

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/CN.6/SR.92

7 June 1951

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fifth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINETY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,  
on Monday, 7 May 1951, at 10.30 a.m.

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Mrs. GOLDMAN	United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. WINSLOW	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Mrs. MYRDAL	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Dr. INGALLS	World Health Organization (WHO)

Representative of an inter-governmental organization:

Mrs. ACUNA de CHACON	Inter-American Commission of Women
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Representatives of non-governmental organizations:Category A:

Miss KAHN	World Federation of Trade Unions
Mrs. FOX	World Federation of United Nations Associations

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Mrs. DAYAL	All-India Women's Conference
Register: (Miss TAYLOR	International Council of Nurses
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Mrs. SCHWARZENBACH	International Federation of Friends of Young Women
Mrs. ZIZZANNIA	International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues
Mrs. EVANS	International Federation of University Women
Miss GUTHRIE	International Alliance of Women

Secretariat:

Mrs. TENISON-WOODS	Chief of the Status of Women Section
Mrs. GRINBERG VINAVER	Secretary of the Commission

REPRESENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

The CHAIRMAN called for a general debate on the question of educational opportunities for women.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking on a point of order, said that she wished for an explanation of what was being done to arrange for the attendance at the Commission's session of the Chairman of the Women's International Democratic Federation. She understood that a telegram had been sent to the Secretary-General asking that the Chairman, Mrs. Dias, should be allowed to represent her organization before the Commission. The United States Consulate in Paris had refused to grant a visa to Mrs. Dias and such action constituted discrimination in respect of the representation of non-governmental organizations. It was undesirable that so-called technical considerations should prevent representation of an important women's organization. She would like the Chairman to take steps to ensure that the representative of the International Federation of Democratic Women would be allowed to attend the session. She asked for full information on the question by the next day.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) wished to express her indignation at the fact that it had been rendered impossible for Mrs. Dias, representative of the Women's International Democratic Federation, to attend the Commission's session. She considered the action taken completely anti-democratic.

The CHAIRMAN explained that she was unable to take any steps in the matter beyond asking that the attendance at the Commission's session should be as wide as possible. She was doing all she could in the matter.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN (E/CN.6/170)

Mrs. MYRDAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that a preliminary survey of educational opportunities had been made in the previous year. It had served its purpose and had revealed glaring inequalities in the educational opportunities provided for women. A resolution had been passed by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 304 G (XI)) asking for additional and up-to-date information. Under the headings of the clauses contained in that resolution, she wished to present a report on the work done by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in that field.

The information was presented in the later report (E/CN.6/170) in a more systematic form, although it was not yet final. The statistics were collected in order to be part of a more general inquiry for use in the preparation of a handbook on educational organizations. Caution was necessary in interpreting figures given, as categories were variously defined in different countries. The information had been set forth with the primary intention of using it at the International Conference on Public Education in 1952. But the Commission might wish to express the desire always to have such statistics on women and education published within general educational statistics in such a form as to enable the Commission on the Status of Women to check the amount of progress made.

The purpose of promoting opinion in favour of equal opportunities of access to education for both sexes, had been well served by the general campaigns promoted by UNESCO to advance human rights in general. The organization had produced an "Album on Human Rights" and several still films on the subject. A study was being made to enable teachers to show how human rights, inclusive of women's rights, could be taught in school. UNESCO was proposing to hold a seminar on advancing human rights by education.

It was also obvious that if general education advanced, that would further help women's education. Important steps in that direction were the UNESCO's work for compulsory free education for all. A conference on the subject was to be held by the International Bureau of Education jointly with UNESCO. Studies were being made in two sets of three countries each, one set where free education was already in operation, and one set where it was just being established.

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The most specific attempt to advance free education would be the 1951 conference on compulsory education, while the main subject of the 1952 conference was to be educational opportunities for women. The documentation prepared for the conference would include general surveys and special studies. For instance, a study would be made of girls' education in several specified countries. The United Nations, other specialised agencies and non-governmental organizations would be called upon to help in the work of the conference which would serve to concentrate world attention on the subject.

