

Women of Europe

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A PEOPLE'S EUROPE (AND WOMEN ARE PEOPLE TOO)

The Heads of State and Government of the ten European Community countries have set up a special committee of their personal representatives. Its purpose: to strengthen a "People's Europe".

And what if women were to air their views too?

Without being over-concerned with treaties, diplomats and experts what can be done (by you and me, by us and them) to promote a People's Europe for both men and women?

That wellbeing and the practical solidarity we should all like to see, does it already exist? What is your own experience? What steps have you taken - or what steps would you like to take - to make this future community of ours a reality?

You know our address.

Women of Europe

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T H E C H A N G I N G
E U R O P E A N C O M M U N I T Y

As an observer of what is happening today, "Women of Europe" is particularly well placed. From the information that floods into its editorial office we often notice somewhat unexpected trends and suddenly realise how greatly the concerns expressed by women in individual European Community countries converge.

Early this spring, for example, we noted a surprising number of news items on the place of women in the scientific world. Computers and new technology have sparked off thought and action whose implications spread far wider than any dreamed of by academics and researchers.

Step by step, cautiously but resolutely, women have been taking on a much more far-reaching role in their society. They have been speaking up in discussions on major issues and accepting their share of responsibility.

We are about to embark on a vital debate as to the economic future of Europe. Should we try to ride out the economic storm, or should we stand up and fight back? And if we decide to fight back, will all the effort be really worth the while?

It would be both surprising and disappointing if women had nothing to say on the subject.

Women of Europe

MINISTERS, WOMEN AND WORK
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An informal meeting of ministers with responsibility for women's status took place in Rome on 7 March on the invitation and under the chairmanship of Mr De Michelis, Italian Minister of Employment. The discussions centred on three proposed directives that the European Commission had put on the desk of the Council of Ministers of the European Community: on part-time work; on parental leave; and on equal treatment for self-employed men and women, including those working in agriculture, and the protection of motherhood.

Winding up the meeting, Mr De Michelis said he would do his best to ensure that the Council could adopt at least one of the three directives before the end of June. Although there was no insuperable obstacle in Italy's case, he warned that other Community countries might have great difficulties to overcome. Denmark, for instance, had already announced its opposition to the three directives because of questions of legal competence, and the United Kingdom had also expressed reservations.

Yvette Roudy, the French Minister for Women's Rights, regretted the fact that it was even harder today to bring in measures promoting the interests of women than in the 1970s because of the economic crisis. She stressed how important it is for women to look to new technologies, implying a different choice of direction in their studies and a different type of basic and specialist job training.

Before the meeting, Mr De Michelis had received a delegation from the "Women's Committee" of the European Trade Union Confederation, which handed him the "ETUC declaration on women's employment". An active policy in favour of women, said the women unionists, should include the launching of appropriate vocational training and job creation programmes and the elimination of wage, tax and social discrimination. The ETUC Committee also asked for "positive action" to be applied under the national law of each European Community state.

LOME III AND WOMEN
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The new convention signed by the European Community and the African, Caribbean and Pacific States is the third of its kind (the reason for its title, Lomé III), but only the first in the series to mention women explicitly. The wording of Article 123 runs: 1. Cooperation will sustain the efforts of ACP States to recognize the value of women's work, improve their living conditions, broaden their role and advance their status in the process of production and development; 2. Special attention will be paid to giving women access to all aspects of training, more sophisticated technologies, credit and cooperative organizations as well as to appropriate technologies which will relieve them of some of the burden of their tasks.

One example will suffice to illustrate the problem. In Mali, under a "rice" scheme being funded by the European Community, a woman cannot obtain credit for the purchase of agricultural equipment on her own account. She can borrow only if her husband applies for her and if he himself grows cotton. Cotton-growing, however, places an extra burden of work on the woman as she has traditionally been responsible for sowing, hoeing and cotton-picking. If she cannot borrow, a woman has to go on using a manual implement - a "daba" - and cannot afford to buy fertilizers, which means in turn that she cannot improve her productivity.

The Lomé III Convention is being brought into force at the end of the United Nations Decade for Women, and the European Community bears part of the responsibility for what the future will bring.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS IN JAPAN - WHY NOT YOU?

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The Commission of the European Communities has set up a training programme that is unique of its kind: 18 months in Japan, consisting of a 12 months' full-time course in the Japanese language and 6 months' attachment full-time to a Japanese company.

A hundred young executives have already benefited from the first four programmes; 34 more arrived in Tokyo early in February and 40 more places are to be made available under a programme due to begin in February 1986. As of this date, only a dozen women have taken part in this quite exceptional scheme. Why not you?

The terms are advantageous: successful applicants will be paid a monthly allowance and the travel costs will be paid by the Commission, which also foots the bill for the language classes and incidentals. An installation allowance is paid on arrival in Japan and there is a relocation allowance at the end of the programme.

The basic requirements are a university degree or the equivalent and two years' experience in business or industry, preferably in an international context. A knowledge of marketing or company development has proved particularly useful in that it has helped trainees to take full advantage of the training opportunities, but many young executives who have trained in technical or business subjects have found the experience to be of great value in promoting their firm's business in Japan.

Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co has been asked to short-list applicants, both men or women. The firm has offices in every capital in the Community except Italy, where its office is in Milan, and Germany, where its office is in Frankfurt. The head office in the Hague can be contacted via its telex (n° 32455).

WOMEN AND RESEARCH

Supplement n° 18 is entitled "Women and Research". In response to a call from European Parliament, one that has been echoed by many women, this is the first survey of research and studies pertaining specifically to women in universities and research institutes in the ten European Community countries.

Being a first approach to the subject it is by necessity selective and non-comprehensive. Like every "first", it has its limits and its faults. For example, the authors have - regrettably - restricted themselves to institutional bodies, although wherever possible they give the addresses of the research and information centres, libraries and discussion groups that have come into being as a result of women's own initiative.

Written by Martine El Mehalawi-Nouet, Nathalie Pauner (of Agence Femmes Information) and Patricia Niedzwecki, this survey (which is available in English) gives an idea of the impressive energy and diversity of the research being done by and on women. It should promote the exchange of ideas, circulation of information, pooling of thoughts and creation of a network at Community level - all of which constitute the very raison d'être of "Women of Europe".

THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Jeannine Terneu-Evrard and Brigitte Evrard have been researching the image of women as it is projected in education today, especially in textbooks, and as it should be conveyed if it is to promote equal opportunities for girls.

The survey, intended to provide food for thought within the European Commission, has the merit of not trying to conceal the complexity of the issue. The authors quote Yvette Roudy's observation, "what we need are new school books", but go on to comment "nothing fundamental has changed as yet, as the new school books prove".

Placing pressure on publishers is helpful. One American publisher has admitted that "what makes us move in the United States is the compilation of black lists of sexist and racist books". Even so, a good deal more thought on the content of new books is needed. It is not enough to write "Daddy is doing the cooking". Should not the high proportion of working mothers be reflected in textbooks? Should this percentage be made apparent in each individual book or should it be obvious from the books used in the classroom as a whole? To what extent should the realities be presented to children, and which realities should be shown? Life as seen by teachers or by workers or by employers? Life as it is today or as it will be tomorrow?

Cautiously and tentatively, many practical solutions are suggested. Including this suggestion - again from the US - which should make us think as well as smile: "domestic economy" lessons should be rechristened "the art of living well", or "the single person's ABC". The book is on sale at the Office of Official Publications of the Communities, 1985 Luxembourg.

WOMEN AT THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

On a hill overlooking Florence, at Badia Fiesolana di San Domenico, the European University Institute is attended by students and researchers. The proportions of men and women are of interest: 27 to 20 respectively in academic year 1976-77; 24 to 17 in 1981-82; 43 to 20 in 1982-83; and 43 to 21 in 1983-84.

The whole of the teaching staff has been male ever since 1976 (35 in academic year 1983-84), with the sole exception of Gigliola Margiotta Broglio, who has been an assistant professor since 1979 and has now become a full-time associate professor.

It is hardly surprising that a "women's group" was set up in autumn 1983 by a few women students and researchers. Their aim was to pool their thoughts on women's studies, a subject not included in the Institute curriculum. Its members also wanted to discuss their own status as women and students in a predominantly male environment.

Its first step was to arrange a cycle of interdisciplinary seminars on the theme of "women and social sciences" and to reprint the papers in the journal "Good News", brought out to coincide with Women's Day on 8 March.

A second cycle is to be held this year, retaining the same interdisciplinary character. Further details can be obtained from Susan Baker, Gloria Bartoletti or Maureen Cain.

Useful address: Istituto Universitario Europeo
Via della Badia dei Roccettini
50016 San Domenico di Fiesole, Florence

E U R O P E A N P A R L I A M E N T

January Session The new members of the European Commission took office early in January 1985 and Parliament asked the incoming President, Jacques Delors, to outline the plan of action for his four year mandate. Mr. Delors' address was followed by a debate and a vote - not quite on a par with a vote of confidence as given by a national parliament to its government, but it has an important symbolic value all the same.

