

Women's Political Caucuses

in D.C., Va., Md.—
a new face for power?
or just a lot of hair-pulling?

By Aileen Jacobson

After the National Women's Political Caucus held its first meeting in Washington last July, three very different women began to organize women's political caucuses in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. The caucuses, headed on the national level by such women's lib leaders as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug, take the women's movement in a new direction—direct involvement in the political process, from backing women as candidates in elections to providing recommendations for the Supreme Court.

Though the local caucuses are just in their formative stages, each has progressed differently, reflecting the tastes and the racial and political backgrounds of the leaders and their followers.

In the District, 24-year-old Audrey Colom is concerned about her role as a black woman and favors having the D.C. caucus support black men as well as women of all colors. She wants the District to gain more political power, either through statehood or through home rule, and she wants the caucus to work to improve the administration of day care centers, model city programs, schools, welfare, and prisons. Most D.C. caucus members are young and liberal in their political sentiments. The majority of those attending the meetings have been white, though, and this has been one of Mrs. Colom's concerns. The convention next weekend, Oct. 29-31, will decide which issues the caucus will pursue.

In Maryland, Mayanne Karmin, a free-lance writer with a recent interest in the women's movement, is concerned with getting women into political office. She wants to see large numbers of women working together, regardless of their political persuasion, and she is confident that this can be done, if slowly. As a wife and mother, she is personally interested in seeing new life styles made available to women.

Flora Crater is confident that in Virginia, once women become aware of the injustices in wages and political representation that they are living under—and, she contends, they have been since Jamestown,—they will rally to the caucus. In her state, as in Maryland, the emphasis is on elections, urging women to run. As for male candidates, if they want these women's votes, the men had better support their issues. A grandmother, Mrs. Crater has been involved in state politics for the last 20 years, but it is only in the last two that she has been inspired with her new perception of the injustices toward women. In those two years, she has organized a chapter of NOW, lobbied for the Equal Rights Amendment, and edited a news bulletin for women.

Each woman has her own reasons for becoming involved in this newest aspect of the women's movement. But their reasons and views are not the same as those of Friedan, Steinem, Abzug . . . the women who often publicize their views, or have them publicized for them.

In the following monologues, each woman tells her own local story, the story of how she came to the women's movement and what she hopes to accomplish for it and for herself. ◻

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Virginia
 Women's Political Caucus, is the founder and president of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW), a member of the Virginia Democratic State Central Committee, and the founder and editor of *The Woman Activist*, an information newsletter on women's issues. She is also a grandmother. The Virginia caucus held its first conference in Richmond on Sept. 18, with Gloria Steinem as the main speaker, but its membership is still open. The address for the Virginia caucus is 2310 Barbour Rd., Falls Church, Va. 22043.

It's just a matter of building confidence. Women are capable. That's all we're really saying in the caucus. Women often say, 'Who, me?' if it is suggested they run for office. We're just not used to seeing women in political power, and so we don't aspire to it ourselves. It doesn't occur to women that they can do more than they are doing. It occurs to them that they can do all that work within the party, but it doesn't occur to them that they can run for office.

I've been involved in politics since 1950. I have run for office—for the Board of Supervisors four years ago. And I've been active in the Democratic Party. I'm on the Virginia Democratic State Central Committee.

But I didn't get involved with women's issues until a couple of years ago, and then it was through my daughter-in-law. She and a group of women from NOW came down—she was living in Princeton, N.J., at the time, where my son was at the Institute—and she asked me to make an appointment for her with her senator. She wanted to talk to him about the Equal Rights Amendment. Well, when she started to tell me about it and about all the injustices toward women, I could readily see, yes, this is all true. I hadn't followed the women's movement, but once I became aware, the injustices seemed so obvious. I became aware of discriminatory employment practices, the so-called "protective laws" keeping women from a supervisory position, and discriminatory jury duty. Now I'm amazed sometimes that some women I know who are liberal and well-educated are not interested in the women's movement or just won't admit that they're oppressed. They have

such low expectations.

