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Maine NOW Times (Fall 1995)

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National Organization for Women - Maine Chapter

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Maine NOW Annual Meeting
**Maine Women
in
China**

featuring
Beth Edmonds and Kate Webb

Maine Delegates to the
Non-Governmental Organization Forum on Women

Friday, November 17, 1995

7:00 pm



University of Southern Maine - Portland
Campus Center Amphitheater

The **United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women** took place this September in Beijing, China. Several women from Maine attended the Non-Governmental Organization Forum that simultaneously took place in Huairou, China. Two of these women, Maine NOW activists, Beth Edmonds and Kate Webb will be joining us at our annual meeting to share their exciting experiences. Beth hopes to bring slides as well.

Beth Edmonds, who has held leadership positions in NOW on the chapter, state and national level, comments on her experience,

"Great wall, great people, great food, gracious Chinese people, beautiful women everywhere you looked, and thousands of workshops on every imaginable topic."

After leading and participating in workshops and being energized by the strength, courage, and power of this gathering, she said,

" Governments come and go but we remain. We are the ones doing the important work. I met women from Mongolia, the Phillipines, other places in the U.S....folks I can and will continue to communicate and work with...a valuable, precious resource".

Want to hear more? Then join us at our Annual Meeting.

There will be **no fee** but **donations will be gladly accepted.**
Goodies will also be available.

Supported by the USM Women's Center



**MAINE
NOW
TIMES
FALL 1995**



VOTE NO on QUESTION 1

Maine NOW Works With Maine Won't Discriminate to Defeat the November 7, 1995 Referendum Question 1

Many Maine NOW members have been working with the state-wide campaign to defeat a referendum measure, Question 1, that will be on the Maine ballot on November 7. Maine Won't Discriminate is a broad based coalition, of which Maine NOW is a member. Our goal is to fight this measure which was designed to prevent lesbians and gays from receiving the same basic protections under the law already extended to the majority of Americans. Maine NOW chapters and members have hosted house parties, held a fundraising dance at which a Maine NOW member's band played, organized a mailing, staffed MWD offices, sponsored educational forums, and distributed literature. The following two actions are a continuation of our effort to prevent the passage of this referendum. Please join in for the final push!

TEAM DAY - Saturday, OCTOBER 28

As a special effort to defeat the referendum, Maine NOW is organizing a Team Day on Saturday, October 28 in cooperation with MWD. Our members will staff MWD offices throughout the state to phone bank as well as participate in voter registration and literature drops in their local areas.

CAMPUS VISITS - " Stopping the Politics of Hate "

We are also organizing students on Maine college campuses to register to vote and to volunteer for the campaign. **National NOW Vice President Rosemary Dempsey** will be holding speaking engagements on campuses throughout the state. Her topic, "Stopping the Politics of Hate" will focus on efforts to counter radical right attacks such as the Maine referendum and will explore the culture of hatred that is propagated by the radical right.

Schedule of Events

- Oct. 10 University of New England 7 pm-St. Francis Room UNE library
- Oct. 11 Colby College, Waterville 6-8pm workshop-Page Common; 8pm speech - Lorimer Chapel
- Oct. 12 University of Southern Maine, Portland 12:00 noon Campus Center Amphitheater
- Oct. 12 University of Farmington, Farmington 6:30pm workshop; 8pm speech Lincoln Auditorium
- Oct. 13 Unity College 12 noon - tentative
- Oct. 16 University of Maine at Machias 12 noon Kimball Hall
- Oct. 16 College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor 6pm Student Lounge
- Oct. 17 University of Maine, Orono 5-7pm workshop; 7pm speech Neville Hall
- Oct. 18 Brunswick Area NOW potluck 5:30pm; Bowdoin College, Brunswick 7:30pm
- Oct. 19 University of Maine at Fort Kent 7:30pm - 8:30pm speech & questions; 8:30pm reception

**BE PART OF THE MAINE NOW EFFORT - campus organizing or Team Day!
CALL RACHEL LOWE 737-2329.**

The Referendum reads as follows:

An Act to Limit Protected Classes Under Maine Law

Do you favor the changes in Maine law limiting protected classifications, in future state and local laws to race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, familial status and marital status, and repealing existing laws which expand these classifications as proposed by citizen petition?

**What will this Referendum do
if Passed?**

It would prevent gays and lesbians from achieving basic protection under the law in the areas of employment, housing, credit and public accommodations. (Unfortunately, defeating the referendum will not assure protection from discrimination for lesbians and gays. Legislation will still be needed to achieve this.)

