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Conference Report: Politics and Culture of the Great Plains

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CONFERENCE REPORT

Politics and Culture of the Great Plains

The Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln sponsored its 20th Annual Symposium, "Politics and Culture of the Great Plains," April 11-13, 1996, in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Symposium was co-chaired by Professor John Hibbing, Department of Political Science, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Professor John Peters, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Tennessee-Knoxville. The Symposium was conducted under the leadership of Professor Ann Mari May, Acting Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. More than 500 people were involved in the various activities and events of the Symposium.

To open the Symposium, Morris Dees, Chief Trial Counsel and Chair of the Executive Committee for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, delivered the keynote address in which he discussed the politics of hate in the heartland, expressed great concern over the increasing number of hate groups in America and urged the audience to fight hate with tolerance and love.

During the three-day Symposium, paper sessions included such topics as populism on the American and Canadian Plains, the political rights of native peoples in the U.S. and in Canada, women's suffrage, the future of the Plains, William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, women and politics, U.S. and Canadian education issues, the Plains economy, Robert Spire, electoral politics, and social justice. Look for articles selected from papers presented at the Symposium in upcoming issues of *Great Plains Research* and *Great Plains Quarterly*!

Peter H. Argersinger, Presidential Research Professor of History at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, opened the sessions with a plenary talk on "Constraints and Decisions: The Interactive Politics of Western Populism." Harriet Woods, former Missouri Lt. Governor, immediate past president of the National Women's Political Caucus, and current vice-chair of the Women's Vote Project '96, spoke on "Women, Politics, Power and the Plains" at the luncheon banquet. The Friday evening entertainment, held in the Old Senate Chambers of the Nebraska State Capitol, featured Nebraska State Senator David Landis portraying the late Nebraska U.S. Senator George Norris. The Friday evening program also featured the "1914 Women's Mock Parliament" in which several Nebraska State Senators joined Randi Warne,

Professor of Religious Studies and Director of Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, in a play about Canadian women's suffrage. The Symposium concluded with a tour of Fairview, the Lincoln home of William Jennings and Mary Baird Bryan, and a showing of the film, "Northern Lights," which depicts the farmers' political movement in North Dakota during the years before World War I.

The 1997 Symposium topic will be "Literatures of the Great Plains." The Symposium is scheduled to be held April 3-5, 1997, in Lincoln, Nebraska. For more information contact: Professor Frances W. Kaye, Center for Great Plains Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1213 Oldfather Hall, P.O. Box 880314, Lincoln, NE 68588-0314.

Submitted by Deb Forssman
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