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First Lady from Plains

Rosalynn Carter

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The Office of the First Lady

BEFORE GOING TO the White House, I knew that some First Ladies had had special areas of interest and, because of their influence, had been able to accomplish worthy goals. Eleanor Roosevelt worked for social change; Jackie Kennedy restored the White House to an American showcase in which we all could take pride; and Lady Bird Johnson renewed our interest in beautifying the country's highways and parks. And although I wanted to work with the elderly and issues of concern to women, my main project as First Lady would be to develop a strategy for helping the mentally ill.

I had begun this work in Georgia and wanted to expand it to the national level. Mental illnesses or serious emotional problems affect one in every four families in the United States; it could happen to any of us. Each of us at one time or another will be affected by marital problems, delinquent children, drug- or alcohol-related stress, the inability to deal with death or a serious accident or illness, or simply by low self-esteem. Many will also experience the tragedy of a severe mental illness, in ourselves or in our families. Perhaps we will be able to cope. Perhaps not. Then what will we do? To whom will we turn? The

thought of mental illness often strikes chords of dread and fear. These fears and suspicions, many based on myths, are as old as mankind, and they are deeply ingrained.

When I was a child growing up in Plains, there was a young man in our community, a distant cousin, who was in and out of the state mental institution. When he was at home I was afraid of him, and when I heard him singing loudly as he came down the street I would run and hide. I don't know why I had to get away — he was never violent, just very nervous and very loud. He probably wanted nothing more than friendship and recognition, yet he was "different," and when I heard him, my impulse was to flee. Today he could be treated and could lead a more normal life.

Although most people who suffer can lead more normal lives, there is such a stigma about mental illness that many who could be successfully treated still hide their problems. Admitting to a mental health problem can be not only socially embarrassing, but also threatening to one's family and livelihood. While in the White House, I received a letter from a Culver City, California, housewife whose medical record of mental illness had prevented her from adopting children. She wrote: "I don't blame anyone for not wanting to seek help if it's going to be held against them for the rest of their lives. Solving mental problems should be like mending a broken leg, and no one carries the stigma of a broken leg around with them for the rest of their lives. Once the leg is mended, no one asks why it was broken."

I wanted to take mental illnesses and emotional disorders out of the closet, to let people know it is all right to admit having a problem without the fear of being called crazy. If only we could consider mental illnesses as straightforwardly as we do physical illnesses, those affected could seek help and be treated in an open and effective way.

There hadn't been an assessment of how we were meeting the mental health needs in our country since the Final Report of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health given to President Kennedy in 1961. Indeed, the whole subject of mental health as a national priority was a relatively new one, stemming from World War II, when psychiatric screening of those drafted into the service revealed a startlingly high incidence of rejection for psychiatric disabilities.

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Since then, our knowledge of the causes and treatment of mental illness has steadily increased, and we have come to realize that mental health is much more than just the absence of mental illness. It is the very quality of the life we lead. Until recently, most communities or states provided services chiefly for those who were severely disturbed. Mental sickness meant schizophrenia and manic-depressive disease, or other debilitating psychoses. Mental illness just meant "crazy people" — until we began to take a broader, more enlightened approach.

Yet the benefits of our increased knowledge have been applied to few of those affected, and we still do not understand what causes most major mental disabilities. Why? I wanted to find out. Politically, the issue had always been shuffled to the back burner, but fortunately, we were now in a position to make mental health a top national priority.

In a speech in Bakersfield, California, during the campaign I had made my one and only campaign promise: to study the mental health needs of our nation. Jimmy fulfilled that promise when he signed the Executive Order creating the President's Commission on Mental Health. Because of federal nepotism laws, I could not be appointed the formal chairperson of the commission but had to settle for "honorary" instead. Physician-attorney Tom Bryant, the former health director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, was named chairman and executive director, and Peter Bourne, a psychiatrist who was also a close friend and associate in my mental health work in Georgia and who became Jimmy's special assistant for health issues, was assigned primary responsibility for coordinating and following up on the commission's report. Our task would not be easy. Not only was the subject of mental health not politically appealing, but in order to accomplish anything we had to establish it as one of Jimmy's major domestic priorities instead of having it dismissed as a First Lady's "pet project."

With the Executive Order signed, we went right to work. We chose twenty commissioners from more than one thousand people suggested, among them Florence Mahoney, for many years a health research supporter who had become a Washington legend in the art of lobbying Congress to increase funding for science and mental health; Mildred Mitchell Bateman, the outstanding black psychiatrist and former mental health commissioner for

West Virginia; Julius Richmond, a pediatrician and the surgeon general of the Public Health Service who had been the first director of the Head Start Program; and George Tarjan of UCLA, a world-renowned child psychiatrist, who was later elected president of the American Psychiatric Association. The others, whom I had not known personally but who each became a close friend as we worked together, were equally well qualified. Some were mental health professionals, but the majority were not. We all felt a deep commitment to helping those suffering from mental and emotional disabilities, and we saw the commission as an opportunity to act on our concerns. Others active in the mental health field shared our sense of excitement and purpose. For example, Mary Lasker, a prominent philanthropist affectionately — and justifiably — regarded as the grande dame of medical research, promptly sent a check for \$10,000 to be used in our work. Additional individuals as well as several private foundations soon followed suit, providing assistance for which I shall always be grateful.

Our first action was to hold public hearings across the country. We listened for hours to advice and suggestions from hundreds of professionals, laypersons, former mental patients, community leaders, and legislators. At the same time, more than four hundred and fifty volunteers on thirty task panels developed comprehensive statements in special areas of concern such as research, prevention, and the needs of special populations.

What we learned was sobering. Federal and state programs were fragmented and fraught with bureaucratic problems. One woman told us that her family was visited weekly by three different social workers, all from separate agencies. Another pinpointed the terrible consequences of cultural misunderstandings and the lack of bilingual therapists: A Haitian woman had gone in fear to a therapist because her husband's ex-wife had put a hex on her. She was diagnosed as paranoid and treated with a powerful sedative. Further investigation by a bicultural therapist revealed that her dilemma was quite common in her particular culture — she was not paranoid at all. What she needed was understanding and guidance. Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians often felt intimidated and harassed by white mental health personnel (fewer than 2 percent of the psychiatrists in our country were black, fewer still Hispanic, and there

were only thirteen American Indian psychiatrists). Women, too, many of whom feel powerless and alienated by their rapidly changing roles in society, also needed specialized attention. And over and over again at every stop we heard of the plight of the chronically mentally ill who were returned to their communities as a result of court orders, the 1963 Community Mental Health Centers Act, and advanced treatments, only to live marginal existences. Often these people remained jobless, homeless, feared by society, and even hungry because no adequate community services were available to them.

We sifted through thousands and thousands of pages of data in order to prepare a final set of recommendations, which we presented to the President at a ceremony in the Oval Office: 117 in all; 8 major ones. Jimmy had given us only a year and an operating budget of \$100,000 to produce the report. With assistance from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (later to become the Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS), through private funds, and through the contribution of many hundreds of hours of time by the commission members and volunteers, we managed to meet our deadline.

