

Women and Old Age

The last fifteen years were characterized by a remarkable impetus in the U.N. international activities. They started with the celebration of the International Human Rights Year in 1967, followed by the 1968 Fiftieth Anniversary of the first installment of the parliamentary franchise for women and, later on, by the Women's International Year in 1975, the International Year of The Child 1979, the IYDP in 1981. Problems of the elderly will be a major theme to be observed by the World Assembly in 1982.

If we take a look at each of the above activities, we shall see that women are particularly concerned with each of them. If they all aim at the rehabilitation and application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of U.N. in 1948, it is especially woman's rights as a citizen, a daughter, a wife, a mother and a worker that should be rehabilitated because, all through the eight thousand years of patriarchal domination, most of those rights were denied to her.

Women are more concerned with the problem of old age than men. The number of widows everywhere is larger than that of widowers, not only because women have a longer life expectancy than men but also because they usually marry at a younger age, the difference ranging from five to ten years or more. Traditions require women to take care of the aged and the sick. The wife takes care of her old husband, but a widow with no female progeny rarely finds anybody to take care of her.

Many people believe that persistence of family traditions in the Arab East and the importance of the family institution guarantee the good treatment of parents in their old age. Nobody has yet made a thorough investigation of the real status of the aged in this region. We know that people in general follow the habit of saving appearances and of pretending that all is well within their homes. Geriatrics, the branch of medicine that deals with the problems and diseases of old age, is almost nonexistent. Proper care of aging people in hospitals and in old people's homes is a matter of doubt. Every individual worries about old age. Because women are financially and socially less privileged than men, they are more apt to be victims of this worry.

For women of the Third World, the theme of the elderly, which will be observed by the World Assembly in 1982, should carry a particular importance. Their problem is not limited to old age insurance or to the care they should receive when they are sick or disabled. There is also the problem of occupying them with useful activities upon retirement, during the "third age", when they are still able to work. As in the case of the handicapped, there are stereotypes to be fought and a new mentality to be developed. The handling of the topic on an international basis proves the existence of a developing interest in the fate of the aged and will hopefully yield good results.

Since a preview of the status of the elderly is scheduled as a major theme of the World Assembly in 1982, in this issue of Al-Raida we take this occasion to publish two articles about this topic, in preparation for the International Year for the Aged which will be probably declared in the near future.

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Dr. Badria Al-Awadhi, a champion of human rights

While we care to emphasize the needs and shortcomings of Arab women of to-day, we should not forget that there exists among them a minority group who act like the leavening agents that accelerate change in their environment.

Kuwait is one of the Arab states that have used their flood of oil wealth for national development and social welfare. Women's education receives special attention from the government. In 1974 the number of women students was 42% of the total number; yet the percentage of working women did not exceed 5% of the labor force. Against this alarming contradiction, the Family Revival Association took certain decisions to promote women's interest in work. University professors denounced traditions that impede woman's integration in development and started a campaign against apathy toward work.

Dr. Badria Al-Awadhi is one of the few university women whose intellectual ambition was not deterred by social restrictions. She chose to specialize in international law, a non-traditional major, which she studied first at Cairo University, then at London University where she obtained a Ph.D. in 1975. Her special field of study was "International Law of Sea Pollution", which she handled in a thesis entitled "Legal Aspects of Maritime Pollution with Particular Reference to the Arabian Gulf." Right after that, she took up teaching at the Faculty of Law and Shari'a, Kuwait University and, within 4 years, was promoted from the position of lecturer to that of head of the Department of International Law, Assistant Professor and Dean of Faculty. Within the interval of 6 years, she attended 15 international conferences dealing with international law, human rights, education and environment; wrote 3 books on international law and a fourth on the rights of children in the legal system of Kuwait; assessed theses and articles dealing with legal problems and delivered several conference papers on questions of pollution and the teaching of human rights. She is currently a member of 14 national and international organizations.

A brief look at her books will show that Dr. Al-Awadhi is not only a meticulous researcher but also a committed writer. In her book on "Rights of the Child in Kuwait," she lists these rights in the Kuwaiti constitution, social laws, penal code and personal status laws, in order to compare them with the International Declaration of the Rights of the Child, proclaimed in 1959; then she gives a list of recommendations which she urges the government to adopt for the purpose of making Kuwaiti laws conform with international ones.



In her other book, "The Law in Relation to Local and International Events", she uses her legal knowledge to criticize government indifference toward pollution in the Gulf waters. She attacks the personal interests which direct the application of laws, the exploitation of office for personal profit, and the injustice done to women in depriving them of leadership positions. She deplores the recent wave of unrestricted divorces spreading over the country and gives practical recommendations for its limitation.

One of the questions she discusses in this book is the danger of including sectarian stipulations in the constitution of a state as, for example, in the Iranian constitution which declares that Shi'ism is the religion of the State. Such a declaration will create bitterness among the Sunna, as well as fanaticism and arrogance among the Shi'a who form the majority. It seems illogical, she says, to emphasize the rights of the majority while it is rather the rights of the minority that need protection from neglect and infringement. What if other countries with a Shi'ite minority in their population should retort with a similar declaration in their constitutions?

Dr. Al-Awadhi exemplifies the Arab woman who believes in the necessity of putting personal freedom above traditional considerations, and general needs above personal interests. Her specialization in international law, while it spurred her national feeling, has helped to make her internationally minded, ready to support justice and human rights.

"Women's Share in a Development Strategy"

by Dr. Ijlal Ismail Hilmi⁽¹⁾

Egyptian delegate
to the WGC Conference

Woman's development, which primarily aims at developing her potential, presupposes, as an initial step, ridding her of out-dated and harmful traditions that block her way to progress. It also requires that she be equipped with adequate education, vocational training and the opportunity for free participation in general development, unhindered by public or private restrictions.

The role played by Egyptian women in the Revolution of 1952 allowed them to obtain certain rights in the 1956 Constitution and in later legislative acts. The Constitution grants them equal rights with men and, as a result, the government has encouraged all measures leading to their integration in development.

In the field of education, the government tries to ensure for both men and women elementary and intermediate education plus vocational training. Gifted students are given scholarships allowing them to go into higher education. The government encourages women's participation in the labor force by granting them a paid three months maternity leave and providing nurseries for their children.

In 1976, the percentage of women's participation in economic activity was 9.2%. In 1977, their participation in rural work went down from 25% in 1971 to 10.2%, showing a shift to better paid jobs requiring more technical training. The percentage of women employed in technical and intellectual occupations rose from 9% in 1971 to 27% in 1977. Equal progress has been recorded in women's secretarial and journalistic employment which went up from 2.5% in 1961 to 10.7% in 1971, and 19.7% in 1977. In contrast, the percentage of women in the services sector came down from 27% in 1961 to 10.2% in 1977.

At the same time, the average number of working women who had received elementary or intermediate education increased from 9.9% in 1960 to 43% in 1977. The number of those with higher education went up from 2.3% in 1960 to 15.6% in 1977. Women holding university degrees such as the M.A., M.S. and Ph.D. increased from 2% in 1960 to 6% in 1977.