Workers' compensation victims and whistleblowers will lose current protections under the Maine Human Rights Act. Other groups such as veterans, hunters, and retirees may lose existing protections against discrimination.

It will remove "sexual orientation" from the Maine Hate Crimes Act and prevent the Attorney General from prosecuting crimes against those perceived to be gay or lesbian, currently 24% of reported hate crime incidents.

It will be bad for jobs, tourism, and business in Maine.

**Partial list of who
opposes referendum:**

Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance
Maine NOW
Maine Civil Liberties Union
Maine Council of Churches
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Bath Iron Works
The AIDS Project
Maine Education Association
Key Bank
Fleet Bank of Maine
Governor Angus King
Maine's Roman Catholic Diocese
Maine Psychology Association
Maine State Bar Association
Guy Gannett Communications
The Matlovich Society
Maine Academy of Family Physicians
Maine Trial Lawyers Associations
Congregation Beth El of Bangor
Episcopal Diocese of Maine

**National NOW/PAC
Proud to Endorse
Senator Dale McCormick**

National NOW/PAC has announced that it is proud to endorse State Senator Dale McCormick in her race for the District 1 Congressional seat now held by Rep. Jim Longley.

McCormick, a longtime NOW member, is not just the best candidate but would be considered an exceptional candidate in any forum. She is politically astute and articulate on a wide range of issues. Dale is a hard working activist who has been a community organizer as well as a Maine state senator.

She has been a champion of feminist issues including leading the fight in the Maine Senate for the Reproductive Privacy Act. Her tireless work and votes as a Maine Senator on health care, the environment, lesbian and gay rights, job creation, and choice prove that she has the right stuff to be a great asset in Congress.

Senator McCormick is the founder and director of Women Unlimited successfully training women in trade and technical occupations after which they get and keep good jobs. She has been a union carpenter and contractor for 24 years being the first woman in the country to complete a five year apprenticeship with a carpenters union.

Dale has been elected to three terms in the Maine Senate from a rural, conservative district. Prior to that she helped organize the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance.

For more information on Dale and her campaign write: "A Whole Lot of People for Dale McCormick", P.O. Box 5139, Augusta, ME 04332.

**CHANGING MAINE:
A Gathering for Grassroots
Organizers and Educators
Saturday, OCTOBER 14, 1995**

9 am - 4:30 pm

Unitarian Universalist Community Church

69 Winthrop St., Augusta

Sponsored by INVERT.

Call Larry Dansinger 525-7776



WELFARE REFORM

Summary of New Welfare Reform Law

The Welfare Reform that passed this session maintains the current AFDC and ASPIRE programs, but makes some significant changes. Many of these changes will require a waiver from the federal government before they can be implemented.

Mandatory Participation in ASPIRE. Until now, anyone (except those two parent families receiving AFDC due to unemployment) with a child under 3 years of age was exempt from mandatory participation in ASPIRE. The exemption has now been reduced to exempt those with children under 2.

The current requirement for "mandatory" families to participate in ASPIRE has never been fully enforced in Maine because Maine does not have the resources to serve everyone. Further, Maine law essentially requires the Department to serve "volunteers first." Because there have always been so many volunteers, this "mandate" has not been reached. The volunteers first provision has been maintained in the law, although the exceptions to it have been expanded.

Teens. AFDC recipients under 18 will not be able to receive cash assistance—instead they will receive vouchers from the Department. (Waiver required). Teens under 20 who have not completed high school must participate in ASPIRE regardless of the age of their youngest child.

Family Contract. Until now, AFDC recipients were required to sign a "contract" saying that they would comply with the requirements of the AFDC program. Under the new law, every family (whether exempt from ASPIRE or not) must sign a contract that may require them to do certain additional things. For example, they could be required to have their children immunized or to undertake a parenting course. Sanctions are a possibility for those failing, without good cause, to comply.

Home Visits. At the last minute, an amendment was offered on the floor of the House to the welfare reform bill requiring home visits to every AFDC recipient upon their being determined eligible. (This will be applied to new applicants only). No funding was provided for this home visit program, so it is unclear how it will be carried out. This proposal was overwhelmingly supported (106 to 25) by both parties, and try as we might, we were unable to defeat it.

Alternative Aid. This would allow applicants for AFDC who are at risk of losing a job, or job offer, to have the choice of receiving up to three months of AFDC benefits in the form of vouchers immediately upon application in lieu of participating in the regular AFDC program. If during the three month period, they needed additional assistance, then they would still be able to receive regular AFDC. Any benefits in excess of what they otherwise would have received would be treated like an overpayment. The alternative aid would be entirely voluntary.

