

MAINSTREAMING GENDER CONCERNs: ASPECTS OF COMPLIANCE, RESISTANCE AND NEGOTIATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

Prompted by the declaration of 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly as International Women's Year and subsequently the International Decade for Women (1976-1985), a number of governments have ratified international conventions regarding women, revised parts of their legal codes, passed new legislation or established departments or 'women's desks', as ways of signalling their acknowledgement of the importance of women's issues. In some instances such public, official acknowledgement may have been a strategic move, in terms of accessing international funds which have been increasingly made available for women-specific activities and projects.¹ The establishment of 'national machineries' features as one major achievement of governments during the Decade (Nijeholt 1991). Set up in about 140 countries, these 'machineries' are purported to provide a structure for policy formulation, programme implementation, monitoring of women's status, and research and training, often with the explicit task of integrating women in development (UN 1987: 20). However, while structures for mainstreaming gender concerns have been put in place, achievements towards the real integration of women in the process of development have been limited (Gordon 1985). Despite the fact that integration of women in development is officially sanctioned by many governments, such machineries constantly face the problems of insufficient funds, understaffing, and marginality to the mainstream work of the institution concerned (Newland 1991: 124; Moser 1991: 84). To uncover the reasons behind these problems, we need to look at the internal functioning of state development bureaucracies.

This article examines the institutional structure and contexts within which WID policy making takes place in the Philippines, the agents involved, and their practices. Drawing on the experience in the labour and employment sector, it is argued that

while a government may appear to be successful in mainstreaming gender concerns in development, and may well be seen as a model for gender-responsive planning and policy making, the situation may be illusory. As we shall see, there are internal inconsistencies regarding the issue of gender within a particular state and its development bureaucracy. While these inconsistencies are a barrier to the goal of promoting women's interests in development, they also represent spaces for manoeuvring and strategizing within a bureaucratic system to push as much as possible for attention to gender issues.

The first part of the article provides an overview of Philippine policy on women and development, including its institutional framework. The second part, concentrating on the labour and employment sector, scrutinizes the major policies on women and development in the light of practice, to unravel patterns of acceptance or resistance of particular policy makers to the officially sanctioned 'mainstreaming of gender concerns'. Strategies of intervention by a group of female bureaucrats are also discussed.

The discussion draws heavily on my working knowledge and experience as a former senior civil servant in the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment (henceforth referred to either as 'DOLE' or the 'Department'). Ten of my 13 years in the Department were spent as Division Chief of the Standards Division in the Bureau of Women and Young Workers, the nucleus organization for policy and programme development for working women and youth. Part of my responsibility was as Chairperson of the Technical Working Group for institutionalizing or mainstreaming gender concerns in the labour and employment sector. This period of access to high level discussions and meetings equipped me with sufficient working knowledge to be able to reconstruct 'facts' concerning the subject of this article which are not found on official

¹ This possibility is not far-fetched, especially in the context of developing countries where domestic resources are scarce and hence where accessing external resources are a premium.

Nevertheless, suggesting that such action may be a calculated one is not to undervalue the benefits of such action to women in these countries.

records. Official records necessarily and not unexpectedly reflect official views and interpretation. As they rarely report all that transpired in discussions or the real reasons behind decision making they do not necessarily constitute the full facts.

2 WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES: NATIONAL POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In the Philippines, the broad policies regarding women are embodied in the Constitution. Regardless of sex, age, race or creed, equality in employment, education and other social arenas is a basic provision of the Philippine Constitution. However, equality between men and women, together with women's maternal and economic roles and their special health needs, feature in the amended Constitution (1987) as explicit stipulations.

To give effect to the Constitutional mandate regarding women, five major national instruments are particularly important, namely:

- 1 the 1985 Labour Code of the Philippines as Amended,²
- 2 1987 Executive Order 227 (The New Family Code of the Philippines),
- 3 1989 Executive Order 348 (Approving and adopting the Philippine Development Plan for Women 1986-1992),
- 4 1992 Republic Act 7192 (Promoting the Integration of Women as Full and Equal Partners of Men in Development and Nation Building and for Other Purposes), and
- 5 most recently, the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2000 currently being prepared.³

Two major government institutions, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and the Bureau of Women and Young Workers of the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment,

are particularly relevant in so far as official policies for women in the labour and employment sector are concerned.

In direct response to the declaration of the International Women's Year, the Philippine government created by virtue of Presidential Decree No 633 the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) in 1975. The NCRFW is the national coordinating body for policies and programmes on women initiated by both governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Philippines. However, it has no direct responsibility in policy making or service delivery for women since these processes remain to be undertaken in each of the various government departments according to their specific area of responsibility.

