ABSTRACT

WILL THE MASTER'S TOOL EVER DISMANTLE THE MASTER'S HOUSE? FEMOCRATS AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY.

Giovanna Vingelli, Department of Sociology and Political Science, Università della Calabria, Italy

Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden

Why do women and men experience such different economic outcomes, and what can policy makers do to promote gender equity?

The paper aims to examine the relationship between women’s movements and state feminism in order to explore the capacity of state feminist institutions to facilitate interaction between women’s movements and the state in support of integrating diversity questions into public policy making. Women’s policy machinery (femocrats) can provide linkages between feminists and state feminist institutions in place. The paper aims in particular at discussing the experience of femocrats in Australia and United Kingdom. Comparative analyses of women’s efforts to influence the policy process through interaction with women’s bureaucratic mechanisms are critical in developing strategies for achieving substantive policy goals. Women’s policy machinery can be an important partner with feminists in public policy debates, but new channels of communication between state feminism and women’s movements are required, in order not to marginalize women’s movements from the consultative process. Reconsidering the role of the state, from a feminist point of view, is thus pivotal to the achievement of equality and justice for all women.

"The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."
-- Audre Lourde