

# Women Quit Drive Rather Than Retreat

By Roy McGhee

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Feminist backers of an equal rights for women amendment have abandoned their drive for congressional enactment this session because they would have to accept a compromise to gain Senate approval.

Representatives of 13 women's groups told their chief advocate, Sen. Birch Bayh,

D-Ind., to drop his push for the constitutional amendment.

Mrs. Marguerite Rawalt, president of the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia, said after the conference with Bayh: "The consensus was that women do not want a substitute for absolute equality of rights. We appreciate Sen. Bayh's support, but we made it clear to him there

would be no retreat. We think further action at this session would be unwise."

Bayh said in agreement: "From a practical standpoint, there is little to be gained by pursuing this this year and maybe much to be lost."

The women prefer an amendment already approved by the House. That measure would

simply wipe out all legal distinctions between men and women.

Critics say it would also move special women's protective laws from the books — such as alimony rights, widow's rights, limitations on working hours and conditions. Other critics believe the proposed amendment would outlaw separate public toilet facil-

ities and require conscription of women into the armed forces, possibly for combat infantry duty.

When the House-approved amendment reached the Senate floor, it first ran into a filibuster conducted by Sen. Sam J. Ervin, D-NC. Next a rider was attached authorizing nondenominational religious prayers in the public schools. Another

rider would exempt women from military conscription.

The riders virtually guaranteed the amendment would not be approved and sent to the states for ratification.

In an effort to salvage something, however, Bayh rewrote the amendment and was prepared to renew the fight if the women's groups agreed.