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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Eighth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 30 March 1954, at 3.15 p.m.

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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 MAÑAS	Cuba
	Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
	Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
	Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
	Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan
	Mrs. DEMBINSKA	Poland
	Mrs. ROSSEL	Sweden
	Mrs. FOMINA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mrs. WARDE	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mrs. HAHN	United States of America
	Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA	Venezuela
	Mrs. MITROVIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Also present:</u>	Mrs. FLOURET	Argentina
	Miss MORALES	Costa Rica
	Mrs. HARMAN	Israel
	Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission on 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:

<u>Category A:</u> Mr. THORMANN	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
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Representatives of non-governmental organizations: (continued)

Category B and Register:

Mrs. ROBERTS		Associated Country Women of the World
Mrs. GIROUX		Catholic International Union for Social Service
Mr. MANUILA		International Association of Penal Law
Miss GUTHRIE	)	International Alliance of Women
Mrs. MAHON	)	
Mrs. WOODSMALL	)	
Mr. LONGARZO		International Conference of Catholic Charities
Mrs. BARNEY	)	International Council of Women
Mrs. FREEMAN	)	
Mrs. PARSONS	)	
Mrs. HYMER	)	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Miss RANDALL	)	
Mrs. SCHWARTZENBACH		International Federation of Friends of Young Women
Miss MCGILLICUDDY	)	International Federation of University Women
Miss ROBB	)	
Mrs. MÄKINEN-OLLINEN	)	International Federation of Women Lawyers
Miss SMITH	)	
Mrs. WISHNER	)	International League for the Right of Man
Mrs. WOLLE-EGENOLF	)	
Miss MCGILLICUDDY	)	Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
Mrs. ROBERTS	)	
Mrs. RUSSELL		Women's International Democratic Federation
Miss SCHAEFER		World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations

Representatives of non-governmental organizations: (continued)

Category B and Register: (continued)

	Dr. ARNOLD )	World's Young Women's
	Miss FORSYTH )	Christian Association
	Miss PEZZULLO	Young Christian Workers
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Chief of the Status of Women Section
	Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN: (a) REPORT ON OLDER WOMEN WORKERS (E/CN.6/251); (b) PROGRESS REPORTS ON PART-TIME WORK FOR WOMEN (E/CN.6/236 and 238, E/CN.6/L.127, L.128 and L.130) (continued)

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) said that the most recent statistics available showed that in November 1952 there had been approximately 6,000,000 part-time workers in the United States, about 5,500,000 of whom had worked part-time for reasons of their own convenience. The majority, or over 3,500,000, had been women.

Various methods had been developed for placing women in part-time employment. For example, the Women's Service Exchange in Madison, Wisconsin, organized as a voluntary project, had been developed in co-operation with the State Vocational School system. Situated in a school building and staffed by school personnel, it helped women to find employment, in co-operation with the regular State Employment Service. It also provided short refresher courses for women. A similar programme had been established in another Wisconsin city and various groups had expressed interest in establishing similar programmes of their own.

The fact that most part-time workers preferred part-time work did not mean that the normal work week for women in the United States was unreasonably long. The maximum hours that women could be employed were regulated by State, the usual maximum being eight hours a day and a six-day 48-hour week. Certain States prohibited work beyond those limits except in unusual circumstances or during seasonal peak periods of production. Furthermore, the Federal Wage and Hour Law established a basic work week of forty hours for workers in manufacturing and other industries subject to Federal jurisdiction and required employers to pay overtime at the rate of time and a half, the worker's regular rate for work over forty hours. Those facts showed that women working part-time were not trying to avoid gruelling work schedules. Most employers in the United States had established reasonable working hours not only because the law required it but because reasonable working hours promoted good industrial relations.

