

# NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, earlier this week, I met with Monica McWilliams of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. She and Pearl Sagar were the only two women participating in the Northern Ireland peace talks, so ably chaired by our former Senate colleague George Mitchell, when they began last June.

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition is composed of Unionist and Nationalist women who have united in common cause for peace and for an end to religious discrimination in Northern Ireland. The Coalition serves as an eloquent voice of civility in an often uncivil climate. It is especially important that women's voices continue to be heard in the search for an end to the violence and a peaceful future for Northern Ireland.

Monica McWilliams talks frankly and effectively about her commitment to inclusive peace talks and an end to the violence in Northern Ireland. Speaking about the intransigence of some in the talks, she has said, "We're naming them, we're blaming them, and we're shaming them." She has called on the IRA to restore its cease-fire, and called on the British Government to admit Sinn Fein to the peace talks when the cease-fire is restored.

Monica McWilliams and her colleagues in the Coalition have shown a great deal of courage in their involvement in the political process. Ms. McWilliams recently had her car vandalized, but as she bravely stated, "That's okay, as long as there's peace."

Mr. President, the Women's Coalition offers real hope for a better future for Northern Ireland. I ask unanimous consent that a recent article about the Coalition which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* in England be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the *Guardian*, Feb. 17, 1997]

WOMEN ALL TOGETHER NOW—IF THE POLITICAL TALKS IN NORTHERN IRELAND COLLAPSE, WILL THE WOMEN'S COALITION SURVIVE?

(By David Sharrock)

In its corridors of power, the political brokers of Northern Ireland's future have weighty issues on their minds. Here comes Monica McWilliams of the Women's Coalition, being tackled by one of Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists lieutenants. Constitutional reform? Bill of Rights? Cross-border bodies? Well no, actually. It's about the trouser suit she's wearing. Doesn't she realise that ladies ought to wear skirts? It's not easy being a woman politician in Ulster. All the main parties have them, but as the DUP's Iris Robinson opined just three years ago, their role has been that of the "ordinary housewife", more often in the kitchen brewing the tea than in the conference hall making policy.

Not any more. When John Major called an election for May 30 last year, a group of women got together and decided to enter the fray. But if the political talks at Stormont

collapse under the weight of a renewed terrorist onslaught while everyone awaits a new Government in Westminster, will the Women's Coalition survive? It has been a rocky nine months since the Stormont talks and the Separate Forum meetings began, in many respects a baptism of fire for these women with little experience of life at the political coalface. Perhaps for that reason, the Women's Coalition seems nowhere near as depressed as the other parties by the lack of progress.

A sense of humour helps. Monica McWilliams, a senior lecturer in social policy at the University of Ulster, and Pearl Sagar, an east Belfast community worker, need thick skins to survive the bearpit that is the forum, a body boycotted by Sinn Fein and the SDLP. Ten days ago, for instance, the DUP MP Rev. William McCrea told the Forum in his best Old Testament delivery: "As long as I live, I'll have a mission, which is to teach those two women to stand behind the loyal men of Ulster." So Sagar and McWilliams burst out singing *Stand By Your Man*. "He was raging," McWilliams laughs, adding: "You can be shocked by the abuse you get. I had to ask the chair to call order three times. At one stage, Ian Paisley Junior started mooing." May Blood knows why they are treated like this. "It's because we're making inroads, they're threatened by us. The strange thing is, I would know the DUP quite well, living and working on the Shankill. Now outside they're one thing, but I can meet them inside the talks and it's as if I didn't even exist. I can understand where they're coming from, but you can't be thinking like that now. They've got to realise that women have as much part to play here and I think this is what really bugs men." But it's not just the way they are treated by their political equals that irks the Women's Coalition. The media, they claim, aren't prepared to take them seriously either. Last month, Blood, McWilliams and Sagar were invited to Number Ten for talks with the prime minister. A half-hour meeting ran on for an hour and a quarter. But neither the BBC nor UTV in Northern Ireland covered the event. The *Belfast Telegraph* gave it 300 words.

