

Democracy at Home

When women put on their smartest thinking caps, dress up as well-informed citizens, law-makers take notice. Effective political action often results.

That is what 25 years' devotion to the cause of alert citizenship has proved to the National League of Women Voters. Not the rabble-rousing type of soapbox ranters, these women pride themselves in their quiet, thoughtful approach to a better working democracy.

Since a group of newly enfranchised women first hit on the non-partisan discussion method in pre-election candidate forums as a way of preparing for voting, people have become increasingly aware of league work.

Before he knew it, some shocked husband found his wife intelligently sounding her views on civil service, poll tax abolition or maternal and child welfare. And during the war many a man picked up a league pamphlet around the house, briefed himself on lend-lease, price control, Bretton Woods and the United Nations Charter.

League members have never espoused a complete program of government action. Rather, they act as community vitamin B pills, concentrate their fire on a few important measures.

Grass Roots. Last fall, some 62,000 women of various political colorings, began talking over issues they wanted to study and promote in the next two years. From all these ideas, the national board drew up leading action items that would represent majority opinion, presented them to the national convention for final approval.

There, a few weeks ago 500 delegates voted unanimously to put the atomic energy question No. 1 on their work list, followed by: (2) U.S. responsibility to the United Nations; (3) streamlining Congress; (4) preventing inflation and deflation; (5) stimulating production and employment.

General ideas falling under these main topics that members will work for include return to rationing, continuation of price and rent control, loans to foreign countries, Federal housing.

Practical. Back home in 550 communities, they'll work first for membership understanding.

With help of literature written by Washington staff members they canvass all points of view, sift out the facts. Once they're prepared to talk intelligently, they may enlist help of various men's groups, persuade Congressmen to introduce legislation, follow up with letters. Lastly, they marshal public support with leaflets and broadsides, public meetings, exhibits.

Their sights are on the kind of woman who wonders how peace can be preserved, how the atom bomb can be controlled—yet doesn't know what to do about it.

The league helps her think out the answer, see how government wheels go round. That way, she'll soon be making wheels go round herself—furnishing power for a dynamic democracy.