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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Tenth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 20 March 1956, at 3 p.m.

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Present:

Chairman: Mrs. RÖSSEL (Sweden)

Members:

Mrs. CORREA MORALES de APARICIO	Argentina
Miss GIBSON	Australia
Mrs. CISELET	Belgium
Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
Mrs. CHU	China
Miss MAÑAS	Cuba
Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
Miss ROESAD	Indonesia
Mrs. BEN-ZVI	Israel
Bogum ANWAR-AHMED	Pakistan
Mrs. DEFBINSKA	Poland
Mr. GIRON	Sweden
Mrs. SPIRIDONOVA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Dame Lucile SAYERS	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Mrs. HAHN	United States of America
Mrs. SANCHEZ de URDANETA	Venezuela
Mrs. MITROVIĆ	Yugoslavia

Observers for Governments of States Members of the United Nations:

Mr. STOYANOV	Bulgaria
Mr. STRNAD	Czechoslovakia
Miss CORCOS	Italy
Miss LUNSINGH-MEIJER	Netherlands

Representatives of specialized agencies:

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

Representative of an intergovernmental organization:

Inter-American Commission of Women Miss LUTZ

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Mrs. EKENDAHL
International Federation of Christian Trade Unions Miss NAGELS
Mrs. SCHMIDT
World Federation of Trade Unions Mr. DRINKWATER
Mrs. NOCE
World Federation of United Nations Associations Mrs. KRETSCHMER
Mrs. TROUPIN

Category B

Catholic International Union for Social Service Miss BOSMANS
Miss HERTOEGHE
International Alliance of Women Miss CAMPOAMOR
International Co-operative Women's Guild Mrs. HUBLER
International Council of Women Mrs. CARTER
International Federation "Amies de la Jeune Fille" Mrs. WOOD
International Federation of Business and Professional Women Miss TOMLINSON
International Federation of University Women Mrs. FIECHTER
Miss ROBB
International Federation of Women Lawyers Lady CHATTERJEE
Miss MANFREDINI
International League for the Rights of Man Mrs. WOLLE-EGENOLF
Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations Mrs. de CAZOTTE
Miss van EEGHEN
Mrs. HYMER
Mrs. WIBLE
Pan-Pacific Women's Association Mrs. HYMER
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Mrs. BAER
World Federation of Catholic Young Women and Girls Miss FARQUET
Miss HERREN

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (continued)

Category B (continued)

World Young Women's Christian Association

Miss ARNOLD

Young Christian Workers:

Miss PEZZULLO

Register

International Sociological Association

Mr. de MADAY

Open Door International

Mrs. BAER

St. Joan's International Social and
Political Alliance

Miss CHALLONER

Mrs. KINSELLA

Mrs. LEROY-BOY

World Federation of Democratic Youth

Mrs. MOLKOVA

Secretariat:

Mrs. Tenison-Woods

Representative of the
Secretary-General

Mrs. Grinberg-Vinaver

Secretary to the Commission

1. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (item 10 of the agenda) (E/CN.6/274, E/CN.6/283-E/CN.4/722 and Corr. 1, E/CN.6/L.188, E/CN.6/L.195) (resumed from the previous meeting and concluded)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to resume its consideration of item 10 of the agenda - technical assistance - and requested the Secretary to read out the revised text of the draft resolution on advisory services in the field of human rights, submitted jointly by the delegations of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, France, Pakistan and the United States of America (E/CN.6/L.195).

After the SECRETARY had read out the text the CHAIRMAN put it to the vote and the joint draft resolution on advisory services in the field of human rights (E/CN.6/L.195), as amended, was unanimously adopted.

The CHAIRMAN declared that the Commission had completed its consideration of item 10 of the agenda: technical assistance.

2. STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRIVATE LAW (item 9 of the Agenda) (E/CN.6/185/Add.15, E/CN.C/208/Add.3, E/CN.6/L.194) (resumed from the 213th meeting)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to resume its consideration of item 9 of the agenda - status of women in private law - and drew attention to the draft resolution on the abolition of customs, ancient laws and practices affecting the dignity of women (E/CN.6/L.194), submitted jointly by the delegations of Belgium, Cuba, France and Yugoslavia.

Mrs. CISELET (Belgium) declared that the status of women in private law was of particular importance, and that it was essential that the Commission should continue to study and discuss it at the next session. It was a vast subject, and progress would naturally be difficult because of the antiquity of certain laws and traditions and the complexity of the status of women in certain countries. For that reason, some members of the Commission had advocated that the problems should be sorted out, the more serious ones being tackled first, especially those of child marriage, the practice of the bride-price, the betrothal of young girls before marriageable age and the like. The preamble to the joint draft resolution noted that laws and customs permitting such practices were inconsistent with the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the operative part invited the Secretary-General to prepare for the eleventh session of the Commission a report on those problems based on all the information in his possession.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) thought that the problems of the status of women in private law were not only the most difficult to solve, but also the most thorny when raised. While some countries actually recognized equality of rights between spouses and between parents, others, though they had written the principle of such equality into their constitutions, had not yet brought their civil codes into line. During the past year the Commission had secured the mention in the draft covenant on civil and political rights of Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which dealt with all problems covering the status of women in private law. It had adopted several resolutions on the married woman's right to engage in independent work⁽¹⁾, her choice of domicile⁽²⁾, equality as between parents in the exercise of parental authority⁽³⁾, and the reform of matrimonial regimes,⁽⁴⁾

On the other hand, the Commission had adopted a general resolution⁽⁵⁾ affecting the under-developed countries, which was partly due to the work of St. Joan's International Social and Political Alliance; it raised a series of questions - child marriages, the abuse of the bride-price, forced marriages, restraints on the liberty of widows, polygamy, etc.

It was now necessary to go farther and accomplish a more practical task. For that reason, the authors of the joint draft resolution before the Commission had thought they should concentrate on the core of the matter - the need for the full and unqualified consent of the woman to her own marriage, a question involving many conditions. The first was the complete abolition of child marriage in its simplest form, which consisted in settling the future of a girl by giving her to the husband's family. The system whereby a series of instalments had to be paid by the future husband's family during her childhood and youth, or the future husband had to work for her family, must also disappear. Those were not, properly speaking, child marriages, but it was practically impossible for a girl promised in those conditions to recover her freedom when the time for the marriage came due; she would require superhuman courage, and would have to appeal to a court which she could not

(1) See E/2571, Annex 2J

(2) See E/2727, Annex 2 DIII

(3) Ibid., Annex 2 DII

(4) See E/2571, Annex 2 I

(5) See E/2571, Annex 2 H

reach. The effects of that custom of paying for a girl even outlasted the marriage, for if her husband died his family considered that the price paid for her covered the whole of her life, and hence that the wife was part of the deceased husband's estate. It was essential to require the girl to give her personal consent to the marriage before the administrative authorities.

It might be assumed that when a girl's family chose a husband they would do so in the interest of the girl herself; but that was not always true. The patriarchal system sometimes intervened, under which the authority determining the girl's future was not her own father but the head of the group of families, acting in its interests. At times the head of a group would marry off several girls of one family to several boys of another; the marriage was then a simple exchange, and neither girls nor boys had any freedom of choice. Another very common system was the matriarchy, which placed the girl under the authority not, as was sometimes believed, of her mother but of her mother's family - the uncle or the maternal grandfather.

The Commission should therefore decide to undertake a serious study of those conditions of life. It might be that the recommendations which it later adopted would stimulate a most necessary development; in any case it might be hoped that those recommendations would be well received by the governments of modern countries which had the wisdom to respect the unwritten laws of its non-metropolitan citizens but had to balance that respect against a respect for the essential rights of every human being.

