

InsideCover

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Trading insults from a bygone era

A Federal Government document emailed to *Inside Cover* might get the country's feminists — or just women in general — fired up.

It was prepared as a minute paper for a department director looking at the appointment of women as overseas trade commissioners.

"Even after some deliberations, it is difficult to find reasons to support the appointment of women trade commissioners," the document said.

After that mildly put conclusion by the author, Mr A. Taysom, the rest of his argument was not pretty.

- In countries where publicity media is well developed, such as North America and England and where there are no other major drawbacks, such as the Islamic attitude towards women, a relatively young attractive woman could operate with some effectiveness, in a subordinate capacity.

- Even conceding these points, such an appointee would not stay young and attractive for ever and later on could well become a problem.

- It is extremely doubtful if a woman could, year after year, under a variety of conditions, stand the fairly severe strains and stresses, mentally and physically, which are part of the life of a trade commissioner.

- A man normally has his household run efficiently by his wife, who also looks after much of the entertaining. A woman trade commissioner would have all this on top of her normal work.

- If we engaged single graduates as trainees, most of them would probably marry within five years.

- A spinster lady can, and very often does, turn into something of a battleaxe with the passing of years. A man usually mellows.

The author went on to say that female trade commissioners are not "long-term investments", but there is nothing in law that precludes women from applying for the sought-after roles.

"About one woman is appointed to every 12 men," he wrote. "This year: one out of 16. Last year: one out of 12 and the previous year, none."

Before signing the minute, he expressed concern that women would continue to be appointed because of a "lack of courage to slam the door".

Oops, *IC* forgot to point out the document was written 48 years ago.



WOMEN TRADE COMMISSIONERS ?

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