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Women Hold Their Own in Politics



Mrs. Constance Armitage, President of the National Federation of Republican Women.

Armitage Urges Vote

The 1972 Symposium, "Women in Politics" opened Tuesday night at 7:00 P. M. in Hanes with the introduction of Mrs. Constance Armitage, President of the National Federation of Republican Women. A tall, husky-voiced blonde, Mrs. Armitage has an impressive background of service in the political arena. She has been a delegate four times at the National Republican Convention, serving three times on the platform committee. At present, Mrs. Armitage is a member of President Nixon's Advisory Council on European Affairs. Her extensive travels in Italy where she lived and studied for several years, and the time she spent in Paris, France, make her well-qualified for such a task.

Mrs. Armitage stressed the fact that American democracy is a citizens form of government and therefore requires citizen involvement and a willingness to do the work. She commented that for every woman active in politics 250 women remain at home baking cookies, attending PTA meetings, or playing bridge bedecked in their gauche flowery hats. Mrs. Armitage commented upon the increasing participation of women with college degrees in governmental offices. Over one-half of all college graduates are working in some capacity with the government. Mrs. Armitage pointed out the importance of obtaining a degree, stating it doubles the amount earned annually as well as opening up avenues into the political arena. She revealed the great addition of talented women President Nixon now has working in his administration. Mrs. Armitage said that President Nixon even has a computer bank containing files on women of training and ability to locate a responsible female when a job opportunity arises. She gave several statistics comparing the working conditions and salaries of men and women. The amount in the work force has doubled in the last decade and it has been discovered that women are more adaptive to working conditions, plus being better persuaders. There has been a marked increase in the number of women doctors, lawyers, and engineers, but sadly enough the number of women in Congress has decreased from 19 in 1961 to only

11 this year. Mrs. Armitage admits that some prejudice still exists concerning women in the political world; she thinks women make the best politicians because they are so idealistic. She feels America is plagued with an attitude of cynicism which begins as early as the 2nd grade of elementary school. Women can recontribute idealism to the young by serving in Congress. Furthermore, Mrs. Armitage laughingly commented, once a good woman gets in, she can never be gotten out.

Although no great purporter of Women's Liberation, Mrs. Armitage feels strongly that women can lead a second life of involvement, and that it is time for a woman's contribution. Forty-eight percent of the electorate is female, so we do have a responsibility to vote - especially those of us who live in the South. The percentage of women voting in the South is the lowest of any other section in the United States. The South has also become an open field for either political party, no longer maintaining a one party dominance true in its past. Participation, thus, is made even more important.

Mrs. Armitage feels privileged to be a woman in America. The dedication of her life to the political arena reveals her appreciation of this privilege. In riding back with Mrs. Armitage to Spartanburg, I noticed a vivaciousness that characterizes her speech whether appearing on stage before a large audience or chatting with a small intimate group. She impressed us with her extensive knowledge of the world and of life. We found ourselves talking about everything from the youth vote to deer hunting with a 40 lb. bow. Mrs. Armitage is truly a remarkable woman whose personality is marked by many interesting facets. From a professor of art history at a small private boys' school to national political prominence with the presidency of the Woman's Federation of the Republican Party is a gigantic and somewhat awesome step. Yet, it can only give inspiration to a girl from an equally small and private girls' school to the Presidency of who knows, maybe the United States.

The Honorable Norma Handloff, mayor of Newark, Delaware, spoke Wednesday afternoon as part of the "Women in Politics Symposium." Mayor Handloff, patriotically dressed in red, white, and blue, opened her remarks by stating that all of her campaign staff was under twenty-two years of age. Surprised? It only serves to verify what Mayor Handloff believes - we are all the "super-wonderland" of politics together, young or old, and politics therefore becomes the job of every human being.

This feeling of the togetherness of politics goes well with Mayor Handloff's definition of politics, which differs somewhat from ones in the dictionary. She defines politics as the art of dealing with people. Mayor Handloff pointed out that we all have to deal with many kinds of people every day. In this sense, each of us is a politician. The moral of that story is, of course, be careful about whom you call a dirty politician - it could be your own self.

Mayor Handloff, speaking directly to the role of women in politics, firmly stated that women should play a role no different from that of men. She pointed out that because of the diminishing differences made between the sexes, women are now able to participate more equally and freely in politics. Some people still raise the question about the emotional stability of women as compared to that of men. Mayor Handloff said that, in her personal experience, the women members of the City Council in Newark did not lose their cool as easily as the men.

