



No longer 'men only'



'Women... may make... politics more humane'

More and more women are assuming positions of power. Will their entry make politics more respectable — or are the differences between male and female politicians only skin-deep?

In this article, the last in a series, political consultant Jeff Greenfield takes a hard look at the political system and tells whether he thinks women can improve it.

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By JEFF GREENFIELD

The male-only world of inside politicking is over. The women's movement, whatever else it has done, has made it impossible to

and paranoia that surrounds virtually all campaigns. No matter how idealistic the cause, no matter how noble the candidate, no matter how much a campaign begins in the communal warmth of a fireside folk sing, sooner or later mistrust and power struggles consume as much energy as the business of winning an election.

Instead of questions like, "Who's organizing the suburbs?" and, "Who's doing the press release on transportation?" the campaign

secret meetings because they're afraid to expose their vulnerability. When they go inside and close the door, there's a sense of power. Maybe they think that 'if she sees us with our clothes off, indecisive or confused, she won't think we're special anymore.'

Viewing women's exclusion from a less charitable angle, Gloria Steinem observes: "The presence of a woman in a male group devalues the syndrome . . . As soon as a woman can do it, too, it literally devalues the whole function, whatever it is."

There's at least a chance then that women will bring into the political arena a capacity

Conclusion of a series

escort women to the exit sign when the tactical and strategic political decisions are being made. Further, the pool of political talent is getting more "integrated" every day.

When I was in law school, barely 5 per cent of my class was female. Now, top law schools routinely have 25 to 40 per cent of their classes populated by women. Since lawyers play a dominant role in politics — both as candidates and strategists — the American political world will inevitably become more "feminized."

What is this going to mean to politics? If we're talking about the way the country is run, not much. While most women who have entered public life have been liberal Democrats, there is no such thing as a "women's view" of foreign policy or race relations or taxation. The most prominent woman politician in Massachusetts, Louise Day Hicks, has built her career on militant opposition to racial busing. The two women who have served as United States Senators, Margaret Chase Smith and Maurine Newberger, were of different parties and philosophies; Ms. Neuberger, a liberal Democrat, was an ardent foe of nuclear testing, while Ms. Smith was a moderate Republican who voted against the nuclear test ban treaty in 1963.

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NOT IS THERE any reason to believe that political women are going to be more honest than political men. Rep. Margaret Hecker of Massachusetts says that "you can't point to a corrupt woman in government . . . and I suspect they are going to be very hard to find, because even in politics, women are very different from men." But I am confident that as soon as women develop the self-confidence that comes with political power and experience, they will prove as skillful in the art of diverting public money and private graft as their male counterparts.

Women who hold public office are no less controlled by circumstance and constituencies than are men. The first Congresswoman from North Carolina will still be representing tobacco interests; a Michigan Democrat must be on good terms with the United Auto Workers whether the prefix is Mr. or Ms. And a chief executive must work within budget limits, as illustrated by Connecticut's Governor Ella Grasso. Elected with strong support from public employes, she is now locked in political struggle with them, insisting on either a longer workday or massive layoffs. There is nothing intrinsically masculine or feminine about avoiding deficits or cutting back social services.

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NONETHELESS, the increased presence of women in politics may well change the nature of the enterprise — not so much in how the Congress votes or how states spend money, but in the way our political campaigns are run.

The most depressing fact about the world of politics is the cloud of suspicion, hostility



offices start echoing with the real concerns of staff members: "Who did the candidate have lunch with today?" "How come Haversham got his picture in the newspaper and I didn't?" "Why wasn't I invited to the meeting on bulletin board arranging?"

Women are not exempt from these jealousies. Indeed, it often happens that a woman who does fight to the top of the campaign structure finds herself the object of jealousy from other women.

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"WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT from birth to compete with each other," says Betsy Wright of the National Women's Education Fund. "It's a miracle there isn't more jealousy than there is now."

But because of cultural conditioning, if nothing else, women talk about their emotions and their feelings more openly and more honestly than men — particularly men who gravitate toward the feverishly competitive world of politics. For a lot of men I've worked with in campaigns, politics is a surrogate world; it takes the place of a good marriage or a sense of purpose; it's a safe way to get rid of aggressive instincts. (In politics, after all, there is always an enemy: the other candidate. In that respect, politics is a paranoid's dream.)

The virtues that seem most admired in campaigns are crisp efficiency and cold-bloodedness, the ability to make tactical judgments and manage crises without collapsing under the strain — or even indicating that there is a strain.

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THIS IMAGE of the supercool pro, in fact, may be one reason why some men are hostile to the presence of women in high campaign roles. Says one woman, "It's almost as if some men are reluctant to let us into their

for emotional honesty that is now almost totally lacking; that they will be able to recognize personal animosities growing up in a campaign and resolve them before they poison the atmosphere.

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I HAVE SEEN intelligent and perceptive political workers turn purely personal disputes into major ideological clashes (often over matters as "crucial" as the color of a brochure), without ever recognizing what was actually going on. With more women in politics, this kind of clash might lessen . . . if only because, as it now stands, it's all but unthinkable for a "political pro" to confront a campaign colleague openly with his emotions.

Women seem more attuned to the feelings of subordinates than men; perhaps because in politics, this kind of clash might lessen ordinate jobs for so long. Politics can be a nerve-racking experience, and more than once a staff member has simply snapped under the strain. Almost invariably, it's the women in a campaign who first recognize the signs of tension, depression or emotional exhaustion in campaign workers, while the men are absorbed in more "important" activities . . . like getting their names in the papers.

So while the presence of more women in political life may not lessen the chances of war and poverty and crime as facts of our times, sexual desegregation of politics will not only provide career ladders for women they would not otherwise find — it may also make the process of politics a little more humane and decent than it is now. And as this election year gets underway, that's more than enough reason to take the "Men" sign off the doors of political campaigns.

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Congress climbs on platform

By GENE BERNHARDT

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Political party platforms are generally considered to be the most heavily debated, least read and hardly ever followed documents to come out of the quadrennial conventions.

Now one of the greatest debating bodies in the world — Congress — wants to get into the act of drafting the Democrats' platform for 1976. And why not? If you can believe the polls not many people think much of what Congress does anyway.

But the idea has merit for those who think party platforms are important, since the bulk of the goals, proposals and promises depend on Congressional action.

"Our aim should be to develop the basis for a platform that the members of Congress, the presidential candidate and the majority of our party can embrace to the greatest extent possible," said Speaker Carl Albert last June when he instructed chairmen of all 21 standing committees of the House

to come up with proposals to be put before the platform committee.

"Up of now members of the House of Representatives have had little or only incidental input into the Democratic platform on which you run," Albert told the chairmen in what has to be an understatement. Party leaders as well as the rank and file members treat congressmen like unwanted guests at conventions.

So the idea of at least one body of Congress — the senate was not constituted by Albert and has shown little if any interest in the project — going to the party and saying, "Here fellows, this is what we think should and can be passed in the next Congress regardless if our man wins or not," has merit.

Albert himself plans to present the finished product to the platform committee at its hearings in Washington starting June 14. His reception by the rank and file on the committee is certain to be polite, and, if the panel has any sense, it will also pay attention.