

**ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL****CONSEIL
ECONOMIQUE
ET SOCIAL**

UNRESTRICTED

E/HR/ST/6
1 May 1946

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATUS OF WOMEN IN CHINA

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The progress made in recognition of woman's rights in any nation is parallel to the progress made in recognition of human rights. The problem of the rise and fall of the status of women is the problem of the rise and fall of humanity.

History indicates that, when feudalism and imperialism held sway, the common woman like the common man was exploited. It is probable that if an historical survey were made of woman's position in all nations one would find that the status of women stays on the level of the common man. Woman's right is an integral part of human right.

The ancient Chinese theory of equality is expressed by the union of Yin, the female principle, and Yang, the male principle. This union symbolizes completeness or entirety. The relationship between men and women in the minds of the early Chinese philosophers is that of mutual activity and mutual functioning for the performance of such deeds and tasks as are ordained by Heaven (God). Thus in ancient philosophical thinking, the position of women is set forth as being on a par with men.

It is not my purpose here to review the entire history of the status of women in China. It is significant to point out that the woman's movement in our country did not stem from resentful or frustrated women, using feminism for revenge, but from the urge to strengthen their nation by awakening the mass of women to their responsibilities as citizens. Women realized that their oppression originated not with the entire body of men, but rather arose from

imperialism, militarism and declining feudalism.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionary followers who overthrew the Manchu imperial government in 1911 championed for the equal rights of women. The principle of equality of sex was first written into the first Provisional Constitution of 1912 and has never been challenged. Thus, to struggle for the basic principle of equality of sex has been a part of the Nationalist programme. This principle was put into practice in 1924 when a number of national women leaders were elected to attend the First National Congress of the Nationalist Party which in turn elected several women of distinction to be the members of the Central Executive Committee of the Nationalist Party, the highest political organ. In the Second National Congress of the Nationalist Party which met in 1926, important resolutions on women's independence and equality with adequate legal protection were adopted as follows:

1. Equality of education for both sexes.
2. Equality of vocational opportunity for both sexes.
3. Absolute equality of both sexes in respect to law.
4. Equality of wages for both sexes.
5. Protection of motherhood.
6. Protection of child labour.
7. Aid for women's labour unions.
8. Overthrow of traditional rites enslaving the female sex.
9. Opposition to polygamy.
10. Opposition to the system of juvenile wives.
11. Absolute freedom of marriage and divorce.
12. Opposition to unequal judgment of the sexes by law courts.
13. Promotion of equal treatment of remarried women by society.
14. Securing for all women the right of property and inheritance.

These points were enacted into law after the establishment of the National Government. In the Civil Code of China adopted in 1930 the complete equality of women is recognized and protected. In the Draft Constitution of 1936 it is clearly stated that all citizens of China regardless of sex shall be equal before the law. In law there is no discrimination against women in China.

Women in China are fully aware that they represent but a small fraction of the vast numbers of women scattered throughout the world.

In putting into practice the fundamental human rights, they are eager to co-operate with the women of the world. To bring about a more humane, more just and more peaceful world is definitely our task. Women in China are happy to co-operate with you, the Sub-Commission on Status of Women, to create such a world. (In conclusion I wish to quote the programme of International Women's League in China as an evidence of the International mindedness of the Chinese women.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S LEAGUE IN CHINA

Pronouncement from the Modern Woman,
December, 1945

1. To obtain close relationships with women of all classes in women's organizations in other countries in order to gain a good understanding of women's movements in those countries.
 2. To promote the re-establishment of national and local organizations with membership of women from different social classes in order to achieve the aim of the League that the interests of women from all social classes are represented.
 3. To establish an international organization having as its function the promotion of women's co-operative enterprises in all countries in order that women can be economically independent.
 4. To give assistance in training for professions to women in undeveloped countries, especially in smaller and weaker countries, to raise the level of women's education and to emancipate women from ignorance and to free them from the exclusive career of homemaking so that a true democratic movement for the liberating of all women will become possible.
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