

# WOMEN AND BUSINESS

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In calling upon all nations to give serious attention to the observance this year of International Women's Year (1975), the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, stressed the importance of deliberating on the problem of how the role of women in society could be improved substantially all over the world.

Both Secretary General Waldheim and the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Helvi Sipilä, have also called attention to the fact that women constitute some 51% of the world's population but have not up to now given their full contribution to the development of their countries. Among the objectives of the IWY are: To achieve full equality before the law in all fields where it does not exist as yet, to promote equality of economic rights, and to ensure that women as well as men participate fully and as equal partners in policy formulation and decision-making at the local, national and international levels.

It has been truly said that a nation's best assets are its human resources. And in the Philippines where more than half of the population also consist of women, such resources have hardly been tapped.

We live in a country that has been generally described as a woman's world. This is not only because the woman holds the purse strings in a typical Filipino family but because she actually makes most of the decisions — how the family abode should be built and furnished; how the children should be named, reared and educated; where to spend the next vacation with the children; whom to invite to the blessing of the family residence or the wedding of one of the grown-up children; and sometimes even how father and junior should comb their hair or what clothes they should wear.

The woman has truly been the power behind the throne, so to speak, in the affairs of the family and consequently in the affairs of state. She is not only the treasurer but the decision maker and in many instances, she has also been the planner.

Yet male chauvinism, or should we say pride, has generally referred to the woman as only fit by training and temperament to stay in the home. We seem to forget that some of the best rulers in history and some of the most famous personalities were women. England, for in-

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stance, became a great power during the time of Queen Victoria. And today one of the most distinguished members of parliament, who was reportedly groomed to be the next Prime Minister of Great Britain during these critical times, is Mrs. Margaret Thatcher who has been in the headlines lately. The world is, of course, well aware of tiny Israel's struggle for survival as a nation under the leadership of its woman prime minister, Golda Meir, against great odds that seek to wipe it out of the map.

Whether it is in politics, education, the professions like law, medicine, the arts and sciences, and economics, women have already carved a name for themselves. But it is in business that the women's role appears to have been ignored or about which very little is known to the public. If we go over the list of our women in business who are members of the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and the Philippine Chamber of Industries, we shall discover that in almost every line of economic endeavor, there are women who are board chairmen, directors, presidents, vice-presidents, general managers, treasurers, or department heads. They are in banking and finance, in industry, commerce, insurance, retailing, the supermarket and the hotel and restaurant business.

The entertainment business, including the motion pictures, television and stage, is dominated by women. The business itself of producing wholesome entertainment via the celluloid has seen the rise of some of the ablest women motion picture producers. There was Doña Narcisa Vda. de Leon, better known as Doña Sisang of LVN Pictures, who built one of the biggest moving picture studios in the country and produced some of the epics in local motion picture entertainment. Then there was Doña Adela Santiago who was president of Premiere Productions for 27 years and who was succeeded by Digna Santiago, her daughter. There is also: Dolores H. Vera, president of Sampaguita Pictures; Mrs. Emilia Blas, president of Lea Productions; Ma. Victoria Marquez, president of Tower Productions; and Louise de Mesa, better known by her screen name Liza Moreno, president of Virgo Productions. Also quite a number of movie stars who have made money and a name for themselves have gone into motion picture production like Nora Aunor, Amalia Fuentes, and Susan Rocas.

The hotel and restaurant business, which is now enjoying a bonanza because of the tourist boom, has likewise produced well known names among women financiers, operators and executives. The late Cielito Zamora was managing the Manila Hotel as well as the Bayview Hotel when the hotel business was still marginal and struggling to make ends meet. Mrs. Trinidad Enriquez, who has been as much identified with the res-

restaurant as well as the hotel business, has made a success story of D & E Restaurant, the Sulo Hotel, the Sulo Restaurant, and is the moving spirit also behind the establishment of the Philippine Village Hotel. The Aristocrat is what it is today also because of the enterprise and business acumen of a woman, Doña Engracia Reyes. And her daughters-in-law were moving spirits in the establishment of famed eateries like The Plaza. The reputable Au Bon Vivant was founded by a well-known nutritionist and gourmet, Mrs. Nora Villanueva Daza. The chain of Quezon City Max's Inc. Restaurants specializing in fried chicken owes its success to Mrs. Ruby Sanvictores Trota, Mrs. Mercedes Sanvictores Gimenez, and Mrs. Felipa Serrano Sanvictores. Mrs. Honorata Fajardo is the founder and president of what is now known as the Bungalow Food Services which now numbers 26 in all. Mrs. Soledad Ramos Teodoro is behind the Alta Vista Restaurant.

The merchandising business is another example of private enterprise where women have excelled. There is Mrs. Millie Velez Dimson who owns and manages the very progressive Millie Velez chain of stores. One of the best known names in the merchandising business is Glecy Tantoco of Rustan who initiated and built this enterprise to where it is today with its department and supermarket complex as a result of her business acumen, daring, and vision. The retailing business, previously controlled by aliens, is virtually run by women. Go to any public market or shopping center and you will see most of the stores run by women. Although many of these stores are registered in the names of their husbands, the operation is usually in the hands of the wives or daughters. The other extreme, of course, are stores registered in the names of women, actually financed and owned by their husbands, but in any case run by the wives.