Our commission was convinced by the one-year study that many Americans were either "unserved" or "underserved," not having access to adequate mental health care at reasonable cost because of where they lived or who they were — their race, age, sex, or economic circumstances. A much larger number did not receive care because they feared the consequences of seeking treatment. The recommendations we made were designed to correct these conditions and bring us closer to quality care for everyone.

We had learned that when people have mental problems, they don't go to a mental health professional first. They go to their families and friends, to priests or to nurses and doctors who may have no specific connection with the local mental health worker. Each could benefit the other by sharing information about their troubled community members and by working together to help them. Also, there are always volunteers eager to help, people with both expertise and time to give.

While Jimmy was governor, I learned at first hand how important a volunteer can be. One of the most important things

mentally ill people need is a friend, someone who is genuinely interested in them. This is one reason the 1963 Community Mental Health Centers Act was so important. It began making it possible to bring many of the afflicted back from the institution to the community, where those who had families could even stay at night with loved ones but still have a place to go during the day to be cared for. But over time, the act had been amended to the point that it was virtually impossible for communities with no services to get federal aid to start any kind of program at all. Our commission recommended changing the act so a community would no longer have to provide all twelve separate services required by law to be eligible for funding. We wanted those communities that couldn't afford to provide the complete program to be able to begin a center with one service, and at least provide the one most needed, as they moved to develop a comprehensive program.

Often the chronically mentally ill wander from one temporary shelter to another, in and out of institutions, with no one who really wants them or who can provide long-term care. We recommended changes in housing programs and in the Medicare and Medicaid laws to help correct this. We also recommended "performance contracts" to help the states take care of their chronically mentally ill. The states would decide what kind of programs they needed and then sign contracts with the federal government for funding. This was very important to state officials, who complained that the federal government didn't always know what was best for their people.

Our commission found that existing health insurance programs did not include mental illnesses, and we recommended such coverage. We recognized that people avoid psychiatric help because of the stigma, and insurance coverage would not only be an incentive to seek necessary treatment, but would also help reduce the stigma.

Another major problem was the lack of adequate personnel in some parts of the country. This was brought home to me one day when a woman called to say that her child was the only one in her county who needed speech therapy. The little girl had gradually lost her voice and could only mutter, but no treatment center was available to her. We finally arranged for the mother and child to spend two weeks at one of Georgia's regional cen-

ters, where both had professional counseling and the mother had instruction in speech therapy so she could help her child at home. To bring about a better distribution of mental health personnel, we recommended grants and loans for students who would in turn repay them by working in rural areas and in the inner cities where such personnel shortages are acute. We also recommended incentives to train more personnel in the special needs of minorities, as shown by the Haitian woman, as well as of children, adolescents faced with drugs and other problems, the elderly, and women.

Years ago, when my cousin was home from the institution, everyone in our small community knew when it was time for him to go back. He would get more nervous and excited, and louder and louder when he walked down the streets, and soon the sheriff would come and take him away. Though it is not that simple now to "commit" a person to an institution, in all too many states it is relatively easy. We recommended an advocacy program and a bill of rights for the mentally ill that would remind us that civil commitment is an intrusion on personal liberty and autonomy, a step not to be taken without adequate legal safeguards, and that guardianship laws can lead to a deprivation of legal rights.

We gave special emphasis to research and programs for prevention. I learned one day on a visit to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) how inadequate our research programs often are. Federal grants are given for short periods of time, while research sometimes takes many years. The time and funds for programs often run out, and projects are suspended before results are determined. I was told that just as we are on the threshold of new discoveries about the brain, our scientists are discouraged. How will we ever make the necessary breakthroughs with all the stops and starts of our research projects? It was a discouraging picture that day of what should be one of the most important emphases of our mental health work. We had a substantial increase in funds for this research during the Carter administration, although still not enough, but with the cutback in funds for domestic programs by the Reagan administration, these gains were short-lived. This is a pity — shameful and so wasteful. How many lives could be saved, and how much expense to the taxpayers saved, with new knowledge and new

"cures"? There shouldn't be even a flicker of indecision about moving forward with our research programs. The same holds true for programs of prevention. Some argue that the complex causes of mental illnesses make it difficult to develop effective prevention programs, but we already know that proper prenatal and perinatal infant care, periodic checkups, and the immunization of young children can prevent serious mental disability. Our commission urged the establishment of an Office of Prevention within the NIMH.

Our commissioners believed that the associated stigma is *a* primary if not *the* primary obstacle to better mental health care. I went to Hollywood and spoke to producers, directors, and television and movie stars to encourage them to portray the mentally ill with accuracy and sensitivity rather than as "mad bombers" or "insane murderers." And we proposed the development of effective public education programs. Now we don't even know how to present mental illness so that people will understand it better. In one community that wanted to enlighten its citizens, a series of advertisements was launched; afterward, polls showed more people reacting negatively to the problem than before it began. It's not easy to deal with fear and prejudice. I know — but I wouldn't try to run away from my cousin now, I would try to run toward him. But I had to learn that.

Once the commission's report was completed, the next step was to make sure the recommendations would be implemented. At Jimmy's direction, every affected department in the government drew up timetables and plans for acting on the recommendations that did not require congressional action. And since the major work of the commission was over, Tom Bryant began putting together a group of prominent citizens to form a Public Committee on Mental Health to continue the momentum.

But the legislative process to implement the portion that did require congressional action became maddeningly slow. We had a setback when Dr. Peter Bourne wrote a required prescription for an assistant, using a pseudonym to protect her from the public scrutiny that affects all White House employees. Because of the attendant publicity, he resigned, and without Peter there was no senior-level advocate on the White House staff to guide the report through the day-to-day work necessary in translating a national commission report into policy. Instead, the major re-

sponsibility fell to HHS Secretary Joe Califano. Much valuable time was lost in too many meetings with him and his staff, and it was finally necessary for me to go directly to the President and to Jim McIntyre at the Office of Management and Budget to get things moving. I told Kathy Cade, my projects director, to keep Tom Bryant and the other members of the commission in touch with the White House staff and the people at HHS to be certain that our commission's fresh look at the problems didn't get watered down to "business as usual." We hadn't put in all of those long hours and hard work just to see yet another national commission report gather dust on some busy Cabinet officer's bookshelf. I knew Califano had his priorities, but I also had mine — and I saw the President more often than he did!

Despite the delays, in May of 1979 Jimmy submitted the Mental Health Systems Act to Congress.

The response to our work was overwhelmingly favorable. The American Medical Association and the American Bar Association both adopted resolutions at their annual meetings commending the report. Conferences were planned in a number of states to focus on mental health issues and needs. We invited hundreds of people, including special interest groups (the elderly, women's groups, children's advocates), to the White House to advise them of the report and encourage them to lobby for its passage, and we invited members of the congressional committees who would be responsible for the legislation. When the time was right, I went to Capitol Hill myself to testify before the Senate committee, for which there wasn't much precedent. We could find a record of only one other First Lady who had testified before Congress — Eleanor Roosevelt on behalf of the coal miners.

