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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Seventh Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 27 March 1953, at 4 p.m.

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Equal pay for equal work for men and women workers: progress reports on the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women workers, including information on Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories (E/CN.6/220, E/CN.6/L.110, E/CN.6/L.112) (continued)

Educational opportunities for women (E/CN.6/L.113) (continued)

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Miss BERNARDINO	Dominican Republic
Begum ANWAR AHMED	Pakistan
Daw OHN	Burma
Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
Mrs. GALLO-MULLER	Chile
Miss TSENG	China
Miss MANAS	Cuba
Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX	France
Mrs. GUERY	Haiti
Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
Miss PELETIER	Netherlands
Miss YOUNG	New Zealand
Mrs. WASILKOWSKA	Poland
Mrs. POFOVA	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

Also present:

Mrs. de CASTILLO	Ecuador
Mrs. KIEP	Germany
Miss FUKITA	Japan
Mrs. de CALVO	Inter-American Commission of Women

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mrs. FAIRCHILD	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Mr. ARNALDO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

<u>Category A:</u>	Miss SENDER	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
	Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)
	Mrs. FOX	World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)

Category B and Register:

Mrs. VERGARA) Miss WEBER)	Catholic International Union for Social Service
Mrs. GUTHRIE) Mrs. MAHON) Mrs. WOODSMALL)	International Alliance of Women
Mrs. CARTER	International Council of Women
Mrs. HYMER	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
Miss ROBB	International Federation of University Women
Miss LA LONDE) Miss SMITH)	International Federation of Women Lawyers
Mrs. WOLLE-EGENOLF	International League for the Rights of Man
Mrs. EVANS	Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations
Mrs. MCGIVERN	Pax Romana
Mrs. WALSER	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Mrs. SCHAEFFER	World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations
Miss FORSYTH	World's Young Women's Christian Association
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: PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK FOR MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS, INCLUDING INFORMATION ON TRUST AND NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (E/CN.6/220, E/CN.6/L.110, E/CN.6/L.112) (continued)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to continue the general debate, adding that members were free to comment at the same time on the draft resolution submitted jointly by France, the Netherlands and Pakistan (E/CN.6/L.110) and on the draft resolution submitted jointly by Cuba and the United States (E/CN.6/L.112).

Mrs. TABET (Lebanon) felt sure that if her Government had been approached on the subject it would have signed the ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, for a law granting equal pay for equal work to men and women workers had been enacted in Lebanon in 1946 and was generally applied. Upon her return, she would urge her Government to adhere to the Convention.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) said that her Government was in exactly the same position, having passed a law in 1948 providing for equal pay for equal work, and that she would take the same steps as the Lebanese representative.

The CHAIRMAN expressed the hope that the efforts of the two representatives would be crowned with success.

Miss MANAS (Cuba) recalled that her delegation's position on the subject was well known. In her country, the right to work was the inalienable right of every individual and women took an active part in industrial and economic development. Her delegation had therefore, jointly with the United States delegation, sponsored the draft resolution contained in document E/CN.6/L.112. There could be no doubt that the draft resolution represented a step forward, inasmuch as it requested the Economic and Social Council to urge increased efforts towards widespread implementation of the principle of equal remuneration in all countries, and she hoped that it would meet with the Commission's approval.

Mrs. HAHN (United States of America) said that the two draft resolutions before the Commission had much in common. She suggested that they should be merged into a single text, if the other sponsors agreed.

Miss PELETIER (Netherlands), Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) Begum ANWAR AHMED (Pakistan) and Miss MANAS (Cuba) accepted the suggestion.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France) said that, on second thought, the joint Cuban-United States draft resolution covered the ground adequately and, if her co-sponsors agreed, she would be prepared to withdraw the joint draft resolution contained in document E/CN.6/L.110.

Begum ANWAR AHMED (Pakistan) saw no objection to such a course.

Miss PELETIER (Netherlands) stated that she had not yet been able to study the Cuban-United States draft resolution carefully and she required time for reflection.

Miss KAHN (World Federation of Trade Unions) stated that her organization could not support either the French, Netherlands and Pakistan joint draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.110) or the Cuban-United States joint draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.112) on equal pay for equal work. In terms of the general approach to the question, the WFTU felt that the Commission attached undue importance to the adoption of a convention. Moreover, ILO Convention No. 100 was unsatisfactory, since the ILO had in that case departed from its customary requirement that legislative enactment should be the methods of complementing ratification of a convention and had merely urged that governments should comply with the terms of Convention No. 100. Women who were not members of trade unions would not, therefore, really be protected. The United States representative had, moreover, revealed the reason why the employer representative of her country had voted for the Convention in the ILO: the prospects of ratification by the United States were remote and the flexibility of the Convention offered an escape clause.

She gave some statistics to show that the average number of ratifications for each of the ILO Conventions over a period of 33 years was approximately fourteen. Although good conventions were highly important, it was essential not to overestimate their importance. If affirmations of good faith were all that was required, the principle of equal pay would have been generally implemented long ago. The United Kingdom, for example, had since 1919 been committed in principle to equal pay in its civil service, but the principle had not yet been implemented. The same applied to the United States; if employers in that country were really convinced that equal pay meant higher profits, the principle would have become a reality, but the majority of employers realized that there were profits to be made by discriminating against women workers.