You name it, and women are in many other lines of enterprise. Even in a traditionally man's domain such as in the wood industry, we have such names as Senator Magnolia Antonino, Former Agusan Governor Consuelo Calo, Mrs. Helen Sanchez, Mrs. Ladislawa Alcantara, Mrs. Nona Bueno, Mrs. Nora Petines, Mrs. Lolita Arañez, and Mrs. Valentina Plaza.

In an interview with the Undersecretary of Agriculture Jose D. Drilon, it was estimated that 90% of the rice milling business in Central Luzon is managed by women, prominent among them being Mrs. Magdalena Santos, who is the president of the Bulacan Rice Millers Association. In the field of agriculture, the name of Mrs. Eugenia Puyat is a stand-out. In the coconut industry, Mrs. Ma. Clara Lorenzo Lobregat; in sugar, Mary Ford and Lolita Lopez; in cement, Mrs. Fanny Cortes Garcia; in real estate, Pura Villanueva Kalaw and Resurreccion Hernan-

dez; in automotives, Mrs. Concepcion Blaylock; in textiles, the deceased Mrs. George Litton, Sr. and Mrs. Gregoria Yujuico Paredes; in the field of interior decoration, Ched Berenguer Topacio and Imelda Borromeo Cancio; in book publishing, Mrs. Ester Vibal and Mrs. Elisa Miranda; in handicrafts, Sally Tesoro of the well known House of Tesoro's; and in the field of music recording, there is Rosario R. Villar.

The banking business too has seen women taking an increasingly active and impressive role. Soledad Dolor is a very good example of a remarkable woman who started with a small rural bank in Candelaria in 1960 and then established four different types of banks. In 1962 she founded the Third Rizal Development Bank of which she is chairman of the board. In 1963 she organized the Traders Commercial Bank (now known as Traders Royal Bank) of which she was president for 12 years. Now she is the president and chairman of the board of the second largest savings bank in the country — the Philippine Savings Bank. The accomplishments of Mrs. Dolor in the field of banking are impressive indeed. Considering that she is also successful in other varied fields of business, she has established her place as one of our outstanding women in business.

There is Senator Magnolia Antonino herself, who, while still active in logging, mining and real estate, is also in banking, being a director and one of the substantial stockholders of the Philippine Commercial and Industrial Bank, a top ranking Filipino-owned commercial bank. Victoria L. Araneta was president and chairman of the Feati Bank and Trust Company, before the bank's merger with the First National City Bank.

Then there is Lourdes Lontok-Cruz, a lawyer by profession, a social worker and educator who has lately attracted attention for her work as a "humanitarian banker" and for having founded the Paluwagan ng Bayan Savings and Loan Association. Mrs. Cruz is also the Philippine director of the Youth for Understanding, an international exchange organization based at Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In spite of the general impression that women's place is in the home, the records in the Bureau of Commerce show that roughly 33% of the some 500,000 registered business firms are owned by women. These include single proprietorships, partnerships and corporations.

Women are in the industries, too, either as presidents or top officers of corporations or as members of the board of directors. Of the 423 member firms of the Philippine Chamber of Industries as of 1974, some 92 have women presidents or chairmen of the board, vice presidents, general managers, treasurers or comptrollers. Among those listed as presidents or chairmen of their corporations are: Magnolia Antonino, Min-

danao Lumber Development; Ma. Luisa Perez Rubio, Advance Resins Corporation and Pacific Products; Soledad G. Zamora, Angel Zamora & Sons; Mercedes Lising, Lising Crafts, Inc.; Cornelia Go, P.I. Manufacturing, Inc.; Leonora Pascual, Pascual Laboratories; Dolores R. de Pellicer, Pellicer Manufacturing Corporation; Lourdes Medalla, Simed & Company; and Avelina Osias, Victoria Manufacturing Corporation.

In the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, out of a total membership of 1,300, 146 are women, and most of them have active participation in the management and operations of their enterprises. Around 32 of them are in manufacturing, 16 in export, 12 in logging or wood processing, 10 in insurance, 8 in general merchandising, 5 in real estate and 4 in banking.

Among the top women in manufacturing are: Josephine Cojuangco, chairman of the board, International Hardwood & Veneer; Lolita Escobar Mirpuri, chairman of the board, L & BM Commercial; Carmen P. Vda. de Caro, chairman of the board, Ramcar, Inc.; Elena S. Lim, president-general manager, Solid Industries; Araceli Peñas, vice president, Sta. Clara Lumber Co.; Valentina Plaza, vice president-treasurer, Plaza Management Corporation; Leoncia P. Reyes, executive vice president-treasurer, G. Puyat & Sons; the late Mary L. Morales, executive vice president-treasurer JNM Manufacturing Corporation.

The insurance business counts also with the participation of some well known or prominent women personalities. Among them are Luz B. Magsaysay, widow of the late President Magsaysay, who is chairman of the board of Philippine Underwriters Corporation; Lourdes T. Echauz, president, Standard Insurance Co.; Conchita L. de Benitez, president, People's Surety & Insurance Co.; and Anastacia C. Reyes, chairman of the board, Zenith Insurance Corporation.