The desire of many married women to work part-time did not mean that they were compelled to do so. Fortunately the United States economy was sound enough to allow married women to choose whether or not they wished to work outside the

home. Although over one-half of all women workers in the United States were married women living with their husbands, only about 26 per cent of all married women in the population were in the labour force. In the 1950 census three out of every four married women had reported their occupation as housewife. Most married women had been employed at paid jobs at some time and were likely to seek paid employment again if they wished to supplement the family income, particularly after their home responsibilities had become less urgent. It was that group which particularly needed part-time work. Most women preferred to work during the hours when their children were in school or away from home. Her Government's interest in part-time work was therefore closely related to the development of a strong family life.

It was apparent from the reports prepared by the ILO and the Secretary-General that a similar pattern of family life was developing in other countries. Women wanted time to care for their families. The reports could be useful in providing employment opportunities for women who had to combine gainful employment with their duties as housewives.

The ILO report to the seventh session of the Commission had emphasized the basic problems in part-time work. There was the question whether the conditions under which part-time workers were employed were comparable to those of full-time workers and whether part-time work represented a danger to full-time workers. Secondly, there was the question whether the development of part-time employment would lessen the value of women's work in general. The Secretary-General's report to the eighth session made certain valuable suggestions for dealing with the problem. Those suggestions would serve as a basis for planning labour standards and procedures. The bibliography compiled by the Secretary-General was also useful. The documents and the Commission's discussion gave a fair picture of the experience of various countries in the field. Her delegation was also looking forward to receiving information from the ILO concerning part-time work for women in cottage industries and seasonal agricultural work.

The Commission had learned that part-time work for women was not customary in many countries. The Commission should therefore inform women of the advantages of part-time work, which would enable them when necessary to

supplement the family income without disrupting family life. Employers and unions should also be encouraged to adjust their work schedules to provide opportunities for part-time jobs and she would welcome comments on how those objectives could be accomplished.

Mrs. ROSSEL (Sweden) agreed that in view of the danger of discrimination against women, part-time work and general working conditions for women should in principle not be subject to different regulations from those governing men workers. The Commission, which was the competent organ to deal with the problem, should not however, avoid a discussion of the issue on that ground.

When labour was in short supply there was ample opportunity for part-time work. In periods of unemployment, however, there was the risk of psychological pressure upon married women to accept shorter hours of work in order to provide jobs for men. In the depression years of the early 1930's motions to that effect had been introduced in the Swedish Parliament, but they had been defeated. When a shortage of labour had arisen in the 1940's the question of part-time work had again been raised and diametrically opposed viewpoints had been expressed. The Parliament had rejected a motion for the study of the question of part-time work in the civil service for women. At the following session, the sponsor of the motion had wisely rephrased the proposal to request a study of the general question of part-time work in the civil service without restricting it to women workers. The Part-Time Employment Investigation Committee set up to make the study had submitted its findings which were still valid in principle in Sweden.

On the basis of the information given by the Swedish members of the ILO Correspondence Committee on Women's Employment, of which she was a member, in reply to the questionnaire sent out by the ILO at the request of the Commission on the Status of Women she stated that the Swedish Part-time Employment Investigation Committee had investigated the possibility of providing greater opportunities for part-time employment in Government service in a manner that would be acceptable to private enterprise. The report was to cover every category of wage earner, thus avoiding the risk that women, particularly married women, might be subject to discrimination with regard to hiring, promotion and the like. It had been stressed that the question of part-time employment should be settled on a voluntary basis between the employer and the employee.

The Committee had defined part-time employment as divided full-time employment on a shorter shift than that normally worked by workers in similar occupations in the same undertaking.

The Committee's findings, part of which had been incorporated in the civil service regulations, referred to civil servants and not to men and women workers generally. The Committee had proposed two possible sources of part-time workers, persons in the service engaged full time who would prefer to work for shorter periods, and persons not employed in the service who could be engaged on a part-time basis.

In 1945, of approximately 175,000 workers, in civil service about 600 had been part-time workers. In 1951, after the regulations had been amended to permit of part-time employment, out of approximately 183,000 Government employees, 1,828 had been part-time workers. Of that number, 1,070 were full-time employees (including 940 women) who had asked to have their working hours reduced. In 1945 approximately 1 per cent of the labour force in private enterprise had worked part-time. By 1951 the figure had increased to 1.6 per cent. Part-time workers were engaged largely for certain jobs in hospitals, in the postal, telephone and telegraph services, in the textile and clothing industries and in certain less skilled jobs. In general it was not considered practical to employ part-time workers for the more responsible or supervisory jobs.