Women and Domestic Service

Woman's role as housekeeper (involving her as a manager) should not be underestimated. Though her work in this field is not adequately remunerated, it constitutes an important contribution to economic development.

Recently, a project called "Productive Families" has been created with the aim of providing opportunities of remunerated work for family members, particularly for women housekeepers who care to earn money in their free time. 260,000 Egyptian pounds have been allocated for the purpose of promoting this project and increasing the number of its beneficiaries.

Rural Pioneers

This is another project which tries to stimulate women's activity in rural areas by preparing trained women social leaders, capable of offering social service to their communities.

Political and Administrative Offices

Women occupy 30 seats in Parliament, and 10 to 20% representation in administrative offices.

The 1980-1981 Strategic Plan

The role of local administration, in accordance with the new policy of decentralization, has been enhanced to include planning and follow up projects of nutrition, industry, habitation, sanitation, and sewage in the various districts. Credits for the implementation of this transfer amount to over 240 million Egyptian pounds which will serve to support production and service activities in each district, organize the distribution of credits, ensure general participation in the execution of given plans, and emphasize rural development as a basic aspect of regional development.

Credits allocated to the seven economic sectors in the country follows a priority plan. First comes the transportation sector followed by those of habitation, public health, rural projects, general services, electricity and industry.

Social development receives the same attention as economic development. Employment offices are ready to help all job seekers without any sexual discrimination. Equal opportunities for education are open to both men and women. Laws affecting personal status have, lately, received a number of amendments in favor of women. In institutions of higher education, the number of women students was up to 46% of the whole. The total number of women in the labor force reached 14.5% in 1976.

In spite of the numerous progressive steps achieved by Egyptian women, they still have a good many problems to handle. Notwithstanding all efforts spent in wiping out illiteracy, the 1976 data reports a ratio of 71% of women illiterates versus that of 43% for males.

Traditional upbringing and orientation of females has impeded their normal development. Overpopulation is hampering the improvement of living conditions in the family. Rural women still suffer from relative neglect which is the lot of the Egyptian village as a whole.

Needed improvement in woman's status requires a close cooperation between women's organizations, community and state. A common action will allow them to effect a thorough study of woman's needs and problems, and therefore, aids them to devise efficient ways of treating them.

(1) Condensed from a paper presented at the Second Regional Conference for Women of the Gulf Countries and the Arabian Peninsula, 28-31 March 1981. See Al Raida, Feb. 1, 1982, vol. V, no. 19, p. 11

Parental Authority and Youth⁽¹⁾

This field-study of parent-child relationship in the Lebanese family aims to show the values which the family tries to transmit to its youth, the response of the latter to parents' authority and the factors influencing the relation between them. **These factors** include the family types, the economic status, the geographic area, the religious affiliation and sexual identity.

War conditions imposed certain limitations on the researchers. Difficult or impossible access to certain areas of the country restricted the number of Christian respondents in the sample to 33, versus 204 Moslems. The total of 237 included: 134 boys and 103 girls aged 18-23 years; 180 from urban areas, 57 from rural ones; 91 participants in political or war activity, including 69 boys and 22 girls.

Family types represented were:

- The traditional, extended family: 45%
- The changing, quasi-traditional family: 17%
- The nuclear, more modernized family: 37%

This representation is fair in the sense that the first type, the traditional, still occupies a primary rank in Lebanon, particularly in the Moslem community.

As to the economic status, the sample includes the following proportions:

- High income group: 20%
- Average income group: 54%
- Low income group: 19.4%

Parental restrictions are related to the basic factors mentioned in the first paragraph of this article in the following ways:⁽²⁾

1. Statistical tables indicate that in nuclear families where young men have their own households, parents have less authority and are less prohibitive than in traditional and semi-traditional families where interdependence is practiced on a relatively large scale.
2. Middle class groups tend to be more authoritative than high income and low income groups.
3. A high proportion of restriction corresponds with a higher degree of tension and conflict and vice versa.
4. Rural families are more authoritative with their children; hence the degree of tension and opposition is higher among rural youth, while in urban areas, young people are more ready to obey their less authoritative parents.

5. Conflicts regarding intersexual relations before marriage reach a higher proportion among boys than among girls, the latter being more successfully trained in self-control.
6. All families without regard to type, economic status or geographic affiliation, are more dictatorial with girls than with boys.
7. Parental authority is relatively weak in families where young men and women participate in political activities.

The following table gives the percentages of parental restrictions, youth's adherence to them and absence of conflict, including variables due to the sexual factor:

	Boys	Girls
Parental Restrictions:	25.25%	43.29%
Youth's Adherence:	44.8%	70.85%
Absence of Conflict:	73.82%	75.04%

Another table shows the percentages of parental authority or restrictions, of adherence and absence of conflict among participants and non-participants in **political activities**:

	Participants	Non-Participants
Parental Restrictions	25.70%	37.76%
Youth's Adherence	44.30%	69.25%
Absence of Conflict	67.23%	73.55%

Adherence of Youth to Parental Authority

Results show that an average of 60% of young men and women included in the sample adhere to parents' values regarding marriage, irrespective of social or economic status. This is particularly true of traditional families.

The following table gives a list of parental restrictions connected with marriage and other forms of behavior and, in the opposite column, the percentage of youth's **adherence** to them.

1. Restriction regarding civil marriage	61.83%
Restriction regarding interdenominational marriage	58.90%
Restriction regarding free choice of mate	41.59%
2. Restrictions regarding personal activities:	
gambling	67.87%
holding a dancing party	63.28%
wearing indecent dress	60.76%
receiving anyone in one's private room	57.31%
athletic activity	45.69%
3. Restriction concerning political involvement	55%

1 — Abstract of a study prepared by Drs. Zuhair Hatab and Abbàs Makki, forming part of a series of "Human Studies", published (1980), by Maahd-ul-Inma' il-Arabi (Arab Center of Development), Beirut, Lebanon.

2 — pp-217-227 contain an evaluation of preliminary postulates given on pp. 32-34, on the basis of conclusive results.

Algerian Women in their Apartment

(Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement)⁽¹⁾

This is the title of six short stories recently published by Assia Djébar⁽²⁾, in which she develops a single theme: the marginal status of Algerian women. Discovering the present through the past, she tries to detect the traditional "structure of the seraglio" or harem in the present way of life. Beyond the deceptive appearance of emancipation, women of today are still invisible, cut off from social communication and condemned to live under supervision. How will they be able to create an exit for themselves to the outside? "There is only one issue for them, one means of escape: speak, speak continuously of yesterday and to-day, speak among themselves of all the harems, the traditional and the up-to-date. Look outside walls and prisons, be the eyes and voice of women!" (p.2) "Create the new word, the authentic word which does not mistake a false, superficial freedom for a true one" (p.3). How does one gain access to the authentic word? Perhaps by a return to one's own language, a critical listening which gradually leads to the lucid and sad knowledge of the real conditions which produced that word.

