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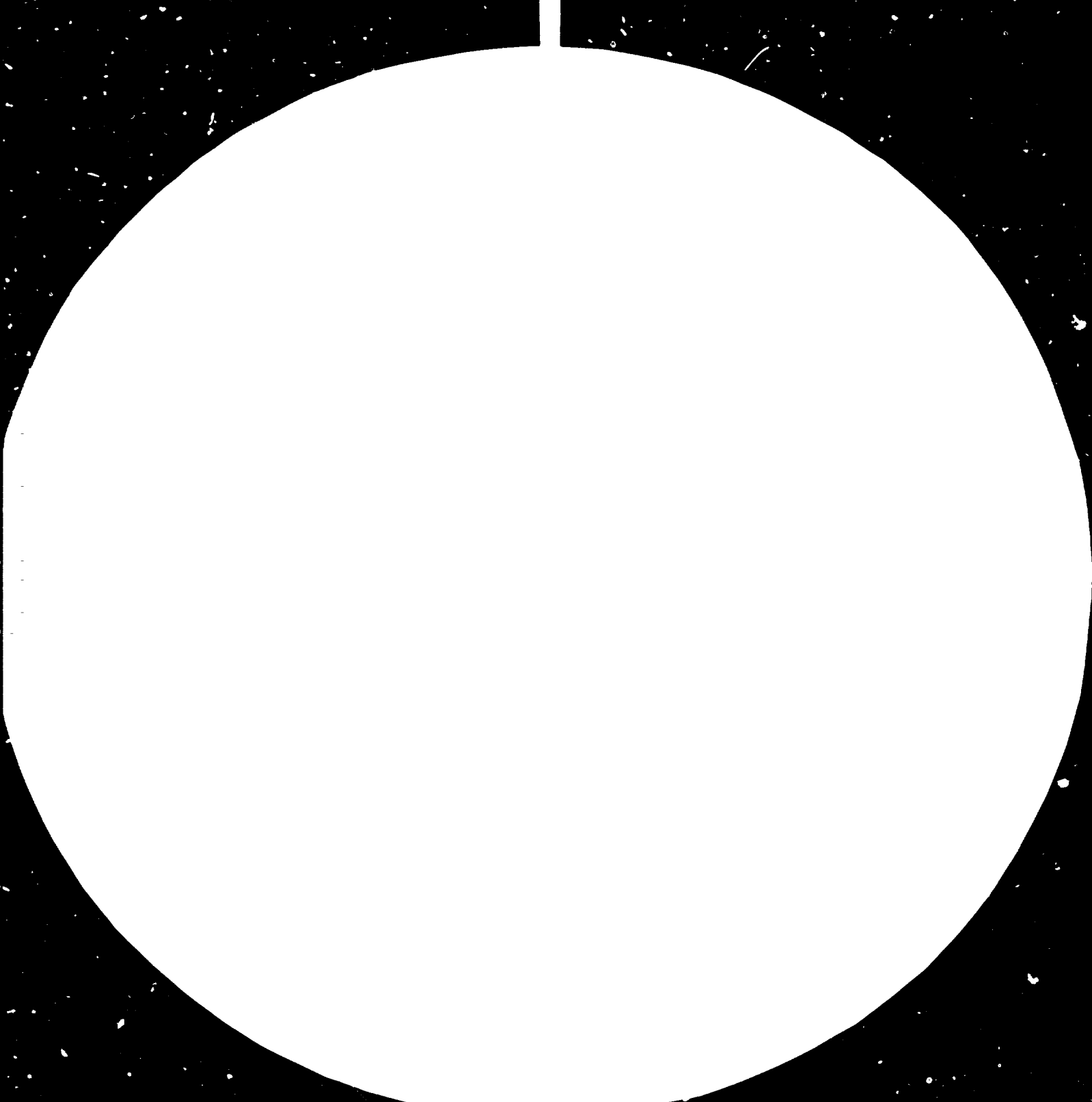
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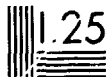




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EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATION OF WOMEN

IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

by

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* organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in co-operation with the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

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In socialist Bulgaria the labour activity of society members is underlain by public property of production tools. All incomes from the population are, thus, of labour origin, their volume being assessed in terms of the quantity and quality of labour consumed to the public benefit. Consequently, the right of labour is recognized in the PR of Bulgaria as a main human right, a point strengthened by the Constitution.¹ The right of labour, however, is viewed not as a right to practise a given profession in general but as freedom to choose any kind of education and profession pertaining to one's personal preferences, aptitudes and qualifications within the framework of public needs, with no discrimination whatsoever in terms of sex, age, nationality, religious or political convictions.

