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No shortcuts to power: constraints on women's political effectiveness in Uganda

Anne Marie Goetz*

ABSTRACT

Numbers of women in public representative office have increased dramatically in Uganda since the introduction of the National Resistance Movement's 'no party' system, because affirmative action measures have been taken to reserve seats for them in Parliament and local government. This article offers an assessment of the impact of these measures on women's political effectiveness, examining how far women in Parliament have been able to advance gender equity concerns in key new legislation. The article suggests that the political value of specially created new seats has been eroded by their exploitation as currency for the NRM's patronage system, undermining women's effectiveness as representatives of women's interests once in office. This is because the gate-keepers of access to reserved political space are not the women's movement, or even women voters, but Movement elites. The women's movement in Uganda, though a beneficiary of the NRM's patronage, has become increasingly critical of the deepening authoritarianism of the NRM, pointing out that the lack of internal democracy in the Movement accounts for its failure to follow constitutional commitments to gender equity through to changes in key new pieces of legislation affecting women's rights.

INTRODUCTION

One of the many achievements for which Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's government in Uganda has been applauded internationally is the increase in the numbers of women in representative politics, from the national legislature (nearly 25 per cent of MPs are women as of the June

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2001 parliamentary elections) down through all five tiers of local government (where women average 30 per cent of local councillors). High-profile appointments of women to senior civil service positions have also significantly enhanced women's presence in the administration. These increases in women's public presence have been accomplished through the creation and reservation of new seats in national and local government for women, and through a principle of affirmative action in administrative appointments. This paper considers how the means of women's access to politics has affected their legitimacy and effectiveness in policy-making. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which women have benefited or lost from the suspension of party competition in Uganda's 'no-party' democracy. The relatively non-democratic means of women's access to power through reservations and affirmative action has been effective in ensuring their rapid promotion through the relatively 'benevolent autocracy' which Museveni's government represents. But this has been at the cost of politically internalised safeguards on these gains. Without institutionalised parties, and without a democratic decision-making structure within Museveni's 'Movement', women have no means of asserting their rights to be fronted as candidates in open elections, of bringing membership pressure to bear on party executives to introduce gender sensitivity in the staffing of party posts, or of using the dynamic of multiparty competition to develop political clout around a gendered voting gap. Instead, they have been recruited to the project of legitimising the Movement's no-party state, risking the discrediting of the entire project of representing women's interests in the political arena should the present system collapse.

The association of party competition with ethnic violence in Uganda, and the historical lack of interest that parties showed in promoting women's interests, led many women and feminists inside and outside Uganda to give a cautiously positive reception to the National Resistance Movement's 'temporary' suspension of party competition when it came to power in 1986. This freed women from the near impossible task of getting party backing for their candidacies. New reserved seats for women in Parliament and local government freed some women politicians from competing with men, and Museveni's willingness to appoint women to important posts in the public administration and the judiciary seemed to make a major crack in the 'glass ceiling' which so often holds able professional women back. This paper begins by explaining the initial relative enthusiasm of women and other social groups for Museveni's 'no-party' democracy in the

context of Uganda's history of ethnic conflict. It then describes the 'no-party' political system in Uganda, and goes on to detail the measures taken to bring greater numbers of women into politics. It reviews the record of women politicians in promoting gender equity in important new legislation on property rights and domestic relations, and finally considers how women's presence and interests have been institutionalised in the National Resistance Movement (NRM) itself, and the longer-term prospects for women's influence on policy-making.

ANTIPATHY TO POLITICAL PARTIES IN UGANDA

There is a strong tradition in feminist political science and activism which has been sceptical about the capacity of liberal or bourgeois democracy to either include women amongst decision-makers, or to admit of meaningful representation of their interests. This has led to an interest in alternatives to liberal representative democracy, particularly any measures that support the principle of group representation for women in politics, through for instance affirmative action measures to put some minimum number of women into political and bureaucratic positions, or to give representative groups of social and political minorities some powers of review over policies that affect their interests (Young 1990). The dismal track record of mainstream political parties in representing women's interests or fronting women candidates has produced a tradition of antipathy to political parties by women's movements the world over. As Marion Sawer (2000: 6), an Australian political scientist, observes:

The question of the relevance of parliamentary representation to women is linked to the historic ambivalence of women's movements concerning representative democracy and the party system on which it rests. This ambivalence manifested itself in the many 'non-party' organisations created in the aftermath of suffrage to encourage women's active citizenship without being drawn into the compromised world of man-made party politics.

In developing-country politics, this feminist antipathy to parties has become pronounced in the aftermath of liberation and democracy struggles in which women who have contributed to independence and democratisation have often been disappointed by relegation to a feminised and marginalised 'women's wing' of parties (Basu 1995; Hale 1997; Mariam 1994; Waylen 1994; Zaerai 1994). Alternatively, parties may be too weakly institutionalised to be perceived by women as the right place to start with feminist democratisation projects. They may be such blatantly hollow vehicles for powerful kleptocratic families

or ethnic groups, lacking any but the flimsiest organisational structures, decision-making processes, and ideologies, that they simply offer no purchase for an internal democratisation project designed to promote gender equity. There may be no discernible party platform, if politics is a matter of appealing to ascriptive loyalties rather than broader interests. In other words, party systems, and the ruling party, may be insufficiently institutionalised for women to challenge rules which exclude women – simply because there are no firm rules and rights, only patronage systems and favours. Alternatively, where a military or theocratic power structure bolsters ruling parties, there is little scope for women's engagement because the rules of these institutions explicitly deny women's full right of participation.

The association of party competition in Uganda with politicised ethnicity and religion, and with ghastly civil conflict, encouraged the antipathy to parties of many women and other social groups. No single party was able to transcend limited constituencies based on religion, ethnicity, language, or region. The two most significant parties, in terms of size of membership and role in post-colonial Ugandan politics, are the Democratic Party (DP), founded in 1956, and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), founded in 1958. The DP is a party of Catholics with its power base in the South. It has never been in office. The UPC is supported by the Protestant church and is strongest in the North, though it has been in and out of alliances with the people of Buganda – the largest and most powerful ethnic group, based in the centre of the country. The interests of the Baganda people, who still dominate the administration but have never captured power, have been represented variously by the Kabaka Yekka (Kabaka [King] Alone) party at the time of independence, and the Conservative Party now.