Some MEPs complained that no specific measures had been mentioned in this guideline speech, but President Delors announced that a working programme for 1985 would be presented to Parliament in March.

Mr Delors outlined the "means" as well as the "ends" in every domain of Community life, from agriculture to monetary policy and environment. Belgian Socialist Raymonde Dury pointed out that no mention had been made of policy in favour of women: the speech had touched on measures to promote equality but had not gone into any detail. Mr Delors will certainly be questioned on the subject during the March debate on the 1985 working programme.

Parliament welcomed Mr Delors's statements on a dialogue between institutions, particularly in the light of the changes which, Parliament hopes, will prevent the Council of Minister from ignoring proposals put forward by the Commission.

In Mr Delors the MEPs noted a twofold concern: to give Europe credibility in the eyes of its own citizens and to the outside world, and to reinforce its unity. In the economic field, he looks for a genuine effort to achieve "coherence" (rather than "convergence", the term usually used). In matters of principle, too, he hopes to achieve this by progress towards institutional reform. Mr Delors expressed his views clearly ("we should go beyond the Treaty of Rome") but cautiously (in the hope that we shall avoid the "dogmatic opposition" that provides a pretext for doing nothing).

Encouraging words for Parliament were proffered from another source during the session. Mr Andreotti, Italian foreign minister and President of the Council of Ministers for the first half of 1985, reiterated his resolve to work for the success of his institutional initiative and clear up the budget differences between himself and the Council of Ministers. He spoke at length of Europe's role towards the rest of the world, in security and other matters. He trusted that Europe would no longer be silent in the dialogue on disarmament between the world powers and that it would take the initiative in the Middle East.

During an emergency debate on terrorism, Parliament denounced international terrorism and called on Member States to take joint action against such alliances. Certain MEPs abstained from voting, including the Rainbow group which did not want to encourage the creation of a "European legal state".

February Session At a formal session, European Parliament was visited by Israeli President Chaim Herzog, following Egyptian President Sadat and King Hussein of Jordan.

Mr Herzog pointed to European Parliament as an example to the rest of the world in the way that peace has been brought to Europe among countries formerly at war. He expressed the hope that a similar dialogue with his Arab counterparts might some day be set up in a comparable forum.

Even so, the prospects today as described by Mr Herzog are not very encouraging. Although he paid homage to the vision displayed by President Sadat, he was highly critical of the other Arab countries which has been so unreceptive to offers of peace and which had done nothing to help the Palestinian people find a homeland.

Mr Herzog appealed to the Community to take due account of Israel's economic problems, since the EEC is its largest export market.

Following the murder of a general in France and an industrialist in Germany, European Parliament held another debate on terrorism. Francesco Forte, Italian Minister for European Affairs, reported on decisions that had been reached in Rome only the previous day at the "political cooperation" meeting of foreign ministers. The Ten are to step up their cooperation to combat terrorism, without detracting from the freedom of movement of Community citizens. Lord Cockfield, European Commissioner, quoted the statement issued after the summit meeting of industrial nations in London in 1984 and the agreement between France and Germany on an operations group to combat terrorism, expressing the hope that it would be followed by many other agreements of this kind.

During the same session, Parliament approved a resolution calling for a celebration on 8 May, the anniversary of V-E Day that marked the end of the second world war in Europe. It expressed its hope that the European Community would be only the first step towards unification of the European continent (the Communists voted against the resolution, as did some of the Socialists). Discussions became very lively when it was announced that President Reagan would be visiting Parliament on 8 May.

The scheduling of an informal meeting of ministers responsible for women's status to mark International Women's Day sparked off another debate. A Parliamentary inter-group statement (signed by Ien van den Heuvel for the Socialists, Rika de Backer for the European People's Party, Maria Lisa Cinciari-Rodano for the Communists, Robert Battersby for the European Democrats and Christian de la Malène for the European Democratic Alliance) welcomed the meeting, although it also voiced some criticisms and demands.

For example, it called for: replacement of the informal meeting by annual sessions of the Council of Ministers; the implementation and application of existing directives, including the directive on the principle of equal treatment for men and women in social security; immediate steps by the Council of Ministers on the procedure for adopting proposed directives on parental leave and leave for family reasons, equal treatment for self-employed men and women, including those working in agriculture, and equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes.

Parliament also urged that: work be launched on a new Community Programme of Action on the promotion of equal opportunities for women; checks be made on the application of the 1982-85 Programme of Action; the recently adopted positive Programme of Action for women be brought into effect (backed, of course, by legislation to introduce positive action); and that proposals be made in the field of taxation and vocational training. International Youth Year might well provide an opportunity for ad hoc schemes to counteract unemployment among girls.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Parliamentary Committee on Women's Rights has been pressing on with its work under the chairmanship of Marlene Lenz (Germany, European People's Party). At a meeting held in Brussels in late January, the Committee considered guidelines for the administration of the European Social Fund. In the course of a discussion following a statement made by Mr Bachy on behalf of the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs and Employment, the Committee members returned to the subject of imbalance in the management of the Fund and how it works against the interests of women (only a third of the projects supported relate to women). They also deplored the lack of information available and the administrative complexities which serve to discourage the submission of schemes by women.

Referring to the Memorandum drawn up by the Commission on equal treatment between men and women in tax matters, the Committee decided to appoint a rapporteur for this issue, one in which Parliament has an essential role to play. British MEP Margaret Daly (European Democrats) was given this responsibility, while the Dutch Socialist, Ien van den Heuvel, was asked to draw up an "own-initiative report" on violence against women.

At a meeting held in late February, the Committee exchanged views with Mr Conti-Persini, Italian Secretary of State, acting on behalf of the President of the Council of Ministers. He reiterated his intention that the Council's agenda for June should include the adoption of the three directives now on the Council's desk. Many questions were raised by Committee members, and the meeting was wound up by the chairman, Marlene Lenz, saying that women may be impatient but they can also be relied on to persevere.

It was the first time that the Committee had met Alois Pfeiffer, Commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs. He said that his first visit to the Committee was only the start of what he hoped would be close cooperation with European Parliament. There is consensus within the Commission, he declared, on treating equal opportunities as one of the priorities.

In the broad-ranging discussion that followed, the MEPs briefed the Commissioner about their concerns and he in turn gave details of the Commission's efforts. For example, he said that there was to be a meeting with the media early in summer to take a joint look at changing attitudes.

The Committee then continued with its own work, which included the report on violence against women and giving its view on guidelines for the European Social Fund.

THE COURT OF JUSTICE

Collective agreements not enough Denmark has lost a case before the Court
----- of Justice of the European Communities because it has not aligned its law with the EEC directive establishing the principle of equal pay for men and women workers. The case had been referred to the Court of Justice by the Commission. In its defence, the Danish Government pointed out that equal pay is achieved by collective agreement rather than law. "What about the people who work in small firms and have no such collective agreement?" asked the Court. The law must be changed and it must clearly state that there will be equal pay "for work of equal value".

RENDEZ-VOUS IN NAIROBI

A debate has been held in the Folketing (Danish Parliament) on the International Decade for Women and the forthcoming Nairobi conference.

Eight of the parties represented in the Folketing had called for a debate on the preparations taking place in Denmark for the UN conference to be held in Nairobi and follow-up action on Denmark's own plan for the Decade since 1980.

The Minister of State opened by saying that women had made their voices heard more clearly during the Decade, and that the Government was in favour of pressing on with UN efforts to improve women's lot. He pointed out that Denmark had ratified the agreement on ending discrimination against women.

In the debate that followed, it became apparent that the parties were more or less unanimous as to the need to do more for women in developing countries, the vital importance of the Nairobi conference, including Forum '85, the desirability of providing more information in Denmark and the fact that progress towards greater equality should not stop after the Nairobi conferences marking the end of the UN Decade for Women.

The debate closed with a resolution calling on the Government to urge the United Nations to continue with its work at international, regional and national level to ensure that women's status does on improving after 1985. Women in the third world should be offered opportunities for training, work and involvement in the decision-making process. Finally, it was decided that Denmark should draw up a national plan of action to give women equal opportunities in every field.

Concern in Belgium: the convention on eliminating discrimination against women may not be adopted before the Nairobi meeting. The problem is the complexity of the Belgian constitutional system: a convention of this kind has to be approved not only by the national Parliament but also by the regional assemblies.

Why not a second decade? Nationale Vrouwenraad (Dutch-speaking branch of the National Belgian Women's Council) may be asking the Belgian Government to submit an official request to the United Nations.

Statistics making a distinction between men and women in the working world are called for by the National Luxembourg Women's Council. In the absence of those statistics, it is impossible to see how the Grand Duchy compares with other countries.

800 women's associations have responded to the appeal by Yvette Roudy, French Minister for Women's Rights: 2,400 questionnaires have already been returned to the Ministry telling it about the expectations of women's groups in matters of employment, education and health. The review of the decade that France is to present in Nairobi will to a great extent draw on these replies.

Women helping women in Kenya: the German Women's Council - Deutsche Frauenrat - has asked its members to make donations to its special account 119 39 94/02 with the Deutsche Bank. The amount collected will be passed on to women in Kenya. Another of the Council's schemes is to organize a working party on "older women" in Nairobi, to focus on the problem as it arises in the third world.