While the legislation was making its way through Congress, I was speaking everywhere I had a chance: to the World Federation for Mental Health in Vancouver, British Columbia; to the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, which invites only one outside speaker each year; in Manitoba, Canada, where the St. Boniface General Hospital Research Foundation in Winnipeg offered me a \$20,000 honorarium to speak at their annual fund-raising dinner (they agreed to donate the money to

our Public Committee on Mental Health). Though the committee needed the money to help inform the public about our report, I almost had to renege on this invitation. The Canadian government refused to let the Secret Service agents carry guns into the country, but finally I reached a secret compromise with the agents. I would go to Canada and make the speech, but I wouldn't spend the night. They agreed and I was "protected" by the Royal Canadian Police that day — though my hosts and the press couldn't understand my promptness in getting away.

In the meantime, I remained in constant touch with the chairmen of the House and Senate committees handling the legislation, Congressman Henry Waxman and Senator Ted Kennedy. I had to swallow some pride — for the cause — during the campaign of 1980, when Senator Kennedy one day would be on the stump making one of his statements, such as, "President Carter is making the poor eat cat food," and the next day would be saying to me, "Mrs. Carter, the committee is completing work on the Mental Health Systems Act."

"Thank you, Senator."

We continued these courtesy calls even during the worst part of the campaign.

In September of 1980, the Mental Health Systems Act was passed by Congress and funded — the first major reform of federal, publicly funded mental health programs since the Community Mental Health Centers Act of 1963. In spite of delays, to have investigated, recommended, and legislated a comprehensive mental health program in a four-year period was a great accomplishment, and we celebrated.

Our celebration was brief. Within a month Ronald Reagan was elected President, and with the change of administration, many of our dreams and the bulk of the funding for our program were gone. I felt betrayed. After four years of hard work and efforts by thousands of people, carefully studying an existing system of care and making changes so it would be responsive and cost-efficient, community-controlled, and accessible to those who so desperately needed it, and after having had the benefit of eighteen months of public scrutiny and careful adjustment — after all this, the funding for our legislation was killed by the philosophy of a new President. It was a bitter loss.

Fortunately, we had taken some important steps that did not require congressional action, steps that could not be instantly undone:

1. Financial support for mental health efforts was increased, especially funds for community-based services, because Jimmy had included those increases in his last budget; but the increases only remained in effect for one year.
2. The same was true with the 65 percent increase in funding for research (which had steadily declined since 1969) to study childhood and adolescent psychopathology, hyperkinetic and learning disability syndromes, the effects on children and families of marital disruption, the correlation between alcohol and mental disorders among parents, as well as drug abuse. Again, these increases lasted only one year; then President Reagan began proposing budget cuts.
3. An Office of Prevention was established within the NIMH for the first time in history; it remains today and is a major contribution. However, the NIMH, which had become in the Carter administration the badly needed coordinator of many of the mental health programs in other federal agencies, has had its responsibilities for services severely curtailed.
4. The entire training program at the NIMH was reorganized to address the attention of our report. More psychiatrists were recruited for the National Health Service Corps. Stipends for summer fellowships in psychiatry for medical students were increased and offered also to premedical students to encourage them to consider careers in psychiatry. The broad clinical training program was redirected to encourage larger numbers of minorities to pursue mental health careers and to increase the numbers of people trained to deal with the special problems of children, adolescents, and the elderly. This has remained in effect, yet even these gains are now under review.
5. The NIMH also collaborated with the Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in a housing program for the chronically mentally ill, working together for the first time at the state level to improve services for the mentally disabled, but this valuable initiative has also been cut back.
6. Perhaps most important, the amount of attention we gave

the issue changed the way some people regard mental illness, which is the first step in successful treatment.

There was more, so much more, that could have been done if the laws had been implemented. Instead, the Mental Health Systems Act is gathering dust on a government shelf, and sick people and their families continue to suffer needlessly. That's the real shame.



While working on the mental health commission, I was shocked to find that not only is there a need for mental health personnel for the elderly, but that there are relatively few physicians trained in the special health needs of our older citizens. This will be increasingly important in the coming years.

We're living longer and longer. The statistics are eye-opening: Today some 27.4 million Americans are over sixty-five and another 33 million are between fifty and sixty-five. This "graying of America" is expected to continue so that by the year 2030, one out of every four of us will be sixty or older.

The problems of the elderly became another area of my interest as First Lady, and Dr. Robert Butler, who was director of the National Institute on Aging while we were in Washington, sent me a copy of a speech he made one day summing up the needs: "The challenge confronting our nation today is to assure that our swelling number of older citizens do more than simply survive. Our challenge is not to replicate years in which huge numbers of us live on, dependent, frail, ridden with disease, unproductive, unhappy and lonely, in fear of crime, dissatisfied with ourselves, falsely regarded as sexless, and tempted to suicide. Our challenge is to extend the fruitful middle years, healthy and vigorous years in which we can live creatively, to the best of our ability, carrying our own weight and paying our own way as productive contributors to our society."

As a result of visiting such places as convalescent homes, nursing homes, and other senior centers every day during the campaign, certain images stuck in my mind: a group of older citizens in Boston seated on the lawn in front of a convalescent home, listening to me tell them of the needs of the elderly I had seen every day, when someone from the audience interrupted with, "What about those you don't see? There are a lot of them

in this city at home alone, with no way to get about and no one to care for them." In another instance, three elderly men were playing cards at a convalescent home, and I asked them what they had done before retiring. One had been a college president, another, an English professor, the third, a doctor, and they said they did the same thing over and over every day — play cards and feel useless.

When my mother was forced to retire from her job as postmistress on her seventieth birthday, in 1975, I came back home from a campaign trip and my brother told me that she had cried all week. "Mother," I said jokingly to her, "I can't understand why anyone who has had to get up and be at the post office at seven o'clock every morning for as long as I can remember wouldn't love to stay home and sleep late and be leisurely for a change." She shook her head. "It's not that," she said. "It's just that no one thinks I can do good work anymore."

She was devastated, as were the three men who had nothing to do but play cards all day. I couldn't help but think of my grandfather, who had come to live with us and helped Mother with the farm, the household, and the children almost until the day he died, and of Miss Lillian, who joined the Peace Corps at sixty-eight because for the first and only time she had seen the words "Age no barrier" in an advertisement. Neither one of them had to retire — and neither, it turned out, did my mother. Soon after she left the post office, she started working afternoons in a flower shop and has been happy and "contributing" ever since.

Once we were in the White House, I began to meet regularly with Nelson Cruikshank, the counselor to the President on Aging, who kept me informed of legislation before Congress that concerned the elderly. I invited representatives of all the elderly advocacy groups to a roundtable discussion on aging. Included were Congressman Claude Pepper, chairman of the House Select Committee on Aging, affectionately called "Senator" and a champion for the elderly, Maggie Kuhn of the Gray Panthers, Bert Seidman of the AFL-CIO, and Peter Hughes of the American Association of Retired Persons. We put together a brochure with fifteen recommendations of things people could do in their communities to help the elderly. We distributed

these to states and organizations, and I visited some of the programs as they were carried out.

