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Womanpower — An Underutilized Resource

The Status and Future Plus Some Surprising Trends

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As the Nation faces increasing manpower needs today and in the years ahead, it will find a rich source of needed skills as it draws more fully on the as yet far from adequately-used talents and capabilities of its women.

This is not to say that women have not been entering the labor force at unprecedented rates. They have. The number of women wage earners has in fact more than doubled since 1940. Among the more than 28 million women in today's labor force are nearly half of all women between the ages of 18 and 64. Representing 37 percent of the total work force, women are employed in every one of the job categories listed in the latest Census. Nevertheless, the skills of women are not by any means adequately utilized. This can be illustrated in a variety of

ways.

Women tend, far more than men, to be concentrated in the less-skilled, lower-paid occupations. Earnings are a good index of relative location in the job structure. Twenty-six percent of all women who worked year-round and full-time in 1966 had money incomes of less than \$3,000. Only 8½ percent of all men so employed were in that income bracket. More than two-thirds of all women working year-round and full-time had money incomes of less than \$5,000. Fewer than one-fourth of all men in year-round, full-time employment were in this income category.

Relatively few women attain the higher reaches of the income scale. Fewer than one percent had wage and salary incomes of \$10,000 or more in 1966. Nineteen times as large a pro-

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portion of men enjoyed this privilege.

Job Level Going Down

Moreover, mounting evidence indicates that the relative position of women in the labor force, despite recent efforts to upgrade their economic status, has deteriorated rather than improved.

The proportion of women in the relatively less advantaged fields has increased rapidly during the years since 1940. In the service trades, excluding private household employment, their proportion has risen from 40 percent in 1940 to 55 percent last year. They represented 53 percent of those in the clerical occupations in 1940; by 1967 this ratio had risen to 72 percent.

During this same period there has been a significant and steady decline in the percentage of women in the more privileged occupations—professional, technical, and kindred jobs. Currently they represent 38 percent of all workers in these positions, compared with 45 percent in 1940. A 16-percent decline in these leadership roles in so brief a time span should be a cause for concern.

It should be emphasized that this diminishing role is *relative*, not absolute. The *number* of women who are professional and technical workers is more than twice as high as it was in 1940, but during the past 27 years the number of men in these fields has more than tripled. The rate of growth in the number of women in the professions has failed to keep pace with the rate of overall demand for the highly skilled in a world that has become increasingly technical and they haven't retained their previous share of these occupations.

Professional Fields

Indicative especially of the under-

use of women's training and talents are recent trends with respect to the relative roles women play in some of the professional fields in which manpower shortages are presently especially large. There is an acute shortage of college and university teachers, yet in 1964 women constituted only 22 percent of the faculty and other professional staffs of these institutions of higher learning. The proportion was considerably higher in 1940 (28 percent), in 1930 (27 percent), and in 1920 (26 percent). It was only a little higher in 1964 than it was in 1910. Yet the proportion of all degrees granted earned by women had risen about 70 percent during these 54 years.

Trends with respect to teaching and administrative positions in the primary and secondary school levels offer similar illustrations. The proportion of elementary school teachers who are women—about 85 percent—has shown little change in the last 50 years, but the proportion who are secondary school teachers has dropped from 68 percent in 1920 to 46 percent. At the administrative level women's role has diminished even more. In 1928, 55 percent of the elementary school principals were women; today the figure is 22 percent of the supervisory principals; now fewer than four percent of secondary school principals are women.

Only one percent of our engineers are women and only three percent of our lawyers, a ratio that has remained virtually stationary for many years. In these fields and even to a greater extent in medicine does the relative role of American women suffer by international comparison. This is well illustrated by a recent study of women's role in medicine in 1965 in some 29 nations of the world. In 26 of these countries women comprised a larger percentage of all physicians than in

the U. S., where women were but 6.7 percent of the total number. In five countries women represented at least 20 percent or more of all physicians, or more than three times the U. S. proportion. In nine countries the proportion of women physicians was between two and three times as many as in the U. S. There were only three countries with a smaller percentage of women physicians—South Vietnam, Madagascar, and Spain.

In Management

Women, we might also note, play a virtually negligible role in the United States in managerial fields. An article on women in management published two years ago in the *Harvard Business Review* states: "The barriers are so great there is scarcely anything to study." It reported that the process of breaking down the barriers cannot be observed "since this occurs so rarely at present." The study concluded that between 1950 and 1964 there had been no observable increase in the proportion of female to male executives.

The fact that women's relative position in the labor force has become less rather than more favorable is also reflected by the widening gap between the earnings of men and women. In 1966 the median earned income of women workers employed year-round, full-time, was only 58 percent that of men. In 1955 it had been 65 percent. Interestingly enough even after the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of sex as well as other grounds, the gap between the median earnings of men and women workers continued to widen.

