



AP NEWSFEATURES PHOTO

# WOMEN & WORK

By Anne Wainscott, special writer

## Female workers shouldn't be alienated, author warns

**C**areer women are becoming a larger part of corporate America, but only some of today's companies are responding to them. Journalist Lorraine Dusky will focus on that issue when she discusses her 1988 book, *The Best Companies for Women* (Simon & Schuster, \$19.95), tonight at Sinclair Community College.

Dusky, who is a consulting editor to *Working Woman* magazine, will speak from 8 to 9:30 p.m. at Blair Hall Theatre in conjunction with the college's Images of Women series for Women's Awareness Week.

"Women want the same things men want at work — to be treated as equals," Dusky said in a recent telephone interview from her home in Sag Harbor, N.Y. Dusky contends companies cannot afford to alienate women, who make up an increasing percentage of the work force.

"In the 1990s, there will be a worker shortage and women will fill that gap. There will be a talent drain at companies that continue to have sexist policies," she said.

In her book, Dusky and co-author Baila Zeitz, a business consultant and psychologist, researched companies nationwide to judge their effectiveness in such ar-

reas as recruitment and hiring of women, opportunities for promotion, commitment to equality, flexibility for parenting needs and sexual harassment policies.

Their findings, spanning three years of research and more than 500 interviews, pinpointed 52 companies with excellent prospects for women.

Ohio companies included 22 employment centers, with two headquartered in the state: Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati and Mount Carmel Health, two hospitals in Columbus that are part of the Holy Cross Health System Corp.

"Getting companies to respond was a major part of the project," said Dusky, who found extra prodding was necessary even for corporations with advanced policies, like the Gannett and Avon companies.

In all, 81 out of 213 companies responded. Final selections were made after the authors visited the companies and interviewed a cross-section of women employees.

"It's not enough to have an official policy because words are meaningless. You have to act on it," said Dusky, stressing the impact the chief executive officer has on managerial attitudes. "The attitudes of the CEO are reflected in all levels of the company. Only until the CEO really pushes policy does it happen."

The 47-year-old journalist is optimistic women will continue to move up the corporate ladder.

"I think this book is a harbinger of good news to come," she said.

Dusky did respond negatively, however, to a recent *Harvard Business Review* article in which Felice Schwartz, president of Catalyst, a non-profit organization representing women's issues in business, stated that women in management cost corporations more than men do.

Dusky faulted Schwartz's recommendation that companies divide women into two broad areas, so that women not intending to have families could be geared for top corporate positions while women on the "mommy track" could be given flexible hours but not be expected to go beyond middle management.

"I find her solution dangerous because it will allow companies to legitimize sexism . . . (by) giving them a right to keep women in low-level jobs."

Dusky added that companies featured in the book have dealt with working mothers' need in some innovative ways.

For example, Procter and Gamble, noted for its responsiveness to parental needs, has two nearby child care centers for their employees. Other companies have allowed women flexible hours. "As long as the work gets done does it really matter

if it's done from 9 to 5 or 7 to 3?" Dusky asked.

Dusky also is concerned about promoting understanding between the sexes. She pointed out that gender can cause men and women not to recognize one another's contributions in the workplace.

"Sexism can creep in without our being aware of it," said Dusky, who thinks companies sponsoring gender and sex workshops have done much to remedy the problem. Both Levi Strauss and Merck, a prescription drug manufacturer, have found "sensitivity sessions" as an effective method to deter sexual discrimination.

Dusky earned her bachelor's degree in journalism from Wayne State University. She won the Empire State Award for Excellence in Medical Reporting in 1966, and was a finalist in a National Magazine Award in 1976.

Her works have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Town & Country* and most women's magazines. She authored several books, including the highly acclaimed *Birthmark* (M. Evans, 1979), which is a memoir about her surrendering a daughter to adoption.

After her speech, Dusky will sign copies of her book, which will be sold outside Blair Hall Theatre, in Building 2 of Sinclair's campus.

Her speech will be interpreted for the hearing impaired.