Then I went to the march last year on the 50th anniversary of woman's suffrage, and it was so exciting. You saw so many different kinds of women, and you started to become sensitized to their needs. The amazing thing about the young feminists is that they're so sensitive. I'm delighted to see young women so aware.

So I did get involved in the women's movement, and I've been excited ever since. Anyone involved in social issues should get interested. All of us are so culturally adapted, though, that we never realize how oppressed we are. And women in the home are so isolated. I never worked once I got married. I was happy doing it, but I always had my outside activities—PTA and the usual route that women take. My daughter-in-law gave up her career when she got married—it was just assumed—and I can understand her frustration.

I felt it would be important to have the Equal Rights Amendment passed. We should at least be constitutionally equal with men, and so I became a lobbyist, a follower of all women's legislation, and a reader of the Congressional Record. I looked around and saw that there was no Virginia chapter of NOW, and I started one. I also found a lack of communication among women, so I started to edit a nationwide action letter, *The Woman Activist*, which I mail all over the country. And women tell me it fills a great need and has helped in the present fight with the Equal Rights Amendment. Through my activities, I met so many different women all over the country. Of those, I found that Betty Friedan is an outstanding leader. She innovates. She takes a step and others have to catch up.

When she called the caucus together in July, I was immediately interested, because politics is my game. I was especially interested because the caucus would be non-partisan and broad-based. Women are very strongly motivated, I know, because they feel the discrimination every day. All they need is a little know-how, and this is where I can help.

I see changes coming in the political parties. They're not adapting now, and that's why these different caucuses are forming. In NOW, we went about things in the mundane way, through traditional channels. But the caucus will get more directly involved in the political process, more involved in elections. We're going to reach women in their homes with a fact sheet. We're going to develop a list of women candidates in each community. We're going to raise the women's issue in every election by sending out questionnaires or inviting the candidates to speak to us, and then we're going to publicize their views. That in itself will make them sit down and examine their own views. As a non-partisan group of women, we may have to develop our own candidate, because we are working not only with the party point of view but with the point of view of women's issues. We want to activate all women at the grassroots level, and this will mean a great deal in Virginia politics. It's going to be a very interesting year.

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We could have women's caucuses in each congressional district, within the parties—anyone who wants to start a caucus can go ahead. Where we can help is to draft guidelines for women who aren't used to organiz-

ing. Often all you need is one person who wants to get in touch with others. We have to develop the tools so that women who are highly motivated can do what they want.

I see the caucus as providing support for women who wouldn't run for office otherwise. Many women are talented but untapped. With the caucus, they'll have something they can turn to that's right there. The caucus will also seek out women. If we had a caucus in every political jurisdiction, it would be the job of the caucus to look around and to develop leadership. We hope the caucus will have an active women's group lobbying in the Virginia state legislature in Richmond. Of course, we also want to develop support for good men. After all, 50 per cent of the elected officials should be men. We want those men to be for women. The men may not be sure that voters are behind them on the women's issues, and it's a fact of politics that they won't move until they are sure. We have to increase understanding among all groups in the population.

Virginia is very backward in the treatment of its wage earners, and I just know that women are going to refuse to let the economy of the state rest on their backs once they're aware of the facts. I know that every woman wants equal pay and a minimum wage, and Virginia doesn't have laws for either of these things now. This state is where our whole political and economic system started—in the hearts and minds of Virginia men. Now it's the women who are going to have to make the system work for everyone.

We're concerned with all women. While the national caucus has been accused of being middle-class and white—which is true—these women are committed to helping all their sisters.

I felt very good about the turn-out at our conference in Richmond. There were over 250 women there, and 15 per cent were black. There were quite a few young college women, and there was no problem of communication between young and old. We all understood. There were League of Women Voters-types and Women's Liberation-types (the two ends of the scale) at the conference. There were women there from the AAUW. There are a lot of middle-aged women who have been aware of their oppression a long time, but they've held back. That's what we find in the caucus—they've finally found their sisters in the younger women, who often became aware during the civil-rights movement. Once women see what we're getting at, that we're not trying to upset the whole world, they will be sympathetic. For instance, once they see the condition of equal wages, they won't stand for it anymore. And once they think about abortion in a rational way, they'll know that it just isn't fair. Why shouldn't a woman have control over her own body? And why should it be so expensive?

