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Introduction

In England feminists write books, . . . in America they set up businesses, and have campaigns about laws, and in Australia they set up services and attempt to change . . . the apparatus of the state. (Judith Dwyer)

This book is about the Australian femocrats, a cohort of feminist women who became bureaucrats in a quest for social change. A bureaucrat seeking social change? To U.S. ears this sounds like a contradiction in terms. Yet this generation of Australian feminist bureaucrats, along with many sisters and brothers who were their allies in grassroots organizations, trade unions, and political parties, helped to change the gender landscape of their country. In this study, I explore the femocratic strategy: what made it possible, how it worked in practice, its achievements, and its limitations.¹

My introduction to the femocracy came through the women's movement. As a new immigrant from the United States in 1980, once I overcame the language barrier, I found my Australian feminist sisters familiar. Their vocabulary and their debates were reminiscent of the white feminist culture I had left in New York (see Eisenstein 1991b). But I soon began to understand that, like Australian political culture as a whole, feminist culture in Australia had its own special features.

Like other feminists internationally, Australian feminists were engaged in a variety of activist campaigns. They sought affordable child care, education,

and job training for women. They fought to end wife battering and child abuse. They campaigned against sexual violence and for woman-centered health care. They lobbied for antidiscrimination, affirmative action, and equal pay measures. All these efforts (and many others) were aimed at giving women a broader range of options and at lessening women's dependence—physical, economic, and psychological—on men.²

The most distinctive feature of the Australian feminist scene was the prevalence of femocrats. A highly visible group of (mostly Anglo) women, openly committed to feminism, femocrats were senior public servants who owed their positions to pressure from the organized women's movement.³ The femocratic strategy rested on a gender analysis holding that governments were run by and for men and that government policy reflected the interests of men. To the extent that government policy dealt with women, whether in taxation, welfare, education, or employment, it reinforced traditional gender roles.⁴ The femocrats' job was to change this, by delivering policy changes that advanced women's interests.⁵

When I first encountered the term *femocrat* in 1981, it was surrounded by controversy (see Eisenstein 1991b). But by 1990, the word *femocrat* had gained sufficient currency to be used matter-of-factly in the daily press. When Carmel Niland, president of the Anti-Discrimination Board, resigned after the victory of the Greiner Liberal-National government in New South Wales in 1988, the *Sydney Morning Herald* headline read "Top femocrat resigns."⁶

The term has acquired international status. It is current in Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, and Latin America. In traveling overseas, the meaning has sometimes become distorted. For example, participants at a 1993 Stockholm conference on women and politics used *femocrat* to refer to any woman in a government position.⁷ The authentic meaning, for defenders and detractors alike, is more restricted: it refers to a woman, feminist by personal conviction, who works within a government bureaucracy at a senior level to advance the status of women in society. (On the origins of the term, see Chapter 5.)

In Australia, the alliance of the women's movement with the femocrats produced some remarkable outcomes. A system of policy machinery for women was put into place at the highest levels of government. As comparable worth activist and scholar Ronnie Steinberg noted,

in no country (except perhaps Canada) have avowed feminists assumed such a wide range of high-ranking policymaking positions. . . . To an American fem-

inist working in these policy-arenas since 1980, it goes well beyond anything we could hope to attain. (Steinberg 1992, 577)

A wide range of services for women, delivered by women, was established with government funding, from information centers and women's refuges (shelters) to women's health centers. The rhetoric of government agencies reflected a widespread acceptance of feminist analysis. Prime ministers personally launched special programs for women in language that acknowledged the patriarchal structures preventing women's economic, political, and cultural equality.

Finally, support for women's issues became central to mainstream electoral politics. In the 1990 elections, both parties promoted child care as a significant element in their platforms.⁸ In 1993 the Labor Party won an unprecedented fifth term in office with the aid of women's votes, after a campaign that placed feminist issues front and center.⁹ Paul Keating, the Prime Minister, campaigned hard on a platform that included increased funding for child care; a national program of training in gender bias for the judiciary; and an extensive National Agenda for Women. In his acceptance speech Keating acknowledged the debt: "Can I give an extra special note of thanks to the women of Australia, who voted for us believing in the policies of this government."¹⁰

Where Is Australia?

