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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

THIRD SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTIETH MEETING

held at Beirut, Lebanon,
on Monday, 28th March 1949 at 2.30 p.m.

CONTENTS:

1. The principle of equal pay for equal work of men and women workers (continuation of discussion)

Present:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mrs. Marie Helene Lefauchaux	France
<u>Members:</u>	Mrs. Elsie Frances Byth	Australia
	Dr. Cecelia Sieu-Ling Zung	China
	Mrs. Bodil Begtrup	Denmark
	Mrs. Lina P. Tsaldaris	Greece
	Mrs. Fortuna Andre Guery	Haiti
	Mrs. Lakshmi Nandan Menon	India
	Mrs. Amalia C. de Castillo Ledon	Mexico
	Mrs. Adila Beyhoum El-Jazaeri	Syria
	Mrs. Mihri Pektas	Turkey
	Miss Mary Sutherland	United Kingdom
	Mrs. Elizieveta Popova	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Miss Dorothy Kenyon	United States of America
	Mrs. Isabel Urdaneta	Venezuela

Representatives from Specialized Agencies:

Mrs. Mildred Fairchild-Woodbury	International Labour Organization
Miss Jeanne H. Chaton	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Representatives from Inter-Governmental Organizations:

Miss Minerva Bernardino	Inter-American Commission of Women
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Consultants from Non-Governmental Organizations (Category A):

Mrs. Marie Couette	World Federation of Trade Unions
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1. THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK FOR MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS:
Continuation of discussion (Document E/CN.6/87: Item 9 of the agenda).

Miss TOMLINSON (Federation of Business and Professional Women) read a statement prepared by Miss Hickey, Chairman of the United Nations Committee of the Federation. The Federation believed that it was its particular concern to make available, and to ensure the use, of the specialized knowledge and the economic and technical skills of business and professional women in the improvement of the economic status of women. It believed that the experience and knowledge of the ILO was essential in overcoming the difficulties inherent in obtaining "the rate for the job". The Federation felt that a resolution from the Commission in general terms, while of value educationally, would not advance the passage of national legislation, or promote its application in practice.

She said the principle of the rate-for-the-job had been promulgated by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women since 1930 as one of the essential conditions for the advancement of women's employment rights. She specified "one" because the rate-for-the-job might operate to push women out of employment in high position, and even out of any employment if at the same time equality of opportunity for initial job selection and promotion were not ensured through training and apprenticeship, placement, promotion, retirement and pension guarantees. Along with the rate-for-the-job should go social security measures to protect families. The Federation believed the ILO could deal most adequately with these problems in all their aspects.

The Federation, which was the largest organization of professional women in the world, had conducted expert investigations into techniques of personnel management, and considered its improvement essential to the just application of the principle. Merit systems do not ensure treatment. Careful job analysis, and grade and classification systems, are required.

She urged that the ILO work towards implementation of the principle of the rate-for-the-job.

Miss IBRAHIM (International Democratic Federation of Women) her organization represented women of all sections of society, socially, politically and as regards different religions. It, therefore, enjoyed the confidence of masses of women throughout the world in its struggle for the rights of women. The Second Congress at Budapest had studied

all questions of discrimination; and the attitude of her organization was that economic inequality between men and women, particularly as regards remuneration, was one of the most serious obstacles hampering women in the social and economic field. They did not have the same protection against unemployment and sickness, so that even if on paper their salaries appeared equal, they were not so in reality.

The Congress at Budapest had adopted a resolution asking for urgent measures to be taken to ensure equality as set out in the Charter, and particularly equality of pay; and she hoped the Commission would adopt effective resolutions. She wished in the name of the International Democratic Federation of Women to support the resolution of the Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the effect that this matter be considered at the 9th session of ECOSOC.

Miss Ibrahim expressed surprise and regret that although the Federation represented over 80 million women, and the majority of the working women of the world, and in spite of the valuable work it had done and the value to the Commission of the information it possessed, it was still classified in category B. She hoped the Commission would draw the attention of ECOSOC to the desirability of rectifying this situation, and thus enable the Federation to give assistance to the full extent of its powers.

Dr. HANNA RYDH (International Alliance for Women) asked the Commission to study the question of the abolition of child labour, especially as regards girls, which exists in several countries. In parts of the East she herself had seen girls of five years of age working from sunrise to sunset for very low wages. It was not only unwise to put young children to work, but it deprived them of the possibility of obtaining education and training, and their status, when they grew to be women, would be deplorable.

Child labour was one of the great problems before the ILO, but it was so urgent that it needed to be stressed repeatedly and she thought the Commission would have accomplished a valuable task if it could promote the solution of the problem.