It's going to be hard for the caucus to campaign unless we find an outstanding woman whom everyone is enthusiastic about. The caucus won't back a woman if she's not sympathetic to the woman's issue. Of course, we'll leave those questions open to the women who join the caucus. What we can do though is raise the women's question in every election. We have invited the candidates for lieutenant governor to have lunch with our policy council, and we're going to raise the women's issue. We're going to put the women's issue into politics and we're not going to stand for any evasions.

Of course, our long-range objective is to get women in office, reflecting the population. The quality of representation now is not good. Why would people come up here from Mississippi if they felt they were being represented? The political process needs jacking up, and the women's caucuses are just the ones to do it. We have the expertise, goodness knows, and we have the commitment.

I went through the Virginia blue book, which lists all the elected and appointed positions. Out of 1500 appointees, 10 per cent were women—and these were not major appointments. Out of 2,000 elected officials, 100 are women—that's 5 per cent. So you see, we've got a lot of work to do.

My own background could not have been more traditional, especially since my mother was Spanish. I grew up in Orange, Va., and graduated from Orange High School. Then I went to Washington for a business course. That was just so that I would be able to earn a living until I married. If I had had the money, I would have gone to college. I met my husband in Washington, and I never worked after we married. He buys and sells eggs. I'm studying for my B.A. now, majoring in biology.

We have three children. The oldest is 32 and an electrical engineer. The next is a theoretical physicist, teaching at Vanderbilt. It's his wife who got me interested in the women's movement. They have two boys. My daughter is a chemist and has a little girl seven months old. She says she feels liberated because she has a profession and a sympathetic husband. She's taking courses, while her daughter is young, so that she can keep up in her field.

Though I was brought up traditionally, anyone who grew up in the depression was aware of the effect of politics on life. And when you go to the PTA, you become aware of the school board and where the power is. It doesn't take much thinking. If you want to have good schools, you have to get good people into power. Once I got involved in politics, I worked in every election. I worked on everything from bond issues to reform of the county government. I worked within the party, too.

Men do feel a little hurt when their wives become so active. My husband was a little hurt at first. But he really believes that I'm on the right path. We've been married for 32 years. How does he feel about my involvement in the caucus? Well, I didn't ask him."



Audrey Colom is a teacher working with Project New Hope, a division of the Department of Corrections which is trying to help women prisoners. She is leading the organization of the D.C. Women's Political Caucus, which will have its first conference on Oct. 29-31 at the Marjorie Webster School for Girls, Kalmia Road and 17th Street NW. The caucus's mailing address is 514 7th St. NE.

this caucus. We don't want a caucus that is based west of Rock Creek Park. Women in the inner city know the problems of the city.

I read about the caucus after the national convention in July, and I was interested enough to call Shirley Chisholm's office to find out more about it. I spoke with her at length, and she told me it was important for black women to get involved at the ground level, especially in a place like Washington. So I went to the first D.C. meeting, and I had a very definite idea of what should come out of that meeting.

Though the District has no politics *per se*, except the Model Cities program and the school board elections, there are issues in the District that I thought we as a caucus could move on. We could push through appropriations for D.C. or get that whole structure changed. We could get women into office. I think that that's especially important in Washington because there are so many influential women here already. I could easily see them holding office, and there must be others who just haven't had the opportunity to emerge. I hope that the caucus could develop these women and work to get them into office. It could also provide Mayor Washington with the names of qualified women for appointed offices.

As a caucus, we could push for a woman to fill one of the Supreme Court seats that just opened up. And the school board elections is one area where women should have a great deal of input. We are closer to children, the way this society is set up. Day care is important to me personally, because I work and have a young child. Very few of the centers in the D.C. area are of a high caliber. The way I feel, 'Sesame Street' is great, but there's no use in watching it if there's no back-up. Unfortunately, the conference will take place Oct. 29 through 31, and the school board elections are on Nov. 4, so there's not much we can do this year. However, all the candidates have contacted me, and we may invite them to speak.

