

A Defeat for the Greening of Hate

by China Brotsky

Members of the Sierra Club, one of the largest and most influential environmental organisations in the U.S., won a significant victory against racism and anti-immigrant hysteria when they rejected “Alternative A,” a measure calling for a “reduction of net immigration” as a component of a “comprehensive population policy for the United States.”

In an initiative process this spring that generated national debate, voters from the club’s 550,000 membership base gave a decisive 60 percent of the votes cast to “Alternative B,” a counter-measure proposed by the Sierra Club’s staff, board of directors and key grassroots volunteers. Measure B reaffirmed the Club’s neutral stand on immigration and committed it to work toward “addressing the root causes of global population problems” through “the empowerment and equity of women, maternal and reproductive health care...(and) to address the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, human rights, and environmentally responsible consumption....” In a simultaneous election for Sierra Club board members, none of the seven candidates running in support of Alternative A was elected.

The vote in the Sierra Club was the latest battle in the fight against the greening of hate—the effort to win environmentalists’ support for anti-immigrant action by persuading them that immigrants are a main source of environmental degradation in the U.S.

In the Sierra club, Alternative A proponents blamed U.S. population growth on immigrants and, in turn, blamed population growth (and immigrants) for every U.S. environmental problem from wetlands loss to logging of old-growth forests to smog and sprawl.

Opponents of Alternative A argued that scapegoating was mean-spirited and wrong. It did not address the real reasons for environ-

Women in Action, with ISSN 101-5048, promotes the empowerment of women through information sharing, communication and networking. It is published by Isis International-Manila, an international nongovernment women's organisation, founded in 1974. Isis has sister offices in Santiago, Chile and Kampala, Uganda. Its network reaches over 50,000 individuals and organisations in 150 countries.

Isis International-Manila acknowledges the support and financial assistance of the following partner-donor organisations: Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad, Inc. (Australia), Bilance (The Netherlands), Canadian International Development Agency (Canada), Christian Aid (UK), CIDA-Southeast Asian Gender Equity Program (Singapore), Evangelisches Missionwerk (Germany), Global Fund for Women (USA), Global Ministries-The United Methodist Church (USA), Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (The Netherlands), The Minister for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Netherlands, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norway), Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Denmark), Swedish International Development Authority (Sweden), United Nations Development Fund for Women, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (USA).

Isis General Assembly: Marilee Karl (Founder, Italy), Sr. Mary John S. Mananzan, OSB (Incorporator, Philippines), Ana Maria Ronquillo-Nemenzo (Incorporator, Philippines), LaRaine Abad Sarmiento (Incorporator, Philippines), Marianita C. Villariba (Philippines), Kamla Bhasin (India), Noeleen Heyzer (Singapore), Eleanor Conda (Philippines), Domini Torrevillas (Philippines), Vanessa Griffen (Fiji), Rashidah Abdullah (Malaysia), Hayat Imam (Bangladesh), Raquel Edralin-Tiglao (Philippines), Josefa Francisco (Philippines), Aurora Javate-De Dios (Philippines), Sunila Abeysekera (Sri Lanka).

Isis Board of Trustees:

Eleanor Conda, Chairperson

Aurora Javate-De Dios, Vice-Chairperson

Josefa Francisco, Secretary

Hayat Imam, Treasurer

Raquel Edralin-Tiglao, Member

Sunila Abeysekera, Member

Susanna George, Ex-officio member

mental degradation: the air and water pollution caused by chemical industries and the clear-cutting of old-growth forests by logging companies. Besides, by taking such a stand the Sierra Club would alienate its constituencies among people of color, who were key allies in the battle to protect the environment.

The Sierra Club differs from most major environmental groups in electing its board of directors by a mail-in vote of its full membership and by allowing policy measures to be put by the members through an initiative process. The measure calling for immigration restrictions was put forward by a small group dissatisfied with the club's neutral policy on immigration which had been hammered out over several years by grassroots activists working through the Club's state chapter and national staff and board governance structure.

But far from acting alone, this small group of members was the tip of the iceberg of a well-funded campaign by extremist, anti-immigration organisations working to persuade the Sierra Club to support U.S. immigration restrictions. Some of the organisations openly supported racist, white supremacist positions or had well-documented connections to other extreme-right organisations. Several of these groups had traditionally limited themselves to cultural or nationalist arguments against immigration but entered this campaign embracing environmental arguments.

The Political Ecology Group (PEG), a multi-racial environmental justice organisation actively opposing Alternative A, documented the efforts of these organisations in lobbying for its passage. Their campaign included mass mailings to club members, paid ads in environmental publications, extensive press work, recruitment of anti-immigrant activists to join the club in time to vote, and campaign literature for board candidates running on "A."

This right-wing campaign was estimated to have cost nearly a million dollars. The political climate in the U.S. has become increasingly anti-immigrant. Despite this context and the concerted, well-financed campaign waged by outside organisations, a strong majority of Club members who voted rejected racism and the scapegoating of immigrants. It is a victory on which we must build and a success from which we can learn.

Source: *Political Environments*, No. 6, Fall 1998

Promoting Gender-fair Language in the Workplace

by Divina Paredes-Japa

The head of a rapidly expanding company notes how he and his competitors have not violated, as yet, their "gentleman's agreement" not to use underhanded tactics against one another.

Nothing wrong with that statement...on the surface. Yet, if the manager had been more sensitive, he would have spoken about an "unwritten agreement based on trust" instead of a "gentleman's agreement." After all, his competitors also included female managers.

Everyday language in the corporate world, mass media and government is pervaded by words and phrases that discriminate against women.

A basic principle in management communication, writes Gloria S. Chan in *Management Communication in the Global Era*, is that "extreme care should be taken that sexist language is not used."

Chan, a professor at the Asian Institute of Management, notes the widespread impact of the feminist movement has caused American writers to be careful about their language.

Even textbooks, she says, advise readers to stay away from words like *spokesman*, *statesman*, *workmanship* and *craftsmanship*.

Chan concedes that the impact of the feminist movement on the use of language may not be as extensive in Asia as it is in the U.S. "Asian women do not get jolted or offended if they are referred to as *chairman* rather than *chair* or *chairperson*, *businessman* rather than *businessperson*, *wife* rather than *spouse*, *housewife* rather than *homemaker*."