Policies Based on Myths

Why should the underutilization of womanpower persist? To what extent

can this be attributed to employment policies based on myths which are no longer related to the reality of women's lives and work performance?

One of the most pervasive of these myths is that it doesn't pay to train women because "they will only marry and leave." This was a generalization applicable in considerable measure 30 years or more ago. It is no longer a tenable assumption as a basis for training and employment policy.

The skill level of the job, the age of the worker, the worker's length of service with the employer, and the worker's record of job stability—all give much better clues to an understanding of differences in labor turnover or work performance than does the mere fact that the worker is a man or a woman.

Women More Stable

Available statistics on labor turnover indicate that the net differences in job-leaving of men and women are much smaller than is generally recognized. A study of job mobility made by the Labor Department indicates that men tend to move from one job to another somewhat more often than women. According to that study, 11 percent of men workers but only 9 percent of women workers changed jobs one or more times in the year reviewed.

For all women, regardless of education, there is increasing likelihood of employment and for longer periods of time. The work-life expectancy of all women has been growing very rapidly and will continue to do so. The average single woman can expect to work longer than a man. The average childless married woman can now expect to work 35 years. Even the average married working mother can now, at the age of 35, expect to work about 24 years.

Mature women over the age of 35 are especially worth the investment of training. They are seriously committed to their work. Often older women can work with less supervision and with greater initiative and judgment. Their performance and safety records are equal or superior to those of younger people and they are far less likely to change jobs.

Economics

Broad generalizations about the comparative labor costs of men and women workers are often incorrect. This is especially true with respect, for instance, to the allegation that absenteeism is much higher among women than men. Data presently available indicate that, on the average, women lose a little less time from the job due to illness or injury than do men.

There is the generalization which often adversely affects women's employment opportunity to the effect that women work only to supplement income and should not be looked upon as an integral part of the work force.

The fact is that most women, like men, work for compelling economic reasons. This is true of single women, of whom there were 6 million in the labor force in 1966 and who work generally to support themselves. It is true of the widowed, separated or divorced women who must often support not only themselves but often families. There were 5½ million such women at work in 1966. And it is true of the many married women who must share with their husbands the financial burdens of the family. The 1966 figures show that a fifth of the 15 million women workers in husband-wife families had husbands whose annual income was less than \$3,000; another 22 percent had husbands earning between \$3,000 and \$5,000; and 26.5 percent had husbands earning between

\$5,000 and \$7,000. Thus two-thirds of the families of these married women would have had incomes of less than \$7,000—the level commonly regarded as a minimum standard of modest adequacy—had they had to depend on the husband's income alone. The contribution of these married women is exceedingly important to the welfare of their families. Their earnings brought the income of two-thirds of the families in which both partners worked, above the modest adequacy level.

Attitudes Toward Education

Among the many other factors contributing to the waste of women's talents, the attitudes of parents play a very significant role. All too often they may give their girls to understand that a good marriage is all that is expected of them, that jobs are for marking time, and that home and family will provide complete personal fulfillment. This attitude often carries over when the question of higher education arises and many parents are inclined to feel that money spent on a college education for a girl is money wasted. This overlooks the fact that 77 percent of all working women today are married or have been married. The less their training and occupational opportunities, the less will they be able to utilize their abilities constructively.

Such parental attitudes overlook the great change in the work-life patterns of women, especially after the age of 35. Since 1940, the number of women in the labor force aged 35-44 has more than doubled, the number aged 45-54 has more than tripled, and the number aged 55-64 has increased more than fourfold. About half of all women between the ages of 35 and 55 are now labor force participants.

The changing work pattern of the mature woman is understandable. More and more American women are

completing their families while they are still young. Once their children are in school, a growing number of women are eager to enter the labor force or re-enter it after an absence of some years. They can assume increased responsibilities outside their homes because technological progress has removed various chores from the household and lightened those that remain.

Education Leads to Jobs

Increased educational opportunities have contributed to the rise in women's employment. The more education they have, the more likely are they to seek jobs. Education enlarges not only skills, but the aspiration and opportunity to use them. Among women who have only completed grade schooling, 30 percent were in the labor force in 1967. This compares with 47 percent of those who obtained a high school diploma, with 54 percent for college graduates, and 67 percent for those with five or more years of higher education. For sizable majority of these highly-educated women, with five or more years of higher education, employment is a lifelong commitment. More than eight of ten are workers in their middle years, 45 to 55, and even during the childrearing years, 25 to 34, nearly two-thirds hold jobs.

No less do unrealistic or uninformed attitudes of teachers and counselors often discourage girls from aspiring to the training necessary to the full use of their abilities. All this may contribute to the fact that, while 64 percent of men high school graduates go on to college, only 46 percent of girl graduates do so. However, this difference has been narrowing during the past two decades. The percentage of young men going on to college from high school has stayed relatively con-

stant, while the percentage of young women doing so is now half again as large as it was in 1948.