From an introduction which has been briefly given here, Claude Tahite proceeds to analyze one of the six stories contained in Assia Djébar's book. The method

applied is an analytical reading of the text, scrutinizing its structural form or the organization of narrative syntax, making use of semiotic terms and symbols. The text chosen for analysis is "La Nostalgie de la Horde", (Nostalgia of the Horde), a story which takes the form of an autobiographical narrative, told by an Algerian grandmother to her three young granddaughters. Briefly related, it tells how the grandmother was married at the age of 12; a unique child spoiled by her parents, she knew nothing about domestic chores. Failing one day to rise early, she was rebuked by her mother-in-law. The latter then complained to the bride's father who took the trouble to come and threaten his daughter. When, after a while, he met her father-in-law, he changed his tone, showed his anger at being disturbed, asserted that his daughter was a child and ought to be excused. The father-in-law was quick to apologize. After that, the daughter-in-law learned to rise early and to perform all her domestic duties faithfully.

In the story, the mother-in-law is a spying eye who dominates and manipulates the other members of the family. The daughter-in-law is manipulated in such a way that she is transformed from an ignorant, careless young bride into a dutiful, enslaved wife. Terrorized, she does more work than is required of her and is mentioned as an example.

Authority in the family is hierarchical, starting with the father and particularly the father of the male. The old dominate the young; the woman, though she may be old, is considered a minor. The final decision

- 1 — Document de Travail, n° 2, par Claude Tahite, Groupe de recherche sur les femmes Algériennes, C.D.S.H. (Centre de Documentation des Sciences Humaines, Université de Wahran, 1981).
- 2 — "Femmes d'Alger dans leur Appartement" by Assia Djébar, Editions des Femmes, Paris, 1980.

(Continued from page 4)

Restriction concerning freedom to declare a political or a religious opinion	49.70%
4. Restriction regarding choice of reading matter	44%
5. Restriction regarding economic freedom: free use of money	64.74%
6. Restriction regarding choice of a profession	56.10%

Conclusions

1. Results of the study show a relatively high degree of agreement between parents and youth regarding values transmitted from the older generation to the younger one.
2. Such a proportion of agreement, or of absence of conflict, reflects a persistent dynamism of parental authority which stands as an impediment to change and evolution.
3. Parental authority, however, is being shaken by

new outside influences, namely political allegiances and party affiliations which emerge as a new authority rivaling that of parents and offering new guide-lines to youth.

4. On the other hand, involvement of young people in politics, while it tends to shake parental authority, may become an obstacle to sound character building if it impresses them with principles of aggressiveness, hatred and rivalry. In this case, they would be exchanging one form of enslavement for another.
5. Moreover, we should not forget that war conditions have limited the present study to include almost exclusively one Lebanese community, reducing the other community to one sixth of the sample. Furthermore, the rural sector, compared with the urban one, represents only 1 to 3.

For more accurate and comprehensive results, the study should be repeated under more favorable circumstances.

belongs to the males of the group. The task of the mother-in-law is to guarantee conformity.

The story also reveals the following facts:

- 1 — The daughter-in-law is treated as an object. Her fear and her masochism are forms of auto-observation and auto-censorship.
- 2 — The women's dwelling is completely separated from that of men, where authority is concentrated.
- 3 — No communication exists between the characters; silence is imposed on their secret dealings. The father announces his presence by coughing instead of speaking. The grandmother says: "I naturally knew nothing about it", showing her conformity to the code of secrecy.
- 4 — Imposed values are a part of the self. The subject is spied on by all others; he sees himself through their eyes. In accepting the values imposed by others, one rejects free will and creativity. Self-consciousness is impossible, and the result is complete alienation.

Results of this system:

- 1 — The concepts of true versus false are suppressed. Communication organized according to power means that sincerity is nullified and subordinated to efficiency.
- 2 — The concept of responsibility is suppressed. The mother-in-law, through her conduct, involves her husband without informing him; his response involves her without her knowing. The father-in-law, considered to be the character with the most responsibility, is precisely the one who knew nothing of the problem. This condition excludes mutual trust.
- 3 — Hence everyone is obliged to spy on everyone else. Silence is the rule; everyone is spied on, everyone is manipulated.

Besides her involvement in a complex methodology, the researcher is careful to read between the lines of the text. She thinks that the autobiographical story of the grandmother corresponds to a liberating discourse. She detects in certain stereotyped sentences a shade of irony. The text seems to her an ambiguous, incomplete narrative, in which every sentence suggests a hidden idea and may carry a double meaning. Here is an example: "By her (the grandmother's) incomplete communication, she transmits the code of authority... She might have liked to make fun of the dominant mother-in-law. She knows this and expresses it in an ironical manner. That is how she proposes to her grand-daughters the way, the voice of liberation" (p.24).

Whatever the conclusions are, they confirm Assia Djébar's recommendation to Algerian women: Speak, speak continuously of yesterday and to-day... Look outside prison walls, use your eyes and your voice. Speaking means crossing a space where no road exists. It means building a new vocabulary and syntax, free from the investments of the patriarchal system.

Motivations of Women's Work in Jordan⁽¹⁾

The paper tries to give a brief report about the Jordanian woman's present participation in the labor force, followed by suggestions for greater development of women's skills.

The need for woman's work becomes clear when we know that the number of potential women workers is 22% of the population, while the actual number of women workers is 6.5%.

Recent progress:

The illiteracy rate among women fell from 48% in 1974 to 34% in 1980. This was due to the following reasons:

- a. Implementation of compulsory education.
- b. Lowering the number of girl student dropouts from 11.8% in 1975 to 8% in 1980.
- c. Forbidding labor for children below 16.
- d. Creating vocational schools for girls.
- e. Increasing the number of centers for fighting illiteracy.
- f. The existence of two universities in Jordan; a third one will soon be operating.

Fields of work for women

Main fields: Teaching, social service, nursing.

Other fields: 355 women doctors, 234 women employed in information service, 72 women in police force, 42,834 women in rural work, West Bank.

Syndical Activity:

In 1980, women counted 80% in Private Teachers' Syndicate;

25% in Spinning and Weaving Syndicate.

30% in Public Health Syndicate.

Political Activity:

10% in National Advisory Council.

5% in the Cabinet.

Motivations of development:

- 1 — Woman's awareness of the country's need for her work, particularly because of the growing number of male emigrants.

1 — Abstract of a paper presented by Sahira Nabulsi (Jordanian delegate) at the Second Regional Conference for Women in the Gulf States and Arabian Peninsula, 28-31 March 1981. See *Al-Raida*, Feb. 1, 1982, vol. V, n°. 19, p. 11.

- 2 — Her desire for economic and social independence.
- 3 — Influence of international conferences, mass media, and training courses.
- 4 — Increasing number of nursery schools for children of working mothers. Here we should note that the number is much below the need, and the personnel in charge are not adequately trained.
- 5 — Recently promulgated labor laws favoring woman's work by giving her equal rights with men in the way of leaves, bonuses, promotion and so on. Laws, however, are not always put into practice.