Waiver of Vehicle Asset Limit. A bright note in this new law is a provision requiring the Department to seek a waiver of the vehicle asset limit. AFDC regulations prohibit AFDC recipients from having a vehicle worth more than \$1500. This asset limit did not apply in Maine due to a legal challenge in 1990. However, the federal government has now required a new vehicle asset limit that would apply in Maine but for this waiver.

Housing Special Needs. The Housing Special Need (HSN) payment of \$50 per month for those whose rent exceeds 75% of their income remains in place. However, to help pay for it, the Legislature made AFDC recipients who receive the HSN payment ineligible for the "Circuit Breaker" program (The Maine Residents Rent and Property Tax Relief Program.) This is the program administered by the Bureau of Taxation that gives a one time payment to families whose property taxes or whose rent exceeds a certain portion of their income.

Although no one was happy about giving up the circuit breaker benefit for special needs families, it was the only way to avoid the loss of the HSN benefit. On average, the HSN benefit is worth double the amount of the Circuit Breaker benefit and it comes on a monthly basis when it is really needed as opposed to once a year.

People who do not receive the HSN payment are encouraged to apply for the circuit breaker program, as it has been expanded this year.

ASPIRE CHANGES

While significant education and training opportunities will still be available through ASPIRE, some important changes have been made.

Upon entering ASPIRE the Department will conduct a "work evaluation" during the first 90 day period. During the "work evaluation" the Employability plan will be developed. **That plan must still reflect "to the maximum extent possible" the individual's preference.**

Job Search. Those two parent families receiving AFDC due to unemployment and those whose children are over 5 who are deemed "job ready" by the Department, will be required to engage in a job search immediately. Those who obtain a job via ASPIRE's job search program will be eligible for 1 year of transitional medicaid and child care even if they have not received AFDC for 3 out of the past 6 months as is required by current law. (For this, a waiver is required.)

Education and Training. Those who enter education and training, still have the opportunity to obtain two and four year degrees. *But*, after two years of education or training, the participant must be willing to also work 20 hours per week. Work study, practicums, part time work, or other work site experience can count toward the 20 hours.

Work. Those who are unable to find work after 2 years of education and training or after participating in job search will be required to work. If a job cannot be found in the private sector, various work programs will be developed by the Department. One such program is "MaineServe," where the hours are determined by dividing the grant by the minimum wage. The values behind "MaineServe" are couched in the language of serving one's community in the tone as VISTA or AmeriCorp. "ASPIRE-PIUS" will be a program affecting no more than 1500 people in 3 regions (DHS regions II, IV, and V) in the state that places people in a private sector job, then uses the AFDC grant to subsidize the person's wages for up to one-half the minimum wage.

COMMISSIONS

Two commissions were also established:

The Commission to Study Poverty Among Working Parents is charged with studying the relationship between the low wage job market and the various programs that support or could support people, such as AFDC, unemployment compensation, the earned income tax credit, and health care.

The Time Limits Commission is charged with looking at the various groups of people who receive AFDC, how long they stay on AFDC, and how the economy, health care access, housing subsidies, workers' compensation and other programs affect families. The Commission may submit legislation resulting from the Commission in the next session of the legislature.

RE-PRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY NEWSLETTER SEPT. 1995



Maine NOW, this year, worked on welfare reform through the newly created, Coalition for Economic Justice. CEJ did remarkable work for an infant organization. We educated ourselves, the general public, and legislators about economic justice; provided another place for low-income people to have a voice (51% of the steering committee is comprised of low-income people); and supported a positive agenda that allows people to move out of poverty with dignity. Our work is far from over, both in learning to work together and in fighting for economic justice. We will be working in communities to develop leadership and create networks that will organize in their communities for economic justice. **If this is an issue you want to sink your teeth into, contact Chris Rusnov 873-0878.**

MORE BACKLASH

As of this writing, Congress has not passed a final welfare "reform" package. But from the looks of things whatever is passed will strike a deadly blow to many women and children living in poverty. Reform is needed but not the kind we're seeing. Don't be fooled by the myths. Ask yourself, why are they picking on women, children, the elderly, immigrants? **Is this really where the waste is or is this more backlash?**

FACT: Welfare and food stamps combined are about 2.7% of the budget. Social Security is the costliest budget item followed by defense and interest on the national debt.

FACT: Since 1980, the national debt climbed from \$900 billion to over \$4.8 trillion. \$200 billion per year in interest payments goes to the wealthiest 1% in this country who own 80% of all the bonds.

FACT: In 1954 corporations paid 33% of the tax revenue. Today they pay less than 10%.

