

The Idaho scene . . .

Hard questions raised on liberal IWY stance

Sun. July 10, 1977

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register staff writer

Hard questions are raised whether the resolutions adopted by the International Conference International Women's Year (IWY) meeting at Boise last May 20 truly represent the general thinking of Idaho women.

Anyway, the proceedings have come under heavy fire, especially from the Mormon women of Idaho who make up a large segment of the Idaho population.

Since this Boise meeting, extensive criticism has been leveled that the gathering was dominated by the liberal elements who muffled opposition of their more conservative sisters.

The controversy has prompted bitter newspaper exchanges of charges and letters to the editor.

Even U. S. Rep. George V. Hansen, R-Idaho, one of the most conservative members of Congress, has taken the opportunity to jump into the fracas by asking an official investigation of alleged illegal activities in the conduct of the meeting. He has even announced plans to institute a lawsuit to enjoin the national IWY commission from further lobbying and to stop what he said was "outrageous diversion of public tax monies."

Hope Kading, Boise, a well known political and public personality in charge of the meeting, sought to give a fair voice to all but it appeared the more liberal elements were in charge.

Sheila Olsen, Idaho Falls, wife of Dennis M. Olsen, Idaho Falls attorney, Bonneville and region Republican chairman and who may become the next state chairman, is especially bitter at outcome of the meeting which she alleges does not represent the true sentiment.

Mrs. Olsen charges the resolutions adopted a loose moral tone and are geared for more rather than less federal help.

She points out that of the 1,100 attending, less than 40 were Mormons and that only one of the 32 or 33 workshop chairwomen was a Mormon.

Eight women representing the Bonneville County Republican Women attended the meeting but they charge they were given little voice, despite the efforts of Mrs. Kading to be fair.

They allege a resolution stressing the Mormon concept on the woman's role in the home and family was deliberately ignored in a workshop session where it was supposed to be instituted. Under the conference rules it was prohibited from being introduced in the general session.

The candidacy of Mrs. Olsen to be named one of the 14 delegates to the national convention at Houston in November was badly beaten.

Mrs. Olsen further charged that only the more liberal women of Idaho Falls were elected delegates to the Houston convention, Anne Voilleque, Michele Brown and Lois Collins, who have been active with the American Association of University Women and League of Women Voters.

Mrs. Kading informed this writer that she has authority to name delegates at large and plans to name Mrs. Olsen and perhaps one or two other LDS women. Mrs. Olsen said she will accept.

One has only to look at the heavy conservative Idaho Legislature to realize the bulk of Idahoans lean in that direction. This is further buttressed by the heavy votes given to such avid conservatives as Ronald Reagan, John Schmitz, of the American Party, Congressmen Hansen and Steve Symms, and U. S. Sen. James A. McClure, to mention a few.

The convention approved 78 state resolutions, plus 38 recommendations of the national commission.

The Idaho LDS women were so angered at the Boise proceedings they alerted their Utah colleagues of what to expect. This resulted in a record 3,500 women attending the Utah IWY conference who rejected the national recommendations and adopted a conservative plank of their own. The national IWY president recently announced the seating of the Utah delegates will be challenged.

The East Idaho LDS women charge the Boise convention was controlled by lesbians, pro-ERA, abortionists and other radical women liberation elements, and Mrs. Kading admits there was a large segment of these at the meeting.

There are a number of resolutions which come under the foremost being

that for the Equal Rights Amendment. The legislature only in the last session voted to rescind this by a 2-1 margin in the House and a one-vote edge in the Senate, although this action is termed legally questionable.

But there are a number of other resolutions which the LDS and other more conservative women challenge are not representative of the feelings of most Idaho women, aside from ERA.

One calls for repeal of any existing law that prohibits forms of sexual behavior between consenting adults and to prevent discrimination based on sexual preference in the matter of housing, employment, child custody and mental health services. Opponents charge this is to favor lesbians and homosexuals.

Others call for eliminations on all government and private forms the titles of Mr., Mrs. Miss and Ms. and that a husband's and wife's first names be included in telephone directories at no extra charge.

Another fosters day care centers which opponents allege is detrimental to motherhood and the family life.

Other resolutions call for elimination of all discriminations based on sexual preferences and free exchange

and dissemination of information about abortion. It calls for bringing state law into conformation with the Supreme Court decision on abortion.

Others call for "reversible methods of birth control according to culture"; that the federal and state government provide abortion services; instruction in sexuality and sex education appropriate to grade school level; repeal prohibitive legislation regarding public availability of non-prescriptive contraceptives.

On the other hand, the conference took many progressive steps in seeking to equalize the role of women. In fact, the vast majority of the resolutions sought to achieve this purpose.

Leaders of such progressive organizations at the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women played a key role in this effort. These are organizations which must be differentiated from the lesbians, extreme woman libbers and other radical feminine groups.

The IWY program was intended to give women a greater voice for equality but at least in Idaho has brought about fiery bickering among themselves, with the men placed in the role of interested bystanders.