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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Sixth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 2 April 1952, at 5 p.m.

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Present:

Chairman: Mrs. LEFAUCHEUX (France)

Members:

Miss LUTZ	Brazil
Mrs. NYEIN	Burma
Mrs. NOVIKOVA	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
Mrs. FIGUEROA	Chile
Miss TSENG	China
Miss MANAS	Cuba
Mrs. de L'OFFICIAL	Dominican Republic
Mrs. FIROUZ	Iran
Mrs. TABET	Lebanon
Miss PELETIER	Netherlands
Mrs. ROSS	New Zealand
Begum Fida HASSAN	Pakistan
Miss KALINOWSKA	Poland
Mrs. POPOVA	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Miss SUTHERLAND	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Mrs. GOLDMAN	United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

International Labour Organisation	Miss FAIRCHILD
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Miss DAS

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category A

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions	Mrs. ETIENNE
World Federation of Trade Unions	Miss CHIOSTERGI Mrs. NOCE

Category B

Catholic International Union for Social Service	Mrs. SOUDAN
International Abolitionist Federation	Miss COLLISSON
International Alliance of Women - Equal Rights, Equal Responsibilities	Mrs. CORBETT ASHBY Miss GINSBERG Mrs. RYDH
International Conference of Catholic Charities (replacing Caritas Internationalis)	Miss OSTERTAG
International Council of Women	Miss van EEGHEN
International Federation of Business and Professional Women	Mrs. HYMER Miss TOMLINSON
International Federation of Friends of Young Women	Mrs. BERTHOUD van WERVEKE Mrs. FIECHTER
International Federation of University Women	Mrs. FIECHTER
International League for the Rights of Man	Mrs. BAER
International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues	Miss PEARSON
Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations	Miss BARRY Miss van EEGHEN
Pax Romana	Miss ARCHINARD
Women's International Democratic Federation	Mrs. DUBOIS
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom	Mrs. BAER
<u>Register</u>	
Associated Country Women of the World	Miss KLEYN
Open Door International	Mrs. BAER
St. Joan's International Social and Political Alliance	Miss CHALLONER

Secretariat:

Mrs. Tenison-Woods	Representative of the Secretary-General
Mrs. Grinberg-Vinaver	Secretary to the Commission

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (item 9 of the agenda) (E/CN.6/L.74/Rev.1, E/CN.6/L.75) (resumed from the preceding meeting)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Commission to resume its consideration of item 9 of the agenda (economic opportunities for women), and to take up the joint draft resolution on older women workers (E/CN.6/L.74/Rev.1) submitted by the United States and Cuban delegations, and the draft resolution on women in the professions (E/CN.6/L.75) submitted by the United States delegation.

Draft resolution on older women workers (E/CN.6/L.74/Rev.1)

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) proposed that the first paragraph of the preamble to the joint draft resolution on older women workers be split into two, and the phrase "and that owing to the continuous progress of medicine and of public health there is everywhere an increased expectation of life," inserted after the words "women live longer than men". The second paragraph of the preamble would then begin: "Noting that various provisions have been made by private employers

She further proposed that the words "maximum age limits for admission of workers to employment and" should be inserted in the final paragraph before the words "retirement ages". In Brazil, State employees retired on full pension whatever their sex. But an age limit for entry was imposed, and prevented older women from entering government service.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that at the 116th meeting the representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) had given a great deal of interesting information on the subject of economic opportunities for women. In the light of that statement, she (Mrs. Popova) would propose the following amendments to the joint draft resolution.

The words "at the request of trade union organizations" should be inserted after the words "and by governments" in the first paragraph of the preamble. The words "through payment of allowances and old-age pensions, but that such measures are far from being satisfactory particularly with respect to older women workers since the latter in almost all countries receive pensions smaller than those received by men", should be added at the end of the same paragraph, after the words "of older people in general".

Since, in her view, the remaining paragraphs of the joint draft resolution contained no constructive proposals, she would propose that they be replaced by the following text:

"Requests the Economic and Social Council to recommend to governments that they take measures to provide older women workers with equal pensions sufficient to ensure a standard of living compatible with human dignity".

