



Betty Friedan

MEET THE MEDIA



Phyllis Schlafly

Sunday, July 11, 1982

A. Reporter - Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to another edition of *Meet the Media*. Today is Sunday, July 11th, and our topic today is the Equal Rights Amendment. The E.R.A., passed by Congress in 1972, has since failed to be ratified by the required $\frac{3}{4}$ of the states. Our guests today are two outspoken women with opposing views on this amendment. I'd like to introduce Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly. Ms. Friedan is one of the founders of N.O.W., the National Organization for Women, and a strong supporter of the E.R.A. Phyllis Schlafly is a lawyer, author, and national spokesperson for the conservative movement in America. Mrs. Schlafly worked to defeat the amendment. Welcome to both of you.

Friedan and Schlafly - Thank you.

Reporter - Ms. Friedan, you were one of the founders of the National Organization for Women and the group's first president. Could you explain to our audience a little about the organization and its work?

Friedan - Of course. N.O.W. was established in 1966 to continue the work of earlier leaders of the Women's Movement. Though the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote in 1919, they knew there was still much work to be done toward gender equality. Only three years later Alice Paul, the leader of the Nation Women's Party, wrote the Equal Rights Amendment and presented it to Congress. The amendment was introduced every year thereafter but was held up in committees until 1972, when it finally passed both the House and Senate. It was then sent to the states for approval. Passage of the E.R.A. has been and remains a major goal of N.O.W.

Reporter - Yet in ten years the amendment has not received the required approval of 38 states. Mrs. Schlafly, why do you think that is?

Schlafly - When Congress passed the E.R.A., the country was in the mood for reform. It was at a time when the anti-war movement was strong, as was the Civil Rights Movement. In that frame of mind, 35 state legislatures did ratify the amendment by the 1979 deadline. Yet that was not enough for passage. Even after Congress extended the deadline to this June, no other states have ratified and some have even sought to rescind their approvals.

Reporter - Mrs. Schlafly, you have been active in opposing the E.R.A. Why are you against the amendment?

Schlafly - American Conservatives oppose the E.R.A. for many reasons. We believe it would blur the traditional line between men and women. Women would be required to serve in combat like men and sign up for the draft when we have one. Women would lose their protection under labor laws; they would be expected to do the same heavy work in industry or construction as men which could endanger their lives. Men and women are different and laws cannot make them the same.

Reporter - Ms. Friedan, how would you respond to these arguments? Do you agree that men and women have different capabilities?

Friedan - They do, but not necessarily based on gender. Some women are strong and some men are weak. People of both sexes should be judged as individuals.

Schlafly - If I might make a point, you say that, but your organization seeks to gain "rights" for women that are beyond the scope of men's. For example, in states with their own equal rights amendments, taxpayers have been required to pay for women's abortions. I must point out that many Americans oppose abortions, yet under the E.R.A., they would be forced to fund them. I don't think people understand that the E.R.A. could have actually taken away freedoms like the right to attend single-sex schools, play on single-sex sports teams, or belong to single-sex organizations such as the Boy Scouts or Girls Scouts.

Friedan - These examples you give miss the point of the amendment. The E.R.A. is meant to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work. Did you know that women now earn about 60 cents for every dollar men earn? Have you considered that many women are forced to leave jobs to escape sexual harassment in the workplace? What about single mothers who cannot earn enough working to afford child care? N.O.W. wants to solve each of these problems and more, and we believe the Equal Rights Amendment would help.

Schlafly - Many of the issues you mention are already addressed by other laws and government programs. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 already guarantees equal rights, as does the Fourteenth Amendment. Though written to protect African-Americans, these laws can be applied to women as well.

Friedan - But they aren't, so the E.R.A. is necessary.

Schlafly - I disagree. Many Americans feel the amendment is unnecessary, which is why the state legislatures have not ratified it. As I mentioned earlier, support for the E.R.A. has actually declined since its passage in 1972. Already we have seen the courts using some laws on the books to address women's issues, and we expect this to happen more often.

Reporter - Ms. Friedan, what are you and your organization planning to do now that the E.R.A. has been defeated?

Friedan - First of all, we are going to try to extend the deadline for ratification on the basis that there is no legal reason for having such a deadline. If this approach fails, we will have the amendment re-introduced in Congress and start the process all over again. In the meantime, we will continue with our other efforts for women's rights lobbying Congress and state legislatures, sponsoring court cases, marching, demonstrating, and so forth.

Reporter - Thank you, Ms. Friedan, and thank you, Mrs. Schlafly for coming here today to talk about the Equal Rights Amendment. I also want to thank our audience for watching this morning and invite everyone to join us again next week for *Meet the Media*.

What NOW?

Since 1982 the courts have upheld the ratification deadline and the E.R.A. has been introduced in every session of Congress but has not passed. Summarize the arguments and add any of your own to help you decide what you think should be done about the amendment NOW.

IN FAVOR OF the E.R.A.

OPPOSED TO the E.R.A.

NOW write a persuasive paragraph explaining what you think should be done about an Equal Rights Amendment. Be sure to support your viewpoint with relevant facts.