COUNTRY TO COUNTRY:FACTS, INSTITUTIONS AND LAWSAND MILITANT ACTIVITIES

B E L G I U M

Dr Lise Thiry, voted "Woman of the Year", is a professor of microbiology at Brussels Free University and department head at the Pasteur Institute. With her team, she helped to isolate the AIDS virus and develop a method of screening for the infection. Founded by the French-speaking branch of the National Belgian Women's Council, the award was given by a jury of about 40 journalists from a list of 22 nominees.

Useful address: Conseil National des Femmes Belges (branche francophone)
1a, Place Quételet. 1030 Brussels

The Zaire Embassy in Brussels has been headed by Ekyla Liyonda since January. A 36-year-old legal expert, she was formerly the Minister for Women's Status in her own country. Her post as ambassador to Belgium is particularly important for economic as well as political and historical reasons.

Voting is compulsory in Belgium, and should remain so: this is the gist of a joint release signed by Lily Boeykens and Huberte Hanquet, presidents of Nationale Vrouwenraad and its French-speaking counterpart, Conseil National des Femmes Belges respectively (National Belgian Women's Council). If voting were to be optional, the risk is that only the better informed and more highly motivated women would exercise this civic right, point out the two presidents.

Useful addresses N.V.R. Middaglijstraat 8, 1030 Brussels
CNFB, 1a, Place Quételet. 1030 Brussels

At the Sixth International Festival of Women's Films in Brussels early in March, 28 full-length films were shown. The highlight of the festival, attended by 28 women film-makers and actresses from 12 countries, was the discovery of a new generation of women directors in France.

Useful address: Cinélibre / La Femme dans le cinéma
10, rue des Palais. 1030 Brussels

420 Belgian Francs a day - about £7 - is the value of a wife and mother of two, according to a judgment by the Antwerp Court of Appeal awarding a husband compensation following the death of his young wife in a road accident. "Thuiswerkende Ouder" (the homebound parents' association) was pleased at the court's acknowledgement of a housewife's financial value, but pointed out that an insurance company pays 450 francs a day compensation for a car being off the road.

Vie Féminine, a Christian movement for cultural and social action, has asked us to point out that the booklet on "my pregnancy day to day" [Women of Europe n° 37] was produced jointly with GERM (Groupe d'Etude pour une Réforme de la Médecine - medical reform study group). It follows "Moi et la Maternité" ("maternity and me"), a booklet citing many personal stories and raising issues of great importance to the whole of the medical profession.

Useful address: Vie Féminine, 111, rue de la Poste 1030 Brussels

In the Socialist Party (French-speaking branch), men are moving up to make more room for women. It has been decided that at least 20% of the membership of all bodies, from grassroots to the top, should be women. At the latest Socialist congress, Viviane Jacobs was nominated permanent delegate and Raymonde Dury as chairman of the Interfederal Committee of Socialist Women.

Useful address: Commission Interfédérale des Femmes Socialistes
13, boulevard de l'Empereur. 1000 Brussels

The refusal of an invitation to dinner by Marijke van Hemeldonck, an MEP, has been reprinted by the feminist magazine, Lilith. The organizers of a gala event in honour of Benelux sent out an invitation ending with the words "a Benelux dinner - with ladies". With ladies? Does this mean that Colette Flesch, the then Luxembourg Foreign Minister, was merely tolerated in a men's club? Would each male guest be decked out with a lady like a pair of cufflinks? Are ladies something one just takes for granted, like parsley on new potatoes? Firmly but with a smile, Marijke van Hemeldonck declined the invitation.

Useful address: Lilith, c/o Josée Roymans, Huidevetterskaii 37, 9000 Ghent

Women and new technology is the topical issue in Belgium today, as it is in the rest of the European Community.

It was the chosen theme of a seminar arranged by the Brussels Free University's Institute of Sociology, in liaison with the Centre Européen pour Bruxelles and with the support of the Commission of the European Communities.

The questions raised were fundamental: what role do women play in the introduction of computer technology? Where do they come in? What strategies do we need to achieve equal opportunities for men and women when introducing new technology? Employers, unionists, sociologists and educators enriched the debate by contributing the benefit of their experience.

In winding up the seminar, MEP Raymonde Dury said that technical progress could bring about social progress, but only if we do not allow ourselves to be overawed by the scale of change now taking place. To a great extent, companies can control internal change, since they control their machines and how they are used. The real problem lies not in machines but in the rigid way work is organized. Should we not have a sort of "model collective labour agreement" at European level? Even so, women cannot be equal unless specific account is taken of them as a target group when planning for training in the new technologies. Undoubtedly the bridge to be crossed is both psychological and technical.

Useful address: Institut de Sociologie, 44 avenue Jeanne, 1030 Brussels

Vocational guidance and training in computer technology for women under 25 is the subject of a plan of action launched by Nationale Vrouwenraad (National Women's Council), which has applied for a grant from the European Social Fund. Through the "women's mafia in the ministries" (to use NVR's own words), support has been obtained from the Belgian Government, but an application for financial aid is still being considered by the Flemish regional government.

Useful address: Nationale Vrouwenraad - Nederlandstalige Afdeling
8, Middaglijnstraat, 1030 Brussels

For women who are "excluded" from the computer world, "Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes" has arranged a 48-hour course, free of charge, running from November 1984 to May 1985. The opportunity to learn and think has been taken up by 400 women, divided into fourteen groups.

The reasoning was that the ability to use a micro may be an important point in a job applicant's favour. Today, however, only 10% of those at courses leading to careers in computers and electronics are girls. On teaching staffs, only 25% of teachers going to retraining sessions are women, although they account for 67% of the teaching body in primary education and 55% in secondary education. In the same way, they make up only 5% of the buffs in computer clubs.

Useful address: Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes, 32 rue St. Jean, 1000 Brussels

D E N M A R K

"Living conditions in Denmark" is the title of a publication issued by the Danish Statistical Office, from which it appears that women are still doing the bulk of work in the home even though three quarters have a job as well.

In 1983, 40% of women did three quarters of chores such as cooking, housework, looking after the children, shopping, washing and small repairs, whereas only one man out of a hundred did more than three quarters of the work in the home.

Less than a quarter of household chores is done by 60% of married men, while only 2% of women do such a small proportion.

Women's workload has, however, lessened by comparison with the situation revealed by a survey in 1976, when 54% (rather than 40%) of women tackled over three quarters of work in the home unaided. Similarly, 68% of husbands used to do less than a quarter of the chores, compared with 60% in 1983.

It is a slow process, but the trend does seem to be towards a fairer distribution of tasks within the family. Some observers, both men and women, link it with the rise in the number of divorces. Out of 10,000 marriages taking place in 1950, 11% have now ended, while 22% of couples married for more than 20 years have now separated.

Women's participation in the political decision-making process could be extended by a recent decision by the Danish Government. In January 1985, the Government tabled a bill on giving fair consideration to women in nominations for the members of committees, commissions and other public bodies.

The bill states that the minister in question must ensure that there is a proper balance between men and women in the composition of commissions or committees set up to improve regulations and in public agencies having an important social role.

A reminder: the coalition Government now in office in Denmark consists of the Conservative People's Party, Liberals, Democratic Centrists and Christian People's Party.

Since men have been entitled to two weeks' parental leave after the birth of a child under a law that came into force in 1984, it has been observed that 20% of new fathers have availed themselves of the right.

"We have not yet reached the same point as in Sweden, where half the fathers take up parental leave entitlement but, given that our system is so new, it is surprising and gratifying so many men should be interested in the facility," says Helle Degn, President of Ligestillingsrådet (Equal Opportunities Council).

Useful address: Ligestillingsrådet
21 Frederiksgade, 1265 Copenhagen

"Women in Denmark" is the title of a one-week seminar arranged by Det Danske Selskab (the Danish Institute). Given in English, the event is to be held in Copenhagen from 29 July to 3 August and it is no coincidence that this should be immediately after the Nairobi meeting.

The main topics for the seminar are: women in positions of responsibility; violence and rape; feminism in the Establishment: is it enough?; the law and equality; women on the labour market; feminist studies in Denmark; women and modern technology. The cost of the seminar is 3,200 Danish crowns, to include accommodation, meals and local transport but not the cost of travel to Copenhagen. The deadline for applications is 1 June 1985.

"Danske Selskab" has been arranging seminars of this type for 35 years, covering the broadest range of subjects music, the care of the elderly, arts and crafts, town planning, etc.

Useful address: Det Danske Selskab 2 Kultorvet, 1175 Copenhagen

(See p. 10 for the report of the Danish Parliament debate, in the section on the Nairobi meeting).

FRANCE

Interesting facts and figures on women's employment have been published in the journal "Economie et Statistique". Between the 1975 and 1982 censuses, the working population expanded by 1,708,700, of whom 264,500 were men and 1,444,200 were women. This upsurge increased the proportion of women in the working population from 37.3% in 1975 to 40.7% in 1982. In 1968, 44.6% of women between the ages of 25 and 54 had a job; by 1975 this had increased to 53.1% and by 1982 to 63.5%.