As Nelson kept me informed, I lobbied for the Age Discrimination Act, which eliminated mandatory retirement at any age in the federal government and raised the age limit from sixty-five to seventy in the private sector; the Older Americans Act, which coordinated existing legislation and authorized substantial increases in appropriations for the various social services and health and nutrition programs for the elderly; the Rural Clinics Act, which expanded medical services to underserved rural areas; and Social Security Reform, which strengthened the short-term and long-range status of the funds.

One important thing I learned in my work with the mentally ill and with the elderly was that when people in communities across our country are aware of problems, they will respond in very helpful and ingenious ways. This was vividly demonstrated in Washington, D.C., at what is known as the Green Door. Two young women became concerned about the chronically mentally ill in a large city institution, St. Elizabeths Hospital, and developed a model community-based program for them. The men and women who came to the center were capable of learning and working and shouldn't have been in an institution, but they had nowhere else to go, no home and no family to care for them. They came from St. Elizabeths every day to keep house and to cook, and they even learned to print a small bulletin about their thoughts and activities. They learned also to take the buses to reach the Green Door and had opened a storefront Thrift Shop, selling donated items for expense money for their "home." The community had joined in to help, but it had all been made possible because two young women cared about them and their poor living situation and recognized that their talents could be developed if given a chance.

There are people in every community who need help and understanding, and programs like the Green Door can be replicated in other cities. I participated in a special segment of *Good Morning America* about the Green Door, and soon afterward in Texas I was thrilled to have a man say to me, "Mrs. Carter, I saw the program on television about the Green Door, and I want

you to know that we're forming a center just like it in our community."

Schools and libraries and hospitals also need help, as do beautification programs and housing programs. As I traveled around the country, visiting mental health centers and homes for the elderly, I began to try to point out other needs where community participation could play a role.

In Washington, D.C. General Hospital was in dire need of help; it had even lost its accreditation. The hospital commissioners came to see me to discuss how I might help encourage local voluntary efforts to improve the hospital. We enlisted the aid of a radio announcer and, with a little publicity and a few telephone calls, a host of organizations and individuals soon joined the project. A decorating company offered to donate fabric and make drapes for the hospital, a hardware store offered paint, and the Singer Sewing Machine Company donated fifteen sewing machines for use in the utility room, among other contributions. The Jaycees took on the hospital as a project, and the D.C. Police, a local garden club, the mayor's wife, the Young Women's League and other civic organizations, members of the business community, and numerous individuals became involved. Furniture and plants for the landscaping were donated, and on some days everyone pitched in, painting and cleaning and planting. I painted a wall in the reception room myself. We learned from the nurses that there was also a lack of ongoing educational programs for the staff. In particular, the nurses felt a need for special training to help them serve the large number of elderly patients. With the help of the American Nurses Association, a nursing education program for geriatric patients was launched and filmed at D.C. General. I introduced each segment of *The Rosalynn Carter Nurse Training Program*, which was later made available to all veterans' hospitals in the country. Our volunteer team celebrated when the hospital received its accreditation again, and D.C. General is now a much-improved hospital.

There were other projects in our nation's capital. At the beginning of the Carter administration, Washington was one of the only major cities in the country without a viable community foundation to encourage private charitable contributions to meet

local needs. Although the Community Foundation of Greater Washington had been established several years earlier, it had never really gotten off the ground. At the request of the chairman of the Board, I met with representatives of some of the major philanthropic organizations in the country, such as the Ford Foundation, to encourage their support for the Washington effort. One of the events for which I left Camp David during the thirteen-day peace summit was a luncheon at the White House for business leaders in the District to ask for their support. The community rallied around the foundation, which is fully operational now, focusing many of its grants in the areas of family aid, mental health, the neighborhoods, aging, and youth.

Most of the people I worked with on these projects were people outside the government, who lived in the city but had never been inside the White House. They were pleased to accept my invitations to teas, receptions, picnics on the South Lawn, and other events. I in turn was pleased to accept in December of 1980 a special commendation from the D.C. City Council for my efforts among Washingtonians on the other side of the fence from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, whom I had come to love.

I regularly visited similar programs across the country, usually going on tours of three or four days, stopping in several states to visit centers for the mentally ill and the elderly as well as other community projects. One that I particularly enjoyed was the grand opening of the Palace Theatre in Lorain, Ohio. A group of housewives had restored the decaying shell of an old theater to its original beauty, and I brought Chet Atkins with me to perform on their opening night. Another favorite was a program called Cities In Schools, in which social workers, policemen, recreation and other government officials, teachers, scout leaders, and private citizens worked together in the schools to keep the most disadvantaged children from dropping out.

Whether it was working on a comprehensive mental health plan, working for legislation to help the elderly, providing a "home" for the chronically mentally ill, or restoring the accreditation of a public hospital, I found men and women, old and young, volunteering their services. Someone said to me one day in Massachusetts when I was commending a group of elderly

volunteers for helping in the public school, "When you're all wrapped up in yourself, you're a very small package."



My greatest disappointment in all the projects I worked on during the White House years was the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment to be ratified. Jimmy and I made dozens of calls to state legislators as individual states considered the issue, and it was very close at one time, so close that if only thirteen legislators — two in Florida, two in North Carolina, and nine in Nevada — had voted yea instead of nay we would have made it. The ERA would have been over the top . . . but it was not to be.

My files are full of speeches about the ERA; they are full of the phone calls I made to legislators in various states. They are full of letters written and invitations to fund-raisers and other meetings I attended, including the Houston Conference celebrating the International Women's Year in the fall of 1977, where Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford, and I appeared together. I held many events and meetings at the White House and did just about anything I could think of for the cause. I remember when my staff was wondering if it would be appropriate for a First Lady to be auctioned off at a dance for the ERA. Jimmy said, "Well, it's better than being a wallflower!" And so I danced for the ERA.

Our one victory came during the fall of 1978, when Jimmy and Fritz Mondale worked to turn seven congressional no votes into yes votes to pass legislation extending the ratification deadline. It was even more disappointing to see the deadline for the extension go by in 1982 with the ERA still not ratified.

Why have we had such a hard time trying to get the amendment ratified? After all, it is a simple twenty-four-word declaration: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

Most people think it says much more than this. I have had women tell me that if I would send them a copy they would pay the postage, as though it were volumes. And Erma Bombeck has described it as the most misunderstood few words since "one size fits all."

The Equal Rights Amendment says nothing about men hav-

ing to give up their places as head of the household or about women being drafted or forced to go to work, leaving their children at home. It says nothing about unisex bathrooms, homosexual marriages, or about personal family relationships, and it would not force any changes in them. What it would do is guarantee women the legal protection that should be rightfully theirs under the Constitution.

The U.S. Constitution is the most basic concept of what this nation stands for: freedom and equality for all. Yet today the only right the Constitution guarantees women is the right to vote. It contains no clause granting women legal status as persons or guaranteeing equal protection for them. Some argue that women's rights are guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment, passed to protect slaves. However, the Supreme Court in case after case has not extended this amendment to include women, although it has repeatedly been urged to do so.

One of the problems is the fervor and organization of the opposition. It is so vocal and so powerful at the polls that local legislators, who are the ones who must vote for ratification, are reluctant to do so. I have talked with many who have told me that they couldn't afford to go against this opposition. Also, due to the many erroneous and often wild contentions by the opposition, people are confused by what the ERA really is and what it would do to their lives.

