

# Carter Given Faint Praise By Feminist

By Jacci Bates-Wilson

President Jimmy Carter has picked some good women for posts, but there has been no radical increase in their numbers, said a national feminist leader Wednesday.

Eleanor Cutri Smeal gives Carter an uneven performance record in advancing the feminist cause.

Smeal is president of the National Organization for Women. NOW, with 97,000 members and 727 chapters, is the largest women's rights organization in the United States.

Smeal was in Grand Rapids Wednesday to speak at the Second Women's Recognition Celebration sponsored by the YWCA.

Ten area women were recognized for their achievements within the community in traditional and non-traditional roles.

Smeal, an Erie, Pa., wife and mother of two, said Carter still has an

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opportunity to help make important strides in securing women's rights, one way would be to push for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

"What we're saying is that we hope there will be more vigorous activity, especially in the ratification of the ERA," Smeal commented.

"We hope that he (Carter) will move and move rapidly because the clock is ticking on ERA in a very grave fashion."

Smeal said the boycott of states that have not ratified the amendment has gained massive support and is rapidly increasing.

The emphasis in 1979, she continued, will be to see that ERA is passed in as many unratified states as possible.

"We have met the opposition in a dozen states," she said, "and we have won them all."

Smeal said she was glad to be in Michigan, a ratified state, and urged residents here to continue to push for ratification in other states.

"Until ERA is passed by 38 states," Smeal commented, "none of us have equal rights."

Commenting on Carter's recent appointment of Lynda Bird Robb to head the National Advisory Committee for Women, Smeal said the appointment is obviously political, exemplifying a change in the advisory function of the

committee.

Robb will replace former Rep. Bella Abzug, who Carter fired in January, according to aides, after he learned the committee had prepared a press release he considered overly critical of his administration.

Smeal was among the half of the 40-member committee who resigned in protest of Carter's action.

Smeal also discussed the Homemaker's Bill of Rights, recently introduced to Congress, that calls for low-interest loans to women who wish to further their education or training to enter the job market.

The response to the bill by Congress, she said, has been heartening.

The bill could potentially aid more than 14 million divorced, widowed or single women.

It also includes equal rights in the home — tax changes that would insure that the women would have half the ownership of property, she said.

"So we're very pleased with the initial response," said Smeal.

"We know it's a long way, but then too we also know that some of the original ideas that we had such as pregnancy disability seemed like a very long way off, (but) have been enacted by law, so we're encouraged..."

NOW does not believe in separating women into two categories, — those who work inside the home and those who work outside — all women work and deserve basic economic rights in our society, she said.

Speaking of Wednesday's recognition program, Smeal said it is important for women to find role models.

"When awards were given out in the past in Grand Rapids," she commented, "we were lucky if one woman was recognized ... now we have a host of awards, and that really is what is occurring nationwide."

Women recognized at the ceremony included: Eula Black, for creative arts contributions; Sue Blandford, community service; Bobbie Butler, human rights; Diane Frary, youth advocate; Joyce Gerrard, human potential; Vivian Lewis, neighborhood development; Barbara Nicholson, education and religion; Florence Peterson, labor; Billie Pharms, human services; and Jeanette St. Clair, Native American awareness.