"If it had been any of the other parties, they would have been all over them," says Kate Fearon, a 27-year-old think tank assistant director. "The problem is, we tend to get into the press only when we are being badly treated by the other parties and it's easy to reel off such stories." They are all frustrated at the lack of recognition they have received for the behind-the-scenes work going on at the talks. The confirmation of former US Senate leader George Mitchell as chairman, for example, in a marathon session running into the early hours of the morning.

The drafting of an "Order in Council" which could immediately enact the North report's proposals on regulating parades was another coup. Labour's Mo Mowlam commented: "If the Women's Coalition can produce draft legislation with such speed and with very little administrative back-up, why can't the Government?" Blood thinks a major spin-off from their party has been the promotion of women into public roles by the other parties. Brid Rodgers of the SDLP has a much higher profile now than 12 months ago, while women in Sinn Fein have always been active but rarely received the recognition they deserved. The loyalist Progressive Unionist Party even has its own women's executive.

"Iris Robinson's not saying 'I'm only a housewife' now. She regards and presents herself as a credible representative of her party. And she's good in the debates. You'll find a lot of women in the parties who may not admit it publicly but they are saying privately, thank God the coalition came into

being." The greatest good women can bring to the political talks, Fearon believes, is the ability to "untaint the concept of compromise, because we have always had to compromise. It's a dirty word to men." Compromise may be a long way down the road, but there's one thing the men in the other parties could do straight away to show they are reformable. "They've only recently been able to start calling us the Women's Coalition, before that it was always the Ladies' Coalition. They couldn't get their heads around it. The only time they use women was when they prefixed it with whingeing or whining."

## HONORING ARNOLD ARONSON ON HIS 86TH BIRTHDAY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I am here along with a number of my colleagues to honor Arnie Aronson on his 86th birthday, which was March 11. Arnie eminently deserves his reputation as one of the greatest founders of the civil rights movement.

Throughout his long and brilliant career, he has been a leader in every stage of the struggle for equal justice for all Americans. Over half a century ago, in 1941, he headed the Bureau of Jewish employment problems, a one-person agency in Chicago that investigated discrimination against Jews. There were no fax machines, no cellular phones, no computers then, no television sets—just one person with an iron will to eradicate discrimination.

Arnie recognized that the plague of discrimination would not be overcome unless victims of different races and religions joined together. As Arnie once said, "the struggle for civil rights cannot be won by any one group acting by or for itself alone, but only through a coalition of groups that share a common commitment to equal justice and equal opportunity for every American."

At that time, Arnie also formed the Chicago Council Against Religious and Racial Discrimination, a coalition of religious, labor, ethnic, civil rights, and social welfare organizations. His organization was immensely successful in addressing the problems of discrimination.

For over 30 years, from 1945 to 1976, Arnie was program director for the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, a coalition of national and local Jewish agencies. During this period, he worked on every major piece of civil rights legislation, and every major civil rights issue. In 1954, after the historic Supreme Court decision in *Brown versus Board of Education*, Arnie organized the Consultative Conference on Desegregation. This organization provided much-needed support to clergy members who were under fire for speaking out in favor of the decision. He coordinated the campaign that resulted in 1957 in the enactment of the first civil rights laws since reconstruction. He was also a leader in persuading Congress to enact the three great civil rights laws of the 1960's—the Public Accommodations Act of 1964,

the voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The list goes on and on.

Arnie was also a principal founder of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. To this day, the Leadership Conference is a powerful force for progress on civil rights precisely because of Arnie's influence and example in the 1950's. When others were seeking to divide the Nation with prejudice and bigotry, Arnie was uniting the Nation through hope and opportunity. The statement of purpose he prepared for the Leadership Conference has as much power today as it did when Arnie drafted it in 1967. The statement reads:

We are committed to an integrated, democratic, plural society in which every individual is accorded equal rights, equal opportunities and equal justice and in which every group is accorded an equal opportunity to enter fully in the general life of the society with mutual acceptance and regard for difference.

