

ORAL HISTORY T-0077
INTERVIEW WITH MS PHYLLIS LAFATA
INTERVIEWED BY DR. ANN B. LEVER
WOMEN IN THE SEVENTIES PROJECT
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LEVER: As a part of the Oral History Project at the University of Missouri at St. Louis, I have with me today Phyllis LaFata.

LAFATA: My name is Phyllis LaFata. I'm 46 years old. Professionally, I am Public Relations Director of all the YWCA's in the city of St. Louis. I have five children, four of my own and a foster child. I am divorced, and I am if not the sole, certainly the major supporter of my family. Last January I graduated from this university with a Master's Degree. Previous to that, I attended Lindenwood College for two years, and took a degree at the University of Illinois, a liberal arts degree with a major in English and a minor in psychology.

LEVER: Where were you born?

LAFATA: I was born in Mount Vernon, Illinois, a small town in southern Illinois.

LEVER: And your parents occupation and level of education?

LAFATA: My father graduated from Bradley University with a degree in horology, which I think is fascinating because it's watch making, and that's the Greek word for hour. He practiced that for a while then he went into the grocery business. He really expanded, he went into politics and to owning property and that sort of thing. My mother -worked with him. She was also a club woman, still is in many organizations. My father is no longer living. My mother is now a general agent with the insurance company, and the only woman general agent with the insurance company. I have one brother who is four years younger than I.

LEVER: What about the economic level of your family?

LAFATA: Oh, I would say upper-middle class. I was born in a small town where my mother's family had helped settle the town, so I was really related to every- body in the town. There was no difficulty, everybody knew me.

LEVER: You went to a public...?

LAFATA: Went to a public high school, yes.

LEVER: What about your employment after college?

LAFATA: After college, I went into radio as a performer, as a copywriter. I also swept up

and all those good things. I was a go-for because there were mostly men in the office. I never really thought of it as a career. I had many opportunities. I don't really know what I was thinking about. When I was at Lindenwood, one of my favorite professors thought radio was my field, and if I just stayed at Lindenwood and graduate, she would see that I gotta good position in that field. But I didn't accept that. I went back to my home town after I graduated, and did go to work for a radio station, did work for two radio stations, as a matter of fact. The second radio station, I was also women's editor and performer. As I told you, I read death notices to organ music. That was really a neat show. And I did a country music show where I talked with a hillbilly accent, that was a little later on. I also even did newscasts when somebody fell and broke a leg and wasn't immediately available. There was some kinds of discrimination in that area. I received a very minimal pay. I knew the men were making much more money than I, although a lot of my ideas they pirated and sold as their own. I recognized what they were doing, but I didn't have the confidence in myself to be able to say anything about it, you know, cause I felt like I had this job and I had to keep it.

LEVER: You mentioned earlier, too, your interest at one time at being a psychiatrist.

LAFATA: Oh, yes. That was really what I wanted to do. I was reading Dr. Menninger books when the other girls were reading Fanny Hill or something, but my mother said that that was no profession for a woman, and since my mother always knew best, I accepted that and decided that I would go into writing, which was another thing that I much enjoyed. I was very programmed for college. My mother decided every event that I was to take place in and I immediately followed her desires, that was what she wanted me to do.

LEVER: Did you marry some one from your home town?

LAFATA: No, I got married, I guess because it was the thing to do. All my friends were married and mostly because I didn't have the courage to go out on my own, and he was in the field, radio and allied kinds of show business. I thought we'd make it together, you know, the two of us together would do it. That wasn't the way it worked.

LEVER: You worked after you got married?

LAFATA: Yes, yes. After we were married, we went to Peoria, Illinois which is the jumping off place of the world. There's an old vaudeville joke, 'how'd you happen to get married? We were in Peoria and it was raining.' And it really is. But Bob went to work for the radio station there, and I knew nobody, and hated being married, and hated being in Peoria where I didn't know a soul and nobody knew me. Finally, by some freak of circumstance, they needed a copy-writer at the radio station, and I went to work there. And we developed a Mr. and Mrs. show which we did for the year that we were there. I also did a late night show for lonely bus drivers. I played sexy music.

