

Womanpower Emerges in Miami Beach

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'A RIGHT TO INVOLVEMENT' —Marlo Thomas, Marv Clarke, Los Angeles, and Estelle Chaeon, San Diego, from left, huddle during women's rally in Miami Beach.



'FEELING OF WOMANPOWER' —Gloria Steinem, left, and Rep. Bella Abzug address women's rally. They demand women at all government levels.
Times photos by James H. Pickrell via AP Wirephoto

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BY MARLENE CIMONS

Times Staff Writer

MIAMI BEACH—The room was crowded with cheering women talking politics, and the spirit was not unlike that of another meeting that took place a year ago this week.

At that time, the weekend of July 10-11 in Washington, D.C., a group of about 300 activists from 26 states, young and middle-aged of both political parties, came together to create a political arm of the women's movement, the National Women's Political Caucus.

There was a lot of disagreement then and the session stretched into the night as the women debated ideas and ideology, but they finally agreed that women had a right to substantive involve-

ments in the political process, a process which had excluded most women until then unless they were willing to make coffee or stuff envelopes.

The organization followed, along with a plan that mobilized women in 48 states. This week, at the Democratic National Convention, the results of the year's work are in dramatic evidence.

According to the Democratic National Committee, 1,173 delegates are women, 38% of the 3,099 total. This figure was 13% in 1968 and 1984, and 11% in 1960. At this time there is a Women's Rights Plank in the party platform and there are new rules to insure women's meaningful participation in future conventions.

"It's been a little bit like pushing marbles through a sieve—and it means the sieve will never be the same again," Gloria Steinem, a member of

the Caucus policy council, told the group of women delegates Monday.

"We have arranged the issues of women and concentrated efforts on getting you here. Now that you are here, we have to make sure that you aren't only on the convention floor, but that you are also in those smoke-filled rooms where the decisions are going to be made."

To that end, the Caucus has brought its organization here and has put together an operation to inform and educate all women delegates on the women's issues that are going to be raised this week—regardless of the delegates' commitments on candidates. They have their own organization on the convention floor—much as the presidential candidates do.

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"We've got our own body of women contacts and hope we can bring to this convention its first real feeling of womanpower," said Rep. Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.), another member of the policy council.

"We believe that no candidate can be nominated without recognizing that we are entitled to have in the Cabinet of the United States women in equal ratios to men, women in the judiciary and in all levels of administrative and governmental posts. We will demand this of the nominee."

Potential Strength

Apparently, the candidates recognized the potential strength of the women delegates here. They came Monday to address the NWPC rally and spoke to about 1,000 women.

Rep. Shirley Chisholm and Sen. George S. McGovern, appearing separately, were greeted with rousing cheers, standing ovations and chants of "We want Shirley" and "We want George."

"If the women of America are going to unite, you have the glorious opportunity of using me for the betterment of all the segments of society," Mrs. Chisholm said. "We are not going to do anything unless we do it for ourselves."

Sen. McGovern, rather than discuss women's issues, addressed himself to the California challenge, stressing that a large bloc of women delegates were going to lose their seats if it was upheld on the floor. "Every single candidate who entered the California primary knew what the rules were before they entered," he said.

Sen. Hubert Humphrey

listed his Senate achievements in the area of human rights, and said: "I urged the President in 1966—not in 1972—to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court."

At stake for women this week will be the approval of various convention rules and platform planks which apply to them, along with consideration of a minority report on abortion and reproduction which was not included in the platform. It reads, "In matters relating to human reproduction, each person's right to privacy, freedom of choice and individual conscience should be fully respected consistent with relevant Supreme Court decisions."

The women are divided over this one. Some feel it does not go far enough. Others feel that abortion and reproduction should be kept out of the campaign entirely.

"It is politically pragmatic to leave it out," said actress Shirley MacLaine, a McGovern supporter and a member of the Democratic Platform Committee. "I am against abortion legislation and I feel strongly about the issue, but I am more concerned with the candidate and the election. It was a terrible decision to swallow, but I had to do it."

Others would like the plank to be more assertive

than it is. "We don't think it's such a hot minority plank," one delegate said. "Some of us don't like—or trust—the Supreme Court. That last phrase really bothers me."

Rita Herbert, a delegate from New Jersey, represents the other extreme. "I'm against abortion and whenever it comes up, I would like to say that I am against it."

The women's plank of the Democratic Party platform contains 16 items which will come up for a floor vote and the NWPC—as well as other women's rights groups—are supporting them. Among them are:

—A priority effort to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.

—Elimination of discrimination against women in public accommodations, public facilities, public education, federally assisted programs and federally contracted employment.

—Full enforcement of all federal statutes and executive laws barring job discrimination on the basis of sex.

—Elimination of all tax inequities, such as higher taxes for single women.

—Amendment of the Internal Revenue Code to permit families to deduct housekeeping and child care expenses as legitimate business expenses.

—Federal government financing of comprehensive development child care programs which will be family centered, locally

controlled and universally available.

—Appointment of women to positions of top responsibility in all branches of the federal government to achieve an equitable ratio of women and men.

Woman Candidate

Another possibility, which women here have been discussing, is an on-the-floor nomination of a woman for vice president.

Betty Friedan, founder of the National Organization for Women, is organizing a committee to put Rep. Chisholm's name in nomination. Other names which have been mentioned include Rep. Martha Griffiths of Michigan, Ms. Steinem and Rep. Abzug. "Any of us is available for nomination," Rep. Abzug said.