The trends reflect the greater continuity in women's working lives, no doubt promoted by the expansion of part-time employment: in 1975, only 15% of working women had part-time jobs, compared with 19% in 1982 and 21% in 1984.

The general growth in the working population is essentially due to an increase in the number of working women with one or two children. The 1982 census revealed that 10% more mothers with one child were working than were recorded in the 1975 census; there were about 15% more mothers of two, exceeding the rate for childless women of the same age. This is why it is difficult to make direct links between the higher proportion of women who work and the declining number of children per family.

In the current situation, it is to the advantage of women that they tend to work in the service sector, where employment is likely to rise in the medium- and long-term. The proportion of women is increasing in most occupations except in agriculture and among blue-collar workers. A few figures: women account for 33% of the self-employed (retailers, craftsmen, heads of firms), 25% of management and the professions, 40% of "middle-rank executives", 72% of office workers and 19% of blue-collar workers. Out of 100 working women in the 25-49 age group, 77 work in the service sector, 21 in industry, 1 in the building industry and 1 in agriculture.

Source and useful address: Agence Femmes Information
21 rue des jeûneurs, Paris

Voluntary terminations of pregnancy were legalized by French Parliament ten years ago and 500 public hospitals were required to open a suitable centre for such operations, although only 420 have in fact done so.

According to the latest official statistics, the number of abortions in the first quarter of 1984 (91,556) was slightly less than in the previous year. Despite the fears voiced by some people, the number of premature births has not increased "due to a deterioration in the health of women who have had abortions". Quite the contrary: the proportion of premature babies fell from 8.2% to 5.6% over a ten year period between 1972 and 1982.

5- to 12-year-old boys and girls and the computer. As part of an experiment conducted by CLEFI (Centre Lyonnais d'Etude et de Formation Informatique - the Lyons centre for computer research and training), children were asked to say what they knew about computers and then to make up a story featuring a computer as a hero. The little story was then illustrated by computerized images.

It seems that boys have a broader and more detailed knowledge of computers than girls of the same age, but girls are far more imaginative and inventive. They have more ideas and their ideas are less stereotyped: knowing less about technical matters, they feel no obligation to stick to real-life, unlike boys. A girl tends to make her computer-hero a cozy character, whereas a boy depicts it in a menacing, even destructive role. A girl puts the computer into a fairy-tale setting, while a boy is more conventional in placing it in outer space.

"Actions-femmes" is a booklet published by the Ministry for Women's Rights to publicize women's schemes that strike an original note in terms of job training, social integration, the services they provide and their economics. It is a lively account of how a team is formed, seeks out funds and defines its aims. The publication describes about a hundred schemes, giving practical details and addresses.

Useful address: Editions FORS, 14 rue Saint-Benoît, 75006 Paris

Women and associations have been the subject of several recent research projects. Two figures illustrate the growth in women's associations: from 34.690 in 1978, the number apparently now stands at over 60.000!

To find out more about women's groups and organizations, the reference to consult is the Guide des Associations féminines published by the Centre National d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes, priced Fr.35 (postage paid).

Useful address: CIDF, B.P. 470-08, 75366 Paris

Issue 11 of Pénélope has a feature on "Women and Associations", describing when and how women started up associations in various sectors. Two main types are identified: organizations providing a "service" and "pressure groups". In the spirit of the magazine, a good deal of space is devoted to the historical background, such as the tradition of associations within the church, associations and feminism, new areas in which groups are being formed and the influence of women's networks.

Useful address: Pénélope, 54 boulevard Raspail, 75270 Paris

A report has also been produced by Sylvie Fayet Scribe reviewing research on "Associations and Women". It covers bibliographical research in various disciplines, listing the main projects and giving a section on bibliographical references. The report is available from:

Useful address: Service des Etudes du Ministère de la Culture
2 rue Jean Lantier, 75001 Paris

The other half of the sky: this is what the Chinese call women. The image is topical. For on 8 February a commercial flight was flown by an all woman crew. The chief pilot on Air-Inter flight 035 was Anne-Marie Peltier, and her co-pilot, technical officer and three hostesses were also women. The passengers were not told that they were being flown by women until they arrived, but then they broke out in applause.

Lieutenant Isabelle Boussaert has received her military pilot's licence for liaison and transport aircraft from the Defence Minister in person, although her licence still does not allow her to fly combat aircraft.

"Widow": this designation is used in many official certificates and documents. In reply to a question raised by Jacques Durand in Parliament, the Minister for Women's Rights said there are "no legal or statutory grounds for so doing and it may cause pain to the women concerned". Habits die hard, however, even though Government departments have already been enjoined by two ministerial circulars "not to include any particulars or designation in documents that might detract from the anonymity to which all individuals are entitled in their dealings with other parties". Minister Yvette Roudy also said that a new circular is to be issued on "respecting women's civil status and private life by ceasing to attach qualifying particulars to their names in administrative documents".

Fewer women recruits for military service. In 1983, 4,797 girls applied to join the armed services, 757 of whom were selected. In 1984, the number applying was only 4,265, whereas 1,077 were in fact recruited. The Gendarmerie, the police force which is part of the armed services, seemed to have been most affected, with a 25.7% drop in women applicants compared with the average of -12.5%. The only arm to have attracted more applicants than before was the navy, with a 25.7% increase.

Jacques Isnard, military affairs correspondent for Le Monde, observes that "many servicewomen have reason to complain of this world, created as it is by men for men. Most have passed the same tests and examinations at the same age as their male superiors, but the ranks and duties to which they are confined give them no scope for real responsibility."

The position of women in religious institutions is being changed as much by thought as by action. The group known as "Femmes et Hommes dans l'Eglise" ("women and men in the Church"), for example, has held a colloquium on the feminization of language and its ethical and religious implications. The proceedings have now been published in the association's journal (N° 19/20).

Useful address: Femmes et Hommes dans l'Eglise
58, rue de la Prévoyance, 1000 Brussels

Entitled "Les Femmes dans l'Eglise" ("Women in the Church"), a report is being produced by Monique Hébrard on lay missions within the Church performed by women, who work as diocesan instructors in catechism, chaplains in lycées and hospitals, episcopal curates, teachers of theology, etc. Published by Editions Le Centurion/Le Cerf.

Feminism and Pacifism was the subject of a colloquium in Paris last November organized by "Résistance Internationale des Femmes à la Guerre" ("women's international resistance to war"). The proceedings were published early this year. The ideas aired there included: "Humans are the only species capable of self-destruction" (Odette Thibault); "There is no just war. Other solutions must be found for conflict, not weapons which merely trigger off an escalation of violence" (Solange Fernex); "Women must be alert citizens and not allow the military to govern our society" (Andrée Michel).

Useful address: R.I.F.G. BP 265, 75960 Paris Cedex 20

In the French Communist Party. Gisèle Moreau has been put in charge of the Party's activities in the field of women's affairs and family policy. Together with Mireille Bertrand, Francette Lazard and Madeleine Vincent, she is one of the four women on the 26-member regulating body.

Training during working hours? An insurance company, UAP, whose chairman is Yvette Chassagne, has arrived at an original solution: its 10,000 employees (60% of whom are women) may use the company's 3,000 VDU terminals for an hour a week to study mathematics, French or accounting or for further study in the insurance field. The courses were requested by 8,000 of the staff; the time allocation is about to be extended to three hours a week.

GERMANY

An extra 10,000 million Deutschmark allocation is to go towards family policy from 1 January 1986. The figure was quoted by Dr Heiner Geissler, Federal Minister for Youth, the Family and Health, during a Bundestag debate on policy in favour of women. The Minister emphasized right from the start of his speech that the Government is gearing its action to make women's working lives more compatible with their family responsibilities.

He publicly thanked all those committed women who have brought the problem of battered wives out into the open and confirmed that funds were to be granted for battered women's hostels under an agreement between the central and local authorities and the voluntary bodies concerned.

In this Parliamentary forum, Dr Geissler also raised the issue of sexual harrassment. Physical molestation and sexual innuendoes can no longer be dismissed as "mere trifles": women at the receiving end must be fully aware of their rights. A better briefing of the police, the courts and the medical profession would lead to greater understanding of the kind of harrassment directed against women.

Useful Pressedienst des Bundesminister für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit
address: Kennedyallee 105-107, 5300 Bonn 2

Four million women work part-time, and 250,000 unemployed women are seeking part-time jobs. The Parliamentary Committee on labour and social affairs is well aware of the problem and has arranged a public hearing on the subject. The Social Democrat (SPD) group has expressed its concern at a Government bill promoting part-time work and leaving broad scope for negotiation between employers and workers. According to SPD MPs, steps should be taken immediately to offset the inadequacy of social protection for part-timers. Many women, for example, earn less than the minimum wage, DM.390, at which they qualify for social security benefits.