FACT: The average top U.S. executive's pay is 159 times the average working person's pay. The ratio in Japan is 20 times, in Germany 21.

FACT: Recent reports say Maine businesses are showing more profits but none is "trickling down" to workers' paychecks.

The Coalition to Fight the CONTRACT and Build Our Communities

Greater Bangor NOW and the Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine have taken the lead in forming a coalition to fight the Republican "Contract ON America". To that end, they are organizing films, teach-ins, and a speakers' series entitled the Brown Bag Lunches. The series takes place every Tuesday at 12 noon at the Peace and Justice Center at 128 Main Street, Bangor (below EPI restaurant). JoAnne Dauphinee, long-time NOW activist will be the featured speaker on Nov. 28. For more info on this coalition's activities call: Greater Bangor NOW at 989-3306 or PJC at 942-9343.

Activist vows to fight on against Reader's Digest and its slander of the poor

My name is Jan Lightfoot, a Maine woman and homeless advocate, who is trying to sue the International Readers Digest for its deceptive March 1995 article. The article was presented as an investigative "special report" on AFDC. The article, entitled "True Faces of Welfare", told the worst of the worst stories of three women to represent ALL women on AFDC. Ninety-five percent (95%) of adults on welfare are women.

I could not afford a lawyer so I studied and researched the law and brought action on behalf of all advocates working against the myths and stigma attached to welfare recipients. I filed the action in the Maine State Superior Court based on the Maine Civil Rights Act. The Court dismissed the case ruling that Maine's law allowing legal action against non-governmental individuals for violation of constitutional rights could be used only if physical force is involved.

I have many examples of case law to support my right to sue for violence perpetrated through speech. But my case was dismissed. Such judicial maneuvering reduces the value of the MCRA. It makes it useless. Over the past six years, twelve out of twelve cases based on the MCRA have also been dismissed.

My next move to fight the harm that the story of lies could create, was to file an action in Federal Court. I also filed a separate suit against the Maine Courts for making the MCRA useless. Although this pattern of non-enforcement of the MCRA by Maine Courts is a chilling action to freedom, the Federal District Court dismissed the action saying it was frivolous, without even allowing a hearing.

I plan to appeal this decision in the Federal Court of Appeals in Boston. I think that women are one of the groups most likely to need the Civil Rights Act and feels my fight if successful may set a precedent allowing women greater access to the courts and therefore a trifle freer.

My hope is that the national media will pick up my story of a freedom fighter up against insurmountable odds. I believe the court system's abuse of power threatens democracy and discriminates against the average person. The media can make people aware of this issue and help to put public pressure on the courts to be fair.

ACTION NEEDED

I need people to write to the Wall Street Journal, 10 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02109. Ask the editor to cover the Reader's Digest and Maine Courts suits, stating that the dismissal of valid suits is a story.

I have been able up until now to get court filing fees waived but welcomes any financial, legal or moral support anyone has to offer. I can be reached at 453-2986.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN



Maine's Leading Feminist Grassroots Organization
 Phone Number: 797-8508



Maine State Coordinator - Merrie Allen 874-2899
Assistant State Coordinator - Cynthia Phinney 778-9506
Scribe - Joyce Blakney 825-3962
Treasurer - Annie Lunt 883-1195

Task Force/Coalition Contacts

Affirmative Action Task Force - Vacancy
 Computer Wizards - JoAnne Dauphinee 989-3306
 Consumers For Affordable Health Care-Mary Donnelly 729-5843
 Dirigo Alliance - Beth Edmonds 865-3869
 Lesbian Rights Task Force - VACANCY
 Maine Choice Coalition - Sandra Holland 729-4663
 Maine NOW Phone Coordinator - Annie Lunt 883-1195
 Maine NOW PAC Treasurer - JoAnne Dauphinee 989-3306
 Maine NOW Times - Chris Rusnov 873-0878
 Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition - Rachel Lowe 737-2329
 Coalition for Economic Justice - Chris Rusnov 873-0878
 Maine HIV Advisory Committee - Elizabeth Watson 582-2068

NORTHEAST REGIONAL NOW BOARD MEMBERS

Lois Reckitt, 38 Mrytle Ave., South Portland, ME 04106 799-8744
 Gerry Miller, 7320 Aqueduct Ave.#13, Bronx, NY 10468 212-367-2435
 Erima Vaughan, 37 Manor Ct., Hempstead, NY 11550 516-489-7262
 Clarice Pollack, Reg.Dir., 1853 Central Park Ave., Yonkers, NY 10710 914-337-7159
 Diane Welch, 15 W.18th St., 9th Floor, NY, NY 10011 212-807-0721
 Ellen Zucker, Boston NOW, 971 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215 617-782-1056

GREATER BANGOR NOW
 87 Sunset Strip, Brewer, ME 04412
 Coordinator - Joyce Blakney 825-3962
 Meets second Monday of each month

GREATER FARMINGTON NOW
 P.O.Box 375, Farmington, ME 04938
 Coordinator - Peggy Stubbs- 778-5609

KENNEBEC VALLEY NOW
 P.O.Box 503, Augusta, ME 04330
 Contact-Sandy Friedman 623-4784
 Call for meeting schedule.

