

Democratic Women's Forum

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April 21, 1969

Dear State Central Committee Member:

The Democratic Women's Forum, one of the oldest and most active Democratic women's clubs in California, wants to express outrage at the behavior of those in attendance at a meeting held in Sacramento on the weekend of April 11. Our sense of indignation is based on two facts:

a. The Democratic National Committeewoman was subjected to verbal abuse and shouts of derision from some in the audience who apparently have no regard for the provisions of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. They had neither the courtesy nor the maturity to listen to that which our National Committeewoman had to say. No one asked that those in the audience agree with or support Carmen Warschaw's views, but if our Democracy is to mean anything, it means that persons of opposing points of view are extended the privilege to state those views. We are continuously puzzled by those who demand their right to free speech, but who are quick to interfere with the free speech rights of others.

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This is all the more disturbing to us because the object of that harassment is a woman who led the liberal caucus at the Democratic National Convention in 1968 and who was appointed to help reform the Democratic Party throughout the nation to make it more responsive to and reflective of Democrats, young and old, rich and poor, and who come from all walks of life..

b. More distressing to us than the boos and catcalls which emanated from the throats of the disruptive ones was the silence of the Party leadership, who sat by and did nothing to restore order and to remind the delegates assembled that if the Party of Jefferson, Jackson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson stands for anything, it stands for free speech and fair play.

This abdication of responsibility is not only shameful, but dangerous.

The issue is not Carmen Warschaw. Last year it was Hubert Humphrey. In December of 1968, James Reston, Executive Editor of the New York Times was prevented from delivering a speech at New York University. In March of 1969, Wayne Morse was the target of a continuous barrage of heckling while he attempted to speak at Riverside Church in New York.

The pattern is clear -- unless those who hold leadership positions speak out against these anti-democratic forces and take effective measures to stop this growing intrusion of hoodlumism into the marketplace of ideas where views should be judged on their merits, then no one is safe.

Last year, Hubert Humphrey and James Reston ... This year, Wayne Morse and Carmen Warschaw. Will you be next?

Sincerely,

Hope M. Schechter

Hope Mendoza Schechter,
President

P. S. Please write and let us know how you feel about this.