

# ERA - Wounded But Not Dead

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

Pollsters tell us that two of every three Americans, when asked how they regard the Equal Rights Amendment, would like to see it approved. Indeed, one of the most recent soundings indicates a slightly higher proportion of men favor it than do women.

But now that proponents have lost the battle because only 35 instead of the required 38 state legislatures voted for the proposal, fighters for women's rights must regroup.

Advice is coming in from all directions. Phyllis Schlafly, who personifies feminine opposition to ERA, is tickled pink. She and her STOP ERA key workers in 41 states figure the battle for the proposed Amendment XXVI is over. Heralding her personal victory at a press conference in the federal building named for Everett Dirksen, a long time senatorial foe of civil rights legislation, she hoisted a victory flag, proclaimed ERA dead, and referred to the defeat as a great plus for the nation.

It may come as a surprise then to foes of ERA that Senator Bob Packwood (R, Oregon) and Paul E. Tsongas (D, Mass.) have already jumped ahead with plans to revive the issue.

In the Senate Judiciary Committee and in other key Congressional bastions, the renewal movement is stirring. Statesmen who follow trends carefully realize that when Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW (National Organization For Women) says the 200,000 enrolled in that unit are seeing a million dollars a month rolling in, they are impelled to listen.

Besides, they know a promising issue when it takes shape. They won't forget that the drive to achieve not only political equality but also economic equality for women is now nearly 60 years old.

Nor are they unmindful of the fact that the amendment probably would have been attached to the Constitution by now had it not been for the recent rise of the New Right, paced by the Moral Majority, and other forces determined to put their stamp of approval or disapproval on socio-political concerns of the day. Many contend that the Constitution should not be cluttered up with a special blessing for women's rights while, paradoxically, they are determined to end abortions and get prayers in public schools by the same amendment route.

What to do then?  
One Harvard sage, Professor Paul A. Freund,

who started his climb to legal wisdom as a clerk to Mr. Justice Brandeis, recommends that efforts should be focused on legislation against sex discrimination under the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. His advice is valued by many who regard him as a giant in the unending battle for minority rights.

In this time of recovery from defeat, ERA leaders seem inclined first of all to follow Jack Kennedy's prescription for progress after a setback: "don't get mad; get even." Thanks to the strength of their campaign to politicize their movement at many levels, they are bent on electing more women to office at city, state, and national levels. They are encouraged by the fact that Chicago, Houston, and San Francisco now have mayors of their preferred gender in office.

They also have made a hit list of more than 200 male officeholders who opposed their cause; and they have interesting news for them.

President Reagan is clearly targeted should he decide to seek re-election. ERA leaders will not forget that the 1980 platform on which he campaigned turned abruptly away from 40 years of supporting their proposal. They hold sharply in focus the protest of Republican Committee Co-Chairman Mary D. Crisp, who, when her party leaders abandoned the amendment, warned "We are about to bury the rights of over 100,000,000 American women under a heap of platitudes." This was right before she left the dais.

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged or denied by the United States or any state on account of sex," is the proposed amendment. It's not adjoined to the Constitution yet. But there are stirring days ahead.

## REAGAN SAYS "NO DEADLINE"

WASH. (WNS) -- President Reagan again refused to be drawn into a condemnation of Israel this time for its bombardment of West Beirut. "There's nothing we would like to see more than to see an end to the bloodshed and the shelling," Reagan said in his nationally televised press conference from the White House.

But he reminded a questioner who asked about "the day after day" bombing and shelling by the Israelis that "it's also been two-way. The PLO has been, and in some instances has been the first, to break the cease-fire."

Reagan reiterated the U.S. goals in Lebanon as "the exodus

of the armed PLO out of Beirut and out of Lebanon.... We want the central government of Lebanon to once again, after several years of almost dissolution to once again be the authority with a military force, not several militias belonging to the various factions in Lebanon and then we want the foreign forces -- Israeli and Syrian -- out of Lebanon."

The president praised his special envoy Philip Habib for doing a "magnificent job" in trying to accomplish these goals but said he could not give specific details because the negotiations are "sensitive." Reagan said he would also not say "who might be providing the stumbling blocks toward achieving these goals. But he noted another cease-fire has gone into effect and stressed that "there are no deadlines that have been set of any kind." A report that Habib promised Israeli Premier Menachem Begin to provide him by Friday with assurances from the PLO that it will leave Lebanon had been taken by some here as an Israeli deadline for an end to negotiations.

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