The adoption of such a text would ensure a more positive approach to the problem.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), referring to the use of the expression "employable women" in the first operative paragraph of the joint draft resolution, maintained that it would be difficult to establish the number of such women from "census reports and other dependable sources". It was easy to establish the number of women who were employed and of those registered as unemployed, but it would certainly be difficult, if not impossible, to discover how many women were available for employment.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) was prepared to agree to the deletion of the word "employable", subject to the agreement of the Cuban representative. In drafting the text, the United States delegation's aim had been to secure the figures available in census reports; her delegation had of course started from the premiss that the Commission would be provided with a more satisfactory basis on which to work if it had some knowledge of the demand for older and part-time women workers.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) stated that the United Kingdom census reports would yield figures of the number of women of various age groups, employed and non-gainfully occupied, which would give a picture of the situation in her country.

Miss FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organisation), speaking at the invitation of the CHAIRMAN, said that the International Labour Office would be pleased to collaborate with the Commission, but that it was impossible for her to say when complete reports could be made available. She would ask the sponsors of the draft resolution whether they would be prepared to use the word "Office" instead of the word "Organisation" in the last paragraph, since she presumed that it was with the International Labour Office that the Commission envisaged collaborating. Furthermore, the task of the Office would be simplified if the

list of subjects to be studied were prefaced by the words "including such questions as", rather than by the words "with particular regard to". Such a formula would make it easier for the Office to draw up the necessary programme of work.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) and Miss MAÑAS (Cuba) accepted the suggestions made by the representative of the International Labour Organisation, together with the Brazilian amendments.

The first paragraph of the preamble to the joint draft resolution was adopted, as amended, by 12 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.

The first Soviet Union amendment to the first paragraph of the preamble was rejected by 10 votes to 3, with 3 abstentions.

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) pointed out that in some countries, for instance her own, retirement pensions were the same for men and women. She therefore wondered whether the Soviet Union representative could agree to modify her second amendment accordingly, and to word it more simply.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), also referring to the second Soviet Union amendment, said that it would be difficult to accept it, since the Commission had never studied the problem of pensions. In the United Kingdom no distinction was made between men and women workers in the matter of retirement pensions.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) said that detailed information regarding the unequal treatment meted out to women in the matter of retirement pensions was not available for all countries. Hence in the interest of great accuracy, it might be better to say "in many instances" rather than "in almost all countries" in the second Soviet Union amendment.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the representative of WFTU had explained that in some countries the retirement pensions payable to women were lower than those paid to men and that the reason given for such differentiation was that women frequently became eligible for such pensions at an earlier age than men. Speaking as French representative, she thought the idea expressed in the Soviet Union amendment might be embodied in the joint draft resolution.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) pointed out that the discussion clearly showed that discrimination in that respect existed. That was why the draft resolution invited the International Labour Office to collect information on retirement ages - a subject on which the Commission had no information.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the words "and pensions" should be inserted after the words "retirement ages" in the final paragraph of the joint draft resolution.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) proposed that the clause in question of the final paragraph should read: "... any information it may have on retirement ages, pensions and their amounts for men and women...."

Replying to the remarks made by the Chilean representative, Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that at the 116th meeting the representative of WFTU had given the Commission extremely interesting information on the experience acquired by trade unions in almost all countries. If the Commission insisted on a compromise formula it would be unable to describe the situation either adequately or accurately. That was why she had submitted her amendment which, the Brazilian representative would note, was simple, clear and short. In view of the speed with which the Commission was working, it would be difficult to devise a better impromptu text.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as representative of France, said that there was certainly something in the idea expressed in the Soviet Union amendment; but she could not vote for it, as she was reluctant to support a text containing a statement which was not in keeping with circumstances in her own country.

The second Soviet Union amendment to the first paragraph of the preamble was rejected by 8 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions.

The new second paragraph of the preamble, beginning with the words: "Noting that various provisions" was adopted by 14 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.