Recommendations:

To meet the need for developing woman's skills and potentials, the following suggestions are given:

- 1 — Preparing research studies on topics related to women.
- 2 — Organizing a documentation center, containing reference works on women, such as studies, books, reports and recommendations of conferences and seminars.
- 3 — Creating projects allowing home-makers to do remunerative work at home, including crafts such as: dress-making, folkloric costumes, clay modeling, ceramics, leather work, wood work, rural crafts etc.
- 4 — Following an efficient informational policy regarding methods of developing woman's skills.
- 5 — Training leaders and specialists who will take charge of training women in the above skills.
- 6 — Organizing training sessions for the following groups:
 - Working women.
 - Women who want to go back to work after interruption.
 - Society women willing to develop certain skills and to learn new ones.
 - Leaders and program directors.
 - Home makers wishing to develop their knowledge concerning health, dietetics, family planning, family relations, domestic technology, struggle against illiteracy and so on.
- 7 — Creating a project of training in national service, which will aim to develop a spirit of self-discipline, national consciousness and responsibility.
- 8 — Organizing a coordination committee whose function will be to ensure communication and cooperation among Arab countries regarding woman's needs and demands.

In Jordan, the creation of a special board taking charge of women's affairs indicates the favorable response of this country to U.N. recommendations. It constitutes a call urging Arab countries to ensure coordination of activities of the various Arab women's organization through a representative body actively involved in carrying out the task.

Tunisian Women's Access to Salaried Work⁽¹⁾

The access of Tunisian women to education, professional training and outside work has led to the development of a new family code including the abolition of polygamy and repudiation and the establishment of women's equal right to divorce and work. It should be noted here that women's emancipation in Tunisia is mainly due to the State's voluntary enterprise and is by no means a result of an organized women's movement.

The participation of Tunisian women in general activity has progressed from 6% in 1966 to 18.7% in 1975, but it is difficult to identify and grade their participation because the majority of active women in the rural and domestic sectors, (over 60%), receive no salary. In the rural sector, where their participation is evaluated at 25%, only 17% of them receive a salary, versus 41% among men. Statistics regarding the various categories of women's work are deficient. Their participation in salaried activity attains only 13% of the total.

Women's salaried employment is almost exclusively oriented toward the industrial and the services sectors, with a growing tendency to favor the former.

This restriction in women's employment constitutes an obstacle to the realization of sexual equality in work.

The author points out the inadequacy of research regarding women's problems in the Maghreb. In spite of abundant religious and juridical literature concerning the Arab woman's status, research with a scientific character is very scanty. Women's condition, as subdued to the contradictions of traditional society, is better revealed through novels and short stories⁽²⁾ than through the social sciences.

Women factory workers in Tunis are generally young and inadequately trained. Their low salaries are attributed to frequent absences, conflict with their bosses, and difficulty of promotion to leadership positions.

The recent industrial development in Tunisia has attracted a large number of men and women to the cities in search of employment. These displaced people live under un-hygienic conditions. 53% of them are unemployed; many of them resort to robbery, delinquency and prostitution.

1 — Abstract of an article prepared in French by Alya Baffoun, from Tunis University published in *«Femmes et Multinationales»*, edited by Andrée Michel et. al. Editions Kathala, Paris 1981, pp. 227-243.

2 — See for example Assia Djébar's poems and stories about Algerian women, the works of the poet Kawthar Najim and the writer El-Musrati about Libyan women's degradation in their homes.

The urban tin shacks accommodating displaced people represent a transitional stage leading to the gradual crumbling of the traditional economy. In this environment, the condition of the Tunisian working woman evolves. Her new employment, however, has certain repercussions on the family as well as on her position in it. Here are some of them:

- 1 — Extreme dependence of families on their daughters' salaries.
- 2 — Clash between Western evaluation of woman, derived from her ability to work and her contact with "models" of the capitalist world, and the persisting traditional values emphasizing looks and submissive character.
- 3 — Psychological change in young girls, shown in their growing ability to choose their husbands and to marry outside their family.
- 4 — Practice of family-planning and birth-control.
- 5 — Ambivalent attitude of men regarding women's work. Educated men are favorable to women's emancipation provided that the new values are integrated into traditional ones without destroying them.
- 6 — Frequent conflicts within the family, as a result of such contradictions. The rising rates of

divorces, neurotic troubles and suicides reflect these conflicts.

Positive aspects of women's present evolution:

- 1 — Woman's increasing involvement in outside employment allows her contact with new horizons. Values of the patriarchal system are reversed; she is called to adopt a new concept of her *raison d'être* and her status. In some cases, she tends to assume a revolutionary attitude and a militant spirit.
- 2 — The present economy based on profit will give her prestige as a money producer and a contributor at a generally low cost.
- 3 — Women will be induced to organize in federations, something which they never did before. Their union will serve to conceptualize certain problems and to handle them collectively.
- 4 — Contact with the other sex will become more natural and direct, free from prejudice and fanciful emotionality.

Finally, the ingenuity shown by women in handling family problems and matrimonial questions pleads in their favor and proves that they can be active and influential in other fields.

Shahryar's Whip

Translated by Rose Ghurayyib from an Arabic poem by the Syrian poet Mumina Al Auf; published

in her last collection: "Tarneema lil-Harb wal-Bara'a" (A Song for War and Innocence)

Halt! Off with your whip!
You old man of the cave,
The harem that you kept
Is now inside the grave!

A child, you slew me once,
While people were asleep,
A corpse, I was thrown off
In the heart of the deep.

Many centuries passed,
I swallowed my defeat;

One day you came along,
My heart began to beat.

I thought the hand of time
Had wiped off your mire,
The whip you raised so high
Must now be in the fire.

O vain was my belief!
As you drew near I saw
The tyrant with the whip
I met long, long ago.

The Sudanese Woman in Mass Media⁽¹⁾

Background

The history of the Sudanese woman is a source of inspiration and motivation for the women of to-day. Among the famous personalities of Sudanese history are great queens like Amani-Shakhti who left a number of monuments that bear witness to her energy and wise administration. Sudanese women, besides carrying out the traditional home tasks, have always participated in heavy work outside the home: in agriculture, road and bridge building, and care of the fighters and the wounded on the battlefield.

Traditions, however, gave them little opportunity for education. Under the Turks, traditional primary schools spread in the country. They gave boys and girls religious teaching and elements of reading and writing. Special training in cooking and embroidery was given to girls.

In the period of independence which started in 1956, women's associations began to appear. Women's struggle for freedom took shape mainly in journalistic activity, displayed through their collaboration in important magazines and their creation of women's magazines such as *Al-Manar*, *Al-Qafila*, *Sawt-ul-Mara'a*.

1 — Abstract of a report prepared by Asma Abdul-Rahman, Faiza Shawkat and Mariam M. Osman, given at the Arab Women Journalists' Seminar, Algeria, July 1981, published by "Al-Marqaz-ul-Arabi li-Dirasat il Ilamiya" (Arab Center for Information Studies) Damascus, 1981, Editor: Mr. Zubair Saif-ul-Islam.

Women's efforts in the field of mass media and in other fields of communication produced a number of results. The most important are the following:

- 1 — There are women members of the National Pact Committee and of the Executive Councils.
- 2 — Women occupy the posts of minister and vice state-minister.
- 3 — Women are members of the Political Council and of the Central Committee of the Socialist Union.
- 4 — 10 women candidates were successful in joining the People's National Council.
- 5 — Women have achieved equal rights with men in the fields of public service, pension and indemnity.
- 6 — Forty percent of posts in the central government are occupied by women. They monopolize nursing and teaching on the elementary level.
- 7 — A leadership position, the Presidency of the Higher Council for Youth Welfare, is occupied by a woman, Umm Salima Said.
- 8 — Another woman, Hajja Kashif, presides over the Social Welfare and Development Council.
- 9 — Women have served in the fields of civil and criminal law, medicine, information, engineering etc.