In 1985, Arnie became president of the Leadership Conference Education Fund. Under his guidance, the Fund has focused on working with young children to root out prejudice early and instill an appreciation for the diversity that is the Nation's greatest strength.

As we all know, the battle is not over. Civil rights is still the unfinished business of America. But because of Arnie Aronson, we have made substantial progress. Arnie is powerful proof that one person can make a difference in the lives of millions of our fellow citizens. It is an honor to join in wishing Arnie a very happy belated birthday.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to wish Arnie Aronson a happy belated 86th birthday and to commend him on his many achievements.

Arnie has been working for civil rights for over 50 years. He began at a time when help wanted ads openly specified "Gentile Only" or "Irish Need Not Apply." In the early 1940's he organized a coalition of religious, ethnic, civil rights, social welfare and labor organizations into the Chicago Council Against Religious and Racial Discrimination. By 1950 he was working with Roy Wilkins and many others to organize support for President Truman's proposed civil rights effort and engineered the combination of national organizations that created the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

He and the Leadership Conference were instrumental in the enactment of the first extensive Federal civil rights laws since Reconstruction, the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act, the fundamental Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the pivotal Fair Housing Act of 1968. They have been critical to our civil rights efforts at every turn ever since.

The Statement of Purpose he drafted for the Leadership Conference says a great deal about this extraordinary man and his dedication to the rights of all: "We are committed to an integrated, democratic, plural society in

which every individual is accorded equal rights, equal opportunities and equal justice and in which every group is accorded an equal opportunity to enter fully into the general life of the society with mutual acceptance and regard for difference."

Arnie went on to help organize clergy, churches and synagogues. He was a founding member of the National Urban Coalition and a charter member of Common Cause. In the last 10 years, while well in his 70's, he assumed the presidency of the Leadership Conference Education Fund and helped invigorate its educational and public service activities.

I am proud to call Arnie my friend and to take this opportunity to wish him a happy belated birthday.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Arnold Aronson, a man that has spent his life working for a goal that is dear to my heart; an integrated, democratic, plural society in which every individual is accorded equal rights, equal opportunities and equal justice.

Mr. Aronson began his work toward achieving his goal in a time when discrimination was overt and widespread in our country. Beginning in a one-person agency founded in 1941 to combat employment discrimination against people of the Jewish faith, Mr. Aronson eventually became the Secretary of the Leadership Council on Civil Rights, an organization dedicated to insuring equal rights to all segments of society.

Under his guidance the Leadership Council was able to plan, coordinate and facilitate the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. His ability to recognize the strength of building coalitions in support of a common legislative goal was instrumental in the passage of all of these bills, and this belief helped assure that the tough decisions that had to be made did not fracture the coalition.

Since 1985, Mr. Aronson has served as the President of the Leadership Conference Education Fund. Under his supervision, the Fund has increasingly focused on programs aimed at developing positive intergroup attitudes among young children. This focus has included a 10-year partnership with the Advertising Council of America aimed at developing public service announcements dealing with diversity and prejudice. As we all know, the children of today will be growing up into the teachers, doctors and Presidents of tomorrow. Discussing this topic with the children of today, should help us achieve our goal of equal rights, equal opportunities and equal justice for all.

Mr. President, while not a household name in the battle for civil rights, Arnold Aronson deserves our recognition and high praise for his years of hard work fighting for civil rights for all. I remain hopeful that in the foreseeable future we will be able to achieve our goal of equal rights, equal opportunities and equal justice for all.

I appreciate this opportunity to pay tribute to Arnold Aronson, and I yield the floor.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to make a few remarks concerning Arnold Aronson. For some Americans, civil rights is a cause. For others, civil rights has been a crusade. For Arnold Aronson, civil rights has been his life.

