

A CONVERSATION WITH BEVERLY CAMPBELL

Beverly Campbell was interviewed in her home in McLean, Virginia, January 1981.

You are known throughout the United States as the anti-ERA Spokeswoman for the LDS Church. How were you chosen for this job? Are you a lawyer?

I'm not really certain how I was chosen. I believe it was because I am from an area where much of the concern about the ERA was being generated. I had spoken out on this issue, and I was one of the organizers of the LDS Citizens' Coalition in Virginia. Because I have a professional background, perhaps it was felt that I had seen both sides of the problems of women and could be a credible spokesperson. I have always had a great interest in constitutional law. My husband is a constitutionalist, and we consider ourselves Jeffersonian democrats. I have taken several courses in these subjects, but I am not a lawyer.

Is it true that you used to be in favor of the ERA?

When it first came out, yes, it sounded like an excellent idea. I remember reading about it and thinking there were real inequities and areas of discrimination which needed to be addressed. At that time, though, there wasn't really much you could find out about the ERA. About 1974 I was being pushed by various professional organizations to announce an allegiance, so at that time I began looking at it from a legislative standpoint, without being aware of the Church's position. As I looked at the legislative history, I felt that because of the various legal ramifications and implications it simply was not something I could support.

Were you called and set apart from the Spokeswoman job by church leaders? Was it a priesthood calling?

Actually, I was not called. I was asked if I would act as a spokeswoman. At no time has it been suggested directly or indirectly as to how I might approach this issue or what I might say. So while I represent the Church in one way, in another way I am speaking of my own concerns and sensitivities to this and other women's issues. It is not a priesthood calling, and I have not been set apart.

It is known that you once worked for the Kennedy Foundation, so some think you have switched political sides.

The entire time I worked at the Kennedy Foundation I was never asked about my politics. It simply wasn't important. The mandate of the Foundation was to deal with human needs. Why do we as individuals always have to fall into one category or another? Why do we get so hung up on labels? There are many issues, and we must walk a broad path. The only change since my days at the Kennedy Foundation is that now I am more vocal on issues because there are more issues to be vocal about. I have always been a Republican, but I don't know why I can't admire both Republicans and Democrats and work with both.

Rumor has it that in your role as anti-ERA Spokeswoman you were chosen to follow Sonia Johnson around on her speaking circuit—that your job was to show up and set the record straight.

That's definitely not the case. The times I have been asked to represent the Church have been times when the media or members of the community (Church or otherwise) have expressed an interest in hearing the "other side" of this issue or where, because of substantial misrepresentation, equal time has been requested. I find now that I am usually going to a community because church members are interested in this and other issues and have asked that I come to their functions not as an "official spokesperson" but as a guest speaker.

Church members have asked for the other side?

Yes they have. They are very interested, naturally, in seeing that both sides are presented.

Recently Sonia Johnson, appearing on the Today show, said that she expected the Church to demand equal time. She mentioned a "truth squad."

There is no truth squad. The idea that there is one makes a good story and certainly interesting press. In situations where there is gross misrepresenta-

tion, I think it would be quite irresponsible of the Church not to ask for equal time to address these misrepresentations. That's what the equal time privilege in broadcasting is all about.

What is your church position now?

I am a counselor in the Bi-Regional Public Communications Council. I am the first woman to hold that position, another indication that the Church is carefully looking at what is traditional and what is doctrinal within the framework of the Church. Certainly this is a sign of the raised awareness and sensitivity to women's concerns and issues which I am seeing expressed by the priesthood churchwide. Within the council, I am responsible for special activities and special events. I also serve as a troubleshooter and am asked to speak on national issues in representing the council.

Do you speak on political issues?

Not in this capacity. The Church does not involve itself in political issues unless those issues are of moral concern to the Church and are played out in the political arena.

Are you on salary?

No, I receive no salary. My travel and lodging are paid by the group that asks me to appear, but other than that, my appearances are simply my contribution to the Church.

You travel and give speeches around the country, then.

Very often I am asked to speak at a special event for a stake or region. It may be a women's conference, a singles event or some other special session. It pleases me that when I do address church groups the leadership of the Church in that area is nearly always present, and they usually express great interest in all the issues under discussion.

What are some of these issues?

