

leaders who had been at the meeting. "They are the conduits to their organizations. We have to break them down into Congressional districts and get them moving."

The work accomplished at Houston is likely to be felt even in the Republican Party. There were more than 100 delegates at a Republican Caucus, and Geridee Wheeler, IWY commissioner and Republican National Committee-woman for North Dakota, said she will use the report at half a dozen regional women's conferences the GOP will hold this spring.

Mary Crisp, an Arizona delegate and vice chairman of the Republican National Committee, is already under pressure because of her feminist stands and will be the target of an attempt by the Right to remove her in January. She does not agree with all the federal solutions proposed in the plan. "As a Republican, I would prefer achieving child care in the private sector. I'd go this route before I'd go the other." However, she declared somewhat obliquely, "We've got to win elections, and we've got to run candidates that are in tune with the American people."

Elly Peterson, former assistant chairman of the Republican National Committee and former party chairman in Michigan, is blunter. If the private sector will not take on the solution of women's problems, she asserted, the government must. "Federal spending is a euphemism. They [the opponents] have no compassion. I see Republican Congressmen voting for a great many things that cost money."

If Republican leaders like Wheeler, Crisp and Peterson use their influence to promote the kinds of federal social-welfare measures and civil rights intervention the GOP has traditionally opposed, there will probably be a clash with the Right. Stop-ERA leader Phyllis Schlafly, a right-wing Republican who is expected to challenge Illinois Sen. Charles Percy in the 1978 Republican primary, has already made an alliance with Howard Philip's Conservative Caucus, which aims to elect right wingers to Congress. The demand that the GOP support feminism and federal spending is certain to provoke a test of strength between the party's factions.

On the Democratic side, White House aide Midge Costanza said that top administration officials who attended the conference will hold a meeting with President Carter in December to discuss the proposals. The groups represented in Houston are largely in the Democratic column, and his appointees are expected to tell him to pay attention.

There will also be meetings with state executives and legislators. Midge Miller, a Democratic member of the Wisconsin state legislature, said, "We plan in our delegation, and I'm sure they will do it in others, to take this plan home and meet with our Governor and legislative leadership to see what is needed for Wisconsin. It will give us a platform." Nancy Deane, a national board member of the American Association of University Women, noted that women elected from her state of New Hampshire were "charged with returning home to work on a state plan of action. It was a charge to most of the delegates in the states."

Journalists who covered the conference made much of the angry conservatives who took the microphones repeatedly to charge that they were being denied their right to speak and that resolutions were being railroaded. In fact, IWY presiding officer Bella Abzug made sure that opposing views were heard on the controversial issues. Once, when she thought debate was going to be cut off on a pro-abortion motion, she left the podium hurriedly to tell several "Pro-plan" floor leaders, "I won't stand for this. These people have got a right to speak against this." However, whenever the Right got a change to propose its amendments, the votes against them were overwhelming.

Phyllis Schlafly used the Houston event as a stage for press conferences attacking the IWY commission, the conference and the delegates' support of the ERA, abortion, government-aided child care and homosexual rights. It was all meant, she said, to destroy the family. On Saturday afternoon, she spoke at a rally of more than 10,000 people who had been bused into town from around the country by church organizations, anti-abortion and stop-ERA groups.

Schlafly had not attempted to become an elected delegate to the conference, and Indiana state Sen. Joan Gubbins, conspicuous in a wide-brimmed yellow felt hat, acted as floor leader for what feminists took to calling the "anti's." On the first day, reporters received copies of their proposed amendments to the IWY plan, and the next morning they got a minority report that purported to represent the delegates who wore yellow "Majority" ribbons—a claim to show that they represented the majority of Americans who, they said, opposed feminist goals.

The minority report, like the amendments, called for "a marketplace free of government control and regulations." Gubbins told the press that meant abolition of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and of the minimum wage. The report opposed government-sponsored refuges for battered wives; it objected to a national health program; it was against disarmament and reductions in military spending, and said the United States should return to "the undisputed position of Number 1 in defense." It turned out that the handful of women Gubbins said had drawn up the proposals apparently had not bothered to show them to their anti-abortion, anti-ERA supporters. "Majority" women I interviewed said they had never seen either document; they had some disagreements.