Useful Bundestagauschuss für Arbeit und Soziales
address: Bundeshaus, 5300 Bonn 1

Higher education: the proportion of girls in higher education has fallen back from 40.4% in 1983 to 37.8% in 1984. Dr Dorothee Wilms, Minister for Science and Training, is worried about this trend and has called on girls not to lose heart: they should opt for university and give consideration to courses in natural science, technology or computers. By staying in the traditional branches of learning and shunning science and technology, girls are taking a path that may lead to unemployment.

Useful address: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft
Postfach, 5300 Bonn 2

Too much overtime is worked in the retail trade, is a finding of a survey conducted by Bremen University. In supermarkets, one out of three full-time and one out of four part-time women staff work on Saturdays. They are given time off in lieu, but this often has to be taken at inconvenient moments without consideration for their family lives.

Men are changing, according to an INFAS survey. They are more likely than in 1975 to be involved in decisions on major purchases for the home (in 9 cases out of 10) and on the education of their children (the decision is reached jointly by 75% of couples).

Useful address: Institut für angewandte Sozialwissenschaften INFAS
Postfach 5300 Bonn 2

Working with the computer at home is a matter of concern for women members of the Christian Democrat Union (CDU). Are women to be chained to the computer keyboard, as they were to the treadle of a sewing machine in the 19th century? As of this time, there are barely a hundred or so instances of teleworking jobs in West Germany. but a warning has already been sounded regarding the danger of isolation. The primary reason why a woman works is money, but the second is the company and companionship that working life brings. "Do we want to work in an electronic convent?" asked someone at the public debate organized by the CDU women's association.

Unless women are informed about new technologies, unless girls learn to "play" with computers at school as do boys, they will face the threat of men programming women as well as the machines.

Useful address: CDU-Frauenvereinigung, Konrad-Adenauer-Hause, 5300 Bonn 1

Banning teleworking altogether, on the other hand, is the idea of the women members of the Social Democrats (SPD), who are supported in this respect by various groups of self-employed women. They feel that the plan for a new telecommunications cable network covering the whole country will give employers an opportunity to decentralize work and employ more people working on terminals in their own homes.

The Chairman of SPD, Inge Wettig-Danielmeier, fears that women will suffer from isolation, the lack of social protection, the absence of union solidarity and disruption to family life - all good reasons for standing out against possible slavery in the home.

Useful address: Arbeitsgemeinschaft sozialdemokratischer Frauen
Ollenhauerstr. 1 5300 Bonn 1

In public sector employment, the proportion of women recruited has dropped from 54.6% in 1983 to 42.2% in 1984. Recent legislation also gives priority to people (i.e. men) who have done military service when recruiting teachers, whereas no account is taken of a year's voluntary social work, nor indeed of a woman teacher's pregnancy. Several regional governments have adopted "Frauen förderungspläne (women's advancement plans) to reverse the trend by rethinking recruitment, promotion and working conditions to fit in better with women's needs: they are the Länder of Bremen, Hamburg, North Rhineland/Westphalia and Schleswig-Holstein.

A new law on parental leave has been tabled by the Federal Minister for the Family, under which a DM.600 allowance would be given for 10 months to whichever parent gives up his or her job to care for a newly born or newly adopted child. Social security and unemployment insurance contributions would be paid out of the public purse during this period, and the parent would be guaranteed his or her job back. One new feature is that women not having a job outside the home would benefit from this law on a par with women in paid employment.

Useful address: Bundesministerium für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit
Kennedyallee 105-107 5300 Bonn 2

Positive discrimination at Hamburg University: if an equally well qualified man and woman apply for a position as professor at the University, the woman is more likely to be chosen. A regular progress report is to be issued, and the procedure is to be monitored. At **Berlin free University**, as a result of the introduction of a quota, 33% of the professorships are to go to women in 1985. Useful addresses:

Universität Hamburg, Pressestelle, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 2000 Hamburg 36
Freie Universität Berlin, Pressestelle, 1000 Berlin-Dahlem

G R E E C E

Several laws to improve the status of women have been passed by Greek Parliament, satisfactorily dealing with various problems not covered by the recent revision of the Civil Code. Although the laws uses the term "spouse" or "parent" without specifying sex, the main beneficiaries of the new provisions are women .

On the subject of insurance, Law 1469/84 states that a spouse who, after a divorce, is left totally uninsured may obtain the same protection from the insurance company as he or she previously enjoyed, subject to very minor administrative and financial conditions.

On the subject of tax, Law 1473/84 provides that a flat rate sum may be deducted from total earnings to cover the cost of caring for children under 6, without having to produce invoices. In principle, this concession is given to working mothers, but it is also available to widowed or divorced fathers responsible for the care or custody of children living with them.

In the health sector, Law 1489/84 gives women who have been unfairly dismissed on marriage or pregnancy the right to return to their jobs in the same grade as before. Since no restriction of this kind exists in the case of men, the Government felt that it was discriminatory to treat women in such a way.

On the Sex Equality Committee (Symvoulío Isotitas ton Dio Filon), the Prime Minister has ended the mandate of three members and appointed three new members: man: Mrs M. Haritou-Fatourou, Professor at Thessalonica University, Helen Hiotis, President of the Petra women farmers' cooperative (Lesbos) and - a man - John Koulaxis, lawyer.

The three women coming to the end of their term of office are population expert Haris Hymeonidou, educator D. Saltouridou and woman farmer Helen Hatzisotiriou.

One of the Committee's activities has been to plan several pilot schemes promoting the advancement and financial independence of women and to apply for European Social Fund grants on their behalf. Many of these schemes are joint efforts started up by women farmers.

Useful address: Symvoulío Isotitas ton Dio Filon, Mousseou 2, Plaka, 10555 Athens

A symposium on "women and the Mediterranean" under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Culture has been organized jointly by the French, Italian and Spanish Institutes in Athens, in conjunction with the French Institute in Barcelona and the Centre for Studies on Mediterranean Women.

How should the social, legal and occupational status of women in the 17 countries bordering the Mediterranean be defined? What are the problems today and in the near future? What policies and strategies should be introduced? The views exchanged by the many personalities and experts who came to Athens for the occasion were very illuminating.

Feature films as well as documentaries were shown in the symposium as a striking illustration of the living conditions of women on the shores of the Mediterranean today.

Those who met at the French Institute expressed the keen hope that they would meet again next year in Barcelona.

Housewives who are members of the Greek housewives' association, Syllogos Ellinidas Nikokyras, have held their second conference two years after the highly successful event that launched the series.

This time discussions centred on points 76 and 81 of the resolution passed by European Parliament on women's status on 17 January 1984. The main themes of the debate were recent developments in the economic and social rights of women who choose to stay at home, and the effects of running the home and doing domestic chores on those women's mental health. Many representatives of women's organizations and political parties in Greece and Cyprus gathered at the venue, the European Communities Information Office in Athens..

In an introductory speech, the chairman of the association pointed out that the European Parliament resolution had marked the first occasion at European level when housewives had been treated as working women. She also said that, with the recent creation of the European Federation of Women in the Home, housewives from several European countries could now work closely together to press their claims.

Mrs Laiou, Chairman of the Sex Equality Committee, stated firmly that the Government was opposed to the idea of a "housewife's wage". A measure of this kind, she explained, would discourage women from entering the labour market and make them even more dependent than before.

The delegates who had come from Cyprus pointed out that "there is something worse than being a homebound woman: it is being a woman without her home" (alluding to the consequences of the invasion of their island by Turkish armed forces in 1974).

The resolution passed at the end of the meeting called for various amendments to the law, recognition of the housewife's right to a pension, a scientifically conducted study to assess the economic and social value of domestic work and in-depth research on any negative effects of housework on the mental health of housewives in Greece. The conclusions were then brought to the attention of individual political parties, asking them to make their views known within a reasonable period.

Useful address: Syllogos Ellinidas Nikokyras 18, Fidiou 106 78 Athens

Women and drugs was the subject tackled by Panhellenadiko Kinima Gynekon - the Pan-Hellenic women's movement - at a conference of doctors, psychologists, jurists and others.

Among the points discussed were the role of the family in general and, in particular, relationships between parents and children in the prevention of drugs and during periods of crisis, covering the defence mechanisms that could be used to cope with the crises that inevitably arise when a young person enters the adult world, helping him or her to avoid the trap of drug addiction.

The conference was the first public event to be organized by this fledgling organization which, according to its statutes, was set up to help women find their own identities and encourage them to play an active, genuine role in the life of their society. Barely a year old, the movement - called PAKIGY for short - is to take as its ideals the preservation of cultural heritage and respect for tradition and the Orthodox faith. It would welcome contact with other organizations pursuing the same aims.

Useful address: Panhellenadiko Kinima Gynekon, Michael Nomikou 3, 112 53 Athens

An association for Greek families has just been founded by people who are already leaders of women's organizations, parent/teachers' associations, consumer groups, etc.

The new association has been set up along lines mapped out for member organizations of COFACE (Confédération des Organisations Familiales de la Communauté Européenne). Its aim is to uphold the interests of families in the social conditions of today. The needs of each family unit are to be reconsidered in the global context, the family being looked on as a socio-economic nucleus as well as the basic institution of present-day society.

