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leadership than to national trends. The state's senior Democratic senator, Sam Ervin, led the ERA opposition in the upper house.

It was a bitter defeat for him. Following the final vote, he raised both fists to the ceiling and intoned: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do... American womanhood (will be) crucified on a cross of dubious equality and specious uniformity."

Ervin argued that certain laws protecting women, such as statutes dealing with alimony and domestic laws, were hard won and necessary for the well being of women.

Like many of his fellow North Carolinians would contend in the state legislature, he said equality in employment and education were already protected by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, the Equal Employment Opportunities Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

But the Equal Rights Amendment, first introduced to Congress in 1923 and reintroduced every year since, holds added significance for those who have fought so hard for its passage.

Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana summed up the feelings of many supporters. "We cannot overlook the immense, symbolic importance of the Equal Rights Amendment," he said. "The women of our country must have tangible evidence of our commitment to guarantee equal treatment under the law. An amendment to the Constitution has great moral and persuasive value."

Opposition

North Carolina's are not the only state's legislators who argued that ERA would disrupt the fabric of society by reversing roles and hence breaking down the family structure.

In Oklahoma, where the amendment was defeated, a legislator said ERA was not in keeping with the teachings of the Bible. "Men and women are not supposed to be alike," he said. A Wyoming opponent again invoked holy scripture, saying if Christ had wanted men and women equal, he would have appointed six male and six female disciples.

Newsweek recalled other remarks from state lawmakers. "I see the darkness of increasing alcoholism and suicide," one

thundered. Others predicted 'pimps and prostitutes everywhere,' with armies of 'homosexuals, bisexuals and other deviators' coming out of the closets. There was a curious fear that ERA would ban sex distinctions in public toilets and a dark reminiscence of 'the Russian Army with men and women... squatting over open latrines.'"

Spurring these legislators on were the adherents of Phyllis Schlafly of Alton, Ill., the self-appointed leader of the national anti-ERA forces. Schlafly, a prominent right wing voice in the midwest and author of the 1964 book about Barry Goldwater ("A Choice Not an Echo"), brought her campaign to North Carolina on Feb. 8, the date of the public hearing.

The clean scrubbed, conservatively dressed spokeswoman led the opposition's remarks. Quoting Harvard

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—Sam Ervin

and Yale law professors in her midwestern accent, Schlafly denounced ERA on the grounds that it would do away with precious legal protections for women.

"Most women don't want to be treated like men," she said. "We are in a wonderful position and ERA would transform every issue into a domestic issue to be settled by federal courts."

Schlafly insisted the ERA would take away a woman's legal right to be a wife and mother, saying, "The ERA would give men free sex they don't have to pay for. A man could leave his faithful wife of 20 years and not feel guilty."

Most of her pro-ERA mail is from men who don't want to pay alimony, she said.

North Carolina's own opposition to the bill was spearheaded by Dot Slade, a middle-aged woman from Reidsville who met Schlafly for the first time at a National Federation of Republican Women meeting and then again in September at a Pro America conference.

"The first anti-ERA meeting in North Carolina as far as I know was in December when I called eight or nine people together at the Sizzling Steak House in Reidsville to just eat lunch and sort of mull it over," Slade said.

She and her friends petitioned and wrote letters to other women across the

state calling for assistance in stopping ERA.

"Women will lose their protective legislation if ERA is passed, laws that keep them from having to work so many hours a day and knowing they will have to go home and work at home," she said. "There are laws that limit the amount of weight they can lift; there is a great amount of difference between lifting your child who weighs thirty or forty pounds when you see fit and, say, lifting twenty-five pounds every three minutes for seven and a half hours a day."

Constituents

Freshman Sen. Bette Wilke, R-Henderson, North Carolina's only female senator, was the only woman legislator who voted against ERA in February.

Retreating to her office cubicle after a tiring day of defending her unpopular position to women who gathered for the public hearing, Wilke outlined with her finger on a N.C. map the ten mountain counties she represents.

"These are mountain people in these counties," she began with a quiet, weary sigh. "They've been referred to, I'm sure, by some as ignorant and backward. I get letters saying I represent the most ignorant counties they've ever known. But they aren't. It's just they're mountain people... you can't really call 'em hillbillies... They're just mountain people. It's just the people are afraid of something of the unknown, especially in my district... and their voice is mine. I'm all they have... and their voice is overwhelmingly against it."

"Have you been under a lot of pressure?"