There has, however, been no relative catching up with respect to college and university degrees. Women earned 40 percent of all B.A.'s granted in 1930; in 1965 the ratio was only one percentage point higher. With respect to M.A.'s, in 1930 women earned 40 percent of the total in sharp contrast with the 32 percent received 35 years later. Similarly, there was a sharp decline over this period from 15 percent to 11 percent in the percentage of doctoral and equivalent degrees received by women during this period.

This does not mean, of course, that fewer women are completing higher education. The number of women earning masters' and doctors' degrees has risen more than fivefold during the course of the 35-year period. Bachelors' and first degrees won by women had more than quadrupled. Here we encounter the "relative" again. What is significant with respect to their capacity to compete in the upper reaches of the job structure is that the number of men receiving higher degrees in comparison has increased at much faster rates. This is why the *proportion* of women among all higher-degree recipients has markedly declined.

For various reasons women's perception of the need for the higher degree hasn't kept pace with the realities of changing occupational patterns and requirements and with the reality of the longer worklife expectancy of the educated woman.

Educational Aid

Another factor affecting the training of women for the professions may well be the deterrent of inadequate financial assistance available to them. A 1965 Office of Education study indicated that the undergraduate achieve-

ment of women students averaged higher than that of men, yet women held a significantly smaller proportion of post-graduate fellowships, scholarships, and research and teaching assistantships. Women do not receive a proportionate share of the guaranteed loans provided for in the Higher Education Act, or of National Defense Student Loans. Only one out of five graduate fellowships under the National Defense Education Act goes to a woman.

But financial difficulties are not the only hurdle for the woman who wants a profession. She may find it extremely difficult to be admitted to a professional school. While admission policies are becoming more liberal than in the past in some fields, in others the barriers remain high.

The woman student may also be deterred from preparing for a profession by the realization that even if she persists and overcomes all obstacles she may still be faced with discrimination once she is launched upon her career. Neither employers nor the public is quite ready fully to accept them in many occupations on the same basis as men.

President Claims "A Waste"

In the light of these and similar facts, it is not surprising that the present underutilization of women's skills was recently described by President Johnson as "the most tragic and the most senseless waste of this century." He went on to say: "It is a waste we can no longer afford. Our economy is crying out for their services."

The President then proceeded to cite just a few of the fields in which we can anticipate urgent demands for skilled workers in the years immediately ahead. He talked of the need in the next decade for additional school teachers and college instruc-

tors, specialists in health services, for scientists and engineering technicians, for State and local employees exclusive of those in teaching. He said:

"The requirements in these fields alone will be 110,000 additional trained specialists every month for the next 10 years. That requirement cannot be met by men alone and unless we begin now to open more and more professions to our women and unless we begin now to train our women to enter these professions, then the needs of our Nation just are not going to be met."

The President was speaking primarily of our requirements for highly trained professional people. Looking ahead to 1970, these are the career fields which are expected to grow the fastest; but there will be great demand, too, for supportive people—health aides; teacher, librarian, and social worker assistants; and a very wide range of other subprofessional personnel.

Some Prospects

The occupational category expected to be the second fastest growing one in the next three or four years is secretarial and other clerical work—the field in which more women find employment than in any other. Opportunities will grow rapidly, too, for people in the service and sales occupations.

As we look to the years ahead the important question is, will the talents of women find a better relative use in the occupational structure than in the past?

There are many constructive forces now at work which should be helpful but there is much more to be done to help women increasingly find work more commensurate with their potential.

This was a matter of very great interest to the Commission on the

Status of Women appointed by President Kennedy in 1961. The Commission's 50 recommendations presented to the President in its report, "American Women," brought forcefully to public attention ways in which women's contribution to society can be enhanced.

Many advances were set in motion by the Commission's work. The passage of the Federal Equal Pay Act can be attributed in no small measure to the new climate of opinion the Commission helped to create. Assurance of equal pay has done more than redress inequality; it has widened employment opportunity. So, too, has the inclusion in Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 of a prohibition against discrimination in employment on the basis of sex as well as race, color, religion, and country of origin.

President Johnson continues vigorously to express his desire to make the Federal Government service a showcase example of good employment policy. This is reflected in his many appointments of women to top-level positions and the intensified recruitment of women at the higher grades. Progress is evident also at the starting levels. Women selected under the Federal Service Entrance Examination in 1966 made up 33 percent of the appointments; they had represented only 22 percent 2 years earlier.

Legislation

On October 13, 1967, the President signed an Executive order prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sex in Federal employment, employment by Federal contractors and subcontractors, and employment on federally assisted construction. This action was an amendment of a previous Executive order that outlawed discrimination in these employment

areas on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin. Although the new Executive order does not substantially alter the employer coverage under prohibitions against sex discrimination established by 1962 Civil Service Commission regulations and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, it will greatly strengthen enforcement procedures.