Uganda's first independent government was formed by the UPC in alliance with the Kabaka Yekka, in opposition to the Catholic DP. But the UPC clashed with Buganda, and in 1966 Obote suspended the constitution, declared a one-party state, and banished the political kingdoms, sending the Kabaka into exile. Amin's 1971 coup installed people of his Western Nile region in power. This paradigmatic homicidal military phallocrat did not of course bother with parties, vesting all executive and legislative powers in his own person. In the elections held after the 1980 Tanzanian invasion which put an end to Amin's regime, it is thought that victory was stolen from the DP by UPC election fraud (Human Rights Watch [HRW] 1999: 34). Also failing badly in that election was a small new party, the Ugandan

Patriotic Movement, formed by the defence minister in the transitional government, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. He promptly turned to armed rebellion against the increasingly despotic Obote regime.

Neither the UPC nor the DP had a commitment to advance women's interests in politics, though the UPC did support a number of 'Women in Development' initiatives which were beginning to attract foreign funding in the first half of the 1980s. Neither party challenged conservative ethnic and religious conventions about women's social, economic or political rights and roles. Both parties had women's wings through which women party members were expected to provide a hostessing service for leaders. There were some prominent women politicians prior to 1986, such as Cecilia Ogwal and Mary Okwa Okol in the UPC. After 1986 other women made an impact in the 'old' parties, like Maria Mutagamba and Juliet Rainer Kafire in the DP. These were not 'token' representatives of women, but hard-core party activists who had made it up through the ranks. While these women did not see themselves as representing women's interests in politics and never took a feminist stance in policy debates, it is perhaps not surprising that frustration with sclerotic leadership and the slavish sycophancy of the middle ranks prompted women such as Ogwal in the UPC and Maria Mutagamba in the DP to struggle for internal party reform in the post 1986 period, and eventually either form breakaway factions, or leave their parties altogether and join the NRM.

THE 'NO-PARTY' SYSTEM

The very first official act of the NRM government after the military triumph of the NRA was the suspension of party politics.¹ From the start, Museveni promoted an alternative and, he argues, particularly Uganda-appropriate version of democratic politics. It is based on the notion that all Ugandans can compete for office without party backing, but on the basis of their 'individual merit'. The democratic content of this 'no-party' system is grounded in the multiplication of opportunities for ordinary people to participate in decision-making through the local government Resistance Council system. Museveni justifies the continued suppression of party competition on the grounds that parties exacerbate ethnic conflict in Uganda (Kasfir 1998: 60; Museveni 1997: 187).

The system has evolved through various self-imposed moments of reckoning, each of which has stiffened the executive's resistance to political competition, and provided occasions for winnowing out more

democratically minded members of the NRM. These moments include the extended process of national consultation over a new constitution (1989–94), the Constituent Assembly debates to finalise the new Constitution (1994–95), and the Referendum over political systems of 29 June 2000. Since the passing of the Movement Act in 1997, the ‘no-party’ system has been known as the ‘Movement’ system. This Act gives the ‘Movement’ privileged Constitutional status, where it is described as the country’s political system, a system that prohibits parties from campaigning in elections, and will do so until a national majority recalls the system through a referendum. The 1997 Movement Act creates a new set of local council structures paralleling the existing system, and culminating in a National Movement Conference and a permanent secretariat. Membership in the local Movement Councils is mandatory for all Ugandans, and all members of Parliament are obliged to be members of the National Conference. The Movement Secretariat, located across the street from the national Parliament, has a budget vote, and indeed the entire Movement structure is directly funded by the Ugandan state, making it a bureaucracy supported by taxpayers, not by its own membership’s contributions.

Though obviously inspired by other one-party states in Africa, Museveni has been at pains to distinguish the NRM’s regime from them. David Apter (1997: lxviii) describes the system as a ‘consultative democracy’, in which various measures are used to share opportunities for the enjoyment of political office with excluded groups or with potential opposition groups. The NRM has another name for this consultative spirit: ‘broad-based’ governance – the notion of embracing as many different interests within the NRM as possible. However, the mechanics of achieving this ‘broad-based’ character have never been clearly spelled out, and it seems that it is left to the discretion of Museveni to decide who or what groups are included (Besigye 2000).

‘Broad-based’ government was initially approached through the formation of a highly inclusive coalition government in which important representatives of all active political parties were given significant Cabinet positions. This coalition has narrowed over time, both because of disaffection by opposition members with corruption and government complicity in human rights violations, and because of a narrowing and tightening of the army and southern-based clique around the president (HRW 1999). Pains are still taken to assign political and administrative positions to people across the spectrum of sectarian and other affiliations, but the result is now not so much

reconciliation as intrigue and clientelism. The representation of social differences is approached as a strategy for palliating the ambitions of other parties to have access to power and economic resources, not as a way of building accountability.

WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Women's professional organisations, religious associations, non-governmental development organisations, rural self-help groups, and feminist policy advocacy groups have thrived under the NRM, constituting, according to Aili Mari Tripp's (2000: 23) detailed study of the Ugandan women's movement, 'one of the strongest mobilised societal forces in Uganda', and indeed, 'one of the strongest women's movements in Africa' (*ibid.*: 25). This was not the case at the moment of the NRA's victory in 1986, when autonomous women's associations had atrophied or been driven underground by the efforts of Uganda's authoritarian rulers to co-opt and control the country's female constituency. It is thus testimony to the resilience and energy of women in civil society in Uganda that a small group of urban women's organisations mobilised to lobby Museveni soon after his take-over. They demanded that women be appointed to leadership positions, arguing that women's support for the NRA during the 1981-86 guerrilla war justified this. Later that year, one new urban feminist association, Action for Development (ACFODE), a small group of professional women, conferred with other women's organisations to generate a list of demands to present to the new government (*ibid.*: 70). This hastily compiled women's manifesto called for the creation of a women's ministry, for every ministry to have a women's desk, for women's representation in local government at all levels, and for the repeal of the 1978 law linking the National Council of Women to the government.

Museveni made quick political capital with urban women. In response to their initial submission, he appointed women who were strong NRM supporters to very prominent positions: Gertrude Njuba, a high-level combatant in the NRA, was appointed deputy minister of industry, Betty Bigombe was given the vital task of leading the project of pacification of the North, and Victoria Sekitoleko became minister of agriculture. Two years later, Museveni appointed two women lawyers (Miria Matembe and Mary Maitum) to the Constitutional Commission, and also created a Ministry of Women in Development.