NCRFW's history is interesting because it shows both continuities and discontinuities. Since its creation in 1975, it has been given the mandate of working 'towards the full integration of women for social, economic, political, and cultural development at national, regional and international levels on a basis of equality with men'.⁴ Regardless of the government in power, it has remained under the Office of the President, a factor of strategic importance both in promoting the Commission's high visibility and enabling it to influence the government at the highest level. Similarly, its coordinating function between the governmental and non-governmental sectors has been maintained.

However, changes in its leadership have been quite extensive, with the leadership's composition during the Marcos administration contrasting with that since 1986 when Aquino became President. Prior to 1986, the Commissioners were mostly drawn from the government, with a minority from selected women's organizations. As those drawn from the government often occupied ministerial posts, this method of appointment of leaders was seen as an effective way of obtaining institutional commitment to women's issues. From 1986, the NCRFW's leadership gradually changed, moving towards greater representation of the non governmental sector in its Board of Commissioners.⁵ The change has had

² The 1985 Labour Code underwent extensive review in 1993.

³ During my visit to the Philippines in July-August 1994, the Bureau of Women and Young Workers was in the process of coordinating within the Department of Labour the preparation of the chapter of the Plan specific to the Department's concern.

⁴ Philippine Development Plan for Women 1989-1992: 6.

⁵ I am using the term 'non-governmental sector' to encompass all groups (including the academe and trade union) other than the government.

the advantage of providing the sector with a more solid platform to affect government policies and programmes on women, though to my knowledge its effect on the commitment of government ministries has not been publicly discussed.

Mainly functioning as a central data base for women and less effectively as a coordinating body during the Marcos era,⁶ the thrust of NCRFW's work since 1986 has placed a greater emphasis on influencing policy and establishing an institutional mechanism (i.e., 'national machinery') for women and development.⁷ At the departmental level, WID institutionalization is attempted through establishing Focal Points and Technical Working Groups. The Focal Point and the Technical Working Group act as a nucleus and a pressure body in each government department for integrating women's concerns in its planning, policy making and programme implementation.

The Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) has responsibility for all workers. Irrespective of the government in power, labour policies and programmes have three major objectives: (1) promoting gainful employment opportunities and optimizing the development and utilization of the country's human resources, (2) advancing workers' welfare and protection through providing just and humane working conditions and terms of employment, and (3) maintaining industrial peace by promoting harmonious, equitable and stable employment relations that assure equal protection for the rights of all concerned parties. With DOLE's programmes and services being grouped according to these areas⁸, its concern for women workers can

be best described as a department-wide responsibility with the Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW) taking the lead role in addressing the group's particular requirements.

Unlike the NCRFW, BWYW's origin was much earlier than the Decade. It was set up in 1960⁹ and since then has been one of the staff agencies¹⁰ of DOLE. Historically, the BWYW has always had a woman director;¹¹ its staff have been predominantly women.

Playing an advisory role to the Department Secretary, it has prime responsibility for women and young workers which it carries out according to the policy thrusts of the Department. Its main activities include standards setting and review, policy and programme development and research, thus requiring it to relate closely with other governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with women and young workers. With the establishment of the WID Focal Point and Technical Working Group in the Department in 1990, the BWYW additionally provides both a link and support to these structures in promoting the mainstreaming of gender concerns in the labour and employment sector. In short, the BWYW is the institution within the Department which ensures as much as possible that the specific needs of women workers are articulated both within and outside the Department.

3 WID IN THE LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT SECTOR: POLICY VIS-À-VIS PRACTICES

Strictly speaking, a WID policy – nationally and specific to the labour and employment sector –

⁶ For a discussion of factors contributing to the ineffectiveness of the NCRFW as a national coordinating body during the Marcos era, see del Rosario 1987.

⁷ National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women – Office of the President Term Report 1986-1992.

⁸ The various bureaux and agencies of DOLE are 'clustered' by programme area, function and nature of operations. There are 6 clusters in total: 3 according to programme thrusts of the Department (i.e., employment, workers' protection and welfare, and industrial relations) and the remaining three according to nature of operations and function within the Department's organizational structure (i.e., regional operations, policy and international affairs, and management services). Each of the 3 clusters according to the Department's programme thrusts is headed by an Under-secretary. All the other clusters are headed by an Assistant Secretary. Within this organizational structure, the Bureau of Women and Young Workers is under the direct responsibility of the Under-secretary for the Workers' Protection and Welfare cluster.