LEVER: Was that the era of the breakfast club sort of thing?

LAFATA: Yes, yes. This was a noon-time show. It was called 'Ladies Day.' We sold a whole housing development, a whole subdivision, even wrote a cook-book; ladies sent in recipes and we wrote a cookbook at that point and time. And we also did fashion shows. I did fashion shows for a time before I was married. I did fashion shows for small shops

around southern Illinois who didn't have the time to put on their own, I charged them so much and got the models and that sort of thing.

LEVER: How about once you had children? Did you still work then?

LAFATA: For a time, when we left Peoria. I was very immature when I got married, very immature even though I was twenty-three years old. I thought that the man that I married was very much the man of the world, very mature and was all the things I wasn't, and I was going to fasten on to this and get like a free ride. When we got to Tulsa, Oklahoma, he immediately was employed, and I went around looking for a job. and it was this period and time in going to different radio stations and advertising agencies they had a thing about hiring, well, not only about hiring women, but about hiring women whose husbands were in the same field. They had some weird feeling that you shared secrets and all kinds of things, you know, inner office things which was a threat to them. One man told me that if I wanted to have something to do, I should go home and have babies. So I said, in an angry moment, "By, God, I will have a baby!" You know, anybody can have a baby, I can't get a job, I can't find any work to do. I don't think I really meant it, but I turned up pregnant, and then I tried to have an abortion, because that wasn't really what I wanted at all. That was the furthest thing from my mind. But I did carry through and have the child.

LEVER: Was the problem of having an abortion only a thought? Did you pursue it?

LAFATA: Oh, I pursued it. I pursued it, yes, but it's funny the way small things happen in life. The abortionist that we went to who was a medical doctor who did this on the side for money, I think, than for any feeling for its rightness or concern for women, said that if we had had weak eyes and both worn heavy glasses, and this poor child was going to grow up not being able to see and having to wear thick glasses, he would have done it. But since we both had nice sharp brown eyes, and I wished I had worn my glasses, because I had them in my purse, and I couldn't see all that well, but anyway; this was his rationale for not doing it. We kept upping the price. He finally threw us out of his office, literally, because he became so angry.

LEVER: Your husband supported your feelings?

LAFATA: Yes, yes, he did. And so this was the beginning of my domesticity.

LEVER: And you did stay home with...?

LAFATA: After my first child was born, I went to work part-time at Sears and Roebuck as a copywriter.

LEVER: Was it for economic reasons?

LAFATA: No, for it was just to get the hell out of the house. I worked when I was pregnant. I had some very interesting pregnancies. When I was pregnant with Chris, I had a job as a copywriter in the fashion department in one of the big department stores. They had a policy that when you're three months pregnant you had to quit, and so I was determined that they weren't going to find out. I used to model in their fashion shows, and the buyer in the fashion department came up and asked me if I'd model in this fashion show. Of course nobody knew

I was pregnant. So I went down and tried on this suit. I could wear a size twelve jacket and had to have a size sixteen skirt. But I did model in the fashion show. Later as I began to bloom, I would go in early in the morning, and because I worked a lot with newsprint, I put on a smock. I'd get there before anybody else did and I'd put on a smock and I'd wait until everybody went home at night and I took my smock off and put my clothes on, my regular clothes on, and then I'd go home. And so I managed to stay until I was seven months pregnant before they found out, and of course, immediately dismissed me, because this was the policy of the company and were just horrified that I managed to stay there all that time. And then after Chris was born, that was when I went to Sears and- Roebuck and worked part-time. The woman who lived next door kept him for me, and I did that for a while. Then I got pregnant again. This company also had a policy that after a certain time you could no longer work for them. I don't know what that had to do with your ability to work, but that's the way it goes. And so I went back home, but with that pregnancy, I got very bored. I went down to the little theater, they had a very prominent little theater in Tulsa. They had their own theater and it's all air-conditioned, and they had a director out of New York, and you rehearse for six weeks and you play for two. And I tried out for the romantic lead in a play, you know, and at that time, nobody knew I was pregnant. I got the part cause they didn't have anybody else. I worked very hard to find clothing to wear that didn't look like -maternity clothing. And so I bought this suit, and I paid a tremendous price for it, although I really couldn't afford it, because it didn't look like a maternity suit. At the dress rehearsal the director was to pass on the costumes, and he said, "That's a lovely suit, but it looks too damned much like a maternity suit." And so I confessed all and said, "Well, it is." I promised all my friends that I would have the baby on the last night of the performance, but I didn't. But that's a neat way to pass a pregnancy. At least the first part of it was interesting.