The impact of the femocrats is a distinctive achievement, intimately linked to Australian history and politics. Located in the South Pacific, Australia is an island-continent of some eighteen million people, distributed in a handful of urban concentrations over a huge land mass roughly the size of the continental United States. Like the United States, it is a white settler society, founded by means of the near-annihilation of its indigenous population.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Aboriginal Australians had lived in relative ecological harmony with the oldest continent for at least 50,000 years.¹¹ After the American Revolution, Great Britain lost the United States as an outlet for deporting convicts, and Australia became the alternative. The continent was colonized by English and Irish convicts, transported with their jailers from the British armed forces.¹² The land expropriated from the Aborigines, under a doctrine of *terra nullius* ("nobody's land"), eventually became the basis of a thriving pastoral settlement.

With an economy based on exporting raw materials, especially wool, to a guaranteed market in Great Britain, plus a small local manufacturing base protected by high tariff walls, by the late nineteenth century the Australian states enjoyed one of the highest living standards in the world, "riding on the sheep's back." Represented in parliaments with a strong Labor Party from the 1890s on, the labor movement combined with liberal reformers to win guaranteed wages, and a "white Australia" policy that kept out foreign labor competition in exchange for supporting a policy of protection for local manufacturing.

In 1901 the colonial states that had won self-government from Great Britain in the 1850s banded together in the Federation, which remains the constitutional basis for modern Australia. This created a federal system which distributed powers such as education and social welfare to the states while reserving others, such as taxation, for the federal government.¹³

A thriving economy, along with relatively early social welfare provisions—a minimum wage, the eight-hour day, pensions, maternity allowances, child benefits, and the vote for women (granted in 1902)—turned Australia into a social laboratory. To Europeans, the state "appeared to be a boldly experimental agent." Visitors used the Australian case to argue that socialism could be built peacefully through parliamentary means (see Burgmann 1985, 9–10; Pilger 1991, 248, quoting Jill Roe).

The prosperity of the turn of the century gave way to the severe depression of the 1930s, which began to lift before Australia entered the Second World War. The postwar government under Labor established the additional social legislation that made Australia into a modern welfare state. Since World War II, government-sponsored immigration from Europe and Asia created a population that is one-quarter non-English-speaking in origin. Multiculturalism has been official government policy since the 1970s. Australia vies with the United States and Israel for the distinction of having the most diverse population in the world. The postwar "long boom" lasted until the 1970s, when the Labor government of Gough Whitlam presided over the beginnings of the stagnation that is still the dominant feature of the Australian economy.

At first glance, Australian life is reminiscent of life in the United States. Australia seems familiar and recognizable, like Canada: a prosperous white eurocentric nation struggling with issues of unemployment, racism, and sexism within its borders. But, as with Canada, less superficial observation reveals some crucial differences. The two major political parties in Australia

are the Labor Party, closely linked to a still-powerful trade union movement, and the Liberal-National coalition. The latter, while increasingly right wing in its rhetoric, nonetheless has its roots in the social liberalism of the late nineteenth century, accepting a strong role for government in economic and social life. Voting is compulsory, and around 95 percent of eligible voters participate in federal elections.¹⁴ During my years in Sydney, political life had a particular vitality and urgency, although cynicism about the political process was growing steadily there as elsewhere in the industrialized democracies.

The Debate over the Femocracy

One of the most vital and controversial aspects of Australian political life was the femocracy. Despite their achievements, from the appointment of the first femocrats in the 1970s¹⁵ an angry debate swirled around them. From the Right, femocrats were accused of enlisting the government in a project to destroy the nuclear family and create a unisex society. Femocrats were held responsible for women abandoning their husbands and children, for egalitarianism run amok, and for forcing governments to give social spending priority over the needs of the market (see, for example, Webley 1982).

This was a fairly predictable set of charges. More interesting was the critique from the Left and especially from within the Australian women's movement, where a persistent chorus of angry voices attacked the femocrats individually and collectively.¹⁶ The critique had several elements. First, femocrats were not true feminists. A feminist worked in collective, non-hierarchical organizations, not in bureaucracies, which are hierarchies par excellence. Second, femocrats were high flyers, an elite of well-paid managers, whose interests diverged from those of most women. Third, femocrats were not legitimate agents of the women's movement. They claimed to speak for all women, but they were not representative either demographically or politically. They were overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic, with few from immigrant or Aboriginal backgrounds. And they were not selected by the women's movement.

Finally, femocrats were being co-opted. Through their acquiescence, the state won control of feminist activism by deciding which issues got addressed. Thus femocrats lent themselves to legitimizing the state without fundamentally altering it. This charge relied on the proposition that ultimately the interests of feminists and of the state diverged radically: the state

worked for capitalism and patriarchy, whereas the women's movement worked to dismantle both systems.

