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E/CN.6/SR.27
8 January 1948

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SECOND SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTH MEETING

Lake Success, New York

Thursday, 8 January 1948 at 3.15 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. Marie Helene LEFAUCHEUX (France)

Rapporteur: Mrs. A. KANDALEFT COSMA (Syria)

Present: Mrs. J. M. Grey Street (Australia)
Miss C. Zung (China)
Mrs. Bodil Begtrup (Denmark)
Begum Hamid Ali (India)
Mrs. de Castillo Ledon (Mexico)
Miss Mihri Pektas (Turkey)
Mrs. E. A. Popova (Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics)
Miss M. Sutherland (United Kingdom)
Miss D. Kenyon (United States of America)
Mrs. Isabel de Urdaneta (Venezuela)

Representatives from Specialized Agencies

Dr. M. Fairchild (ILO)
Miss J. Maass (UNESCO)
Miss B. Howell (WHO)

Observers from Non-Governmental Organizations

Miss T. Sender (American Federation of Labor)
Miss S. Anthony (Women's International
Democratic Federation)

Other Observers

Miss M. Bernardino (Inter-American Commission
of Women)

Secretariat: Professor John P. Humphrey

Miss L. M. Mitchell

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METHODS OF EDUCATING NEW WOMEN VOTERS ON THE USE OF THE FRANCHISE -
ITEM 5 (c) OF THE AGENDA (document E/CN.6/22/Rev.1)

The CHAIRMAN opened the meeting.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) felt that the approach to the problem of greater use of the franchise by women had been successfully solved in her country where every effort had been made to ensure that the economic situation of women and their social and cultural development was such as to enable them to make full use of the franchise. She cited the nursing homes provided to take care of children in order to give women the free time necessary to take part in public life. Women shared with men important administrative positions of all types in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking not as Chairman nor even as a representative of France but rather as an average French woman, thought that the emphasis should be placed on encouraging women to participate in public life as citizens, not as women. Any kind of special education of new women voters as a group seemed unwise.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreed with Mrs. Lefauchaux that new women voters should not form a group separate from men but she thought that all new voters should be given special education.

Although the CHAIRMAN realized the value of Miss Kenyon's suggestion she wondered whether an international plan for educating new voters would be practicable.

Mrs. COSMA (Syria) referring to a possible centre for collecting relevant information concerning the education of women in the use of the franchise, Mrs. COSMA (Syria) suggested that in view of the present need for economy, a unit might be set up for that purpose within the Secretariat section dealing with the status of women.

The CHAIRMAN thought that Mrs. Cosma's idea might be included in a broad reorganizational programme which the Commission would send to the Economic and Social Council.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF QUALIFIED WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT, BOTH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND AT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONFERENCES: ITEM 5 (d) (ii) OF THE AGENDA (document E/CN.6/22/Rev.1)

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the vitally important item 5 (d) (i) concerning problems relating to conflicts of law in fields of nationality, domicile, marriage and divorce should be postponed until a later meeting after the Secretariat had given its report on item 4, the preliminary report based on replies to Part I (Public Law) of the Questionnaire on Legal Status and Treatment of Women.

/She turned

She turned then to agenda item 5 (a) (ii).

Miss ZUNG (China) proposed the following resolution (document E/CN.6/48):

"In view of the almost negligible number of women who have succeeded in being elected as representatives to the national governing bodies of many of the Member Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council to suggest to the Member Nations that where such conditions exist, in order to give women an opportunity of proving their capability and usefulness, provisions be made as a temporary measure, for the election of a reasonable minimum number of women representatives to their national governing bodies in accordance with their national laws, practice, and constitutions."

The CHAIRMAN felt that Miss Zung's resolution could not be applied in France, and would not be desirable in that it seemed to give undue protection to a particular group.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) affirmed her full agreement with the principle contained in Miss Zung's resolution. It was however a propaganda resolution rather than a practical one. Pointing out that it would almost certainly not be accepted by the Economic and Social Council, Mrs. Street nevertheless felt that the principle should be brought to the Council's attention.

Miss ZUNG (China) thought that possible opposition should in no way deter the Commission from taking a step to help right an injustice of long standing.

She explained that the Commission would merely be asking the Council to make a suggestion to Member Nations.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) expressed sympathy with Miss Zung's proposal but emphasized that the Commission's role was to work for the participation in national and international affairs of qualified people, regardless of sex. She could not therefore approve of setting a quota for women representatives.