Miss KALINOWSKA (Poland) and Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) considered that the text proposed by the Soviet Union representative to replace the remaining paragraphs of the joint draft resolution should be put to the vote first.

The Soviet Union text which it was proposed should replace the three last paragraphs of the joint draft resolution was rejected by 8 votes to 3, with 6 abstentions.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) said that she had abstained from voting only because she believed that the final paragraph of the original joint draft resolution should be retained.

The new third paragraph of the preamble to the joint draft resolution, beginning with the words: "Noting that employment opportunities for older workers . . .", was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 5 abstentions.

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) pointed out that the first operative paragraph, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to supply information on the number of women as compared with men in the age brackets over forty, implicitly contradicted the first paragraph of the preamble, in which a plain statement was made. Once the Commission had declared that the number of women in the adult population exceeded men in many countries, and that in some areas women lived longer than men, why should it ask for arithmetical corroboration of that statement?

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said that if census figures could be collected they would help to strengthen the position taken by her delegation. It might, perhaps, be advisable to clarify the idea expressed in the first operative paragraph by referring to the "number and employment status of women as compared with men..".

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER, Secretary to the Commission, pointed out that while the United States Government might be in a position to reply to a questionnaire soliciting the information requested by the Commission in the first operative paragraph, it must be borne in mind that there were other governments which would be unable to do so. Hence the Secretariat could not give the Commission any assurance that it would succeed in compiling complete documentation on the question.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) wondered why the Secretary-General should be requested to supply information "to be derived from census reports and other dependable sources". Could not the words "information available" simply be used?

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) accepted the Chilean amendment.

Miss FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organisation) stated that the International Labour Office was constantly seeking statistical information of the kind requested in the joint draft resolution, but found it very difficult to obtain. Such information as was available was published biennially in a statistical year-book based on official sources only. The International Labour Office would of course be glad to collaborate with the United Nations in securing the information, but she feared that it would not be so complete as the Commission might wish.

The first operative paragraph of the joint draft resolution was adopted as amended by 14 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.

The adopted text read as follows:

"Requests the Secretary-General to supply to the Commission on the Status of Women for its next session available information on the number and employment status of women as compared with men in the age brackets over 40;"

Miss FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organisation), referring to the final paragraph of the joint draft resolution, asked whether its authors wished to have statistical information on the employment of older women in industry and the professions only, or whether they would also wish to have information on other categories of employment, such as agriculture.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said that the United States delegation would be in favour of the International Labour Office being free to give the Commission any material it had at its disposal. Would the point be met if the words "these and other" were inserted before the words "older workers" in the final paragraph?

Miss FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organisation) pointed out that the International Labour Office would undoubtedly be able to do a better job if the instructions were not too specific.

After a further exchange of views on the wording of the last paragraph, Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile), supported by Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), proposed that the text be re-drafted by the authors of the joint draft resolution, with the help of the Secretariat, and that the vote on it be deferred until the next meeting.

The CHAIRMAN accordingly ruled that further consideration of the joint draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.74/Rev.1) be deferred until the next meeting, and invited members to turn to the draft resolution on women in the professions. Draft resolution on Women in the Professions (E/CN.6/L.75).

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) proposed the deletion of the final clause of the first paragraph of the preamble, from the words "and that the solution" onwards.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) accepted the Brazilian amendment.

Replying to Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile), she said that the word "advancement" meant progress to the higher ranks in any given profession. In almost all countries

obstacles that prevented women from reaching the top of their chosen profession still existed. The United States delegation intended the text to refer, not to opportunities for study, but to opportunities of advancement for women who had already qualified and were practising a calling. She would mention the legal profession as an example: few public or professional appointments were given to women lawyers. The problem was of the greatest concern to the Commission.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) suggested that the words "advancement in the" should be replaced by the words: "the exercise of their".

