

# NOW Elects Judy Goldsmith as President

By **Joanne Omang**

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The National Organization for Women, rejecting a shift toward a more confrontational approach in its politics, elected veteran administrator Judy Goldsmith as its president early today after a hard and bitter campaign fight.

Goldsmith, 43, from Manitowoc, Wis., NOW's executive vice president for the last three years, headed a slate backed unofficially by outgoing president Eleanor Smeal, who was ineligible to run for another term. The outcome, in which Goldsmith turned back a strong challenge from controversial ex-Mormon feminist Sonia Johnson, was an endorsement, with some reservations, of Smeal's policies.

At a turning point in the organization's history, the vote was an affirmation of the policies that built NOW into the nation's foremost voice on women's rights, despite the group's inability last year to win ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. It also reflected political pragmatism of a more or less conventional approach to elections at a period when NOW is seeking to take advantage of polls showing alienation from the Republican Party, especially among women.

"We will proceed with work on defeating the right wing that is opposed to all our issues and with freeing this nation from the Reagan administration," Goldsmith said in her acceptance speech. "We are going to go about changing this country and pursuing our goal of equality."

The 16th annual convention today also passed resolutions, binding on the new leaders, to challenge the right wing and make abortion rights an issue in Congress and to "continue to expose the role of the Catholic church hierarchy" in the anti-abortion movement. Goldsmith said defeating Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) in 1984 "is my No. 1 priority."

Another resolution introduces political candidates' stands in favor of homosexual rights as one of several priorities in determining whether NOW will give them money or endorsements. Other resolutions will increase minority responsibilities in NOW, restart feminist consciousness-raising sessions and launch "a major campaign to outlaw all sex discrimination in insurance."

Goldsmith, the daughter of a Michigan aluminum factory worker and his wife, defeated four rivals on the third round of a complex preferential balloting system.

Two other members of her slate also prevailed, but the crucial No. 2 slot, executive vice president, was won by an independent, attorney Barbara Timmer, of Williamsport, Pa., a Washington, D.C., aide to Rep. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D-N.Y.). Timmer pledged a wider, more activist approach than Smeal's. Another independent, Kathy Webb, of Little Rock, Ark., was elected secretary.

These results suggest that the 1,853 voting delegates are less pliant to their centralized leadership than in the past. Alice Chapman, of Danbury, Conn., was elected treasurer and Mary Jean Collins, of Chicago, became action vice president, both with Smeal's unofficial backing.

Goldsmith's chief rival and runner-up in the race was Sonia Johnson of Sterling, Va., who was excommunicated from the Mormon church in 1979 for her NOW involvement. She called for more open confrontation with NOW's opponents, and her evangelical style worried some of the group's state leaders. "I am a civil rights leader," she told the convention in her final campaign speech.

"I brought the Mormon church to its knees and sparked a revolution there." Johnson's candidacy split the movement, making the vote a referendum on the pace of Smeal's leadership.

Smeal, 43, led NOW for five years, boosting it to 220,000 members and a \$13 million annual budget, but many NOW members thought her focus on ERA came at the expense of work on other areas such as minority and abortion rights. Others objected that she had ruled out civil disobedience tactics in the ERA fight that might have been more successful.

"I'm disappointed that Sonia lost," said Virginia state coordinator Linda C. Wilson, "but Judy [Goldsmith] was my second choice." The word of the day was unity as all sides pledged to work with the new leaders.

In a floor statement today, Johnson said her candidacy meant that "we want diversity honored in this organization," but told the leaders, "I'm at your disposal and when you need me I'll be there."

In a speech before the Saturday vote count, which continued until dawn today, Goldsmith targeted "the Catholic church, the Mormon church and the electronic ministry" for overhaul in their attitudes toward women, pledging to "build new bridges" to the blacks and Hispanics whose faces are largely absent here. In an interview, she said that NOW has always been militant and will continue that way.

"The new people have not really seen that part of our history," she said. She noted that NOW's focus during the ERA campaign was on all aspects of economic discrimination and said that would continue. In her speech, she promised "direct action against the corporate powers who profit from sex discrimination."

In an interview, Goldsmith, the fourth of five children, said she was raised in "the kind of poverty that didn't have any light at the end of the tunnel." Her parents divorced when she was 8 and school, she said, "was the place I looked for approval and rewards, partly because my home life was so difficult."

A former college English professor, she is separated from her husband, an orchestra coordinator, and has a daughter, Rachael, 11.

The other presidential candidates, Jane Wells-Schooley, Mary M. McQuay, and Anne L. Lang, said they will continue to be active in NOW at the regional and local levels.