

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions for the film 1977 National Women's Conference: A Question of Choices

*A Question of Choices* documents the National Women's Conference held at the Sam Houston Coliseum in Houston from November 18-21, 1977. Broadcast nationwide on the last day of the conference, this film describes the conference agenda, leaders, caucuses, and passed resolutions, as well as the protest against the conference at the Astro Arena. The first series of questions can be answered while viewing the film. The questions in "Thinking After" require additional research or critical thinking.

1. What are the reasons given at the beginning of the documentary for why the conference was organized?
2. When and where was the first women's rights conference held?
3. Why did international delegates attend the conference?
4. The narrator states that the overriding concern of conference attendees was that women were not valued in society. This was explained through a comparison showing the level of representation of women in government, the wage differences between men and women, and the limited availability of childcare. Fill in the charts below with the statistics given:

**Representation of Women in Elected Positions**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage of women in elected positions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage of seats in the House of Representatives held by women
- \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage of seats in the Senate held by women
- \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage of seats in state legislatures held by women

**Comparative Wages**

- \_\_\_\_\_ men - WHITE - women \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ men - BLACK - women \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ men - HISPANIC - women \_\_\_\_\_

**Childcare**

Childcare availability for children under 6: \_\_\_\_\_

Why is each of these particular issues a challenge and/or problem?

5. Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment was a key issue going into the conference. At the time of the conference, how many states had ratified the amendment?
  
6. The opening addresses focus on several themes. What do some of the speakers emphasize?
  
7. After the opening addresses, the delegates broke into dozens of caucuses that met around the clock. What was the function of the caucuses?

8. In the video, one of the delegates states that she does not believe that any group in the nation that will be totally happy with the National Plan of Action, but that they should not open that “Pandora’s Box” because they would end up with nothing. What did she mean by this statement?
  
9. What are some of the reasons given for why the delegates attended?
  
10. Some attendees are concerned that the delegates do not represent a “true cross-section” of the country. How do they think this could have been improved?
  
11. Each plank of the national plan of action has to move through a process to be ratified by the conference and included in the National Plan of Action. What steps do you see during the process for the childcare plank?
  
12. Provide a definition for *plank*.
  
13. When the plank to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment comes to the floor for debate, delegates try to amend the plank. What change are these delegates asking for? Why might this request be good or bad?

14. When the conference began, the draft of the National Plan of Action included a plank to address the issues of minority women, but many minority caucuses found the plank to be inadequate. What groups came together to revise the plank and what were some of the issues they said needed to be included?
  
15. Another conference held in the Houston Astrodome on the same weekend was organized to protest the National Women's Conference. What were their concerns about the National Women's Conference?
  
16. During the adoption of the official position of the opposition conference, the speaker addresses the platform statement to "Mister Lawmakers." What do you think this indicates?

**Thinking after:**

What exactly did the Equal Rights Amendment call for?

The conference closed without the adoption of a framework for measuring success or carrying the platform forward. Why would it be important to have a clear, attainable plan to accomplish the goals of the conference? Who would need to be involved in deciding how to accomplish the conference goals and determining if those conference goals were met? What do YOU think the appropriate next steps would have been to implement the National Plan of Action?