

Demographic Structure of the Lebanese Population⁽¹⁾

Under the above title, Dr. François Farah, of the Lebanese University, gave a lecture in which he made use of statistics showing certain anomalies in the Lebanese "age pyramid".

During the war, he said, the emigration of males between 20 and 40 led to a decrease in the number of the active group, i.e. those whose ages range between 15 and 50.

Compared with the number of women between 20 and 25 and even between 30 and 35, the number of men of the same age group presents a ratio of 10 men to 13 women.

Another anomaly lies in the number of the Lebanese of the first age group, i.e. those less than 15 of age, who in 1973 numbered 42% of the population,

while in 1975 this group did not exceed 23% in France, 21.5% in Sweden and 20.8% in Germany.

The Lebanese belonging to the second age group, the one between 15 and 64, numbered in that same year 52.4%, while in France those of the same age group reached 63.5%, in Sweden 65% and in Germany 64%. Since that time no significant change in the above statistics has taken place in Lebanon. Compared with the percentages given by developed countries, the Lebanese figures indicate (1) a high fertility range and (2) because of the reduced number of active population, a low percentage of productivity, leading to a low standard of living.

Dr. Farah concluded by recommending that the LFPA be given the opportunity to play an efficient role in planning and carrying out solutions for this and other demographic problems in Lebanon.

(1) Given at the Second National Conference on Demographic Policies. See p. 10 of Al-Raida, no. 1, 1982, no. 22

Women in China: Equal opportunities, many gains

In the old China, most women had to submit to their breadwinner husbands at home and contend with having neither a personal identity nor a role in society. So painful is their memory of the past that, since their liberation, they do not like to be called by their husbands' names anymore.

Most Chinese women now work outside the home and are no longer homemakers but contributing providers for their families.

Half of the three hundred million peasant workers in the countryside are women earning their own living. In the cities, 24 million women (30.8 percent of all government workers) work for government organizations and state-owned factories.

The government has provided state-subsidized nurseries and kindergartens for 70-80 percent of all the small children of working mothers. Sharing household work and parent responsibility is popular among working parents today.

Discrimination against women still exists in many employment departments, in factories and hospitals, on the ground that they have an extra burden at home. But it is being fought by women's supporters who think that every woman has the right to gain a livelihood and to get rid of the potential undermining factor to a stable city life. The All-China National Women's Federation wrote to the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee: "Women workers have become an indispensable part of the work force."

In the old society, women were usually hired in traditional women's jobs such as clerks, nurses, teachers, shop assistants and textile workers, all relatively lowpaying jobs. Now Chinese women have

made substantial inroads into nearly every occupation. They dominate in hospitals and medical schools. More and more women pilot planes and captain coastal and inland ships. Women bus drivers are a common sight in the cities. There are two women ambassadors, 13 minister-counsellors and counsellors; many of them are commercial and cultural attachés in Chinese embassies abroad.

Now more emphasis is being put on the professional training of women workers. They constitute 42 percent of the 680,000 trainees in technical schools. One third of the nine million spare-time college and spare-time technical school students are women workers.

In the field of management, many women have shown outstanding ability which won them rapid promotion. A fair number of women were elected members of the National People's Congress in 1978. Some occupy high government offices as vice-chairmen of the Standing Committee of the Congress, as ministers, vice-ministers and vice-bureau directors, vice-governors of provinces and vice-mayors of municipalities.

In the field of science, the government gives special attention to the training of women. In Qinghua, the best science University of China, 16.5 percent of the students are women. Most of them major in architecture, chemical engineering, mathematics, physics and chemistry. A number of women scientists have achieved distinction in modern fields such as astronautics. The most famous is Wang Shiren who was one of the engine designers for China's first satellite, launched in 1970. Another distinguished scientist is Zhang Min, an assistant researcher in the Shanghai Metallurgy Institute. Xu Qian, a woman graduate of Qinghua University, was one of China's first to major in oil refining.

Last year, the Chinese women's volleyball team was able through hard work and an admirable esprit de corps, to capture the world cup in this game.

(1) Condensed from an article published in the magazine, "China Reconstructs," March 1982, by staff reporter Tan Manni.