

Address by Helen K. Leslie, National President
National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs
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There are many things I would like to say tonight. My heart has never been fuller nor my words so inadequate.

I would like to review the past -- and the fine accomplishments of the Federation -- not only during the past year, but during all the years back to 1919. Certainly such a review would be interesting and worthy of your time.

I would like to enumerate the many things done by our illustrious past presidents because I have been inspired and challenged by their stalwart approach to the problems facing women, and by their courage to carve out the rich history which has spelled the advancement of business and professional women.

I have sought their advice, and cherished their friendship.

I could tell you how hard it will be to fill the shoes of one who has done such a fine job as our leader during this past year. This convention has been most outstanding and some of the things done here have been just short of fantastic!

I could tell you how humble I feel in the presence of so many tonight who have meant so much to me.

While all these things are in my heart and on my mind -- I am going to ask you to look with me into the future.....that great, dark, frightening..... but tremendously challenging void which holds the destiny of the world and each of us who is privileged to share in it.

We live in a daring age! We live at a time unparalleled by anything our wildest imagination can envision.

In 1919 when we were founded, the speed record was broken by an airplane flying at the fantastic speed of 42 miles per hour. Today, we go around the world in minutes.

It took 100 horsepower to keep a plane flying in 1919, today 200 horsepower takes us to work or to the supermarket.

A few miles away from the spot in Florida where Ponce de Leon landed 400 years ago, we launch vehicles taking us to outer space.

Yes, times have changed. In St. Petersburg years ago, Eastern Air Lines approached our city fathers about establishing headquarters in our Sunshine City. Our city fathers unanimously turned this prospect down because they were convinced there was no future in this flying business.

We have planes now that can fly from New York to California in three minutes -- if they could land softly.

We literally soar in orbit with the astronauts as we watch daring and fantastic acrobatics in spacefeats that were not even thought of earlier in our lives.

Yes, this is a daring age!

And, tonight I would like to DARE you to move this Federation forward at a pace befitting this supersonic age in which we live.

DARE TO SHARE!

I DARE you to open the doors of this organization to ALL business and professional women who want to share in our work and our aspirations.... whether they live in our large cities, or in the less populated areas; whether they are women who have been especially trained or whether they are women who have achieved through experience; whether they are top executives, or whether they are new in business and are reaching for the first rung on the ladder of success.

The strength and the force of this Federation comes from its membership -- from the fact that even though our avenues of employment run in different directions, we still share one common goal and that is to elevate the standards of all business and professional women.

I dare you to open the door even wider to the young career woman....that door which Virginia Allan opened in Detroit in 1964, and which Dorothy Ford has kept wide open as we have worked as partners with YOUTH. Share your experiences with them and I am sure you, too, can learn from them.

Yes, I have the courage tonight to dare you to break the barriers, to tear down the walls, to increase the membership of this Federation by at least 10,000 members this year, to at least 185,000.

I would not only dare, but I would URGE you to reach across boundaries and lines established by governments and share the rich rewards of membership with the business and professional women south of us. Opposition and differences are melted when women meet with common interests and common goalsthat of promoting understanding between peoples, and bringing peace to the world.

Our Florida Federation trip to Guatemala is one example. When 77 people who represent all the range of interests covered by such varying positions as judges, lawyers, teachers, corporation executives, accountants, and office managers found common interests, common problems, and common concerns with the business and professional women of Guatemala, we know that women of both countries benefited. More important, both groups learned to understand different points of view.

This need for understanding and friendship does not apply just to the countries in this hemisphere, even though I feel this is a particular responsibility of the United States. It applies to all lands, and particularly to those countries affiliated with our International Federation.

When I visited West Germany in April as the guest of the German government, I realized how much our friendship, our service, our loyalty and our support are welcomed when we give it in the true spirit of friendship.

We owe a special allegiance to Helen Irwin, President, and Sally Butler, Membership Chairman, for their leadership during their service to the International Federation.

Friendship and fellowship is the bond that holds us together in our clubs. It is the same bond that holds women together even when they don't speak the same language. The speed with which Ana Castro, who is President of the Guatemala City Club has learned English during her four weeks as a guest of the Florida Federation, is one more demonstration of the power of friendship and fellowship to break down language barriers.