On the one hand, the socio-economic development of Bulgaria has been attended with a numerical growth of those employed in the national economy and on the other - with efficiency growth of their utilization. One of the main lines of more efficient utilization of labour resources is stepping up employment in industry and conversely bringing it down in agriculture and stockbreeding. To account for it comes the better technical equipment of the latter and stemming from it higher labour productivity. Thus for the period spanning from 1945 to 1975, the volume of industrial employment had gone up by 467,3%, whereas with relation to agriculture and stockbreeding it had gone down by 62.5% which on its part brought about a sharp turn in the allocation of their relative share in the overall employment volume. With regard to industry this share

1. Constitution of the PR of Bulgaria, "Science and Art" Publ. house, 1974. p. 27

grew from 7.9 up to 34.9% while with regard to agriculture and stockbreeding it dropped to 24.4% as against the previous 31.9%. Unlike the situation in the other countries during the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th century however, in socialist Bulgaria the rural population was not brought to ruin as that process went off but just the opposite, the standard of living was raised.

The full political and economic equality of man and woman established in the PR of Bulgaria provided the Bulgarian woman with the necessary conditions to rapidly gear up her labour activity. An evidence in proof of the latter is the total number of women-workers and employees which, for the period 1960 - 1980, had jumped from 631,7 to 1983,2 thousand, that is by 213.9%. At present women represent 48,6% of the overall number of workers and employees engaged in the national economy, which broken down into its branches yields the highest absolute employment volume in industry, followed by agriculture and stockbreeding, business, education, culture and arts, public health services and social insurance, etc.

1. Raising the Educational Level of Women

An important prerequisite for improvement of employment and efficiency of utilization of women labour is their education and qualification. It is a well-known fact that as a result of the special care taken by the Government illiteracy and semi-literacy, which in 1946 spread over about one fourth of the population above the age of seven and higher, was done away with already in the first years of the People's power. Simultaneously a programme of broad democratization of the educational system was carried out - equal rights of education and free tuition for everybody. An actual expression of this is to

be found in Article 45 of the Constitution of the PR of Bulgaria which says: "All citizens are entitled to free education at educational establishments of any kind or rank under the conditions laid down by the law. All educational establishments belong to the State. Primary education is compulsory for everybody. The State is building up conditions for universal secondary education to be carried into effect. The State fosters education, takes care for an all-round and thorough improvement of working conditions at the educational establishments, grants scholarships and other awards to specially gifted students. Citizens of non-Bulgarian origin can study their native language along with a compulsory learning of the Bulgarian language."

This brought about substantial changes in the proportional ratio of the various categories of education, of women included - increase of the relative share of those having higher and college education and technical or comprehensive secondary schooling on account of a lower share of those lacking secondary education. Thus the relative share of the active in the economy women with higher education grew up during the period 1965-1975 from 24% to 5,0%; of those with college education, technical and comprehensive secondary education - collectively it grew to the total of 32,0% as against the previous 17,0%, whereas as per women with primary education (finished or unfinished) it went from 30,0% down to 63,0%. The changes in the dynamics of the educational level are not obvious. During the period the highest growth was noted with women with college education, then followed with technical or comprehensive secondary and with higher education respectively. Conversely, the number of those who had finished (or not) only primary school

dropped down.

The concern for women education is a significant prerequisite for their most adequate and effective participation in the social production. The latter is being manifested along various lines and includes both the educational system, i.e. higher, secondary and vocational education, and the mechanism of planned orientation of all young girls to make them launch into suitable professions, fully congruent with their propensities and interests.

Training of highly qualified specialists for the national economy, including industry, is the responsibility of the higher institutes and universities. The development of higher education in the years of the People's power scored a great leap forward. Thus in 1940 Bulgaria had five higher educational establishments attended by approximately 10,0 thousand students whereas in 1980 the higher institutes and universities revved up to 28 with 85,3 thousand students registered in them. At the same time the relative share of women-students at the higher institutes also swelled up. From a fairly low percentage before the socialist revolution, they represented 53,2% of all higher students in 1980. In terms of their professional orientation the women attending higher institutes may be categorized as follows: 24% students of engineering; 42% - of architecture; 70% - of medical sciences; 56% - of stomatology; 38% - of natural sciences; 45% - of social sciences and 48% - of Arts.

