

NINTH JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

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FAX COVER SHEET

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TIME 3:35 pm  
3:45 p.m.

TO: Lawrence Beaupres / ~~Art H. Hoffman~~

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This fax consists of a total of 4 pages, including this cover sheet. If you do not receive the indicated number of pages, or if there is a question as to the transmittal, please call (914) 997-1677.

FROM: DLS

MESSAGE: Re: your mailed letter of 10/31/91

Please call if you are interested in setting up an appointment to review my documentation.

+ let me know when we can expect to see this letter in print.

I do not consent to any editing changes without my consent.  
Thank you. DLS Ex "K"

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Nancy Keefe's October 24, 1991 column is the latest example of Gannett's irresponsible journalism and persistent character assassination. Defamatory comments about me were gratuitously made the focus of a column supposedly reporting on a 2-1/2 hour program on "gender bias". I was not present at the program to defend myself--and Ms. Keefe did not even bother to give me an opportunity to comment prior to her publication of Evelyn Breslaw's insupportable lies and distortions.

This serious breach of journalistic responsibility has been fully condoned by Gannett's management. They claim that Ms. Keefe's column is one of "opinion"--as if opinion not based on fact is worthy of publication. Gannett has refused to assign a reporter to examine the unassailable documentary proof and write a proper story--or even to allow me sufficient space to write one.

Ms. Keefe's reference to Justice Samuel G. Fredman as "one of the enlightened ones" likewise highlights Gannett's baseless, biased reporting. Ms. Keefe admitted to me that she never witnessed the way Justice Fredman presided over the Breslaw case--the best case study showing why politicians are a menace on the bench: they have no compunctions about ignoring the facts and the law in following the politician's golden rule--"reward your friends and punish your enemies".

Ms. Keefe tellingly omitted any reference to a major cause of the women's suffering set forth at that meeting by a

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member of the audience: the 1989 Three Year Cross-Endorsements Deal. That Deal, of which Sam Fredman was identified as the architect, traded seven judgeships, including the one to which he himself was elected without contest. As one of its terms, the Deal created protracted vacancies through required judicial resignations. Neither Justice Fredman nor the other parties to the Deal were concerned about the chaotic effect that treating judgeships as "musical chairs" would have on the courts in the Ninth Judicial District--or on the lives and fortunes of litigants such as those present at the program who rightfully complained of the long delays in the trials of their divorce actions and of the attendant expense.

Ms. Keefe's gratuitous reference to my suspension was not balanced by my documentable contention that it was not only unjustified, but a retaliation for having brought a lawsuit to challenge the Deal, which I handled pro bono for the Ninth Judicial Committee.

It is ironic that Sam Fredman and Sondra Miller--now judges sitting on the dais at the program covered by Ms. Keefe--should have presided. As practitioners, they both actively blocked legislation in 1980 which would have entitled women to a "presumption of equality" in the distribution of marital assets, thereby substantially reducing the time and cost involved in divorce litigation. That legislation was vigorously opposed by a powerful clique of the matrimonial bar--led by Sam Fredman and Sondra Miller--who instead supported a competing bill sponsored

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by then Assemblyman, now Supreme Court Judge, Gordon Burrows.

At that time, I was counsel to the National Council of Women of the United States and Special Counsel to the New York State National Organization for Women on the divorce issue, waging a state-wide campaign against passage of the Burrows bill. In so doing, I earned the enmity of its supporters, when I predicted it would be a "bonanza" for lawyers, appraisers, and accountants and do grievous harm to women. The Burrows bill became law, to the detriment of divorcing wives who now have to prove in court their entitlement to any share of the marital assets.

The record shows that my predictions and the vigorous positions I took in defending women's interests have been validated by time. Had Ms. Keefe bothered to do the slightest research before putting her baseless opinions into print, the public would know precisely where the blame lies for the catastrophic effects complained of by women speaking out at the October 22nd forum.

  
DORIS L. SASSOWER

The writer is Director of the Ninth Judicial Committee, a citizens' group of lawyers and laypersons, working to improve the quality of the judiciary in the Ninth Judicial District.