"A very great deal of pressure," she said softly. "You see, a legislator is not cold. We have a heart. And many, many times we have lay there at night and thought, you know, what is the best thing? What in the world is the best thing for the state?... And you are... you're under pressure from your own self because you do want to make the right decision."

She looked up from her lap, her dark eyes trained on those across from her.

"So what do you suggest we do?" she pleaded, sincerely. "You're young, you're alert... (Someone says she's in a bad

position)... you're wise. They asked one senator and he said, 'Well, half my friends are for it and half are against it... so I'm gonna stay with my friends.' (Laugh) You know you can't do that... you've got to vote. I'm all my people have."

Defeat

Why was ERA defeated in North Carolina?

Orange County Senator A.B. "Lonnie" Coleman, one of the bill's original sponsors, sat cross legged on the wooden railing around the senate chamber.

"I think the reason most people vote against it is simply because they think men and women will have to use the same bathrooms and that sort of thing," he said. "I think they think the legislatures and the courts and the Congress will be without any authority to deal with people based on differences in abilities and physical characteristics, and I think their fears are honest in this respect. I don't think they are just lying in bed trying to see what arguments they can generate against this."

What will happen now that the bill has failed in North Carolina?

"It will just be an issue for next year's campaign again," Coleman answered. "This bill can be ratified anytime within seven years after it was passed by the U.S. Congress."

Future

Since 1789, more than 5,500 resolutions to amend the Constitution have been advanced to Congress. Most of them died, including proposals to change the name of the United States of America to the United States of the Earth (USE for short), choose the president by lot, and replace the president and vice president with a three-person ruling council.

Should it pass, ERA will be only the 17th addition to the Constitution since the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in 1791.

President Nixon, Governor Holshouser, Lt. Governor Hunt — all support it. So did the late Alabama governor Lurleen Wallace.

Thirty states have ratified it; at least 11 have rejected it. Several, including Tennessee, Idaho and Nebraska passed it and are considering rescinding it. It needs at least eight more states.

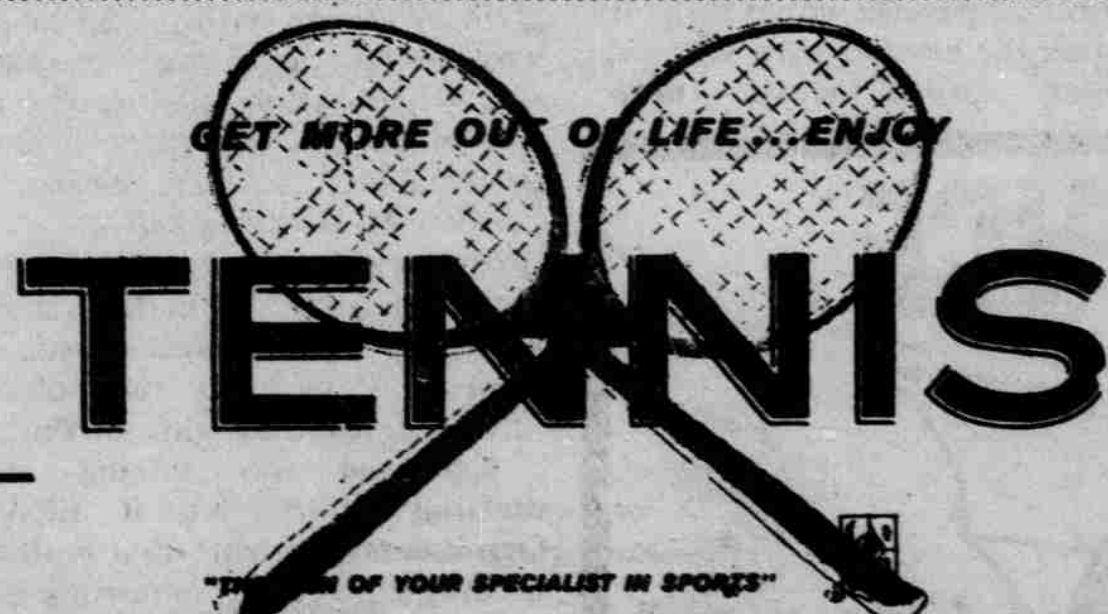
ERA can be kept alive six more years. But no Constitutional amendment has ever been ratified later than one year after it was approved by Congress.

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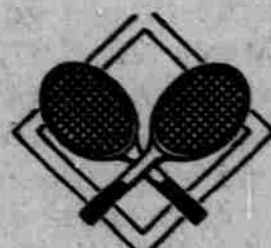
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