Notwithstanding these achievements, Sudanese women, like their sisters in other Arab countries, complain of sexual discrimination in spite of egalitarian laws. A long struggle is necessary for realizing the full participation of women in administration and development.

Family planning in Bahrain

In the early part of this century, the inhabitants of Bahrain counted only 70,000 who lived under miserable health conditions. Contagious diseases decimated them. Women were particularly exposed to disease for want of medical care during pregnancy and at childbirth. It was a common thing for a Bahraini woman to prepare her will before going through delivery.

Conditions have recently changed: 85% of deliveries take place in hospitals, and the rate of child mortality has gone down to a respectable international figure of 44 per thousand. The number of inhabitants has risen to 350,000, 78% of whom are established in cities. Of those ranging between 5 and 19 years of age, 60% are studying in schools; girls number 45% of secondary school students.

Since 1975, a family-planning association was created in Bahrain. In spite of its small size, it was able to convince the Ministry of Health to open family-planning clinics in ten health centers of the country. Contraceptive pills were freely distributed through the clinics, intra-uterine devices were supplied for a certain number of women and sterilization operations were performed in a few cases. It is expected that, in the

near future, health centers will provide prenatal and post-natal care besides family-planning information. The number of women using contraceptives will rise to a third of those who are of child-bearing age.

Preventive medicine is gaining more and more importance as an aid to family-planning. Rural districts and quarters inhabited by poor fishermen are in particular need of family-planning information and other health services. Adherence to traditions prevents the poorer classes from changing their way of life. They think that a large family is a source of pride. Women refrain from operations that might leave scars on their bodies and thus make them undesirable to their husbands.

On the other hand, reforms already initiated by the State are operating in favor of change. Encouragement of family-planning and laws restricting divorce and polygamy are among the progressive measures adopted by the State.

Condensed from the quarterly "Al-Nas" (Arabic publication) vol. VI, n° 4, 1980, p. 12-14. Printed in England by Stephen Austin/Hertford.

Research Projects in Egypt

IWSAW recently received three research monographs in English from the Supreme Council for Population and Family Planning, Research Office, Cairo, Egypt 1981. The first, by Wedad Soliman Morcos, is a critical review of "Mother and Child Welfare Studies", mainly devoted to the changes in the status of women with the objective of finding the effect of change in women's social status on the upbringing of children.

The author of the monograph makes the following conclusions:

- 1 — Studies concerned with social upbringing are very rare in spite of their extreme importance... Control of the increase in the number of children should be associated with better education and welfare. Discrimination between boys and girls regarding upbringing is more marked in rural areas than in urban

ones. In both areas, this discrimination should be fought because of its detrimental effects.

- 2 — Child mortality rates are still high if compared to the rates in developed countries.
- 3 — No studies have been made to reveal the causes of drop in the admission rates of children eligible for compulsory education.
- 4 — Employment of children appears to have decreased in rural children. No studies dealt with this item in urban areas.

The **second** monograph, by Hamed Abou-Gamrah, is a "review and evaluation of studies on the **determinants** of fertility in Egypt".

Fertility determinants include: mother's education, socio-economic development, husband's education, husband's occupation, female labor force participation, rural-urban factor, child mortality, and religion.

The conclusion stresses the importance of a better understanding of the causal relationships underlying

A Call for Boycotting Dowry Marriages In India

"Dowry is a society cancer", is the title of an article published in "Newslink", a magazine issued by Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, India. The article was condensed and appeared in No. 6 of "Al-Raida", Nov. 1978, p. 10. It carried the call made by an Indian woman, Mrs. Usha Francis, to wage war on dowry marriages, such a war being as necessary as the war on hunger, illiteracy, and growth of population.

Revolt against this tradition seemed to materialize in an actual boycott of dowry marriages, recently practiced by a growing number of Indian families. In a recent issue of "Manushi" (the Indian journal about women and society), readers who practice boycott of dowry marriages were asked to make a public commitment regarding their behavior. It was argued that such

a commitment is necessary to provide an alternative role model in a situation where many seem to be giving and taking dowry. The objective of the commitment being to assure mutual support and to build moral pressure.

The request issued by "Manushi" received immediate response. In number 8, 1981, of the said magazine, a report was published about a meeting held by women activists from March 1 to March 10, 1981. During the meeting, pledges were taken by a large number of young women to oppose the giving of dowry at their own marriages. The published pledges carried the full names of those who took them, in addition to a statement explaining their reasons for taking such a stand.

Women in the Gulf States⁽¹⁾

In Saudi Arabia, women's employment is no longer limited to teaching and nursing. Many are employed in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Fifty percent of women employees are probationers at various stages; two thirds of them are married, which shows that

marriage does not necessarily prevent a woman from working outside the home. Women are also employed in information, radio, television and journalism. The newly opened women's banks directed exclusively by women, permit them to practice their financial capacities and assume new responsibilities. In the urban districts of Dimām, Taëf, and Riad, 67% of mothers are literate.

In the Arab United Emirates, women have been

1 — Excerpts from a report prepared by Pervine Nasrallah, given at the Arab Women Journalists' Seminar, Algeria, July 1981, published by "Al-Marqaz-al-Arabi li-Dirasat-il-'Iamiya" (Arab Center for Information Studies) pp. 63-70.

fertility decline in a country like Egypt which tries to reduce its fertility. It points out three levels for the analysis of the relationship between fertility and the socio-economic determinants:

- 1 — Cross-national data may be used. This type of study does not pick up the variation within each country and does not usually deal with political and cultural aspects which are so important in fertility studies.
- 2 — The study may be carried out within a country by considering the differences between the administrative units. This type of study considers socio-economic and fertility relationship under the same political and cultural conditions.
- 3 — The differences between families can also be used to study the relationship between fertility and the socio-economic status.

The **third** monograph, by Dr. Mary Taylor Hasouna, carries the title: "An Action Research on the Promotion of Conventional Methods of Contraceptives among Egyptian Married Women".

One of them, Dolly Nath, said: "I am opposed to the giving and taking of dowry because I have seen and experienced in my own life, many women driven to suicide because their parents could not give them enough dowry. So I swear that I will oppose dowry give and take in my family and community".

In a pledge written by Sandhya Kiran, we read the following: "I will tell my friends that dowry marriages are a kind of trading in women, creating for them many problems. These problems often make them victims of atrocities, like murder or even lead to taking their own lives".

To make clear the meaning of the dowry system which has been causing so much trouble in India, the author consulted an article by Sham Rathak, published in "International Women's News", vol. 76, no. 1, March 1981. That article notes that the pleasant custom of exchanging gifts between the bride's and the bridegroom's families, practiced for centuries in Indian society, has disintegrated into the ugly shape of blunt demands. Cash, kind, or anything else possible, could be required of a girl's parents in return for marriage.

seeking higher education since 1972. Besides teaching and nursing, many of them work in government administrative posts, in the police force, in information media, in commerce and banking sectors.

