

HCWPC

Harris County Women's Political Caucus
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NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 1975

ERA UPDATE

By Barbara L. Williams

Many HCWPC members have visited their legislators during the month of December to discuss the ERA. Most reports were optimistic--the legislators would rather not deal with the issue since no matter how they vote, they will be alienating a portion of their constituency and since the issue will take up a great deal of valuable time needed for researching other bills. However, several legislators report that they are receiving much mail on the ERA. Ron Waters' office, for example, reports that more mail has been received on the ERA than on any other single issue. For some districts, the "anti" mail exceeds the "pro" mail by a 40-to-1 majority. Conclusion--WE NEED TO INCREASE THE PRESSURE--WRITE A LETTER OR POSTCARD TODAY.

The holidays produced a slack in the number of ERA letters to the Houston newspaper editors. Just when I was beginning to feel that we'd worn out the opposition, I noticed that another "anti" letter appeared in the Chronicle Viewpoints column. We need to respond to these letters and re-iterate the separation of issues. The ERA does not mean federally-sponsored day care centers, creeping communism, birth control, loss of jobs for men, abortion or any number of other issues the opposition associates with it. Remember, the ERA was a natural conclusion to the 19th Amendment. Once women gained the right to vote, they deserved the right to be included in the Constitution. The ERA will give them that right.

Texas for ERA--the statewide coalition of many civic and women's clubs--met in Austin January 4th. The Coalition agreed to continue to fight the rescission movement. An ERA coordinator will continue to gather information about opposition activities, to keep a headcount on the legislators and to communicate with citizens all over the state who support the ERA. A press conference will be held in Austin when the Coalition meets in February. For further information about Texas for ERA, call Barbara Williams at 528-4141 (X734).

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Locally, there have been several public forums on the ERA. Ellen Mendoza of the League of Women Voters appeared on the Viewpoints program in early December and debated Wanda Schultz (representing Happiness of Womanhood) on Issues and Answers just before Christmas. Pam Pitt and Kathy Whitmire represented the HCWPC on the Lesley Davis Talk Show (KILT) in response to a previous program by Wanda Schultz on the John Birch Society (it seems that Wanda wears many hats!!) Pam and Kathy were bombarded with many, many "anti" ERA comments, soliloquies, and hostile questions. Pam, Kathy and Ellen deserve our heartiest thanks for a job well done while on the firing line!!!

On January 6th many Caucus members attended a forum on the ERA presented by the Women's Rights Committee of District 84. Representing the pro position were Kathy Whitmire from HCWPC, Ruth Milburn from Common Cause and Ellen Mendoza from the League of Women Voters. The anti position was represented by Wanda Schultz (this time, Happiness of Womanhood) and Irene Slovak (Committee to Restore Women's Rights). Though several Birchers and other "anti" supporters were present, there was a substantial "pro" audience. The high point of the evening was Wanda Schultz's answer to an audience question about how the ERA would benefit men. Her reply: "How many of you men here want to be impotent? I have here a statement linking increasing women's rights with increasing impotence in men." Enough said about the level of sophistication of the opposition's arguments. Mostly emotionalism and fear. Thanks to Marcie Keith and Gloria Smith from Herman Lauhoff's office for organizing the forum.

What can we do now? First, keep those letters, phone calls and postcards going to the legislators. Remember to place pressure on both the Senators and Representatives. Urge their re-affirmation of the ERA. Next support our statewide lobbying efforts--

1. with monetary donations--earmarked for lobbying and channeled through the HCWPC treasurer, Sylvia Garcia.
2. with information about your legislators--keep the state office in Austin informed about local ERA events and the most recent opinions, statements or actions of our local legislators concerning the ERA. A pattern found in other states that have rescinded ratification shows that strong supporters begin to waver under heavy anti-mail at the last minute, then they vote to rescind.

We must remember that the opposition is organized and active--we are also, and we have to keep on top of the situation.

(Ed.'s note: Your newsletter this time includes ERA postcards to be sent to your legislators. If you've already bombarded yours with calls, cards and letters, consider forwarding the cards to your cousin Jane out yonder in Ruralville--where the legislators probably haven't been getting such a strong pro-ERA message as in Houston!)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

by Margaret Buchorn

The United Nations has proclaimed that 1975 is International Women's Year, to honor women throughout the world and strengthen their position. HCWPC was invited to participate in an organizational meeting convened by Carol Groppe at the local U.N.A. UNICEF Center, December 7, 1974 to plan Houston/Harris Co. observance of IWY. Carol Groppe was elected Harris County Chairwoman. Margaret Buchorn and Gloria Guardiola represented the H.C.W.P.C. at this meeting, and Margaret Buchorn has continued on the steering committee's subsequent meetings, along with Olga Soliz and Cilia Estrada. The International Women's Year will be celebrated throughout 1975; each month will be designated to honor a particular group of women. As time is so short our initial thrust was an all out effort for January 11, 1975 "Launch Day" (in honor of Amelia Earheart). January is the month of women in space, aviation and environmental protection.