With regard to the subject of paragraph (c) of the Economic and Social Council's resolution, referring to the development of fundamental education and adult education in agricultural and less developed countries, it was not easy to define exactly what UNESCO had been doing specifically for women. It should be remembered that the purpose of fundamental education was not only to increase literacy, but also to cover a wide field in connexion with hygiene, agricultural methods and other subjects of importance to raising the status of women. Such education constitutes a very considerable part of UNESCO's regular activities, also of technical assistance and in addition the Director-General had been instructed to raise extra funds to train teachers. The purpose of the programme was not to replace action by countries themselves, but to place at their disposal the knowledge available to UNESCO.

Fundamental education could be said to create an atmosphere which would be favourable to fuller participation by women in the life of their country. The programme was not specially designed to promote women's rights. As an example, she quoted the case of Colombia, where the fundamental education programme had originally taken the form of a series of agricultural extension courses. It had then become apparent that the services of a domestic science teacher would be required in order to reach the women in the rural districts. In India, where fundamental education was greatly advanced through government efforts, Mrs. Hatch, the expert responsible for organizing the programme in an experimental station, had made it centre around a 24-hour home life schedule, which also served to show how women's part in life fitted into the general scheme.

This reports on what UNESCO had done according to the Economic and Social Council resolution. Mrs. Myrdal went on to say that she thought that the Commission wanted to know something more about the deeper sociological explanations; what was holding women back? Very difficult problems were involved in the question, and UNESCO would have to be objective and careful, and try to produce something really new to make it worth while.

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It was not desirable to go over ground which had already been covered by women's international organizations. A profound rather than a wide study should be made. It had been decided that if women's exercise of their political rights were chosen as a point of departure, it would inevitably be revealed how educational opportunities for women are related to social and economic factors. The Department of Social Sciences was to deal with the subject, and it was felt that the knowledge of women's ways of participating in the social life of their country would provide much information with regard to all other questions, including educational opportunities. The countries studied would all belong in the category where women already have political rights, but the countries should be chosen so as to show up some characteristic variations. The work would naturally be carried out in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

She emphasized that all plans referring to 1952 or later had not yet been approved by the General Conference, but were still in the form of proposals by the UNESCO Executive Board, thus not yet binding on the Organization.

Mrs. DEMBINSKA (Poland) said that the problem of women's education was considered in Poland as most important and indeed an essential element for the country's progress and the process of post-war reconstruction. In the new Poland, education was being provided for all, and the initiative was being taken by the Government, the municipal authorities and all social organizations, from trade unions and women's organizations to cultural bodies. Two tendencies were apparent, the first a desire on the part of adults to improve their education and attain higher professional standards, and the second the new system of education for young people, which made it possible for the children of workers and peasants to attend school.

/She quoted

She quoted a passage from the report of the Polish Women's League which showed how much that organization had accomplished in the field of adult women's education. According to the report, it had been a matter of urgency in 1945 to provide training for women who had lost their families, and therefore their means of support, and who had no professional training.

The Polish Women's League had arranged for vocational training for these women, and had provided such training for 45,000 women. In 1946, woman power in industry had reached a total of 873,000 women. Numbers had increased steadily since, as a result of the three-year reconstruction plan for the development of national industry, agriculture and trade. At the end of the three-year plan, there were already 1,300,000 women employed in industry. A further increase might be expected as the result of the six-year plan, since under that plan work could be provided for 1,230,000 women, 900,000 of them at the professional level.

As a result of the six-year plan, the Polish Women's League had made certain changes in the vocational training provided for women, and was co-operating even more closely with the authorities and bodies responsible for implementing the plan. In 1950, it had become possible for women to receive similar training to men, and learn alongside them in the schools of metallurgy, railways, mines, building trades, steel works, textiles and agriculture. There was a pronounced increase in the number of women engaged in productive work. In the metallurgical industries, woman power had tripled since the war. Fifteen times the pre-war numbers of women were employed in mining, nine times in the steel works, six times in the clothing industry; in the textile industry woman power had doubled. The total woman power employed in the above-mentioned branches of industry had increased from 110,000 to 350,000. There was a marked decrease in the number of women employed in unproductive occupations such as domestic service, in which, before the war 40 per cent of the total number of the women employed had been engaged. The figure had fallen to 5 per cent and was still falling. During the first six months of the first year of the six-year plan, the figure for woman power employed had been 1,500,000, i.e. 31½ per cent of the total labour force employed in Poland. However, the number of women

Working in new professions and earning higher wages was continually increasing. Women were being employed in responsible positions on the railways, and in the agricultural co-operatives, where their rights were entirely equal to those of men. In industry, over 18,000 women had obtained high posts. Women had achieved positions as university lecturers, Under-Secretaries of State and judges of the Supreme Court.