In certain industries with expensive machinery it was deemed impractical to have the equipment handled by different operators and part-time workers were employed in other work. In order to obtain maximum use of equipment and to procure the necessary extra manpower, other industries had however introduced a part-time shift from 5 to 10 p.m. Those hours which were disadvantageous from the viewpoint of the family, were often the only solution for women who could not leave their children during the day but could leave them with other members of the family during the evening.

Various systems had been introduced for caring for the children of mothers who worked part-time on morning or afternoon shifts. In practice, there was often an over-lap at midday at the day nurseries, which overstrained the facilities and personnel and was detrimental to the child as well. Her Government was aware that day nursery facilities must be expanded to meet the needs of working mothers.



Approximately 90 per cent of the part-time workers in private enterprise and in the civil service were women, most of the remaining 10 per cent being students.

Employers had introduced part-time employment largely because they wished to make full use of existing equipment and machinery. In periods of equilibrium in the labour market, employers were unwilling to plan new industrial installations in which a large proportion of the work was to be done by part-time workers, presumably because of the risk of the under-utilization of their plant. Such action was taken, however, during periods of peak demand for certain articles. An employer would occasionally permit workers to change from full to part-time employment in special circumstances. He could thus make use of the worker's experience and facilitate a return to normal working hours at some future time.

From the employer's viewpoint, the disadvantages of part-time employment were the increased administrative work and higher administrative costs, the lack of continuity in the work, the greater space requirements, the higher cost of training personnel, the lower efficiency of part-time workers, the short supply of jobs for reserve staff and technical difficulties, particularly in arranging shifts for part-time workers. On the other hand, the system resulted in less absenteeism, increased efficiency, provided better opportunities for retaining trained personnel, provided a greater supply of manpower and resulted in less overtime.

Employees considered part-time work disadvantageous because it provided a relatively low net wage, placed too great a strain on the part-time worker, and required too much overtime. It was difficult to arrange the shift at a time suitable to the worker; there was the risk that he would be given less skilled work and fail to be promoted and that he might be compelled to change from full-time to part-time employment. The part-time worker received less favourable consideration in regard to working hours and leave. He was required to meet the production standard of the full-time worker and the value of women's work depreciated. The employees also felt, however, that the system had certain advantages. It made it easier to combine housekeeping with gainful employment.

It gave persons of limited means a better opportunity to study, provided persons with dependent children or students with a source of income and resulted in a better division of work from the employees' standpoint.

The wages of part-time workers varied in direct proportion to the number of hours worked. They were granted leave in accordance with the applicable legislation and were entitled after they had completed sixteen days' service, to not less than one and one half days' leave per month for each month worked, the leave to be paid at the same rate as working days. In the civil service part-time workers received remuneration, paid sick leave, leave without pay and pension benefits in proportion to the hours of work they were employed, on the same conditions as full-time workers. In view of the frequency of part-time employment between 5 and 10 p.m. in certain industries, provisions had been inserted in labour contracts providing for an additional payment of 15 per cent of the hourly wage for any hours worked by the part-time worker after the completion of the full-time day worker's normal shift.

With regard to the system of social insurance, every worker who was a member of a trade union with a recognized unemployment fund was entitled to compensation for unemployment regardless of whether he was a part-time or a full-time worker. According to the law, accident compensation was payable to all workers in proportion to income, regardless of the number of hours worked.

Employers' organizations generally preferred full-time workers: they were considered to make better use of the capital investment and to be more stable at work. In some cases, employers argued that costs per working hour, including administrative and supervisory costs, were higher for part-time than for full-time manpower. On the other hand, employers recognized the value of part-time employment as a means of utilizing previous training and keeping working women in contact with the labour market.