Now that the ERA has died down a bit, I find that there is a great interest in the role of women in the Church. I am often asked to speak to community groups about creative community involvement and am very often asked to address what I see as the challenges of the eighties.

You mention the woman's role. You believe there is a specific woman's role, then?

Very definitely! I think that women are creators of life, that their first role is that of wife and mother. But this does not say that a woman cannot and

should not do many other things. There is great need for community involvement. There is a need for women to keep their career skills intact should circumstances require that they care for the financial needs of the family. Certainly there are many choices a woman can and should make, but they should always be made in line with her first, very real commitment to home and family. Women are and should consider themselves equal in all walks of life—home, church, community and business. We must look for creative ways to express ourselves in these areas in line with the needs of our children, but there is no limit to what women can and should do!

Then their biological role is their first and most important role.

It is more than biological. For most women it is their first priority. When the chips are down, women who are mothers always recognize that motherhood is their first priority. That doesn't mean that is the only thing they do, however.

Do you think the ERA is dead?

I think we are still going to see a lot of activity, a lot of press and some interesting demonstrations, but at present it doesn't appear to have a chance of passing. This doesn't mean we can settle back and do nothing. We still must be active in states where the ERA has not passed. I think the dialogue arising out of the ERA issue has been important and necessary. I would hope that we will not settle back complacently and say "all is well," but that we will be diligent in dealing with the issues of concern.

What are they?

We need more support systems for women. I feel we need to address these issues from the "preventive" perspective rather than merely trying to bind up wounds after the damage is done. In medicine we have all kinds of preventive centers. We must develop such centers for the family. Why cannot we, as citizens, as part of our church, community or social efforts, establish centers where women or families can go before the damage is irreversible? I think that we cannot hope that government will take care of this for us. We need more help from the churches, more help from the schools. Schools must develop good, solid curriculum material, and we can't be so afraid that schools are going to destroy our value systems. Without this we are on the brink of disaster. Instead of catching people just as they go over the cliff, we must put up warning signals. We must deal with the human issues. The most frightening thing in the world is for a woman who is, say, thirty-six who has stayed home, had four children, and then is suddenly divorced. She has never had a career, and she doesn't know what to do. We must deal with these real situations, and we cannot wait for the government to do it.

Wasn't a bill dealing with child and wife abuse voted down in Virginia?

Professionals have advised me that the abuse bill was written in such a way that it couldn't be enforced. This is what happens with much of women's legislation. I have been accused of working actively against such legislation, but I have worked against ERA and abortion, nothing else. In fact, I have gone personally and said "Let me help you" and have never been given an entrée. Women must become professional enough to push these issues through.

You mean women should become lobbyists and run for office?

Yes, I think women should become lobbyists, and they should run for office. We've also got to be terribly knowledgeable and professional in designing and drafting bills. When a so-called "women's bill" goes before a legislative body, it should be totally workable and enforceable.

Whom did you speak to about these laws? To whom did you offer your assistance?

Three years ago when I was working here in the state rather than at a national level I went to one of the liberal women delegates and asked what I could do to help. I was never contacted by this group to be of any help whatsoever.

Then your objection to the child and spouse abuse law is that it was not clearly written? You do not object to passing a law against spouse and child abuse?

Certainly, if the bill is well written, I not only have no objections, but I would be most supportive of it. However, I am concerned that when we propose a bill, it represent not just another area of government intervention, but a really helping program in which the community can become involved, with funding for the services to be provided made available to interested church, private and community groups. Only then can we provide the variety of services needed.

How about the abused wife who is desperate and knows of no way to protect herself against her husband? How is she supposed to get help? She certainly is not capable of writing laws herself.

That's why it's important that you and I and all other women involve themselves with these issues and see that appropriate laws are in place, that they work and that there are a variety of support systems for these citizens. We must care, particularly in these areas of such intense human suffering.

Are you recommending that private groups get money from government to fund these support groups you speak of?

Yes, for hotlines and other support groups so that citizens can be really involved. There is no question that we need better laws, especially for the

problem of battered wives, but saying that government should do it *all* is wrong. We need creative ways of dealing with these issues so that individual groups can do it. We need to raise the consciousness of individual groups so that they can deal with the issues. As I say, one of the most frightening issues is re-entry into the job market. I have talked to many women to whom this is a shattering experience, for whom it is not a choice, not a luxury. Of course rape laws must be improved, too. These are issues common to all women. My hope would be that out of all the dialogue would come a common ground where we can work together. We cannot turn it over to the government. We've tried that, and it didn't work.

