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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Eighth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 26 March 1954, at 3.15 p.m.

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on the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work,
including information on Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories
(E/CN.6/231, 235, 237, L.125, L.126) (continued)

14p.

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mrs. FIROUZ	Iran
<u>Members:</u>	DAW NGWE KHIN	Burma
	Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
	Miss GONZALEZ	Chile
	Miss YANG	China
	Miss MANAS	Cuba
	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
	Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan
	Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
	Mrs. ROSSEL	Sweden
	Mrs. FOMIN	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mrs. WARDE	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mrs. HAHN)	United States of America
	Mrs. MORRISON)	
	Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA	Venezuela
	Mrs. MITROVIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Also present:</u>	Mrs. FLOURET	Argentina (Observer)
	Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission of Women

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mrs. FIGUEROA	International Labour Organisation
Mrs. CRUZ-SANTOS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category A:

Mrs. LONG	International Co-operative Alliance
Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
Mr. THORMANN	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions

Category B and Register:

Mrs. ROBERTS	Associated Country Women of the World: <u>and</u> Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
Begum NAFISA HAMDANI	All Pakistan Women's Association
Mrs. VERGARA	Catholic International Union for Social Service
Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission of Women
Mrs. MAHON) Mrs. WOODSMALL)	International Alliance of Women
Mrs. FREEMAN	International Council of Women
Mrs. HYMER) Miss RANDALL)	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Mrs. LAGERMANN) Miss SCHWARZENBACH)	International Federation of Friends of Young Women
Miss ROBB) Mrs. MCGILLICUDDY)	International Federation of University Women
Mrs. MAKINEN-OLLINEN) Miss RUIZ-OVEJAR) Miss SMITH)	International Federation of Women Lawyers
Mrs. WOLLE-EGENOLF	International League for the Rights of Man
Mrs. RUSSELL	Women's International Democratic Federation
Mrs. SCHAEFER) Mrs. von TRESKOW) Miss WEBER)	World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations
Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Chief of the Status of Women Section
Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

Secretariat:

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK FOR MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS (E/CN.6/231, 235, 237,
L.125, L.126) (continued)

The CHAIRMAN asked the Commission to continue the general debate on equal pay for men and women. The Commission had before it two draft resolutions, one submitted by the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (E/CN.6/L.125) and the other jointly by the United States of America and Sweden (E/CN.6/L.126).

Miss SENDER (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said that trade unions had been fighting for decades to obtain pay for women equal to that received by men. While the principle of equal pay had not yet been completely recognized by employers and administrations, great progress had been made, especially during and after the First World War, when the need for manpower had been more acute, women had been introduced into new types of work and, whether single, married or divorced, they had had to earn their living. However, a great deal remained to be done.

It was essential that the principle of equal pay should be applied in a free world and the attitude of employers who expected to pay women less than the rate for the job was to be condemned. That regrettable state of mind would be gradually eradicated by the efforts of trade unions and women's organizations. There was no desire, of course, to raise women's standard of living by reducing working hours. On the contrary, women's work should contribute to the growth of national wealth and production, so that the question of improvement of wages and salaries could be solved to the advantage of all groups of workers. Study of the application of equal remuneration and of methods of applying it should be entrusted to bodies made up of representatives of governments, employers and workers' organizations in various countries, in which women were appropriately represented.

In the United States, the Department of Labor had carried out a very worthwhile study on the employment of female labour, from which it could be seen that the position had improved. It was still true that the better jobs were largely reserved to men, but that tradition was breaking down as more and more women proved themselves capable of undertaking larger responsibilities. Some women in the United States, for instance, were now occupying high positions in government and industry.

In all countries, trade unions were trying to secure the adoption of laws to protect women against long working hours and inadequate wages. As a result of their activities, women workers in the United States had reaped benefits from collective agreements establishing desirable working standards for men and women. It was important that equal wages should be fixed at a high enough level.

The Commission had been told that living conditions were superior in certain countries without a free trade union movement, but those contentions had been expressed in a very general way and no precise figure had been supplied. It might therefore be useful to make a comparison between the status of workers in a free country and those in a country without a trade union movement. A study of that character had been made in the United States. An effort had been made to find some data in the Soviet press and to compare wages with the work-time required in order to buy selected commodities in 1928 and 1953 in Moscow and New York City respectively. From that comparison it had resulted that the Soviet worker would have had to work 45 per cent more in 1953 than in 1928 in order to buy the same weekly supply of seven essential foods and that the Moscow worker had to work twice as long as the New York worker to buy a pound of bread. In order to buy potatoes, beef, milk, eggs and butter, he had to work three, five, six, seven and nine times more than the New York worker.