The report of the national conference on equal pay held by the United States Department of Labor Women's Bureau in 1952 began with the general statement that many women were paid less than men for comparable work and recommended that Federal and state legislation should be enacted and existing state legislation improved to achieve the full application of the principle. Some progress had been made but large groups of women were still excluded from the provisions of equal pay laws and many of the laws contained restrictions which made effective enforcement difficult.

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union, which included in its membership over 100,000 women workers and was active in the struggle for equal pay, had issued a pamphlet giving facts on the direct and indirect methods by which inequalities were perpetrated. Women employees in the electrical industry, regardless of skill, were usually paid less than the least skilled men. Women suffered such discrimination because profits were increased thereby. In 1950, according to the United States census, the average annual earnings of women in factories was \$1,285 less than that of men. The profits per employee in industries employing few women were lower than in those which used woman-power extensively. Inequalities were created indirectly by discriminatory and arbitrary job evaluation systems, the allegation that differences in pay were justified by differences in physical effort, placing virtually all so-called women's jobs below male common labour, and the segregation of so-called women's jobs to prevent ready comparison with male wages and ready comparison as to equality of work concerned.

The WFTU had been gratified by the ILO representative's report on the recommendation of the ILO Textile Industry Committee and the advance in thinking of that body. The ILO's recently published report on textile wages stated that the difference between the wages of women and men in most countries ranged from 20 to 40 per cent of the male average wage, but it noted that since the war the principle of equal pay had been applied in four countries. The Textile Committee had been influenced in its recommendation by such external factors as the slump in the industry due to a decline in consumption as the result of the world armaments drive, and increasing concern of some major textile countries about competition from countries where textile workers were paid low wages.

In some areas, attempts to widen the wage gap were affecting women workers. Thus in Australia employers were trying to reduce the statutory basic wage for women in relation to men, while trying to cut the basic wage itself. An ILO study on the West Indies stated that most statutory minimum wage orders prescribed different minimum rates for women and men and that similar discrimination in a concealed form existed in the United States Caribbean territories. The same disclosures were made in the ILO report on the regulation of wages on plantations.

Although progress was being made as the result of the efforts of trade unions, women's organizations and other bodies in countries where inequality prevailed, the rate of that progress was too slow. The French, Netherlands and Pakistan draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.110) was inadequate, since it merely urged continued study and reports. The Cuban and United States draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.112) likewise merely noted past action and proposed study and reports; moreover, the prefatory language of that draft was inappropriate, since it would be a retrogressive step for the Commission to reaffirm support of equal pay primarily because equal pay was a "sound business practice".

The WFTU wished to re-emphasize the proposals it had submitted to the Commission's sixth session for the application by means of legislation and practical measures of the principle of equal pay in metropolitan and Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories and for annual progress reports to the Commission. In that connexion, she pointed out that draft resolution E/CN.6/L.112 merely asked for periodic information, without specifying any time-limits, whereas such reports should be made annually.

Her organization urged the Commission to adopt a resolution stressing the necessity of practical implementation of the principle of equal pay. It also considered that any study undertaken by the Secretariat or the ILO on the subject should examine the weaknesses of existing statutes and the various subterfuges used to debase women's wages on the grounds that the work performed was not equal in value with that of men. In conclusion, the WFTU suggested that non-governmental organizations might be asked to supply information on that point and on the practical application of the principle and the effect of legislation on the matter in various countries.

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) pointed out that the principle of equal rights for men and women, the economic aspect of which was illustrated by the principle of equal pay, was enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The non-application of the principle not only materially influenced the political, spiritual and cultural life of women but also had an adverse effect on the wages of men.

Although the problem had been discussed for several years, no practical results had yet been achieved. The Commission had entrusted the matter to the ILO, which had drawn up an unsatisfactory Convention, containing no provisions which would make the instrument binding on the signatories. No time-limits were provided for the observance of the minimal provisions of the Convention, and governments were enabled to delay the implementation of the principle ad infinitum. Moreover, the instrument contained no provision for its extension to the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories, although the women in those territories stood in the greatest need of protection in the matter of equal pay. Furthermore, the Convention made no provision for equality in vocational training and conditions of work and pay.

The 1952 Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation, the 1952 ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics and various United Nations documents showed that most countries, under one pretext or another, still failed to apply the principle of equal pay for equal work. When requested by the Commission and the Council to take suitable action, all the ILO had done had been to adopt at its 34th Conference a convention which was more in the interests of employers than of labour. The Commission shared the responsibility because it had not itself sought a solution to the problem.

The Commission could no longer evade the issue and it must take effective action to abolish economic discrimination against women. The Byelorussian delegation in whose country - as in the People's Democracies - the principle of equal pay for equal work was established by the Constitution and strictly enforced, would consider any proposal aimed at that objective.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (E/CN.6/L.113) (continued)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to act on the draft resolution on educational opportunities for women (E/CN.6/L.113), adopted by the Committee on Resolutions.

Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France), Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, explained that the Committee had merged, with some minor changes, the texts submitted by the United States and Haiti (E/CN.6/L.109/Rev.1) and by France (E/CN.6/L.101).

Mr. ARNALDO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), referring to the last paragraph of the text, said that in some areas the native language was also the official language and that it might therefore be better to change the word "native" to "vernacular".

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, as she had explained in the Committee on Resolutions, the expression "native language", which came closest in meaning to the Russian word "rodnoi yazyk", was preferable because it clearly indicated a language spoken by a person from his infancy.

The draft resolution was adopted unanimously.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.