Bahrain has a large number of women's voluntary organizations like those of family-planning and child welfare. In Kuwait, women's associations have social and cultural aims. In Iraq, the General Federation of Iraqi Women was founded in 1968. Its activities are political, cultural, social and educational. In Abu-Dhabi, the UAE Women's Federation has five branches in distant regions of the Emirate. Other women's associa-

"This action research project was conducted for the purpose of providing insights about **barrier method** acceptability in order that population policy makers could make decisions about strengthening family planning service delivery".

The project included short term training of the family planning service personnel in how to communicate with clients and in service delivery management. Efforts were spent on informing people about barrier method availability.

While many women who participated in the project continue to practice family planning, some of them dropped out; others switched to another method.

On the whole, results show that the **foam tablet** is the most acceptable method introduced by the project.

"The project results support the hypothesis that introduction of a choice of contraceptive technology can lead to increasing family planning participation and to providing a milieu in which people are provided an opportunity to exercise their own selective judgment in management of their fertility behavior."

The dowry system is a source of evil and misery, especially for parents of girls. The only way to fight it is to improve the status of women by education, economic independence and integration of women in development.

The author noted that the dowry system practiced in India does not apply to the Mahr or Sadag instituted by the Muslim personal law (Shari'at) and imposed by contract on the bridegroom as the bride-price. We do not know of any study made in Muslim countries about the actual practice of the Mahr institution and the problems created by its application. The Arab press, however, has been publishing complaints and protests from families and young men against the high price demanded by the parents of marriageable girls. In an article published in "Al-Raida" on Aug. 1, 1981, vol. IV, no. 19, p. 17, reporting on the dowry system in Algeria, the author questions the validity of this institution in modern society, and states that the promotion of women into public function and the progressive availability of women's education, make the dowry system a superfluous requirement.

tions and charity organizations exist in the Gulf States.

There are at least five women's magazines published in the Gulf region.

The spread of education and of other cultural factors has greatly influenced social and family life in the Gulf States. The rates of polygamy and divorce have been reduced as well as those of the bride-price and arranged marriages. Women have achieved a certain degree of freedom and independence; their lives are no longer concentrated on husband and children. Their interests include travel, continuing education, development of new skills and promotion in work.

The Status and Role of the Aged in Lebanon⁽¹⁾

This is the title of a study based on a sample taken from Lebanese students enrolled in Beirut University, St. Joseph University, American University of Beirut, and the Lebanese University.

Data collected did not come directly from the aged but from their children, grand-children, and other younger generation included in the sample about whom the following preliminary information was obtained:

- The majority of the students sampled represented the Lebanese middle class.
- 80% claimed to have urban residence, 20% rural residence.
- The respondents were 600: 480 urban residents, 120 rural (the latter were mostly concentrated in the Lebanese University: 95/120).
- 92% of urban students and 87% of rural students were unmarried.
- 79% were not involved in any employment (About half of them depended on parents for their support, the others received government aids, scholarships, etc.).

Status of the aged within the family

The Lebanese family is a moderately large type of extended family, with an average of 6-7 children.

The ratio of identified aged in the rural sample was significantly higher than that in the urban one. The 120 rural student sample could identify 146 aged, a ratio of 1 to 1.26. The 480 urban student sample identified 480 aged, a ratio of 1 to 1.

The larger number of aged men than women was due to the big difference in age between husbands and wives: 5-10 years, while the greater life expectancy of women accounted for the larger number of widows and grandmothers. Thus:

In rural districts: 53 grandmothers, 23 grandfathers
In urban districts: 173 " , 87 "

As to residence, the majority of the aged lived with their children:

In urban districts: 57% with their children
18% alone
25% with other kin
In rural districts: 65% with their children
19% alone
16% with others

On the other hand, figures show that the aged were frequently visited by their family members, at the rate of 65% for urban agers and 66% for the rural.

Ailments of the Aged

Data obtained in the study shows a little higher percentage of physical ailments among the urban aged than among the rural ones. The rate of senility among urban agers is 6%, among rural agers, 3%, which shows that the village remains for the aged a healthier place to live than the city.

Who Takes Care of the Aged?

It is the immediate family circle that performs this duty, according to the sample study. It is considered a shame to let an aged member of the family be cared for by a maid. The mother seems to be the most responsible person for the care of the sick and aged. In the second place, come the female children. The male family member is the last to do such work.

Because of the difference in age between husbands and their wives, the aged husband rarely, if ever, assumes the responsibility of caring for his wife.

If, for imperative reasons, the immediate family circle is unable to take care of their sick aged, then they resort to the maid, the nurse or relatives, lastly to an old people's home.

The Aged and the Use of Time

Reading is not a common entertainment for the Lebanese, except in the form of political newspapers. «Visits and radio listening are more dominant in the village than in the city, where reading is practiced by 38.5% of the aged, against 14.7% of them in the village». Gardening is a more popular pastime in city than in village.

Personal Income of the Aged

Most of those who were asked said that the aged had a personal income which came from personal savings. Many of them, however, receive help from their children in one way or another. Others receive money gifts from emigrant children, grandchildren, and other kin.

Work and Retirement

Work for aging people, whether it is productive or not, helps to keep their morale high. In Lebanon where the economy is predominantly a service economy and huge industrial corporations are almost non-existent, the problems resulting from forced retirement are at a minimum level. The study shows that 42.5% of rural aged, as contrasted with 36.8 of urban aged, have been throughout their lives self-employed. Consequently a high proportion of old age retirement becomes voluntary. Statistics show that only 44.2% of the rural aged and 55% of the urban ones were no longer working. The others were still busying themselves in full-time or part-time work.

(1) Condensation of a study made by Dr. Mounir Khoury, and submitted to the U.N. Social Integration and Welfare Section, Social Development Division, 1973.

Here it is possible to add that aging women who live with their families, unless they have been incapacitated by sickness, may keep on their household chores till the end of their lives.

The Aged as Seen by the Eyes of the Young

When asked about their attitude toward their aged parents, most of the sample students declared that they held them in high respect. Only 19.6% of the total urban respondents and 17.5% of the rural respondents considered old agers as a burden. Most of them refused to admit that aged relatives were unhappy or lonely in their families.

Regarding this situation, it should be possible to assume that the respondents' answers were not always sincere but, in many cases, dictated by pride and prejudice.

Conclusions

Though the study made by Dr. Mounir Khoury has not been updated, it still contains a number of enlightening facts which probably have undergone little change since 1973:

1 — The gap between rural and urban Lebanon is being quickly bridged as a result of the forceful current of amalgamation between the two areas.

2 — The great majority of old agers in Lebanon are residing with their children and other immediate family members. They are chiefly cared for by the females of the family, especially the wife.

3 — Urban aged people suffer more than rural aged from old age ailments and idleness.

4 — Senior citizens all seem to enjoy economic independence based on personal savings, regular money allowances from children, money coming from emigrant family members, etc.

5 — Retirement of old agers is mostly voluntary because a good many of them have been self-employed. Almost half of them are still working.