Kitty Reichenback, a 60-year-old widow and co-leader of the Alabama delegation, belongs to Schlafly's Eagle Forum, Stop-ERA and an anti-abortion group. However, she voted for the resolution on federal action to prevent child abuse, because "I think we need to do something." Texas delegate Eva Cuadra, a woman in her 30s, wore a "Majority" ribbon, but said, "There ought to be action to change the inheritance laws, which are unfair. The widow has to pay taxes on the property she gets." "Majority" delegate Evelyn Caine, a woman in her 60s from Mississippi, said what she opposed was the federal financing and control of the proposals. "My only objection to the ERA is government control. I would work

and support every one of these programs if they weren't federally controlled. I wanted the city of Jackson to pick up day-care expenses. We went to the City Council. They heard us politely and moved on to the next thing on the agenda. Our whole City Council was voted out in the last election, so we have another chance." Another "Majority" delegate voted for the resolution on government aid for the disabled. "I have real sympathy for the disabled," she explained, "and anything we can do for them is just not enough."

Several delegates said they were wearing the yellow ribbons because someone had come around and passed them out, that it meant they were pro-family, anti-abortion and anti-ERA. However, the anti-federal intervention position of these women is sometimes at odds with their genuine social conscience and compassion. The press has been wrong to assume that they are a tight-knit group, marching in step to every Schlafly command.

Even some of the participants at the "Pro-Family" rally did not support the whole "Pro-Family" platform. Judy Cline, 33, came with a busload of anti-abortionists and Stop-ERA activists from Franklin, Ky. "I don't think I'd be in favor of the minimum wage being abolished," she said. "And we need some more legislation on protecting battered wives and rape victims."

Senator Gubbins herself showed that there can be chinks in the right-wing armor. When the vote against the child-abuse resolution was called, the women in her delegation started to rise and were confused when she remained seated. "I'm against the first part (calling for federal funds), but I'm for the rest of it (proposing state programs). I'm abstaining." She waved her hand. "You do whatever you want."

That is a far cry from Schlafly's response at one of her press conferences to a reporter who asked if she opposed government-supported shelters for battered women. "It is just simply beyond me how giving a wife who's been beaten an R&R tour or vacation at the taxpayers' expense is going to solve her problem," she declared. "I would think that the husband would be more inclined to beat her more if he thinks that she just will get a taxpayers' paid rest cure for the next week." The reporters gasped.

Schlafly is probably aware that some of her positions would alienate part of the public she hopes to make her Senatorial constituency. Although her anti-ERA literature includes an attack on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a current popular far-Right issue, she denied at one press conference that she supported abolition, then moderated that the next day to say she had no position, after Gubbins said the minority report favored ending OSHA.

In fact, Schlafly's interest in economic and foreign policy questions is at the heart of her organization of the anti-ERA movement. She set up her Eagle Forum in 1967 after losing a bid to become president of the National Federation of Republican Women; its first mission was to support conservative candidates, especially for the 1968 Presidential nomination.

Now, she uses the Eagle Forum and the sometimes-affiliated Stop-ERA groups to promote the right-wing

line on collective bargaining, right-to-work laws, taxes, regional government, busing, the ban on Rhodesian chrome and American control of the Panama Canal. She is also moving her supporters into alliances with groups like the Conservative Caucus and the American Conservative Union, which work to elect candidates to national and state office.

The Houston Women's Conference made it clear that the feminist issue has become part of the national political debate and that proponents and opponents of women's rights have taken their places in the general alignments of Right and Left. It is significant that the moderates have attached themselves to the feminist camp.

An important related development is the sensitizing of feminists to the role of the labor movement in winning rights for women workers. Half a dozen years ago, NOW set up a trade union task force, and some time later women officials and staff of such unions as the United Auto Workers and the Communication Workers organized the feminist Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

One IWY commissioner who chaired a conference session was Addie Wyatt, vice president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen and vice President of CLUW. When she was introduced, a delegation rose to sing a rousing chorus of "Solidarity Forever."

Representatives of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers passed out literature urging women to support action against J.P. Stevens & Co. which has refused to bargain with Southern textile workers, many of whom are women. A thousand people signed postcards to the Avon Company, which is known for aiding feminist causes, urging that its chairman resign from the Stevens board.

The conference also passed a resolution asking President Carter to consider the obstacles women face in organizing traditionally nonunionized jobs when he makes appointments to the National Labor Relations Board or seeks amendments to the National Labor Relations Act.

In effect, the women's movement has become a bridge between groups that represent very different social interests. It is bringing into the general movement for liberal social change women in business and the professions, women who are Republicans, clubwomen who have spent their past time in charity work and women who have never been involved in politics at all but who see political action and alliances as necessary to their own goals.

Conservatives are right to view this as a threat.

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