.

and deep seeded opposition to equality for women that has brought back this unification. Whereas, had the opponents just let it be approved, it would have lacked the meaning the eventual approval will hold for us.

"Now in terms of attitudes, the number of conferences being held in the state, and the ability of women's groups and other groups to work together, progress is being made. In 1972 the Fair Employment Practices Act was begun to be implemented.

"The majority of cases brought before the federal agency in Illinois of employment discrimination have been sex discrimination. Our state law has not protected against sex discrimination as they have race and creed.

"EYES ARE being opened in little ways. The Governor signed a bill in March that for the first time will not arbitrarily discriminate against pregnant women as far as unemployment compensation.

"The law previously stated an able and willing unemployed woman couldn't receive compensation 13 weeks before and four after a birth. We four women in the Assembly put up with a lot of locker room humor, but the bill was passed.

"We're asking for the same treatment for women and men. Nothing special. The court decisions on pregnancy are interesting. Now a woman can't be fired because she's pregnant."

In other legal steps, an amendment to the higher education act passed last June provided that schools and colleges receiving federal funds must not discriminate on the basis of sex in admitting students or in faculty personnel policies. And in 1972, the Equal Pay Act was expanded to cover discrimination against sex in administrative, executive, and professional jobs.

DURING 1972, it also became easier for women to win their rights on the job. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was given enforcement powers and helps protect women against discrimination in promotions, pay, and hiring policies.

"In our company I think women are getting into higher levels of management," commented Harriet E. White, district staff supervisor of equal Employment Opportunity for the Illinois Bell Telephone Company. "There are more in middle management jobs this year. People are becoming more conscious of the women's movement. What this means for the company augers well."

"More women are in line management jobs in contrast to staff management. One woman is a division manager in switching and responsible for all the equipment in the south suburbs. Another woman is a district commercial manager and deals with a number of accounts which is an unusual job for a woman to hold. Now the women holding these jobs are small in numbers, but it is progress."

"As of Sept. 15 we had 405 women in craft jobs such as communications maintenance men, frame men, plant assigners, stock men, and communications consultants."

Ms. White sees lethargy as the biggest block in the coming year. She says that is why the raising of consciousness is so important. "Business cannot go on as usual," she said. "A lot of myths about what women want to do or will do have to be dispelled."



Harriet White: "More women now are in middle management."



Mary Ann Lupa: Leading N. O. W. pressure on government.



Jewel Lafontant: First woman to get a new Nixon post.



Joan Anderson: New blood for the M. S. D. board.

"WHAT WE have to do is get the word to women everywhere and especially to young women in schools. We have to let them know that the whole thing is opening up and women who have the credentials can get any kind of jobs they want. Women always have been teachers, nurses, and social workers. We have to get the word to them they can be engineers, corporate executives, doctors, architects, or whatever they want to be."

Throughout the U. S. the women of 1972 demanded and received attention as individuals. Shirley Chisholm was a candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination and appealed for votes on behalf of women and blacks as underrepresented groups in the political process. She gave impetus to the entire women's movement.

Also supplying momentum to the movement was Frances [Sissy] Farenthold, who ran for the governorship of Texas and was defeated. However, she received 407 votes for the

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Democratic vice presidential nomination, running second only to Sen. Thomas Eagleton [D., Mo.].

Romano Acosta Banuelos, a Los Angeles businesswoman, was appointed the 34th treasurer of the United States by the president, who also named Dr. Marina von Neumann Whitman, a University of Pittsburgh economist, to the three-member Council of Economic Advisors.

Anne Armstrong, cochairman of the Republican National Committee, became the highest ranking woman in the Nixon administration when she was named counselor to the President. But her appointment late in 1972 left most women's groups fuming that more women should have received higher posts in the federal government.

Jean Westwood headed the Democratic National Committee—the first woman to do so—from the national convention in July until she was ousted in early December following the defeat of Sen. George McGovern.