Dr. Alice ARNOLD (World Young Womens' Christian Associations) said there were two important factors that should be considered. One was public opinion. It was generally thought that women worked in order to be able to have luxuries. Her association had made an enquiry from which it appeared

/that everyone

that everyone of the women approached worked out of necessity and for their livelihood. Similar studies were being conducted by local organizations for the enlightenment of the public. An enlightened public opinion would assist the implementation of any law for equality of pay.

The second factor was that of vocational and technical training. Women in industry and agriculture and the professions could not expect equal pay for unequal work and must have equal opportunity with men to acquire skill and efficiency. Her organization had done a great deal to further this end; but she felt that more should be done on an international and national scale.

She hoped the ILO, in drawing up the convention, would include the question of technical training and equal opportunity for employment.

Mrs. COUETTE (World Federation of Trade Unions) regretted that the document she had handed to the Secretariat, classifying the original information submitted by her organization, had not been distributed to the Commission. The document contained official figures collected from workers' organizations, trade unions and governmental sources.

She stressed that the degree to which the principle of equal pay for equal work was applied depended on the extent and interpretation given to it by the different governments. The statement of the Representative of the Soviet Union, that full application of the principle was in force in her country, proved there was no difficulty in putting the principle into effective practice. What was needed was that women should take up a determined position concerning the achievement of their rights in order to make them a reality.

She referred to the discrimination which existed with respect to education for intelligent children of the poorer classes, who did not enjoy same privileges as children of rich families. That affected the contribution which children of poor families were able to make to the economic life of their countries; women were often found in subordinate positions because they had not been able to take advantage of educational opportunities available to the rich.

It was not sufficient to include the principle in the constitution of the various countries, unless each government took effective measures to enforce implementation of the principle in practice. Although a decree

had been passed in France abolishing inequality of wages, nevertheless women were receiving about eight per cent less remuneration than men for work of equal value. In the china industry at Limoges, women were paid two per cent less than men. Women should energetically press their governments to take appropriate and speedy action in the matter. The right to vote had been granted in France after the magnificent efforts of women in the resistance movement. The principle of equal pay had been included in the Constitution after demonstrations and petitions by hundreds of thousands of women, and at the present time workers were still fighting to retain that right. Illustrating the necessity of fighting for rights, she gave examples of how women in France had obtained, as a result of repeated demonstrations and petitions, an increase in wages equivalent to that accorded to male workers.

She urged the members of the Commission not to disappoint the women in different countries who looked to them for support, and to press their governments to take quick action. She could not agree with the view held by the Representative of the United Kingdom about difficulties in interpretation of the principle. The essential point at issue was the value of the work performed, regardless of sex. In France, rates of pay were determined by a co-efficient based on the actual value of the work carried out.

Therefore the Commission should (1) stress the necessity for appropriate and speedy action, and (2) take the necessary action for the important question of equal remuneration for equal work to be placed on the agenda of the ninth session of ECOSOC.

Mr. LAWSON, Secretariat, explained that the document referred to by Mrs. Couette was a very lengthy Report, already distributed by the WFTU. It was customary for such voluminous documents to be presented in a sufficient number of copies for distribution, when they existed in mimeographed form. Since priority had to be given by the Secretariat to the reproduction of day-to-day resolutions and documents, it had so far been impossible to circulate the document in question.

Mrs. FERTU made four comments on the draft resolutions on equal pay for equal work. (1) The reference to maternity in sub-clause (d) of the Chinese resolution should be deleted, since the problem was too complex to be dealt with in the general subject under discussion.

- (2) She feared that the word "legally" in the Soviet Union proposal would be unacceptable to the Danish trade unions, which preferred free negotiation in wage-fixing procedures. (3) The second paragraph on page 2 of the United States proposal was redundant and should be deleted. (4) Referring to the resolution submitted by WFTU, she asked the representative of ILO whether there was any possibility of including the question of equal pay for equal work on the agenda of the 1950 Conference of ILO.

The CHAIRMAN felt that it was not appropriate to examine the four resolutions in detail at the plenary meeting since they would be studied by the Resolutions Committee.

Mr. LAWSON, Secretariat, replying to a comment made by Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), said it was correct that the Soviet Union had presented a document in reply to the Questionnaire on the Legal Status and Treatment of Women. Unfortunately, the information had been received after a compilation had been made of the other replies, which was the reason for its circulation in a separate document. The reply of the Soviet Union contained information other than on nationality and education which, as in the case of the other replies to questionnaires, had not been reproduced. The Secretariat had only published information which, in its view, was pertinent to the questions under consideration.

Dr. ZUNG (China) felt that all observations should be made on behalf of all the women in the world, and not of that of individual countries. She herself would not comment on the position of China except to point out that equality existed among professional women, for example, teachers in public schools, lawyers, and so forth, who received the same remuneration as men.