Useful address: Syndesmos Ikogenion Elladas, Milioni 8, 106 73 Athens

I R E L A N D

A comprehensive report on the position of women in Ireland is planned by Nuala Fennell, Minister for Women's Affairs. This will be the first such overview since the Theckla Beere Report on the status of Irish women in 1970.

A **"positive action initiative"** has also been taken by Nuala Fennell by sending out guidelines on an equal opportunities policy to all semi-State and State bodies, asking them, for example, to review procedures and make recommendations on positive action. She has also instructed them to include a progress report on that action in their annual reports.

Useful address: The Minister for Women's Affairs and Family Law Reform
Department of the Taoiseach, Merrion Street, Dublin 2

The sexual abuse of children is a matter of concern for Barry Desmond, Minister for Health. In 1981, 36 children were taken into care because of sexual abuse. The Minister has given a grant of £25,000 to the Irish Council for Civil Liberties to investigate the problem, and its working party is expected to deliver its findings in 18 months' time.

Useful address: Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Women's Group
Liberty Hall Dublin 1

The number of rape complaints has risen sharply, points out the Rape Crisis Centre, with twice as many women seeking its help in 1984 than in the previous year. The Centre has counselled 380 women, 275 of whom were rape victims and 105 the victims of incest. Following an RTE television programme on incest, the Centre received 4 phone calls that very evening and 6 more the following day.

Useful address: The Rape Crisis Centre
2 Lower Pembroke Street, Dublin 2

Co-education, sex education and the elimination of sex-stereotyping in school books have been recommended by the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Women's Rights.

The findings of the report were generally welcomed by women's organizations and parents, and a sex education programme could be on the curriculum of all primary and secondary schools within 12 months.

A charge of bigamy against her husband by a Dublin woman, Eileen Vard, has been struck out by the Principal State Solicitor, since the only witness for the prosecution could not be compelled to give evidence.

Mr Vard obtained an ecclesiastical annulment from the Catholic Church in 1975 and married another woman in 1977, although neither signed the church register after the ceremony.

The case highlights the anomalous position of State and Church law in Ireland on the issue of marriage. Eileen Vard's case has been taken to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Ireland liberalizes contraception - By 83 votes to 80, the Dail has passed a law authorizing the sale of contraceptives to persons over age. Up to now, only married couples were allowed to obtain natural or chemical contraceptives.

Premier Fitzgerald has hinted that he intends to table new reforms, to include divorce.

Women in Small Business - the Success Factor. Admission was free to a one-day conference on this theme organized by the Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs, held at the Irish Management Institute on 8 February.

The conference provided information, advice and encouragement to women who intend to set up their own businesses. One highly qualified speaker was Rona Feit, an American lawyer who was Executive Director of the President's Interagency Task Force on Women Business Owners in the late 70s before becoming the first head of the Office of Women's Business Ownership - no sinecure, since no fewer than 2.8 million women-owned businesses were registered in 1980.

Useful address: The Minister for Women's Affairs and Family Law Reform
Department of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings. Dublin 2

I T A L Y

Celebrating the 8th March International Women's Day is widely celebrated in Italy. More than in any other Community country, women there band together to force society to stop and think for a moment. Every woman puts a ring around the day in her diary and every women's association arranges its programme - for the 8th March is both a festival and a time for questioning.

"A long 8 March," the press called it, not inaptly. So many events are set up in Italy that a single day is no longer enough. For example, the "Commissione Nazionale per la realizzazione della parità fra uomo e donna" (national committee for equality between men and women) met Fausta Deshormes-La Valle, head of the Women's Information Service at the European Commission, on 5 March. Then there was a presentation of the Women's Code, a compilation of all the laws relating to women in Italian law. The day of the 8th was then celebrated right up to the 27th and 28th March, with an inter-governmental seminar on parental leave and creches.

The national committee for equality also took the initiative in arranging for Italian television to put on a "Women's Special" on 8 March. The broadcast was a technical feat: a live - and lively - four-hour marathon.

It featured songs of course, and news on everything that is going on in the legal world in Italy and at Community level, plus a two-way link with the women who are taking a stand against the mafia in Sicily and a report on the forthcoming meeting in Nairobi. In the studio was Annamaria Miglio, the first woman police chief ("questore") in Italy, more specifically in Terni, an industrial town in Umbria.

This TV programme made an extraordinary impact. But, at the same time, not a single top job in Italian radio/television, RAI, is held by a woman!

The 8th was also an opportunity to reflect on certain statistics: at top management level in the public sector there are 4,863 men and 394 women. At the very top there are 547 men and 3 women. Within the nationalized industry's "autonomous" sector, there are 1,197 men and 26 women at senior management level.

A change in the Constitution has been called for by Senator Elena Marinucci on behalf of the Commissione Nazionale per la realizzazione della parità fra uomo e donna, the equality committee that advises the Premier and his department. Aldo Bozzi, who chairs the committee on constitutional reform on which both Chambers are represented, has rejected her demand, including the suggested change to article 2 of the Constitution in which Senator Marinucci would have liked the term "rights of man" to be changed to "rights of the person".

Useful address: Commissione nazionale per la realizzazione della parità fra uomo e donna, Presidenza del Consiglio, Palazzo Chigi, Rome

Institutional reform in a changing society was the subject chosen by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane - the Italian National Women's Council - for its 13th triennial meeting in Milan.

The viewpoints expressed by the representatives of women's organizations that are members of the Council converged in that the reform of political and institutions was seen as an urgent priority: in any such reform there should be due regard for both the needs of Italian society and the new outlook for Europe.

By its very nature, the debate showed that women's associations are particularly well placed to air and disseminate ideas thrown up by women and to bring pressure to bear on parliamentary bodies in Italy.

Silvia Moravia, chairman of the Council, and its secretary general, Sofia Spagnoletti, were to arrange for the discussions at the meeting to be written up and published so that they could be used as a basis for a forthcoming one-day seminar at which practical proposals could be formulated for transmission to MPs. One of the ideas to be investigated was advanced by an expert on the Constitution, Anita Garibaldi Jallet: why not modify the powers of the Lower House so that it could view Italian problems in a directly European perspective?

Useful address: CNDI, c/o Maria Sofia Lanza Spagnoletti, Segretaria Nazionale Piazza dei Quirinti 3, 00192 Rome

Can a woman be a judge in court martials? The idea did not seem far-fetched to Nuccia Ruta di Andria, a judge in the civil courts in Vigevano, who applied for the position. Despite objections (that she had not done national service and was not an officer), she obtained the support of Vito Maggi, a member of the national association of military magistrates.

The Sixth Socialist Women's convention was dominated by two themes: paving the way for the elections and the bill on sexual violence.

Speaking on the first of these two subjects, the Vice-Secretary of the Italian Socialist Party, Claudio Marelli, gave assurances that the Party as such would support women when drawing up lists of candidates for the May elections for municipal, provincial and regional bodies. The Party would ensure that women candidates are "usefully" placed, with at least one woman high enough in each electoral list to guarantee her election.

Discussing the sexual violence bill which, at the time of the convention, had gone through the Chamber of Deputies but was still before the Senate, Elena Marinucci persuaded the convention to pass a resolution calling for substantial amendments, such as arrangements to permit women's organizations to be a party to every stage of criminal proceedings and the automatic initiation of proceedings by the authority in all crimes of sexual violence.

Useful address: Partito socialista italiano, Sezione Femminile
Via del Corso 476 00186 Roma

Woman and reconciliation was the title of a series of encounters in Milan Cathedral as part of a "school of the word". Singing, commentaries on biblical passages and silent prayer alternated with discussions led by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini. As a counterpart to the style if not the spirit of the rest, the strong voice of Father David Maria Turoldo rang out to the cathedral rafters proclaiming that "women are the highest point of creation".

In Palermo, it was Cardinal Pappalardo who opened discussions on "women and theology". Those attending (French, Italian, Belgian, Spanish and German women) considered such subjects as women and biblical knowledge, moral theology and the theology of the Trinity, and women in the history of the Catholic Church.

Useful address: Fondazione Costanza Scelfo Barberi, c/o Facoltà di Teologia
Corso Vittorio Emanuele 463, 90134 Palermo

Women, Parliament and Society - "Donne. Parlamento e Società" is the title of a new magazine produced by the inter-parliamentary group of women elected on the Italian Communist Party ticket. The group was set up about a year ago to establish new relationships between women and institutions and between women in elected office within institutions and women in society in general. Known by the abbreviation D p & s, the magazine is intended to be just as interesting to women who do not (yet) vote for the Italian Communist Party as those who do.

Useful address: D p & s. Piazza Campo Marzio 42 00187 Rome

Women, the unions and new technology: at the Florence Centro Studi (research centre), a seminar was arranged by Coordinamento Femminile CISL (the Italian trades union federation's coordination agency for women unionists) on the ways in which women's lives and work are being changed by the computer.

It is not just the volume of work available which concerns the unions but the very nature of this work, its organization and its influence on everyday life. Those attending the seminar expressed their resolve that the unions should monitor the current restructuring process to ensure that women do not suffer. Quite the opposite, in fact. Women should take advantage of the circumstances by redefining their own ideas and reshaping their own role in the society of tomorrow, for example by pressing for positive action.

