

ບກວຈາຮນໍ້ານັ້ນສື່ອ

Gender and its effect on global economy and female labor policy: The remarks of Cynthia Enloe and Teri Caraway

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการทบทวนแนวคิดของ Cynthia Enloe และ Teri Caraway ที่เกี่ยวกับผลกระทบของเพศสภาวะต่อระบบเศรษฐกิจโลกและการก่ออุปป้องกฏหมายและนโยบายที่เกี่ยวข้องกับแรงงานโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในประเทศกำลังพัฒนา จากรายงานเขียนของ Cynthia Enloe เรื่อง “Blue Jeans and Bankers” ในหนังสือ *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* และงานเขียนของ Teri Caraway เรื่อง “Feminized Ghettos? The Structural Contours of Women’s Employment” ในหนังสือ *Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing* กลยุทธ์ทางการผลิตเพื่อลดต้นทุนและเพิ่มขีดความสามารถเพื่อแข่งขันในตลาดโลกของรัฐบาลหลายประเทศคือการลดและควบคุมค่าแรงของแรงงานเพศหญิง และการบังคับใช้นโยบายและกฎหมายแรงงานต่างๆ ที่มีนัยยะของว่าทกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับเพศสภาวะของหญิงและชายกับความสามารถในการทำงานที่แตกต่างกัน ทั้งนี้ การลดและควบคุมค่าแรงของแรงงานหญิง ยังก่อให้เกิดปรากฏการณ์ทางสังคมระหว่างประเทศ เช่น การย้ายถิ่นของแรงงานหญิงและความหมายใหม่ของ “สาวใช้” “แม่บ้าน” และ “ผู้หญิงทำงาน”

คำสำคัญ: เพศสภากาดะ เศรษฐกิจโลก แรงงานหญิง นโยบายแรงงาน

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Abstract

This article is the review on Cynthia Enloe and Teri Caraway remarks toward how gender affects the trend of global economy and how it shapes labor related laws and policies in several countries, particularly in developing nations. The review is based on Cynthia Enloe's work *Blue Jeans and Bankers* in "Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics" and Teri Caraway's work *Feminized Ghettos? The Structural Contours of Women's Employment* in "Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing". According to Enloe and Caraway, the important strategy for many countries to cope with rapid growth of the global economy and survive in the fierce competition in international market is to cheapened female labor. And with the gendered discourses of work-- ideas about men and women as distinct types of a labor-- implied in labor laws, regulations and policy, many governments thus can manage to keep the cost of its production relatively low. Furthermore, keeping female labor's at low wage also lead to several international social phenomena; including international women migration and the new perception of domestic workers, housewives, and working women.

Keywords: gender, global economy, female labor, labor policy

Since globalization turned the world into one global network, people around the world, too afraid to take the risk of being left behind, couldn't help but have to get on the train of globalization. The rising of global economy have pushed countries to cheapen their labor, especially on female labor, in order to catch the wave of globalized competitive productions across the nations. In the feminist sense, Cynthia Enloe points out that policy of making women's labor cheap is an important strategy for many countries to cope with rapid growth of the global economy. To express her view about how gendered policy is required in the global

economy, Cynthia Enloe strongly remarks that women's labor is employed in many production sectors due to their low wages which was controlled by feminization of works and idea of duties in the family or at home.

The notions of Enloe's view of cheap labor and her ideas on gender in the global economy --why women's labor was cheapened and how they were made cheap-- has portrayed in her works *Blue Jeans and Banker* from her book "Bananas, Beaches and Bases". However, Enloe's point of view had overlooked some crucial factors to explain why women's labor was being cheapened or how they were linked to the international market. To fill this gap, Teri Caraway's work *Assembling Women: the Feminization of Global Manufacturing* explains 'the gendered discourses of work' which also shed some light on why some employers continue to employ men despite hiring women cost less.