LEVER: When would you say that you had any consciousness about women's problems, women's rights, a women's movement?

LAFATA: I wish I could say that I was early on, but I really wasn't. As I told them this morning, when I read Betty Friedan's Feminine Mystique, I knew that I was one of those women who didn't like doing housework, who didn't like raising children, who didn't like staying at home, and yet, I thought that made me strange, you know? And I felt very guilty about this. I'm supposed to like these things. I'm supposed to want to do them, and there's something wrong with me that I don't, and it's a tremendous relief to know that you're really not strange, you know. There are a lot of other women who feel like you do and it's not strange and there's no reason to feel guilty about it. But not feeling guilty came much later, not at that particular point and time, just a realization that I wasn't a weirdo. I was just one among many, of course that's how the National Organization for Women originated. Women decided to get together do something about changing ideas about women.

LEVER: Were there any sorts of experiences that maybe changed your consciousness? Anything else that happened to you that you read? Any people you met?

LAFATA: Well I had known people that I met. I did volunteer work for the Young Women's Christian Association, which is a fantastic organization because it's made up entirely of women. Even the entire staff is women, which is unusual. The business director is a woman, the executive director is a woman. The woman who is responsible for all the millions of dollars worth of buildings who handles the plumbing and all that, she is a woman. The

volunteers are all women. So there 's no real put down. When you come in as a volunteer, you don't get relegated to washing the dishes. Your ideas are important, and your feelings are important and they have value, and there's no male domination or competition. That was very instrumental in my development. You know coming from somebody who was hurt in and injured and in capable of functioning, because I did reach that point and time where I became a vegetable. You know, I didn't like what I had, I didn't know how to change it. I didn't know what to do about it, and so I just regressed. I slept away my life. I got up and did what I had to do and I went to bed. When the kids came home, I got up and did what I had to do and then I went back to bed. I don't know whether it was back to the womb or on to the tomb, but this was my escape. Many other women find it in alcohol or promiscuity,- or even card playing, a lot of other solutions, but this was mine. But I did get in doing volunteer work for this women's organization, people listened when I talked. I do have something to say, I am not stupid. My husband had never been supportive because his own ego was a little frail, plus the fact that he was from an old Italian family where the man is the strong father figure who believed that women should be barefoot in the winter and pregnant in the summer. Anything I did was threatening to him, and so I never could manage to fit the role that he thought I should fit. I couldn't fight back. I couldn't communicate to him with any kind of feedback, and so that was how it went.

LEVER: When did you start working again?

LAFATA: I started working again when my husband left home. He just like walked out. While I had wanted a divorce for several years, back to mother again," there are the children; there's been no divorce in your family. This isn't what you do,' and then your own fears that you keep putting up. The nicest thing that he did for me besides give me the four children was to make the decision for me, because I might never have been able to make that decision, like you know, how to keep buying the groceries, how to keep paying the rent, when you haven't worked for sixteen years, what do you say when you go to look for a job, and where do you look? Divorce is a whole traumatic experience. I know it is for men, too, in different ways, but it's a terrible thing for a woman. The first year I was not able to handle it very well. In fact, I finally went for professional help. This is another typical female hang-up. Let me say that women have it more than men have. If my husband had rejected me, then I was good for nothing, you know. Nobody could love me, nobody could like me. I couldn't do anything right, and you generalize that for your whole life situation. I am incompetent in every area. I am a loss. I am a total failure, and that's very hard to deal with. Having worked so long for the "Y", and I had a friend who now teaches at the school of social work at Washington University, and she was the executive director at county branch, and they had no young adult director, and I had worked in that area as a volunteer, and she asked me if I would come as the interim director of the young adult department, work part-time until they got someone. That really saved my vanity. And I did that, and then they got some- body and then I was lost again. I was just beginning to be able to handle it. Then she left, and I went back. Then I worked full-time, and then I got up the courage to know that I needed more money, and I found another job with more money, and I worked at that for a year with the Girl Scouts, at which I had absolutely no experience. I never could learn to tie a knot or make a fire that burned. It was a year that I could never live through again, but it was a fascinating experience. I always hated camping, never done any camping, and I had a unit of 32 girls and-a day camp for a summer, and all of them from the inner city which means nothing except that I never worked with inner-city girls before, they used to panic at a butterfly.