⁹ BWYW started as the Women and Child Labour Section in March 1925 under the then Philippine Bureau of Labour. After three decades, the section was expanded and elevated to become the Women and Minors Division of the Bureau of Labour Standards. In 1960, it was further elevated to the status of a bureau.

¹⁰ A 'staff agency' such as the Bureau of Women and Young Workers, provides staff support to the regional offices in terms of technical supervision and policy direction. 'Line agencies' typified by the regional offices, are responsible for implementing labour policies and programmes and delivering direct labour services to clientele.

¹¹ On one hand, the fact that the BWYW has always been headed by a woman is a matter to celebrate. On the other, this fact shows the persistent belief that women's issues are rightly women's affairs only. This attitude is reflected in other ways, e.g., male officials expecting only female officials to get involved in family planning programmes of the Department whereas male officials expect to be involved in matters concerning industrial relations, as a high-ranking female official has complained to me.

existed long before the promulgation of the Philippine Development Plan for Women 1989-1992 (henceforth referred to either as 'Plan' or 'PDPW') in 1989. As mentioned earlier, policy directions regarding working women emanate from the Philippine Constitution as well as other national policy and legal instruments. In addition and similar to other areas of policy making, international instruments, such as UN and ILO conventions have had a big impact, with the Philippines displaying a record of ratification which appears better than that of some industrialized countries.

Aside from these macro policies, the issues and problems, development goals, policies and strategies, programmes and targets for women specific to each of the various sectors of society and the economy are laid out in the comprehensive document, the Philippine Development Plan for Women 1989-1992. The Plan was intended to 'serve as ... a companion ... [to] the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan to ensure the mainstreaming of women in development'.¹² Featuring additional chapters on migration, prostitution, violence against women, media, and arts and culture, the Plan can be said to be more comprehensive than the main, national plan and is in fact intended to be 'the government's major reference or 'Bible' on gender and development'.¹³ With respect to women in the labour sector, the PDPW is purported to act as an encompassing guide for policy making, in the same way that it should be used as a guide by other government departments.

Similar to situations in many other countries, policy making for women in the labour and employment sector historically reflects the conflicting values of equality (with male workers) and special protection. This largely stems from unresolved arguments and indecision within and between pressure groups and government agencies over certain aspects of women's employment. Prioritized themes of international development agencies at particular junctures contribute further to such indecision.

The Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) responds to the provisions of the PDPW through two packages of programmes. These packages

¹² S. Collas-Monsod (then Director-General, Philippine National Economic and Development Authority) 'Foreword' Philippine Development Plan for Women, 1989-1992.

¹³ National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women - Office of the President Term Report 1986-1992: 11.

comprise (a) DOLE's regular programmes and (b) those planned and implemented by its various agencies alongside the four priority gender issues identified in the labour and employment sector. The former type of programmes adopt an 'integrated approach towards its clientele', an official phraseology which is a euphemism for women's issues being subsumed to men's issues. Whether before or after the PDPW, such programmes are carried out along the three major policy objectives of the Department and are the primary focus of efforts aimed at mainstreaming gender concerns. The latter type of programmes, compositely termed as the 'four priority gender issues', represent, in reality, 'women only' programmes, or those with sharper focus on women workers. They address migration, homework, equal employment opportunity and sexual harassment.

Since 1990, efforts to mainstream gender concerns in the labour and employment sector have been done within the functionally related structures of the Focal Point and the Technical Working Group, with the Bureau of Women and Young Workers acting as a linking and support organization. Under the instigation of the NCRFW, both the Focal Point and the Technical Working Group were created in 1990 to facilitate the implementation of the provisions of the PDPW concerned with the labour and employment sector. Their membership is overwhelmingly female. Since their creation, both structures have been reconstituted and reorganized in order to be 'more responsive to the changing needs of the sector'.¹⁴ The most recent reorganization took place in February 1994, shortly after the submission of DOLE's First Report of Compliance to R.A. 7192. During the reorganization, a short-term 'Institutionalization Plan for Mainstreaming Gender Concerns'¹⁵ was adopted and changes introduced to membership, both in terms of composition and number, although its predominantly female profile was maintained. It is notable that as a result of the latest reorganization, the Philippine Secretary of Labour and Employment no longer chairs the Focal Point. This change can be seen as a shift of this structure from being the ultimate policy making body for gender concerns within the Department to that of merely assuming an advisory

¹⁴ Department of Labour and Employment, 1993, 'Highlights: First Report in Compliance to R.A. 7192' Manila: DOLE.