This book is shaped, at least in part, by these debates. Having become a femocrat myself, I was particularly sensitive to the women's movement critique, since it placed into question my integrity as a "true" feminist. In addition, as someone with an enduring interest in feminist theory, and social and political theory more generally, I was intrigued. The debate over the femocracy touched on some classic issues about social change: the relation between social movements and mainstream politics; the role of the state; the relations between capitalism and patriarchy; the intersections of race, class, and gender; and the tension between reformist and revolutionary strategies.

The history of the femocracy is in part a history of social policy, how Australian women placed a series of feminist issues on the public policy agenda. But the details of this process are not the main emphasis of my account here.¹⁷ Rather, I focus on three historical and analytical questions. First, I explore how this structure was developed. What was it about Australian political life and culture that made this extraordinary experiment possible?

Second, I record and interpret the experience of femocrats within the alien world of the Australian public service. This is a chapter in the history of "gendered lives," for a generation that challenged the male power structure and lived to tell the tale, albeit with much scar tissue.¹⁸

Finally, I examine the femocratic experiment as a moment of lived political theory. How did the femocrats assess their own strategy? How did they see their relationship to the women's movement, to women in general, and to the state? Where had they been able to make a difference? And where did they feel they had been blocked?¹⁹

Issues of Theory and Practice

The femocratic experiment in Australia brings a fresh perspective to several areas of contemporary feminist scholarship and activism. In response to the renewed women's movement, feminist scholars have begun to reexamine the role of women in politics. Drude Dahlerup, Joyce Gelb, Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Jovi Lovenduski, Carol McClurg Mueller, Pippa Norris, and Virginia Sapiro, among others, have examined the impact of the contemporary women's movement on public policy, on women's voting behavior, and on the efforts of women to win electoral office.²⁰

One focus of this work is the growth of "state feminism." Governments

in a number of countries around the world have responded to the women's movement, particularly since the International Decade for Women sponsored by the United Nations in 1975–1985, with the creation of specific government machinery for women's affairs. This development is now coming under scholarly scrutiny. How did these mechanisms operate? Did they represent the interests of women to government or vice versa? Who ran them, and how did they function? As noted, the femocratic experiment is a particularly developed example of state feminism.²¹

The renewed efforts of feminists to place women's issues on the public agenda, and the scholarship tracking this effort, have raised important theoretical questions about social citizenship for women and the relation of women to the state.²² As Mariana Valverde noted,

Sometime in the late 1970s, the phrase "women and the state" came into widespread use, a memorable phrase bearing multiple theoretical and political promises. By the late eighties a sizable literature existed in a number of countries, much of it produced by feminist scholars influenced by neo-Marxist state theories. (Valverde 1994, 209)

In what ways did state power shape women's lives? How did public policies explicitly or implicitly track women into domesticity and economic dependence, while encouraging men to be breadwinners? Was the state itself "gendered"?²³

Classical Marxist analysis was seen as arguing that the state was merely the "executive committee" of the ruling class.²⁴ In contrast, neo-Marxist theorists argued that, whereas the modern welfare state was indeed fundamentally constituted to protect the interests of capital, it nonetheless balanced this role with a need for legitimation. This required the maintenance of structures, and an ideological framework, that provided for the representation of other interests. Such a model arguably made room for interventions by other political and social interest groups, viewing the state as an arena of contestation rather than a monolithic arm of capital. (On neo-Marxist theories of the state, see Carnoy 1984; Fraser 1989.)

In a similar vein, socialist feminist writers on the state argued that the state was the "executive committee," not just for capital, but for patriarchy. They held that the modern welfare state was intimately linked to the control of women's lives. The state had a fundamental role in constituting the boundaries between public and private, and in regulating reproduction, marriage, and sexuality. (For a summary of this literature, see Alvarez 1991, 29, 31.)

Nonetheless, from the onset of the second wave, groups of women activists turned to state power to redress their grievances, from rape and battering to the absence of child care and the prevalence of pornography. Was this a misguided and foolish endeavor, or could one use state power to improve women's lives?