The studies undertaken by the Commission would have the further merit of focussing attention on the fact that mankind was one, and that different societies often passed through the same evolutionary stages. (For instance the patriarchal system already mentioned recalled the laws of Rome or of the ancient Germans). An examination of social structures still in existence would yield a lesson of understanding and solidarity.

Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) said that although, after the penetrating statements by the two previous speakers, there was little that she could add, it might be of some interest to those members who had a rather less lengthy experience of the Commission's work than she if she were to give a brief account of the history of the joint draft resolution. She had been in Geneva when that problem had been studied in the Commission in 1952 and when her delegation, with others,

had first introduced in the Commission the idea of the desirability of abolishing customs that were inimical to the dignity of women and inconsistent with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Belgian representative would recall how at the 14th session of the Economic and Social Council, the Cuban delegation had stressed the facts that were set forth in the joint draft resolution, and how she (Mrs. Ciselet) and the United Kingdom representative had suggested amendments to a Cuban draft resolution on the subject. Since those days, everyone had been working steadily to further those aims, upon which the Commission had set its mind and heart. Once again the issue was being raised and squarely faced in the draft resolution submitted jointly by her own and the Belgian, French and Yugoslav delegations. In that text, she would single out as of particular importance the abolition of the practice of the bride-price, a practice which amounted to treating women as mere chattels, as though they were the objects of a commercial contract governing a matter that should be decided entirely by the free will of the individuals concerned. In inviting the Secretary-General to prepare a report on that most important subject, she and her co-authors hoped to command the Commission's unanimous support.

Mrs. MITROVIĆ (Yugoslavia) had little to add to the statements of the other authors of the joint draft resolution, save to recall the Yugoslav delegation's previous statements on the subject at the eighth and ninth sessions, when it had also put its name to the relevant draft resolutions. She would recall that in the Economic and Social Council some delegations had expressed the view that the proposals relating to the Status of Women in private law were unduly specific. But surely that was proof that the authors of the recommendations had given a great deal of detailed study to the situation of women throughout the world and that their concern was allied with a determination to see the principles of the Charter and the Universal Declaration implemented to the full. The joint draft resolution invited the Secretariat to engage in further study. When that had been done, it would be possible for the Commission to invite the governments represented on the Economic and Social Council to take more active steps to improve the situation. She was under no illusions about the possibility of rapid action. However, the influence of the

Commission on world public opinion was by no means negligible, and every measure, however small, tending to improve the position of women in private law would be a welcome step forward. She would appeal for unanimous support for the joint draft resolution.

Further consideration of item 9 of the agenda was deferred.

3. EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK (item 5 of the agenda) (E/CN.6/276 and Corr.1, E/CN.6/285 and Corr.1)

Mrs. FIGUEROA (International Labour Organisation) presented the report prepared by the International Labour Office (ILO) on equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value (E/CN.6/285 and Corr.1). She drew attention to the situation in respect of ratifications described in paragraph 4 and to the provisions concerning annual reports by countries to the International Labour Organisation and the examination of those reports by experts every year, as set forth in paragraphs 5 to 8. She also drew attention to paragraphs 23 to 25, dealing with the resolutions adopted by the Textiles Committee of the International Labour Organisation and by the Latin American Technical Meeting on the Utilization of Women's Work. The decision taken by the latter that the present notion of "wage" be replaced by the more comprehensive one of "remuneration" was particularly important. The Latin American meeting had been the first of a series of regional meetings of experts on the utilization of women's work contemplated by ILO for the future. It was hoped that if the necessary appropriations were forthcoming, other meetings would be held in Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

