

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

The questions posed by Miss Tarrant in her initial letter derive, as I understand it, from a general inquiry into the role of women in our society--surely a subject of considerable interest if the space accorded it in recent publications, ranging from Life to the current issue of the Atlantic is any measure. As her questions progressed, they seemed to become increasingly rhetorical and directed toward what James Thurber used to refer to as "the war between the sexes." Enough so to provoke me into analyzing the employment records of the institution I presently serve, along with those of the banking industry in the Ninth Federal Reserve District, which is comprised of the States of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Northern Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It was a useful precautionary move as these facts indicate.

As to the Federal Reserve Banks:

----There are 22,000 employees, of whom 12,000, or 55% are women.

----There are 510 officers, of whom 10, or 2%, are women. One of these is a full vice president; the others are junior or middle range officers. Eight of the twelve Reserve Banks have no women officers at all. Minneapolis is one of the eight.

----There are two hundred twenty-eight directors serving the twelve banks and their twenty-four branches. There are no women among them.

As to commercial banks:

----The four largest banks in the Twin Cities employ 3,580 people, of whom 2,134, or 60%, are women.

----There are 485 officers, of whom 13, or 3%, are women.

----The two largest holding companies in the District employ in their central offices 231 people, of whom 83, or 36%, are women. Out of 1,562 directors in their many affiliated banks 2, or 13%, are women.

----In the entire Ninth Federal Reserve District, there are 1,597 banking offices, most of which are unit banks or separate corporations with a full panoply of officers and boards. At 920 of these, or 58% of the total number, women were listed as holding official positions.

----Out of a total of 9,306 officers in District banks, 1,343, or 14%, were women. Of the 1,343 women officers, approximately 142, or about 10%, were officers because they had either inherited or married a major stock holding; 1,032, or 78%, were in junior positions; and 169, or 12%, were at management levels. Twelve women were identified out of the 1,343 as chief executive officers. The distribution of directorships was unavailable, but presumably it would be close to the 10% with major stock holdings.

Based on this bare statistical recital, the evidence would appear overwhelming that banking is a carefully contrived man's world. It might further appear that the spirit of the early Christian martyrs is not yet dead if a man has the temerity to recite statistics like that to a group of women, most of whom identify more easily with the feminist liberation movement than with bankers. But let me sketch what seem to this observer to be some of the reasons.

1. At the outset, let me acknowledge the existence of prejudice against women in decision-making roles. While there appears

to be a correlation between community size and the upward mobility of women in the business hierarchy, there is an implicit prejudice in many men - and interestingly enough, some women - that inhibits public roles for business women. It is neither measurable nor definable, but its existence continues even though I think it is diminishing.

2. History indicates women seeking careers have tended to concentrate in professions where education can help them toward an even start. Education, medicine, law, arts, and economics are examples. In our own Bank, we have two economists and one lawyer who are women. But most of the women we hire, and I suggest many commercial banks are in the same boat, are fresh from high school and enter our work force as pages, clerks, and apprentice stenographers. There are virtually no college women applying for general management careers; our college-trained women applicants seek jobs in narrowly defined areas for which they have been professionally trained. A straight (and I use that word in its strictest sense) liberal arts graduate, if a woman, seldom applies at a bank, and I suspect very few women go on to graduate schools of business for an MBA, now thought a necessity by many for a starting position in a junior management position.

Given the increasing importance of general education in our society, whether it be for the added social grace some regard as a not inconsiderable virtue in a complicated and pluralist society or the enlargement of mental capacity which is a measurable fact, a college background is helpful, though its absence is not an absolute bar to

promotion to management ranks. Specialized education is another matter. It can be gained during college years or as supplementary education on the job. Whenever gained, it is a necessity for management promotion in most businesses of any size. The young person who hasn't had some undergraduate college years has a tougher time with these courses.

Women have no greater disadvantage than men on this score. Many businesses now recognize the importance of filling the education gaps in an employee's life and subsidize in various ways continuing education programs. I am aware of three PhDs and one MA whose graduate programs were assisted by our Bank in the last four years. One was a woman, may I hasten to add.

I think there may be a difference in the motivation of women employees in business, a difference that is not innate but born partly of lack of visible evidence of a payoff for others, and partly because of the physical demands on time imposed by housekeeping and family chores. I think these are facts, however deplorable they may be. For what it may be worth, and what scant comfort it may furnish, I believe the first reason is losing some of its validity.

3. For many women in our Bank at least, a career in business is an incident on the way to marriage. Before the feminists erupt in outrage, let me give you some facts. In 1969, we hired 234 new employees, of whom 209 were women and 140 under 21 years old. Only 15 of the women under 21 had had at least one year of college. 210 left our employ, of whom 179 were women and 80 under 21 years old. The

greatest number by far entered employment either as pages or as machine operator trainees. Although the statistical match is not precise, it may be reasonable to assume the year is typical.