This contradiction spurred on the theoretical debate. In fact, one could now array feminist views on the state in a broad spectrum, from the socialist feminist view that the state represents capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein 1993), through the liberal pluralist position that women compete as an interest group for a piece of the pie (Sapiro 1983), to the (radical feminist) view that state power is irrevocably masculine (Brown 1992; MacKinnon 1989). Nordic scholars (see, for example, Lewis and Astrom 1992; Hernes 1987) express more nuanced positions, evincing greater optimism about the possibility of creating a woman-friendly state, as do those, such as Theda Skocpol and Desley Deacon, who seek to "bring the state back in" as having some degree of independent agency (see Deacon 1989b, 1-3, and Evans et al., 1985). Meanwhile, theorists influenced by postmodernism argue that the state is not a coherent unity in any case, but rather a "diverse set of discursive arenas which play a crucial role in organizing relations of power" (Pringle and Watson 1992, 70); this view, too, leaves room for activists to maneuver.²⁵

Indeed, as Deacon and others have argued, to speak of "the state" in an undifferentiated way is misleading. "The state" means the entire apparatus of government, from parliaments, cabinets, and bureaucracies administering programs for health, welfare, education, and commerce to the judicial system, the army, and the police. And internationally, as Alvarez (1991) pointed out, the form of the state varies from military dictatorships to capitalist democracies and a few remaining socialist systems. Each has a different relation to women.

Similarly the relations of states to women vary tremendously, depending on their location at the core or on the periphery. Alexander (1990) notes that state power in many Third World countries is openly hostile to women's interests, seeking to control population size (and thus women's behavior) while cutting back social services through the restructuring required by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The view of the state that informs this study is a socialist feminist one; namely, that overall the Australian state does in fact act on behalf of the in-

terests both of the capitalist system and of male and white supremacy. Nonetheless, both historically and in the present, Australian political culture has retained a strong ideological commitment to "a fair go." This, along with some institutional structures, such as the trade union movement and the relatively accessible public sector, helped to give the femocrats a *prise* on (a very small amount of) state power. (For a discussion of the Australian social compact, see Chapter 1.)

If the state is not an undifferentiated category, neither are women. To speak globally of the relations of women to the state is to ignore race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and reproductive status, not to mention age. Patient analysis by women scholars and activists of color—Gloria Anzaldua, Patricia Hill Collins, Bonnie Thornton Dill, bell hooks, Cherié Moraga, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, among many others—has established the point that an undifferentiated use of the category "woman" necessarily evades and covers over the profound differences of location, consciousness, and history produced by racial and class oppressions.²⁶

I have said that the femocratic experiment depended on a gender analysis of the role of government. In this account I discuss issues of gender as they were put on the table by (mostly) white femocrats. But the story of Australian femocrats is a chapter in the international history of white feminism and its stormy encounters with women of color.

The underlying structure of Australian history is colonial in a double sense. The British treated (and still treat) Australians as colonials. And the Anglo-Australians in their turn have had a colonial relationship to the non-Anglo population. For the Aboriginal people, governments—more specifically, the bureaucracies implementing welfare policies—were consistently an instrument of oppression. For migrants of non-English-speaking background, government policies and market conditions combined to keep them at the bottom of the social ladder.

To the extent that the femocratic experiment was an experiment in government, by definition femocrats participated in the power structure that preserved white supremacy. I argue that the overwhelming "whiteness" of femocrats was one of the unspoken keys to their success. Despite the challenge to patriarchal structures represented by feminist claims, femocrats could be assimilated over time because of their strong cultural links to the men placing them in positions of power. (I come back to this point in Chapter 8.)²⁷

If the category of "women" is suspect for disguising the demographic dif-

ferences among women, it has also come under attack by postmodern theorists for embodying an "essentialist" view of women's alleged nature. The claims of writers like Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, Sara Ruddick, and others for a special sensibility among women as being collectively more affiliative and attuned to the needs of others than are men have been challenged as "essentialist" by writers such as Denise Riley, Donna Haraway, and Joan Scott, who point out that the categories "woman" and "gender" are socially constructed and cannot be assumed to have a particular transhistorical content. (For this debate, see Butler and Scott 1992.) A related debate concerns sameness and difference, as a matter of both strategy and theory. Should women seek equal access to public life on the basis that men enjoy, or should they require (and organize for) special treatment? (On this issue, see Vogel 1993; Bacchi 1990.)

In the world of politics these issues loom large. Do women who enter the public sphere automatically bring with them an impulse to make politics more democratic and more attuned to people's needs, because of their gender? Or does the belief that links women to a commitment to nurturance reveal a false essentialism about women's nature?