The Swedish Federation of Trade Unions, for its part, emphasized the need for an agreement between the employer and the part-time worker regarding working conditions and for an informational campaign directed to organizing part-time workers.

Swedish women's organizations and the trade unions took the position that gainfully employed women whether engaged in part-time or full-time work should be recognized as independent individuals whose income should not be considered as a supplement to the family income, whose wages and working conditions should be fixed on the basis of the nature and value of the job, as they were for men, obviating the need for any special legislation. They further considered that women could find suitable part-time employment which would work to the advantage of the employers as well as to their own advantage, and that the best way to protect them in their jobs was by a voluntary agreement entered into by the contracting parties.

A pre-condition for planning part-time employment for women was to reduce the task of keeping house to a part-time job by increasing shopping facilities, creating more day nurseries, distributing work among family members, and other community measures. In some cases, part-time work for women should be considered as a last resort, while in others, it was urgent, especially for older women.

The Swedish delegation had found the studies on part-time employment for women by the Secretary-General and by the ILO extremely valuable. The subject of part-time work for women should be carefully studied to avoid opening the way to discrimination against women in employment.

It would be recalled that Sweden had introduced a draft resolution on the question jointly with Pakistan (E/CN.6/L.127). The United Kingdom draft (E/CN.6/L.128) appeared to have the same objective, but limited its appeal for continued study to the ILO; the two proposals might be combined into a single draft in the committee on resolutions.

Mrs. WARDE (United Kingdom) withdrew her original draft (E/CN.6/L.127), noting that it had been replaced by a new proposal (E/CN.6/L.130), which might well be merged with the joint Sweden-Pakistan text in the committee on resolutions.

Mrs. HYMER (International Federation of Business and Professional Women), discussing the problem of employment opportunities for older women, reviewed the results of studies undertaken both by the International Federation and National Federations based on the premise that the capacity, technical training and experience of older women should be used in every country in work for which they were best qualified. The Federations had found that in several countries, even in times of full employment, it was difficult for women over forty to secure jobs, mainly because of the reluctance of employers to recognize the value of their contribution to commerce and industry. Their studies had also revealed the need for training programmes for the older woman and the necessity of stimulating interest in the problem on the part of governments, local authorities, trade unions and employers' and employees' organizations. The results of the studies carried on in fourteen Federations had been reported to the Secretary-General and were included in his document on economic opportunities for older women (E/CN.6/251). The document could usefully be made available to National Federations.

At the sixth congress of the International Federation, held at Stockholm in July 1953, a resolution had been adopted directing National Federations to encourage women to receive adequate guidance and training for employment to urge women withdrawing from employment to keep up their training, to assist women wishing to work to stay in their jobs until retirement age, and to promote training opportunities for women in all communities.

It was suggested that the record of the discussion to be held at the ILO May meeting in Geneva on the item dealing with salaried and professional workers, so far as it related to the question of older women workers, and any recommendations that might be made by the ILO, should be presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its ninth session as guidance to non-governmental organizations in their further study of the problem.

Mr. THORMANN (International Federation of Christian Trade Unions) said that as a result of a survey among its members in Belgium, the IFCTU had found that one third of women workers were women over forty, the proportion varying with

economic conditions in the area and possibilities of promotion; that the critical age for women in manual work was 50 years, rather than forty, while in other jobs it was 35; that women over forty were unemployed for about the same length of time as men in the same jobs; and that many women continued to work past the retirement age of 60. A pension system better adapted to women workers would greatly affect the position of older women workers. The IFCTU had also investigated the psychological and sociological factors influencing that situation and its findings had been included in the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.6/251).

The Belgian Christian trade unions had agreed that all women workers should be pensioned at the age of 60, or earlier to facilitate the promotion of younger women; that higher pensions should be granted to unmarried women; that methods of production should be adapted so as to relieve the great physical strain placed on women workers; and that working hours for women should be shortened. Although its investigation had been of a preliminary nature, the IFCTU had concluded that women workers must be guaranteed equal pay for equal work, that two standards, one for women and one for men, should be established to measure the productivity of workers in particular jobs, and that women's contribution to the economic life of the community should be reconciled with their principal task as home-makers.