BRUNSWICK AREA NOW
 P.O.Box 133, Brunswick, ME 04011
 Coordinator - Sandra Holland 729-4663
 Call for monthly meeting schedule.

GREATER PORTLAND NOW
 P.O.Box 4012, Portland, ME 04101
 Coordinator - Cindy McGinn 854-1741
 Call for meeting schedule.

E-MAIL FEMINISTS:
 Cynthia Phinney CPHIN@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

COUNT ME IN! I wish to join NOW and commit myself to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men. **MAINE NOW, P.O. BOX 4012, Portland, ME 04101. Make check payable to MAINE NOW.**

NAME (Please PRINT) _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND (optional) _____ to help us analyze our organization's diversity.

CHAPTER (see above) _____ If there isn't a chapter near you, leave this space blank and we will enroll you as an at-large member.

Dues rate includes membership at the national, state & local level.

\$ _____ dues enclosed. \$35 Regular Dues. A sliding scale of \$20 - 34 is available, if you need it.

\$ _____ additional contribution enclosed. \$ _____ Political Action Committee contribution. Payable to Maine NOW PAC.

PLEASE CHECK HERE IF YOU DO NOT WANT MAINE NOW TO SHARE YOUR NAME WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS. (see Maine NOW policy below)

Please check here if you do not want National NOW to share your name with other groups.

NAME SHARING POLICY: Maine NOW shares our member list for coalition work, in which we are active (see list above). We also occasionally, on a case-by-case basis, will share the list with progressive groups who are advertising events or sharing information.

**Proposed amendment to
the Maine NOW By-Laws.
To be voted on at the
Maine NOW
Annual Meeting, Nov. 17.**

(see page 1)

**Add: Article XVI AFFIRMATIVE
ACTION**

Maine NOW recognizes that a simple policy of nondiscrimination is not sufficient to overcome the deeply entrenched, systematic and insidious biases against all women, all children and minority people. Maine NOW is dedicated to creating human relations not based on structures of oppression such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, able-bodyism, looksism, et cetera.

A. The State Board shall, from among its members, appoint an Affirmative Action Coordinator who shall be responsible for proposing and/or evaluating:

1. Activities promoting and celebrating diversity within Maine NOW, and by Maine NOW in the general community;

2. Plans or policies for recruitment of minority women for leadership positions in Maine NOW;

3. One action or project annually focusing on minorities in Maine.

B. The board shall schedule a minimum 10 minutes of every State Board meeting for discussion on minorities.

C. The Affirmative Action Coordinator shall provide at least one written evaluation of Maine NOW annually, in the Fall.

Maine NOW Annual Meeting

Maine Women in China

Share in their experience!



featuring

Beth Edmonds and Kate Webb

Maine Delegates to the
Non-Governmental Organization Forum on Women

Friday, November 17, 1995

7:00 pm

University of Southern Maine - Portland

(SEE PAGE 1 INSIDE)

It's AUCTION Time...

Time for you to help fill
Maine NOW/PAC coffers

The PAC will support Maine feminist
& progressive candidates running
in 1996, so now is the time...

...time to go to your local restaurant,
book store, nursery, movie house, music
store, computer store, B & B, health food
store...

...time to talk to service professionals -
doctors, lawyers, massage or polarity
therapists, acupuncturist, printers, ...

ASK FOR THEIR DONATIONS TODAY!

We will hold an auction either at the
annual meeting on Nov. 17 or at a
concert in December so don't delay!

**Need more info? Need to drop off
or mail your donation?** Contact

Chris Rusnov, 11 Bolduc St.,
Winslow, ME 04901, 873-0878.



Maine NOW
P.O. BOX 4012
PORTLAND, ME 04101

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Tues. Nov 7

**Vote NO
on Question 1**

Maine Won't Discriminate

**Join Maine NOW
Saturday, OCT. 28**

**Volunteer to defeat the referendum!
Call 737-2329**