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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Ninth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 18 March 1955, at 4 p.m.

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(b) Report on methods which have been found useful in creating a favourable climate of public opinion on the need for equal pay for equal work (E/CN.6/263; E/CN.6/L.155/Rev.1 and E/CN.6/L.156/Rev.3)

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mrs. RÖSSEL	Sweden
<u>Members:</u>	Mrs. CHAMARRO-ALAMAN	Argentina
	Mrs. DALY	Australia
	Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
	Miss POA SWEN TSENG	China
	Miss MAÑAS	Cuba
	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Miss ROESAD	Indonesia
	Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
	The Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan
	Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
	Mrs. FOMINA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mrs. SAYERS	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mrs. HAHN	United States of America
	Mrs. de URDANETA	Venezuela
	Mrs. MITROVIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Also present:</u>	Mrs. LOPEZ	Colombia
	Mrs. de TEJEIRA	Panama

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mrs. FIGUEROA	International Labour Organisation
Miss SALAS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Representative of an inter-governmental organization:

Mrs. LEYES de CHAVES	Inter-American Commission of Women
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PRESENT: (continued):Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

<u>Category A:</u>	Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
	Mr. THORMANN	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
	Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions
	Mrs. FOX)	World Federation of United Nations Associations
	Mrs. EREN)	

Category B and Register:

	Mrs. ROBERTS	Associated Country Women of the World;
		Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
	Mrs. VERGARA	Catholic International Union for Social Service
	Miss GUTHRIE	International Alliance of Women
	Mrs. CARTER)	International Council of Women
	Mrs. FREEMAN)	
	Mrs. MEINANDER	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
	Miss FRANCES)	International Federation of University Women
	Miss MCGILLICUDDY)	
	Miss SMITH	International Federation of Women Lawyers
	Mrs. EGENOLF	International League for the Rights of Man
	Mrs. WALSEN	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
	Miss JAINES	World Assembly of Youth
	Miss FORSYTH	World's Young Women's Christian Association
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Representative of the Secretary- General
	Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK: (a) PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK (E/CN.6/257); (b) REPORT ON METHODS WHICH HAVE BEEN FOUND USEFUL IN CREATING A FAVOURABLE CLIMATE OF PUBLIC OPINION ON THE NEED FOR EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK (E/CN.6/263; E/CN.6/L.155/Rev.1 and E/CN.6/L.156/Rev.3)

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) said the women of France were disturbed by the slow progress made internationally in the application of the principle of equal pay. Some progress had been made, the best example being the recent action in the United Kingdom with respect to certain classes of civil servants, but it was too slow, and there was a danger that foreign competition would force the more progressive countries to reverse the trend for, as the Paris Chamber of Commerce had stated in November 1954, the failure of most of its signatories to apply International Labour Convention No. 100 placed the countries which observed its provisions in a position of obvious disadvantage.

The General Assembly of the Presidents of Chambers of Commerce of the French Union had also said at the end of 1954 that international competition could not operate properly or efficiently so long as flagrant inequalities in production conditions persisted, despite assurances given in international bodies.

As France was one of the few countries which had ratified and implemented Convention No. 100, French production was at a disadvantage owing to the differences between France and most other countries in the matter of wage legislation. In some industries, such as textiles, for example, as one-third of the workers were women, about the same proportion as in other countries, equality of wages had an adverse effect on French prices. Taking the wool industry as an example, she said women's wages were equal to men's wages in France, but 35 per cent lower in the Netherlands, 25 per cent lower in Germany, and 18 per cent lower in Italy. It was clear that in countries where women accounted for 75 per cent of all persons employed in the textile industry but received only 75 per cent of the standard wages - meaning men's wages - an 18.75 per cent saving could be achieved on the cost of labour.

(Mrs. Lefauchaux, France)

France would not contemplate a reversal of the principle of equal pay, which was a constitutional provision, but the country was legitimately concerned about the reluctance of other countries to ratify the Convention. As the Polish and USSR representatives had said, the Convention was not perfect; nevertheless it represented a step forward and if it were universally applied all the women of the world would have scored an important success.

She wished to reply to the criticism by the World Federation of Trade Unions of the wage inequalities supposedly existing in French private industry. It was curious to note, incidentally, that that criticism was aimed at one of the few countries which had ratified the Convention and put it into immediate effect without any transitional stages.