Saturday January 11 was celebrated by 3 functions: a kite-flying contest in Hermann Park; a formal program at the Rice Hotel which was keynoted by Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, our honorary chairwoman of the year, and included a panel of women from aviation, environmental protection, and the consular corps; and a fundraising cocktail party with an exhibit of the works of 15 Harris Co. women artists at the Contemporary Arts Museum.

As one of the organizations cooperating in the local celebration, the HCWPC membership is urged to participate in the various opportunities planned throughout the year to honor ourselves and our sisters. The I.W.Y. gives us a rallying point around which to gather women whose feminist consciousness has not yet been awakened.

Each cooperating organization has been asked for a minimum financial contribution of \$25. Individual contributions from members are very welcome. Make checks payable to: I.W.Y.-'75. And mail to Carol Groppe, UNA of Houston, 2813 Westheimer, Houston, 77006.

If you have any questions, call Ms. Buchorn at 792-3216 (bus.) or 772-1592 (home).

MARIA ISABEL BARRENO

In the spirit of International Women's Year, Maria Isabel Barreno is coming to town. As you all know, Ms. Barreno is the Portuguese feminist whose book—co-authored with the other two of the "3 Marias", Maria Teresa Horta and Maria Fatima Velho da Costa—on the situation of women in Portugal aroused storms of criticism under the former Portuguese government. The subsequent suppression of the book, the 3 Marias' narrow avoidance of prison and eventual acquittal elicited the support of feminists worldwide. The 3 Marias' New Portuguese Letters is just now being published for the first time in the U.S. (Doubleday, \$10).

Ms. Barreno's stay in Houston will cover January 27-30. You can meet and talk with her at a wine and cheese-tasting party at the Women's Center, Monday, January 27, 8 PM on. Admission is \$2 — and Ms. Barreno will also autograph your copy of her book. Other speaking engagements are being planned for her around the city, including an autograph session at the University Blvd. Bookstore, 2437 University Blvd., Tuesday, January 28, 6-8 PM.

Volunteers are needed to provide transportation around Houston for Ms. Barreno: phone Olga Soliz, 524-5005, or 748-7573 (bus.) to volunteer. If you want to help plan for the visit of this Portuguese feminist, come to the ad hoc committee meetings at 3 PM, Women's Center, Sundays January 19 and 26.

TEXAS CAUCUS HIRES A LOBBYIST

by Kathy Whitmire

The 1975 session of the Texas Legislature opened on Tuesday, January 14, and the Texas Womens Political Caucus intends to have a voice in the work of this session. As authorized by the December meeting of the TWPC policy council, the administrative committee interviewed applicants for the position of TWPC lobbyist and voted to hire Gretchen Raatz to lobby for women's issues during this session.

Gretchen is a member of the Austin Caucus and is a partner in an Austin law firm. All members of the administrative committee were impressed with her qualifications and believe she will represent us well.

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TEXAS CAUCUS HIRES A LOBBYIST continued

The following issues have been set as priorities for our lobby effort: 1) defense of the equal rights amendment, 2) child care, 3) rape, 4) credit, 5) defense of the supreme court stand on abortion, 6) education, 7) formation of Commission on the Status of Women, 8) formation of state utilities commission, and 9) consumer protection. Gretchen will be calling on local caucus members to present testimony on these issues at committee hearings and to contact our own legislators before critical votes. So -- now is the time for each caucus member to become an "expert" on the issues of particular interest to her!

Caucus members can be proud that the TWPC has taken the lead in establishing a significant lobby effort for women's issues. However, the hiring of a professional lobbyist is a major financial commitment. Many of the issues we have set as priorities are also important issues to other women's organizations. Now that the caucus has taken the initial steps of hiring a lobbyist and making plans for the lobbying program, we are confident that other organizations will be willing to help provide financial support as well as helping with the womanpower requirements to reach our common legislative goals.

Earlier this year the TWPC established a lobby fund and at this time the fund contains about one-half of the money needed to finance the lobby effort through the end of the session in May. Much of this money has been raised through the efforts of individual members who have solicited contributions from women who may not be members of the caucus, although they are concerned about women's issues. Other contributions have come from local caucuses. Dedicated efforts of each member of TWPC will be needed to raise the remainder of the money for a successful lobbying program.