Useful address: Coordinamento femminile CISL, Via Po 21. Rome

L U X E M B O U R G

The **"head of household" allowance** must be paid to married women as well as married men working in the private sector, according to a ruling by the Luxembourg court of arbitration, if they satisfy the same conditions for entitlement to that allowance.

The judgment implies that this allowance should be paid retroactively over the five years before the date of first bringing the case. Very few women have taken their case to the courts and a fair number of employers have already come to an arrangement with married women in their firms.

Military history has been made in Luxembourg, with six women trainees from the police force and five from the gendarmerie passing out as officers following their time at the Luxembourg Army's instruction centre.

A new women's centre has been inaugurated by the Women's Liberation Movement. Just a few steps away from Luxembourg station and much more spacious than before, the centre will give the Movement the premises it needs for a phone-in service, a meeting place for groups and the kind of legal, social and medical services that women need. The centre is also a forum for working parties and think-tanks on such subjects as women and the working world or women and peace.

Useful address: Maison des Femmes - MLF
66, rue de Hollerich. Luxembourg-Gare

Fictitious separation by couples was the subject of a Parliamentary question raised by Astrid Lulling. Couples who separate purely for convenience are taking advantage of the "splitting" system - in other words, they pay tax on only 50% of their income, whereas unmarried people pay tax on their entire income.

In his reply, the Finance Minister stated that living apart does not affect the legal existence of a marriage, nor by consequence the category of tax applicable. This category applies to married couples, and couples who are separated but still married in the eyes of the law are entitled to opt for whichever tax arrangement is more favourable.

The Minister acknowledges, however, that there is a great temptation for childless two-income couples to simulate separation by setting up separate homes, thus avoiding the higher rate of tax to which they would be liable were they to be taxed jointly. There are about a hundred known cases in Luxembourg. The tax authorities are reluctant to be too nitpicking, but the Government intends to plug these loopholes as they are in conflict with the principle of equality in tax matters.

A wage for one's spouse was the subject of another question by Astrid Lulling in Parliament. Income tax legislation states (art. 46.3) that "remuneration effectively paid to close relations other than the spouse jointly taxable with the trader may be included under the heading of trading costs". Astrid Lulling proposes that this be reworded to read "close relations OR the spouse". In his reply, the Finance Minister turned down this proposal on the grounds that "couples who are traders may be treated only as joint partners whose respective duties and rights are strictly equal; one implication of this is that one spouse cannot pay a wage to the other".

Useful addresses: Astrid Lulling, Chambre des Députés, Luxembourg
Ministère des Finances, 3 rue de la Congrégation, 1352 Luxembourg

N E T H E R L A N D S

Dian van Leeuwen-Schut has been chairman of the Emancipation Council - Emancipatieraad - since 1983 and she has now been re-elected in that office until 1989. In an interview in Kartaal Nieuws (Emancipatieraad's quarterly journal), she says that there is still a good deal to be done before equal opportunities are a reality and points out that the Council intends to broaden its contact with women's groups in the Netherlands. She feels that social security is one field where even today too little thought is given to the equal treatment of individuals.

Useful address: Emancipatieraad, Lutherse Burgwal 10, 1512 CB The Hague

Dutch nationality is to be granted automatically at birth to the child of any Dutch woman. Before the new law came into force on 1 January 1985, a child was entitled to that nationality only if its father was Dutch. An additional provision is that naturalization is to be made subject solely to a royal decree.

Paulien van der Linden has been appointed general administrator of the Dutch union, FNV - the first woman to hold this post.

This year, the Women's Movement international archives - Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging - is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Our "happy birthday" greetings go to I.A.V. for its first half century's unique, invaluable work on the international records of this Movement.

Useful address: Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging
Keizersgracht 10, 1015 CN Amsterdam

At the age of 77, A. Naeff-Scheen is the first woman to obtain a doctorate in Slav languages (Polish and literature) at Amsterdam University. It is of interest that the Polish Institute is patronized more by Polish than by Dutch students.

The Ministry for Social Affairs asked the Nederlandse Vrouwenraad NVR (Dutch Women's Council) to work with other women's groups in organizing a seminar on emancipation in the Netherlands on 27 April. The stated aim was to produce written recommendations on policy for the official Dutch delegation to Nairobi and the delegation of Dutch women taking part in the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum. The subjects discussed at the seminar, which was open to the general public, were employment, education and health. The Council was also asked to arrange the 3rd European Colloquium of women's organizations and groups in the ten EEC countries to be held in the Netherlands next March, whose theme will be "working and leisure time".

Useful address: Nederlandse Vrouwenraad
Laan van Meerdervoort 30, 2527 AL The Hague

The Lower House - Tweede Kamer - feels that maternity leave for working women should be extended from 12 to 14 weeks. It should be up to mothers themselves to decide how they should apportion this leave (before and after childbirth). The Secretary of State for Emancipation, Mrs A. Kappene van de Coppello, declared that she would be asking employers and unions to insert clauses for the protection of pregnant women in collective agreements, dealing with such matters as extra breaks, more flexible working hours, temporary part-time working and exemption from work in the evenings or at night. She will also be asking the Inspectorate of Labour not to allow these women to perform certain heavy jobs.

The third phase of legislation governing "tweeverdieners" (two-income households) has been discussed by the Upper House. From 1 January 1985, the husband's earnings are being taxed at a higher rate on an escalating scale: the more the wife earns, the more her husband pays in taxes. By discouraging women from taking a job outside the home, the measure will boost the "black economy". The provision of support to families in their own homes, for example, a service provided by some 240 institutions, will suffer. Such "family aid" is essentially based on the work of part-timers, 140,000 of them; more than 90% of whom are married and are the very people hardest hit by the new regulations. Dozens have already given in their notice and others will do the same when they realize how heavily their family income is being taxed.

As a result of protests from women's groups nationwide and the Emancipatieraad (Emancipation Council), the provisional regulations on State intervention to promote equal opportunities - Tijdelijke Rijksbijdrageregeling Emancipatiewerk - have been extended until 1989. The Government felt that local and provincial authorities had gained sufficient experience to manage on their own, but there is still much to be done: many small and medium-sized municipalities have not yet availed themselves of the regulations designed to promote equal opportunities schemes at local and provincial level.

Useful address: Emancipatieraad, Lutherse Burgwal 10, 1512 CB The Hague

The directors of Regional Employment Offices - Gewestelijke Arbeidsbureaus - have received a Ministry of Social Affairs circular via the Employment Department, calling on them to allocate 10% of their budget, i.e. 35 million guilders a year, to helping women jobseekers and retraining women who would like to return to work after a number of years' break. The purpose of this step, it seems, is to imbue Employment Office staff with a greater sense of urgency.

Useful address: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken, Zeestraat 73 The Hague

The Dutch Government is to launch a prize, to be awarded twice yearly to a woman or group making a vital contribution towards improving the position of women in society. This "Women's" prize will bear the name of Joke Smit who, before her death in 1981, was a dynamic pioneer in women's emancipation.

The monthly women's magazine "Vrouwenkrant" is no more. A decision has been taken to cease publication after 13 years. Pauline Harmsen and Marga Rijen say that many of the issues tackled by the magazine last year evoked no response. It was disappointing, but since the number of subscribers had fallen as well as sales on news stands they were looking elsewhere. "Producing a women's magazine," they say, "must be a means to an end, not an end in itself".

Do you like to browse in bookshops? If you are passing through Amsterdam come to the Xantippe bookshop at 290 Prinsengracht. If your travels take you to Leiden, drop by Gaia at 1 Pieterkerkchoorsteeg, where you will find records, costume jewellery, books and badges. Its profits are shared out among women's groups. In Utrecht, don't be too frightened to go to the "witches' coven", or "Heksenkelder", at 13 Teelingstraat.

"De liberale vrouw" - the Liberal woman - is a booklet published by women members of VVD, the Liberal Party. It is compact in size but packed with information and reports on what is going on in women's affairs.

Useful address: Liberale Vrouw, Koninginnegracht 57, 2514 AE 's-Gravenhage

UNITED KINGDOM

Janette Jordan has been successful in a claim against her employer, the Northern Ireland Electricity Service. She had been temporarily occupying a post there for ten months but, when it was to be filled, she had to compete with eight other candidates. One of those, a man with less experience than herself, was given the job. The Tribunal hearing her case decided that pregnancy was part of the reason why she was not offered a job for which she was well qualified. She had suffered discrimination, it said, because the Electricity Service had assumed that a married woman with children would be affected by certain difficulties and not a married man.

Janette Jordan was awarded £500 compensation for loss of earnings and £500 for injury to her feelings.

Useful address: Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland
22 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 2BA

Three 12-year-old schoolgirls were awarded £351 each as compensation for sexual discrimination at school. Michelle Debel, Michelle Teh and Selmin Sevket were made to stay down in the third-year class because there were too many pupils in the fourth year. The parents were told by the school that the youngest pupils would repeat the year, but on checking they found that only the youngest girls were affected, not the boys. They appealed to the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Bromley Education Authority admitted discrimination at the school, St. George's Primary, and the fact that the decision had caused suffering to the three girls.

