

**ECONOMIC  
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SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

SUMMARY RECORD OF MEETINGS

THIRTEENTH MEETING

Held on Tuesday, 14 May 1946, at 2:00 P.M.

Chairman: Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt

At its thirteenth meeting, the Commission on Human Rights considered the report of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women to the Commission on Human Rights (E/HR/18.)

The Chairman invited Mrs. Begtrup, Chairman of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women to take part in the discussion of the Commission. Mrs. Begtrup read the report of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women to the Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Borisov stated that he had arrived too late to participate in the discussion of the Commission and had not as yet had a chance to study the documents and recommendations of the Commission. He asked therefore, to be allowed to postpone his final commitment concerning the recommendations of the Commission, and suggested that he might transmit his vote to the Second Session of the Economic and Social Council or that the representative of the U.S.S.R. on the Economic and Social Council be authorized to transmit the vote of the Russian member to the Commission on Human Rights concerning the recommendation of the Commission.

The Chairman replied that Mr. Kriukov had cast his vote on the recommendations agreed upon by the Commission on Human Rights, that his vote was duly recorded, and those records cannot now be changed. It would, however, be possible, while recording Mr. Kriukov's vote, to state that Mr. Borisov, the new member of the Commission on Human Rights will abstain

from voting on the final report, as he was not present during the discussions of the Commission and has not as yet studied its documents and records. The Chairman pointed out that the Commission on Human Rights could not instruct the Economic and Social Council to give to the representative of the U.S.S.R. on the Economic and Social Council a right which belongs to the Russian member on the Commission on Human Rights. As Mr. Borisov would have the chance to study the draft of the final report, he may be willing to vote on the different recommendations. If that should not be the case, the Commission would have to state to the Economic and Social Council the situation as it existed and the Economic and Social Council would have to make its own decision.

The Chairman then read Document E/27, Section B, 1,2,3 and 4, pertaining to the terms of reference for the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women.

She pointed out that the terms of reference could be divided into two parts. One, the Sub-Commission may wish to submit proposals, recommendations, and reports to the Commission on Human Rights regarding the Status of Women for the consideration of the Commission on Human Rights. Two, the Sub-Commission may submit through the Commission on Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council proposals regarding its terms of reference and recommendations on the definitive composition of the Sub-Commission.

Dr. Hsia asked for clarification of Section II, Point 4 (E/HR/18) concerning the calling of a United Nations Women's Conference, and the Chairman of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women explained that the Sub-Commission hoped that such a conference could be organized in one or two years, so that the work of the Sub-Commission could be discussed with women's organizations and government representatives from all the United Nations and their recommendations for further work could be received. The recommendations of such a conference would be taken into account by the Sub-Commission, but would not be binding to it.

Dr. Hsia then pointed out that Section II, Point 1, concerning a world-wide survey of laws pertaining to the status of women, their application and the actual status of women, was a very comprehensive task, and he wondered whether the Sub-Commission had meant to ask for a survey of the status of women in those countries where their treatment is not up to desired standards. The Chairman of the Sub-Commission explained that the Sub-Commission did not feel that it could accomplish its work without knowing about the laws concerning women in all countries, as well as the application of those laws. It was expected that this survey would take from one to two years.

Mr. Neogy felt that it was not clear which sections of the report were to be considered as terms of reference. It seemed to him questionable whether the Sub-commission would be able to undertake the task in Section II, Points 2,3,5,7, (E/HR/18):

- "2. To conduct polls in various regions to sound public opinion on matters of interest to the Sub-Commission.
- "3. To organize a forum to hear the view of the consultative agents.
- "6. To arrange for international exchange of all categories of manual and intellectual women workers, including the industrial, agricultural and cultural fields.
- "7. To implement the proposal to create a world-wide public opinion through the media of the press, radio, publications, lectures, motion pictures, etc.."

Point 1 - A world-wide survey of laws - and Point 6 - to collect and systematize records on women's affairs - while difficult to accomplish, seemed to him legitimate and necessary tasks. Also mentioned under II were several recommendations to the Secretariat which could not be included in the terms of reference recommended to the Economic and Social Council.