Before introducing a resolution urging that more qualified women should be included in international organizations and conferences and in all levels of governmental activities of Member Governments (document E/CN.6/33), Miss Kenyon pointed out how disproportionately low was the number of women on the delegations to the United Nations. She further gave facts and figures to show that in her own country women held comparatively few public offices, in spite of the fact that they had proven their ability by their attainments in all major fields.

Mrs. BEGIERUP (Denmark) reported the success women of her country had had in being chosen to public office by appealing to all women to vote for them.

/Mrs. de URDANETA

Mrs. de URDANETA (Venezuela) noting that many women in Venezuela already participated in the government, proposed a resolution asking the Economic and Social Council to encourage member states to grant women equal opportunities to serve in responsible administrative, political and social posts.

Miss SENDER (American Federation of Labor) while agreeing with the purpose of Miss Zung's resolution, did not think it would lead to the desired results, as it was the electorate rather than the Government that elected representatives to national governing bodies. The problem was essentially one of making the public realize what women could do. Women should be chosen for their ability, not because they were women.

Miss ZUNG (China) pointed out that her resolution was a temporary measure only, designed to meet a present difficulty, and would be discarded when there was no further need for it.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) did not think that the Commission should endorse the quota idea contained in Miss Zung's resolution. She favoured Miss Kenyon's resolution but proposed the omission of the word "next" in the clause "when vacancies next occurred", at the end of the third paragraph.

Miss SUTHERLAND deplored a tendency among women's organizations to put too much stress on women's grievances. Women should seek to become qualified human beings, and as such should take a greater part, side by side with men, in every field of human endeavour.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) thought that the clause in her resolution mentioned by Miss Sutherland might be further modified to read "whenever vacancies occur".

Mrs. STREET (Australia) felt that the Commission should not be distracted from its purpose of seeing that more women should be elected to public office by unfounded fears that they were seeking elections as women rather than as qualified human beings. Her wide experience with women's organizations had shown her that women were in fact highly qualified.

The CHAIRMAN stated that all the resolutions on the question would be studied by the Committee on Resolutions.

HOW TO INFLUENCE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOUR OF EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN WITH THE PURPOSE OF REMOVING PREJUDICES IN THIS RESPECT: ITEM 12 OF THE AGENDA

The CHAIRMAN called on Mrs. Begtrup to open discussion of the agenda item which the latter had suggested.

/Mrs. BEGRUP

Mrs. BEGTUP (Denmark) asked that discussion of item 12 should be postponed until after she had had an opportunity to talk further with the Secretariat.

She reported that arrangements were already being made for members of the Commission to give radio broadcasts to their own countries, telling of the work of the Commission.

CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN PARAGRAPHS 39 AND 40 OF THE REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION: ITEM 11 OF THE AGENDA

Miss MITCHELL (Committee Secretary), at the request of the CHAIRMAN, read paragraphs 39 and 40 of the Report of the First Session of the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN called attention to the budgetary obstacles to visits of members of the Commission to Member States.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) thought that priority should be given to other work of the Commission. She therefore felt that though such visits were desirable, it would be better not to press for them at the present time.

Mrs. STREET (Australia), supported by the CHAIRMAN, suggested that the Commission's report to the Council should state that in view of the budgetary situation, visits to Member States would not be considered until the next session.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) doubted the advisability of retaining the point on the agenda since it seemed premature as a practical step.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the Committee seemed to agree that its report should contain only a brief reference to the matter.

Mrs. STREET (Australia), referring to the question of regional conferences, expressed approval of the idea of sending a representative from the Commission to regional conferences of women in order to give them information concerning the work being done by the Commission. She did not think however that the Commission should itself plan to meet in regions where much unnecessary expense would be incurred.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) expressed the opinion that it was of major importance that the Commission should meet in different parts of the world, particularly in regions where women were in need of its help. The power of persuasion was, in her opinion, the Commission's chief weapon and meetings in different places would spread the Commission's ideas.

She introduced a resolution that the 1949 session of the Commission should be held in the Near East (document E/CN.6/56).

Begum HAMID ALI (India) welcomed the idea of a session of the Commission
/in the

in the Near East, but felt that it might be too expensive unless the Commission received an invitation from a Government.

She suggested that the Commission should invite a few of its officers and ex-officers to represent it in getting into contact with women throughout the world through visits to as many countries as possible.