¹⁵ DOLE Administrative Order 86, Series of 1994 Amending Further Administrative Order No. 164 (s 1990) as amended by Administrative Order No. 103 (s 1992) on the Creation of the DOLE Focal Point and Technical Working Group.

role in such matters (very similar to the role of the BWYW within the Department).

By comparison with other government departments, DOLE has had one of the 'most active and successful' Focal Points and Technical Working Groups in the country.¹⁶ It was also the first government department to embark on the pilot implementation of the PDPW. Nevertheless, in its 1993 report to the Philippine Congress, it states 'clearly the ultimate goal of mainstreaming gender concerns in the sector still has a long way to go' and identifies the major obstacles to the full achievement of this goal. The obstacles stated in the report are: (a) budgetary constraints, (b) inadequate sensitivity towards gender issues, on the part of both the DOLE's clients and its internal staff, and (c) an insufficiently disaggregated data base which makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to assess the differential impact on women and men of policies, programmes and projects pursued by various bureaux, offices and agencies of the Department of Labour and Employment. Many of these problems are not restricted to the Department of Labour and Employment or to the Philippines but apply widely in many contexts, including those within international agencies purporting to promote women and development (Rathgeber 1990; Newland 1991; Nijeholt 1991). However, it is the unstated aspects of these problems which are equally crucial.

First, the problem of budget is more complex than simply a lack of financial resources. Similar to many other areas of corporate planning in government bureaucracies, major decisions especially on resource allocation are largely influenced by attitudes of policy makers towards particular programmes. In addition, as found in other situations, the question of personalities inevitably becomes a factor intruding on decision making, with a particular bureau judged to be only as effective as the credibility of its director. It is notable that the openly and widely acknowledged concern for gender issues within DOLE does not match the budget allocation for the BWYW which remains one of the lowest within the Department. The imbalance of resource allocation

for the various bureaux reflects the low priority order occupied by programmes intended for women in comparison with other programmes, such as industrial relations (del Rosario 1987).¹⁷ In fact, since the beginning, the WID institutionalization programme of DOLE has been mainly financed by external, notably foreign, sources. In early 1993 when the need for allocating funds for women-specific projects was communicated to heads of the different bureaux and branches of the Department, the announcement was generally met with a strong resistance, although during individual discussions with heads of bureaux the majority emphasized that they were 'supportive of mainstreaming gender concerns'.

The resistance of agency heads to allocating resources transcends finance, with a similar, though unspoken and much more discreet, opposition displayed to mobilizing human resources. Heads of agencies showed a good record of compliance to the required agency participation in gender-related activities and, without exception, appointed a regular representative to the Technical Working Group, especially as the instruction memorandum emanated from the Secretary of Labour and Employment who also chaired the Focal Point.¹⁸ However, when participation required more than attending meetings (e.g., report preparation, involvement in research, etc.) problems would arise. The agency representative would become overworked, having to cope with her responsibilities in the Technical Working Group and 'regular' responsibilities in her own agency. This is because, in the majority of cases reported to the Technical Working Group, agency heads tend to make a clear distinction between the work for WID institutionalization and 'regular' activities. In short, gender concerns are not seen as being integral to an agency's regular work, and this could well be the reason why agency heads resist the idea of allocating funds for women-specific or women-related activities from their regular budget. Thus, as observed in other similar situations, the BWYW and the WID institutionalization programme in general are under-resourced, which can be taken as a serious indication of a lack

¹⁶ Personal communication with several members of NCRFW staff, 1993.

¹⁷ The smallness of the BWYW's share of the Department's regular budget has made it an imperative for the BWYW to access external funds such as through the NCRFW to finance activities in connection with its role as Secretariat to the Focal Point and the Technical Working Group.

¹⁸ Who originates the instruction has assumed a prime importance in terms of obtaining compliance, especially in matters relating to gender. This is a major reason why I think it will be interesting to see the effect of the change of top leadership of the DOLE Focal Point. The current Chairperson is the Under-Secretary in charge of the Workers' Welfare and Protection cluster who, strictly speaking, has no direct clout over the other clusters in the Department.

of real commitment on the part of many bureaucrats towards gender issues.

Second, there are differing reactions, especially of male officials, to the problem of inadequate gender-sensitivity. There seems to be an easy acceptance that the problem exists as it relates to the Department's clientele but there is a very reluctant admission, if at all, of the existence of the problem in so far as DOLE officials are concerned. This difference in mind-set has engendered different responses to current and proposed measures to promote gender-sensitivity.