FIVE WOMEN were elected to Congress for the first time. Among the winners were two black women—Barbara Jordan, a Texas Democrat who was the first black in the state senate; and Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, a California Democrat who has served in the state assembly. Returning to Congress was Bella Abzug, an outspoken feminist.

During the last year, the Air Force named its second woman brigadier general, and Alene Durek, director of the Navy Nurse Corps, became the first woman admiral. In business, Juanita Kreps, an economics professor at Duke University, became the first woman director of the New York Stock Exchange.

"I think that the women's rights movement gained in that it became a subject of broad based discussion," said Joan Anderson, who with Joanne Alter is one of the first two women ever to be elected to the Metropolitan Sanitary District Board. "The movement has gone from being considered an isolated and somewhat silly demonstration to a serious and much-debated subject."

As a Constitutional Convention delegate in 1970, Mrs. Anderson said she rarely was asked a question about women's rights. She said there was no mention of equal pay or equal employment rights. "But after Con-Con was over I noticed a pronounced change," she recalled.

"The movement was very much a factor in the recent campaign. The subject came up often and there were two things I noticed. Broadly speaking, there was a great deal of interest in women's rights from the women. They specifically asked about equal pay and promotions. The questions weren't from any particular group.

"When the subject was discussed the reactions differed. Some reacted with self consciousness, worry, or resentment, depending upon the group. The woman who chooses to play a traditional role—the young mother—was made to believe somehow she was performing a less important function than someone in business, education, or the employment world.

"THE question of, 'Is what you're doing what you should be doing?' came up. Putting out the question and opening it to debate creates a challenge that is viewed with insecurity and unsureness. I found among men and women alike a

support for some of the basic rights having to do with equal opportunity."

What Mrs. Anderson believes needs discussion and debate is the question of discriminating procedures in employment.

"I see no reason why a competent woman can't fly a commercial airliner anymore than a man can't be a steward as well as a woman is a stewardess," she commented.

"Women lawyers are having an easier time than they used to, but you still don't see many in labor negotiations because women are not considered to be tough enough.

"I think women who have achieved positions during the last year have to be so open, so positive," emphasized Joanne Alter, the other woman elected a trustee of the Metropolitan Sanitary District. "We're unusual because we're the beginning of the tide. We have to encourage all kinds of women to achieve all kinds of ends in the coming year. Those who have achieved have to keep their fields and other fields open to other women."

"TO understand the progress during the last year you have to understand the functions of N. O. W.," said Mary Ann Lupa, president of the Chicago Chapter. "We're an outside pressure organization functioning with the picket signs, leaflets, etc., but we also apply pressure in other avenues that people don't see.

"We have a Women's Advocate Corps which directs women to the proper government agencies that can handle their cases of discrimination and where they can receive the soonest possible solution. We direct women to the Fair Employment Practices Commission, Equal Opportunity Commission; and, in the situation of equal pay cases, to the Labor Department.

"Our function is more than to just hold hands. We follow thru with cases. At the same time we apply pressure on the agencies to follow thru and force business and industry to comply.

"One thing very few women know is that if they experience sex discrimination on the basis of pay they can file with the Labor Department within seven years of that experience. This comes under the Equal Pay Act of the U. S. Department of Labor," Mr. Lupa explained.

"An interesting action was taken last year in New York and we're going to do it here this year," she said. "A license challenge was brought against ABC-TV for sex discrimination. The Federal Communications Commission for years prohibited discrimination on the basis of race and creed and it has now added sex. Every three years when a license comes up challenges can be made. We're going to challenge on the basis of sex."

MS. LUPA explained the Chicago chapter will monitor a certain network station for one year, watching for the number of women on camera, sex discrimination in plots, and discrimination in programming. "We have to have sound evidence," she explained.

"I would say a major event in communications during the last year was a woman was made daytime programming director for a national network," said Sherry Goodman, director of program development for Channel 11 WTTW. "I think she was considered for this position at this time because of the women's movement. This wouldn't have happened a few years ago."