The image of the ERA has been a serious problem. Attention has often centered on those supporters who have appeared to be demanding and strident man haters — mostly urban, professional women. "Nice" women, as my daughter-in-law Judy says, have been reluctant to be identified with such a group, though they support the ERA itself. In fact, I learned that a majority of people do support the ERA when they know the facts.

During the campaign for the ratification of the ERA, I talked with one state senator who had always been opposed to the amendment until he had gone with his wife to make a will. He told me he had found out that under the laws of their state, his wife would have no control over what he owned. If he died without a will, the business that he and his wife had developed together would go to his blood relatives, not to his wife. Furthermore, if he changed the ownership of his property and put half in his wife's name, they would have to pay a gift tax on the half

he gave her. He told me he had changed his mind and was going to support the ERA. I wish a few more legislators had confronted the issue in such a personal way.

In years past, many laws were written with different provisions for men and women. In some states, women could marry at an earlier age than men. Men could drink at an earlier age than women. In Alabama, girls had to be seventeen before they could be newspaper carriers; boys only had to be ten! In some instances, women were required to have their husbands' consent to sell property. Everyone agrees that today these laws are outdated. But society at the time thought that women were different and should be protected; staying at home with the family, teaching school and working with children, or being a secretary helping a man were the kinds of things that women really wanted to do and could do well.

The movement for equal rights for women began with the simple reasoning that while women are biologically different from men, they have the same ability to serve as doctors or lawyers or do other things that had traditionally been viewed as men's jobs, and that society should take advantage of these talents.

I am grateful that because of the women's movement, there are not as many discriminatory laws as there once were. The lieutenant governor of Louisiana, Bobby Freeman, told me of one celebrated case in his state where a woman worked and bought her home. Her husband was disabled and did not contribute to the purchase, but later he placed a second mortgage on the house without her knowledge. The lender foreclosed and took the home. Under Louisiana's law at the time, the wife had no right to protect her house from her husband's mortgage or even to know about it, even though she had paid for it. Since then, the law has been changed.

An Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution would protect women's gains and ensure that future laws would not discriminate against them. But great progress comes slowly, and someday, a day I hope to see in my lifetime, we will look back on this struggle as we look back now on the long but successful struggle for women's suffrage and wonder why. Why all the controversy and why such difficulty in giving women the protec-

tion of the Constitution that should have been theirs long ago?

While Jimmy was President, I understood clearly that times were changing in our country and that women everywhere were undergoing a period of adjustment. Many were forced to work outside the home to help supplement the family income or to support a family as a single parent; many were pursuing careers for their own fulfillment; and many others chose to remain at home and care for their families.

I felt very fortunate to identify with women in all these categories. I am a relatively traditional person and enjoy my roles as wife and mother, but it has also been natural and essential for me to expand my life and to participate outside the home as a partner and businesswoman and in public service as First Lady.

Jimmy has always supported women's causes, but he didn't have much choice, surrounded by active women as he was: his mother, me, and Amy. It was interesting how the pattern in our family reversed. I had been surrounded by men, Jimmy and the three boys, for years. Then, after our sons were grown, Amy came along, Miss Lillian moved back home to Plains, and Jimmy was surrounded by women.

Before his inauguration, Jimmy asked me to work with his staff and our women's campaign committee to develop a list of women who would be likely prospects for available positions in the federal government. Keeping an up-to-date list of qualified women in every job category, ready to submit for consideration as appointments became available, was very helpful. Some statistics:

Only six women had ever been appointed Cabinet secretaries in the history of our country; Jimmy appointed three of them.

Only five women had ever been appointed as undersecretaries in the history of our country; Jimmy appointed three of them.

He appointed 80 percent of all women ever to hold the post of assistant secretary.

He was the first President to name women as general counsels and inspectors general.

Of the forty-six women serving as federal judges at the end of his term, forty-one had been appointed by Jimmy. We knew a number of women who would have been good Supreme Court justices, and it was always understood between us that a woman

would be appointed if a vacancy occurred. That didn't happen, but the appointment of many women judges helped to compensate for their not having a voice on the Supreme Court and ensured a permanent and powerful voice for women in interpreting the laws of our land.

In previous administrations, a total of twenty-five women had held ambassadorial posts. Jimmy appointed sixteen women as ambassadors.

And more women were serving on federal boards and commissions and on delegations representing the United States at conferences throughout the world.

In addition to receiving presidential appointments, women need to be elected to positions at all levels of government. When we were in Washington, there had been only fourteen women senators and ninety women in the House of Representatives in our history. I agree wholeheartedly with the well-known slogan: "A woman's place is in the house . . . and the Senate."

We also included women in all activities at the White House, taking care to invite representatives from women's groups to participate in all events — government consultations and briefings on such issues as SALT II, inflation and energy, education, Middle East peace, and on the progress of women's issues. Every year we held receptions and briefings for congressional wives, women in business, women legislators, rural women, Jewish women, black women, Mexican-American women, Democratic women, educators, and many more, and I learned a lot from these discussions.

From my own experience, I remembered how the long hours at Carter's Warehouse had to be coordinated with my duties as a mother and housewife, and supported flexitime schedules for working mothers in the federal government, our nation's largest employer. And I was pleased when expanded day care centers became one of Jimmy's priorities. When my mother had to work full-time while we were children, she was lucky to have friends and relatives in Plains who could care for us. Most working women today are not so fortunate.

I had learned about small business management also by working alongside Jimmy at the warehouse, and now I wondered what I would have done if it had been necessary to organize my

own business. Women were given some help in the Carter years: The Small Business Administration offered entrepreneurial training workshops for them and significantly increased loans available to businesses owned by women; the Farm Home Administration sponsored workshops and made it a priority to inform rural women of loans available for their businesses; HUD had seminars to teach women about housing finances and their rights to mortgage credit, removing barriers to women who wanted to own homes.

The President's Advisory Committee for Women came to realize that women nominees for federal judgeships were being penalized because they had had relatively little experience as judges in the lower courts or because they had taken several years away from their careers to have children. We discussed this with Jimmy and the attorney general, and they both agreed to be careful not to discriminate against women in the appointment process because they were mothers or because they had not been treated fairly when previous appointments had been made.

Other steps were taken to tackle the issue of discrimination, including: the amendment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect working women from occupational discrimination based on pregnancy; the consolidation of nineteen separate enforcement units in the federal government under one agency to handle discrimination complaints more efficiently; and the development of an interagency task force to eliminate sex discrimination from laws and policies and to focus government resources on increasing opportunities for women.

In most cases, the executives responsible for carrying out these decisions were women, often the "first" in their positions, which further strengthened the effectiveness of the programs.

The need for advice about the special concerns and problems of women in our country has been recognized by every President from John Kennedy through Jimmy Carter, all of whom appointed a women's advisory group. My daughter-in-law Judy served as honorary chair of this group, working closely with Kathy Cade in my office and Sarah Weddington in Jimmy's and with Chairpersons Bella Abzug, Carmen Delgado Votaw, and Lynda Robb. Unfortunately, there has been no such opportu-

nity for American women to present their views to President Reagan, perhaps another cause of the highly publicized "gender gap" that affects his administration.