He conceded to the demand to create a seat for a woman at all levels of the now five-tier (village to district level) Resistance Council system. This was put into practice in the 1989 local council elections. And, in a gesture which laid the foundation for the pattern of patronage appointments which was to follow, Museveni went one step beyond women's demands for political representation. They had asked for seats for women in local councils, but he added thirty-four dedicated seats for women in the national assembly (the National Resistance Council), one for each of the country's Districts. Election to this position was to be determined not by popular suffrage, but by an electoral college composed of leaders (mostly male) of the five levels of the RC system.

A critical opportunity for the women's movement to insert its concerns into the institutions and politics of the country was presented by the extended period of preparing a new (the fourth) constitution for the country between 1989 and 1995. The two women lawyers on the constitutional commission (which prepared drafts between 1989 and 1993) introduced clauses on matters of importance to women, and the women's ministry organised a nation-wide consultation exercise to compile a memorandum for the Commission which set out women's interest in seeing the repeal of legislation which discriminates on the basis of sex, particularly in relation to marriage, divorce, and property ownership.

Fifty-two women, or 18 per cent of delegates, participated in the Constituent Assembly (CA) constitutional debates of 1994-95. Most of these were occupying the seats reserved for women representatives from the Districts, but nine had won in open contests to be county representatives. The large number of women in the CA enabled women to act as a distinct negotiating and voting block. Most of them joined a non-partisan Women's Caucus, which was very strongly supported by the women's movement, particularly when it came to lobbying for gender equity clauses in the Constitution. The Women's Caucus was instrumental in ensuring that a number of key provisions were included in the Constitution, such as: a principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex; equal opportunities for women; preferential treatment or affirmative action to redress past inequalities; provision for the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission; and rights in relation to employment, property, and the family.

One of the most contentious issues defended by the Women's Caucus at that time was the use of the principle of affirmative action to reserve one third of local government seats for women. Many male CA members objected to this on the grounds that it violated the principle

of equal rights in the Constitution. Women delegates countered that participatory democracy did not deliver equal participation of women without specific instruments to enable women to attain representative office, particularly at the local level (Ahikire 2001: 13). The measures proposed by the Women's Caucus to promote women's presence in policy-making arenas rely on the mechanism of affirmative action: giving women a special advantage in compensation for a history of disadvantage. The practical methods of operationalising affirmative action in politics do not involve giving women advantages in political contests with men, but rather, the creation of new public space reserved exclusively for women: new bureaucracies for women, new parliamentary and local government seats for women-only competition, new ministerial positions. This 'add-on' mechanism of incorporating women into public life has negative implications for the perceived legitimacy, and ultimately the political effectiveness, of women politicians, as is evident from a closer look at the impact of the 30 per cent reservation for women in local government.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESERVED SEATS FOR WOMEN'S LEGITIMACY AS POLITICIANS

The way the one-third reservation for women was implemented in the 1997 Local Government Act creates ambiguities about the constituencies they are supposed to represent. The one-third reservation has not been applied to existing seats in local government councils. Rather, the number of seats on all local councils (LCs – previously Resistance Councils) save at the village level have been expanded by a third to accommodate women. The 'women's seats' therefore do not disturb established competitions for ward seats. Instead, new 'women's seats' are cobbled together out of clusters of two to three wards, in effect at least doubling the constituency that women are meant to represent, compared to regular ward representatives. The 'after-thought' nature of these seats is emphasised by the fact that elections for the women's seats are held separately, a good two weeks after the ward elections. And the mechanics of voting are different: instead of a secret ballot, voters indicate their choice through the old bush war system of physically queuing up behind the candidate in question (this was changed to a secret ballot for district-level women's councillor seats in 2001, in time for the 2002 local council elections). In the 1998 local government elections, irritation with this unwieldy system, as well as voter fatigue, resulted in failure to achieve quora for the women's

elections all over the country. Eventually, after several attempts to re-run these ballots, the results from sub-optimal voter turn-outs were accepted, with obvious implications for the perceived legitimacy of the women who won the seats. Women now in these seats profess confusion over who or what they are supposed to represent: women in their wards, or all of the population in their wards. Either way, they are very often sidelined by the 'real' ward representatives, to whom locals go first with their problems (Ahikire 2001).

Similar ambiguities and constraints afflict the women in the fifty-three reserved district-level parliamentary seats. As detailed by Sylvia Tamale (1999), it has never been clear whether these women district representatives are supposed to represent women's interests. The Constitution makes a subtle distinction between these women representatives and other categories of special representatives (for whom there are simply a few national seats, not district seats), such as youth, workers, and disabled people. Representatives of other special interest groups are elected directly by their national organisations, but women are elected through an electoral college composed of local government politicians from the district. Affirmative action seats for youth, the disabled, the army, and workers, are described as being for people who will be 'representatives of' these special interests. Women district representatives, in contrast, are not described as representatives *of women* in the Constitution, but as representatives *for* each district (*ibid.*: 74). Women running for these seats must therefore appeal to a narrow electorate of mostly male district elites, not a broader electorate, and inevitably this favours elite and socially conservative candidates. Indeed, in many districts, professing a commitment to women's rights might well constitute a disqualification in the eyes of the electoral college. However, it should not be assumed that affirmative action women MPs are necessarily diffident about the gender-equity agenda. One of the most outspoken feminists in Parliament, Miria Matembe, has repeatedly run for and won the affirmative action seat for her district.

The 'add-on' mechanism of incorporating women to politics has been based on a principle of extending patronage to a new clientele, and indeed of 'extending the state' – creating new representative seats, new political offices, and where possible, new political resources. Women are not the only beneficiaries of this approach. It is the principle behind the reinstatement of traditional kingdoms in 1995, and behind the creation of new districts prior to each presidential election.² In the capital city, one of the most visible examples of this has

been the continuous creation of new Ministries, and 'minister of state' positions which have bloated the Cabinet. One third of these new 'minister of state' positions are held by women. Young parliamentarians are the other chief beneficiary of Museveni's ingenuity in fabricating new positions. A sudden expansion in these positions in 1999 scotched an incipient rebellion by young parliamentarians and women MPs who were expressing concern about corruption in high places.³

The 'add-on' method influences the relationship between women in office and those in the women's movement. The reservations for women-only competition mean that women are treated as a social group whose disadvantage justifies protected access to the state. But this recognition is not accompanied by an acknowledgement that women as a group may have specific interests which need to be identified through a process of public debate involving women in civil society. Thus it is their gender, not their politics, that is their admission ticket. The implicit assumption is that gender acts as a proxy for the political and social values held by an individual (Tamale 1999: 77). Moreover, it is assumed that these values are shared by all women. There are no further screening processes beyond ascertaining the candidate's gender, no process of winnowing out likely candidates according to their effectiveness in promoting any particular party platform or social programme, and no process to enable the women's movement to review candidates. The efforts to include women do not threaten incumbent politicians or male aspirants. They do not challenge entrenched interests by suggesting that women as a group may have a set of interests to represent which may change the policy orientation and beneficiaries of these institutions.