The general conclusions were therefore the following: first a country with a free enterprise economy had succeeded in raising its workers' standards of living to a greater degree than a country with a planned economy. If the latter country did not agree with that opinion, it would only have to supply statistics clearly indicating the position, as other countries did. Secondly, free trade unions, independent of governments and parties, had been able to raise the standard of living for both men and women workers. The trade unions aimed at securing a better life based on equality and justice.

Mrs. RUSSELL (Women's International Democratic Federation) recalled that the United States representative had expressed the wish that non-governmental organizations would contribute to the Commission some information on the measures they had taken to press for the principle of equal pay and to interest public opinion in the matter. The non-governmental organizations would be very glad to respond to her request, but it was probable that many of them would feel, as did WIDF, that the matter had had worldwide publicity through themselves and through the trade unions supporting women's rights, and that it seemed rather for the governments which had not yet ratified even the inadequate Convention No. 100 to explain the reasons for their procrastination, if they could.

The position as it appeared from the ILO report (E/CN.6/231) was very depressing. Only six countries had ratified the Convention and many of those whose statements appeared in the report either did not wish to ratify it or were taking evasive action.

WIDF had taken vigorous action to support the principle of equal pay in all countries where this was necessary. It was encouraged by its membership in countries such as the USSR, Poland and the people's democracies including China where the principle was applied and promoted by the Governments, and where the status of women had been thereby improved. At the World Congress of WIDF, held at Copenhagen in June 1953, the Vice-President had presented a long report on women's rights, in which the position on equal pay in many countries was reviewed. Nearly two thousand women from seventy countries had supported the declaration of the Congress, which had been distributed to the Commission as document E/CN.6/NGO.18. In that declaration, the Congress had called for the right to work, equal pay and professional training for all women, irrespective of race, nationality and social position. The Congress had been genuinely representative of women of the entire globe; it had been attended by delegates from all countries of the world and by representatives of various national and international women's associations and trade unions. All nationalities religions and professions had been represented.

Opponents of the principle of equal pay seemed to forget the large numbers of mothers, widows, divorced women and unmarried mothers who had to support their children and that in certain countries, such as Honduras, Jamaica and Trinidad, some women were underpaid on grounds of race.

After a great demonstration in the United Kingdom the principle of equal pay had recently been re-affirmed by a vote of the House of Commons. It was the Commission's duty to make Governments understand that they should not wait on pressure groups before performing an act of moral justice. Legislation by Governments would rapidly bring the private employer into line. Unfortunately, the experience of two recent wars had shown that some Governments were only too ready to call upon women for their labour in time of need, but continued indifferent to the moral right of women to receive their just share of the wealth they created.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) emphasized that the question of economic equality for women was closely linked with the question of political equality. A study of the situation of the millions of women who were earning a living for themselves or their families led to the conclusion that, when women were subjected to economic discrimination, they could not fully exercise their political rights, even if they were granted such rights by law. Women had to work harder than men in order to obtain the same wages, and when they were mothers, often had additional responsibilities. As a result they were frequently unable to participate in social and political life on account of their heavy work, or else their work did not bring them in a living wage and their situation remained inferior to that of men. The Commission had set itself the task of achieving equality between men and women in all respects. If women were to enjoy equal political rights with men, they must receive equal pay and their children must be cared for. The situation with regard to equal pay was far from satisfactory. Application of the ILO Convention, which in any case was inadequate because it

contained no provisions on the subject and did not cover the dependent territories, was meeting with opposition from many countries where women were victims of discrimination with regard to pay. The information given in the ILO report made it clear that some States were refusing to apply the principle of equal pay for equal work. That was the case in Switzerland and Australia, which had both decided to maintain the difference between the basic pay of men and women. Other States, such as the United Kingdom, were continually deferring application of the principle. The arguments advanced in support of that situation whether they were based, as in Australia, on the view that men had heavier family responsibilities to bear, or, as in other countries, on the idea that the governments should not participate in the preparation of collective agreements, could not conceal the fact that the discrimination practised against women in that respect was a source of profit to employers. Thus, according to a report published on 2 November 1953 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor, the wages of women workers, of whom there were 19 million, amounted to 44 per cent of those of the men. It was obvious that by that means the employers must be making thousands of millions of dollars in additional profits. Furthermore, women were always the first to suffer from unemployment, in one of two ways - either they were the first to be dismissed or they were the first to have their wages cut. That was an important consideration in present circumstances, because unemployment was continually on the increase in some countries. In the Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, women were subjected to discrimination on two grounds, as women and as members of an oppressed national group. The Trusteeship Council's debates were very illuminating on that point.

