

OPPORTUNITIES THAT GO BY

Point of View Concerning
World Conference for Women 1980

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"There are many women I think, who don't rise as high as they might because they are not naturally ambitious enough. Those that are—myself, and other women—have reached the top in business, in profession. The opportunities do exist and it's a question of grasping them".

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was explaining to me some of the reasons why she thought that the majority of women in the workforce—in almost all countries—remained in the lower paid sectors of the economy. "The problem for girls in India is totally different in many areas from the problems in the West and yet Mrs. Gandhi got to the top as I did... I think in the West there is largely equal opportunities for men and women. The trouble is, too few women take advantage of the opportunity".

It is not surprising that Mrs. Thatcher subscribes to this view. Born Margaret Roberts, the younger daughter of a lower middle class grocer from Grantham, she did not reap the immediate benefits of those who are born into wealth and privilege. She attended the local state primary school, won a scholarship to the girls' grammar school, and a bursary to Somerville College Oxford, where she studied chemistry. It was at Oxford that she first became actively involved in poli-

tics, becoming president of the University's Student Conservative Party Association. She worked for several years as a research chemist for an industrial firm and in 1950 and 1951 she contested two parliamentary elections for the Conservative Party.

In 1951 she married Dennis Thatcher, a successful businessman and two years later gave birth to twins—a son and daughter. "There are many women, particularly married women, who run their own homes and have a job who don't want to take on a lot of extra responsibility in their job as well as responsibilities at home", Mrs. Thatcher says. This was certainly not so in her own life, for she studied law in her spare time and was admitted to the bar four months after the birth of her children. After that she practised as a barrister specializing in taxation law. She entered parliament for the first time in 1959 and was appointed Secretary of State for education and science in 1970.

When I asked her how she coped, personally with combining career and family responsibilities Mrs. Thatcher said that if and when a crisis arose in the family, she and her husband had always managed to cope. She saw very little difference between men or women "if there is a real crisis. Men and women understand that you must at-

tend to the crisis first and that occurs whether you are a man in politics or a woman in politics the difference between men and women under those circumstances are not nearly as great as people think".

Mrs. Thatcher talked to me in connexion with the 1980 World Conference of the UN Decade for Women. As the fact that the Prime Minister is a woman was self evident, the topics we discussed reflected the objectives of the Decade without dwelling too much on gender.

Education (one of the sub-themes of the World Conference) and more particularly, the type of education a girl receives, is a crucial element in determining what her future potential for employment will be. Mrs. Thatcher felt very strongly "that you should never confine education to the kind of conditions which prevail where the school is. Education is the only time when you really can show a child what are the opportunities in the larger world and it would be terrible to deny children the opportunity to develop their own talents to the greatest extent. But let's also be practical about it. If you're living in an agricultural community you really ought to be taught a great deal about agriculture and how to make the best of the things around you".

When I asked whether she supported the idea that boys and girls be offered the same curricula in schools she said. "No, not necessarily That is to be too conscious of both boys and girls". She did add, however, that both should be offered the same opportunities. "Don't ever try to hold the girls back because they're girls. Don't ever do that".

Mrs. Thatcher's views on the promotion of development in Third World countries echoed her thought on opportunities for the development of individual talents. "So many of the developing countries have the resources, not only the national resources..... but they also have a tremendous talent wait-

ing to be developed". She expressed reservations about some approaches to development, saying that "if you impose great systems on people who were very different sometimes you stifle their development. Countries must develop in their own way", which is more or less how she feels about individual men and women.

Mrs. Thatcher herself is someone who has utilised every opportunity available to her, to become the first woman elected head of government in European history, although, as she reminded me, it was in Asian countries where women first held the post and job of prime minister.

If the media often portrays her as the "iron lady" unsympathetic to other women and to women's movement generally, my impression was that Mrs. Thatcher is not so much unsympathetic to women, as to those who continue to make unnecessary distinctions between men and women, isolating women, and women's issues, rather than treating them as having the same economic and political potential as men. The fact that Mrs. Thatcher's gender is largely irrelevant to the position she holds, should be an encouraging sign, if equal treatment opportunity are to be determined to all women, everywhere.

GENERAL NURSING TRAINING COURSE

The Medical Superintendent, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital & Nursing Home, New Delhi invites applications by 25-7-1980 in prescribed forms available from the office of the Sister Tutor, Nurses Hostel to this Hospital from 1-7-80 for admission to the 1st year class of the three year General Nursing Training Course of the School of Nursing, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi from unmarried female candidates or widows without encumbrances in their own handwriting. Out station applicants should send a self addressed and stamped envelope for supply of application forms. There are 25 seats out of which 15% reserved for Scheduled Castes and 7½% reserved for Scheduled Tribes candidates. In case suitable Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates are available the seats will be filled otherwise.

QUALIFICATIONS: 1. Matriculation or its equivalent with 60% marks and above OR Higher Secondary or Pre-degree or equivalent with 45% or above. 2. AGE LIMIT: 17-25 years as on 1-9-80. 3. Unmarried female candidates or widows without encumbrance only will be entertained. 4. Candidates must apply for the application form in their own handwriting and must send a self addressed envelope to the Medical Superintendent, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi. 5. Filled in application form along with attested copies of Mark-sheet certificate, Health Certificate, Character certificates and birth certificate must reach the Medical Superintendent upto 25-7-80. 6. Candidates who are called for written test only will be called for interview. 7. S.C./S.T. candidates are required to attach the S.C./S.T. certificates alongwith their application forms. Application forms for local candidates will be issued from the Sister Tutor office, Nurses Hostel from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. daily on all working days till 25-7-80. 8. Candidates attending written test must bring along with them attested copies of their photograph, the original certificates Mark-sheet, birth certificate, S.C./S.T. certificate. 9. During their period of training the candidates has to stay in the Hostel compulsorily. Messing is also compulsory.

The Medical Superintendent reserves exclusively the right of deciding whether or not a candidate satisfies the minimum requirement for admission to the said course.

Suitable candidates only will be called for interview and selected candidates will be intimated about their selection. Stipend of Rs. 125/- p.m. will be paid to meet the expenses of messing etc. and free furnished accommodation will be provided to them during the course of training in the Hostel. No T.A. & D.A. will be paid to the candidates called for interview.

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