In his quiet, effective, persistent way, Arnold Aronson fought the battles that too many Americans simply talked about. It made no difference whether the victims were Jewish workers or Protestant pastors, black adults or white children, Arnold Aronson knew that there was only one American dream and that it applied to all Americans.

Arnold Aronson has over the last half century worked with all the big names in civil rights, Americans like A. Philip Randolph and Roy Wilkins. But Arnold Aronson should not be honored for the big names for whom he worked but for the countless millions who he worked so hard to help.

Arnold Aronson once said: "The struggle for civil rights cannot be won by any one group acting by or for itself alone but only through a coalition of groups that share a common commitment to equal justice and equal opportunity for every American."

For Arnold Aronson, opportunity knew no boundaries of age, race, or religion. Opportunity was simply a principle to be lived and practiced, consistently, lovingly, and most of all, together.

From his work with the Bureau on Jewish employment in Chicago in 1941 to his presidency of the Leadership Conference Education Fund for the past decade, Arnold Aronson has turned that principle of opportunity for all into his life's mission.

Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor one of the founders of our Nation's civil rights movement, Arnie Aronson on the occasion of his 86th birthday.

Mr. Aronson began his fight against discrimination in 1941. He headed the Bureau on Jewish Employment Problems in Chicago, Illinois. At that time discrimination against Jews was overt and widespread. Oftentimes help wanted ads stated "Gentile Only" need apply. Realizing that employment discrimination was a prevalent problem that affected people of all races, he organized the Chicago Council Against Religious and Racial Discrimination, a coalition of religious, labor, ethnic, civil rights, and social welfare agencies. As Council Secretary, Mr. Aronson directed the campaign that led to the first Municipal Fair Employment Practices Commission in the Nation.

He went on to form a statewide coalition, the Illinois Fair Employment Council which initiated the Illinois campaign for fair employment practices legislation. Due to his experience in the area of employment discrimination he served as a consultant to other states that sought similar legislation.

From 1945 until 1976, Mr. Aronson served as the Program Director for the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, a coalition of national and Jewish agencies. He helped develop policies and programs for Jewish agency involvement on issues of civil rights, civil liberties, immigration reform, church/state separation, Soviet Jewish emigration, and support for Israel.

In 1949, Mr. Aronson served as Secretary of the National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization. This group was formed to lobby in support of President Truman's proposed civil rights program. The Mobilization consisted of approximately 5,000 delegates from 32 states representing 58 national organizations. At the time, it was described as the "greatest mass lobby in point of numbers and geographical distribution" that ever came to Washington.

In 1950, Mr. Aronson helped found the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, one of the nation's leading civil rights organizations. He served as Secretary of the Conference from 1950 to 1980. In addition to being responsible for the overall administration of the Conference, he helped plan and coordinate the campaign that resulted in the enactment of the first civil rights laws since Reconstruction, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. During Mr. Aronson's tenure with the Conference, he helped contribute to some of the Conference's most productive years.

I could go on, Mr. President, for there is no shortage of achievements, but I think that these few examples are sufficient to illustrate what an extraordinary contribution Arnie Aronson has made to the civil rights of our Nation. It is no exaggeration to say that millions of men and women of all races—who may never know Arnie Aronson—have benefited directly from his dedication and personal sacrifice on behalf of civil and human rights. He has made a positive and constructive difference for our Nation. I am pleased to wish him a belated happy 86th birthday.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, it is time for attention to be given to Arnold Aronson. Few students in this country, when studying Civics in their high schools and elementary schools, learn of the name Aronson. When they read about the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988, and the Americans with Disability Act—each in their own right a high water mark for our Nation—they hear names like King, Kennedy, and Johnson—but not Aronson.