The misunderstanding might be due to a misinterpretation of the statistics. For example, a comparison of the average wages of male and female workers would usually show that men's wages were higher, because in many industries only men worked overtime; in France, overtime was paid for all work in excess of 40 hours a week.

In reply to the USSR representative, who had said that women enjoyed no protection in the Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, she referred to some of the principal provisions of the Labour Code applicable in the French overseas territories. Subject to equality of work, skill and performance wages were equal for all workers, irrespective of their origin, sex, age and status. By statute, employment, whether paid at time rates, by job or at piece rates, was not allowed to exceed 40 hours a week in any public or private establishment. The weekly rest period was fixed at not less than twenty-four consecutive hours. The night work of women and children was governed by international conventions. The nature of the work performed by pregnant women was determined by order of the chief territorial officers after consultation with the Labour Advisory Board. A pregnant woman could interrupt her employment for fourteen weeks, six of those weeks being after confinement, without having to make any payment for breach of contract. An employer could not dismiss a pregnant woman during that period. She was also entitled to free medical care and to half her normal wages and retained all her rights to benefits in kind. Mothers of families were entitled

(Mrs. Lefauchaux, France)

to an additional day's leave annually for each child under fourteen years. The Assembly of the French Union had recently decided to grant family allowances to mothers, which meant a considerable safeguard for women, particularly in polygamous communities. All those legislative provisions, which were applied in practice, proved that women in the Territories in question were protected by the law and enjoyed benefits which did not exist in many sovereign States.

Mrs. MEINANDER (International Federation of Business and Professional Women) stated that in the Economic and Social Council, the International Labour Organisation and in the Commission, her Federation had constantly advocated the principle of equal pay. It had therefore greeted the adoption of ILO Convention No. 100 as a victory and a first step in the direction of equality of men and women in economic affairs. Her Federation's efforts, since its 1950 Congress, to secure the adoption and subsequent ratification of the Convention had been described at previous sessions of the Commission. She would therefore speak in greater detail about the position in certain countries and in particular in her own, Finland.

The Finnish Parliament had considered the ratification of Convention No. 100 and its accompanying Recommendation in September 1954. It had decided to postpone ratification and to reconsider the matter before the end of the current Parliamentary term, in July 1957. In the meantime, a Government committee was to collect the necessary statistics, as had, incidentally, been suggested by the Labour Party, which took the view that public opinion would have to be educated before the Convention was ratified.

The latest statistics, published at the end of 1954, showed that the difference between men's and women's average hourly wages was about 30 per cent (171 and 115 markkas, respectively). It should be remembered, however, that the gap was narrowing as average wages rose and that women, in Finland as elsewhere, most often worked in the lowest-paid industries and trades. Whenever a woman did the same work as a man, she usually received the same wage, at any rate in industry, though women were still at a disadvantage as compared with men in the liberal professions.

(Mrs. Meinander, International Federation
of Business and Professional Women)

In the United Kingdom, progress had been made since the date when document E/CN.6/257 had appeared. In consequence of the representations of the Equal Pay Campaign Committee, which had been formed by women's organizations, the Government had agreed that the principle of equal pay for men and women should be gradually applied in the civil service and in the teaching profession.

In the United States, where equal pay was the concern both of the federal and of the State authorities, the American Federation was tackling the problem at both levels. It was urging federal legislation and was also making representations to the legislatures of the States. Draft legislation providing for equal pay had been submitted in eighteen States and in some would shortly become law, for example, in Nebraska, Colorado, Arkansas and Oregon.

The problem of equal pay should not be studied in isolation and in the abstract; women should also be trained to play a useful part in the country's economic life. In that respect, document E/CN.6/263 contained very useful suggestions and the 1954 resolution in which the Commission had requested the collection of data concerning the methods used in the various countries for creating a favourable climate of public opinion towards equal pay had already produced good results.

In Canada, the method recommended by provincial women's organizations was to send to each member of the provincial legislature a memorandum containing the text of a bill and setting forth supporting arguments. That method had first been used in the Province of Ontario which had been the first to enact legislation providing for equal pay. Since then, two other provinces had passed similar laws.

Through its Employment Conditions Committee, her Federation would continue its endeavours to make equal pay a reality for all women.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (International Labour Organisation) wished to reply to the three suggestions which the representative of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions had made at the 182nd meeting of the Commission concerning the documentary material, relating to the equal remuneration of men and women, to be collected by the ILO.