It is worth noting that before the socialist revolution specialists with higher technological education for the needs of industry could only get their training abroad. This accounts for the insignificant relative share of women-specialists with higher education in the overall number of specialists - 20,9%

in the year of 1946.

With the accelerated socio-economic development of the PR of Bulgaria the women with higher education grew rapidly in number and by 1980 they were 11 times more as compared to 1946. The industrialization of the country enabled women to branch out into the engineering and technological subjects. At present they represent 35,0% of the total engineering-technological specialists employed.

There are now in the PR of Bulgaria three main forms of training women with secondary education: the secondary vocational-technical schools, the technical schools and the comprehensive secondary schools (high schools). Every year about 41.0 thousand pupils are being trained at the secondary vocational-technical schools for the needs of the national economy, including industry; of them 38,1% are girls, the predominant part of which are taken on in the industrial branches. Another 35,0 thousand young specialists or so have their schooling at technical schools and colleges; of them 45,2% are girls. 68,1% of those finishing comprehensive secondary schools (high schools) are again girls.

Those girls who do not continue their studies at secondary schools or drop out from them in the process of schooling acquire vocational training at the vocational training centres, courses and training schools set up at the industrial enterprises. The vocational training centres are a new form of qualifying workers. They were set up in 1972 and are attached to the bigger industrial enterprises. At the moment there are 319 vocational training centres and 134 branch centres functioning in the country.

At the enterprises where such centres haven't been set

up ,new women-workers get training at courses or training schools.About 40% of the new women workers needed today in industry are trained at the vocational training centres,courses and training schools.

For the comparatively short term of their existence,the vocational training centres have won recognition of successful comprehensive bodies for professional qualification of workers.Their establishment presented an opening for an adequate solution of a number of important problems in the field of professional training;a great deal of cadres got their training within short terms and immediately under production conditions; planning of demands and cadre allocation was refined;the necessary material and technical base of teaching was improved;the terms of adaptation to labour teams were shortened,etc.

These centres contributed to the unification of the whole educative process.A uniform regulation system was adopted to account for the equalization of teaching plans and programmes as well as for a unified approach in determining the duration,periodicity,succession of the various forms of professional training and qualification.

The democratic character of the educational system established in the PR of Bulgaria finds practical realization in the development of the forms of training.Besides as regular (full-time) students,women in this country can finish their studies as extra-murals or part-timers (at night-schools).This form of schooling provides industry with cadres with higher and college education.Classes at night-schools run in the evening or after work,while women-students may avail of a shorter working day.In addition,women-students at night- or extra-mural educational establishments have the right of an

extra paid leave every year to use for their examinations. Graduates of these educational bodies share equal rights with regular(full-time) students.

The right of labour in the PR of Bulgaria is practically carried into effect through the system of assigning jobs to young women, graduates of the educational establishments. By decree of the Bulgarian government of March 25th, 1977, all young men and women who have finished secondary schools, colleges or higher institutes and universities are assigned to suitable posts. When a young woman begins work for a given enterprise, the latter is bound to provide her with: work to fit her qualifications; lodgings for her and her family; money for the travel expenses of the whole family and for moving house; It is also bound to help her fix up the other members of the family with jobs and get her children into schools and kindergartens.

Thus the educational system in the PR of Bulgaria took up a firm stand as a major factor in the socialist construction of the country. It contributes enormously to the moulding of the harmoniously developed socialist personality, to the training and higher qualification of cadres and to the enhancement of the nation's economic and cultural level. The development of the educational system goes hand in hand with the overall development of the socialist society. That is why in the years to follow, the educational system is to be attuned afresh to the new, higher demands of our social development, to the more complex problems facing our country and our government. The reconstruction of the educational work was considered at a special plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, held in July 1979. At this plenum and at the

First Congress of Public Education an overall programme was adopted aiming to boost educational activities into new upsurge pertaining to the major aim - instruction and shaping of the new thoroughly accomplished personality and in conformity with the country's demands and interests.

All ranks of education shall be involved in the forthcoming reform - secondary schools, technical colleges and higher institutes; a compulsory secondary schooling for all girls and boys shall be initiated.

2. System of Professional (Vocational) Orientation

The professional orientation takes a significant part in determining the kind of education and in the choice of future profession by women. In the PR of Bulgaria has been set up a national system of professional orientation having as its task to help young girls choose a profession to fit their likings, aptitudes and capabilities. There is, however, a fact that should never escape us, namely, that the choice of profession is a unity of individual and public interests which means that in their strivings to master a profession young people should always take into account the objectively existing needs of society itself.

