

Equal Political Chance Seen Open to Women

Ability Required, However, Miss Lavinia Engle Declares.

ONLY THE "window dressing" in politics a decade ago, women in recent years have made an important place for themselves in political life. So thinks Miss Lavinia Engle, the first woman to run for county commissioner in Montgomery County, Md.

"Until the last few years all any woman could expect in politics was courtesy and the superficial acceptance of her as a part of the picture." Miss Engle said yesterday across a table at the Brook Farm Ten House. "Now, however, if a woman really has something to contribute to a political career, she has a chance to do something really worth while."

Granted she has something to contribute, what is the most effective way for a woman to scale the wall of masculine prejudice? What qualities are necessary to her success in politics? Power in oratory? An attractive appearance? Insistence on her rights as a woman? she was asked.

"A woman who hopes to be successful in politics must have a clear conception of what needs to be done, and a well-organized plan of how it can be done," Miss Engle said. "If she has a constructive plan of activity to set before voters, that should help her more than anything else."

Oratory of Minor Importance.

"Whether any candidate—man or woman—is a good orator is not so important as it used to be. But a woman must be able to talk well enough to express herself, to let people know what she proposed to do if elected. And she must be able to convince voters she is better fitted for the office than any other candidate in the field."

"But about insisting on rights—that's the one thing a woman must not do. I realize some women have been elected to offices because they were women in need, because they were attractive, because of their appeal. But I have yet to see a woman elected solely on any, or all, of these counts who made good afterward and was reelected."

"The time has passed, in fact, when a woman runs for an office merely because she needs a job. A few years ago, many women (and plenty of men) sought offices without considering whether they were particularly fitted for them. But not now. A woman who hopes to be a successful candidate these days must know she is prepared through both training and experience to fill the office. Furthermore, she must convince others she is the ideal person for the place."

Long Active in Politics.

A graduate of Antioch College and a student at Johns Hopkins Graduate School, Miss Engle has devoted much time to studying political science, economics, and government. Her doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins was written on "Rural Government."

"I have been keenly interested in this subject for a number of years," she said. "I am convinced a good county government is the keystone in the arch of good National government, because the county government is the closest unit for people in rural communities."

Born in Forest Glen, Md., Miss Engle has served on a number of welfare boards in her State and she has become nationally known in the woman's movement throughout the United States, having campaigned for suffrage in 16 States.

In 1930 she was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. There as the first woman ever to be a member of the ways and means committee, she distinguished herself by taking an active part in passing many worthy and outstanding measures.



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MISS LAVINIA ENGLE,
political leader, says women have
ceased to be mere "window
dressing" in politics.