They'd run screaming and yelling, all 32 of them. "What is going on?" I thought something terrible had happened. They'd seen a butterfly; they thought it was going to attack. But that was a really great experience, as I say, I wouldn't want to go through it again. I became very conscientious, as you know, if you have any feelings of inadequacy, then you have to become better than anybody, better than the whole world or you if you're a complete failure. So I had a friend with a degree in recreation, and every night, bless her heart, she would come over to the house at two o'clock in the morning. She was trying to teach me how to make paper flowers out of KLEENEX I finally said, "To hell with it, we'll hike again tomorrow." And then this job came up at the "Y," which paid a great deal more money.

LEVER: In the Public Relations.

LAFATA: Yeah, in the Public Relations.

LEVER: When did you go back to get your Master's Degree?

LAFATA: Well, I just kind of fell into this job at the-Y", you know, particularly the first one, and I knew it wasn't going to last, and I knew that agency did not pay particularly well, and knowing that I was getting practically no money from my husband, and I had a house and kids to raise, I thought, "I got to do something." And I wanted to get a degree in psychology. I thought I could be a psychologist, and then I talked to people who, well, I couldn't afford Washington University and the University of St. Louis didn't have that program, and Dr. Bunch at Washington University said that if you don't get a doctorate, there's no point, well, by the time I had a doctorate, I would be ready for medicare, that would be a bootless effort. So I compromised at his suggestion and went into guidance and counseling. And I thought that was some kind of a goal to set. Now I could say, "I did that. all by myself, I did that." I find as life goes on, there's nothing so exhilarating or so exciting or so satisfying as being completely independent. You can say to just the whole rest of the world, you know, of course you need people, I'm not saying that, but to know that you don't need to be dependent upon any living soul is the most wonderful feeling in the whole world. It's very difficult to reach, and very lonely sometimes, but always exhilarating.

LEVER: It is. I agree with you. What about your current involvement in the women's movement. What organizations are you involved with?

LAFATA: I have a very interesting association and very interesting history in the women's movement. I got all fired up before the National Organization of Women established a chapter in St. Louis. We got a group of women together and we were going to start our own thing, and while we were hassling around exactly how we were going to do it, because the YWCA is involved in the women's movement not as deeply as I would like to see it particularly at the local level, but some what involved. Before we really got through the organizational stages, we heard about the National Organization for Women, that there were some women who were going to establish a chapter in St. Louis. I was one of the founding members and have been a member ever since. That was, golly, about two years ago, it was a few months before the first national strike on August 26. I got deeply involved in that and have been ever since. On National Strike Day, we started from the YWCA, we invaded the men's bar on the Becky Thatcher which is now no longer a men's bar I'm glad to report. There was a great deal of radio and television coverage, and somehow I got to be the