To promote gender-responsive planning in the Department, various types of gender-sensitivity training are given to its personnel.¹⁹ It is notable that when a gender-sensitivity session was targeted particularly at DOLE officials, silent resistance was quite overwhelming, as evidenced in the extremely poor attendance of senior male officials.²⁰ The few who were in attendance often displayed a low level of interest in the session. Some even made a snide remark about the topic of the session.

However, when the target of measures was the clientele, the agency heads tended to be more supportive of implementing such measures. In fact the examples of activities aimed at promoting gender-sensitivity of DOLE clients provided below were implemented with the approval of agency heads, in lieu of conducting gender-sensitivity sessions for their own personnel.

The problem arguably runs deeper and has much to do with the basic assumptions informing both the organization within which policy making takes place and the policy makers. As Newland points out, 'Development policies are set within male-dominated institutions which still see WID as an instrument rather than a goal in itself: a means for lower population growth, higher economic

growth or more successful political mobilization' (1991: 130). Persistent sexist attitudes and beliefs especially of some top-level policy makers, such as those noted earlier in this article, further exacerbate the problem. Often, the end results are policies which subsume women workers' needs under those of male workers' or, if 'women's interests' are considered, policies that singly identify women with their mother/homemaker role, thereby invalidating their specific needs and interests as workers *vis-a-vis* their family responsibilities.

For example, income-generating activities for women are promoted. Yet, a redefinition of sex roles to alleviate the resulting double burden of work and family responsibilities on women, is hardly given the priority and emphasis it deserves, especially given the Department's stated concern with the welfare of workers. The latter policy is thus contradicted, unless the issue of reorientation of sex roles is taken seriously during the design and implementation of policies geared towards employment promotion.²¹ The concept of women's work is narrowly restricted as such work largely remains to be viewed as separate from women's family life and the wider socio-cultural circumstances. The effect is to ignore women's multiple identities and interests as mothers, wives, factory workers, homebased workers and so on. Given the narrow conceptualization of women's work, issues such as prostitution and the mail-order bride phenomenon have not been seen as legitimate concerns of the Department (del Rosario 1994).²²

Some of the above issues have been addressed by the BWYW during the review of Labour Code provisions concerning women. The rigidity or resilience of state masculinism²³ embodied in these issues is put to a test as the BWYW awaits the action of the Labour Code Review and Drafting Committee on such proposals.

¹⁹ As of May 1993, more than 200 members of DOLE staff belonging to various grades (to the inclusion of ministerial-level officials) have been recipients of gender-sensitivity training (GST), training on gender-responsive planning and other forms of in-house gender awareness programme within the Department.

²⁰ These are my personal observations during a gender-sensitivity session conducted for top DOLE officials. By comparison with sex distribution of attendance in Departmental meetings/workshops on other issues (e.g., industrial relations, employment), it is notable that few male top officials were in attendance in such session, reflecting lack of interest, possibly lack of commitment, to women's issues.

²¹ Contradictions in policies emanating from different branches of the government are also a problem. For examples and discussion of this problem, see del Rosario, 1987.

²² In the case of mail-order brides, they are ironically seen as victims yet are the ones controlled through restrictive and discriminatory policies and legislation.

²³ 'State masculinism' is a term borrowed from Brown, 1992. Emphasizing the non-unitary nature of state power and male dominance, Brown encourages us to understand state masculinism as one operating through an intricate grid of often conflicting strategies, technologies and discourses of power.

Third and finally, the absence of a gender-specific data base stems from the durable assumption that men's and women's experiences of development do not differ qualitatively and quantitatively. This erroneous assumption is reflected in the continuing resistance of many heads of line agencies of DOLE to collecting women-specific information.²⁴ As a result, however commendable policies are, the biggest obstacle towards achieving their desired objectives remains implementation (Smith, 1985), arguably compounded by lack of effective monitoring. The lack of an adequate and accurate information base means that 'rational' policy making becomes a formidable task.²⁵

Overall, practices of DOLE policy makers in so far as WID is concerned are in a conflicting state of compliance and resistance. Faced with this contradiction, a number of female middle-rank managers committed to gender issues have formed an informal alliance, exploring spaces for action while at the same time having to toe the official line. Most of these women are also the regular agency representatives on the Technical Working Group and/or Focal Point. Clearly, their actions, whether individually or as a group, have been highly dependent on the 'availability and interaction of time, space and place' (Chhachhi and Pittin 1991). Additionally, their experience has shown that specialized knowledge and knowing how and when to use such knowledge are an important element of women's strategizing.²⁶ In general, some forms of manoeuvring, formal as well as informal negotiations requiring varying degrees of persuasion or confrontation with colleagues and superiors, have been proven to be possible. Achievements have been made in the following areas:

1 Advocacy in the corporate planning process to ensure inclusion of gender issues in the main-

²⁴ Since the early 1980s, the need for collecting gender-specific statistics as a crucial aid towards more responsible policy-making in the labour and employment sector has been articulated by the BWYW both within and outside the Department. However, there was a reluctance especially on the part of regional office personnel on the grounds that regional offices are under-staffed and under-resourced, making it impossible to respond to such a 'demand' from the BWYW.

²⁵ The general problem regarding statistics in the context of less developed countries has been made in Myrdal 1968.

²⁶ This has become increasingly clear to me as a former bureaucrat performing the roles of Chairperson of the Technical Working Group and Division Chief in the BWYW, as well as an activist. The demands of such roles have frequently required the use of specialized knowledge both in terms of commanding credibility

stream policy making machinery of the Department. This has involved parallel activities at the bureau/agency level and at the Departmental level.

At the agency level, the Technical Working Group representative pushed for gender concerns in policy and/or programme planning within her own agency. Examples of results include the 'Gender sensitivity in voluntary arbitration and other voluntary modes of dispute prevention and settlement' for labour and management representatives and 'Gender responsive trade unionism'. As a result of these experimental inputs in July 1993, the module on gender has now become an integral part of DOLE-initiated seminars for management and trade unionists.

At the Departmental level, the monitoring forms issued by the Planning Service to the different bureaux/agencies now include a section on women-centred programmes.

2 Advocacy during the review of the 1985 Philippine Labour Code.

The original intention of the Technical Working Group was to become part of the Labour Code Review and Drafting Committee.²⁷ However, as this did not become possible, it had to resort to submitting a written recommendation. Its major recommendation was to use non-sexist language in the drafting of the new Code. It also endorsed the recommendations made by the BWYW, especially the intent behind such recommendations (i.e., to remove sexist implications of existing Labour Code provisions).²⁸

and designing effective strategies. For example, as Chairperson of the Technical Working Group, I was the first person to be called upon to design a module on gender and deliver the actual lecture during two occasions in 1993. In this context, specialized knowledge has assisted in penetrating a traditionally male-dominated sphere such as industrial relations, whereas failure to act and respond on the basis of lacking specialized knowledge would have meant a lost opportunity in advancing gender issues. For an illustration of the importance of expertise and specialized knowledge in feminist strategizing, see also Barroso 1991.

²⁷ The Labour Code Review and Drafting Committee is composed of both independent organizations and representatives of the government.

²⁸ As of my July-August 1994 visit to the Philippines, the review of the current code and drafting of the new one has not been completed.

4 CONFRONTING STATE MASCULINISM: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Using the experience in the labour and employment sector regarding mainstreaming gender concerns, it has been shown that state structures are clearly not monolithic – within them are individuals with different perspectives on and interest in development. They therefore respond to WID differently, according to the contexts and their interests at stake. A glaring fact is that state masculinism assumes both a systemic and a localized nature in the realm of policy making, with the two often interacting to produce effects which are detrimental to women's interests. It is not uncommon to find contradictions in government policies which in turn pose conflicting demands on women. Furthermore, such interactive relationship between systemic and localized masculinism has led to state development bureaucracies shrinking from any radical redefinition of women's position which would legitimate women's claims *vis-a-vis* men's vested interests (Nijeholt 1991).

Despite this, it is clear that progress, though slow, has been achieved. This progress has come about neither spontaneously nor as a result of government benevolence. Instead, much has been achieved through sustained feminist engagement from outside but also from within government bureaucracies. The government's official support for mainstreaming gender concerns, together with the structures in place, have been utilized by women bureaucrats to advance gender issues. In conjunction with spaces created by internal inconsistencies on the issue of gender within bureaucracies such as the Department of Labour and Employment, these have given female bureaucrats the necessary power base to effect change, however limited. Virtually every interaction involved coming face to face with a different kind or hierarchy of masculinist power, engendering different kinds of responses (negotiation, persuasion, confrontation) on the part of these female bureaucrats. Experience has shown that the prerogative power of agents of the masculinist state can sometimes be swayed to favour women. The barrier of state masculinism is not impenetrable.

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