The argument I make in this book is that the content of gender—that is, how femaleness operates in the political realm—is socially constructed, both historically and politically. I do not assume that women are, either by nature or by socialization, automatically advocates of policies that attend to human needs, that is, that they are located to the left of the political spectrum. The evidence from the twentieth century is that women's allegiances can be found across the spectrum, including on the far right. But I argue that the meaning of being female is basically ideological and in particular that it is shaped in conscious political struggle.

In the case of the feminists, they drew on a strong historical tradition of organizing on behalf of women's economic independence. They shaped their claims on the state, as I will argue, in terms that were recognizable and acceptable to the political culture in which they operated, by constituting women as a sectional interest. They embraced women's difference, defined as economic disadvantage, as a means of justifying state intervention. And they deliberately linked gender, and femaleness, to a tradition of social justice. This cluster of ideas about women was a matter not of biology, but of strategy.

This study also illuminates the problem of the relationship of women to organizations—in particular, to bureaucracies. The work of the contempo-

rary feminist movement has largely been carried out by and within organizations, from Women's Studies programs to rape crisis centers. Most have tried to differentiate themselves from traditional male-dominated hierarchical structures, with varying degrees of success (see Ferree and Martin 1995b). It has been a commonplace of second wave writing to argue that feminism and hierarchical organizations, especially bureaucracies, are invariably in conflict. (See Ferguson 1984 and Iannello 1992 for a good summary of the feminist debate over hierarchy.)

Vivien Hart has pointed out that, given this assumption of hostility, there has been relatively little research on women in bureaucracies. Yet her research on U.S. women bureaucrats after World War I led her to conclude that "women bureaucrats can be active 'crusaders,' not passive 'servants of the state,' agents of change not necessarily marginalized or co-opted by their official standing."²⁸ My study joins a growing body of work on the experience of women in the operation of bureaucracies, in public administration and in corporations, and on the "gendered" nature of bureaucracies. (See among others, Acker 1990, 1992; Duerst-Lahti and Johnson 1989; Hale and Kelly 1989; Martin 1992b; Mills and Tancred 1992; Staudt, 1990.)

In this study, the question of how gender works in organizations (at least in the Australian context) is linked to the impact of having openly feminist women operating at senior levels of the public service. I do not assume that bureaucracy is intrinsically and irrevocably "masculine," that is, patriarchal. Indeed, this would be an essentialist position. But the evidence from my interviews shows the degree to which male assumptions and behaviors constrained and limited women's freedom to maneuver. Nonetheless, femocrats developed ways and means of using their presence as women to establish pockets of a distinctly alternative bureaucratic culture.

Finally, the femocratic experiment speaks to the question of effective strategies for social change. Some writers took a fairly dim view of the welfare state in relation to women, as noted, arguing that its social programs served to control women's reproductive and work lives, merely substituting public for private patriarchy (see, for example, Abramowitz 1988). But as the political center of gravity shifted sharply to the right in the 1980s and as the public sector safety net came under intense siege from proponents of the so-called free market, feminist scholars began a process of reevaluating the history of the welfare state in relation to gender and race (see Gordon 1990a; Valverde 1994, 210). Recent writings on the 1880s to 1930s in the United States, Great Britain, Europe, and Australia have documented the close links

between the political power acquired by the middle-class women's movement at the turn of the century and the development of the first elements of the modern welfare state (see Gordon 1994; Koven and Michel 1993; Muncy 1991; Sklar 1995; and Skocpol 1992).

The contradictions in this historical literature have important implications for the present. On the one hand, it seems evident that a public presence of feminist women gave a strong boost to a reforming impulse that sought to set limits on the untrammelled operations of a free market system of capitalism and to create a society with a safety net for its least privileged members. On the other hand, the efforts of some of the "maternalist" reformers helped to build systems (such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children) that were deeply oppressive to the nonelite women subject to them (see Gordon 1994).

Like their counterparts at the turn of the century, the femocrats, too, sought to use state power to intervene in behalf of the interests of women, especially the poorest and least politically powerful. In the following chapters, the attentive reader will pick up my mixed feelings toward the strategy femocrats followed. I admire and applaud their achievements in legitimizing and making broadly acceptable many of the assumptions of a feminist analysis. At the same time, I am critical of some aspects of their strategy and pessimistic about sustaining this effort over time, given the changes in the political climate and, more profoundly, the inevitably reformist nature of their effort (despite the more radical convictions of some of the participants). I address this question more fully in the Conclusion.