New laws and improved regulations, however, are but part of what is needed to effectuate employment progress. The Women's Bureau seeks to promote larger educational and training opportunities for women and to encourage them to appreciate the diversity of occupations open to them and to prepare realistically for them.

Because the great majority of our young women can now expect to combine the dual roles of homemaker and employee during a sizeable span of their lifetime vocational counseling of girls and young women takes on new significance if sights are to be set high and abilities well used.

The Women's Bureau seeks actively to encourage the expansion of special educational and training opportunities open to mature women entering or re-entering the labor force. Many hundreds of our colleges and universities now have continuing education programs or special educational services designed primarily for adult women. Often these provide classes at hours convenient for homemakers. They usually provide special counseling with respect to educational and employment plans. They frequently make available financial assistance and special services such as child care, job placement, or referral services.

Government Programs

The Manpower Development and Training programs of the Labor Department have helped large numbers of women, whose lack of previous edu-

cation or training has seriously limited their job prospects, to fit themselves for the changing world of work.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps has provided more than 1.3 million disadvantaged young people—over two-fifths of them girls—with job-oriented special skills.

We now have 18 Jobs Corps residential centers for unemployed girls from families in poverty, providing intensive training in a new atmosphere away from home. The nearly 10,000 young women presently enrolled are being trained for jobs which would not have been open to them without this experience.

Work-study programs are making it possible for many young people to finance their college education with part-time work schedules.

Girls and women have been assisted greatly by the landmark legislation relating to education passed in 1965. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides improvements particularly for schools attended by children of low-income families, and the Higher Education Act makes possible improvements in college and university facilities as well as financial assistance for college students. In addition, training programs for subprofessional workers and for professional retraining have been expanded under the act.

Through these various programs and many others beside, we are helping to open larger opportunities for women for employment, job training, and education as never before, and more and more women are taking advantage of them.

The Women's Bureau is especially concerned with the less advantaged fields of employment in which many women are engaged, promotes the improvement of wages and working conditions, and seeks in other ways to

elevate the dignity and status of these occupations. An example of these efforts is the Bureau's program directed toward the upgrading of household employment. Representatives of some of the country's most influential voluntary organizations met at the invitation of the Women's Bureau in several consultations which led 3 years ago to the establishment of a National Committee on Household Employment. This Committee now includes representatives of 22 professional, social welfare, and service organizations. The Bureau and the Committee working together have stimulated the development of training programs which will enlarge earning potentials; they seek also to promote the passage of needed legislation, to encourage better understanding of good employer-employee relationships and in other ways help upgrade and reconstitute this field of employment.

State Commissions

An important development of recent years has added another new impetus to women's progress. Patterned largely after the President's Commission on the Status of Women, State Commissions have been established in every one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and two municipalities. They have drawn heavily on the resources and assistance of the Women's Bureau in planning and carrying out programs. They, like the President's Commission, have been concerned especially with the expansion of educational and employment opportunity. They are contributing importantly to understanding and action.

The State Commissions have worked tirelessly for legislation. They have promoted new and improved State minimum wage legislation. They have helped to expand the number of

States with equal pay laws; 36 States and the District of Columbia now outlaw pay discrimination. Fourteen States and the District of Columbia now ban all forms of discrimination in employment on the basis of sex. Many hundreds of State laws have been passed in the last few years improving the civil and political status of women. The State Commissions have played a key role in these advances.

The Women's Bureau, working through its national headquarters and its five regional offices, serves as a central source of information and provides leadership in all these and the many other areas of its concern. It stimulates interest in the improvement of law, attitude, and practice through conferences, through its technical assistance and consultant services to

State Commissions, private organizations, and government agencies, and through its many publications. Its program directed toward the enlargement of women's contribution, not only in employment but in volunteer community service and in other aspects of national life, have taken on added significance in the light of our country's goal for the full utilization of our human resources.

Equal Opportunity

Change is in the making; of this we can be certain. As a Nation we appreciate more fully than ever before that all who wish to contribute their skills should have the chance to give of their best. The greatness of America has always lain in the open door—the open door of equality and opportunity for all our people.

Business Archives

Of the 100 pieces of paper filed in the average office, only 20 will ever

be called back for reference, according to the Leahy Business Archives.

TV in South Dakota Technical School

The new Lake Area Vocational-Technical School, Watertown, South Dakota, was dedicated October 1, 1967. Closed circuit television will be used at the school to teach specialized subject matter and manipulative skills. Instructional programs there are avail-

able for replay at other local or State schools upon request. One feature of the school is a permanent structure in which houses are built; this will permit year-round construction by the building trade classes.