Attendance at the congress of the Polish Women's League had revealed the increased self-respect, dignity and assurance of women who had passed from living in slums and earning a precarious wage by taking in washing, to tasks of some responsibility and interest. She was mentioning these facts not for reasons of sentiment, but as a demonstration that it was quite unnecessary for women of colonial countries to pass through any further long periods of education before obtaining their rights. The new feeling of hope which inspired the women of Poland was obvious from the fact that 2,000,000 children had been born in the past five years.

All vocational training courses were paid for by the State. Students frequently received full board while training. Many elementary, secondary schools and pre-university training institutions were available for adults desirous of receiving education, and scholarships were open to them. Correspondence courses were provided by the State for those unable or not wishing to attend regular school courses. Progress was being made possible for all who had previously held a low place in society, and in particular for women. It was the result both of a democratic system and the demands of developing industry. Poland was changing from an agricultural to an industrial economy and the old system of differences between towns and villages was disappearing, all of which was contributing to the progress of women's education.

With regard to education for young people, its aims included all those to which she had previously referred. She had already spoken of nursery schools and kindergartens, which, owing to a lack of teachers and buildings, were still insufficient. Nursery schools were increasing in proportion to the growing number of women employed in productive industries, since nursery schools and kindergartens were intended primarily for the children of working mothers.



Primary schools were free to all and education was compulsory. All educational establishments, including universities, were free and opportunities were provided to prepare children for vocational training schools and high schools. The number of secondary schools and vocational training schools, and the number of pupils attending them, had risen. In 1938-1939, the number of such pupils had been thirteen per thousand inhabitants. In 1951, the number had risen to thirty-two pupils per thousand inhabitants, not counting the pupils of agricultural training schools. Free access to schools for children of workers and peasants had increased the number of pupils of both sexes. Scholarships and allowances were available and proportions of scholarship holders varied from 18 to 76 per cent according to the type of school. 30,000,000 cheap textbooks were published each year.

Universities in Poland had increased from a pre-war number of twenty-eight to eighty-one, with 120,000 students, 40 per cent of whom were women.

Credits for education in the national budget, added to credits for cultural services, public health services and social insurance, accounted for 31½ per cent of the budget.

Poland's progress in the field of education had been accomplished despite great difficulties; 17,000 teachers and lecturers had been lost to the country during the war and 6,000 schools had been destroyed. Despite all adversities, however, Polish universities were doing important scientific work, and with other educational establishments were struggling to achieve results in the field of education. Considerable publicity was given to promising students.

Education in Poland was based on principles of sincere internationalism. War propaganda was prohibited by law, and Polish mothers, anxious for the life and future of the young people of the country, were working for peace.

Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) congratulated the UNESCO representative on her informative report.

Referring to educational opportunities for women she said that in the Dominican Republic there was no discrimination against women. For many years they had been teaching in all the institutions of higher learning. Her sister, who was a doctor, had been one of the first women to teach medicine at the University.

/As in most

As in most of the countries of the western hemisphere, in the Dominican Republic there were more women teachers than men. With a population of slightly over 2,000,000 people, at the present time the country had 2,665 schools serving more than 230,000 pupils, of whom almost half were women.

Since 1941 her Government had launched a broad educational programme to eradicate illiteracy. Under that programme, which was a significant step towards improving the cultural level of the population, almost 450,000 persons had been taught to read in the space of a few years. The State supplied all the teaching materials necessary to instruct the people in reading and writing.

Women had access to all educational opportunities in her country. They were actively engaged in the liberal professions, where they competed with men on the basis of full equality.

She was firmly convinced that the development of a people could best be measured by the participation of women in community life and in society. She hoped that in the future there would be no discrimination against women in education anywhere in the world.

Mrs. GUERY (Haiti) said that the Haitian women were particularly anxious to educate themselves after having been denied that opportunity for many years. Existing legislation which made education free was evidence of that desire. In Haiti even members of the foreign colonies were entitled to attend the public schools.

Until a quarter of a century earlier Haitian women had received only primary education, but when they had shown a desire for higher education, despite the many prejudices against co-education, secondary teaching had been made available to them with great success. A high school for girls had been established in 1944. Private schools had gradually expanded their curricula to include secondary studies. There were at the present time five secondary schools for girls in the capital of Haiti and the rural high schools ensured access to education for both sexes.