To this end, taking as a basis the economic development and the changes to set in the content of labour as a result of the implementation of the strategic trends of scientific and technological progress, the future cadre demands are specified as per main groups of profession, specialities, branches of economy and territorial units. These demands do not form a part of the factors underlying the vocational orientation of young people. The basic activities in this respect are carried out at school and include the following more impor-

tant points:

- Acquaintance of students and their parents with the future needs of cadres (professions, specialities) for the national economy and the respective territorial unit.

- Formation of such skills and habits in the students which will make them fit for various kinds of labour in production conditions.

- Discovery of their diverse professional interests and propensities by means of various forms of educative and instructive work.

- Pedagogic, medical and other advice to help students determine correctly their own vocation.

Apart from schools, a significant part of the professional orientation activities is allotted to the public organizations, the Bulgarian Trade Unions included. The specific forms they proffer, as for instance, meetings with students, excursions to factories or plants, meetings and talks with the front-rankers in a given profession, etc., lead to firm inculcation in the students' minds of love for the future profession. They reveal to them the social significance of every profession, show them the possibility for realization, in labour as well as individuals, which various professions open to young people.

3. Changes in the Professional-Qualification Structure of Women

The speeded development of industry, the educational system refinement as well as the incessant enhancement of qualifications brought about significant professional differentiation of women labour force. The changes in the professional

structure of women employed in industry for the period 1960-1977 may be brought forth as an illustration of the above.

According to statistic data the highest relative weight falls to those women who practise professions most typical of woman labour application - weavers, spinners and seamstresses.

What is characteristic of the cited professions is that though by tradition exploiting women labour mainly, with the development of technical base of production, they've undergone some changes towards expansion and diversification of scope.

The electrification of industry lead to fast increase of the relative share and absolute number of women with the following professions: electrical fitters, electrical mechanics and electricians. During the analysed period their relative weight had gone ~~from~~ from 0% up to 2,5% while their absolute number marked an 8-fold increase.

With the rapid development of industry, the requirements with relation to the quality and assortment of manufactured goods also rose, which on its part called for a fast numerical growth of women working as quality-surveyors and waste-controllers (rejectors). For the considered period the relative weight of women at such jobs had stepped up by 2,6% as against 0,0% and their absolute number swelled 8 times higher. It should be noted that the fast numerical increase of women at such jobs has certain bearing on the implementation of automated and mechanical control means for production quality which still goes at a very slow pace.

Another firm positive trend in the development of the professional structure of women employed in the industry of the PR of Bulgaria is the constant decrease of the absolute number and relative weight of jobs requiring manual labour,

hard and inagreeable toil such as charwomen, women working on hand or treadle sewing machines, weavers, etc. In general this may be explained with the fact that this category of labour is gradually being replaced by various automated and mechanical means. Their relative share was brought down for the considered period to 8,0% as compared to the previous 34,8% and their absolute number marked a 2,1-fold drop.

The changes in the professional structure of women conveyed are not emptied of content with the quantitative variations in the separate groups of professions alone. Along the alternations in the labour content of traditional professions there goes an intensive process of emerging of new professions stemming from the strategic trends of the scientific and technical progress. Further the improvement of women professional structure may serve as one of the basic indices for a growth of their cultural and technical level. Potentialities for extension of their qualification, on the one hand, for increase of labour productivity and, in particular, for building up a highly qualified cadre "reserve" and on the other, for satisfying the needs of social production, underlain by science and technological progress, are fulfilled in the changes of their professional structure.

The rise of qualification level is bound up with the socio-economic development of the country. Consequently, at every new stage of economic development, the Government of the PR of Bulgaria takes the necessary measures to extend the qualifications and training competence of those employed in industry, women included. The educative forms and bodies set up to raise the professional skill of employed women correspond to the development rates in industry as well as to

the structure of manpower with regard to age and qualifications. Thirty per cent of the women working in industry extend their skill every year at some training form for improvement of qualifications. The enhancement of women professional competence is effected within the framework of the Unified national system of qualifications improvement of cadre, passed by Act No. 42 of July 24th, 1980 of the Government of the PR of Bulgaria. The system has as its major task to maintain and set the level of cadre qualifications and professional competence constantly in tune with the tasks posed by the socio-economic development of the country, the scientific and technical progress and the fast growth of the social production efficiency, by providing rates of improvement of the qualification structure that get ahead of future demands.