Begum Hamid Ali, supported by Mrs. STREET (Australia), also proposed that regional committees should be set up even before regional conferences, as the former could do useful work in arranging for invitations to the Commission to meet in a particular region, and could moreover help later to set up regional conferences.

Mrs. BEGRUP (Denmark) considered Miss Kenyon's resolution a practical one. As a result of efforts made during the last session of the General Assembly, the Commission might be invited by some government to meet within its territory. If that government should defray a part of the expenses, the Commission might have its session in another part of the world without any additional cost.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) approved the principle of Miss Kenyon's resolution; she feared however that the budget for other work of the Commission might suffer if the place of meeting caused unduly heavy expenditures. She therefore preferred to postpone the idea of meeting in the Near East.

She did not fully agree either with Begum Hamid Ali's suggestion for setting up regional committees. So much organization seemed unnecessary. If the Commission planned to meet in a particular country, the representative of that country could contact the neighbouring nations and make all arrangements.

Begum HAMID ALI (India) explained that her idea was that the regional committees would be able to save the Commission considerable expense by planning with the country in which the session was to be held to bear some of the cost.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) thought that meeting in the Near East would be desirable, but experience had shown that there was little hope that the Council would agree. She therefore preferred that the Commission should request to meet next year in Geneva.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) thought that a session of the Commission in the Near East should be discussed on its merits, rather than on the basis of the financial considerations involved.

It was well to put the matter before the Council even if the request were refused.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the Secretariat
/for information

for information about the possibilities of a meeting of the Commission elsewhere.

Mr. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) expressed the readiness of the Secretariat to service a conference anywhere, but reminded the Commission that its decision concerning the place of meeting was for the Economic and Social Council to take.

In reply to a question by Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) and Mrs. COSMA (Syria), Professor HUMPHREY (Secretariat) pointed out that expenses for the 1949 session would be included in the 1949 budget. He thought it unlikely that the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the General Assembly would reduce the amounts allotted to other parts of the Commission's programme, if they agreed to extra sums for a meeting place.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) and Mrs. URDANETA (Venezuela) felt that although Geneva was an inexpensive place to meet, it failed to serve the purpose of having a session in a Member State where women needed particular encouragement.

Begum HAMID ALI (India) favoured Geneva because it was economical and yet it was in Europe where many women still did not have as many rights as the women of the New World.

Mrs. STREET (Australia), pointing to the importance of two sessions a year if the work of the Commission was to progress satisfactorily, preferred two sessions in an inexpensive place to one that was costly.

REPORT OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

Miss Susan B. ANTHONY, (representative of the Women's International Democratic Federation) said that the Federation represented 89 million women in forty-one countries. The President of the Federation, Madame Leclerc, had intended to be present at the session of the Commission, but she had not been granted a visa to enter the United States. The Women's International Democratic Federation asked the Commission to make a protest to the United States Government.

The CHAIRMAN explained that she had been in contact with the Secretary-General on the question and measures were being taken to expedite the arrival of Madame Leclerc.

Professor HUMPHREY added that it was hoped the desired result would be achieved within a very few days.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) requested that the Commission should be kept informed of the progress of the negotiations.

The CHAIRMAN assured Mrs. Popova that this could be done.

CO-OPERATION OF THE COMMISSION WITH THE SOCIAL COMMISSION

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) said that at its first session the

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Commission had discussed relations with certain other commissions of the Economic and Social Council and suggestions had been made concerning contacts with the Commission on Human Rights, but no definite suggestion had been made concerning contacts with the Social Commission. At present the Social Commission had in hand a number of projects of work closely related with the question of the status of women - traffic in women and children, prevention of crime, treatment of offenders, family welfare, etc. which were of great interest to the members of the Commission. She thought therefore that the Commission should keep closely in touch with the Social Commission's work and that the Social Commission should be invited to refer to it any matters connected with women's rights. She submitted a resolution to that effect. (document E/CN.6/46)

Mrs. LEDON (Mexico) agreed with Miss Sutherland's proposal. She pointed out that during the General Assembly, when it had become known that the League of Nations documentation on the subject of the traffic in women and children was to be transferred to the United Nations, she had expressed the Mexican delegation's wish that that documentation should be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women as well as to the Social Commission.