WOMEN'S RESISTANCE TO PATRONAGE

The pay-off for the NRM of its patronage of women is a large vote bank. Moreover, the NRM has made efforts to construct women as a non-sectarian political constituency, a model of the non-ethnic vision of citizenship and political participation promoted in the 'no-party' political system, and therefore key to Museveni's legitimation project. In the view of one opposition candidate for the presidential elections of 2001, one of Museveni's greatest successes has been to capture this female voting constituency:

Museveni has tremendous hold, especially in rural areas. Women have been exposed to change possibilities. Out of 10 rural women, 7 will be favourable.

He reached them by demonstrating that he could put women in the leadership. (Interview, February 2000, name withheld on request)

This notion of women as a vote bank reserved for Museveni was invoked in a series of advertisements appearing in the newspapers in January 2001 before the presidential elections. Entitled 'Message from the Women's Movement for the Return of Yoweri K. Museveni (WORK)', the mysterious organisation 'WORK', speaking for the entire women's movement, enjoined women to vote for Museveni on the grounds of 'what he has done for them'. It elaborated:

Museveni's administration has made women visible, given them hope for themselves and their children together with power to: participate in nation-building and decision-making; access education and microfinance; express themselves at all levels. (*New Vision* 9.1.2001)⁴

This vision of grateful sycophancy is unrepresentative of the women's movement's position on the NRM and Museveni, which has not been uncritical of the NRM's instrumental interest in women as a constituency. But the women's movement has sometimes been in a reactive, rather than pro-active, position in the competition to establish the authoritative discourse on the purpose and means of women's inclusion in politics. Up to the June 2001 elections, the women's movement had not put pressure on the NRM to institutionalise women's political gains and secure them from a future loss of patronage. Such institutionalisation would involve revising the electoral system to enable women to compete more effectively against men for 'mainstream' seats. This would require a review of means of articulating and promoting women's interests in politics, which would include a review of the regulations on political parties, starting with the NRM itself, and with the perpetually stalled Political Organisations Bill that is intended to establish just how limited the freedom of association will be until the next referendum on political systems.⁵

There were a number of occasions when it would have been possible for the women's movement to reflect upon the implications of the country's political system for women's political effectiveness. During the 1994-95 Constituent Assembly debates, the Women's Caucus did not take a stand on the debate over the country's political system. As the Caucus was deliberately non-partisan, it did not enter into a relationship with the multiparty caucus, the National Caucus for Democracy, made up of most of the 66 delegates known to be associated with opposition parties. Article 69 of the new Constitution provided for the continued suppression of political party activity and

freedom of association in order to entrench the no-party 'Movement' system of government, subject to review after five years by a nation-wide referendum. A motion moved in the Constituent Assembly by the multipartyist delegates to repeal this article was defeated by 199 to 68 votes, and this resulted in a dramatic walk-out by sixty-four multipartyists and sympathisers. The six women who joined were already associated with a pre-1986 political party.

The Women's Caucus's positions on key debates in the CA was in part informed by the nation-wide consultation process which the women's ministry had conducted in the preceding years in order to collect women's perspectives on important areas for legal change. The training materials for this consultation and the final recommendations to the Constitutional Commission contain little reflection on the implications of different party and electoral systems, or different ways of controlling executive power, for women's electoral prospects or for their capacity to influence policy-making. The concern at the time was with the (admittedly important) issues of extending all basic human rights to women, entrenching the principle of affirmative action to compensate for historical discrimination, and the repeal of legislation which discriminates against women. In the women's ministry summary of the advantages of the new constitution for women, no mention is made of the constraints on political parties. A passing reference is made to the fact that gender equity provisions in the constitution mean that no women- or men-only party can be formed, and that the national executive of any political party must have representation of women. However, what this might mean in a 'no-party' context is not discussed (Ministry of Gender 1995: 8-9).

There was a similar lack of discussion of the implications of a lack of pluralism for women's policy ambitions or for their prospects as politicians on the occasion of the June 2000 referendum. The engagement of political parties in the referendum was highly controlled by the Movement, which appointed a movement-sympathetic 'multipartyist' to head the campaign for pluralism. The use of government resources by Movement organs throughout the country to support the government's position also undermined the capacity of opposition parties to participate, and in consequence they observed a boycott, hoping to challenge the legitimacy of the results by discouraging participation in the vote. Women's organisations did not step in to protest the suppression of engagement by opposition parties, or to review whether the NRM's achievements merited a vote for an indefinite continuation of no-party rule.

The restraint shown by the women's movement in engaging in debates on pluralism should not be taken as collusion with the deepening authoritarianism of the Movement. It is testimony, instead, to the growing risks associated with opposing the Movement, and to the fact that the malingering old parties do not offer a credible alternative arena for women's political activism. The women's movement diffidence in debates on pluralism is also about its enduring scepticism about the value of engaging with the state. Just before the 2000 Referendum, the feminist lawyer Sylvia Tamale explained women's neutral stance on the Movement versus multiparty debate:

Yes, one state machinery may offer a better opportunity for women to advance their cause than the next. But women understand that at the end of the day, they have to fend for themselves. The state, by its patriarchal nature, is not a promising or consistent ally of women. (*Sunday Monitor* 9.4.2000)⁶

This statement invokes the importance of autonomy for the women's movement, and contains a reminder about the reasons for which women in Uganda have for so long avoided engaging with the state. But the failure to keep a critical eye on the undermining of democracy in the country – risky as it is to challenge the NRM – has contributed not only to a deepening stagnation and paralysis in the old political parties, but to an erosion of democracy within the NRM itself. By neglecting questions of party development, the women's movement has failed to scrutinise the position of women within the NRM, and, as will be shown below, has done little to promote the institutionalisation of gender equity concerns within the party: in its recruitment, candidate promotion, policies, or leadership.