D.C. is full of programs, but some are not to the advantage of the residents of the city. They're used as stepping stones, to the advantage of the organizations that sponsor them. So far, there's been no organization to push for responsibility in these programs.

I want to see a lot of things done in the District. I want to see it get some political power—either through statehood or through home rule, whichever the caucus decides to back—so that we're not the last colony. I'm interested in ex-offenders. That's what I'm involved with in my job, Project New Hope. I'm developing curricula for classes to help women prisoners to pass the high school equivalency test.

I feel that the caucus could be making elected officials more responsible to the people. We could be highlighting the inefficiency of the board of education, of model cities, of the department of corrections, of the welfare department. These are things that need to be brought to the attention of people. People are not aware of them. The caucus can get women to realize that they have a place in the administration of the District government, that they do have a place in politics. The District does send delegates to the conventions, and these should be at least 50 per cent women. Drug addiction, crime—women should be involved in these facilities, to make sure they function properly.

I've been active in political things before, when I was a student and when I was teaching in New York. But my background is definitely middle-class. I just can't get away from that. Both my parents own their own businesses in New York. But I found out in high school, in junior high, even in grade school, that even though both my parents have money, I'm still a nigger.

I went to a private school. All my schools, grade school through high school, were all white. That was my motivation, that was what got me to realize that no matter what kind of background you come from, or what kind of money your parents have, you're still up against the same kinds of problems as the people in Harlem.

An incident in the fourth grade got me going. We took a reading test, and I made the highest grade in the class. That automatically made me eligible for a special junior high program. But I was passed over. The teacher told me I wouldn't do well academically. She chose a white girl who did poorly on the reading test but was considered more intelligent.

I was afraid to tell my parents, and I didn't tell them. Someone else did. That was the first time they sat me down and told me why the teacher had passed me over. I had thought the teacher was right, that somehow she knew that I wouldn't do well.

And then in high school, the junior class asked me to run for senior class vice president. The dean had to approve the nomination. I went to her, but she refused to give me her approval. She said it was because I had called a teacher a bastard in class and he had written me up. We brought in the NAACP, and they found out that other people who were running—white—had also

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been written up, and that they didn't have as good an academic record as I did. Finally the dean said that it was her own feeling that I would not be an acceptable vice president. But she didn't approve me, and I didn't run. It was then that I decided that I would always go to black schools.

But it was that incident in the fourth grade that was really the turning point. It also told me that I could achieve as well as anyone else, but that I would always be classified as an under-achiever. That experience made me go into elementary education. In fact, I decided I wanted to teach the fourth grade. I want to instill a sense of self-pride and self-worth in the kids. I want to go back to teaching, but to an open-classroom situation.

I'm disappointed that more black women haven't come to the caucus meetings. I made it clear on the 26th, the anniversary of women's suffrage, when I was on TV, that we are not an elite group of women. If I ever saw it going in that direction, I would leave. I hope it won't be necessary to form a black caucus in D.C.—maybe it will be necessary to form a white one.

A group of us feels that, as black women, it would be difficult for us to push for the rights of women and not deal with the rights of black men at the same time. We're going to be dealing with equality for all women and black men. I don't want to perpetuate the diversity between black men and women. Studies like Moynihan's say that black society is a matriarchal society, that the black woman is stronger. I don't feel that way, but we have to make it clear that we're not trying to castrate black men.

If a black man is running, and I feel he's more qualified than a black woman running, I would push for the black male. If a white woman and a black man were running, and both were equally qualified. . . I don't know. I might be inclined to support the black male, though it would depend on the job. Any male candidate—even a black one—would have to sell me on his position on women. On the other hand, it would be ridiculous for us to back a woman who is a racist, just because she is a woman.