The political victories for women were important ones, and being a woman who mattered pleased me very much during my time as First Lady. But I never forgot that I was there because my husband held his high office, not because I had been elected. I had helped him get there, and I liked to think he couldn't have done it without me, but the situation was clearly the same one women have faced for centuries. First Ladies throughout our history have been expected to be adoring wives and perfect mothers, to manage the public and social aspects of the White House to the satisfaction of all critics, and to participate in "appropriate public service." The role of First Lady is a difficult — and sometimes nearly impossible — one to fill, and each one of us has dealt with this challenge in her own way.

The role has changed dramatically along with the expanded opportunities of other women in America. This was brought home quite vividly to me and Jimmy during our first visit to Gettysburg from nearby Camp David. After studying the battlegrounds of the War Between the States, we went by the beautiful farm of the Eisenhowers to pay our respects to Mamie Eisenhower, whom we had long admired. We spent several hours with her, listening to her description of life in the Army, in the White House, and during their retirement. She was also eager to hear about my own experiences, but was somewhat taken aback by the variety and extent of my projects. She finally said, "I stayed busy all the time and loved being in the White House, but I was never expected to do all the things you have to do."

Until quite recently, First Ladies were expected to limit themselves to the duties of official hostess and private helpmate, and most of them never varied from this narrowly restricted role. Eleanor Roosevelt was the notable exception, and she was severely criticized for her personal involvement in public affairs. Nowadays, the public expectation is just the opposite, and there is a general presumption that the projects of a First Lady will be substantive, highly publicized, and closely scrutinized. I am thankful for the change.

I remember one special evening at the White House, a reception for the President's advisory committee, women appointees and officials, activists, and legislators from all over the country who were working for the ERA. Some of our special guests gathered upstairs before the reception. Joan Mondale was there; she had become a valuable asset to the nation through her knowledge and promotion of the arts and was a wonderful example of what women can accomplish through public service. Three generations of Johnsons were there too: Lady Bird, her daughter Lynda Robb, and Lynda's three small daughters; and three generations of my family: me, Judy and Amy, and my tiny granddaughter, Sarah. I was struck with the picture we made: grandmothers, mothers, daughters, all of us playing out very traditional public roles — but this night we were all there to celebrate and to stand for and to work on some very nontraditional choices and opportunities for women.

We went down the elevator together and made slow progress through the huge crowd of women into the East Room, finally reaching a small platform. And with the little girls wiggling behind me, I was ready to welcome the guests. "Welcome to your house," I found myself saying. "This house belongs to all Americans — and that means more than half of it belongs to women." The crowd roared its approval, and I couldn't have been more proud to have been a part of it.



In the mid-seventies, there were several million homeless refugees in Southeast Asia, Indochina, and Africa. The problem became so urgent that the United Nations convened a special conference in Geneva, to which Jimmy sent Vice President Mondale. The United States was working with international relief agencies such as ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), UNICEF, the World Food Program, Catholic Relief, CARE, and others that were trying to provide food, clothing, medical care, and shelter. We doubled the quota of refugees we could accept, and Jimmy was already working to convince other countries to share the responsibility.

But in the fall of 1979 a new wave of refugees, the Cambodians, flashed on our television screens every day and every night. There was talk of another holocaust and, indeed, it was

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126
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Eleanor Roosevelt

VOLUME ONE

1884-1933

Blanche Wiesen Cook



One of the myths that ER seemed actively to encourage was that she was naïve politically. Not insignificantly, several people who harbored that illusion were actually victims of ER's political intrigue and opposition. The fact that they saw her as a "dim bulb" rather than as their enemy is probably the greatest testimony to her political style and maneuvering. ER's gracious manner often obscured intense emotions, including disapproval and dislike. She tended to avoid confrontations and occasionally walked away from angry words, but never from the battle. She did not play politics transcendently—somewhere above the fray. She walked hard edges, made tough decisions, and followed her principles wherever they led.

Nowhere was this more clear than in her part in the Bok Peace Award controversy, which caused her to be attacked as a subversive. The Bok Peace Award was established in 1923 by Edward Bok, the former publisher and editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, who offered a prize of \$50,000 to the plan that would "provide a practicable means whereby the United States can take its place and do its share toward preserving world peace, while not making compulsory the participation of the U.S. in European wars if any such are, in the future, found unpreventable." It might be "based upon the present covenant of the League of Nations or may be entirely apart from that instrument." A fortune equivalent to over \$1 million in contemporary currency, the prize was headline news throughout the United States. It was featured in news columns, editorials, and cartoons; Will Rogers joked about it; it appeared in the "Mutt and Jeff" comic strip.

Esther Lape agreed to administer the prize on the condition that Eleanor Roosevelt and Narcissa Vanderlip work with her. The contest created a stir in academic circles, and was taken seriously among leading American internationalists, especially businessmen who hoped for an expanding economic future free of both war and the current hysteria that rejected all European "entanglements"—including "foreign" trade. The former Secretary of War and Secretary of State, Elihu Root, agreed to be jury chair; Judge Learned Hand, Henry Stimson (to become Hoover's Secretary of State and FDR's Secretary of War), and Roscoe Pound (dean of the Harvard Law School) were dedicated members of the committee. The jury also included Colonel Edward M. House, Wil-

son's former confidant; Wellesley College President Ellen Fitz Pendleton; William Allen White, editor of the *Emporia Gazette*; General James G. Harbord, formerly General John J. Pershing's chief of staff, then president of the new Radio Corporation of America; and Brand Whitlock, the novelist and progressive politician who served as Wilson's ambassador to Belgium.

Lape considered it "deeply significant that none of the law experts" considered the campaign "a superficial popular activity." In fact, a great optimistic mood regarding the possibility of outlawing war and achieving world peace through rational discourse prevailed during the 1920s. Thousands of plans were submitted to the jury from noted legal scholars, businessmen, former and current public officials, including FDR.

FDR worked hard on his plan, a variation of the current League, which he called a Society of Nations (heralding the United Nations). The range of submissions was vast: Harvard's President Charles W. Eliot, for example, saw the path to world peace through increased "family discipline." M. Carey Thomas, Bryn Mawr's longtime president, called for a "Declaration of Interdependence" to outlaw war and create a "Council of Vigilance and Inquiry" to resolve global tensions. Some wanted a national referendum in case of war; many sought means by which war, and the production of weapons for war, would be made unprofitable; one called for an army of hypnotists to drive warlike thoughts from the mind. Many ascribed war to propaganda, misinformation, and packaged hatred, and called for the creation of schools for international ethics and understanding. Hundreds of plans focused on the need for an equitable distribution of raw materials and natural resources; the restructuring of global markets and prices; the creation of a world economic council. The U.S. section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom called for a conference to consider the cancellation of the devastating wartime debt; the stabilization of European currencies; a reconsideration of the Treaty of Versailles, especially the evacuation of the Ruhr by the French; and general disarmament.