Competence extension can be effected with or without discontinuing work or both combined. Training forms include collective and individual instruction, further, they can be regular (full-time) or extra-mural. The training itself may proceed in the following ways: intensive - (uninterrupted daily training with/without quitting one's job. The trainees master gradually the new skills and knowledge.); by stages - (Trainees acquire thorough mastership of a given scope of knowledge not at once but step by step); cyclic (recurrent) - trainees acquire mastership of a number of different cycles of a given range of knowledge and skills).

The Ministry of Public Education is entrusted with the functions of a training-methodological body in the system.

Qualification centres for improvement of cadre professional skill have been set up at the ministries, at the administration offices and at the district people's councils.

With regard to industry the activities in this respect go along the following lines: brushing up and extending workers' knowledge and skills, specialization and expansion in scope of practised professions, requalification - training for a new job.

Cadres with higher and secondary education may get competence training with a view to step it up at the departments set up to this end at the higher educational establishments, at the leading technical colleges and secondary schools, at the scientific and research and applied engineering organizations with the ministries and administration offices, at refresher courses held at various enterprises and scientific and technical unions.

Workers may extend their professional skill at vocational centres or where no such centres exist, at courses and training schools organized by the enterprises.

The women employed in the industry of Bulgaria enjoy special favours; they are provided with most adequate opportunities to keep up their professional skill and enhance their qualifications with or without discontinuing work, even during the period they're having a maternity leave always in concord with their workload, closely contingent on the time they devote to bringing up, instructing and educating their children. Mothers working in industry are given priority of admission to the various professional training bodies. The stipulated periodicity of training may be speeded up to fit their wishes and in compliance with the specific conditions existing at the enterprise. Student-mothers' children are admitted to creches, nursery homes and kindergartens with preference. The enterprises and vocational centres arrange

special hours or posts for training consultation at time and place suitable for the mothers, irrespective of their number. The consultation training sessions are held in the close proximity of places of residence, of enterprises or vocational centres or at specially fixed up posts in school buildings, clubs, etc. Until their children grow up to the age of three, they may apply for a raise of qualifications rate without observing the normative requirements (work standards) for service length. The exams for obtaining higher rate, rank or class are held at time and place to fit the mothers, irrespective of their number.

Some of the women jobs (mainly in textile industry and some other kinds of services) are of narrow competence scope and consequently, those working there lack the opportunity to progress in their profession in terms of rate or class. Professional growth and skill improvement is achieved in such cases through thorough mastery of the technique, and experience in general, of the best workers in the field as well as by arrangement of or participation in some other forms - meetings of colleagues by trade, meetings with workers awarded with the title "Best in His Trade" etc. Good traditions have been established at almost all industrial enterprises in propagating and disseminating the experience of front-rankers and new labour techniques and in distinguishing front rankers in industry and in labour, etc.

Although the training bodies responsible for the extension of the qualifications and professional competence of workers and specialists are fixed in type and rank by the Unified national system for qualification improvement of cadre, the industrial enterprises show a creative attitude towards ways of

organization, training methods, ways of providing women with all they need for an active participation and so on. This turns educational and training bodies into flexible units functioning in conformity with the specific conditions, striving to set manpower qualifications in tune with the needs of the dynamically changing industrial production.

The qualification structure of women workers may be taken as a general factor of their professional skill. According to the rank system of professional competence adopted by the Bulgarian government in 1973 all women workingⁱⁿ industry on wage rate systems rank in three categories: low-skilled, semi-skilled, high-skilled. In the development of the qualification structure of industry employed women, the share of the low-skilled women shows a tendency of decrease in contrast with that of semi-skilled and high-skilled which tends to develop in exactly the opposite direction.

The questions bearing on women education and qualification have always been an essential point in the social policy of our socialist country. At the present stage of development of the PR of Bulgaria these questions are of still higher topical import.

The practice of socialist construction in the country confirms most convincingly the conclusion that: the all-round intensification of the national economy, the rapid implementation of the achievements of science and technical progress, the intellectualization of labour, the introduction of the new economic approach, the realization of the strategic course for high quality and efficiency are to the highest degree dependent on education and qualification, on the active labour and social participation of man - the chief production force of every society. This problem is of key strategic sig-

nificance; on its solution depend the fulfilment of a whole complex of complicated social, political and ideological tasks, the overall development of the PR of Bulgaria.