This is a lamentable omission for two reasons. First of all, none of these landmark pieces of legislation would ever have happened if it hadn't been for him. Second, school children across the Nation should be taught about the vital role non-elected individuals have

played in our society, and the indispensable role of grass roots efforts and coalition building—two pillars of our political structure exemplified by Arnie Aronson. Mr. President, this nation should understand that our landmark civil rights laws were born in our Nation's communities, not in the minds of our Presidents. The truth is that the leadership came from the bottom, so to speak; not the top. The initiative required for these fundamental shifts in our society were born in the hearts of thousands of individual citizens, each of whom reached out to their respective communities, and were strung together delicately and persistently by a few motivated and foresighted leaders like Arnie Aronson.

The reality is that Arnie has no one to blame but himself for his lack of notoriety. Arnie, as his friends and colleagues all know, shuns publicity with the same energy that some employ in its pursuit. But had Arnie been a self-promoter, then he never could have satisfied the complex interpersonal agendas necessary to organize so many disparate views, so many different goals, so many challenging attitudes. Arnie weaved together practically every major civil rights organization in the country into the grandparent of all coalitions, and perhaps still one of the most successful coalitions this century, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Some of the organizations that eventually found a voice under his umbrella were in their infancy at the time and now are household names; others had such distinct agendas that it is nothing short of miraculous that they were willing to lend their names to any unified cause. But Arnie is a master consensus builder, and he accomplished more than most people could imagine, by advancing the interests of others rather than himself, by the practically unknown arts of self-sacrifice and behind-the-scenes hard work.

By doing what he does, Arnie sets an example for us all. He has shown us what this Nation is capable of accomplishing, if it has the right goal in mind, and the will to reach that goal. He is an inspiration, because of his tolerance, his eagerness to hear out views that others might find offensive, his patience to find new, non-threatening ways of expressing strong opinions, and his ability to harness and channel tremendous energy in productive directions. There are millions of Americans enjoying lives and jobs and suffering far less discrimination than their parents endured, thanks to Arnie.

Mr. President, Arnie Aronson should be anything but a secret in this nation. He is a role model for us all.

#### PUBLIC CALL FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH COVERAGE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, last week, over one-half dozen groups representing millions of Americans spread out across Capitol Hill to lobby for leg-

islation that would guarantee every child health insurance. Their message was simple: it is wrong that America, alone among industrialized nations, doesn't assure health protection for its children.

We in Congress should heed their call and work together to erase this ignoble distinction.

Bolstering their message was the release last week of the Children's Defense Fund's 1997 edition of the "State of the Children Yearbook." The picture that report paints of the state of children's health care is bleak.

Every 48 seconds a child is born without insurance. One in every 7 children is uninsured for the entire year. Nearly 1 in every 3 is uninsured for at least one month during any year. Nine out of every 10 uninsured children is from a family where at least one parent works.

In announcing the results of this report, Marian Wright Edelman, CDF's President, succinctly sums up the situation. "Lack of health insurance is a problem we can solve right now and make a huge difference in many child lives. The issue is whether we care enough to build the political will to do it."

The effects of children not having insurance are well known to us all: Children without health coverage get less cost-effective preventive care, less basic care and more costly acute care when their illness is too advanced to ignore. Further, uninsured children are more likely to suffer preventable disease and have trouble learning.

How can we reverse these trends? Proposals to address this problem are well known to all of us and simply stated through the following principles. First, make health coverage available to every uninsured child through age 18 and every uninsured pregnant woman. Second, make coverage genuinely affordable to all families. Third, give children access to coverage that provides for the full range of health care that children need. Finally, build on—do not replace—the current employer-based system, Medicaid and public-private initiatives in the States. Advocates of guaranteeing all children health insurance are telling us to act bipartisanship. And there is ample precedent for bipartisan action on behalf of children's health. Almost every health reform bill, Democratic and Republican alike, introduced in the 103d Congress provided assistance to low-income Americans to purchase private health coverage—most had special assistance for the cost of children's coverage.

In other words, we have agreed in the past that children who fall through the cracks deserve proper health coverage.

Children don't vote; they do not sit on corporate boards; and they cannot argue their case on the Senate floor. But we have a vote. We can take it upon ourselves to improve the lives of our children and their families by making our nation's children our top priority.