

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*."

She says this could be because of the functional rather than socio-psychological view that Asians have of the English language. Because of this, Asians “are not sensitive to the nuances of English outside of the purpose for which it was intended.”

She says, however, that managers must be sensitised to the urgency of using nonsexist language because they have to keep abreast of the global trends in communication.

A book called *Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes* (McGraw-Hill Book Co.), she reported, calls on writers to treat men and women “as individual people, not primarily as members of the opposite sexes” and states that “neither sex should be stereotyped or arbitrarily assigned to a leading or secondary role.”

Yet, a cursory look at some corporate journals and even the newspapers, including the classified ads, reveals that discriminatory words are still widely used. In the Philippine setting, among the gender-discriminatory words are *man-made*, *manpower*, *one-man show*, *tradesman*, *chairman*, *salesman*, *career girl* and *girl Friday*.

The following alternatives are suggested for some of the most commonly used words that discriminate against the female gender: *staffed* for *manned*; *handcrafted* or *artificial* for *man-made*; *workforce* or *personnel* for *manpower*; *run by one person* for *one-man*; *fair play* and *sporting* for *sportsmanship*; *tradespeople* for *tradesmen*; *business executive* for *businessman*; *chair* or *convenor* for *chairman*; *assistant* for *girl Friday*; *principal* for *headmaster*.

Some non-sexist words

Instead of

gentleman's agreement
man
man
man-to-man
number two man
chairman
businessman
manned
man-made
manpower
one-man show
tradesman
salesman or saleslady
layman
switchman
workman
workmanlike
sportsmanship
headmaster
deliveryman
handyman
mailman
office boy or girl
wife
housewife
girl Friday

Use

unwritten agreement based on trust
humanity or human beings
person or individual
one-to-one and person-to-person
second in command or chief aide
chair, chairperson or convenor
businessperson or business executive
staffed
handcrafted or artificial
workforce or personnel
run by one person
tradespeople
salesclerk or salesperson
lay person or nonspecialist
switch operator
worker
efficient and skillful
fair play and sporting
principal
courier or delivery clerk
fixer
letter carrier or postal worker
office helper or office assistant
spouse
homemaker
assistant

Nonspecialist or *lay person* for *layman*; *courier* or *delivery clerk* for *deliveryman*; *fixer* for *handyman*; *letter carrier* or *postal worker* for *mailman*; *humanity* or *human beings* for *man*; *person* or *individual* for *man*; *one-to-one* and *person-to-person* for *man-to-man*.

Second in command or *chief aide* for *number two man*; *office helper* or *office assistant* for *office boy* or *girl*; *salesclerk* or *salesperson* for *salesman* or *saleslady*; *switch operator* for *switchman*; *worker* for *workman* and *efficient* and *skillful* for *workmanlike*.

In addition, phrases which can be considered demeaning and should be banished, according to the University of Sydney Non-Discriminatory Language Guidelines, are: “you think just like a man,” “you’re pretty smart for a woman,” “even a housewife can do that,” “boys in the storeroom,” and “girls in the office.”

Darlene Cruz, assistant director for the Bureau of Information and Education of the Department of Agrarian Reform,

underscores the need to foster gender-fair language in the contemporary workplace because of the growing number of women employees, in both managerial and staff levels.

As author Dale Spender wrote in *Man Made Language* almost 20 years ago:

“For women to become visible, it is necessary that they become linguistically visible... New symbols will need to be created and old symbols will need to be re-cycled and invested with new images if the male hold of the language is to be broken. As the language structure which has been devised and legitimated by male grammarians exacts ambiguity, uncertainty, and anomie for females, then in the interests of dismantling the muted nature of females, that language structure and those rules need to be defied.”

Cruz, who recently attended a conference in the Netherlands on gender and organisational change, says this need is vital because the Philippine workplace, whether in the corporate or public sector, is still “macho.” The use of gender-fair language is just part of the larger effort of management to sensitise the workplace on gender issues. Using nondiscriminatory language, she says, is in effect part of good management.

She notes: “Organisations that have adopted a more gender-fair management style seem to perform better. Studies have also shown that gender-fair work cultures contribute to higher productivity, greater creativity and innovation for product development, and wider reach of product lines.”

Source: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 19 July 1999