

Women politicos transcend old roles

by Adella Wacker

Women always have done a great deal of the work that moves a political campaign.

But in this year of the Nixon and McGovern presidential campaigns, the titles that women hold and the jobs they are doing in campaigns reflect their changing roles in the world.

"I think in the past five years the role has been changing," Republican National Committeewoman Patricia LaHR Smith reflected.

Women are doing more than the traditional jobs of stuffing envelopes, giving dinners and running the offices, she said.

"They are being more leaders and more accepted," Smith said.

This was certainly true at the Republican convention, she said.

This summer's convention had the first woman keynote speaker, and the chairman of the site committee was a woman. Smith works indirectly with the Nebraska campaign organization to reelect the President.

Officially she and the state's national committeeman represent Nebraska on the Republican National Committee.

Smith said she helps the campaign by relaying campaign research and methods, party position papers and speaking.

More internal reforms within the Democratic Party made women more visible than ever at the Democratic convention this summer.

"There has been a real stress in George McGovern's campaign that women be in decision-making roles," said Ginger Luke, 26, who co-chairs the Lancaster County McGovern campaign with her husband.

Luke is also state central committeeperson from the 29th district for the Democratic Party. This is an on-going party governing position, while the campaign structure is temporary.

About the area and precinct campaign organization beneath her, Luke said, "The real core work we are doing is the canvassing."

Canvassing is traditionally the area where more women work in campaigns, but Luke said people should not underestimate the number of men who canvass.

She admitted that state campaign organization persons have usually not been women.

However, this year's state campaign coordinators are the Lambertys in Omaha.

Not Lou Lamberty and his wife, Luke said, but Lou and Pat Lamberty.

With a Lincoln businessman, another woman, lone Smith, now co-chairs the Lancaster County area campaign for re-electing the President.

This is the way the party tries to organize all counties—a man and a woman as co-chairpersons, she said.

In her case, she said, the system works well.

"Each of us finds that I am good at one thing and he at another," she said.

Although Smith has a number of other work and volunteer involvements, she said that right now her political job is "first and foremost."

Smith said politics offers her personally a variety of things, besides being "a tremendous challenge."

The people come first, she said. Mainly, she and other



women like her are working for the man they believe is right for the presidency.

She likened her duties to overseeing the formation of a reverse pyramid structure down to the precinct level.

But there is a fun part to the job also, she said.

"You make friends locally and nationally, depending on your job," she said, remembering the Nixon inauguration.

Women involved in local campaigns come from a variety of places: Teenage Republicans, Young Republicans and Young Democrats, college sorority meetings and, often, at the urging of other women.

"And there's just not an ending to it until you are too tired," said lone Smith, who started at the grassroots level by doing blockwork.

Women are better volunteers, she said.

For one, they aren't having to earn the whole living usually, and because women enjoy working in campaigns, she said, they are "really very good at it."

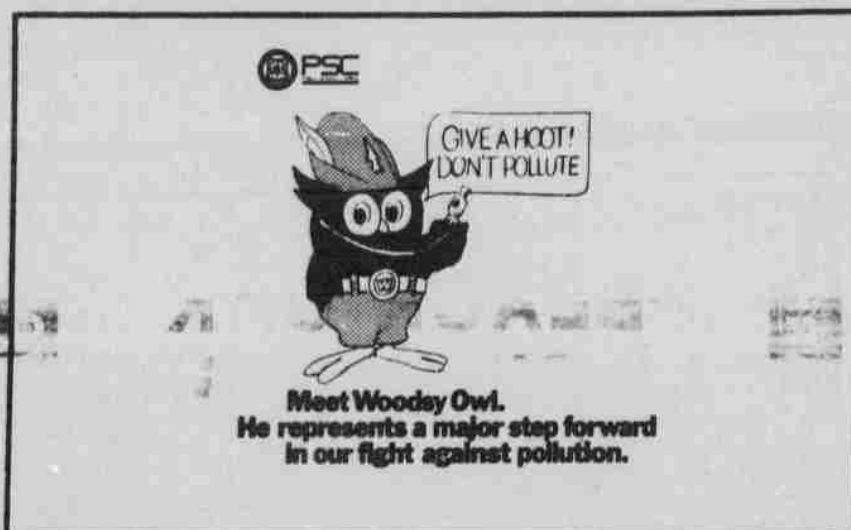
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