Miss ROBB (International Federation of University Women) noting that the survey undertaken by the national branches of the Federation bore out the ILO conclusion that accurate statistics on part-time work for women were still lacking, said that the reactions of both employers and women workers to the question varied with the economic realities of each country, and particularly, with the state of the labour market and the adequacy of family incomes. For example, Finnish university women considered part-time employment suitable for them, whereas Norwegian women pointed out that the "mutual tax" in Norway gave little economic incentive for married women to accept part-time employment, and the Belgian Federation concluded that the introduction of part-time work would further curtail opportunities for university women in an already overcrowded labour market.

University women were mainly concerned with the part-time employment of students, economic opportunities for older women professional workers, and possibly, the need for university women with specialized knowledge to keep in contact with the labour market.

The International Federation of University Women was especially appreciative of the documentation compiled by the Secretary-General and the ILO on economic opportunities for older women and part-time employment for women. It believed that a number of women's groups would benefit from receiving many of the documents prepared for the Commission's current session, and suggested that they might be appended to the Commission's report and either sold at a slightly increased price or made available in mimeographed form at low cost. It was prepared to discuss with the United Nations Publications Board the possible distribution of several documents and would submit an appropriate list to the Secretariat.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) announced that she would re-introduce her draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.129) under item 11 of the Commission's agenda.

Miss RANDALL (International Federation of Business and Professional Women) said that her organization regarded part-time work as a means of using the skill and capacity of women who were not able to work full time.

The findings of studies carried out by its member Federations in various countries were given in documents E/CN.6/213 and E/CN.6/236; in that connexion she wished to draw the Commission's attention to the following point:

(1) many women whose domestic responsibilities made full time work impossible, were looking for part-time work, either because of economic pressure or because they were unwilling to lose their special skills; (2) in certain categories of employment shorter shifts were possible; (3) part-time workers must be protected against exploitation, and full-time workers, against any danger of resultant wage decreases or shorter hours. Conditions of part-time work must be the subject of voluntary agreement between the contracting parties.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women believed that part-time work must not be used as a substitute for full employment or as a device for disguising periods of under-employment. It suggested that the study of part time work should be continued, and not confined to married women alone, and that ways should be found to develop part-time work opportunities with a view to the fullest possible use of women's abilities as a permanent feature of the labour market. The ILO, as the competent specialized agency in the field, might be asked to establish international standards for part-time employment, having regard to the interests of all the parties concerned. Governments might be urged to set up national committees for further exploration of the subject, and non-governmental organizations might be requested to develop further the opportunities for the full utilization of women's abilities and experience.

Mrs. SCHWARZENBACH (International Federation of the Friends of Young Women) said that as employment opportunities for foreign workers were greatly restricted in many countries, young girls who wished to take temporary employment abroad in order to learn a foreign language frequently went into domestic service. The girls could either work full time at beginner's wages or part time in exchange for pocket money and the privilege of being received into the family. In France and Belgium the contracts governing part-time employment of the latter type were government controlled and particularly favourable; they specified the obligations of the employer and the employee and included such advantages as a temporary work permit and eligibility for social security benefits. The International Federation of the Friends of Young Women had worked for some time towards extending those facilities and had approached the ILO in that connexion.

The ILO report on part-time employment (E/CN.6/238) drew attention to the fact that part-time employment including domestic employment of the type she had described, might give rise to various forms of abuse against which workers should be protected in their own interests as well as in that of other workers by properly defined conditions of employment. As such employment was useful both to the young girls concerned and to their employers, the International

Federation of Friends of Young Women requested the Commission on the Status of Women to support the ILO's efforts to encourage the enactment of appropriate legislation in countries where such legislation did not yet exist.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the various draft resolutions should be referred to the committee on resolutions and that the latter should endeavour to prepare a single text for submission to the Commission at its following meeting.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.