There are so many women's groups. Can they work together?

Yes, there are many women's groups, with different agendas. Some are to the right and some are to the left; some are feminist and some are Moral Majority. That is fine; let them go on. But somewhere in the middle are issues of concern for us all. Let us find areas of commonality on which we can all agree.

Do you know about Orrin Hatch's Senate hearings on women in the workplace?

Yes, and I think hearings of this kind are very positive. I understand that in these discussions, they are looking at the laws already in place but not functioning well. Many women do not know, for instance, that it is presently unlawful *not* to provide equal pay for equal work, equal educational opportunities, equal business opportunities, equal credit. We need a massive advertising campaign which will tell us where to go for redress when these laws are violated. It seems the money we are spending on other things should go into such a campaign.

Isn't that what the ERA was supposed to do?

People are very uninformed as to what the ERA should and would do. The ERA in and of itself seems a nice philosophical statement. However, when you understand that every law dealing with the working of the lives of men and women and boys and girls must be based on this simple philosophical statement, then you must look at it more carefully. As you look at the intent of the law, you look at its legislative history because that is where the lawmakers must first look as they begin writing laws. At this point you see our real concern. The proposed moderating amendments which were rejected by both houses of Congress seal the law's intent.

But wouldn't it make it easier to activate those other laws you speak of?

Why? We've had some of these laws seven, ten, twenty years. How would the ERA be a panacea? It won't be any easier.

Proponents of the amendment seemed to think so. Like raising a flag so all can salute.

It's a nice general statement, but when you start dealing with every law about women you find they are all federal laws, adjudicated on a federal level. There is no law which we currently find onerous that couldn't be challenged successfully under the Fourteenth Amendment. The ERA would add nothing new to any of these laws. It isn't a magic wand. It brought with it many other things that really concern me. Look what is happening in states where the language that is being interpreted as equal rights is causing problems for women.

What are some of these problems?

I was on a talk show in New York with a woman psychiatrist who had just been on the segment ahead of me. The moderator had asked her how she felt about the ERA, and she said, "I am for it 100 percent, because one day my husband came home and told me he didn't want to be married any more, and I got nothing. Nothing. Now if we had had the ERA, this wouldn't have happened." Of course, the moderator was just delighted to have me next, so she could ask, "How can you be against it? The woman who was just on would not have had all the problems she had."

I answered, "What you don't realize is that the reason she had the problems in the first place is because she is from Pennsylvania, an Equal Rights language state with the same approach as the proposed national law. This means that the man is no longer responsible for the support or maintenance of his wife, including necessities like food, medicine and insurance. Under Pennsylvania law, she is equally responsible for the support of the children." When it came to divorce, even though she had not worked for years, little weight was given to that. Because she had a degree, her "capability" entered into it, and she had to go out and provide for her own support. She couldn't get any more than fifty percent of their mutual properties, which she thought was unfair and probably was. Because she had stayed at home all those years, she felt she should have received more. Before we began getting all this equal rights language, the presumption was that the men had to support their wives. As I said, in Pennsylvania the laws requiring a husband to support his wife in an ongoing marriage are "repugnant to the Pennsylvania State ERA."

Most child support and alimony laws have not been enforced in this country for a long time.

Of course, so much is attitudinal. If the man knows that he is no longer responsible for the support of his family, it would not be many generations before a woman would not feel safe going into a marriage committed to a large family. She would need to be ready to provide not only for her own

necessities, but she would have to share the burden of support for the minor children of that marriage. Proponents of the ERA say that if a marriage is good, you don't need laws. If we don't need laws, why have we always had them, and why is there all this talk about the need for the ERA to provide laws?

A handout was circulated in the Oakton, Virginia Stake announcing another LDS Coalition push to stop ERA in Virginia. It is a sample letter to use in writing legislatures. It lists the things they are against. For instance, they are against wives having to pay alimony and child support.

A woman was jailed last spring in Maryland for failing to provide child support payment to her ex-husband. However, I have not seen the materials to which you are referring.

You are not in on this?

Some of the women from the original LDS Citizens' Coalition are still active, and I certainly am supportive of them.