Of the 22,165 plans submitted, the committee chose a very simple plan by Charles E. Levermore, an academic, who recommended the United States' immediate adherence to the Permanent Court of Inter-

national Justice and cooperation with (though not membership in) the League of Nations.

Esther Lape selected twenty of the most interesting plans for publication, and introduced them with her analysis of the different *Ways to Peace*. Published by Scribner's, the book sold well and was critically acclaimed. The *New York Times* reviewer considered Lape's essay "better worth a \$50,000 prize than any of the plans we have seen." And the *New York Herald Tribune* editorialized that Lape's book was the "best thing that came out of the Peace Award."

The winning plan stimulated Bok, Esther Lape, ER, and their allies to promote U.S. entrance to the World Court. Senate isolationists were outraged and called for an investigation into the un-American and potentially treasonous nature of the Bok Award. They condemned it as propaganda that encouraged "foreign entanglements" and "communistic internationalism."

On 17 January 1924, the veteran Democratic Irreconcilable James Reed called for the Senate Special Committee on Propaganda to investigate charges that the American Peace Award was the tool of "foreign governments or foreign institutions," for the purpose of unduly and improperly influencing or controlling public opinion and legislative action, specifically regarding the "foreign policy of the United States."

The Senate committee accused Edward Bok of conspiracy: He had attempted to manipulate public opinion with untold sums of money in behalf of the League and international peace, creating thereby "a moral menace." Unruffled by threats of contempt charges, Bok refused to disclose the cost of the contest. He insisted that the money he donated to the American public was his affair and that he intended to spend the rest of his life giving his money to worthy causes.

According to *The New York Times*, the Senate committee room "was filled by over 700 men and women peace advocates" who hissed and booed the investigators and cheered Bok and Lape, who appeared as key witnesses.

Lape was particularly brilliant under fire. Although the Irreconcilable investigators sought to discredit and demean her, their questions were so insistent and their tone so assaultive that two senators, Frank Greene of Vermont and Thaddeus Caraway of Arkansas (the only pro-

Leaguer on the committee), frequently interrupted Reed's harangues to "go to the aid of the witness." (Reporters assured their readers, however, that Esther Lape did not require such chivalric services.)

Lape created the greatest flurry when she named ER and Narcissa Vanderlip as the two most significant members of the policy committee. The *New York Herald* took this as the signal to emphasize that the award was a plot by unscrupulous women, influenced by foreign radicals and their bipartisan henchmen (Root and Stimson were Republicans), to ensnare the United States into membership in that un-American organization the League of Nations. "The great Bok peace prize," said the *Herald*, "was managed by two matrons of social distinction [ER and Narcissa Vanderlip] and a highly educated and most efficient young unmarried woman." Lape was in fact older than ER, but unmarried women were generally perceived to be young—or at least younger than matrons of distinction. Nevertheless, the *New York Times* editorial "These Women" praised the skill and wisdom of Esther Lape and her "fellow conspirators."

The Bok hearings were suspended on the news of President Wilson's death, and then simply allowed to expire; but government isolationists pursued Bok's Foundation and punished it by administrative fiat. The IRS removed the Foundation's tax exemption. Its "education work" was declared "political" lobbying, in behalf of that un-American idea: international law.

Eleanor Roosevelt's first specifically "un-American" activity resulted in the first document entered into her voluminous FBI file (only recently declassified through the Freedom of Information Act). Dated 15 February 1924, and heavily deleted, it is part of the FBI's "General Investigation" of the American Peace Award. "Recorded and Indexed," with three copies sent to Washington and routed to J. Edgar Hoover, who signed it, the document itself is bizarrely innocuous: "The other number used by the American Peace Award, namely Murray Hill 4278 was contracted for and signed for by Mrs. Anna Roosevelt. This is presumably Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, as 'Who's Who' indicates that Franklin D. Roosevelt married Anna Eleanor Roosevelt of New York on 17 March 1905."

However criticized and harassed, ER, Lape, and the other supporters

of the Bok Foundation were undaunted. They continued to work for the League, and for U.S. entrance into the World Court. In 1925, the House voted for U.S. participation, and ER urged a women's crusade to achieve Senate approval.*

In addition to her work in behalf of international peace, ER spent some part of every day planning strategy for the New York State Democratic Party. In her 6 February 1924 letter to FDR where she minimized her activities, she reported that she, Caroline O'Day, and Nancy Cook had been to a "remarkable dinner" of "600 women from Albany and nearby and all workers!" They saw Governor Al Smith, who asked them to lobby for his new reform program, and ER spent several days in Albany, working out the details. But there was still one piece of additional news, she noted almost as an afterthought: Cordell Hull, the Democratic Party's National Committee chairman in 1924, had invited ER—currently finance chair of the Women's Division—to head a platform committee for women to present their demands at the June convention in New York. She was delighted, though she gave no hint of that to FDR: "I'm up to my eyes in work for the convention preparations and trying to raise our budget which is going to be an endless job."

ER even rejected FDR's praise for her work, the words of which are now lost along with most of his correspondence during this period: "You need not be proud of me dear. I'm only being active till you can be again. It isn't such a great desire on my part to serve the world and I'll fall back into habits of sloth quite easily! Hurry up for as you know my ever present sense of the uselessness of all things will overwhelm me sooner or later! My love to Missy, and to you, Devotedly, ER."

When one considers the disparity between ER's denial and the reality of her daily activities, one pauses to wonder what motivated her decision to trivialize both her work and her commitment to it. Her need to minimize her efforts and to reassure her husband that she was in fact no threat, and no competition to his primary place in the political arena,

* It lasted for over a decade and in 1935 resulted in failure. The World Court was only a first and rather tiny step on the long road toward international peace, she acknowledged wherever she spoke: But remember: "All big changes in human history have been arrived at slowly and through many compromises."

is a sturdy testimony to the proverbial double standard that was and remains the burden of political women.

Despite her modest denials, however, ER increasingly went about her own business, whether or not it served FDR, with or without his approval. On 9 April, she wrote that she planned to attend a two-day "convention of women" on law enforcement, specifically as it related to Prohibition, in Washington: "I know you will probably feel with Louis [Howe] that it is politically wrong to come but I do believe in it." It was indeed politically wrong, as ER was quick to realize, and acknowledge.

The Women's Democratic Law Enforcement League was one expression of the 1924 alliance between "dries" and Dixiecrats that ended Prohibition as a cause for social reformers. At this time the alliance between populists and religious fundamentalists (led until his death by William Jennings Bryan), and the reinvigorated Ku Klux Klan, which dominated Dixiecrat politics, focused on the crusade for a dry America, and influenced partisan politics until 1932. ER had hoped that Prohibition might result in "less drinking now among young people than there was among our fathers." But she would not be allied with a reactionary group who opposed progressive politicians like Al Smith because he was a "wet," a Catholic, and a reformer.*

ER was embattled on several fronts in 1924. On 9 April, she wrote FDR that she wished he were at home to advise her "on the fight I'm putting up on a delegate and 2 alternates at large." The fight was classic: Would the female or male party leaders get to name the women delegates? Forty-nine county chairwomen had already selected and endorsed their representatives when Tammany boss Charles Murphy claimed it his privilege to name the delegates. ER, resolute and ready for a fight, wrote: "I imagine it is just a question of which [Murphy] dislikes most—giving me my way or having me give the papers a grand chance for a story by telling [all] at the women's dinner . . . and by insisting on recognition on the floor of the convention & putting the names in nomination!" Clearly, ER had already decided to do full battle: "There's

* See pages 374–75.

one thing I'm thankful for—I haven't a thing to lose and for the moment you haven't either."