The Chairman of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women suggested that while the Sub-Commission considered as important and hope to

accomplish all of the tasks mentioned under II, Programme, (E/HR/18), the five points enumerated on Page 9 of E/HR/18 might be considered as the terms of reference for the Sub-Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Neogy felt that some of these points constituted final recommendations for the full Sub-Commission rather than interim proposals.

Mr. Brkish, while agreeing in principle with the report of the Sub-Commission, felt that the recommendation for the definitive composition of the Sub-Commission (III-E/HR/18) should be the same as the recommendation agreed upon for the definitive composition of the full Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, namely that:

(a) Members of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women should be nominated by the Member Governments of the United Nations and elected by the Economic and Social Council.

(b) The Chairman of the Sub-Commission should not be consulted before the final appointment by the Economic and Social Council (III, 5, E/HR/18). Members of the Sub-Commission should be re-eligible for re-election, but re-election of the present membership should not be compulsory.

(c) The term of membership should be three years, members to be nominated in three classes.

(d) The Sub-Commission should not ask for the establishment of an executive office (II, 12, E/HR/18) or an executive committee (II, 13, E/HR/18) as the establishment of such an agency and committee was not within the terms of reference for the Sub-Commission, but would tend to make the Sub-Commission an independent Commission.

The Chairman suggested that the members of the Commission confine their questions to points which, in their opinion, needed clarification, and that later on the Commission would consider the report of the Sub-Commission from the point of view of what recommendations the Commission on Human Rights would want to accept and transmit.

M. Cassin felt that a Women's Conference (II, 4, E/HR/18) should best be postponed until the Sub-Commission had made a survey of laws pertaining to the laws on the Status of Women and its documentation on women's affairs had begun, as the Conference would need these as background for its deliberations.

The Chairman of the Sub-Commission explained that while it may not be possible to organize such a conference immediately, it would be important to know immediately that such a conference would be held within a year or two, as much of the work by the Sub-commission could then be directed towards that conference. She felt that it was important to decide immediately that the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women should be a permanent Sub-Commission and that an executive office should be established.

M. Cassin suggested that the Secretariat, which would be part of the Secretariat of the Commission on Human Rights, could fulfill the functions which were suggested by the Sub-Commission for the executive office. The executive committee might consist of the Chairman and one or two members of the Sub-Commission. Such a committee, however, would not have any executive power, as neither the Commission on Human Rights nor the Economic and Social Council had such power.

M. Cassin pointed out that the task of undertaking a world-wide survey of laws pertaining to the status of women and to collect records on women's affairs was not a tremendous undertaking as it might seem as the League of Nations had already accomplished a large part of that job. At the request of women's organizations, thirteen years ago the League began such a survey and after five years, had collected rather complete documentation. While serious changes have taken place in the meantime, the work of the League was still valid and could be used as a base, even though improved methods might be employed and the scope might be widened. Such a survey, once published, would be of tremendous use as women's organizations would publicize it and progress would almost inevitably result.

M. Cassin felt that a general women's conference was premature and that it might be better to have several special conferences first. For instance, a conference on problems of women's work in co-operation with the ILO and an educational conference organized with the UNESCO or by the UNESCO, which might stress specifically women's education.

The Chairman of the Sub-Commission considered that the Executive Office that they wished to establish might be part of the Secretariat, but its leadership should be entrusted to a highly qualified woman who should be appointed only after consultation with the Sub-Commission. She explained that they had thought of the Executive Committee more in the nature of a consultative committee, which would watch over the execution of the work on which the Sub-Commission had decided. The Sub-Commission was aware of the survey taken by the league, but did not want to use that survey, as it was much too narrow in scope and had been conducted by an international organization. They felt that a completely new survey should be started with women's organizations in each country taking an active part in this survey.

While the Sub-Commission would welcome specialized conferences and was grateful for the suggestion, it seemed to them necessary to start with a general conference.

In closing, the Chairman of the Sub-Commission pointed out that this report had been formulated after discussions by women all over the world, that it constituted their wishes and should, if possible, be transmitted as it stands.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

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