One of the main concerns of the Latin American meeting had been to devise means of giving practical effect to the principle of equality of remuneration. The Commission on the Status of Women, it would be recalled, had decided to consider the principle alone, not methods of applying it, although there had been differences of opinion about the wisdom of such a course. The ILO's recent experience showed that it was hard to divorce principles from methods of application, however complex, even in the mere definition of a concept. In most countries there was some general machinery for fixing salaries, and the government had some legal powers to set up bodies of various kinds to fix minimum rates of remuneration for all workers and actual rates for certain categories of workers, such as civil servants, school teachers and those employed in some nationalized industries. Such machinery included arbitration boards, ministerial orders,

tripartite tribunals etc. Where no minimum wages were fixed, it seemed that the general wage structure tended to be weakened, and to a greater extent in the case of women than in that of men. The fixing of minimum rates of remuneration also helped to safeguard the workers' interests in certain groups of activities which were not covered by collective agreements. Experience also showed that where minimum wages were fixed at the same level for men and women workers, collective agreements and negotiations between workers' and employers' organizations fixed wages above the minimum, whereas in collective agreements not based on a minimum wage level, women's remuneration was generally fixed at a lower level.

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER, Secretary to the Commission, recalled that at the ninth session¹⁾ the Commission had invited the Secretary-General to obtain from the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council further information on methods found useful in various countries for the promotion of equality of remuneration for men and women workers, and also on the present position regarding the application of the principle. In response to that request, the Secretariat had drawn up a report (E/CN.6/276 and Corr.1) based on the replies received from the following non-governmental organizations: International Alliance of Women, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Co-operative Women's Guild, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, International Federation of Women Lawyers, St. Joan's International Social and Political Alliance, World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, World Federation of Trade Unions, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and World Young Women's Christian Association; they contained information covering some forty countries.

Part I of the report contained material on methods used in equal pay campaigns supplementing the data given in the Secretary-General's earlier report (E/CN.6/263). Part II gave an account of the present position of the application of the principle of equal pay. Some of the information was quite new and came from trade union organizations or bodies concerned with the protection of working women.

1) See: E/2727, para. 63.

She also drew attention to two documents¹⁾ containing statements by non-governmental organizations on the question of equal pay for equal work.

Speaking at the invitation of the CHAIRMAN, Mrs. EKENDAHL (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said that she had participated in the work of the Women Workers' Committee set up by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which had met on February 14 1956 and had discussed many questions virtually identical with those on the Commission's agenda. Representatives of ICFTU had addressed the Commission at previous sessions, and ICFTU was continuously co-operating with the Secretariat, thereby demonstrating that ICFTU was firmly determined to play its part in the social and economic emancipation of women. The item under consideration - equal pay for equal work - was not a mere technical problem, but a basic objective in the promotion of the social and economic interests of women. At its Founding Congress in 1949, ICFTU had laid stress on the need to eradicate every form of discrimination, including discrimination on grounds of sex, laying particular emphasis on the principle of equal pay for equal work, and had worked steadily for those aims ever since. It had not organized special congresses for the purpose, but had preferred the more difficult course of effective day-to-day activity. It did not place its entire trust in international conventions, devoting much of its efforts to organizing women in free trade unions, within which they were given information and documentation about their rights and duties. Trade unions continued to bargain with the object of obtaining the maximum advantages which a stable economy ought to provide, regardless of whether the specific problem was treated in an international convention. Information on ICFTU's activities was to be found in document E/CN.6/276.

ICFTU hoped that it would soon be able to transmit to the Secretariat the findings of a new survey, started in June 1955, in which all the organizations affiliated to it had participated. Day-to-day observation of the way in which the principle of equal pay for equal work was or was not being put into practice showed that it was not an isolated problem and that it was not merely a question of how much money men and women took home respectively at the end of

1) See: E/CN.6/NGO/35 and E/CN.6/NGO/37.

the week; it was also a question of the way in which women could be given identical opportunities of earning that money. That was linked up with the problems of general education, vocational training, and access to certain studies and certain jobs.

