

Kuwaiti Working Women

Kuwaiti women suffer from discrimination in job opportunities, says the **Committee for Working Women of the Kuwait Labor Union**. Although the Kuwaiti labor law does not differentiate between men and women, working women are restricted in promotion in both the public and private sectors and are prevented from working at night.

Educationally, Kuwaiti women have come a long way since the first half of the century: their illiteracy rate has been reduced from 77.9 percent in 1957 to 49.6 percent in 1980, and while only 0.1 percent of women obtained the Secondary School Certificate in 1957, 7.7 percent did so in 1980. In addition, Kuwaiti women between 1965

and 1975 formed 61 percent of all Kuwait University graduates.

But these figures do not reflect a similarly encouraging trend in employment. According to official statistics, Kuwaiti women form only 9.2 percent of Kuwait's workforce, compared to 27 percent for expatriate women residing in Kuwait. As **Dr. Shafiqa Bastaki of Kuwait University** argues, replacing expatriate working women with Kuwaiti women would not solve the problem because Gulf nationals, whether male or female, refuse certain types of work carried out by expatriates.* In addition, Kuwaiti women do not take up employment due to the difficulty they find in striking a balance between family responsibilities and work.

On the other hand, **Mrs. Amal Al Gharaballi**, a researcher at Kuwait University, believes that illiteracy and ignorance are the main problems of Gulf women in general. She blames the official media for giving a false image of Kuwaiti society. Programs for women on Kuwait Radio, for example, concentrate on subjects such as cooking and make up, perpetuating the traditional image of women and creating an impression of a female society that depends on males.

(Arab Times, Nov. 22, 1983).

* Kuwait has a populational 1.6 million. Only 42% are nationals, the rest are expatriate workers of various Arab and Asian Nationalities.

Mediterranean Women's Studies Institute

A new institute for the study of Mediterranean woman has been recently established in Athens, Greece. Its main objectives are:

- to investigate the position of women in the Mediterranean countries and the role women can play in the development of this area;
- to promote women's cooperation in the struggle for equality in all sectors;
- to mobilize women to save the Mediterranean Basin from pollution;
- to encourage women in the effort to preserve the cultural inheritance of the Mediterranean countries;
- to study methods and initiate efforts of conflict resolution in the area.

The Institute's main research projects and

publications are:

- **Women in Mediterranean Society: Social, Economic and Political Studies.**
- **Mediterranean Women in History and Culture: Publication Series.**
- **A Newsletter entitled KEGME**

For more information about the Institute write to:

Elen Arnopoulos — Stamiris
KEGME Director
192/B Leoforos Alexandras
Athens, GR 115 22
Greece.

(WIN News, Vol. 9, No. 4, Autumn 1983)

Call For Joint Arab Broadcasting Service

A three-day symposium held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 26-29 February 1984, called all Arab countries to join hands in establishing a broadcasting service beamed to major international centres, to project Arab culture and ideas without resorting to propaganda.

The gathering, attended by senior representatives of Arab funds and financial institutions, also recommended to undertake a study on the full utilization of the Arab satellite

for economic and social development.

It also asked Arab educational institutions to introduce courses aimed at preparing the younger generation to meet the challenge of modern technology and called on governments to establish national information data networks to encourage cooperation between information organizations.

(Reuter, Riyadh, 29 February, 1984)

Women Leaders Need Many Female Friends

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said in an interview with the BBC, that the friendship of other women helped her overcome the cares of office and that she did not think any women in power could be happy without a large number of women friends.

She also paid particular tribute to Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by declaring: "I find it very

easy to talk to Mrs. Gandhi. We understand the combination of the pull of family and the total dedication to politics."

Mrs. Thatcher, who became Britain's First Woman Prime Minister in 1979, added: "Women should have the ambition to get top jobs. Sometimes it's thought to be unfeminine to do that. It isn't at all".

(Reuter, February 28, 1984)

Policewomen In Bahrain

"Bahrain has at present 48 policewomen who play an active role in maintaining peace and security and are actively involved in the well-being of women prisoners and juveniles under their care", declared Major Awatef Al-Bader of the Bahraini policeforce.

Major Al-Bader added: "Policewomen are now being more readily accepted by society and

increasing numbers were volunteering to join the force. After a four month intensive course, they are given training in the use of weapons and posted to various centres in Bahrain. They are mainly responsible for the juvenile welfare centres".

(Arab Times, November 14, 1983)

Kuwait Says Yes to Test Tube Babies

A communique issued by the Supreme Council of Islamic Legislation on April 1, 1984, declared that in-vitro fertilization was an acceptable method of procreation in Kuwait.

The Supreme Council however puts a condition for its acceptance which is that the fetus should belong to a couple who wants a child in order to assure its genealogical descendance. Moreover, very strict measures should be taken in order to avoid any risks of error in conception.

This newly taken decision by the Supreme Council of Islamic Legislation puts an end to a long debate in Kuwait to legalize test-tube babies. in a country that is witnessing a rapid decline in the natality level of Kuwaiti Nationals contrasted by a raise of the natality level of non-Kuwaiti nationals residing in the country.

According to the latest official figures, the percentage of Kuwaiti Nationals dropped from 46% to 41.2%, in a country that counts one million and a half inhabitants only. It is not surprising then to find the Health Minister of Kuwait, Mr. Abdel Rahman el-Awadi, qualifying as "national " the problem of sterility in Kuwait. Mr. El-Awadi also said that the implementation of the test-tube babies project could resolve 30% of the sterility problem in his country.

This is why he added, the Kuwaiti government has decided to create a specialized centre for test-tube babies, that would be ready to function in five years time.

(AFP, Kuwait, April 1, 1984)