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) was prepared to accept the term "exercise", although she did not think that it conveyed quite the same idea as the term "advancement". The issue did not turn on the right to exercise a profession, but on the possibility of climbing the rungs of the ladder within that profession.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the United States representative had conclusively demonstrated the existence of discrimination against women in the professions. What she had said about women lawyers applied with equal force to other types of work, for instance technical work. She believed that the only way to make the text wholly satisfactory was to insert an explicit reference to discrimination and to enumerate the kinds of discrimination at present practised against women.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said that she had refrained from elaborating that point in order to save the Commission's time. She explained, for the benefit of the Soviet Union representative, that what she had in mind were the kind of difficulties which women had experienced after the last war. During the second world war women highly qualified in the sciences and other technical subjects had taken the place of men and had won rapid promotion. When the men had been demobilized, some of the women had had difficulty in keeping their jobs and getting the promotion they deserved. Leading Women's organizations in the United States of America, such as the Federation of University Women and the Federation of Business and Professional Women had studied the problem in detail and could certainly provide information about it. She did not know what the precise answer to the problem was, but she would like to refer to a book by Mr. Kotschnig, whom some representatives present might know as a United States

representative in various United Nations organs. In that book he pointed out that the fundamental objection to discrimination against women workers was that insufficient account was taken of women's achievements. They had done work which was equal in value to that of men, and that was indeed a remarkable achievement considering the short time during which they had had access to the liberal professions, and considering the handicaps imposed by century-old prejudices. Mr. Kotschnig had concluded that such discrimination was not only unjust, but was likely to deprive mankind of important discoveries and valuable service.

Another important aspect of the problem was that in certain countries, in those of Latin America, for instance, women had readily been accepted in certain professions before they had been granted full political rights. It was possible, therefore, that the experience of some countries would prove valuable to those where women had enjoyed political rights for some time.

Perhaps the Commission might prefer the following text for the first paragraph of the preamble:

"Recognizing that women in many countries encounter problems in the exercise of their profession, especially with regard to promotion".

Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) regretted that the Commission seemed to be reluctant to take up the Soviet Union representative's suggestion, the more so inasmuch as representatives were agreed that discrimination did take place in almost all countries, including the United States of America. Of course, there was none in the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, where, once women had graduated, they easily got jobs and enjoyed regular promotion.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that the first paragraph be amended to read:

"Recognizing that in many countries discrimination prevents women from successfully practising their professions".

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as representative of France, felt that the use of the word "discrimination" was hardly appropriate, since it suggested that discriminatory measures were being applied. In the case in point, however, it was a question of combating an attitude of mind arising out of traditions of very long standing. She would accordingly vote against the Soviet Union amendment.

The Soviet Union amendment to the first paragraph of the draft resolution (E/CN.6/L.75) was rejected by 8 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the new text just proposed by the United States representative for the first paragraph of the preamble.

That text was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), referring to the second paragraph of the preamble, in which several professions were mentioned, thought that that enumeration should be transposed to paragraph (1) of the operative part. One of the difficulties was that the term "profession" had different connotations in different countries. She feared that the Commission might find that it had addressed to the Secretary-General a request with which he would find it difficult to comply satisfactorily. It would therefore be wiser to limit the proposed study to certain specific professions.

The CHAIRMAN, too, wondered whether the scientific profession and that of professor in institutions of higher learning should be included in the list in the second paragraph of the preamble. In France, for example, such callings were regarded not as liberal professions, but as public functions.

She wondered whether the list could not be shortened so as to end with the word "architecture".

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER, Secretary to the Commission, observed that it would greatly facilitate the task of the Secretariat if the list of professions was transferred to the operative part of the draft resolution as suggested by the United Kingdom representative.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) said that she was unable, without mature reflection, to decide whether the list of professions given in the second paragraph was the most suitable. In any case, the Commission should take account of the objection raised by the United Kingdom representative and seek a generally acceptable formula.

The CHAIRMAN explained that the idea of enumerating certain professions was simply to restrict the scope of the study for the time being.

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) considered that either the paragraph in question should refer to professions generally, without any enumeration, or, if the enumeration were retained, the mention of science and professorships in institutions of higher learning should be retained. There were few women professors or scientists.

The CHAIRMAN explained that she had suggested that the professions of science and professor in institutions of higher learning be omitted because in her opinion they would be covered by the study on public functions.