This didn't come from the top? This is a local group only?

Yes. And I hope that they continue. If they still feel strongly about the ERA, they should certainly go on opposing it. I do hope that this group and others around the country will take the next step, however, which is to address the other human issues we have already mentioned. We cannot afford the luxury of feeling safe and comfortable and thinking that we don't have to deal with our sisters' problems. We've got to deal with them, if we are to follow the mandate of the Relief Society "to care for all our sisters who may fall under our care and supervision irrespective of religion, color or condition."

What if we speak up and then find what we have said does not agree with what our leaders are saying? For instance, this letter from the LDS Citizens' Coalition is signed by the wife of one of the members of the stake presidency.

Does being a wife of a member of the stake presidency remove her right to participate in community affairs as a private citizen?

No, she has a perfect right to participate, but people may think that it is official.

I think we have got to get over the provincial idea that holding a position in the Church makes it impossible to participate actively in community affairs. If we do that, we effectively remove most of our people. We all hold jobs in the Church. One of the reasons for the consolidated schedule is so we can involve ourselves more actively in Christian service.

The women involved in this group are involved as a direct result of what's happening in Richmond. They are now activists. Each woman is a person—

an individual—and we must each make a personal decision about community service, based on that individuality. I hope the group continues because there needs to be a group where our people feel comfortable. (I see it as rather like training wheels on a child's bike.) When we become more sophisticated in the community arena, we can then join other "larger" groups and begin to function more effectively.

Would you allow the same rights to members of other groups who are still in the Church but who favor the ERA? Can they send out material too?

Obviously they can organize and send out materials. However, I think if they organize as a group, such as Mormons for ERA did, they are not going to find as receptive a response within the framework of the Church because the ERA is an issue on which the prophet has spoken—not once, but four times. When people ask, "Can I speak to a group in favor of the ERA?" the answer is obvious! Freedom of belief and speech is the right of all of us, but they should not expect to make such presentations from the pulpit or in Relief Society, because the prophet has identified the ERA as a "moral issue." You wouldn't expect the alcohol or tobacco lobby to request equal time in the chapels to discuss the virtues of their program.

What do you think about the abortion amendments? There are two of them: the Paramount Human Life Amendment and the Human Life Amendment. Has the Church made a statement on either of these?

Not to my knowledge. It certainly has made a statement on abortion, which does allow for abortion considerations in the case of rape, and in protecting the health of the mother.

In your view, is this still the Church's official statement? "The Church opposes abortion and counsels its members not to submit to, perform, nor abet an abortion except in the rare cases where, in the opinion of competent medical counsel, the life or good health of the mother is seriously in danger or where the pregnancy was caused by rape or produces serious emotional trauma in the mother. Even then, it should be done only after counseling with the local presiding priesthood authority and after receiving divine confirmation through prayer."

As far as I know that is still the statement.

It is a reasonable statement. It says that the Church is not in favor of abortion, but it leaves some options.

The "Paramount" Amendment says that the right to life is the highest right—the fetus' right to life, not the mother's. It makes no provision for the life of the mother: (I am going to quote from the proposed amendment.) "Note that there is no provision in this Amendment for an exception to kill a preborn child to 'save the life of the mother.' . . . This Amendment would protect every born and preborn human being's paramount right to life." The fertilized egg is even legislated for. I

assume all kinds of problems would arise—from such situations as spontaneous abortion.

I think some of those arguments are specious, but I do feel you have to be careful because of the wording which will often allow extreme interpretations of the law—both ways.

The Human Life Amendment is not as extreme. I quote: “No unborn person shall be deprived of life by any person; provided, however, that nothing in this article shall prohibit a law permitting only those medical procedures required to prevent the death of the mother.” It allows for saving the mother, but it does not mention rape or health. The brochure I am quoting—“Stop HLA” published by NOW—does name the Mormon Church as a supporter of the amendment. Has the Church issued a statement officially supporting the amendment, as it says here?

I have heard of no other statement than the one you just read. I would certainly suggest that each person look into it carefully for herself or himself.

I take it you are uncomfortable with the more extreme statement.

It doesn't deal with human needs. Again we must be careful of what amendments we pass because of the possibility of extreme interpretations one way or the other.

It would seem that some people are more interested in the unborn than in the people who are already here. They are not interested in gun control, for instance.