Method of Research

The strategy I followed was to interview a group of present and former femocrats and to supplement the interviews with further research, using mostly secondary sources but some additional primary materials, such as government reports and newspapers. One of the more agreeable parts of working on this book was collaborating with people who were close friends as well as colleagues.

In choosing people to interview, I used a method known to sociologists as snowball sampling. Starting with femocrats whom I knew well, I followed their recommendations to find others to interview. The snowball eventually went beyond my own circle in Sydney (New South Wales), as I interviewed people in Canberra (the federal capital), Adelaide (South Australia), and

Melbourne (Victoria), covering three of the four states where the femocracy is "old."²⁹ I also interviewed Elizabeth Reid, the first women's adviser, and the late Peter Wilenski, for their recollections of the early years of the femocracy. The chronological timeframe of this study is the period from 1972 to 1990, with additional information to bring the conclusions up to 1995, when I completed writing this book.

My sample comprised thirty-two present and former femocrats. They ranged in age from thirty-six to fifty-seven. Just over half (seventeen) described themselves as middle class or upper middle class; the remainder described themselves as originally working class. All held at least a bachelor's degree, and the majority (twenty) had some advanced graduate training or degrees, including degrees in law and doctorates. Most described their ethnic background as Anglo-Celtic. Two of the group were Aboriginal women; three were second-generation migrant women from China, Greece, and Poland; three were Jewish (one Australian born, two from the United States and Austria). Twenty of the thirty-two women had children. Their experience varied widely, from women in long marriages to single mothers to women who were in relationships with other women. The majority identified as heterosexual. My respondents held, or had held, positions as heads of women's units, as women's officers in state or federal departments of education, health, labor, and social welfare, as equal employment opportunity (EEO) or antidiscrimination officers, or as mainstream bureaucrats, with a few who had moved in and out of government during their careers. The small size of the cohort from which the femocrats were drawn is illustrated by the fact that my sample included two sets of sisters.³⁰

This book is both an oral history and an ethnography, delineating the shared culture of the femocrats. It is not that my respondents agreed on all of the issues. But they had a similar way of discussing them. A shared set of assumptions, growing from a shared experience, created a certain amount of common ground. I was able to write with some authority about this culture because I had been in effect a participant-observer within it for a period of eight years. As a former femocrat, I was able to conduct the interviews as an "insider." My own experiences helped to shape the questions, and my feeling of identification with the respondents created an interview situation in which the respondents and I often finished one another's sentences. My stake in telling the story of the femocrats inevitably colored the process of interview, transcript editing, and final interpretation.³¹

At another level, I wrote the book from the outside. Having left the world

of the femocracy, I was now placing this experience into its historical and political context, from the vantage point of some years and many thousands of miles of distance. In the interim, my own social location shifted, from femocrat to feminist academic. But my emotional connection to the femocratic experiment remained strong, as did my sense of admiration for their efforts. I cannot claim, therefore, to be objective. But I have tried to take account of my own involvement in the world described here and to balance my sense of identification with some critical perspective.³²

Structure of the Book

In Part I, I lay out the background: the distinctive features of the Australian political landscape (Chapter 1) and the historical conjuncture by which the femocracy came into being (Chapter 2). I trace the femocrats' first steps into the bureaucracy (Chapter 3) and the areas of reform that changed the gender landscape (Chapter 4).

In Part II, I examine the ideological debates surrounding the femocrats, their relationships to the bureaucracy and to the women's movement. I explore the definitions of the term *femocrat* and report how femocrats located themselves on an ideological spectrum from reform to revolution. I develop the idea that femocrats implicitly created a peculiarly Australian ideological position, constituting women as a sectional interest with a claim on the state (Chapter 5).

I also look at the issue of accountability to the women's movement (Chapter 6); of setting a class-conscious agenda (Chapter 7); and of how issues of race, ethnicity, and racism cut across the femocratic claim to be representing all women (Chapter 8).

In Part III, I report on gendered experiences: how being female and explicitly feminist affected femocrats' bureaucratic roles (Chapter 9), how sexual politics got played out for lesbians and "straight" women (Chapter 10), and how sisterhood was challenged and undermined by power structures and ideological differences (Chapter 11).

In Part IV, I document the roadblocks encountered by my respondents (Chapter 12), trace the rise of neo-liberalism and its effect on their work (Chapter 13), and explore the sense expressed by many of my respondents that they were experiencing the end of an era (Chapter 14). In the Conclusion I assess the femocratic experiment as a strategy, its strengths and its weaknesses, in the context of a rapidly changing economic and political climate.