But women should not allow their aspirations for equal opportunities and equal treatment to distract them from their very special responsibilities towards their families and children. Neither should such aspirations prejudice the special protection to which women were entitled in dangerous occupations or before and after confinement. The community needed working mothers, and should provide them with the services they required. That was even more necessary where the family stood in need of the earnings of the working mother.

Even though ICFWU believed that international conventions alone could not solve all the difficulties she had adumbrated, it would continue to press for international measures to give effect to the principle of equal pay for equal work, and it therefore strongly supported the relevant International Labour Conventions and Recommendations, particularly Convention No. 100. In 1953, fifty women trade unionists from twenty-four affiliated organizations had participated in an international summer school organized by ICFWU, and had discussed all those problems, and plans for continuing study had now reached a stage where special permanent machinery would be set up. Its operation would be supervised and guided by a standing women workers' committee, and its work would cover four main fields of study and action: discrimination, the protection of women workers, women workers and their family responsibilities, and women's employment. Under those general headings, the committee would keep under continuous review the question of how the free trade unions could best work for the attainment of conditions likely to ensure equal pay for equal work and all the other advantages for women without which equal pay for equal work would remain an empty slogan. The ICFWU committee would accordingly support all decisions or action taken by the United Nations and the specialized agencies to that general end.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) said that the Commission was fortunate in having before it the report of the ILO and that of the Secretary-General supplementing the one submitted by him at the ninth session.

The ILO study on equal remuneration, for which her Government had supplied the necessary information, would be particularly valuable to the Commission.

As she had stated at the ninth session, the United States Government, in accordance with the provisions applicable to Federal States, had brought the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value to the attention of the appropriate authorities in both State and Federal Governments. Within the past year, three more States of the Union had passed laws on equal pay, bringing the total number with such legislation up to seventeen. Bills concerning equal pay were also pending in the United States Congress, and had been described by the President in his State-of-the-Union message as "a matter of simple justice".

Two facts of particular significance emerged from the reports before the Commission. First, the emphasis still being placed by non-governmental organizations on the importance of establishing the principle of equal pay; and secondly, the strong support being given to that policy by international trade unions. Clearly, the non-governmental organizations considered the elimination of discriminatory wage rates to be of fundamental importance in enhancing the status of women. In her own country, many people believed that equal pay was as important in the economic field as was woman's suffrage in the political field. Equal pay was essential if the value of women's work was to be adequately recognized, and it was also of great social significance, because more and more women were taking jobs, and the value placed on their work inevitably affected their status as persons and citizens. United States labour unions had always consistently supported the principle.

It was a sign of progress that more and more attention was being paid to the methods by which the principle of equal pay could be given full practical effect, the touchstone being whether women workers received the same pay for identical or comparable work being done by men; whether in jobs at which women alone worked wage rates were established on an equitable basis by reference to objective standards; whether women were employed at the same minimum starting rates as men; and finally, whether they had equal access to jobs and equal opportunities for training and promotion.

She believed that it would be very useful if members of the Commission could inform one another of the methods by which the principle was being applied to the various categories of women workers in their respective countries.

In the United States of America equal pay was assured through voluntary action on the part of the employer, through collective agreements, or through State and Federal legislation. The principle was being increasingly admitted by enlightened employers throughout the country, not on ethical grounds alone, but also because they recognized that it made for efficiency and good labour relations. The National Association of Manufacturers had for many years been advocating that wage rates should be determined by the work done, and many employers had carried out job analyses to establish what skills the jobs required, what responsibilities they entailed and what physical and mental demands they made on the worker. Each job was then classified. Wage rates themselves were not fixed on the basis of such analyses, nor did the latter replace collective bargaining.

Many union agreements provided for the payment of equal rates to men and women employed on identical or comparable work in a single establishment, the clauses being enforceable through a special procedure which allowed an employee to file a complaint alleging violation of a specific contractual provision. Thus there existed orderly means of settling disputes over the interpretation of a contract; those means had often been described as "the heart of the collective bargaining procedure". If no settlement was reached, the matter could be referred to an impartial board of arbitration which took into account not only the provisions of the contract, but also the usual practice within the enterprise concerned.