In Poland, the right to work and equal pay for equal work were guaranteed to all workers under the Constitution. The Government and non-governmental organizations were supervising the economic progress of women. Such progress was possible because there was no unemployment; because the constant growth of the economy enabled women to participate more and more extensively in its economy; because women were free to choose their profession -- heavy work was prohibited by law for expectant and nursing mothers -- because women as well as men were able to obtain technical training and to hold high positions; and, finally,

because measures had been taken in respect of social insurance and child welfare. It was therefore clear that, if the action of governments and non-governmental organizations were supported by legislation, the question of equal pay could easily be settled. She was not going to comment on the ICFTU representative's speech, which was designed to distract the Commission's attention from the problem under discussion, for a purpose which was no mystery to anyone.

The Byelorussian draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.125) was designed to safeguard women's rights in a practical and specific fashion and emphasized the importance of the part which could be played by non-governmental organizations. It also had the advantage of being applicable to all women and the Polish delegation would vote for it. She reserved the right to comment later on the Swedish-United States joint draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.126), which she had not yet had time to study thoroughly.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) stated that in her country women rarely engaged in the same occupations as men and, when they did so, there was no discrimination against them. Women had not been working for very long and, despite a recent increase in private industry, there were still few enterprises and the State was the largest employer. Women's work was greatly appreciated in Haiti. In all fields in which they were active, whether as doctors, secretaries, administrators, inspectors, etc., it was thought that women were more conscientious than men and that they took more pride in their work, and employers did not willingly dispense with their services. It therefore did not seem necessary for Haiti to sign and ratify the ILO convention. She nevertheless would vote for the Byelorussian draft resolution.

Begum ANWAR AHMED (Pakistan) said that in her country the principle of equal pay was applied generally, without discrimination on grounds of sex, If the Government wished to take measures to ensure the application of that principle in industry, a complex organization would have to be set up and that would be extremely difficult in a country still in the initial stages of industrialization. Pakistan, however, was doing everything in its power to ensure the application of the principle. In the circumstances, although she fully understood the motives which had led the Byelorussian delegation to submit its draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.125), she could not vote for it.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) said that her delegation would support both draft resolutions (E/CN.6/L.125 and E/CN.6/L.126), as they were in line with the position adopted by the French Government, which had signed and ratified the International Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value. In that connexion, she wished to stress the fact that the situation arising from the failure of many Governments to accede to the Convention and to refrain from applying the principle of equality might, if continued, result in unfair economic competition against the small number of States which had implemented the principle, and such States might find themselves at a disadvantage, and even penalized, because they had brought their actions into line with their words.

The last phrase of resolution E/CN.6/L.125 referred to a matter of great concern to the French Government and Parliament, which had just adopted a Labour Code for the non-metropolitan territories and for the metropolitan country, ensuring implementation of the principle of equal pay.

Miss MANAS (Cuba) recalled that her delegation had always upheld the principle of equal pay, which was set forth in article 62 of her country's constitutional statutes. Furthermore, the Governments of Cuba, Chile and the Philippines had declared their intention of ratifying the Convention. For those reasons, the Cuban delegation would vote in favour of any draft resolution designed to ensure application of the principle of equal pay.

Mrs. HYMER (International Federation of Business and Professional Women) said that her organization had welcomed the adoption of the Convention on Equal Remuneration as a great victory, for it was the necessary concomitant of the Convention on Political Rights of Women and was the first step towards the recognition of economic equality between men and women. The Federation had always supported that principle in the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the ILO. In their various countries the national federations had been urging Governments to ratify the Convention and to take the requisite legislative measures and had been working to persuade public opinion and employers' organizations to accept the principle of it.

At its sixth International Congress the Federation had considered women's place in the labour market. It had come to the conclusion that the principle of equal pay was gaining ground and that there was a growing tendency in various countries to equalize the pay of men and women by granting larger wage-increases to women than to men, as for instance in Denmark. The Congress had also heard reports from representatives of the national federations on action taken in the various countries. The question of equal pay could not, however, be considered in isolation; it was closely linked with the questions of equal access to occupations, equal working conditions and conditions of vocational training and guidance, equality in security of employment and in the social services, and so on, all of which were mentioned in articles 6 and 7 of ILO Recommendation No. 90. The Commission ought therefore to ask Governments not only to ratify the Convention, but also to give effect to the provisions of those articles.