spokesman for women's liberation in the city of St. Louis. I seem to represent all groups, and coordinate information for all groups. Last week I was interviewed by Time magazine. I'm doing one Sunday of the Lenten series at Berea Church. I did a seminar today. I did a seminar, participated in a seminar that the industrial representatives, anyway it was all the big companies who were going to have to be hiring women. They had a panel on racial discrimination, sexual discrimination. I did the one on sexual discrimination. One of the men works in the compliance area, and every once in a while he gets together with me and we exchange information, also with the chairman of CORE in regard to black women. I get all kinds of interesting phone calls from women on welfare who say they are being 'ripped off,' or women whose husband has suddenly left them and what do they do now. Sometimes it's just a matter of talking to them over the phone, and kind of, because I've been there, sometimes it's a matter of referring them to an attorney who is sympathetic and who will listen. I keep all kinds of resource files on women, women lawyers, women therapists, women surgeons because I get a lot of, sometimes I just get phone calls from women who are lonely and want to talk to somebody who is concerned about women. Really how the whole thing evolved has just amazed me. I sat in on the first meeting of the women's political caucus. There was a small group of us who got together at that first original organizational meeting. I have not done as much work as I'd like to in that group. I hope to be able to do more. But I act as kind of a—they feed information to me and I give it out to other women, someone who calls and says "I have this problem," and I say, "Well, where you really ought to be is working on the laws or working on this or working on that." And so I direct them to where they want to go. I managed to get the Post-Dispatch want ads desegregated, single-handedly, me and a friendly attorney. I work in just all kinds of areas. I also do counseling for the clergymen Consultation service one night a week. I run a group counseling thing for divorced women. So I work around in all kinds of different areas.

LEVER: Have you personally been in a cell group or in a consciousness raising group?

LAFATA: I have sat in on, there is only one group per se that I know is going on now, and we've tried to start some others. I been in on some that were very disappointing and very bad. Even supposedly liberated women. I sat in on one and I really could have vomited, because they sat and talked about typical women things, but the sad thing was they got off on divorce and that's one reason why I started a group for divorced women per se. They were projecting all the hostility against the man, and there's no divorce that does not involve two people. I am not this all because of him. It was all anger and hate. and the woman is never going to make an adjustment to herself and to her life with that kind of feeling. You have to accept responsibility for yourself and you have to learn to know what problems are yours as a person rather than became you had a bad marriage or because of your husband, you know, there's no way you can get through that. And they were continually doing this which was bad enough, and then a man, the boyfriend of the woman whose home it was walked into the room and they all became kittenish and coy and winking and 'could we get you a cup of coffee, Charlie?' You know, that's not what a liberated woman is, these are supposedly liberated women and they're trying to crawl back in the same damn bag that they're not even able to remove themselves from, because they are still hating men and wanting men at the same time, and there's no way you can be liberated and do that. You have to be able to accept men as just other human beings. And I find in my group of divorced women, one of them was telling me she went to this party and she met this man who was really groovy, you know, and she kept spilling things and knocking things over. She had been married before. She was

33 years old, and she was being 16. And he's just another human being. All she had to do was be herself whatever that is as she acts with other women or with her children to start a relationship which is a friendship, but you see, we've got sex in there and all the sad things going again. And a woman doesn't have to have a man to be a woman, in order to have a full life. You see first you have to get yourself together, then you can be friends and companions with men without the sexual thing, without the dependency, then if you, well what did Fritz Pearl say on that poster he says so beautifully, "You do your thing and I'll do my thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations, and you're not in this world to live up to my expectations. I am I and you are you, and if ever we should meet, it may be wonderful." And that's the way. it has to be. You have to be yourself as a person, because most marriages today are dishonest, and the kids keep perpetuating it. She always looks her best, she hates football, but she really loves football, of course we can sit down tonight and watch television when she would rather go dancing, and he says" sure honey, I'll go to the symphony with you, he hates symphonies, and then they get married, and' hell, no, I won't go sit through the damn symphony, and you know I don't like football, and do you have to watch television all the time, why can't you talk to me? They are not the people that they parried. So they decide, well, we'll have a child, because a child will bring us together, and then this poor child is brought into the world and he's supposed to weld together two people and there's just no, way. Then the marriage gets worse and the child gets all kinds of hang-ups. We just have to change the whole relationship between men and women, you know? We have to relate as people, not on the basis of sex.

LEVER: You were talking about before NOW came to St. Louis, that you were together with some other women thinking about sort of forming some sort of organization, how did you get together with them? What had happened to you that made you want to organize?