FEMINIST CREDIT UNION IN HOUSTON

by Kathy Whitmire

Feminist credit unions are already operating in Detroit, New Haven and Dallas. Some of us believe it's time we started one in Houston.

The initial meeting of feminists who want to start a credit union will be held within the next two weeks. If you are interested in helping, please call Kathy Whitmire at 521-0649 (or 228-9531) or call Laura at 528-3631.

RAPE CRISIS COALITION

The coalition anticipates publication of a brochure on rape--prevention of, and what to expect if--and needs willing hands to fold and staple. To volunteer yours, call Alice Shrader at 926-5809.

Plans for February include a workshop for training women to accompany rape victims through hospital, police, and court procedures, and for training women as phone answerers. Time and place will be announced; for more info, call Bette Ann Knoll at 493-4656.

The coalition needs volunteers to go to court in January as observers in rape trials. To volunteer, call Kathy Parker at 795-5350.

Regular coalition meeting times are the first Tuesday (business meeting) and third Tuesday (program meeting) of each month. For more information, call HCWPC's representative on the coalition, Peggy Hall, 528-3424.

ENDORSEMENTS

In the special election of January 11, the lobbying and candidate rating committee recommended a dual endorsement of Cecil Bush and Eugene Mendoza for state senator, dist. 6, and no endorsement in the race for state representative, dist. 96.

COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN

CLUW will hold a members-only election at 7pm on Thursday, January 16, at the Teamsters' Hall, 3100 Katy Fwy. At 8pm, after the election, Joan Suarez will speak on the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' contract, which includes a day care provision.

MEMBERSHIP '75

Time's running out for you '74 caucus members who haven't renewed for 1975. Your last year's membership in the local caucus (which includes this newsletter!) will be carried to convention time in March. BUT all TWPC memberships (including state newsletter) which are not renewed by the end of January will be DROPPED by state.

To keep current with what's happening on the state level (especially crucial right now with the threat to the ERA), keep your TWPC membership current--and HCWPC needs you, too. Fill out and send in your membership renewal today.

AND SPEAKING OF THE CONVENTION...

March is just around the corner, and that means the HCWPC convention is coming up. We've got to make this one the best (and best-attended) ever--the success of caucus endeavors in '75 really depends on the enthusiasm and re-dedication generated by the convention. This is our year: we've no time to waste.

EVERYONE INTERESTED IN HELPING TO PLAN THE CONVENTION IS ASKED TO MEET WED. JANUARY 29, 7:30pm AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER--THIS MEANS YOU!!!

CONTEMPORARY WOMAN SERIES

Last September 1974 a program of workshops, the Contemporary Woman series, was initiated by the Continuing Education Center, University of Houston, coordinated by Dr. Alice E. Whatley. The initial offerings were based on a national review of credit free program topics most often associated with continuing education for women: self-discovery and growth, academic degree completion, employment, volunteer service.

Spring 1975 program plans include repeating the initial fall workshops as well as new offerings associated with cultural appreciation, individual and family development, career development, community issues, and other topics. Additionally, workshops and conferences will be designed on all levels for individuals and groups requesting assistance in meeting specific continuing education needs.

The following 3 workshops will begin in January, followed by other workshops being initiated each month: The Contemporary Woman: Academic Opportunities (January 22-February 12, 4 Weds. 9:30-11:45 AM, \$20 per person); Alternatives (January 21- March 11, 8 Tues. 9:30-11:45 AM, \$40 per person); Second Career (January 23- March 13, 8 Thurs. 9:30-11:45 AM, \$40 per person).

Early registration by mail is encouraged and preferred. For additional information, phone 749-4247.

*****QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CAUCUS? CALL ONE OF THESE PEOPLE*****

Chair: Barbara Lane Farley, 461-6075.

Co-chair: Peggy Hall, 528-3424.

Vice-chair internal: Suzanne Marshall, 523-9024; 224-5441 x61.

" " external: Kathy Whitmire, 521-0649; 228-9531 (w).

Secretary: Susan Heavey, 528-5168; 691-2283 x40.

Treasurer: Sylvia Garcia, 529-7860; 225-0521 (w).

Committee chairs: Election of feminist candidates: Pam Pitt, 523-9647.

City pledges: Olga Soliz, 524-5005; 748-7573 (w).

Political action: Peggy Kress, 772-8559.

Affirmative action: Patty Payne, 668-4600.