Mrs. SCHAEFER (World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations) recalled that her organization, which represented 36 million women, had always held that the principle of equal pay was a matter of simple justice. Mothers should not be obliged to work outside the home and it was regrettable that the legislation of certain countries and, in others, economic necessity, forced them to do so. In that connexion, failure to apply the Convention had certain

economic effects which should be brought to light. It resulted, for instance, in the number of women workers increasing at the expense of men with greater family responsibilities, and led to a lowering of male workers' wages because it was assumed that a women's wages augmented those of her husband. It was furthermore unfair that countries applying the principle of equal pay and endeavouring to establish social justice should be at a disadvantage in relation to those which exploited female labour.

Miss YANG (China) stated that the principle of equal pay was applied by her Government both in its legislation and in practice. The principle was mentioned not only in the ILO Convention, but also in Economic and Social Council resolution 504 (XVI).

She noted with satisfaction the progress already made towards equal remuneration as a result of the joint efforts of the ILO and the United Nations, and hoped that both governmental and non-governmental organizations, which had already made great contributions to that end, would redouble their efforts.

The Chinese delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution in document E/CN.6/L.126.

Mrs. Sanchez de URDANETA (Venezuela) said that she would support any draft resolution designed to promote the application of the principle of equal pay, which was recognized in her country's Constitution. Article 67 of the Labour Law, in particular, categorically forbade salary differentiation between men and women and protected women by excluding them from work of a morally or physically harmful nature.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as representative of the Dominican Republic, recalled that she had always earnestly upheld the principle of equal pay, which was recognized in her country's Labour Code. The Dominican Government had already ratified the Convention. She would therefore vote in favour of any draft resolution intended to assure to women pay equal to that of men for work of equal value, and thus to have justice done to women workers all over the world.

Mrs. TABET (Lebanon) stated that the Labour Code in force in the Lebanon since 1946 formally recognized the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The social visitors employed by the Government saw to it that the principle was in fact applied and that the interests of working women and children were safeguarded. The Lebanese delegation would therefore vote for the two resolutions before the Commission.

Mrs. MORRISON (United States of America) informed the representative of Poland that the statistics published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor on the wages of men and women workers were not confined to those of men and women in the same jobs. Nor did they take account either of actual hours worked - for they included persons employed part-time - or of the importance of the post held. It was important not to lose sight of the fact that what was meant by equal pay for equal work was an equivalent wage-rate for men and women doing the same job.

Mrs. de CALVO (Inter-American Commission of Women) said that the object of the Commission she represented was to promote the economic and social wellbeing of women in the American continent and that it attached primary importance to the principle of equal pay for equal work. That fact was reflected in the decisions it had adopted at its meetings. Thus, at its eighth assembly the organization had decided, with the assistance of trade unions and women's organizations, to launch a campaign to spread information about the ILO Convention and to bring direct influence to bear on governments to ensure its application. At its ninth assembly it had considered the progress made in applying the principle of equal remuneration for civil servants and had decided to urge the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to convene a conference of experts on the employment of women and directors of the relevant services of the American countries; the assistance of ILO had been sought for that purpose. During the same assembly, the Commission had given particular attention to the question of the vocational training of women, and had examined a report on the subject prepared by the ILO with reference to the American continent, and had asked governments to give both sexes the same basic

education, so that women could undertake all types of vocational training. Finally, it had appointed an expert to make a study of the economic position of women in the American continent. A preliminary report had been submitted to the tenth conference and the study would be pursued, with the ILO's collaboration.

Mrs. FOMIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) reserved her right to reply in detail to the ICFTU representative's comments. She wished at the present stage, however, to say that that representative's statement was based on incomplete information, which gave a wholly erroneous impression of the standard of living of workers in the USSR. In her country wages were not paid in cash only; workers also received a variety of services entirely free of charge, such as social insurance, medical care, vocational and technical training and recuperative periods in sanatoria and rest homes. The standard of living of Soviet workers was improving daily and, as trade union delegates and representatives of governments, business concerns and United Nations bodies who had visited the country had observed, was already high. The 1953 cuts in the prices of industrial and agricultural products were not the first of their kind; since the end of the war the Government had introduced six successive price-cuts for those products, as well as for textiles and woollen goods.

ICFTU was a trade union organization and, as such, responsible for the protection of workers' interests. It would have been better advised to ask the Commission to try to solve the problem of unequal pay, which was of vital concern to millions of women in the United States. It ought to defend the interests of the many unemployed women in the United States, and to fight against the widespread poverty and misery in a number of Latin American countries which had been described by the representative of Chile in such moving terms, instead of trying to sow dissension among governments and men of goodwill.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.