DARE TO SPEAK!

Yes, I would dare you tonight to let your voices be so strong in seeking and upholding our legislative platform that there will be no doubt on Capitol Hill as to the desires of this Federation as it relates to the laws that concern women. The record in the past has been impressive. The job is not yet done.

We have been the spokesman for employed women, and our work is not finished. However, I believe strongly that a leading example of the power and force when women do speak out is the establishment of 44 State Commissions on the Status of Women. When the Federation first offered to provide leadership in helping to establish these State Commissions a little more than two years ago, it had to have faith in the ability of women to speak out and in the quality of the leadership it could bring. The action of governor after governor in establishing state commissions is evidence of how effectively you have spoken out. I dare you in the remaining states to speak out so that there will be a State Commission in every state in the Union.

But, the establishment of state commissions is only the beginning of my dare to you to speak out. For, the final evidence of your power to bring about results will be the "pay-off" of the state commissions in needed legislation. There is still much to be done locally, in our states, and nationally. I think legislation is like peace. You never achieve it. It is never finished. It is a WAY OF LIFE.

We must always maintain a strong legislative program, and we must always remain united in speaking out to support legislation that is for the best interests of ALL women.

DARE TO SERVE!

Indeed, service is the note that recurs again and again as we reflect on our Plan for Progress. One of our early founders, Adelia Prichard, said it more eloquently than I can possibly state it:

"Because each generation has had great women, women who caught the vision, who fought the fight, we stand where we do today, strengthened by bonds of friendship, broadened by our contacts with each other, prepared to meet courageously each and every problem that is ours."

"So it would seem that we should realize the wealth of this great heritage, the price that has been paid, the sacrifices that have been made; and that in that realization we should be very humble, very desirous for service, that we should be truly grateful for the privilege of this national organization with its wonderful opportunities, remembering always that our only right to existence is through service, and that always that service must mean building a finer, better world, creating in the minds of our people high ideals of government, true standards of living, sympathy without sentimentality and an intelligent understanding of the work we hope to do."

There is truly nothing women can't do, if they put their minds to it, and I would dare you tonight - and during the coming year - to apply your talents in service within your community, your state, and your nation. Each one of us cannot perform the same service -- thank goodness!

But, instead our effectiveness and our strength lies in the fact that when we combine our talents we have a cross-section of abilities which are characteristic of AMERICA and of the democracy we fight and die to uphold.

You all recall the bible story of Martha and Mary at the household of Jesus, and the fact that Mary complained that she had to busy herself with household chores, preparing the meal, etc., while Martha only sat and visited with Jesus. Jesus' reply was, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." And this is a good lesson to remind us that each has his own niche... each has his special place of service. We do not propose to tell you how to serve, nor how much service you must give. That is your choice to make. We only hope to inspire you to apply your talents where they will do the most good... whether that talent is one, or many.

With our heads and our hearts in our homes, and our minds in the business world, we have more power to influence than any other group. Let us not misuse -- nor WASTE that power.

DARE TO HAVE FAITH!

I dare you to have faith in yourself, faith in others, and faith in a supreme being in whom we can find both the meaning of our lives and the power to live it.

Lack of faith can cause people to falter, and nations to crumble. Lack of faith has caused great companies to go bankrupt and like wise a deep and abiding faith can move mountains.

The true greatness of America lies not in her high rate of production, but in her ideals of freedom. Every citizen has the responsibility to preserve this legacy of freedom. It is yours to surrender - or to hold.

The power of women is great but like all other great powers, its power lies in its control. We must be informed. We must control with careful thought, and with dedication to the ideals of freedom ... with true regard for our fellowman.

And so I ask you to wield that power to --

DARE TO SHARE

DARE TO SPEAK OUT

DARE TO SERVE

AND

DARE TO HAVE FAITH

There is an old Chinese proverb that goes something like this:

If there is harmony in the home
There is agreement in the state
If there is agreement in the state
There is order in the nation
If there is order in the nation
There is peace in the world.