

IF THE PRICE OF BARLEY GOES UP, PRICES OF DONKEYS GO DOWN

A story by Salam al Rassi

Translated by Hanna H. Farha
From the book "Heess Beess " by Salam Al Rassi

Salam Al Rassi says "I've spent my whole life working for the government without getting real promotions since I didn't hold any university degree.

Other employees used to study inside and outside their working hours, in order to get the necessary diplomas which would qualify them for exceptional promotions, a thing which made me feel that my value has gone down and my dignity has lessened.

One day, I've decided to protest against this and submitted a complaint to the government. So, I went to Sheikh Farid Dahdah, the Chairman of the Civil Service Council at the time. I thought that he would perhaps help me find a way to see my situation improved. Sheikh Farid brought all the files and began to read all the resolutions, regulations and laws in order to persuade me that the government was right in its policy.

On my way out from his office I met a villager from the South (Lebanon). I told him my story and complained about the bad situation I was in and how unfair the government was and said "those who are inferior and younger receive one promotion after another, all because they hold higher degrees" Then I asked for his advice. The man said "I believe that's fair. Aren't you aware of the proverb which says: When the price of barley goes up, prices of donkeys go down?"

"Thank you very much my friend.. You've solved my problem" I said and rushed back to Sheikh Farid's office to tell him the good news. "Do you know what ?" I said "Now I am convinced that the government is right."

"And what made you change your mind ?" the Sheikh asked.

"On my way out, I've met a villager from our area who ruled in the government favor and convinced me with a very simple proverb which all your resolutions and laws could not be so persuasive when he said commenting on my story with you "If the prices of barley go up, prices of donkeys go down."

After Sheikh Farid examined carefully the meaning of the proverb he commented saying "If we bring all the economists and ask them to set a brief rule to define the relationship between the lavish supply of production and the reduction of prices - or vice versa- they will not be able to come with a better formula."

From the book "HeeS BeeS " by Salam Al Rassi, Nawfal Publishing Est., Beirut.