The first 1,000 corporations will show women's participation as relatively modest as yet, but the latest listings of the trade and industry chambers reflect the steady gains that women are making in playing an increasingly greater role in big business. It is in the building up of the real backbone of the nation's economy, the small and medium-scale enterprises, as well as the cottage industries however, where women are making a more substantial contribution. This is reflected, first of all, in the ownership of some 166,000 enterprises registered with the Bureau of Commerce.

But even in some of the most successful enterprises that had a modest beginning, the brains and the original prime movers are invariably women. Many of the men who are in big business today or sit as presidents or

chairman of their corporations or run the enterprise as general managers owe it usually to their wives for starting or carrying on with the business during its early beginnings while their husbands were earning a modest salary as obscure employees. Only when the family business gained stability and prosperity under the firm guiding stewardship of the wife will the man of the family invariably resign his position in a private firm or government office to assume the position of president or manager. Usually, the wife stays on as Vice President and/or Treasurer and thus keeps a check on the husband's out-of-pocket expenses.

Oftentimes, the woman not only wants her husband to take the credit but will continue to take the responsibility of running the business while the man of the family turns his interest to something else, such as politics, civic work and charities or sports.

The building of the Antonino business complex is a good example of a family enterprise that has become big because of the woman's active role from the early beginning. And even when the diversified family corporation became a multi-million organization, Mrs. Antonino found it necessary to carry on the burden of running the various enterprises when her husband entered politics, and especially after his tragic death in an air accident. She is still active in the operation of the organization she helped build, and now her children have assumed bigger roles in its management.

Rustan is another success story started by a woman. Like many other enterprising women, Glecly Rustia Tantoco obviously was merely peddling merchandise to her friends even before she decided to put up a modest shop. This grew into what was later called the House of Rustan and finally into a diversified and integrated enterprise, Rustan Investment and Management Corporation, which has holdings and runs the management of such capital-intensive operations as pulp and paper manufacturing, supermarketing, garments and cosmetics manufacturing, container manufacturing and others.

#### UNTAPPED POTENTIAL RESOURCES

It is clear that women are taking an increasingly greater participation in endeavors and enterprises that used to be the exclusive preserve of men. There is little doubt also that women will take an even greater role in business and in the development of the country in the years ahead.

Impressive as the women's gains have been in taking a more active role in business and industry, the potential of harnessing educated and

trained women, power in promoting a faster and more meaningful economic development of the country is even greater. The number of women trained and prepared to go into business is growing, considering the number of women graduates that our business schools and colleges are turning out. Soon there will be more women prepared and qualified to run various lines of endeavor and business than there will be men.

I am sure that if women were given greater participation in the operation and management of our increasingly complex business and industrial systems as well as of the economic and financial affairs of the government and of the nation as a whole, this country would be a better place to live in. I am certain that the standard of living and the quality of life of every Filipino will improve. I dare say this because unlike men, women generally are armed with a potent extra-sensory tool — their intuition or sixth sense. And besides, where common sense, responsibility, and sensitivity to social problems are concerned, the women are way above the men in the Philippines. This was admitted by President Marcos in his speech at the United Nations Regional Seminar held at Philamlife Auditorium on December 6, 1966.

Why then has the potential of women not been tapped to the maximum? This is essentially due to constraints set by tradition delineating the separate roles of men and women — and limiting women's role essentially to the home. Even the schools, the Church and our laws have conspired to perpetuate the tradition.

## SUGGESTIONS

Considering the growing competitiveness of the present day economy, men would find more difficulty trying to handle the complexities alone without the help and support of the women. It is to their mutual benefit that they form a partnership so that together they can better overcome obstacles and difficulties as a well coordinated team.

Men should not regard women as competitors, as this idea would arouse their masculine resentment. Men should consider women as partners and together they can easily succeed not only in the field of business and the professions but also in the family and in the home.

A concerted campaign by media, the schools, the Church, and all other means must be utilized to bring about a reorientation in the thinking of our people as regards the relative roles of men and women in our society so as to eliminate the traditional constraints that serve to hamper the proper utilization of the potential of women in business and in other fields as well.

There should be legal reforms to temper or eliminate discriminatory restrictions on women affecting her role in business. Basically, efforts in this regard should equalize obligations and opportunities for both men and women, particularly those affecting the development and utilization of their talents and abilities.

A strong movement must be launched to convince the men that the best insurance for the family is to encourage and help the wife to succeed in business. In the event that the husband should get sick and would be unable to earn for the family, or in the event of his death, a successful woman in business can certainly carry on very well for the family and provide properly for the future of the children too. This, in effect would be training the wife to be a widow and ensuring the security and stability of the future of the family.

To our men folk who may be concerned about the inexorable advance of women, we have this to say: Do not be alarmed. We are not your competitors. We are your partners. And as we succeed, you — as the partner in the team, also succeed. Together we can make a perfect team. Together, we can work effectively for equality, peace and development.