Cynthia Enloe believes that ,after the world war II, the global economy, mostly controlled by men bankers in major developed countries, affect women's labor by creating the strategies such as Export Processing Zone for indebted countries, especially in the Third World, to set aside territory specifically for factories producing goods for international market (Enloe, 2000). To do so, an indebted government has to offer their cheap labor for the productions- and women's labor, thought as the group easiest to cheapen, is the main group that has to be kept as low wage earners in order to increase the country's competitiveness in the international labor market-- in which, often times, through government's labor laws, regulations, and policies such as the maternity leave and the compensation regarding.

Enloe points out that, to cheapen women's labor, these four processes will be implied under the policy-making process, notably by the government in developing world:

(1) *Define women's labor's skills as natural and so there is no need to be trained.* This process depends on an assumption that women in the factories are there because they are doing naturally what women

always do. In this sense, women's labor is though as it is naturally cheap, in the way that requires no policy decisions, no pressure and no manipulation. For instance, in garment sector, sewing was defined as a skill every woman naturally possesses, which in fact, such thinking is not accurate at all. In addition, women are often persuaded that they don't deserve promotions because they will be quitting paid work once they get married and become unpaid housewives. These presumptions usually result in gender inequality policies towards female laborer in developing countries and eventually make belief that due to their natural skills and conditions, women should not be rewarded with promotions or better salary.

(2) *Create the sexual division of labor and reserve skilled jobs for men labor so that they can be rewarded with higher wages.* The factory's managers will select male labor to run specialized machines, like zippers inserter, and they would be acknowledged as cutters and pressers in believing that running specialized machinery, cutting and pressing require physical strength that only men have. Women, with their unskilled job and physical weaknesses have to be push out of the picture. Some government even tried to promote their sexual division of labor through government's campaigns; calling out for unmarried young women citizens to work as a seamstress in a factory miles away from home in exchange of a respectable femininity and appealing feminized morality. These campaigns are obviously designed to feminize sewing as a valuable (and low paid) job for women and in the same time, help to masculinize other skilled job by not presenting those jobs to female labor. In this sense, the government is now can distribute this sexual division of labor to the society and increase their competitiveness by employing low-waged female labors.

(3) *Justify paying women less by imaging that women are merely secondary wage earner in their families.* This process is driven by presumption that women were being supported by a man at home such as father, husband or brother so that they do not need to be paid as much as men. This presumption

also make belief that primary duties of women are housewives, mothers or as a 'dutiful daughters' at home. Even for single women labor, they were not considered as a serious member of the labor force because they were assumed to work only until they find a husband, settle down, and will be supported by him, not a career worker or a breadwinner like men.

(4) *Prevent women labor to organize by using militarized forces.*

Enloe strongly propose that this tactic rarely succeeds unless managers have assistance from government officials and women workers' male relatives. In order to accomplish this process and keep women low paid, government officials and their male relatives, in form of masculinized police, military forces and unsupportive husbands, fathers or brothers who sometimes try to keep those female labor from becoming politically involved. Government official have done their part by passing laws banning unions or authorize only unions that friendly to their labor policies and management. Enloe claims that, from her research, Indonesian government's military and the militarized police have helped keep thousands of Indonesian women's labor unorganized. The same story was being repeated also in Vietnam, China and Thailand where their governments have strong masculinized police and military forces that are deployed against their own citizens in the name of public order and national security (Enloe, 2000).

To sum up, Enloe tries to propose that women's labor is the crucial part of the global economy. By implement labor policies that cheapen their wages and hard works, feminize certain home and workplace tasks, rationalize the valuation of that work, along with constructing the illusion of "who they are", "what they capable to do" and "what are the limitations of their lives", countries can be enabled to produce low cost - high profit goods to the international market using their low-waged female labors.

However, in spite of the fact that many employers hire women when faced with extremely competitive markets, like Enloe's proposal, questions that rose above are that; why many employer continue to employ

men and still manage to compete effectively? And why some employers opt to hire women despite sometimes it incurs more costs than hiring men? To answer these questions, Terri Caraway's idea about 'Gendered discourses of works', which try to explain the fact that low wages is not the only matter in understanding the gendered political economy issues, shall be explored.

