

Kuwaiti Women Want To Vote and Join The Parliament

Kuwait, Monday October 5, 1992

During the elections in Kuwait, hundreds of women demonstrated for the right to vote and to be elected to parliament. They marched the streets towards the various voting booths holding bright and colorful banners which said: *We will be joining you in 1996* and *Men and women together in Parliament in 1996*..

The editor of a national Kuwaiti newspaper, -- Al-Watan, i.e. The Nation -- Ms. Fatima Hussein, one of the organizers of the demonstration said that this public protest is simply a call for the present candidates and voters to ratify voting laws to allow women to exercise their political rights.

The right to vote of Kuwaiti women was on the agenda of the meeting between the Prince of Kuwait, H.R.H Abdallah Salem Al-Sabbah and Secretary of States, James Baker on the visit of the first American delegation to Kuwait after its liberation. At the time, Baker announced that women's rights to vote and to participate in politics was among the priorities of post-war Kuwait.

However, in the midst of reconstruction, the women's issue did not bloom. The old government delegated it to the new government-elect. However, the opposition expects that ratifications will provide women with the right to vote but not the right to be elected and participate directly in politics •

R.A.H

Symposium on Women, Employment and Development in the Arab Countries

Amman, Jordan December 16-18, 1991

Under the patronage of her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal, and the joint efforts of the Arab Association for Women and Development (AWAD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), a symposium entitled "Women, Employment and Development in the Arab countries" was held in Amman.

The symposium is a result of research studies revealing that women have not played a complete role pertaining to their level of education, in the economic and social fields and that national development plans in many Arab countries have not permitted them to do so.⁽¹⁾ Thus, Women's contribution to the Labour force has remained 10-15 percent despite the growth and development.⁽²⁾

The objective was to identify the extend of women's contribution to development planning and their role in future plans at the national level. Contribution in economic activities, international labour standards related to women, effects of childbirth and women's productivity on socio-economic levels, status of women in labour legislation and vocational training for women in the Arab countries, were major topics of discussion and deliberation.

Hence, discussions reviewed employment opportunities and conditions. Furthermore, it became evident that Arab women's participation in the industrial sector is

generally low; that unofficial work is not reported in official statistics and that participation in the agricultural sector is low even in countries where women traditionally engage in agriculture. The service sector, on the other hand, is characterized by heavy concentration of female labour, especially in the social and voluntary services subsectors.

Reproductive and productive behavior of women differ between rural and urban areas. Thus, the interrelationship between fertility and labour is not manifested among rural women, but appeared evident among urban women in the Arab countries. Fertility of urban women is low compared to rural women engaged in agricultural activities. On vocational training, it was found that educational systems in Arab Countries lack programmes that combine theoretical education with vocational training to produce qualified workers who will contribute to the development process.⁽³⁾

The symposium ended by stressing the importance of Arab cooperation in matters related to the labour market and to integrate the market and full utilization of potential capabilities of the Arab society. It also called for enabling women to benefit from the achievements of development by occupying advanced positions at the decision-making levels in the various Arab countries •

(1) Final Report, Symposium on "Women, employment and Development in the Arab Countries, Amman, Arab Association for women and Development, International Labour Organization ILO, p.3.

(2) Ibid, p.5. (3) Ibid. p.9