There is an exception to this. In the run-up to the 2001 parliamentary elections one umbrella women's organisation, the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), spearheaded an initiative which took public steps towards challenging the lack of internal democracy in the Movement. UWONET's (2000) 'People's Manifesto', backed by like-minded NGOs, broached the issue of internal reform in the Movement, raising the need to develop means of incorporating women's concerns to the National Executive Committee and the Movement Secretariat. Although a UWONET representative admitted that there had been little uptake of this manifesto amongst women's organisations or electoral candidates at the time,⁷ there is evidence of a sea-change in the relationship of the women's movement to the NRM since the 2001 elections. For a start, more women than ever before were elected to the open seats, making up nearly a quarter of the women in Parliament

(seventeen out of seventy-five). The marked sense of female political assertiveness this represents is underwritten by current efforts to revitalise the Women's Caucus in Parliament (it had met only twice between 1996 and 2001). Meanwhile, many women's associations, badly bruised by losing important legislative battles over the Land Act in 1998 and the much-postponed Domestic Relations Bill (both discussed in the next section), are reassessing the value of the NRM's patronage, considering its failure to follow its Constitutional commitments to gender equity through to legislative change. A new association, the Coalition for Political Accountability to Women, was formed in March 2001 to act as a lobby to support women politicians in taking a more independent stance in advancing gender equity issues in Parliament.

WOMEN IN POLITICS AND GENDER-FRIENDLY LEGISLATION

One measure of the institutional security of women politicians, and of their relative autonomy from male or party interests which are hostile to a gender equity agenda, is their capacity to promote gender-equity legislation. Women in Parliament started out well on this score, passing an amendment to the penal code in 1990 that made rape a capital offence.⁸ A few years later, women Constituent Assembly delegates were effective in writing gender-equity provisions into the new constitution. But between the CA debates and the run-up to the 2001 parliamentary elections, there was a notable flagging of energy around a gender-equity agenda, or around efforts to act in concert on other issues. The Women's Caucus in Parliament was largely inactive between 1996 and 2001. Women politicians did not use their valuable positions on parliamentary committees to promote a united policy agenda, and, as will be shown in the discussion of the 1998 Land Act, there is considerable disagreement between them on key pieces of legislation which have related to women's rights in the past few years. A major stumbling block is that it is impossible to pass new legislation without the endorsement of the top leadership of the Movement, yet, as will be shown in the next section, there are no means of debating new legislation within the Movement, even if women politicians within the Movement were to coordinate efforts. At least two important recent efforts to promote women's rights have quite clearly lacked this essential Movement endorsement.

The most dramatic example of Movement hostility to women's concerns, and indeed, direct presidential sabotage, was the under-

mining of efforts to include a clause in the 1998 Land Bill to give women equal rights with men over joint property, such as the homestead. Women in civil society first took up this issue in 1997, joining the Uganda Land Alliance (a civil society coalition), and conducting research nation-wide into women's land ownership patterns. They demonstrated the prevalence of the tragedy of widows being forced off their homesteads by their husband's families. They also argued in favour of what became known as the 'spousal co-ownership' amendment, since without wives' right to homestead land, husbands could sell family land without their wives either consenting, or gaining any financial benefit from the transaction (UWONET 1997; UWONET & AWOPA 1998).

Assiduous lobbying by women's groups generated support from many women MPs (but not three of the then five women in Cabinet, who remained strongly opposed). Particularly important was the fact that Miria Matembe championed the amendment on spousal co-ownership of the marital home, and land used for daily sustenance of the family, tabling and passing it in Parliament on 25 June 1998.⁹ But when the Land Act was published a week later, there was no trace of this amendment. It took months for women MPs and women in civil society to trace this 'lost amendment'. They were told that there had been procedural irregularities in the way they had tabled the amendment which then disqualified it. In the end, the President admitted that he had intervened personally to delete the amendment (Tripp 2002). He had already made his opposition to the notion of women having rights in their husband's property known, partly through allegations that women would make a capital accumulation strategy out of serial marriage and divorce. His justification for the move was that the amendment belonged more appropriately to the pending Domestic Relations Bill.

The president's suggestion to append the co-ownership amendment to the Domestic Relations Bill (DRB) as good as extinguished the amendment altogether, because of the political near impossibility of passing the DRB. Various drafts of the DRB have been debated since 1964. Since 1995 the need for legislation to bring family laws in Uganda into conformity with the guarantee of sexual equality in the constitution has become urgent, but the DRB has not even been tabled in Parliament. The Bill aims to protect women's rights in relation to polygamy, bride-wealth, child custody, divorce, inheritance, consent in sexual relations, and property ownership. This kind of legislation, which challenges men's rights to control women and children in the

family, is deeply controversial in a sexually conservative society. The item in the Bill which has aroused the most ferocious objections from many men relates to criminalising marital rape. In addition, the Muslim community has objected to the Bill's restrictions on polygamous unions. Already burdened with these 'unpassable' clauses, the DRB can hardly act as a vehicle for pushing through the spousal co-ownership clause.

The Bill has no champion amongst women MPs. Rebecca Kadaga, whose background as a women's rights lawyer makes her a likely supporter of the DRB, and whose position as a cabinet minister in charge of Parliamentary Affairs would enable her to smooth the passage of the Bill, has not offered any support. Other prominent women MPs who are vocal on women's rights, notably Winnie Byanyima, Miria Matembe, Winnie Babihuga, or Proscovia Salaamu Musumba (who extended, then withdrew, an offer to table the DRB as a private member's bill), have also not wanted to risk their political careers on such unpopular legislation. The objections of the Muslim community made the last minister of gender, labour, and community development, Janat Mukwaya, herself a Muslim, deeply ambivalent about the Bill. She has refused to be associated with it. The criminalisation of marital rape has made the Bill hard for the minister of justice to stomach. A politician from the old Buganda party, he exhibited marked indifference to gender-equity legislation, and admitted to members of the women's movement that he had trouble in presenting this Bill to Cabinet because he simply could not understand the concept of marital rape.

The minister of justice has done more than foot-dragging to hobble another important piece of legislation: the Sexual Offences Bill. This draft legislation, which raises the age of consent to 18, is very popular among Ugandan women because of the deep outrage about what is called 'defilement' of young girls, particularly in the context of the rapid spread of AIDS. However, when the minister of justice presented it to Cabinet in 1999, it was referred back to the Law Reform Commission because of the poorly prepared principles and missing background documentation justifying the law. The Commission was mystified, given that the principles and documentation had been prepared in full. It transpired that the Minister of Justice, personally objecting to setting the age of consent at 18, had taken it upon himself to revise the draft legislation and lowered the age to 16, re-drafting the legislation in great haste.¹⁰ This cavalier disregard for the views of the women's movement as expressed in the Commission's work shows

contempt for the expression and pursuit of women's interests through political processes.