Once each month I attend a luncheon held for all new employees. The number varies from twenty perhaps to forty. It is obvious most are young women. Very few I have talked to at my table are career oriented. Occasionally they are married, with a husband enrolled at the University. Most are in the city because the pay is better than back home, for a surprising number are new migrants from smaller towns. Many are looking for husbands and already have sensed the pickings will be lean in banking because of the skew in numbers. Most, I suspect, are conservative politically and socially.

As Richard Scammon, who directs the Election Research Center, has pointed out, the term "young people" includes a great many who are not in college. And even among those in college, there are substantial numbers who do not fit the stereotype so feared by those over 30. Not entirely relevantly, let me observe Mr. Scammon commented that Wallace did a little better among people under thirty than over thirty. As he said, the fact is "the average youngster tends to get his politics, like his religion, from his parents." I would add only this--the Silent Majority has its counterpart among the young, and more particularly then for our purposes here, among young women for whom career horizons tend to be home and family centered.

What I am saying is to caution you about extrapolating from what you and your friends in this environment believe to what a majority of any age or sex believes. I will always remember the extraordinary disbelief with which a friend of my mother's acknowledged the fact of Truman's election. "How could he have been elected, Winnie? No one I know voted for him!"

Finally, what is the future for women in banking? For those who want a career in banking and are willing to make the trade-offs required, the future is getting brighter. Prejudice as a factor in the larger institutions is waning. I have been informed that the President and Chief Executive Officer of the largest trust company in Wisconsin is a woman who rose through the ranks.

The structural problems remain, but they are there for men too. Education levels, professional skills, technological changes, affect everyone. And, unlike the man, the woman who wants marriage and a family, in addition to a business career as contrasted with a career in a profession, has a unique set of structural problems (no pun intended). Let me illustrate: one of the most talented young women we've hired during my tenure is a graduate of a professional school at the University. She was hired for a job within her professional training and she very quickly demonstrated unusual skill and sensitivity, not only within the traditional job description of her position, but across a much broader range of influence. So much so, that she was obviously a candidate for an eventual management role. I visited with her one

day about her career, and suggested various education programs designed to accelerate her career. But, and this was the stumbling block, some would require a fairly prolonged absence from the city, and all would require a substantial personal commitment of time. She turned me down because she said the day would come soon when she and her husband would want children. That day has arrived and she will be leaving us soon. I told her of my assignment from Miss Tarrant and asked her if she could help me. Her statement, which she had on my desk in an hour or so, poses the trade-offs a woman must make as she viewed them that day. She states her position so much more eloquently than I ever could, I would like to quote from it. After acknowledging the fact that the time required to run a modern home has been reduced in the absence of children, she says:

A woman's attitudes must, to some extent, be determined by her biological function. Obviously men cannot have babies. Women should recognize that the privilege of bearing children, now by choice rather than by chance, carries with it certain responsibilities and obligations to that child.

Setting priorities is really the key. A woman can pursue a career, and be a wife and a mother, if she knows what is most important to her when conflicts arise.

She then continues with a statement which accurately records, I think, the prevailing social attitudes in this country about marital roles.

A woman's career must not come before her husband's needs and his career. Even a hint of competition between their careers can destroy her priorities. She must realize that the success of her career with all of the self-satisfaction and reinforcement that it brings does not guarantee success in her marriage and family life. The woman who accepts the secondary role of her career will find greater satisfaction through the successes and achievements of her husband and family.

This is the way it is; and the "Women's Liberation Movement" notwithstanding, the way it will continue to be for some time. But please observe I did not say it should continue, nor did I say it would continue for all time. It may sound offensively Olumpian, but I see little purpose in assailing attitudes with which I differ when the data base is as confused as it is around this subject. It seems to me the analogy to social minorities fails, because a significant number of women, perhaps even a majority, regard domesticity in the conventional American sense a positive good. Far from a secondary and undesirable one, it has feminine defenders whose voices are every bit as shrill and I think more numerous than those of its opponents. Whether a woman's place is in the home or in business or both, ought to be that woman's decision. I happen to believe it is possible for some marriages to operate on multiple but equal tracks right now. But if the marriage is to work, the two in it will have to work out their own roles, and no amount of external exhortation is going to change one or the other's view of their relative roles.

Can the woman advance in a banking career at the same rate as a man? Does she have the option? These are the more important questions. I am assuming (a) she has equal talent, (b) an appropriate education background (or the willingness to make it up), and (c) has made the decision to place her job first. My answer is a cautious maybe, with a prognosis of steady improvement in the possibility. This is simply because modern banking is desperately short of talented people in all management positions. It is reinforced by the growing recognition that today's woman is making far more economic decisions than her mother ever did -- and her daughter will be making even more.

I can think of no better way to close, probably leaving most of you in varying stages of exasperation, than by quoting the final paragraph of her statement:

The struggle for equal rights and opportunities for women is, as I see it, unfounded. Women today can pursue whatever career they really want and are qualified to undertake. The real struggle is internal--the search for identity and direction as a woman and the acceptance of the responsibilities and the rewards that belong exclusively to her.