The value of the study, however, remains highly limited for the following reasons:

First, it was based on a sample of college and university students who normally come from the middle and upper social strata.

Secondly, the data collected did not come from the aged but from their children and grandchildren, who tend to be biased and prejudiced in their answers.

Thirdly, the rural sector in the study is not as fully represented as the urban one (This is a major cause for this study's inadequacy).

Dr. Khoury gives a final conclusion stating that the aged in Lebanon do not, as yet constitute a serious problem, which implies that they may do so in the near future.

This point was further elucidated in a previous study⁽²⁾ made in 1971, which, though earlier in time, throws further light on the problems of old age in Lebanon, because it deals with the impending disin-

tegration of the Lebanese family, as well as the public and private policies and services related and rendered to the aged in Lebanon.

This earlier study agrees with the latter one on the conclusion that there is less dissatisfaction and resentment among the rural than among the urban aged. But it warns against the belief that old agers enjoy complete economic independence, as they or their children pretend. Money coming from emigrants is not dependable as a permanent source of income. The gradual breaking up of the Lebanese family threatens its traditional unity and the cooperation among its members.

The same study points out the lack of government policy regarding the aged. Cooperation between government officials and private institutions is limited to the allocation of funds to five major private institutions that take care of the aged in Lebanon. The majority of officials contacted admit that a problem of old age, if it does not already exist, may exist in the near future. The problem is in the making.

What should be done?

The following suggestions are presented by Dr. Khoury:

1. The devising of a well studied plan to check disintegration of family ties caused by urbanization and industrialization.
2. The encouraging of private clubs and institutions dealing with the aged to continue in their work with the following recommended changes:
 - a. That some kind of coordination be established among them to insure more efficiency and less expense.
 - b. That a more homelike atmosphere be created for the aged and better entertainment and recreative facilities be provided.
 - c. That only the desperately aged who are homeless, and/or having no families, be admitted to public sponsored homes for senior citizens. This will require the government to subsidize those institutions with the necessary money to enable them to carry on their work.
3. The playing by the government of a more important role in alleviating the problem of the aged in the following ways:
 - a. An intensive study of the aged may be undertaken by the ministries of Public Health, Education and Social Affairs, in the light of which a well coordinated plan of action can be drawn and executed.
 - b. The Office of Social Security could expand its old age program to include all aged Lebanese, not only retired employees and workers.
 - c. The Office of Social Development and the Ministry of Social Affairs should pay more attention to training and development of social workers.

At least one of Dr. Khoury's suggestions will eventually be carried out if the law concerning the old age security which is already in the Social Security Program succeeds in being promulgated.

(2) Presented to the United Nations in the Summer of 1971.

"The Coming of Age"

by Simone de Beauvoir

In the last decade, people concerned with the problems of old age, witnessed the publication of the monumental work of Simone de Beauvoir, "La Vieillesse", translated into English by Patrick O'Brian, under the title of **The Coming of Age**. It is a thorough study of old age in all its phases and can be considered a pioneering work in our century.

In the first part of her book, Simone de Beauvoir presents her subject based on her findings from a study of various disciplines, like biology, anthropology, history and contemporary sociology. It is from this first part that a review is offered of her study on old age and present-day society.

Family Situation of Old People:

The author claims that there is more respect towards the old in educated and middle class families than in poorer families. Usually sons are more affectionate towards their mothers than their fathers, whereas daughters are more loving towards their fathers. This Freudian interpretation of the attitude of children towards their parents the author accepts, for the most part, as a way of explaining some of the negative feelings expressed towards the aged. However, she has found out that daughters, in general, care more, and sacrifice more, for the sake of their parents than do sons. The latter are often influenced by their spouses, thus inclining them to demonstrate apathy and indifference towards the condition of their parents.

Young men and adolescents are found to be more affectionate and feel closer to their grand-parents than to their own parents. The children also love them and are taught to respect them. Children of working mothers are especially attached to their grandmothers or grandfathers if the latter live with them and take care of them in the absence of their parents. Conversely, it is also true that in some homes grandparents are made fun of, especially in lower class families. In others, they are humiliated and criticized for not being able to adapt to modern life conditions. For some old people, living with their children and their families has become a most ungratifying and unsatisfactory existence.

Housing for the old is closely connected with family life. Through urbanization of modern life, it has become almost impossible for parents and married children to live together in small apartments. Usually the old people stay in the country house while their children move to the city. When several generations live under the same roof, some advantages are gained by young couples. Child rearing and household chores are better managed through the help of parents. Problems also are created by the conflict between generations and sometimes divorces take place because of the parents' presence in the house. Japan has kept the patriarchal family system as it is a country that is strongly anchored to its family traditions. In Germany, young couples live with their parents because of a housing problem. The best arrangement has been practiced in

Switzerland, where the parents live in a small house close to the bigger house where the married children live. This way the older people have their privacy, feel more independent, and are happier.

The Scandinavian countries have made the best effort in housing old people. Copenhagen's "Old Peoples' Town" has been considered a striking success. Sweden has built 1350 homes for the retired since 1947, housing 45,000 people. Those who are unable to get into the special pensioners' buildings are given supplementary grants by the State to cover the high cost for rents imposed by the newly built apartments.

In Switzerland and West Germany many projects have been accomplished to house old people. Holland and England have improved the situation by building new dwellings for the aged. In Southern Europe, however, there are not any residential buildings for the aged. France started to put up some of these residences in 1964. Such buildings house from 100 to 125 people. Only ten percent of the pensioners' income is left after payments for rent and board are covered. Such arrangements in housing, therefore, are available for those who can afford it and not to the majority of old people.

In the U.S. "Victoria Plaza", a big modern block with a club, library and recreational activities, has been a great success. The lives of old people there have been completely transformed. Nevertheless, they do feel their shortage of money as they have many opportunities to spend money on buying clothes and furniture or spending on leisure activities and entertainment.

A question that is much discussed at present is whether it is good for old people to live exclusively among their contemporaries. Victoria Plaza is successful because it lies in the heart of a town and its residents are not cut off from their families. A plan much recommended at present is the setting of small independent houses in the middle of the town, so that the old people would be near their families. An even better plan would be the creation of dwellings combined with a center. These will be private dwellings but with certain common facilities, the whole forming part of a large complex inhabited by people of all ages.

Institutions

The author mourns the situation of the institutions that house those old people who are no longer able to manage for themselves physically and economically. In some countries the institutions are inhuman, no more than a place to wait for death. She gives the example of such institutions in France where sanitary services are bad and there is no medical care. In addition, the buildings are at least 100 years old and are not modernized. The dormitories have no screens to give any privacy to the patients. There are no lockers or bed-tables. The sick and bedridden lie all day without getting any attention or care.

Statistics show that more than half of the old people die within a year of their admission which is caused by one of two factors: uprooting of the old people; and the miserable living conditions of the institutions.