Caraway remarks that *gendered discourses of work* –ideas about men and women as distinct types of a labor (Caraway, 2007) –are necessary to explain not only the process of feminization but also answer why many employers are reluctant to cut costs by hiring cheap female labor. Gendered discourses of works based on an assumption that "*rational economic practice is partially constituted by gender and that employers view productivity and labor control through a gendered lens*" (Caraway, 2007). Caraway's research suggests that, in manufacturing process, although labor intensive sector is likely to employ women's labor more than in capital intensity one, however, in some occasions, gender can exert an impact on employer choices in sectors with similar wages and levels of capital intensity.

In many labor intensive industries in Indonesia such as wood product and petroleum/coal products, women are the minority labor-employed; less than 30 percent, whereas 78 percent of all employees in garment and footwear industries are female (Caraway, 2007). This statistic proves that there must be some managerial beliefs about characteristic of women workers related to "what is women's work". So when factory's managers try to 'put the right man to the right job' they often consider the assumptions about gendered discourses of work- *what gender is better for the job*- independent from the wage rate. From the discourses, women's labors are always labeled as a patient, disciplined and diligent worker who unlikely to go on strike. But in fact, it does not matter that women possess these characteristics or not, what is matter is the factory's managers and owners believe so. Thus, gendered discourses of work are another key to understand female labor's role in global economy.

In addition, gender in household is another part which shapes the global economy-- in the form of pressure that creates the wave of the international women migration. To cope with global restructuring of economy, more women become the waged workers or the breadwinner of their families. In the mean time, to cope with the patriarchal system of their responsibility as a mother or a wife, they need to seek survival strategies to manage their tasks at home as well. By hiring a migrant domestic worker, employed women not only resolve the thorny problem of childcare but also unburden themselves from a substantial amount of housework. This strategy of working housewives effect on the increasing of the feminization of migratory populations around the world, push more middle-class women in wealthier countries to enter the labor market to find help and thereby increasing the demand for female migrant caregivers to balance their roles at home. Furthermore, the global economy is generating a class of "new rich", the people who have benefited from international business expansion and can afford to pursue more affluent and comfortable lives (Caraway, 2007). To do so, they often employ migrant women who can serve as both caregivers and housekeepers to take care of their responsibility in the house.

In conclusion, the nature of political economy has pulled Third World women into domestic service around the world in order to fill the gap between the waged job and the patriarchal duties at home of the 'working women' in globalization era. Therefore, when we combine the needs for cheap labor in the global manufacturing sectors and high demand of migrant domestic women across the nations, we now clearly see that gender is the trend setter that shapes the global economy and the labor related policies in many ways.

It is obvious that Cynthia Enloe has brought the significant factor which has been hidden behind the issues of globalization to attention. Supported by the works of Terri Caraway, the notion that women's labor have been cheapened and rationalized devaluated under the men dominant

world has led to a broader picture of gender as a factor that drives the global economy, in form of gendered division of labor and discourses. In order to justify paying women less and spreading the gendered discourses of works, factory's managers need to be backed by policies and laws enforced by government and the male dominant system through militarized power- normally possessed by men- to control women's role in factories, political unions or international markets. Also, government would have to prevent those female from rethinking their old fashioned ideas about themselves, such as the meaning of marriage, motherhood and familial responsibility, because if this rethinking occurs, it will threaten the stability of the governments and effect negatively on economic sectors due to the higher production cost.

Therefore, from all mentioned above, analyzing gender as a factor that drives the global economy is crucial for the understanding of how gender shapes the labor laws and policy-making decisions. Since cheap labor, mostly refers to women's labor, under prospective of gendered analysis is now considered as a crucial part to coping with the competitive international markets, regarding to its powerful effect in international productions, it can be said that gender is absolutely required for countries wish to survive in the extreme competitive global economy in the age of globalization.

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