WOMEN'S POLICY AGENDA, 1992

It is time for American women's vital economic interests to be recognized and acted upon. Women are at a grave disadvantage in this country. They frequently suffer limited opportunities, discrimination and harassment on the job in violation of our laws. Millions of women from all racial and ethnic groups live in poverty, enmeshed in a welfare system that is a trap and a disgrace. Women shoulder a disproportionate share of the burdens of family care. The WOMEN'S POLICY AGENDA that we propose would serve to redress the disadvantages women suffer. It would improve their lives, and their children's.

Women and the children they raise constitute more than half of the people in this country. Improving their opportunities and their lives is an important and legitimate function of our government.

We propose a WOMEN'S POLICY AGENDA of measures for improving the well-being of women in the United States, and of the children who depend on them:

- welfare reform that enables women to leave welfare and gets them and their children out of poverty
- faster progress toward equality of opportunity by race and sex in hiring and promotion, and toward ending discriminatory wage structures
- government support of child care and of family leave for births and health emergencies
- universal access to health care
- guaranteeing women control of their reproduction

The programs we are asking for are not new and untried. Each of them has been adopted in other democratically-run countries with free-market economies. All Western countries with the exception of South Africa and the United States have government-guaranteed universal health care. France and Sweden have government-subsidized child care and other aspects of the welfare reform we are advocating. Australia and Canada have made government-sponsored progress in pay equity. These programs have not created economic difficulties in those countries. The United States, in its failure to adopt more effective policies to reduce discrimination and poverty, to insure health care for all, and to assist family life, lags behind other advanced industrial countries.

Some of these programs will save money, but others will require substantial additional government spending. As economists, we assert that the country can mobilize the resources to finance such programs, even while cutting the deficit, without injuring our potential for a healthy economy. The end of the Cold War is the opportunity for a resetting of spending priorities. We can afford programs that will improve the lives of women and children if we reduce the defense budget by a large fraction, reduce other programs that benefit a very few well-off people, and restore the taxes on the well-to-do that were mistakenly cut in the 1980's. The plea that the present deficit precludes additional expenditure is false. Just as over $100 billion were found with no difficulty to resolve the S&L crisis, money can be found to pay for this agenda.

The continuation of now-unneeded weapons systems is sometimes advocated on the grounds that they provide jobs. The agenda we propose would also provide jobs. But under our program, instead of useless military hardware, we would be producing things that are sorely needed — health care for all and high quality care for children.

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EVALUATING THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' PROGRAMS

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Trudi Renwick, Skidmore College
A. Dale Tussing, Syracuse University
Elaine McCrate, University of Vermont
Louis Lefeber, York University
Linda Wilcox Young, University of Vermont
Carol E. Heim, University of Massachusetts
Charles Levenstein, University of Massachusetts, Lowell
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Tim Sullivan, Towson State University
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