

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Thursday, 13 February 1947, at 3:00 p.m.

Present:

- Chairman: Mrs. B. Begtrup (Denmark)
- Vice-Chairman: Mrs. J. Street (Australia)
- Rapporteur: Mrs. E. Uralova (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)
- Members: Mrs. W. S. New (China)
Mrs. G. de Echeverria (Costa Rica)
Mrs. M. Lefauchaux (France)
Miss S. Basterrechea (Guatemala)
Mrs. Hanid Ali (India)
Mrs. Amelia de Castillo Ledon (Mexico)
Mrs. A. Cosmo (Syria)
Miss M. Sutherland (United Kingdom)
Miss D. Kenyon (United States of America)
Mrs. E. Popova (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Mrs. I. Urdaneta (Venezuela)

Representative of Specialized Agency:

Mrs. E. Rowe (ILO)

Consultants of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Miss L. Spiegel (WFTU)
Miss T. Sender (AFL)
Mrs. H. Fuhrmann (ICA)

Secretariat: Mr. J. P. Humphrey
Mr. E. Lawson

Miss E. Bowerman (Secretary of the Commission)

Consideration of Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda - Examination and Study of Sections I and II of the Report of the Nuclear Sub-Commission on the Status of Women (document E/38/Rev.1, pages 14 - 20): continuation

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) suggested that in view of the fact that Sections I and II of the Report of the Nuclear Sub-Commission on the Status of

Women had been referred to the present Commission for study, it would not be necessary for the Commission formally to endorse the report or to take a vote on any of its clauses. She proposed that the document should be considered as a source of information and as a basis for discussion, and that any points raised in connection with it should be included in the summary records, to be used later in the formulation of the Commission's programme, but that they should not be considered as amendments to the report.

The CHAIRMAN felt that the adoption of Miss Sutherland's suggestion would speed up the proceedings and leave more time for the practical problem of drawing up the Commission's programme.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), reminded the Commission that a basic principle of the United Nations was to fight against the remnants of Fascism and to work for the establishment of a lasting peace in a democratic world. Unless that goal could be reached, all talk of the rights of women would be worthless.

The CHAIRMAN noted that the principles mentioned by Mrs. Popova would be considered when the Commission drew up its own report.

Referring to Section I, Paragraph A of the Sub-Commission's Report, she stated that there was general agreement on the acceptance of the idea which Mrs. Popova had presented during the previous meeting, namely, that women should have equal participation in governments and the possibility to exercise all the rights and assume the duties of a citizen, "irrespective of nationality or race".

The Chairman then called the Commission's attention to Section I, Paragraph B of the Sub-Commission's Report, which referred to civil rights. She observed that the Legal Department had suggested that a better term for the word "property" in sub-paragraph 4 of paragraph B would be "legal capacity".

/Mrs. STREET (Australia)

Mrs. STREET (Australia) proposed that there should be a fifth sub-paragraph to paragraph B, entitled "Domicile". She explained that the right of a married woman to establish her own domicile was often of greater practical importance than nationality itself.

Mrs. Street moved that the Commission's Report should include a paragraph entitled "Domicile", worded as follows: "A married woman should have the same rights in regard to establishing her domicile as a man or a single woman".

Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreed to the importance of Mrs. Street's suggestion but pointed out that point 4, "legal capacity", referred chiefly to the rights of married women, since the rights of single women did not differ greatly from the rights of men.

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) thought that a clear distinction should be made between "domicile" and "nationality". Moreover, although a married woman should have the right to choose her own nationality, she should not be allowed to have a dual nationality.

Mrs. de CASTILLO LEDON (Mexico) felt that careful and detailed study was necessary on the important question of nationality.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) agreed with the Member from Mexico, but she pointed to the basic difference between nationality and domicile.

Miss KENYON (United States of America), said that the Commission's ultimate goal should be not merely to achieve uniformity of laws among nations, but rather to have the domestic laws correspond to its ideals concerning the rights of women.

The Commission agreed that the questions of domicile and nationality constituted an important part of its work.

The CHAIRMAN read paragraph C of Section I of the Sub-Commission's report. She spoke of the necessity of changing not only laws but customs which discriminated against women, as stated in sub-paragraph 1.

/The question.

The question of prostitution covered in sub-paragraph 2 fell largely within the competence of the Social Commission. She thought that the Commission on the Status of Women should indicate its special interests in the Social Commission's work in that field.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) suggested that the Social Commission might be asked to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women any recommendations which they might make concerning prostitution.

The CHAIRMAN thought that the Social Commission might be requested to consult the present Commission on all matters relating to the status of women. She felt however that the point should be discussed when the Commission considered its relation to other Commissions.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), referring to paragraph C, sub-paragraph 1 which mentioned the aim "to prevent discrimination against women in economic status and customs", proposed the addition of the following words: "independently or regardless of nationality and/or race, and to ensure equal rights for labour, equal wages, and benefits from any scheme of social security."

She also proposed that paragraph C, sub-paragraph 3 should include the following sentence: "For such purposes to struggle for State measures to safeguard the mother and the child and the preservation of wages during pregnancy period and special rest period before and after motherhood, with wages paid, as well as the establishment for all the women throughout the nation of nursery and motherhood clinics, free of charge".