Useful address: Equal Opportunities Commission, Overseas House
Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN

The British Gas Corporation has produced a video to attract more girls to scientific and engineering careers in the gas industry. Entitled WISE with gas (a pun on the title of the recent campaign Women in Science and Engineering), the video features women scientists and engineers, ranging from a service engineer visiting people's homes to a civil engineer supervising pipeline installations.

Useful address: British Gas Film and Video Library
Park Hall Road Trading Estate, London SE21 8EL

Women priests in the Church of England? The Church has until recently refused to favour the appointment of women priests, although they have been broadly accepted in other Protestant Churches. After a 7-hour debate on a motion moved by the Rt. Reverend Ronald Bowlby, Bishop of Southwark, at the last meeting of the Church's governing body, the Synod, the principle has now been accepted by its three houses, covering bishops, clergy and laity. Because of the complex consultative and administrative measures involved, however, no woman is likely to be ordained for another 5 or 6 years.

270 women have gone on strike at the UK Ford plant at Dagenham in Essex and Halewood on Merseyside, bringing the company to a halt and costing it almost £250 million in lost car production. The women in question, who machine seat covers and head rests, were striking for a regrading from unskilled to skilled work and a pay rise of £6.50 a week. They demanded an independent investigation on the grounds that the company had wrongly evaluated their work under its grading scheme. After 6 weeks' strike, the company agreed to the investigation.

City Centre is the imaginative solution to the needs of London office workers, providing rooms for meetings or films, a library, advice on individual problems and a place to stop by for lunch.

Four out of every ten women in employment are office workers, and office work provides 60% of all jobs in Central London.

Funded by the Greater London Council, the Centre has five full-time assistants and a management committee with representatives from the four main office worker unions.

Office workers are so scattered that they have had little opportunity to discuss their problems. The City Centre hopes to reduce this isolation.

Useful address: City Centre, Irene Hamilton and Gill Kirton
Room 402, Southbank House, Black Prince Road London SE1

Shopping with baby? A nightmare! In main stores shopping with children is a struggle. Children's clothing is often on an upper floor with no lifts, and it is hard to get up stairs with a push chair. Toilet facilities for feeding or changing a baby are often non-existent.

The Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movements and its local branch, the Women's Centre in Belfast, circulated a petition to mother-and-toddler clubs, women's groups, trade unions and community organizations in the city and then presented the signatures to the Belfast Large Stores Association. Most stores pleaded lack of space for providing facilities, though help could be made available if the customer asked.

Useful address: The Belfast Women's Centre
18 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1

Heart disease: the United Kingdom now has the highest rate in the world. Many experts attribute this to the average Briton's liking for fatty foods and sugar. The Department of Health and Social Security has published a report urging a reduction in the amount of fat in the British diet and declaring that most people eat too much salt.

The National Federation of Women's Institutes has chosen coronary heart disease as one of its priorities in 1985 and is embarking on a broad campaign to combat this major killer. The ministerial report will be widely circulated for comment by members of the Federation and discussion at open meetings arranged by local Institutes.

Useful address: National Federation of Women's Institutes
39 Eccleston Street, London SW1W 9NT

The health service has been under fire from a report by the Women's National Commission, an advisory committee to the British Government. The majority of National Health Service users are women, not just for themselves but because they are concerned with children and care for the elderly, but their needs are often ignored.

The report was based on the views of 6,000 women. Seven out of ten, for instance, wanted a weekly evening surgery with their local doctor, and over half wanted a monthly Saturday surgery other than for emergencies. They also wanted easier access to women doctors, particularly for pregnancy and gynaecological disorders. Nearly nine out of ten women would use a Well Women Clinic if it were available and also wanted more health education, particularly in mental health, diet and ageing. The working group, chaired by Dame Ann Springman, has made 84 recommendations.

Useful address: Women's National Commission
Government Offices, Great George St., London SW1P 3AQ

RESEARCH, MEETINGS AND BOOKS

The Family, the State and financial security. This is the theme for the 5th world congress of the International Association for Family Law in Brussels on 8-14 July.

Under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians, the Director General of UNESCO, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the President of the Commission of the European Communities, the Congress will compare and predict the economic and social repercussions of current changes in family structures and roles, the crisis in the welfare state and unemployment on individual and family security. The groups most affected by these problems are women, children and the old.

Three major themes will be debated: evolution in the rules of private law on the obligation to support one's family; fiscal and social policy on family matters; and employment policy in relation to equal opportunities and financial security for the individual and the family.

Useful address: Centre International de Conférences de Bruxelles
Parc des Expositions, Place de Belgique, 1020 Brussels

On the occasion of European Music Year, research is being conducted on women in the world of music. Their role, place and careers in music and related professions merits investigation, as it will generate practical proposals on how to better women's position in this branch of the arts. Any information and views will be welcomed.

Useful address: Patricia Niedzwiecki and Yves Bessières
50. Rue de Roumanie, 1060 Brussels

Sex: female. Occupation: shellfish farmer. Carole Roussopoulos of Video Out and Claude Vauclaire of Centre d'Etude et d'Action Sociales Maritimes (centre for social maritime research and action) have, with financial backing from the European Commission and the French Ministry for Women's Rights, produced a 35-minute colour video on shellfish farming (mainly oysters and mussels) in the oyster-beds of Marennes-Oléron in the French department of Charente-Maritime. While their menfolk are at sea, women run the "sheds" where oysters are sorted and measured. It is a physically demanding, lonely job, and a precarious one at that. What does a woman do if she loses her husband through death or divorce? To help each other, they have formed an association. The film-makers hope to promote the movement and tell the public about their lives.

Useful address: CEASM, 14 rue Saint-Benoît, 75006 Paris

Firmato Donna ("signed woman") was a successful book fair held in Rome in June 1984 by the Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue (national league of cooperatives and friendly societies) to present and promote books written by women. The next in the series will be open to publishers in every country in the European Community.

Planned for June 1985, the event will be accompanied by shows and discussions in which equal opportunities are looked at from the cultural viewpoint. The aim is that Firmato Donna will both encourage women to read and serve as a meeting point for authors, publishers, booksellers, book and layout designers, etc. All exhibitors are invited to adopt an additional theme for their stands. The League, for example, has chosen "education in eating".

Useful address: Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue
Via A. Guattani, 9 00161 Rome

Attic Press is a new feminist publishing house in Ireland, launched with two new titles: "The Best of Nell" by the feminist journalist Nell McCafferty, and "Smashing Times", a history of the suffragette movement in Ireland from 1889 to 1922 by Rosemary Cullen Owens. Attic Press has also published the Irish-women's Guidebook and Diary '85.

Useful address: Attic Press, 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2

Italiane in Belgio, with a preface by Dacia Maraini, is a collection of 32 personal stories of Italian women in Belgium, brought together and introduced by Myrtia Schiavo. Immigrants living under widely differing conditions tell about their lives as working women. 228 pages, Lit.13.800, published by Tullio Pironti.

Women and research in biochemistry. The International Association for Women Bioscientists is urging all women scientists to come to the 13th international congress on biochemistry to be held in Amsterdam on 25-30 August. It is an occasion chosen by many women researchers for announcing their latest research findings.

Useful address: Congress Secretariat, XIIIth International Congress of Biochemistry, c/o Organisatie Bureau Amsterdam bv Europaplein 1078 GZ Amsterdam tel. (20) 44.08.07

The Canadian Consultative Council on the Situation of Women has published a dossier on "women and legal action", recommending that a legal aid fund be set up to enable women to bring legal action. With the changes introduced by recent legislation in the field of equality, there will probably be a growing number of legal suits. The Council's file also cites the best known precedents in the history of women's rights in Canada.

Useful address: CCCSF, 66 rue Slater, 18th floor
C.P. 1541, Succursale B, Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 5R5

Femmes Suisses (Swiss Women) is a monthly journal supported by the Alliance de Sociétés Féminines Suisses and the Association Suisse pour les Droits de la Femme, gives a host of clear-cut items, many of them very funny, which paint a rather unconventional picture of Swiss society. A thought by Jules Renard is quoted in one article: "La féministe, c'est celle qui ne croit plus au prince charmant" - "A feminist is someone who doesn't believe in Prince Charming any more".

Useful address: Femmes - Case postale 323, 1227 Carouge, Geneva

Die Frau in unserer Zeit (women in our time) is a quarterly journal produced by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung) aimed at women who want to be well informed and politically committed. Leading personalities are on the editorial board: Marlene Lenz, chairman of European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights, Annelies Klug, Eva-Maria Lackman and Jutta-Brigitte Böhle-Joester. Apart from commenting on society and the family the journal devotes a good deal of space to subjects that women approach in a different way from men: peace, the environment, health and consumer affairs. The journal may be aimed at women, but it also hopes to influence men. Published by Ernst Knoth.

Useful address: Die Frau in unserer Zeit, Postfach 1365, 5047 Wesseling.

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