Women were entering the field of medicine and the other liberal professions in increasing numbers and were achieving growing success in those fields. Women were free to enter the legal profession without discrimination but much time would be necessary before they could overcome the deep-rooted prejudices which still subsisted and equal men's financial success in that field.

For five years a teacher's training school had been operating, staffed by foreign instructors who were graduates of the Sorbonne and by Haitians with many years of training in the teaching field. Graduates of that school were sent abroad to take their advanced degrees. There was no discrimination against women in the selection of the students for such advanced studies. Currently four young men and two young women were abroad continuing their education.

The graduates of other schools were also entitled to fellowships for study abroad. Despite the fact that Haiti's main source of income was agriculture, however, women were unable to attend the school of agronomy.

The professional schools in many instances had inadequate equipment. That was the great stumbling block in the way of further progress, for such equipment was costly to purchase and equally expensive to maintain. It was also a discouraging factor for many scholars, who often left Haiti to establish themselves in other countries, to the great loss of the community.

The real problem facing Haiti and other under-developed countries was the need for assistance which would enable the Government to instal the necessary technical equipment. They did not need advice from technicians who prepared reports and made recommendations which often could not be carried out.

The school of nursing was growing and increasing numbers of applications were being received. In the last five years entrance qualifications had been raised; the teaching staff was constantly being improved and the general level of performance of both staff and students had risen tremendously.

Haitian families were making increasing use of the services of nurses, but there was now a shortage of nurses. There again the country was faced with the problem of inadequate facilities and technical equipment. For two years men had been registering at the school of nursing and were training to serve in the insane asylums. For all their physical strength, however, men could never replace women, with their patience, devotion and intuitive understanding of the sick.

Laboratory technicians and pharmacists were held in high esteem. Women in those fields did their work competently and efficiently and did not attempt to profit by the sufferings of their fellow men.

Haiti was still faced with the problem of illiteracy despite the campaign undertaken in the last few years to educate the people. No agreement had as yet been reached on the language of instruction. She felt that the country could not continue to teach the vernacular because of the difficulty of keeping that language alive. Moreover, that type of instruction built up a wall between the people and the upper classes which did not augur well for the future of a democracy. Thirdly, the possibility of encouraging trade and cultural exchange through the use of the vernacular language was extremely difficult. The advanced nations would have little interest in teaching a language which was used by so few people. Until the country had decided in which language it wished to give instruction, however, the urgent problem of eliminating illiteracy would remain.

Mrs. POPOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said the subject of educational opportunities for women was of vital importance. It was not the first time that the Commission had discussed that item although it had not made particularly satisfactory progress.

The representative of UNESCO had made a particularly interesting statement on the subject. She had expressed the fundamental truth that educational opportunities for women were affected by their political rights.

Hitherto the Commission had failed to cope with the problem. The position of women was still unsatisfactory and that situation should be changed. The statement by the representative of Haiti further confirmed her opinion. For example, the problem of illiteracy in Haiti had still not been solved. The large percentage of illiteracy in many countries directly affected women's enjoyment of their rights. The inadequate educational facilities and the discrimination against women in professional fields all hindered their progress towards that goal. For example, in the United States there were ten million illiterates, six million of whom were unable to attend school either for lack of facilities or because their parents could not afford to send them. That fact was of vital importance to women, for it could be roughly estimated that half of those ten million illiterates were women. The situation in the United States was particularly serious in view of the fact that less than 1 per cent of the

the 1950/51 budget was devoted to education. In New York pupils were attending school in dilapidated buildings. There were, of course, some good schools but the matriculation fees in those institutions were beyond the reach of many families. Moreover, the number of public schools was not increasing. A Federal social service agency in a recent report had stated that 1,000 million dollars would be required in the next decade to provide adequate school facilities in the United States. To ensure the appropriate educational facilities one million additional teachers would have to be trained and many more schools built.

The lack of adequate educational facilities in the United States could be ascribed to the armaments race, for, according to the Chamber of Commerce, 70 per cent of the national income was being devoted to military appropriations.

