

Pipe-Smoking Woman Legislator Puffs For Equality Of Sexes

By Robert Slater

TRENTON, NJ (UPI) — A tall, slender, pipe-smoking grandmother is quietly prodding her colleagues in the New Jersey legislature to give the state's women a new bill of rights.

Handsome, gray-haired Mrs. Millicent H. Fenwick carries her sex's banner not because she thinks women an "oppressed minority" as women's rights groups often contend, but for a more deep-seated reason:

She fights for women out of

a conviction that they are the equal of men and, therefore, deserve equal treatment in all respects. Not surprising, then, Mrs. Fenwick's first piece of legislation recommended that women be included in New Jersey's anti-discrimination statutes.

"I was literally floored when I realized that the state law does not protect women," said Mrs. Fenwick, born a New Yorker but now from

Somerset County in rural northern New Jersey.

"It's unbelievable that there's not one word about us in the statute."

The bill has already breezed by the assembly and appears to face little challenge from either the senate or the governor.

On the assembly floor, several assemblymen teased Mrs. Fenwick, asking if it would be necessary for restaurant owners to remove the "Gentle-

men" and "Ladies" signs leading to restrooms.

"The bill leaves that to the good taste and judgment of the women, and I'm sure that won't cause any problems," replied Mrs. Fenwick, whose two-piece suits usually fall well below her knees.

During her 56 years Mrs. Fenwick has always been vocal about getting women to stand up and be counted.

A former editor of Vogue magazine for 14 years, she often wrote stories during World War II encouraging women to go into war-related industries.

From her conviction that women deserve a better break

springs another keen interest: The need for a better rehabilitation program in New Jersey's prisons.

She helped found the halfway house project in New Jersey, a program which helps prison inmates adjust to life once they are released. And she is convinced that rehabilitation of those inmates should be accompanied by modernization of the state's antiquated prison facilities.

"They're a disgrace," she contends, noting that 19th Century buildings still are used to house prisoners.

Although she lacks formal schooling ("Yes, it handi-

capped me — I had trouble finding a job"), Mrs. Fenwick, a Republican, comes from a colorful and diverse family, which has given her a broad outlook on life.

"My father, Ogden Hammond, was an assemblyman from 1914 to 1917, and later in 1926 became the ambassador to Spain," she recalled.

Her mother drowned when the Lusitania sank in 1915.

The Depression and the anguish it caused her friends drew the lady legislator into politics. "I went around with market baskets to show how the cost of living had risen," she recounted, explaining how she

campaigns for the first time in 1936 in a bid to become state committeewoman.

All the while, she lived in an old, sprawling home with her father near Bernardsville, NJ. Although she married in 1932, Mrs. Fenwick separated several years later, after a son and daughter were born.

She is the first woman to have been elected to the Borough Council in Bernardsville.

As a freshman legislator, Mrs. Fenwick has already discovered that it pays to be a woman assemblyman.

"Because Jo (Mrs. Josephine Margetts, a Morris County Republican) and I are the only women in the legislature, we have the use of a private office across the hall from the assembly," Mrs. Fenwick said.

"We're the only legislators who have an office. The rest," and she smiled broadly, "just get a locker downstairs in the basement."

Mrs. Fenwick started smoking a pipe five years ago after her doctor advised her to give up cigarettes.

"When I had my seventh grandchild I felt I had a kind of license to do what I wanted," she said with a smile. "Now I have eight, and I don't know what to do next."

She questions all the fuss

statehouse observers make about her pipe smoking, noting: "I only smoke four or five times a day. Charlie Irwin (a Republican assemblyman) smokes his pipe much more and nobody ever notices. I wonder why?"



TALKING TO ANTI-ABORTION pickets outside the New Jersey Statehouse is Mrs. Millicent H. Fenwick, right, a freshman legislator who has found that it pays to be a woman assemblyman.



MRS. MILLICENT H. FENWICK, a tall, slender, pipe-smoking grandmother, lights up at her desk in the New Jersey State Assembly. She is quietly prodding her colleagues in the legislature to give the state's women a new bill of rights.

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