Mayor Handloff discussed some of the disadvantages of being in politics. There is a loss of privacy. There is the impossible task of choosing a right answer when there are none. But Mayor Handloff believes the rewards gained from serving the people of your community far outweigh the disadvantages. The rewards must indeed be great for Mayor Handloff. She is serving her fourth term as mayor and is presently running as the Democratic candidate for the State Legislature in Delaware.

Mayor Handloff, not hampered by ponderous notes, freely discussed her experiences and ideas. (She said that she felt that her frequent departures from prepared texts were more revealing and inspiring for her audiences.) The ideas she professed and the experiences she has had were culminated in an exciting talk about the role of Mayor Norma Handloff and the role possible for other women.

Info

Dr. Cornelius Troost will speak Thursday, October 19, at 1:15 in Shirley on the subject of pornography. Prior to coming to Salem, Dr. Troost worked with the County of Los Angeles on various court cases concerning pornography. His talk will deal with his experience in these cases, and the laws and penalties relating to pornography.

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"We must organize politically, legally, as students, and every other way," asserted Martha McKay during the October 11 morning session of the Women In Politics Symposium at Salem College. Speaking in the drama workshop to a moderate-size crowd of students, faculty, and visitors, Ms. McKay urged women to join together to fight against discrimination of women in government, both national and state, in jobs, and in education.

The aim of the N.C. Women's Political Caucus, Ms. McKay said, is to create a political power block, thus removing the dependence of women on a party boss. Women's issues will come first, the party and the candidate second. "We are no longer going to crochet bumper stickers!", she said, to the delight of the audience. Women will become a vital part of politics and government and will "play the power game" as effectively as men. However, Ms. McKay clearly stated that the Caucus does "not support candidates because they are women", but because they are qualified women.

The Equal Rights Amendment to be voted on by the state legislature next year is the main concern of the Women's Political Caucus. The amendment, if passed, will give legal protection to women against discrimination, especially in jobs. Citing a working woman's median income as \$4467, Ms. McKay gave examples of how equally qualified men and women seeking employment are invariably categorized by sex, the man almost always obtaining the job.

Education and training opportunities should be granted to women as well as men, stated Ms. McKay. Day care centers should be provided for the convenience of student or working mothers, and a Fair Employment Practices Commission should be established in N.C.

When women are free, men are free, asserted Ms. McKay. In the present situation, "the oppressor is as chained as the oppressed."

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"It all costs money," Gertrude Lotwin, Chief of the Assistance Standards Branch of the Dept. of HEW, said of the Public Assistance program.

Following Ms. McKay in the Wednesday morning session,

Miss Lotwin took a different approach to the symposium from Ms. McKay. Rather than discussing how women can unite to be an influential part of government, she discussed the aims and needs of the welfare program and how she, as a woman, functions in her job with the HEW Dept.

Those qualifying for public Assistance must be over 18, blind, and needy; permanently and totally disabled and needy; or a needy family with dependent children in which one parent is absent by death or desertion. "Need" is defined as the poverty level, which is an income three times the amount of money spent on food.

"How much would you give to a poor family?", Miss Lotwin asked the audience. Figures were thrown out, but criticisms of over-expenditure of tax money by the welfare system predominated. Most seemed to agree that the poor should work for the money given to them, that they should be taught to buy what is really needed instead of purchasing "luxury" items, and that the welfare department should have some system of regulating what is bought with welfare money.

Listening to the complaints attentively, Miss Lotwin pointed out the fallacies to each. Asking the poor on welfare to work is asking those who are the least trained, the least educated, and in the poorest health to take an eight-hour-a-day job of poverty level payment, she said. It was noted that most welfare recipients are mothers with dependent children who must not only hold a job but cook, clean, shop, and help with school work. "You know what they're really saying when they won't work?", Miss Lotwin countered, "They're saying 'I'm dead tired'".

Studies have shown that the low income person manages money better than the middle income person, said Miss Lotwin. "People have the right to spend their money as they see fit." The HEW has no right to govern personal lives.

The principle concern of the welfare system, Miss Lotwin stated, is the children. They must not be destroyed by their unstable family life. "It is a national problem", Miss Lotwin said. "We need fresh ideas. Brave ideas. People who are unafraid to spend money."



Miss Gertrude Lotwin chats with Lee Booth