Another sign of a lack of a women's rights agenda in politics is the non-appearance of the Equal Opportunities Commission. All of the other government commissions provided for in the Constitution have been created (e.g. commissions on human rights, law reform, elections, and judicial service). It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender to ensure that the Equal Opportunities Commission is set up. But after an initial costing exercise in 1998, no further effort was made by the ministry. The issue has no particular champions in Parliament.

There is, however, one noticeable contribution which women MPs have made: some of them are beginning to constitute an anti-corruption lobby. Winnie Byanyima is the most outspoken critic of government corruption, spearheading the first censure motion in Parliament against the MP Brigadier-General Muhwezi, and subsequently Sam Kutesa. Other MPs such as Salaamu Proscovia Musumba have joined efforts to pass a Budget Bill which would impose much greater transparency and disaggregation in the presentation of budgets for ministries and also for districts. In the Ministry for Ethics and Integrity, which is the focal point for all anti-corruption bureaucracies and campaigns, the minister is the important woman's rights activist, Miria Matembe. Opposition MPs such as Cecilia Ogwal (UPC) and Juliet Rainer Kafire (DP) have been much more eager to join in efforts to challenge corruption than in women's rights legislation, for the obvious reason that this gives them a means of exposing the Movement government.

For women within the Movement, it may be that raising issues of corruption is the only way in which to make an implicit critique of the lack of internal democracy in the Movement. Figures who have been targeted in Byanyima's censure motions are in fact key members of the privileged clique around Museveni. Women MPs have concentrated more closely on corruption than any other group in Parliament, save for the group of new/young parliamentarians between 1996 and 1999, after which key leaders amongst them were neutralised by absorbing them to Cabinet by making them ministers of state. Byanyima's crusade is beginning to bite, in the sense that she has come under increasingly personal attack from the president himself. Her relationship with him worsened drastically following her husband Colonel Kiiza Besigye's outspoken statements on corruption in the government and the army in early 2000, and his campaign running against Museveni for president in early 2001. Amazingly, Besigye's

presidential aspirations, combined with Byanyima's unpopularity within the Movement, did not prevent her from being re-elected in 2001, when her Mbarara constituency rallied behind her. However, ostracism by the Movement now profoundly undermines her capacity to continue to work for internal democracy in the Movement. Her crusade also demonstrates the tremendous risks of challenging vested interests in a semi-authoritarian system: she has been subject to severe threats to her physical security, and has had to fight trumped-up charges of sedition.

THE NON-PARTY MOVEMENT: PROBLEMS OF
INSTITUTIONALISATION AND CONSEQUENCES FOR WOMEN

The preceding discussions about the means of promoting women in politics, and their effectiveness as representatives of women's interests while there, beg questions about how women have been incorporated to decision-making within the Movement itself. Is Musveni's promotion of women a personal project, or does it stem from a decision taken by the Movement, perhaps as a result of pressure from women within the Movement? Does the Movement have a vision of gender equity and women's rights which it hopes to promote politically? Does it have measures to support women Movement supporters who stand for open seats? Answers to these questions reveal the extremely limited extent to which the Movement is institutionalised as a political organisation, and reveal, therefore, the severity of the obstacles which women face to institutionalising gender equity in political competition in Uganda.

This section discusses the consequences for women – and indeed any Movement member unconnected to significant patronage systems – of the following features of Movement organisation (or lack of organisation): organisation of the local 'Movement Councils', selection and role of the National Executive, role of the Movement Secretariat, support to candidates for local and national elections, and the lack of a Movement policy statement.

In the first half of the 1980s, no efforts were put into constituting the NRM into a political party – it was merely the public negotiator for the National Resistance Army (NRA). At the time of coming to power in 1986, the NRM/A was primarily a guerrilla army, given coherence by its overwhelming loyalty to the person of Museveni and its one priority of seizing power. Apart from presiding over the Resistance Council system in liberated areas, the NRM/A had no formal internal structures for electing leaders or debating policies. It was also not a 'movement' in any sensible use of the term. It has started out as a

fighting force of a little over thirty men, and by the 1986 victory controlled just 20,000 soldiers, with no real branch structure, and no political base beyond the army and the ethnic group of the Banyankore in the South, and the allies it had gained among the Baganda people in the Luwero triangle. Between 1986 and 1997 the NRM set up shop in an office block in Kampala and established directorates to perform some functions associated with a party: political mobilisation, organising Resistance Council elections, supporting the NRM representatives in the districts, supporting a caucus of NRM MPs in government, and organising political education and self-defence for villagers (*chaka muchaka*).

The women's movement, like most other sectors of civil society, was not centrally engaged in Museveni's liberation struggle. However, women in combat areas in the centre and south of the country did give marked support to the bush war by acting as couriers, providing nursing skills and caring for orphans. A few women were prominent as fighters in the NRA and activists in the NRM, but they did not form themselves as a distinct constituency. There was no women's wing, and senior women such as Gertrude Njuba did not identify themselves with women's issues. The NRM thus differed from liberation movements in other African countries such as South Africa, Ethiopia or Eritrea in the sense that it was not a broad-based social movement. Women supporters and combatants had not had a chance to articulate a position on internal representation of women, or on gender equity in party policy. In the post-1986 period, senior women within the NRM have diverged according to their interest in gender-equity in politics. Some, such as Gertrude Njuba, Betty Bigombe, Vice-President Specioza Kazibwe, and Janat Mukwaya, have not taken a feminist stance on policy debates. Others, such as Miria Matembe, Winnie Byanyima, and Rebecca Kadaga, have been much more critical in relation to government foot-dragging on gender-equity. Some of these women (Matembe,¹¹ Kadaga) appear to have been neutralised by inclusion in the Cabinet, and an attempt was made to bring Byanyima into the solidarity of the 'High Command' by making her – for a short period – Director for Information in the Movement Secretariat in 1997.

