

Project HARVESTING

Seniors' second meeting at the Kilingi-Nõmme Club House on the 4 March 2009 (subject CHANGE).

The number of participants: 16

The topics touched upon on our second meeting were

- **The first job, changes resulting from that**
- **Education and schooling**

In present economical crisis many people have lost their jobs. Was a similar threat there when you were young?

With one voice everybody said: NO. The Soviet system of compulsory appointment to a job was applied. Only the best graduates had the possibility to choose a job from among of those offered by different companies. The rest were supposed to work where they had been appointed for three years.

Ada, 'After graduation I had a job and a flat. Just work. As I graduated cum laude, I would have been the first to choose a job on the list. But instead I married and went to the same place my husband did. We got a three-roomed flat and it was only 100m to go to work.

As for changes, calculators were an enormous change. You didn't have to use an abacus to divide or multiply, calculator was much quicker. All my life I have worked on the speciality I had learned, as a book-keeper (accountant) in different companies. I started my studies in a technical school followed by a university.'

How easy or difficult was it to find a job at that time and what's the situation like nowadays?

Most of the people present agreed that there were no problems at all when they were young. Working was obligation in the Soviet times.

Kalle, 'I quarrelled with the secretary of the Young Communist League of Youth and didn't get a letter of recommendation for university. (It was necessary at that time). So I had to find a job, work for a year on a production line and only then I could ask again for a recommendation. But in 1959 it was impossible to find a job in Tallinn when you were 18. Eventually, thanks to my aunt's connections, I got a job in a factory.'

Comments to it: it was really difficult to find a job apart from a compulsory appointment. And especially difficult while being in disfavour with a party member. Having right connections was as important at that time as it is now.

A noteworthy point from our previous meeting was that back in old days everybody was eager to obtain education. Nevertheless, not everyone could do that due to political or financial reasons. Later, during the Soviet system, everybody could theoretically get a special college or university

education unless you were an outlaw of authorities. Today a lot depends on family's financial situation, ideology doesn't play any role.

Virve, 'People's attitudes towards getting a profession has changed a lot during last 50 years. Today you can pay to go to a university. There are state-budgetary places as well as commercial, paid tuition places. When I entered a university in 1954, the competition was really high and I had to manage only with my own knowledge. Having passed the entrance exams one had to pass a political board selection as well. They for example wanted to know whether a person had belonged to the Young Communist League or not. If not then WHY was asked. They also made inquiries about student's parents, whether they had been deported/ punished or not. Such questions are not asked today. And when you were accepted to a uni, you had to work really hard as the requirements were very high.'

Today it is hard to find a job on your speciality after graduation. There was no such problem before the time of Estonia's independence. During the Soviet times students were paid a sum of money after graduation to compensate the expenses of moving to a new home. But on the other hand, nowadays many young people don't understand the word 'workplace loyalty'. They do not work on their acquired speciality. Some students aren't afraid to state that they study only to get a diploma.

- **What kind of impact has the development of technology had on everyday work?**

Different public services exist on the Internet, which makes life easier for the bureaucrats but it also discourages face to face communication. Clerks distance from civilians' is a real problem.

Peet (organizer of land exploitation in local municipality), 'Part my job includes merging data from different computer systems and presenting it to different local authorities. For example, there is a street called Kase which exists both in Kilingi-Nõmme and in Tali. The application I'm using gets all confused and can't distinguish these two apart.

Work has become more complicated because a person doesn't want to communicate with another person any more. They tell you to call someone in Tallinn or check a homepage. But very often you have to know the background and talk to a person to solve a problem.'

OUR NEXT MEETING will be at the Kilingi-Nõmme Club House on the 25 March .