As black women, we're going to be interested in the issues of the city and in candidates who can get positive results for the city, male or female. We may be cutting ourselves off from white women. If we all see the function of the caucus as dealing with the white male—who economically and politically is a cut above all women and the black male, though the black woman is at the very bottom—then we are going to be one caucus. But if other women see the division as being male and fem-

W I'm in this caucus because the District is 70 per cent black, and black women have a place—need a place in

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ale, then we are going to have two caucuses. I would like to see us all working together.

A lot of my friends are black nationalists, and they feel that what I'm doing is ridiculous. But they're not looking at the effect. A lot of them have stopped coming over, and a few of the men don't want their wives or women to talk to me, and they're constantly on my husband. But I myself feel strongly enough about what I'm doing to go ahead. I just do not want to see an elitist organization.

I feel a woman can be anything, as long as her priorities are clear. Mine are my family, my job, and the caucus. I put the caucus last because I don't know how much input I'll have, whereas I know that helping women in prison pass the high school equivalency is a big step. My family comes first because I have a daughter who is 15 months old and there are certain things that I must instill in her before she goes out to deal with the world. And there's a lot of support that I have to offer my husband, who's already out there having to deal with society and its prejudices. He's finishing at Howard and working at the same time. I've found that we support each other, and that's important. It's important that he knows he has a part in bringing up our child and in keeping the household together. Since I've become involved in the caucus, I've been pointing up injustices to him and pointing out his responsibilities, and he has responded very well. My being involved in the caucus has had a good effect on our whole relationship. And that's why I'd like to see black women involved in the caucus. It helps a relationship to know that both partners are working toward the same end. Having dinner hot when you come home doesn't help black people as a whole.

I think the National Women's Political Caucus has a lot of its own organizing problems.

To me, Betty Friedan is a very intelligent woman. However, now I see her as a very comical woman because of her manner. She always feels that she has to get irate at meetings. She's found that it's the only way she can get her way. She yells and continues to stay on a point until eventually out of sheer exhaustion she gets away with what she wants, because everyone else gets tired of listening to her. I understand there's a power play between Betty and Bella Abzug. Something like that could split the caucus. Betty knows how to deal in politics, and that's something I can admire her for.

Gloria Steinem and Shirley Chisholm are the two who have not been doing any kind of power playing within the caucus, and both are well-liked. Shirley has been called in a few times to mediate between Betty and Bella. She has that ability. She might very well emerge as the leader at the national convention in February. I admire her because she's gotten rid of a lot of hang-ups I have about not offending black men. For instance, announcing that she might run for the presidency before the black caucus in Congress has a chance to nominate a man—that's something that gets black men moving.

The national caucus will have to become more sensitive that there are poor people involved. There will be many who won't be able to attend the next meeting because it's in Detroit. At an organizational meeting in New York, they passed the hat and collected \$840 from 33 women. The other representative from D.C. and I didn't contribute. I guess that says something about the D.C. caucus.

The black women who were involved in the last national convention—like Beulah Sanders of National Welfare Rights Organization and Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women—have organizations behind them that pay their way. So unless a woman is already influential or has money, she can't travel.

I don't know who the money people are in Washington, but we will get them involved. Maybe they would take power in the caucus because they have the money to travel and can devote time and have the necessary

contacts. But I'm concerned that any woman who takes power is one who can produce. And that could mean Alice Brown living on 14th and U as easily as any woman from west of Rock Creek Park //



mother of two children, 14 and 11. She is temporary head of the Maryland Women's Political Caucus, while the group is planning its first conference on Nov. 6, at Baltimore Community College. The registration fee will be \$2. The caucus's mailing address is P.O. Box 5983, Bethesda, Md. 20014.

W I was there at the National Caucus and I did feel that given the proper incentive, women would get together around specific political goals, and that this was the only way to advance the cause of women. It doesn't pay just to get on television and argue with David Susskind. That doesn't do any good. Most of the women in Maryland I've spoken to are ready to make a political move. It may not be as quickly as other women, but they are becoming aware. It's becoming respectable in this state to be for women's issues. We're attracting a large group of women, many of whom have never before been involved in women's groups with political implications.

