

AJC Supports Women

NEW YORK--The American Jewish Congress announced support of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment barring discrimination based on sex. At the same time, the Jewish organization said it would undertake a study of the role of women in Jewish law and tradition to determine "if rights and obligations assigned on the basis of sex and considered enlightened at the time are appropriate and adequate to the needs of Jewish life today."

In a resolution, the Jewish group declared:

"As we support the right of every American to achieve his or her maximum potential as a human being without regard to religion, race or ethnic origin, so we support the same right for every American without regard to sex."

"We firmly believe that a constitutional amendment is needed to establish securely the principle that 'roles' in life may not, with the permission of government, be imposed upon either sex by institutions of American society laboring in 1971 under the misapprehensions and prejudices of earlier centuries and earlier societies."

The resolution, adopted by the organization's policy-making national Governing Council, said that the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments were "inadequate to insure that American women share fully in the rights, privileges, benefits and obligations of the society."

The Equal Rights Amendment, currently awaiting Senate action, states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Esther Polen of Philadelphia, a national vice president of the Congress' Women's Division who presented the resolution, said the proposed Amendment would help end "legally sanctioned discrimination" and reflect "a national commitment to the ideal of equality between the sexes."

The resolution quoted a 1967 Idaho Supreme Court decision awarding the administration of a son's estate to his father rather than his mother on the ground that "...nature itself has established the distinction... The legislature when it enacted this statute evidently concluded that in general, men are better qualified to act as an administrator than are women."

The American Jewish Congress said:

"It is too easy for the courts to treat men and women as physiological unequals and therefore to deny equal treatment. The proposed amendment would be a national commitment to the ideal of equality between the sexes."

The resolution noted that the American Jewish Congress had "listened to and considered the arguments of those opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment on the ground that hard-won 'protective legislation' for women, especially

working women, would be threatened by the Equal Rights Amendment."

The organization had concluded, however, that "more is to be gained than lost in this area by passage of the proposed amendment." The resolution declared:

Support for the Equal Rights Amendment was recommended to the Congress by its Women's Division following the division convention earlier this year. The position was adopted at a meeting in Stephen Wise Congress House attended by some 200 members of the Governing Council, more than half of them men.

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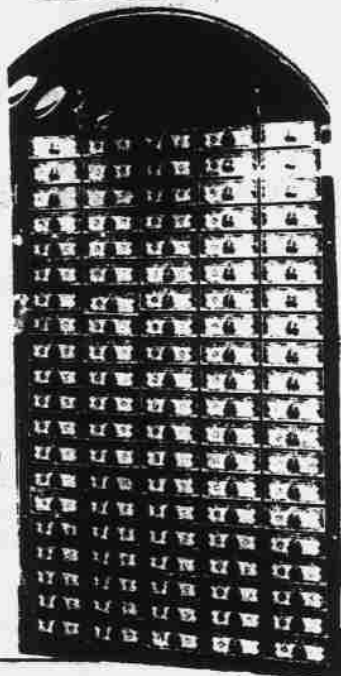
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