Lobbying and candidate rating: Dianne Richards, 664-4929.

Membership and information: Susan Carlman, 524-5531.

Sexuality and reproduction: open

Funding: Harla Kaplan, 772-4987.

Cilia Estrada, 682-3575; 222-8949 (w).

FEMINISCELLANEAFILM RECOMMENDATION - by Barbara Williams

The newest Bergman film Scenes from a Marriage is playing at the Galleria. Film notes appearing in August, 1974 Ms. did not do justice to the feminist statements the film made -- I highly recommend it.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN is the topic of a research project being conducted by Caucus member Barbara Williams. The project is being done as her PhD dissertation in Sociology at Rice University. Many Caucus members will be asked to participate in the research during the next few months. The HCWPC Policy Council approved the research proposal last spring and has given full support to a project which will gather much needed data about women and politics.

WHAT'S NEWS? Deadline for the Feb. newsletter will be Jan. 28. Brief announcements (meeting times, etc.) may be phoned to Barbara Marcus at 528-2525. Longer news items should be written out and either (a) mailed to the editor, Suzanne Marshall, 1842 Kipling, Houston 77006; (b) handed to Suzanne; (c) put in the HCWPC vice-chair internal/newsletter box at the Women's Center.

If you can suggest events or actions that should be in the newsletter, or if you want to help get the newsletter out, call Suzanne at 523-9024, or 224-5441 X61.

Chicana Caucus News

by Olga Y. Soliz

The first Mexican American Women's Conference sponsored by Lulac will be held in Phoenix, Arizona on January 31, 1975 through February 2, 1975.

Elma Barrera will cover this historical event for the Mexican American Women of this nation.

LULAC at its District meeting passed a resolution supporting the ERA Amendment.

A Mexican American Lobbying office has been established by the Mexican Americans of the State of Texas. Margaret Gonzalez from Friendswood sits on the Executive Committee, Leonel Castillo is the present chairman.

CALENDAR

- 1-15: policy council. 7:30 PM, Women's Center. Peggy Hall and Helen Copitka will discuss the Community Development Act.
- 1-21,22,23: beginning of Contemporary Woman Series workshops, Continuing Education Center, U. of H. 9:30-11:45 AM. For more information, call 749-4247.
- 1-22: program meeting: 7:30 PM, Women's Center. Women who ran/worked in recent elections will share their experience and expertise.
- 1-23: conversation with Carter Heyward (one of 11 women ordained priests last July by 3 Episcopal bishops), sponsored by the Nat'l Conference of Christians and Jews. 7:30 PM, Central Presbyterian Church, 3788 Richmond. NCCJ asks that those planning to attend drop a card to Nat'l Conference of Christians and Jews, 1310 McDuffie, Suite 27, Houston 77019. If you have any questions, call NCCJ at 526-4957.
- 1-24: nationally-known feminists Karen DeCrow (NOW national president) and Aileen Hernandez speaking at 8 PM, U. of H., Krost Hall.
- 1-27: wine and cheese-tasting party to meet Maria Isabel Barreno. 8 PM, Women's Center. Admission \$2.
- 1-28: Meet Maria Isabel Barreno and have her autograph your copy of her book, 6-8 PM., University Blvd. Bookstore, 2437 University Blvd.
- 1-29: meeting to plan HCWPC Convention. 7:30 PM, Women's Center. EVERYBODY COME!

CLIP AND MAIL FORM TO: MEMBERSHIP, HCWPC, 3602 MILAM, HOUSTON 77006
Make checks payable to HCWPC.

NAME _____ PRECINCT NO. _____
ADDRESS & CITY _____ ZIP _____
HOME PHONE _____ OFFICE PHONE _____

___ Enclosed is \$12.50 for state(TWPC) and local(HCWPC) membership through all of 1975.

___ Enclosed is \$17.50 for national(NWPC), state(TWPC), and local (HCWPC) membership through all of 1975.

___ Enclosed is \$7.50. I need to waive \$5 of my 1975 state dues.

___ I need to waive all dues. Attached statement gives my reason.

___ I am interested in the following committees: ___ funding;
___ political action; ___ affirmative action; ___ lobbying and
candidate rating; ___ sexuality and reproduction; ___ membership

Send HCWPC information to the following names. (Please enclose 30¢ or three 10¢ stamps for each to cover the cost of sending 3 newsletters, if possible.)

NAME _____ ADDRESS, ZIP _____
NAME _____ ADDRESS, ZIP _____
NAME _____ ADDRESS, ZIP _____

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Houston, Tx 77002