LAFATA: Well, we had been talking and reading. We read the, Feminine Mystique other things about the women's movement, and the more we got together, these were mostly women who worked for the "Y", the more we got together and the more we talked about the sea of discrimination and injustices and needs, and then there was just the supportiveness of getting together and talking over those things, which is really what a conscience-level raising is. And I've seen fantastic things done in a conscience-level raising group. I talked about a bad one. I've seen a good one. I've seen a woman whose males in her family told her she was so poorly coordinated she would never learn to drive an automobile. She accepted this, it's what men say, that's what her son said, that's what her husband said, and so she was housebound and isolated for lack of transportation. But the women in the group said, "Of course, you can, of course you're coordinated, of course you're intelligent, of course you can learn to drive." And she learned to drive an automobile. There were other women who had very bad marriages, but didn't have the courage, -how will I support my children? will they be messed up because they don't have a father figure?' which is a bunch of stuff. "I can't face making that decision." but they were supportive enough to her, "Of course you can, we will help, we'll always be there." And she was able to make that decision and carry through, and it turned out really great. I hope someday, and I don't have the time to really start it, that we will engender an advocacy system where women who were going through traumatic experiences would have a woman bear with her, or other women with her to go to court when she has to go to court, to go to the hospital with her when she has a sick child and she's alone. Any experience that is difficult to handle, there will be other women there, you know, 'I'm here, and you can do it and I'll help you.'

LEVER: That would be great.

LAFATA: Yeah, that's really what we need.

LEVER: What sort of things is the "Y" doing? What else would you like to see it do?

LAFATA: Well, I would like to see it do a great deal more. The "Y" provides a meeting place for NOW. The YWCA is tailor-made for the women's movement. It is the largest women's organization in the world, and has always been concerned about women. In fact has been much more militant in the past with working women and immigrant women than it is now. I would like very much to see it move into the main stream. I'd like to see it a center for women's activities. I'd like to see it as a resource. Anybody who's working with women can call the YWCA and say 'I need this kind of information,' and it would be immediately available. Our library, I'm doing that now. I have countless women call me and say "I'm doing a thesis on this subject, I'm doing a paper on women, and they come down and I provide them office space, and I've got countless files, all kinds of pamphlets and books and things. They write their paper there. And I would like to see it even extended. I would like to see the YWCA go into training courses for women, not college, but women who say I have no skills, you know, who don't want to typing and filing. There should be housekeeping kinds of things like in motels and hotels, skills that they can sell that demand a good price. There should also be vocational counseling. I would like to see that come out of the YWCA. We've done workshops for women thinking about going on, continuing work, that we have done. And we've had women come in like from Famous-Barr personnel directors, and they'll bring application forms and hand them out to other women. None of them ever get returned. This is one of the biggest problems, and I suppose it was one today. 'I want to go back to work, but I don't have any skills. I don't know what to wear and I don't know what to say', And you get that application form and it says, "Your previous experience" and you haven ^t worked for twenty years. The guy you worked for may be dead or gone. You get the feeling that you can't. You've got to build up that kind of confidence. You've got to show women that if they can manage a budget in a house and make the meals, all the food come out on time, and they can schedule children, and they can plan vacations. This is experience that can be applied easily and transferred to the business world. If they have done volunteer work. I know several very successful women who have taken volunteer work they have done and translated it into the business world. Like one woman who used to run the Book Fair, she's now a fund raiser, and she's making an excellent salary at fundraising. All these things are applicable to other work in the business world, that you can get paid for doing. And as I said this morning, I would like to see women in areas that we don't even think about, like being the mayor of the city. What is that? You see that the garbage gets collected, you see the school buses run, you see that the schools work, isn't that what women do? It's what the engineers call up-scaling. They're taking a small version of it and enlarging it. Women ought to do a terrific job of running cities. And certainly no woman in the whole world could have designed Pruitt-Igoe and have it be the fiasco that it is. There are many areas that we need women and women have the capabilities even though they don't have a long formal degree behind their names that says they can do it.