Our first goal is to try to insure that women are represented reasonably on the convention delegations. Last year, less than 10 per cent of the Democratic delegation were women. Out of 49 delegates, only three were women. When one considers the thousands of women in this state with political savvy, who have worked in the parties, something must be working against them.

Our second goal is to encourage women in the political field and to let them know that there's support for them. It's harder for a woman to run. We'd like to let any woman know that we'll help her out. Any other goals will have to be decided on at the conference on Nov. 6.

The Maryland Caucus is a Maryland thing. We're an independent group, we're not a chapter of the national caucus. We have no contact with them except that they have my name as the leader here. I think that women

in this state ought to have the right to set their own goals and pace. All the speakers at our convention will be Maryland women. We don't want to overpower the women with someone like Gloria Steinem. Besides, those women in New York don't understand what life is like outside New York. I speak as a former New Yorker myself. Let Gloria and Betty do their thing, and we Maryland women will do ours.

I was always interested in political things. I wrote a political column in college. In those days, I just wasn't ready to accept everything. I questioned authority. I know this is not considered much in comparison to what students are doing in college now, but at our graduation, the music we were supposed to march to was chosen by the administration. But the class was unhappy about it, and I stood up and made another suggestion. We took a vote, and the class stood behind me. We won.

I went to a woman's college, Russell Sage in Troy, New York. In a woman's college, you have more opportunity for leadership positions, more opportunity to open up. There's no worry, 'Am I being feminine? What will the boys say?' I never found any boys upset by my lack of worship of authority. It certainly didn't hamper my social life.

My own experience as a married woman is that working women are not just discriminated against, they're ignored, as though they didn't exist. I resented this—though of course some men were very helpful. I worked before the children, as a copy writer in advertising, and then I free-lanced as a copy writer and later as a magazine writer. A woman really does have to be 'twice as good to get half as much.' Or she ends up in the category, 'you're different.' Men aren't subjected to that. If a man is talented, he's not considered different.

I became interested in the women's movement about a year ago. A friend took me to a speech by Dr. Estelle Ramey, who is a professor of physiology at Georgetown University and a member of our caucus now. I found her delightful. She said she had spent time in her career when she had no time to think about women's issues. But after all, Simone de Beauvoir didn't discover her impediment until she was around 40. I didn't run out to buy every book on the subject, but I did get interested. People get upset over Dr. Spock, but with his advice, child care is a 28-hour-a-day job. It has a built-in guilt complex. You couldn't possibly do it. I didn't think of it as being discriminating, but as just another one of those experts giving impossible advice.

Younger women coming up now—and younger men—are much more attuned to sharing child care. It's marvelous for the men and the women and the children. People always think that the mother is neglect-

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ing the child if the couple hires a baby sitter. We heard a remark recently about a couple who had hired a baby sitter because the *mother* was away on a business trip. I asked about the father, and it turned out they were both away on trips. But only the mother gets blamed.

I would like to see a change. I believe in the family unit, but if we're going to stay with marriage as the accepted form, then we have to think of people as a unit. For instance, if a company is moving an employee

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to another city, then along with the other responsibilities it takes, it should also assist the other partner—male or female—to find a job in his or her field. And we need more part-time work for men and for women who want to spend more time with their families. The father needs time off, too, to watch his child in the school play. But these are my ideas, and whether the rest of Maryland is interested in them, I don't know.

As I got interested in the women's movement, I became aware of things I knew all along. For instance, there are certain fields a woman doesn't enter. A woman doesn't run for office. But women are no longer ready to accept this. Even the President is starting to take this seriously with his thinking about the Supreme Court. Surely there are women who are qualified, but we never thought of them before. That's what I mean when I say that in business and in politics, women are usually just not considered. They're invisible.

Somebody told me about the national caucus meeting and I went. I took on the job of starting the Maryland caucus because this is one of those cases where everyone says, 'Wouldn't it be a great idea if. . .' All you need is one or two people to say, 'Yes, it would be a good idea. Let's do it.'