Much the same unsatisfactory situation prevailed in the United Kingdom. Since the Second World War no new schools had been built and the existing facilities had not been repaired. Nevertheless, that country was spending an inordinate share of its budget on armaments. Likewise, in Paris only one new school had been built since the Second World War despite the fact that many of the old buildings had collapsed. In the face of that situation France, instead of expanding its budget for social services, was devoting an increasingly large share of the public funds to armaments. All those things indirectly affected women's rights.

Moreover, the Secretary-General's report stated that in many cases women's rights remained a dead letter. She felt, therefore, that on the basis of those facts the Commission should take some action in the matter.

There was widespread discrimination against women in the professions, particularly in the law and medicine. In the United States, not more than 5 per cent of the student body of medical colleges could be women. The high cost of education also made it impossible for many families to send their girls to professional schools. In the United Kingdom, although according to law women were entitled to study medicine, only 15 per cent of the physicians were women. The upper ranks of the banking industry were not open to women. In France access to some professional fields and schools was limited or totally denied to women. In the Far East and Asia the problem was even more serious owing to the higher rate of illiteracy.

In the Trust Territories an extremely unfavourable situation prevailed. There was widespread illiteracy and almost no professional training in the British and French Trust Territories. For that reason, she agreed with the representative of the Dominican Republic that the Commission should raise the question of professional training for women in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

There was no law making education compulsory in the Trust Territories. In Kenya, Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Swaziland education was compulsory for the Europeans but not for the indigenous inhabitants. In Somaliland no professional opportunities were open to the people, and in Uganda no indigenous candidates had been qualified to apply for professional positions. In Surinam men were given priority for posts in public office.

The unsatisfactory situation in education was confirmed by many of the petitions received from the Trust Territories. It was true that the Commission did not possess sufficient data to make a thorough survey of the situation, but the facts it had in hand indicated that very little in the way of educating the people had been done in those countries.

In the USSR, on the other hand, Stalin had proclaimed the education of the people as one of the first objectives of the State. A large percentage of the national budget was devoted to education. Over 120 thousand million rubles, or 26.8 per cent of the budget, was allocated to social affairs.

Illiteracy had been completely eradicated. Each of the Soviet Republics gave instruction in the local language. Education was compulsory for seven years. There were now 37 million students in undergraduate schools. There were 800 institutions of higher learning with a student enrolment exceeding the total enrolment of all the institutions of Europe. Increasing numbers of women were attending school. In the first ten years of the Soviet regime 28 per cent of the students had been women; by 1940 the proportion had risen to 49.3 per cent. Steadily increasing numbers of women were attending technical training schools where 47 per cent of the students were women. Moreover, 42 per cent of the professional persons in the USSR were women. More than 2 million women were actively working in the public education system and at least 39 per cent of the persons engaged in science were women, one million women were engaged in the Public Health System.

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There were many prominent women in all branches of activity in the USSR, several of whom had received the Stalin prize.

Before the October Revolution the Soviet Union had been a backward nation but now all its citizens enjoyed equal rights. The Soviet Government had promoted education in the Republics and had fostered the development of national cultures.

The social structure of the USSR was based on the premise that the social, education, material and cultural well-being <sup>of the people</sup> in all walks of life must be improved. The Soviet leaders were working for peace, a policy which was incompatible with the armaments race in which the United States was engaged. It was that policy which enabled the USSR to devote such a large proportion of its budget to the education of women.

The Commission should work actively for equal opportunities for women. It should devote its major attention to the vital issues at stake and attempt to find solutions for the problems confronting women all over the world. It was regrettable that some members of the Commission seemed to forget that that was the Commission's main task.

The USSR representative said she was accustomed to cite facts in support of her contentions and it was to be deplored that the United States representative had misinterpreted the facts in her attempt to refute the USSR's contentions. The letters quoted by the United States representative merely proved that women were able freely to criticize those institutions which infringed their rights. In so doing they were acting as true USSR citizens who would let no one prevent them from achieving their full rights.

It was true that the USSR penal code prevented pregnant women from working. That was an excellent illustration of the Government's concern for women's rights. It was also true that students were often assigned work after they had received their education at the Government's expense. In the United States, on the other hand, university graduates were frequently unable to find any employment at all. She considered, therefore, that <sup>the</sup> criticisms directed at the USSR had been invidious distortions of the true facts.

In conclusion she said that the problem of equal opportunities for women in education was a vital issue which deserved the Commission's full attention, for she was persuaded that the Commission's work would assist women throughout the world in attaining their rightful place in society.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.