There has been no structured approach to encourage women's engagement in setting policy priorities within the NRM. Senior women in the Movement appear to have focused upon the politics of national reconstruction in the post-1986 period, rather than upon internal democratisation. The Movement has one official system for articulating

and aggregating interests, and that is through the 'Movement Councils' parallel to all local councils – in effect a rural party branch system, intended to act as a caucus for movement members in the Local Councils. The chair of every Local Council is automatically the chair of the parallel Movement Council. There are no measures to ensure parity in the participation of women in these Movement Councils, nor to ensure their representation in the leadership of these councils. In any case, the automatic leadership of these councils by the LC chairperson ensures almost completely male leadership, since most elected LC chairs at all levels are men.

One possible reason why little attention was paid to women's engagement in the Movement Councils is because a parallel structure exclusively for women was set up earlier: the National Women's Council system. No provision for a structured input of policy concerns from the Women's Councils to the Movement Councils (or even the Local Councils) exists. This underlines women's separateness, and strengthens the notion that women's participation in politics is constructed around notions of their difference from men, rather than equality.

There are other organs for policy-making in the Movement: the National Executive Committee of the Movement, elected at the Movement's National Conference, and the Movement's Parliamentary Caucus. More important still are the decision-making arenas in government: the Cabinet, and the informal and shifting collection of friends and advisers around the president. Elections for the first Movement National Executive Committee took place in July 1998 at the first National Movement Conference, composed of 1,600 delegates, almost all of whom, with the exception of the directly elected local government representatives, were from a range of NRM-created political positions – such as representatives from the National Councils for Women, and councils for youth, workers, persons with disabilities, and so on. Elections to the top three posts: chair, vice-chair, and national political commissar, were unopposed, going to Museveni, Alhajji Moses Kigongo (vice-chair of the NRM since the days of the bush war), and James Wapakhabulo (the parliamentary speaker). There was no discussion of whether a woman ought to take one of these positions, and indeed, Vice-President Kazibwe had to suffer the indignity of not being awarded a sinecure parallel position in the NEC in the way that Museveni and Wapakhabulo had been (in her case, she could have been the Movement vice-chair). There are 150 people on the NEC. This includes a few seats for representatives of special interest

groups (five are for women), while the rest are filled by the forty-five district chairpersons (all men), and one MP chosen from each district (most of whom are men). According to one of the few women MPs on the NEC, there has been no discussion since 1998 of gender issues, no mention of any need for the Movement to offer women special support in elections, or to create a quota to ensure that a certain proportion of Movement candidates are women. The NEC has never functioned as an effective policy-setting body. Prior to 1997 it was supposed to meet at least once every three months, but it had not met for three years prior to the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution (Besigye 2000), and has met rarely since 1998. Obviously important policy positions are established elsewhere.

There is no comprehensive statement of Movement policy, and it would be difficult to put a single label on the Movement's ideology. Its values are summarised in a thin 1999 document that updates the NRM's 1986 10-point programme into a 15-point programme. Gender is mentioned at point 14, which endorses affirmative action as a means to encourage political, social and economic participation of marginalised groups (Movement Secretariat 1999: 46). The justification for this is instrumental: 'the policy of fending for the oppressed and marginalised has clearly shown that there is a lot of potential which can be tapped if gender and marginalised group-responsive programmes are emphasised' (*ibid.*). The terms 'gender-equity' or 'equality' are never used, nor are any measurable goals mentioned, in terms of aiming for parity in women's and men's political or economic engagement. According to a member of the four-person committee in the Directorate that wrote the 15-point programme, this 'gender' point was not raised by the one woman on the committee, nor was it promoted or supported by the Secretariat's gender sub-directorate. Instead, it was put there by other directors conscious of the importance of consolidating the Movement's success with the female constituency.

The Cabinet is an important forum for debating policy. But although there were six women ministers in the 1996–2001 Cabinet, none of them was close to real decision-making. Research by the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE 2000: 10) has shown that these women control small budgets, in low-visibility ministries, with few staff. The vice-president has been sidelined, described by one woman MP as 'just an errand girl for the President'.¹² She used to be the leader of government business in the Parliament, but was forced to surrender this power to the new prime minister when the president made the important patronage appointment of Apolo Nsibambi, a prominent

Muganda, to this position. She is ostensibly the chair of Cabinet but this function is usually usurped by the president. But, in any case, not even the Cabinet is the true locus of decision-making for the Movement. Insiders say that most decisions are debated by a very tight circle of close army comrades of the president: friends on the Army Council, the president's brother Salim Saleh, and a few senior Movement stalwarts in the Cabinet. This is popularly known as the 'Movement Political High Command'. There are no women in this inner circle.

Because membership in the Movement is mandatory and universal, it does not have policies on recruitment, and hence women have not had the opportunity to push for focused recruitment of women members. There has been no structured approach to improving women's chances as Movement candidates in open contests. The 'no-party' principle of electoral competition on the grounds of 'individual merit' means that the Movement has always claimed that it neither cultivates nor promotes particular candidates in local and national elections. It does not put a limit on the numbers of people who can compete on the basis of 'individual merit'. There is no official system for deciding between the many people who may put themselves forward as 'Movementists'.¹³ This means that there is no way for women to insist that the Movement provide backing to a quota of women candidates in the way that their South African sisters so successfully did in the African National Congress (ANC).

However, the absence of a formal candidate selection system does not mean that there is not in fact one in place. Ever since the CA elections of 1994, the NRM Secretariat has unofficially sponsored district-level committees to recommend 'NRM candidates' for support. At the time, the objective was mainly to eliminate candidates supportive of pluralism (Besigye 2000: 32). Nevertheless, most of the women politicians interviewed for this study who had come to Parliament through competition for an open county seat (as opposed to an affirmative action seat) claimed they had received no support from the NRM in the 1996 parliamentary elections. By keeping the candidate selection system unofficial and informal, personal preferences can be muscled through by local strong-men. Women politicians who wish to receive Movement backing must buy into these local power structures. Since the informal district election committees are not acknowledged to exist, there is no internal Movement directive to oblige these committees to encourage women to stand for open contests with men, to receive priority support from the local election committees, or to get priority access to campaign resources.

There have occasionally been efforts to democratise the movement from within, but each individual who has dared to challenge abuses of power has lost her position within the Movement.¹⁴ For instance, Byanyima lost her post as director of information at the Movement Secretariat in early 1998 when it became clear that this appointment had failed to silence her protests at official corruption. Two years later she was roundly booed at the Movement's National Conference when she pointed out that the endorsement of Museveni as the Movement's sole presidential candidate was in contravention of the policy of allowing anyone to stand for any position on the grounds of individual merit (*Sunday Vision* 26.11.2000).