Mrs. HAMID ALI (India) supported Mrs. Uralova's proposals.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) thought that the Byelorussian suggestions should be considered in connection with the Commission's formulation of a programme of work. She pointed out that much work was already being done by the specialized agencies on some of the points raised by Mrs. Uralova, and emphasized the necessity for keeping in touch with the activities of the specialized agencies.

/She felt

She felt that one of the main functions of the Commission on the Status of Women was to ensure that there was no discrimination against women in the fields of activity covered by other Commissions and specialized agencies.

The CHAIRMAN agreed with Miss Sutherland, and added that the Commission might make practical recommendations to the specialized agencies.

She asked Mrs. Uralova to submit her proposals in writing so that they could be used by the Commission in preparing a practical programme.

The CHAIRMAN then read Paragraph D.

Mrs. NEW (China), explaining the term "euthenics", said that women's education should include discoveries for the improvement of human life.

The CHAIRMAN read sub-paragraphs 1, 2 and 3.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) asked for an explanation of the phrase "and private agencies" in sub-paragraph 2. Since the term was not clear, she thought that it might be left out.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that a paragraph should be inserted between sub-paragraphs 1 and 2, stating that the Women's International Democratic Federation could collaborate, on a consultative basis, with the Commission.

Mrs. NEW (China) proposed that all suggestions should be submitted in writing to a Committee which would study and circulate them among all members.

After some discussion, the Commission accepted Mrs. New's proposal and decided that it would consider written suggestions in connection with its working programme. The Rapporteur might take note of those suggestions in her report.

The CHAIRMAN turned to the consideration of Section II, point 1, and pointed out in that connection that paragraph 2 on page 4 of document E/CN.6/9 dealt with provisions relating to equality for women in recent international instruments.

/As regards

As regards survey of laws, she recalled the Sub-Commission's preference for obtaining information through national committees instead of requesting such information in questionnaires sent to governments, as had been done previously. The Commission might, therefore, request governments to interest groups in those questionnaires.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) pointed out that after the questionnaire method had failed, the League of Nations had set up in 1935 a Commission to Study the Legal Status of Women which had followed a similar procedure.

Mr. LAWSON (Secretariat) called the attention of the Commission to the "Report on the Study of Legislation concerning the Status of Women" circulated as a miscellaneous paper, with no number, in accordance with the instructions of the Council.

Mrs. de Castillo LEDON (Mexico) explained that the Inter-American Commission of Women, confronted with the same task, had decided that every representative should form a co-ordinating Committee for all women's organizations in her own country. Such committees studied the data submitted by various bodies. The Commission might follow a similar method.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed to the difficulties of legal questions and thought that governments were better qualified to deal with them.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the question referred not only to laws affecting women, but to the application of those laws; women's organizations might be more familiar with practical difficulties. She supported the Mexican member's suggestion.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) congratulated the Secretariat on the excellently prepared questionnaire. She thought that active women's organizations would be able to furnish supplementary information; as regards difficult legal terminology, most organizations dealing with the status of women were thoroughly familiar with it. Furthermore, if technical difficulties arose, the organizations could consult their legal committees.

/Miss KENYON (United States of America)

Miss KENYON (United States of America) wished to point out that she had a proposal on the matter which she would present later.

Mrs. URDANETA (Venezuela), as a delegate to the Inter-American Commission of Women, recalled the splendid co-operation of men lawyers in a Venezuelan project which had ultimately resulted in the nomination of twelve women to the Congress of Venezuela.

The CHAIRMAN read point 2 (Section 2) and noted that the United Nations budget had not provisions for such projects. The countries themselves, however, might give assistance.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), speaking on point 4, stressed that the programme should be furthered by resolutions of the General Assembly and not women's conferences, and that men, as well as women, should be made aware of the problems involved.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) and Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreed with Miss Sutherland. Miss Kenyon, however, felt that regional conferences of men and women might be called to study local problems of women.

In connection with point 5 Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that it was for UNESCO and ILO to initiate such a project. When planning its programme, the Commission could take note of trade unions' work in the educational field and include such a suggestion there.

With regard to point 6 the CHAIRMAN explained that the United Nations archives might serve as a sort of clearing house for relevant information. She noted the efficient work of the Department of Public Information in connection with points 7 and 8.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), in reference to point 10, felt that it was for women's organizations to train leaders; she therefore favoured the deletion of that point.

/Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom)

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) agreed.

The CHAIRMAN, referring to point 11, thought that the Commission might suggest to the Social Commission that the latter should give consideration, when dealing with housing problems, to the questions of technical improvements in the home.

As regards point 12, the Economic and Social Council had agreed that a section on women's affairs should be set up in the Secretariat.

Mr. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) explained that in the Department of Social Affairs there was a Human Rights Division which had a section on the status of women. The acting chief of that section was Miss Bowerman. It was expected that eventually the section would comprise six to seven members. Other sections, such as the Research Section, also worked for the Commission.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) believed that as long as the Commission was well served by the Secretariat a more elaborate section on women was unnecessary.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that it might reassure women throughout the world to know that there was a special section dealing with women's affairs.

She noted that point 13 had no practical application any longer.

The meeting rose at 6:05 p.m.