Well, I really don't know how to respond to that. We must each work in the areas of our greatest concerns.

Do you see any place besides Orrin Hatch's hearings where groups are coming together on disparate issues?

I would hope that all the women's groups would meet and try to find common ground. But we must be careful that when we begin to meet together, it is not just women. If we do not move women's issues into the mainstream and begin to deal with them as citizens, we will see them moved to the side while the legislative bodies deal with what they consider mainstream issues. Women's issues must be identified with all human issues and moved into the legislative mainstream.

Would you be willing to meet with avowed feminist groups like NOW and Mormons for ERA?

Certainly I would be happy to meet with these groups and try to find areas of agreement. Obviously there are going to be areas on which we will probably

never agree. We can move these to the side and look for those programs we can all support. There will be problems because we probably will not agree as to the best kinds of support systems, but if there can be give and take on both sides then we should be able to work together to positive ends.

Why is it that some people act as if when women get their rights they will automatically blow it, as if believing in equal rights means believing in abortion, or in leaving home and family?

I think this feeling arose out of the initial press. The first group of radicals were so extreme that people saw them as harmful. People who have causes and who are willing to commit enormous time and energy often articulate them through extreme actions. Some groups have different agendas than others, and we need to be aware of that. Everyone does not share our values.

Were you involved in the March for Life activities?

No, I wasn't, though I support the right of other individuals to be so involved.

How about homemakers' rights?

We hear a lot about homemakers' rights. What do you mean by that?

Part of it is social security reform.

There are some real problems with such reform. At this time it doesn't appear that it would benefit those it is supposed to help the most. Those who have studied the issue say it would decrease coverage of the single income family by an average of 15%. It would levy taxes on the assumed economic value of a homemaker's work and would require as much as \$1,200 in additional taxes per year to come out of the homemaker's pocket—based on a standard 8% taxation rate for self-employed workers. Most families do not have that much additional disposable income, and it would therefore force the woman out of the home into the marketplace to earn the extra money to pay her social security. I don't believe we can justify it on that basis as it doesn't give that much additional protection.

Do you see yourself as a role model? Are you a typical Mormon woman?

I'm often asked that question, and I'm always concerned, because I don't know what a "typical Mormon woman" is. We are now a worldwide Church. Can there be such a woman? I am also very concerned because we seem to describe the "typical Mormon woman" in terms of tasks: she stays home, has a large family, bakes bread and cans fruit. When you ask about a typical Mormon man you talk in terms of values: he does well at his work, he holds



many church positions, he cherishes his family. Why can't we describe women in value terms? When we say that she stays at home and has a large family aren't we saying that she values life and feels one with her Father in Heaven in her responsibility to procreate? Aren't we also saying that she creates a warm, safe, fulfilling home? Can't we say that she cares for her family's nutritional needs, rather than narrowing it down to baking bread? That she husbands her family's resources, rather than narrowing it down to canning fruit? I believe more women would be comfortable—and feel less guilt—if they were described in value terms rather than in task terms. If I were described in value terms, I would say, Yes, I am a typical Mormon woman.

Are there, then, many different acceptable lifestyles?

Obviously there are, because we must all make different choices as we go through life. There are typical attitudes and approaches to problems, to doctrine and to family, though. I would say I am probably typical in these.

Would you recognize Sonia Johnson as typical in a way?

She is not typical in that she was willing to exchange basic doctrine and philosophy for something else. But certainly her vigor and her willingness to champion a cause are typical.

You obviously think, then, that there are definite women's issues.

I do. But I would hope we could begin identifying these as human issues. As I said before, we must move these into the mainstream of our legislative process and we, men and women alike, must deal with them. Women cannot and should not attempt to do it alone.

You see a danger of a legislative women's ghetto, so to speak?

Yes. We are faced with a situation where men say, "Let's not deal with those issues—those are women's issues. Let's get money for roads," or whatever. We really need to bring these issues into the whole human services area.

Do you see any changes in Mormon women?

Yes I do. I see them becoming more aware of the issues, more active, asking more questions and definitely making more contributions to society at large. I also see a greater recognition of their responsibilities as full partners in the Church and increasing authority over the programs for which they have stewardship. I hope in all of this that we as Mormon women can maintain a balanced point of view as we make our influence felt.