The 'no-party' system allows the Movement to resist defining itself as a party, while its constitutional status as the country's political system allows it to enjoy the privileges of a monopoly on state power – in effect a one-party state without the party. The absence of a party structure condemns women's engagement in politics to remain at the level of special pleading and success in gaining patronage appointments, not at a more institutionally secure level of sustainable change in party structures, candidate support systems, and party policy.



Feminist political scientists are increasingly sensitive to the fact that choices made in the design of political institutions – the powers of the executive in relation to the legislature, the design of the electoral system, the nature and degree of party institutionalisation – determine women's prospects in electoral competitions, and their capacity to influence policy once in office. As Georgina Waylen (2000: 791) argues, 'the focus of analysis then becomes the nature of the institutional measures proposed by women activists and the ways in which variations in political systems, for example in terms of party structures and electoral systems, affect both the goals and strategies of those activists'. Ugandan women's arguments and strategies for admission to representative politics and to policy-making are all framed by one key feature of the current institutional framework: the suppression of parties. By ruling out pluralism, Museveni has emasculated the development of accountability mechanisms, and by extending an ever-widening net of patronage, he has neutralised oppositional energies, including those of women pushing for a legislative agenda which would challenge male rights within gender relations. As summarised by a Ugandan feminist lawyer:

If there was pluralism here, there would be space for women to influence political structures. Right now, no political organisation has affirmative action internally. That would give women leverage. Women are captive to the Movement now.¹⁵

The problem, however, is not just the absence of pluralism, but also the way affirmative action has worked as a tool for accommodation and control of women in politics. Ugandan women have not been able to use the competitive dynamic of a pluralist system in order to build leverage around their political demands, and neither can they use the rules and representative systems within well-institutionalised parties to press for equitable inclusion at all levels. It is important to remember that liberal multiparty systems in Africa and elsewhere do not automatically promote women's rights. Women have made gains in terms of their numerical presence in political arenas, and their feminist influence on policy, only where the women's movement is strong and autonomous, political parties are sympathetic to feminist goals, and electoral systems and other political institutions can give voice to socially excluded groups.

The 'no-party' system held many attractions for women and other social groups who supported Museveni's project of 'neutralising ethnicity' (Muhereza & Otim 1997: 5) by suspending socially destructive party competition. But the current compromised status of women in politics in Uganda offers an important lesson: though women can benefit enormously from direct presidential patronage, their effectiveness in promoting a gender-equity agenda is low if they have not institutionalised a presence for themselves as legitimate competitors for the popular vote, and for their policies as legitimate matters for public debate. It is hard to see how this institutionalisation can be accomplished without regularising women's participation as decision-makers and candidates in political parties. Even in a pluralist system, this cannot be accomplished if parties are overly personalised, secretive in decision-making, and lacking clear rules for supporting electoral candidates and debating policy – and these, unfortunately, are characteristics of parties in many new democracies.

NOTES

1. Through the Legal Notice No 1 of 1986.

2. The creation of ever more new districts channels development resources and political status to smaller ethnic sub-groups, and is seen as a strategy of responding to the demands for recognition and resources made by ethnic groups. Six new districts were created just before the 1996 presidential elections (Muhereza & Otim 1997: 5), and eleven, some absurdly tiny, were created in late 2000, just in time for the 2001 presidential elections.

3. In the 1997–2001 Parliament, 97 MPs were either young or new to national politics or both. They formed a ‘young parliamentarians’ group and worked closely with the more active and critical women MPs. They registered their concerns about corruption through their activities on key parliamentary committees, particularly the Select Committee on Railways, which was dominated by new MPs, the Privatisation Committee, which investigated a corruption scandal involving Uganda Commercial Bank (illegally purchased through Malaysian brokers by the president’s brother, Salim Saleh), and the Legal Committee, through which a young parliamentarian, Nathan Byanyima, mobilised support for a censure motion for corruption against MP Sam Kutesa. In 1999 ten young parliamentarians, many of them women, were made ministers of state for newly created ministries (of sports, disability, children). As one member of this group says: ‘the flood of new ministries was an effort to break up our group. It has worked. Others have been promised Ministries, and are on the waiting list.’ She felt that this had divided people critical of the Movement by coopting some to the Movement ‘high command’, where they were expected to inform on critics (interview with woman MP, 25.2.2000, name withheld on request).

4. I am grateful for Josephine Akihire from the Centre for Basic Research for bringing this to my attention.

5. Debate on the Political Organisations Bill, which should have been wrapped up before the 2001 elections, has continued well into the current Parliament. The president continues to push for a containment of party activity to the capital city, while the previous Parliament signed off on an agreement to allow some party activity at the district level.

6. I am grateful to the anonymous reader of this article for drawing my attention to this article and passage.

7. Interview, Sheila Kawamara Mishambi, Coordinator, UWONET 6.12.2000.

8. Questions can be posed, of course, about the wisdom of insisting on so harsh a punishment for rape. It appears to have discouraged sentencing.

9. The government newspaper reported on the passing of the amendment the next day: *New Vision*, ‘Spouses to co-own land’, 26.6.1998.

10. Interview with an ex-member of the Uganda Law Reform Commission, 21.2.2000.

11. Matembe was later demoted from minister to ‘minister of state’.

12. Interview with a woman MP, 23.2.2000.

13. Increasing opposition to Movement candidates has, however, prompted the beginnings of a concern to set in place candidate selection procedures. The most spectacular challenge to the policy of not screening and selecting candidates came when, during the late 2000 National Conference, Colonel Kiiza Besigye, a veteran of the bush struggle, announced his candidature for presidency alongside the predictably unanimous call for Museveni to stand for a second time as presidential candidate. The National Executive Committee promptly declared that Museveni was the sole Movement candidate, making policy on the spot about formal endorsement of a sole candidate: ‘Where a constituency is under threat from multipartism, full support should be given to one Movement candidate that would have to be identified’ (*The Monitor* 25.11.2000).

14. These include Sam Njuba, a government minister who objected to the NRM’s pressure on the constitutional commission to write the ‘no-party’ system into the draft constitution, Onyango Odogo, an early director of information and mass mobilisation in the NRM Secretariat, who proposed procedures for electing the NRM’s top leaders and limiting their terms of office (Onyango Odongo 2000: 77–8), and Dr Kiiza Besigye, who was threatened with court martial for an open letter he published in the opposition paper in November 1999 discussing the Movement’s lack of internal democracy and the corruption of high officials.

15. Interview, December 2000, name cannot be cited due to promised anonymity.

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