Employment and Retirement for the Old

Simone de Beauvoir has come to the conclusion that of all the countries in the world the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, give the best treatment to the aged. These countries can be regarded as models for the rest of the world. There is some kind of humane socialism in these countries. The big incomes are heavily taxed and on luxury goods there are high duties. The aged people profit from these arrangements especially in Sweden where 12% of the population is elderly and the average age of 76 is the highest in Europe. In Sweden the retiring age is 67, but every citizen draws a pension. In Norway 70 is the age limit for retirement and in Denmark between the ages of 65-67 men retire; women get an earlier retirement between the ages of 60-67.

In Belgium, West Germany, Luxembourg and Holland the retiring age is 65 for men and women. In Austria, United Kingdom and Greece 65 is for men and 60 for women. In France it varies from 55 to 65 depending on the jobs and employers — government, or private institutions.

The reality behind retirement is the disturbing fact that people are unemployed before their actual age for retirement. The first to be dismissed from any firm are the employees over 40 or 45. Discrimination against employing elderly people is universally observed. The criticism against aging employers is that they lose much of their efficiency; they cannot adapt to new situations; they have less strength and, they are slower. But there are all the qualities that employees in their middle life possess which can counterbalance their weaknesses. They have a rich experience along with qualifications for their job. They are conscientious and loyal to their firm. These qualities are rarely found among the young employees. If there is good will on the part of the employers some of the physical failings of old age can be removed by providing spectacles for those of weak vision or making special seating arrangements, or giving the older employee a lighter task to do. Instead, he is often reduced in rank and earns less. In the worst situations he is asked to retire. The Scandinavian countries show that old age can be protected. They do not toss the workers aside as soon as they discover a failing but provide them with jobs that require less physical exertion.

Those who retire, for the most part, do not get good pensions, otherwise it would have been ideal to retire. The pensions old people get are hardly enough for survival. As one pensioner has remarked, "It is too much to die on and not enough to live on." "The position of executives and people at the managerial level is less disagreeable, but it is still not satisfactory. The middle-range executives, the lower civil servants and technicians, have very modest pensions. Women are particularly badly paid. For most people retirement means a loss of status and a much lower standard of living.

Suicides Among Old People

A French sociologist states that retirement, com-

bined with the falling apart of the family unit, renders the state of the aged person lonely, useless and gloomy. All gerontologists agree that living the last twenty years of one's life in a state of physical fitness but without any useful activity is psychologically and sociologically challenging. Those who live on must be given some reason for living. Mere survival can be worse than death. A gradual retirement would certainly be less hurtful than the "sudden chop". Jobs should be divided into several categories according to the effort required and the worker would move gradually down from the hardest to the easiest. Or his hours of work would be reduced.

Once the individual has grown old and discovers that he has no place on earth, neither in work nor at home, where oftentimes he is humiliated before his wife and children, he falls into a kind of despair. That despair reaches such a degree, sometimes, that he resorts to suicide. The reports of World Health Organization show that the highest rate of male suicides occurs at the age of 70 and later in such countries as England, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and Australia. The maximum age for women comes 10 years earlier and the rate is far lower.

Hobbies and Leisure

In order to avoid depressive states and suicides among the old or elderly people, and to remove the feeling of uselessness, efforts should be made to engage them in useful and constructive activities. They should feel they are making a contribution to society in some way. If elderly people retain some of their activities, they will function much better as a whole. American research shows that between 40-65% of the elderly people have hobbies between the ages 50-70. After that they lose interest. The higher the person's intellectual level, the richer and more varied are his occupations. Among elderly people there is a high percentage of complete inactivity which causes an apathy and destroys all desire for useful leisure activity.

In England, Sweden and U.S. there are efforts to encourage elderly people to join associations, some of which bring together people of all ages. There are 40 "day-centers" in New York where retired people meet, engage in activities, do useful work, and have social life. The young people or the old themselves have committees that organize discussions, excursions, music hours-listening or playing. Some churches and trade unions also organize activities in their own centers to keep the retired busy in a meaningful way, thus protecting them against boredom and loneliness. There are some successful experiments in France where paid professional leaders and volunteers together organize cultural and other activities for their club members. Ninety percent of their members participate in all the activities. Certainly this is limited to the well-off among the old.

(To be continued)

**Azadouhi Kalaidjian
(Simonian)**

The Feminist Forum vol. III, no. 9, Sep. 1981

A special issue published by the "International Feminists of Japan" (IFJ), for the purpose of acquainting other feminist groups and publications with their activities, and working towards the filling of the information void that so often prevents women from communicating with one another.

The "International Feminists of Japan" was founded in 1979, to act as a support network for the international feminist community and to serve as a bridge between it and the Japanese feminist groups.

The IFJ includes about 300 women of 20 different nationalities: Far-Eastern, American, European and Australian. The members represent a wide variety of professions and ideologies. They hold monthly meetings to discuss feminist problems, to plan their activities which include publication of the "Feminist Forum", developing the IFJ library, and cooperating with the Japanese feminist movement.

Other activities recently started are:

- 1 — Establishing in 1981 of Action Coalition whose function is to deal with specific issues by means of letter-writing, attending demonstrations, protesting against objectionable TV programs, fighting pornography, etc.
- 2 — Creating a branch of the International Feminist Network in 1980
- 3 — Conducting health-related and social activities.
- 4 — Organizing women's trips to Japan where they can enjoy the finest facility for women at the National Women's Education Center in Saitama Prefecture.

The Address for both the "Feminist Forum" and the "International Feminists of Japan" is:

C.P.O. Box 1780
Tokyo 100, Japan.

"The Disabled Child": A new approach to prevention and rehabilitation⁽¹⁾

This book compiles articles dealing with innovative approaches in the prevention and rehabilitation of the most common disabilities affecting children. Recent policies and new trends are discussed by directors of

(1) Published by UNICEF in "Assignment Children", a journal concerned with children, women and youth in development.

institutes for the handicapped, professors of public health and consultants to social welfare projects, representing national and international institutions in the Western and Eastern worlds. Case studies are presented by experts and professors from Third World countries: Jamaica, Botswana, Algeria, Philippines, Zaire and Bangladesh.

According to statistics made in 1975, and quoted in Mr. P.E. Mandl's editorial, three-fourths of the disabled live in Third World countries. "In the year 2000, the gap will increase even further if the present trends continue, i.e. if traditional theories of economic development continue to dominate, with their irreversible inequality in the distribution of income."

The innovative approaches presented in the book highlight the social inequity in the prevalence of disability. The vast majority of impairments are preventable. They are not due to faults but to conditions of existence that can — and should — be modified, such as malnutrition, unhealthy environment and war.

Mashru'ul-Markaz-el-Arabi Lil-Fununi-l'Iamiyya (Arab Communication Arts Center) 1981

IWSAW has recently received a stencilled brochure announcing the foundation of the Arab Communication Arts Center, stating its objectives, program of activities, strategy of action and application, considerations peculiar to national and local services, list of participants, location and funding of the Center.

It has been suggested that the Center be located in Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, if the Jordanian Government declares its agreement. Otherwise, another Arab country will have to be approached.

Dr. Abdul-Jabbar Wali is currently the director of the Center. His address is: Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, P.O. Box 20449.

Pithy Sayings

Justice to-day is an alibi for assassins who want to kill without accepting to be killed.

Albert Camus

Science without conscience is ruinous to mankind.
Adolphe Balit

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