The New York Times featured ER's fight for women's equality at the state convention in an article titled "Women Are in Revolt." It was the "only inharmonious note" of the convention: the women supported Smith, but demanded their right to choose their own representatives. "Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt . . . slated to be one of the four delegates-at-large, led the fight for the women." She said:

We have now had the vote for four years, and some very ardent suffragists seem to feel that instead of gaining in power the women have lost. . . .

I have been wondering whether it occurs to the women as a whole that, if they expect to gain the ends for which they fought, it is not going to be sufficient simply to cast a ballot. . . . They must gain for themselves a place of real equality and the respect of the men. . . . The whole point in women's suffrage is that the Government needs the point of view of all its citizens and the women have a point of view which is of value to the Government. . . .

ER was in the vanguard of those feminists who protected and promoted women's issues and the equal representation of women within the party's committees. She demanded that women be represented on county committees "in equal numbers" and be listed among those nominated for office in all primary elections:

It is disagreeable to take stands. It was always easier to compromise, always easier to let things go. To many women, and I am one of them, it is extraordinarily difficult to care about anything enough to cause disagreement or unpleasant feelings, but I have come to the conclusion that this must be done for a time until we can prove our strength and demand respect for our wishes. . . .

We will be enormously strengthened if we can show that we are willing to fight to the very last ditch for what we believe in.

ER's efforts were victorious. She was named chair of a committee that negotiated the women's right to name their own delegates and alternates. Their meetings with Smith and other party leaders "established a precedent," and ER felt encouraged: "We go into the campaign feeling that our party has recognized us as an independent part of the organization."

But it was only a preliminary victory. The women's political movement had become a significant element within the Democratic Party. It was feminist and bold. And the entrenched male power brokers hated it. They sought at every turn to set up roadblocks, brake its momentum, and destroy it. A daily and nasty battle ensued, fought meanly and through subterfuge. For example, women who finally achieved membership status on a committee often found the doors to the meetings locked, or the meetings moved to secret places. Other apparent victories were no sooner announced than betrayed.

In March 1924, the Democratic National Committee proudly announced that it was "the first political group to seek women's views on important questions of peculiar interest to them so that these social legislation planks as incorporated in the national Democratic platform may represent their ideas." And, with considerable public relations fanfare, the leadership announced it had asked Eleanor Roosevelt to chair the women's platform committee.

ER agreed, and determined to base the recommendations for needed social-welfare legislation on the "requests of all women's organizations in the country." She appointed a panel of activist experts, including Dorothy Kirchwey Brown of Massachusetts, Margaret Norrie of Dutchess County, Elinor Morgenthau, Maud Swartz, Gertrude Ely (a noted philanthropist from Bryn Mawr who was one of ER's closest friends), Charl Williams of Tennessee (who was credited with lobbying the final vote needed for the ratification of the suffrage amendment), and Patti R. (Mrs. Solon) Jacobs of Alabama. The committee endorsed the League of Nations, and called for the creation of a federal department of education, equal pay for women workers, and the ratification of the child-labor amendment. It called for a forty-eight-hour workweek, wages commensurate with the cost of living and health care, the creation of

employment bureaus and the means to ensure "healthy and safe working conditions."

But in June, their three months' effort was rudely rebuffed by the Resolutions Committee at the convention. For hours ER and her co-workers sat outside the locked doors of the all-male Resolutions Committee and waited to be heard. At dawn the men voted twenty-two to eighteen, for the third and last time, to reaffirm their refusal even to hear the women's proposals. ER wrote that at the convention of 1924 she saw "for the first time where the women stood when it came to a national convention. I shortly discovered that they were of very little importance. They stood outside the door of all important meetings and waited." She spent most of her time during the deadlocked, heat-filled convention—every day the temperature topped one hundred degrees Fahrenheit—trying to seem calm. "I sat and knitted, suffered with the heat and wished it would end." One day, Will Rogers noticed ER and asked: "Knitting in the names of the future victims of the guillotine?" ER was tempted to respond that she was "ready to call any punishment down on the heads of those who could not bring the convention to a close."

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THE 1924 CONVENTION WAS A SETBACK FOR THE WOMEN, AND a disaster for the Democrats. But for the Roosevelts 1924 represented another turning point. Both ER and FDR were widely perceived as the most significant contributors to the Democratic convention. The women's political community acknowledged ER as a major leader. Personally, she was informed and toughened by her new understanding of the way male bastions of power actually work. And during the convention, FDR's reputation as a national figure soared. In fact, the only bright moment of the divided and frequently violent convention—a convention dominated by Al Smith and his chief opponent, William Gibbs McAdoo, who was now frankly associated with the Ku Klux Klan—occurred when FDR presented the nominating speech for Smith.

His first major public appearance since he was stricken, FDR had practiced for weeks in order to be able to walk erect on his heavy steel braces, supported only by one crutch and the arm of his sixteen-year-

old son, James. According to Marion Dickerman, who sat with ER, SDR, and Nancy Cook, it had been a gray, cloudy day. But as FDR reached the podium, drew himself upright, and smiled "a rather remote smile . . . as if he smiled to himself amid the thunderous applause and cheers," at that very moment the clouds parted "and through the skylight came a burst of sunlight." The entire crowd that filled the great hall of Madison Square Garden cheered with joyous relief and high regard as he walked the distance from platform to podium. His unforgettable triumph represented three years of agonizing effort.

Naming Al Smith "the Happy Warrior of the political battlefield," FDR called in dramatic and resonant phrases for party unity in the face of all differences. "You equally who come from the great cities of the East and the plains and hills of the West, from the slopes of the Pacific and from the homes and fields of the Southland, I ask you . . . to keep first in your hearts and minds the words of Abraham Lincoln—'With malice toward none, and charity for all.'"

The crowd cheered for an hour and thirteen minutes. But FDR's courageous eloquence lifted the spirit of the convention only temporarily. It was deadlocked for 102 ballots. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, as "the results of the futile balloting droned on," there was "in the exact center of the great hall the one man whose name would stampede the convention were he put in nomination. . . . From the time Roosevelt made his speech in nomination of Smith, which was the one great speech of the convention, he has been easily the foremost figure on floor or platform." From that moment on, FDR was considered the real "Happy Warrior."

Finally, the Democrats agreed on a compromise candidate, a Wall Street lawyer associated with the House of Morgan, John W. Davis. Politically indistinguishable from the Republican nominee, Calvin Coolidge, Davis inspired nobody. Almost five million Americans voted for the third-party candidate as Progressives. Even party stalwarts like Caroline O'Day supported the new Progressive Party's candidate, Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follette. FDR returned to his business ventures, with frequent vacations in warm Southern waters. And ER agreed to help run Al Smith's campaign for re-election as New York's governor—against Republican nominee Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.