LEVER: Yes. If I asked you if you had a vision of what the good society ought to look like in terms of women, what would it look like?

LAFATA: In terms of women. Well, you can't frame it all in terms of women, you have to frame it in terms of people. There are a lot of things that we haven't discussed like the black woman and her relationship to the movement, and her relationship to the world, and the importance of well, for instance, welfare they say is one of the biggest problems in the United States today. There is no way we can begin to eliminate welfare until women get equal pay for equal work and equal opportunity, because the major member of the family below the poverty level are women, and the major portion of those are black women, and it's increasing rather than decreasing. The number of poverty level families headed by black men is decreasing, not rapidly, but it is showing an appreciable amount, and with black women it's going up. Black women are not really into the movement, because they got this whole structure of the black family which I'm sure you don't want to go into and discuss because that would take another hour. What we really want to see, and what I would really like to see, and it's a pat phrase, but people being able to develop their potentials, their abilities, their talents, whatever they are without any kind of regard to sex or race or religion or any of those good things, just to become whatever they have the capability of being without any outside discrimination. The family will change. The structure of the family, I even think, will change.

LEVER: What do you think is responsible for what's wrong. women's lives, about sex discrimination? What lies behind it? How in sort of a larger sense do you change' it? Do you change the economic structure or is it some sort of psychological

LAFATA: Well, it's all those things and we'll be able to change. We can change the laws, and by changing the laws we will change the economic thing. We will remove, hopefully, some discrimination, attitudes is another whole bag. Techno- logically we're on the moon, but when it comes to people, we're still back in the Stone Age. As I said this morning, our Constitution is based on the English Common Law which regarded women as chattel, belongings. They belonged to their husband, they had no rights separate from their husband, and we have no rights today. Without the Equal Rights Amendment, women have no rights in the Constitution except the right to vote. There's one state in the Union where a married woman's clothing is still owned by her husband.

LEVER: Do you think the NOW approach of changing laws, of changing state ways will really change attitudes?

LAFATA: Well, we're working in other areas. For instance, we work in task force and we have one in education, and I was talking to Dr. Dust about getting to the school counselors. Because from the time a baby is born, is when it all begins. Little boy babies are given toy tractors to duel over, and little girls are given rag dolls to clasp to their breast. And the boy baby is thrown up into the air, jostled around, and the girl baby is tenderly cradled and cooed over. Even the nursery rhymes discriminate, for God's sake, 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?' "The little old lady who lived in a shoe,' and Bo-Peep was do damned stupid she couldn't find her sheep, while it's 'Jack be nimble. Jack be quick. Jack jump over the candle stick.' And then you get into school, and girls for toys get nurses kits, and boys get doctors kits. Girls, you ask them, they're going to grow up to be a mommie, and how many kids are they going to have, and the' little boy, the whole bit. Your textbooks discriminate against all kinds of women. Mother is always in the backyard or in the kitchen, father is always doing something meaningful, comes home from work. It never rains, nobody's ever sick, nobody's ever poor, nobody's ever divorced in a child's book in school.

There are no single parent families. Can you imagine how kids from broken families feel? 'My mother and I must be really weird, because that's not the way it really is.' And this goes on in school. Counselors are certainly guilty of encouraging, you know, the girls take cooking and sewing and the boys take shop. Girls don't take daughter is the only girl in drafting class, there may be one more, this year. which is very unusual. It , wasn't easy. They kept trying to tell her she really didn't want to take that thing, 'yes, I do really want to take drafting. So it really starts way back there, and when it get, squared around it's going to have to, liberated women or the ones who follow us, are going to have to raise their children differently and demand. We were talking about education, we have no, gone to where we are examining textbooks, and we're finding cases of discrimination, and we're going to confront the publishers and the school systems and say, .look, fellows, this is what you are doing to our children.'

LEVER: Just 'look, fellows.' too.

LAFATA: Right.

LEVER: Well, I think that about answers all of my questions.

LAFATA: Probably more than you ever want to know about women's liberation.

LEVER: No.