

The original documents are located in Box 21, folder “2/76 McCall's "How much should a first lady say"” of the Betty Ford Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Right Now

FEBRUARY 1976

With certain unforgettable exceptions—Eleanor Roosevelt was one—the wives of Presidents have never said much, especially on sensitive subjects. Then the warm, voluble and unintimidated Mrs. Gerald Ford let candor and plain talk out of the closet. She spoke her mind on some of the most significant social issues confronting women and their families, from the E R A to abortion, marijuana and premarital sex.

Betty Ford enthusiastically supports the Equal Rights

of responses. Jane Muskie and Margaret Sanford expressed admiration of Betty Ford but did not wish to comment on the positions she has taken. "I respect her right to express her own opinions," Mrs. Muskie said. "But each First Lady must decide for herself . . . how she

**HOW MUCH
SHOULD A
FIRST LADY
SAY?**

should be debated by the candidates who seek to serve the nation. It is a damaging diversion to involve the views of wives on relatively secondary matters."

Nancy Reagan did not agree that issues like abortion and teenage sexuality were relatively secondary

sticker, "If it feels good, do it," may sound fine, but what if it makes someone feel good to go around bopping his neighbors over the head with a club?"

"I have always been a very private person," Beryl Bentsen answered. "I really believe personal relationships should be dealt with within the family and in the greatest of confidence." After expressing this implied disagreement with Betty Ford, Mrs. Bentsen noted that "I am a supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment."



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