In the seventeen States where legislation on equal pay in private industry was already in force, application was also assured through labour law enforcement, so that individual women workers could seek the assistance of the State Labour Department to safeguard their rights. In addition, they could bring an action to recover any sums due to them under the law. The constitutional right of an employee to bring such an action where it was not expressly authorized in the relevant legislation had been established in 1942, in a test case in the State of Michigan.

In order to ensure that women workers benefited from the laws on equal pay, State Labour Departments carried out inspections at plants and held informal hearings for the settlement of disputes. In addition, efforts were being made to familiarize the public with the law in various ways.

Thus the struggle, in which collective bargaining had played an important part, to eliminate discrimination against women had been effective and far-reaching in her country, and she welcomed the present opportunity of studying the progress made elsewhere. She had been particularly struck by the Swedish representative's statement at the ninth session to the effect that it was more difficult to bring about equality of pay in the older industrial countries. That experience had been confirmed in the United States of America, where generally speaking, younger industries were more inclined to offer "the rate for the job" than were those in which wage discrimination had gained a hold over the years.

The Secretary-General's memorandum provided particularly useful information on the way in which women were being encouraged to take a leading part in trade unions in the various countries.

In discussing other economic items on the agenda, it was important that the Commission should bear in mind their close connexion with the application of the principle of equal pay. Consideration of those items should provide an opportunity of examining both the immediate need to eliminate wage discrimination against women working side by side with men, and the ultimate objective of extending economic opportunities for women to new fields.

Mrs. SCHMIDT (International Federation of Christian Trade Unions), speaking at the invitation of the CHAIRMAN, welcomed resolution 587C(XX) of the Economic and Social Council, which invited all governments, where necessary, to introduce legislation for implementing the principle of equal pay. One important step in that direction would be to induce them to ratify the relevant International Labour Convention, but even that would not entirely suffice, since governments differed widely in their conceptions of the duties the Convention imposed on them. The International Federation accordingly believed that the Commission should ask the Council to urge States to ratify the two draft international covenants on human rights, which proclaimed complete equality between men and women and enunciated the principle of equal pay.

So far, only ten Governments had ratified the International Labour Convention, and only in two of the 59 countries affiliated to IFCTU - France and the Federal Republic of Germany - was the principle being put into practice. In the Constitution of the latter country there was a special clause prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex, which a Federal Labour Court had interpreted in 1955 as meaning that women should receive the same remuneration for equal work.

The Economic and Social Council should also invite States to ensure equality between men and women by creating facilities for women in professional organizations and trade unions, and by giving them access to all the professions, including the civil service. They should also be urged to ensure that wages and salaries were fixed according to the nature of the work, and to take steps to persuade public opinion that the claim for equality was both necessary and justified. Similar action should be taken in Non-Self Governing Territories, where, as in under-developed countries, it was extremely important to improve the position of women: a task in which non-governmental organizations had an important part to play.

Miss CHALLONER (St. Joans International Social and Political Alliance), speaking at the invitation of the CHAIRMAN, said that she wished to correct the statement made in the first two paragraphs of section 21 of the ILO report. In the United Kingdom, local authorities were autonomous, but on 1 July 1955 a substantial victory had been won when the London County Council had decided to pay the rate for the job to women employed in the administrative, professional, technical and clerical services, as well as to temporary women employees in analogous grades. Unfortunately, other local authorities were following the Central Government's example of meting out justice by instalments.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that it was regrettable that the International Labour Convention which, though lacking in boldness, nevertheless did advocate acceptance of the principle of equal pay, should have been ratified by only ten Governments. She had recently learned that the Governments of the Soviet Union and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic would shortly be following suit. Their intention was a further proof of the importance those two Governments attached to securing the recognition and application of the principle in those countries where it was not as yet admitted.

