

LIMERICK CHRONICLE

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Women challenge Mayor

The newly-formed Limerick branch of the Women's Political Association this week challenged the Mayor of Limerick, Senator Ted Russell, to include women in any committees he forms during his term of office.

Miss Win Harrington told the association's first public meeting in Limerick that the Mayor planned to do things by committee, and the W.P.A. insisted that women be included.

Miss Harrington, chairwoman of the local branch, described the Corporation as "male-dominated."

She urged local women's associations to press the Mayor to put women on committees.

"Don't take no for an answer," she declared.

"You are 51% of the electorate."

She disclosed that members of the W.P.A. would attend Corporation meetings in the future to keep up to date on political activities locally.

"There is nobody who cares about Limerick in the political arena because Limerick represents safe seats. We elect the same people again and again. Well, let's make them unsafe, and then we will get action," said Miss Harrington.

During the meeting, it was suggested that a women's "talent bank" should be established in Limerick.

The purpose of the bank would be to have a list of women qualified in various fields, which could be sent to the Government when any appointments to State boards or bodies are being made.

Normally, according to some of the WPA members from Dublin who were at the meeting, the reason no women are appointed to these bodies is that the Ministers say "there were no suitable women available."

A "talent bank" would provide the Ministers with a list of "suitable women."

Mrs. Maeve Breen, Chairperson of the Women's Political Association, gave statistics on women in politics.

There are only 89 women in local Government out of a total of 1,589.

There are three women senators out of 60, and only five women Dail deputies out of 144.

She offered as a solution to this situation, a quota system for a period of years.

Under this, a minimum number of women (25% was mooted) would be guaranteed nominations in the political and employment sectors.

Miss Harrington stressed the weight of the women's vote - about 51% of the electorate.



Senator Ted Russell pictured in July 1976 after his re-election as mayor. He came under pressure from the Women's Political Association to have women represented on different committees

She declared: "There is nobody in the political arena who cares. Well, I care, and I can only do what you help me to do. I am looking for your support."

"Let it go out from this meeting that women are quite intelligent and competent. The future is in our own

hands. We have the votes to put women in. We can do it, and we will do it. It is up to us."

She added that what men were lacking in was a caring dimension, which women had.

The W.P.A. wants women to take their rightful place and not to

"knock" men.

It was felt at the meeting that women were very much to blame for the position they found themselves in today. Mrs. Maureen Ahern stressed that today's women must not forget those who went before and who had a hard fight to prepare

the way for this generation.

"I am glad to say I lived to see this day," she told the attendance of about 200.

"West of the Irish Sea is awake at last."

This article first appeared in The Leader on October 9, 1976.