To start an organization from scratch is no picnic. Especially with volunteers, there's no sense of urgency. It's not like directing paid people. But they've done remarkable work. Quite a few elected women are involved. Every woman in the Maryland General Assembly is sponsoring the caucus, by lending her name, and sometimes, financial support. We have state senators and university professors. It's not a bunch of radicals. We're serious, and we're going to be moving slowly but surely. I'm sure some people won't like that. But if it's going to be successful, it has to attract a larger number of women and give them time to think things over. We can't rush people.

We have some black women as sponsors. At our first meeting, a couple of black women got turned off and said that they thought this was going to be a middle-class tea party, that all we were going to do was talk. But I didn't see this incident as a black-white thing so much as a personal decision. Some white women were turned off, too. What were we going to do at our first meeting but talk? We had a lot to discuss. I imagine that the organization will be predominantly white because the state is predominantly white. But we are having our one-day caucus in Baltimore and keeping the registration fee low so that many poor women who live there will be able to attend. For many of the women in this neighborhood—Chevy Chase—it will be the first time that they have sat together with a black woman other than their maid. Only after this happens will they be able to listen to the problems of the poor woman in Baltimore—like welfare and race discrimination. It can't be thrown at them right away. But change is going to come. It won't happen next month, but it might happen in six months, and, who knows, by that time maybe there will be enough women in office so that we can do something.

What I'm more interested in than racial breakdown is political breakdown. We took a show of hands at our first meeting, and it was about equally divided be-

"I loathe it when someone says, 'just a housewife.' It's a demanding, tedious job."

roughly divided between the two parties. When we got the list together, we hoped for women connected with black, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish organizations, so that women who fall into these groups would feel welcome.

For a lot of these women, adding their names to the list is a tremendous act of humility. When a woman becomes successful, she enjoys being 'the only woman who . . .' Yet these women show humility in caring about others, and I was very impressed with this.

Of those involved in the caucus right now, the majority are in their 30's, like me. There's a large group under 30, too, but when we started organizing, the colleges were not in session. So there's a group now getting in touch with college students, so that they will be able to get in on the ground level, too.

My husband is very happy about my involvement. He's always been nice about helping with cooking if I can't. I can be out on a story or gone for a weekend. My children are very helpful, too. They are just as proud of me and of my accomplishments as they are of my husband, who works for the Wall Street Journal and has won a Pulitzer.

When I grew up, I was taught—all of us were taught, and some still are—that a woman must sacrifice for her family and children and only in this sacrificial role will she be a 'good' mother. I certainly wouldn't have approached going to work when I did work with such tremendous guilt otherwise. I probably would have pursued a career more. My mother told me to have a career 'in case your marriage doesn't work out.' My advice to my daughter is to have a career 'if your marriage does work out.'

It's a tremendous stress on young women with little kids in the house. Often their only contact to the outside world comes through their husbands. There should be some arrangement for them to pursue a career or interest two or three days a week. That's essential for a young woman's emotional stability.

I loathe it when someone says, 'just a housewife.' It's a demanding, tedious job. I did it myself, but I never gave myself credit, and now I'm beginning to see that I should have.

I think the caucus is going to be successful. A lot of women have sorted out and are willing to support the group. A lot of women are afraid of ridicule in asserting themselves, as people, and as women. They are very leery in these new roles. Some women who consider themselves advanced are impatient with other women. But I think it's a mistake to laugh at any woman. Every woman starts from where she is. Some of the women in my age group don't grasp this subtle but constant conditioning. For instance, a little girl interested in medicine is told to become a nurse, not a doctor. And when people come to schools to talk about professions, it's always a man. Why not have a woman doctor come, so that the girl can have a choice? All these women are a product of their backgrounds, but they're opening up now, they're beginning to look at things differently.

Nobody's laughing anymore at the idea of a woman in the Supreme Court or Shirley Chisholm running for president. Other countries have female heads of state. Why can't we produce one?

People used to make fun of Liberace, but they say he was laughing all the way to the bank. Well, we women may be laughing all the way to the polls. ■

For notes on another salient in the women's liberation movement—jobs, please turn the page.