Over the past years, the Commission had adopted a series of recommendations asking governments to take legislative and other measures to ensure that the principle of equal pay was fully applied. In some countries, little progress had yet been made, and various organizations were still actively campaigning for the improvement of the economic position of women. It was clear from the reports before the Commission that its resolutions and those of the Economic and Social Council were being ignored, and that in certain countries the principle of equal pay was being only partially applied in some collective agreements, which was obviously not enough. Collective agreements could only supplement legislation; they were no substitute for it. It was not fortuitous that the principle was most neglected in those countries where no legislation on the subject existed, and the reports of many governments on the application of International Labour Convention No. 100 and Recommendation No. 90 included reservations, some on the ground that the governments concerned did not wish to interfere in wage fixing, and some on the ground that women's work had been evaluated at a lower rate. There were governments which admitted that women employed by local authorities were paid less for doing exactly the same kind of work as men. Others claimed that women did not generally seek employment outside the home and were not responsible for supporting the family. Like all such arguments, that was not convincing, because women were frequently the breadwinners, and were heavily handicapped in those countries where only lip service was paid to the principle. Frequently, the number of women among the unemployed was high.

She had often described the position in her own country in respect of equal pay, and would therefore confine herself to stating that ever since the establishment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic equal pay had been assured by law, because it was the foundation of the economic and political equality of the sexes. Women were therefore employed on absolutely equal terms with men in every branch of the professions or industry, and any violation of that right was punishable.

In conclusion, she said that the Commission could not remain indifferent to the inadmissible inequalities which existed in certain countries, and that it must intensify its efforts to secure their abolition. Since the ninth session, the women's organizations had been carrying on the struggle, and an international

conference of working women was to be held in 1956 with the object of securing better conditions for their sex. The Commission should lend its support to such movements, to enable its own recommendations to be put into practice, particularly in under-developed countries and Non-Self-Governing Territories, where women stood in even greater need of protection. The Commission had a special duty to help in eliminating the shameful discrimination which was still a blot on the record of so many governments.

The CHAIRMAN noted with satisfaction the announcement that the Soviet Union and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic would shortly be ratifying International Labour Convention No. 100.

Miss CAMPOAMOR (International Alliance of Women), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, said that at the Congress of the Alliance held at Colombo in August, 1955, it had been decided to undertake a campaign of education and action to persuade governments to ratify International Labour Convention No. 100. On the other hand, the Congress had not seen fit to approve the resolution adopted by the International Labour Organisation's first Regional European Conference (1955) fixing a lower retirement age for women than for men. The Alliance wished to remind the Commission that statistics showed the average expectation of life to be greater for women than for men. Moreover, the advancement of science, the establishment of public health services and the trend towards higher welfare standards had resulted in increased longevity, so that all human beings now had a longer working life than hitherto. It had also been found that employers tended to replace workers of retirement age by younger workers who could be paid lower wages. Nor must it be forgotten that an employee who was to reach retirement age five years earlier than others was less valuable in the eyes of the employer, who would thus tend to engage persons who could carry on working longer. To make the retirement age for women earlier than for men would be to perpetuate the custom of paying lower wages to women for equal work. Thus the Recommendation was not in the interests of women, and militant women's organizations could not endorse it. The Alliance urged the Commission to adopt a resolution to the effect that the retirement age should be the same for men and women; it also asked the International Labour Organisation to reconsider the question.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) asked whether the retiring age for women in the United Nations was the same as for men.

Mrs. TENISON-WOODS, Representative of the Secretary-General, replied that in the United Nations the retiring age for both men and women was sixty, and that in special circumstances the Secretary-General was empowered to extend a staff member's term of service in the interests of the Organization.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) expressed gratification that the United Nations should be guided by such a genuine concept of equality.

Further discussion of item 5 of the agenda was deferred until the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.