She welcomed any suggestions on her draft resolution, which had been proposed in the interest of women all over the world, but asked that any criticism should be sincere and not based on propaganda. She hoped that the Report of the ILO would present the matter of equal pay for equal work in more concrete form, and suggested that the expression "rate paid for the job" might have more significance. She was not pressing for equality of remuneration for both sexes, but if women could do the same work as men, they were entitled to equivalent wages. While

sub-clause (a) of her resolution was difficult to realize in practice, measures should be taken to mitigate the burdens placed on women workers.

Miss KENYON (United States of America) referred to the vote taken at an earlier meeting on connexion with political rights of women in non-self-governing territories, in which she had abstained from voting. She was now in a position to record her vote in favour of the amended resolution.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) made two comments. (1) Her statement, which had been referred to by the Representative of WFTU, about difficulties of interpretation, concerned the term "equal pay for equal work", for which "rate-for-the-job" was a more easily understood clause. She agreed entirely about the need for classifying and grading jobs according to the work done. (2) She could not vote in favour of any resolution which merely reiterated previous statements. ECOSOC had placed the point at issue in the hands of ILO, and the resolutions of the Soviet Union and WFTU attempted to by-pass what had been achieved by that Organization.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) replying to Mrs. Begtrup, said that the Soviet Union proposal was based on the Charter and covered women who were victims of discrimination; they should be protected by guarantees based on legislation.

In asking for the rejection of what she had termed "an out-of-date" principle -- equality with men who were raising a family -- Miss Sutherland was going backward instead of forward and leading women to poverty. Many British women who had lost their husbands and fathers during the war were now heads of families, and should be considered as bread-winners.

Mrs. FAIRCHILD-WOODBURY (International Labour Organization), replying to the question asked by the Representative of Denmark, directed attention to the established procedures of the ILO, under which there would have been no possibility of adequately considering the subject of equal pay for equal work before 1950. In her opinion, if those procedures, namely, preliminary consultation with governments and competent bodies before drawing up a draft text for discussion, were disrupted, no useful work could be accomplished.

Mrs. Pia Colini LOMBARDI (International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues) said that the principle under discussion was included in the Italian Constitution.

Two considerations should, however, be borne in mind:

- (1) Unemployment was steadily increasing in several countries and should be taken into account in respect of labour questions.
- (2) The presence of the mother in the family was irreplaceable, and her absence constituted a serious blow to family life.

Her organization, representing 36 million women, expressed the hope that the Commission would declare itself in favour of family allowances, taking into account the family needs of the worker. That would also help to solve the problem of unemployment and enable the mother to remain at home, where she could make her contribution, both as a producer and a consumer, to the economic life of her country. The Commission should not limit itself to one aspect of the principle of equal pay for equal work, or else its consideration would run the risk of remaining on the theoretical plane. The matter should be dealt with in a practical way, and thus serve the interests of mankind in its widest sense.

The CHAIRMAN felt that the exchange of views had been sufficiently wide for the general debate on Item 9 to be closed. She suggested that the Resolutions Committee proceed with a study of the four resolutions submitted (documents E/CN.6/100, E/CN.6/103, E/CN.6/104, E/CN.2/151).

The draft resolution submitted by India concerning information contained in communications from non-governmental organizations (E/CN.6/106) would be considered under item 15 of the agenda.

The suggestion of the International Alliance of Women, on child labour, could be taken up under Item 13 of the agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 4.30 p.m. and was resumed at 5.30 p.m.

The Commission proceeded to a discussion of the four Resolutions submitted.

PROPOSAL OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (E/C/2/151).

The CHAIRMAN called upon the consultant from the WFTU to present the proposal of her organization.

Mrs. COUETTE (World Federation of Trade Unions) said the reasons of her organization for presenting its proposal were explained

in the report she had submitted, which the Secretariat had not been able to circulate to the Commission. The reasons, as set forth in the preamble to the proposal were, first, that the WFTU desired the Commission to re-affirm the principle of equal pay for equal work; and, secondly the procedure adopted by the ILO showed that it did not attach sufficient importance to this question. That procedure made it impossible for a convention to be concluded before 1951. The WFTU was asking that the question be placed on the agenda of the ninth session of ECOSOC so that the ILO could be requested to proceed with the work of preparation of a convention. She stated that the worker's group had voted against postponement and, therefore, the ILO had not been unanimous in its decision. The worker's group was most concerned about the delay.

Mrs. FAIRCHILD-WOODBURY (International Labour Organization) wished to make it clear that the worker's group had not unanimously voted against the adoption of the ILO Governing Body's programme, which included consideration of this question in 1950.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the Commission to adopt the resolution of the WFTU which corresponded with the hopes and interests of all the women of the world.