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) said that she was informed that in the United States of America scientific research was not a public function, but belonged to the field of private enterprise.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked what was the Commission's conception of a liberal profession. Reference was made in the second paragraph of the draft resolution to law, medicine, engineering, architecture and other professions. The Brazilian representative had justly pleaded the cause of women scientists. But what about actresses and ballerinas? The list of professions could be extended indefinitely. She perfectly appreciated the difficulties in which the French and Chilean representatives found themselves.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) wondered whether it was advisable to specify certain professions. If a study on the situation of women in the professions was to be undertaken, why should certain professions be selected rather than others? If the Commission decided to initiate such a study, it should be of more general scope.

Mrs. GRINBERG-VINAVER, Secretary to the Commission, pointed out that the term "professions" covered a very wide field, and that it would be difficult for the Secretariat to make so vast a study. There was also the question of the criteria to be applied in defining a profession, since the term did not have the same connotation in every country. Clear directives on the question would simplify the Secretariat's task, and for that reason she had suggested including a list of the professions which might be studied, the exact contents of the list being, of course, a matter for the Commission to decide.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) said that in the United Kingdom actresses were certainly considered as professional workers. Indeed, acting was one profession in which there was no discrimination against women. She had raised her point because she feared that the Secretariat would be unable to complete all the work involved in the time available. She would suggest that the list be kept to the four professions mentioned in the second paragraph and to the question of university appointments. The International Federation of University Women had studied the last-named problem, and would be able to supply information on it.

Miss LUTZ (Brazil) agreed with the United Kingdom representative that the Secretariat was being asked to do too much. Indeed, she believed that the Commission would be able to do better work if at future sessions it dealt with one major question only instead of with the many which had been placed on the agenda for the present session.

As to the paragraph under discussion, she would suggest that it be retained as drafted, since the non-governmental organizations would be able to supply information on the professions mentioned. She believed that in the final analysis the Commission would find itself up against psychological difficulties; for instance, women themselves were often reluctant to call on the services of women doctors and lawyers.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that studies made by non-governmental organizations would not lighten the burden on the Secretariat to any appreciable extent, as the latter would still have to analyse them and prepare them for publication.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said that she would be prepared to accept the United Kingdom representative's suggestion that the second paragraph of the preamble should merely state the principle that a study should be undertaken, and that the professions to be studied should be enumerated in paragraph (1) of the operative part. She could not but agree with the Soviet Union representative that the practice of music and the arts was also a profession, but she was primarily concerned with making a beginning and getting a study under way.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) agreed with the Brazilian representative that the Commission should either undertake a full study of the question, or defer the work, perhaps until the seventh session.

Miss PELETIER (Netherlands) agreed that adoption of the draft resolution would mean too much work for the Secretariat. She feared that the Secretariat and the International Labour Office would only be able to submit incomplete reports, perhaps only at the last minute, perhaps only with considerable delay. It would be wiser in the interests of the Commission's work to study only a few problems at a time. The best course would surely be to place it on record that the Commission

had examined the problem but had decided to defer action on it. She therefore supported the representatives of Brazil and Chile.

The CHAIRMAN agreed that the other tasks assumed by the Commission must be taken into account. The Commission was already committed to studies on part-time work for women and on older women workers.

She enquired whether the United States representative could agree that the study on women in the professions should be deferred until the next session.

Mrs. GOLDMAN (United States of America) said that she was most anxious not to overload the Secretariat, but experience had shown how much was gained by the year-to-year study of a problem by means of questionnaires. Moreover, the Commission had at its disposal the services of the non-governmental organizations, whose technical competence was steadily increasing. She would not have submitted the draft resolution had she not known that such organizations as the International Federation of University Women and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women were able and willing to help to deal with the problem.

It might perhaps be best to start by studying only two professions, for example, law and medicine.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the second paragraph of the preamble to the draft resolution on women in the professions.

That paragraph was rejected by 9 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions.

The CHAIRMAN, replying to Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom), who enquired whether the decision just taken was a final one, explained that it would be indicated in the report on the session that the Commission had discussed the question and had decided to revert to it in the near future.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.