

'Woman Power'—Thompson Address at Convention

Let us talk this evening about: The power of women, about women's organizations, about what we can do to improve our status and stature in the society of the future.

To be alive today, well and able to enjoy oneself, and to make a contribution to civilization is a most exciting, stimulating, challenging and at the same time confusing time that one could wish to be alive in.

This is an exciting time in which to live because the age of Women's Rights is relatively new. When we realize that the age of women's rights is less than seventy-five years old, and stop to evaluate the progress that has been made in that short space of time, it is very exciting to imagine what we have power to accomplish within the next half century. This is a stimulating age because of the rapidly moving age in which we are living, it keeps all on our toes trying to interpret the events of the times and understand their implications for the future.

This is a challenging age in which to live because it provides many opportunities for us to do something about the existing conditions of our community, our state and country. Challenging because we hear and read about so many people and conditions that are in need of our power to change conditions.

This is a confusing age in which to live. Confusing because the world is so small that we are concerned about what ever takes place on any one of the other seven continents and the thousand islands of the seas; confusing because of our mechanized system of communication and advertisement that gives emphasis to fact and fancy alike so very convincingly, that one needs to know something about everything in order to live comfortably within ones own skin.

Every day we are made to realize that it is necessary to continue our educational process throughout life.

We are greatly confused because this is an age of transition and progress. In all transitional eras there exists mixed emotions and fears. We fear transition because we know that there will be some losses. We know that there will be many worthwhile gains. Not having already experienced the new order we have fears of the future, and at the same time we welcome transition because we believe that transition means progress.

The Age of Women's Rights

We might go on record as proclaiming this half century, the age of Woman's Rights and now

work toward gaining in the world more stature than we have so far. This we can do if we work with sincerity toward the full development of our womanly powers.

Let us now consider the depths from which we have arisen in this country within this present half century. May we pause for a minute or two to realize that it has been less than seventy years since Woman's Suffrage; less than seventy-five years ago, Susan B. Anthony was fighting to bring about Woman's Suffrage; at that time the opportunity for educational and professional employment was very scant; only a very few institutions at that time considered women for higher education; woman's right to own property, or to manage for themselves what property they did have was subject to medieval restrictions in statutes then still clinging to the books in many states. Women seldom had any voice as to custody of their children. Seventy-five years ago, it was unthinkable that women should hold public office. With no consideration at all for the many modern conveniences that women of today enjoy as labor saving devices, women a century ago were very much concerned about status. Status in a man's world was what they most wanted and needed then . . . all this has changed greatly in the past seventy-five years. Women in American society today might not yet have equality of status but they have gone a long, long way toward gaining it . . . what we must work for in this next half century: is stature. Stature means height, whether in the intellectual, spiritual, moral, political or any other sense. Stature signifies growth, reaching upward and expanding with influence, and importance, in every field of accomplishment in our modern society. To gain stature one must be dedicated to a cause. To be dedicated to a cause means that we sometimes have to lose ourselves in order to accomplish a dream. In order to accomplish ones dreams there must be patience coordinated with hard work. Work that might mean continued labor for decades without becoming discouraged when we fail. We are told that Susan B. Anthony worked forty years for Woman's Suffrage without becoming discouraged. She gained status and stature . . . Madam Curie, Rosa Bonheur, Sarah Bernhardt, Maggie L. Walker, Mary Church Terrell and Mary McCloud Bethune, were all women of great stature. There are many more that we could enumerate; but even the list is too limited. What American women must work for now is stature . . . how far have we come along this road?



DINNER MEETING—Executive Board dinner meeting on June 5th at which time corsages were given President Spellman and Chairman of Board Byrd. They were presented from Northeastern District by its President Mrs. Edna Mitchell.

Women in America have made more progress toward gaining stature than any other group of women in the world. Just to make a spot check on the American woman we might mention just a few of her citizenship accomplishments; women in America, now hold a larger proportion of the total voting power in this country. They have in their name, more of the country's financial power than men; they have been given by our modern urban civilization an even more exclusive influence on their children, and therefore upon future generations than they had in the past . . .

For some time now American women have been gaining on the men—at least in numbers. There are now a million and a half more women than men in the United States today, and the Census Bureau predicts that by 1975 women will outnumber men by perhaps as many as 3,600,000 . . . this growing surplus of women is likely to cause some interesting changes in American society . . . in our courting and marriage habits, family life, the job market, even politics. At the turn of the century the average American woman lived two years and ten months longer than the average man. Today she is outliving him by more than six years.

The American woman is marrying much earlier today. On an average she is married by the time she is twenty, has her first child by the time she reaches twenty six, and takes her last child to school by the time that she is thirty two. The average woman is older at thirty two. Having entered her last child in school by the time that she has reached thirty three, many of these women will be ready to add their power to the field of labor. Between 1951 and 1956 the number of women employed increased by 2½ million, or 60 per cent of the total increase in employment . . . some authorities believe that our economy maintained its high level only because

these women were available . . . the future of our national security and economic development depend upon woman power to a greater degree than ever before.

The Department of Labor recently predicted that by 1965 we will need an additional 10 million workers to supply all of the goods and services required for a growing population, expected to exceed 193 million. Of the 10 million workers needed 5 million will have to be women because there will not be more than 5 million men available.

The years ahead are years of opportunity for women who have not had the best chances for training, employment, and advancement in the past . . . we must not overlook the fact that advanced technology produces a rapidly increasing demand for more better trained and better educated workers . . . some 22 million women are bringing home pay checks today and never before have so many of them been both homemakers and wage earners . . . today the average woman is no young thing waiting for matrimony. She is likely to be a married woman forty years old . . . for women who want to work, there should be plenty of opportunity in the years ahead—for those who will prepare themselves. We need an increasing supply of creative men and women in the arts, in medicine, and teaching, and in religion, in law, in public administration and in social (services) science . . . by 1965, we will need about 40 per cent more professional and technical workers than we needed in 1955; 22 per cent more managers, proprietors, and officials, 27 per cent more clerical and sales people. And we don't have an adequate supply right now.

Now what does all this have to do with the N. C. Federation of Negro Women's Club program?

The North Carolina Federation of Colored Women's Clubs is a powerful organization of women in this state. You are a grass root