General Information

Source: NBC Today Show  Resource Type: Video News Report
Creator: Tom Brokaw  Copyright: NBCUniversal Media, LLC.
Event Date: 11/21/1977  Copyright Date: 1977
Air/Publish Date: 11/18/1977  Clip Length 00:04:06

Description

The National Women's Conference that just opened in Houston, Texas hopes to produce a national plan of action for women to submit to the federal government.

Keywords


Citation

MLA

APA

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Transcript
Opening of the Largest Gathering of American Women Ever Held
TOM BROKAW, reporting
By early morning light, and by NBC News live mini-cam, that’s the Albert Thomas Convention Center in Houston, on registration day, for what promises to be a historic first: The National Women’s Conference, opening today in Houston, Texas. It officially opens later this morning, when this torch relay team reaches Albert Thomas Hall. Just a short time ago, we taped them as they started on the last lap, from Dayton, Texas, which is about 39 miles northeast of Houston. These runners are the last of many torch relay teams, which first formed in Seneca Falls, New York two months ago, and then moved through three dozen cities. Why Seneca Falls, New York? Well, that was the site of the first Women’s Conference held in 1848.

Good morning, all. I’m Tom Brokaw, and I’m inside the convention hall this morning, on this, the registration day for the National Women’s Conference. It has been converted now into an exhibition hall, and just down there on the floor you can see before us the last stages of completion. A lot of displays about the many aspects of life and the roles that women play in life. By the way, these booths are being constructed by all women crews. Later today, it will be a virtual beehive of activity here. This weekend, by the way, culminates three years of planning, the three years of the International Women’s Year, for which, Congress appropriated $5 million, not just for this meeting, but for state conventions and for territorial conventions to select the delegates that come here. There will be 2,000 delegates in all, but many more thousands are expected to come here as observers, perhaps as many as 18,000 more, mostly women, but a lot of men as well. It is the first time in history that a national body has been gathered to produce a National Plan of Action for Women. What they’re going to do is draw up here a National Plan of Action to submit to Congress and to the President of the United States on issues that affect women ranging from child care to foreign policy. That is, issues that affect all of us.

Those delegates, however, were picked at 56 state and territorial conventions, a process that began in the
snows of Vermont last winter. This one, in Albany, New York, attracted 7,000 women, more than double
the number expected. In the early conventions, feminists dominated, principally on the volatile issues of
E.R.A. and abortion. But battle lines began forming. In Florida, the state meeting adjourned without
taking a vote on anything.
Women Singing: We’re the women! We’re the women! E.R.A! E.R.A.!
Unidentified Woman: Do you have any questions about the agenda?
BROKAW: In Montana and in Utah, with the Mormon Church taking command, feminist forces were
over run. In Montana, in fact, feminists caucused outside before deciding they would only hurt their
position by staying out. A coalition of religious fundamentalists and political conservative groups caused
sparks in Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Missouri.
Unidentified Woman: I don’t want them leaving here saying that any faction dominated the meeting,
intimidated them, and above all, I am ashamed that we have to have the police department here because
you refused to be orderly.
BROKAW: But at most state conventions, such as California, which is sending the largest delegation, the
elected delegates represented every political persuasion, as well as every shade of opinion. Nationwide,
the cross section is what was hoped for. About 65% of the delegates are white, 17% black, 8% Hispanic,
3% Asian-American, 3% American-Indian. Most of the delegates are between 25 and 55 years-old.
Fifteen percent are over 55, the rest under 25. The youngest here is 16. The vast majority of the delegates
are in the middle-income group between 7,000 and 19,000 dollars a year. About 14% are in the high-
income bracket. And about a quarter of these delegates can be called low-income.