The Commission decided to refer Miss Sutherland's resolution to the Committee on Resolutions,

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REPRESENTATION OF THE COMMISSION TO THE OTHER ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS UNDER ARTICLE 70 OF THE CHARTER

Mrs. STREET (Australia) submitted a resolution (document E/CN.6/49) which drew attention to the fact that the Commission on Human Rights, the Social Commission, the International Labour Organization and UNESCO all dealt with questions with which the Commission on the Status of Women was closely concerned. The Economic and Social Council had laid down that the Status of Women Commission should be represented at meetings of those organs or agencies only when a question directly connected with its work appeared on their agenda; as it was impossible to foresee what turn the debate might take, Mrs. Street was of the opinion that the Commission should be represented at all their meetings. She had asked for only one representative to be present, on account of budgetary limitations. That representative would act as a sort of liaison officer or rapporteur.

The CHAIRMAN considered that the question of relations with the different organs of the United Nations was too important to be decided by empirical or arbitrary methods. Liaison with the specialized agencies should be organized differently from that with the Economic and Social Council or the Trusteeship Council. She proposed that discussion of this item should be

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completed so that a draft could be submitted to the Committee on Resolutions on Saturday.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) recalled that at its last session the Commission had been informed that the Trusteeship Council would organize regional conferences, and it had decided to request the Economic and Social Council to allow it to be represented. Such representation would be particularly useful because the Commission would thus be able to get in touch with women in the various areas under the control of the Trusteeship Council.

Mrs. URALOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) pointed out that the question of relations with the Trusteeship Council had been considered at the first session of the Commission. She referred to paragraphs 23, 24 and 25 of the report of the first session of the Commission to the Economic and Social Council (document E/281/Rév.1).

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) observed that since the last session of the Commission the Economic and Social Council had come to an agreement with the Trusteeship Council on the subject of collaboration and joint consultation, according to which consultation would be at Secretariat level. When it was thought desirable, however, the President of either Council should have the privilege of initiating a discussion. She wondered whether this agreement would not invalidate the resolution passed by the Status of Women Commission.

Professor HUMPHREY (Secretariat) in reply to a request for clarification by the United States representative, stated that the position was as outlined by the United Kingdom representative. He read the paragraph concerning reciprocal representation from the Draft Report of the Joint Committee of the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council on Arrangements for Co-operation in Matters of Common Concern (document E&T/C.1/2, page 7, paragraph (d)).

Miss KENYON (United States of America) assumed that if a matter under discussion were connected with the Commission's work, the President of the Economic and Social Council might designate a member of the Commission to represent him.

Miss MAASS (UNESCO) pointed out that relations with the specialized agencies were governed by agreements already concluded between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. According to these agreements it appeared that a member of a Commission might be included in the United Nations delegation if the Secretary-General so decided.

Dr. FAIRCHILD (International Labour Organization) said the agreement with the International Labour Organization contained a similar provision, according to which United Nations representatives might be invited to

/attend meetings

attend meetings of the International Labour Organization. More than one representative might attend; and the representatives might be of either Secretariat or Commission level. Representative of the International Labour Organization to United Nations meetings would ordinarily be members of the International Labour Office. She ventured to suggest that it might appear advisable for the Commission to request the Economic and Social Council that it should be included in the representation at any conference or meeting that was of concern to it.

Mrs. BEGTRUP (Denmark) recalled that last year the Commission had asked that a member of the Commission, Mrs. Ledon, might attend the UNESCO Conference in Mexico City as an observer, but it had been informed that that was not possible.

Mrs. STREET (Australia) suggested that if the Commission had passed a recommendation at its last meeting that it should be represented at the Conference, it might have been possible for Mrs. Ledon to attend.

The CHAIRMAN thought the Commission should adopt a resolution requesting the Economic and Social Council to appoint a member of the Commission to represent it.

They might also adopt a resolution requesting the Economic and Social Council to allow the Commission to be represented at meetings of the Trusteeship Council if any question of particular interest to the Commission was to be discussed.

After a short discussion, the Commission decided to begin its work the following morning with the discussion of item 8 of the agenda (Human Rights and the Prevention of Discrimination on Grounds of Sex and subsequently to discuss item 4 (Preliminary Report based on replies to Part I (Public Law) of Questionnaire on Legal Status and Treatment of Women) and item 5 (d) (i) (Problems Relating to Conflicts of Law in Fields of Nationality, Domicile, Marriage and Divorce).

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.