The CHAIRMAN said the Commission would vote upon all the proposals submitted; but, if the members agreed, she thought it ought to be possible to draw up a single resolution embodying those paragraphs of the individual resolutions which proved acceptable to the Commission. The Committee on Resolutions had failed to do this; but she hoped the plenary Commission would be able to reach agreement. The preamble of the WFTU resolution mentioned several different questions and it was impossible for the Commission to vote upon it as a whole. The Commission would decide which paragraphs of each resolution they wished to include, without prejudice to the location of each paragraph in the final resolution.

The Commission proceeded to vote on document E/C.2/151 paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1 was rejected by seven votes to two, with one abstention.

Paragraph 2 was rejected by seven votes to four.

Paragraph 3 was rejected by seven votes to one, with four abstentions.

Paragraph 4 was rejected by eight to one.

Paragraph 5 was rejected by seven votes to two, with four abstentions.
Paragraph 6 was rejected by seven votes to one, with three abstentions.
Paragraph 7 was rejected by five votes to four, with four abstentions.
Paragraph 8 was rejected by seven votes to two, with two abstentions.
Paragraph 9 was rejected by six votes to five, with two abstentions.

Draft Resolution presented by the Delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Document E/CN.6/100)

Paragraph 1

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), said that among the many tasks entrusted to the Commission by ECOSOC, the study of the question of equality of wages was one of the most important. The Commission should, therefore, adopt paragraph 1 of her resolution so as to avoid giving the impression that the Commission was hostile to the principle of equality.

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) pointed out that the 1947 resolution of ECOSOC asked the Commission to study the question in consultation with the ILO.

Mrs. BEGTURUP (Denmark) asked whether the 9th session of ECOSOC would take place before the meeting of the ILO, and wondered whether there was any use in asking ECOSOC to place the question on its agenda before it had any material to discuss.

Mr. LAWSON, Secretary of the Commission, replied that the ninth session of ECOSOC would take place in July and August 1949.

Paragraph 1 was adopted by nine votes to none, with four abstentions.

Paragraph 2

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) suggested substituting for the last four lines of the paragraph: "Reaffirms its support of the principle of equal pay for men and women workers and urges continued progress in its implementation."

Miss KENYON (United States of America) believed that this was the text of the first operative clause of her resolution. She had suggested an amendment consisting of adding after the words "men and women workers" the words "without distinction as to race, nationality and religion."

Miss SUTHERLAND (United Kingdom) agreed to the amendment.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the joint amendment of the delegates for the United States of America and the United Kingdom replaced the second clause of paragraph 2.

Mrs POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that as the Commission had adopted the procedure of voting on resolutions paragraph by paragraph, it was necessary first to vote on the paragraph as it stood and then on any amendments suggested.

The CHAIRMAN said the rules of procedure laid down that amendments should be voted upon in the first place. Since it was difficult to distinguish between an addition and an amendment, she ruled that the joint proposal just made should be voted upon first.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) thought there should be a separate paragraph on discrimination as regards race, nationality and religion.

The CHAIRMAN, in reply to an enquiry by Miss KENYON (United States of America), said there was nothing to prevent members suggesting additions to the preamble at a later stage.

Mrs. LEDON (Mexico) thought the phrase "without distinction of race, nationality and religion" appeared restrictive and suggested adding "and others" at the end of the phrase.

Various drafting proposals were made. Mrs. Ledon (Mexico) drew attention to the wording of Article 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights which began "without distinction of any kind, such as" and continued with an enumeration of possible distinctions.

The CHAIRMAN saw no use in mentioning distinction of sex, since the whole resolution dealt with that question in connexion with wages.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said the essence of the amendment under discussion was contained in paragraph 4 of her resolution.

The CHAIRMAN replied that she must put the amendments to the vote as they were submitted.

Mrs. MENON (India) thought it unnecessary to mention other distinctions. The Commission was trying to eliminate discrimination against sex and had therefore only two categories of persons to consider -- men and women.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) felt, and Miss KENYON (United States of America) agreed, that it was not out of place to mention distinction of colour and race where women workers were concerned.

It was finally agreed, on the suggestion of Miss KENYON (United States of America), to add the words "without distinction of any kind as laid down in Article 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights" after the words "men and women workers" in the United Kingdom amendment.

The CHAIRMAN wished to make it clear that those who voted in favour of this joint amendment would be voting in favour of deletion of the Soviet Union text.

It was decided, by ten votes to three with one abstention, to substitute, for the original text of the second clause of paragraph 2, the amendment proposed by the Representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The clause would thus read:

"The Economic and Social Council,

Reaffirms its support of the principle of equal pay for men and women workers without distinction of any kind, as laid down in Article 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights, and urges continued progress in its implementation."

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) objected to the procedure adopted and requested the Chairman to put the original text of the resolution to the vote in accordance with the rules of the United Nations.

Mrs. COUETTE (WFTU), on a point of order, said the amendment adopted could not replace the Soviet Union text, since the sense was quite different.

The Commission rose at 6.45 p.m.