(Mrs. Figueroa, International Labour Organisation)

The first suggestion was that the Economic and Social Council should recommend the ILO to ask its Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, or an ad hoc committee appointed by its General Conference, to report on the subject. By virtue of the ILO Constitution, the Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, a standing body, was responsible for studying the reports of Governments on the application of conventions to which they were parties, and the Committee in turn reported to an ad hoc committee set up by the General Conference, which reported in turn to the General Conference. The proposed recommendation was therefore unnecessary.

So far as the second suggestion was concerned she explained that, likewise under the ILO Constitution, Governments which had ratified a convention were under a duty to report annually to the Director General how it operated in practice. The Governments communicated the reports to the employers' and employees' associations which could submit their views to the ILO on the way in which the convention was being implemented.

With reference to the third suggestion she said that States Members which had not ratified a convention were under a duty periodically to inform the ILO of the measures they were taking to apply the principle and the obstacles in the way of its application. The ILO Constitution accordingly made ample provision for the collection of the information, from both non-governmental and governmental sources, to which the representative of the Federation attached importance.

She hoped that the ILO would, at the Commission's tenth session, be able to submit an addendum to the annual report giving information on the measures being taken in different countries. It was understood that the documentation would be submitted for the Commission's information, since the International Labour Conference alone was competent to pass judgment on the manner in which the principle was being applied in different countries.

The CHAIRMAN gave the floor to the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) said that her Committee had voted on two texts: the draft resolution in document E/CN.6/L.155/Rev.1 which it had adopted unanimously, and that in document E/CN.6/L.156/Rev.3 which it had adopted by 6 votes to none with 1 abstention.

Draft resolution in document E/CN.6/L.155/Rev.1

Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden) said that the sponsors of the initial draft had intended the word "countries" in paragraph 1 of the operative part to mean all territories, but as that interpretation was not general, the word had been replaced in the revised text by the word "areas" in order to indicate more explicitly that Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories were included in that term

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Miss ROESAD (Indonesia), Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) and Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) said that they would vote in favour of the draft resolution on the understanding that the word "areas" meant all countries, including Trust Territories and Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The CHAIRMAN put the draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.155/Rev.1) to the vote
The draft resolution was adopted unanimously.

Draft resolution in document E/CN.6/L.156/Rev.3)

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) pointed out several translation errors in the Russian text.

Mrs. de URDANED (Venezuela) drew attention to a mistake in the Spanish text.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would correct the mistakes.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that operative paragraph 2 should be deleted and that paragraph 1 should be amended as follows: "Requests the Secretary-General to include all States in his report, whether or not they are Members of the United Nations, or of the specialized agencies or Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice".

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) and Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) supported the amendment as likely to make the draft resolution clearer and more effective.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) said that paragraph 1 as drafted was fully consistent with General Assembly resolution 793 (VIII). By adding paragraph 2 the sponsors of the draft had in any case enlarged the scope of the Secretary-General's annual report.

Miss TSENG (China) supported the draft resolution. The distinction between Member States and non-member States was perfectly in order.

Miss ROESAD (Indonesia) said that her delegation would support the USSR amendment which enlarged the scope of the draft resolution and would enable the Commission to know the position throughout the world. If the amendment was not adopted she would nevertheless vote for the draft resolution.

Mrs. SAYERS (United Kingdom) had no objections to the Soviet Union's amendment but thought it would be better to conform to precedent.

Mrs. FOMINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said it should be possible for the United Nations to obtain information from non-member States as well as from Member States. It was precisely in order to enable the United Nations to draw on all possible sources that she had submitted her amendment.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) referred to Council resolution 547 B (XVIII) which, she thought, clearly contained an invitation to non-member States.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) drew particular attention to the last paragraph of that resolution.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) said that the invitation mentioned in Council resolution 547 B (XVIII) and in General Assembly resolution 793 (VIII) was addressed to "non-member States which are or may hereafter become Members...", in other words, to States only when they had become Members.

Mrs. TENISON-WOODS (Representative of the Secretary-General), in order to dispel what appeared to be a misunderstanding, read out resolution 793 (VIII) of the General Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the USSR amendment should be put to the vote. At the request of the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic a vote was taken by roll call.

Cuba, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Indonesia, Poland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Yugoslavia.

Against: Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela, Argentina, Australia, China.

Abstaining: Haiti.

The amendment was rejected by 12 votes to 5, with 1 abstention.

The CHAIRMAN put the draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.156/Rev.3) to the vote. The draft resolution was adopted by 14 votes to none, with 4 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.