CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
III 6th Session

OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE THOUSAND AND EIGHTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York

on Tuesday, 16 May 1955, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. CASTEX

Lt. R. MR. MALIK

RERA R. MR. WHITLAM

(Article 61 (continued))
Mr. NEXT
Mr. VALERIUS
Mr. JENNY
Mr. ZHANG PANGAN
Mr. Congress
Mr. CHENG
Mr. ANJUNI
Mr. KURY
Mr. CHEN
Mr. WALL
Mr. ICAY
Mr. BODE
Mr. VILENO
Mr. KNOZ
Mr. LAR
Mrs. ROSETILL
Mr. RASSO
Mr. CANTY
Miss MUNE
Also Present:

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mr. FLINford
Mr. INCE
Mr. VAPA

International Labour Organization (ILO)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Representatives of non-governmental organizations:

Category A:

Miss SENDER
Miss KAND

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICTU)

World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)

Representatives of the Commission on the Status of Women

Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay
Yugoslavia

International Federation of Trade Unions (FITA)

/Better

/Category B:
Article 21 (continued)

Mr. BORATYNKII (Poland) stressed the importance of the second USSR amendment (E/CH.6/L.46) regarding equal pay for equal work. As an example of the pitiful conditions endured by women workers in many countries, he referred
to the conditions in the Greek tobacco industry, where approximately half of the workers were women who were paid 30 per cent less than the men doing the same work. Many of those women had homes and children to look after, they had to do their shopping and housework after working hours in extremely difficult conditions and there was no provision for looking after their children while they were at work. He had cited those facts from a publication issued by the United States Department of Labor on 25 February 1951. A similar situation prevailed in many countries. For example, official statistics showed that, in December 1951, women workers in New York State had earned on an average 39 per cent less than men doing the same work. He went on to quote figures from the International Labour Review of March 1952 showing similar discrimination against women in Australia, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Some representatives had used economic arguments against the immediate application of the principle of equal pay for equal work. The invalidity of such arguments was obvious. In spite of the tremendous efforts they had had to make to re-build their countries after the devastation of the war, the People's Democracies had succeeded in establishing equal pay for equal work for men and women workers. That move had not created any fresh economic difficulties but had, on the contrary, helped in solving some of the economic problems. Under his country's new draft constitution, women were guaranteed equal rights with men in all fields and all necessary provisions were made for maternal and child welfare. Accordingly, he supported the USSR amendment and urged the Commission to adopt it, particularly in view of the resolution adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its last session.

Mr. Kalik (Lebanon) took the chair.

Mr. SCARR (United Kingdom) said that, among the various amendments, there were two cases in which the Commission had to choose between the general and the particular formulation. The first was the question whether the words "for men and women workers" should be added to the provision on equal pay for equal work. He personally felt that such an addition was unnecessary since it was clear from the introductory part of the article that its provisions applied...
to "everyone" and, in addition, the article was covered, as was the whole of
the draft covenant, by the general clause which specifically precluded
discrimination on grounds of sex. When the Commission on the Status of Women
had first made its proposal there had been no such general clause so that there
had been more grounds for the proposal. As it was, however, he fully
agreed with the representatives of Sweden and India that it was best to adopt
the general approach and to secure that all the rights listed in the covenant
applied equally to men and women as a matter of course rather than to single
out women for special mention. He also agreed with the French representative
that the inclusion of a specific reference to women might impair the obligation
to prohibit discrimination on other grounds; the clause was intended to apply
to all workers and not only to the relationship between men and women workers.

The second case in which the relationship between the general and
the particular arose was in connexion with the Chilean amendment (E/CN.4/L.624/Rev.1)
the first paragraph of which repeated a provision already contained in article 1.
For that reason he objected to it; if, on the other hand, the purpose was to
maintain the provisions of the general clause, in case it should eventually be
deleted, he would be obliged to oppose the amendment for the reasons he had
given when objecting to paragraph 2 of the general clause, as its adoption
would mean that States would be obliged to grant equal pay for equal work for
men and women immediately, and many States were not in a position to undertake
such a commitment. As for the second paragraph of the Chilean amendment, he
wondered whether it was intended as a repetition of the provisions of the
general clause regarding progressive implementation, or whether it would in
fact impose an immediate obligation. If it was merely a repetition, it was
unnecessary and if it involved an immediate obligation for States, he could not
accept it for the reasons he had just given.

At the previous meeting, the USSR representative had asked why the
United Kingdom, while accepting the principle of equal pay for equal work in
theory, was not in a position to implement it in practice. It was true, as
the USSR representative had stated, that women in government service in the
United Kingdom were paid less than men for equal work, although, in many cases,
they received a very adequate salary. In existing circumstances, it was
impossible for the Government to grant equal pay for equal work because of the

/economic
economic position in the United Kingdom. Like many other countries, the
United Kingdom was suffering from an inflationary tendency. At the same time,
the disequilibrium between its imports and exports was increasing. Consequently,
the Government was trying to curtail unnecessary imports and, as far as
possible, to limit the volume of purchasing power, so as to increase the
quantity of goods available for export and reduce both the demand for
additional imports and the use for domestic needs of productive capacity which
could be used for exports. If the Government were to raise the pay of women
workers to the level of that of the men, a similar step would probably be
taken in many other walks of life where the action of the Government was
usually followed and there would be a sudden sharp increase in purchasing
power within the country, which was just what had to be avoided. In the
circumstances, the Government did not feel that it could take the responsibility
of releasing that extra purchasing power. The USSR representative might argue
that the economic situation in the United Kingdom was only temporary, but there
seemed at present to be no end in sight and it might well be that the position
reflected a disequilibrium in world economic relations, and particularly
between hard currency areas and the rest of the world, which could not be
corrected in the immediate future.

With regard to the statistics quoted by the Polish representative, he
pointed out that the very fact that equal pay for equal work did not yet exist
in many countries should make the Commission hesitate to impose an immediate
obligation on States to put the principle into practice. The situation could
not be changed simply by a stroke of the pen and if the covenant was drafted
in such a way as to prevent a large number of States from signing and ratifying:
it would lose greatly in effectiveness. Furthermore, statistics of the kind
mentioned by the Polish representative needed careful interpretation. Some
industries, such as the heavy industries or skilled industries, where the wages
were generally high, were staffed mainly by men, so that, if the statistics
quoted represented averages covering every type of employment, they did not
really give a fair picture.
Turning to the other amendments submitted, he said that he would support the USIP proposal (E/CN.4/L.46) to delete the word "minimum" from sub-paragraph (b), for the reasons given by other speakers. He could not, however, support the second and fourth USSR amendments (E/CN.4/L.46) for the reason which he had already given. As for the third USSR amendment, he felt it would be out of place to include a reference to rest and leisure in sub-paragraph (c). In his opinion, the conception of rest and leisure was inherent in the provision for a reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

He supported the Chilean proposal to redraft sub-paragraph (b) (1) (E/CN.4/L.62/Rev.2).

In the Yugoslav amendment (E/CN.4/L.65/Rev.1/Corr.1), he agreed with the other representatives who had expressed the view that it would not be desirable to link the level of wages to the prosperity of any particular undertaking. In certain cases, when the business was going through a difficult stage, the workers might voluntarily accept cuts in pay until the business recovered. However, he did not think it would be at all well received if it were made compulsory for workers to accept cuts in pay whenever the undertaking they were working for ran into difficulties.

Finally, he commented on the amendments submitted by Uruguay (E/CN.4/L.66). In the first place, he questioned the advisability of using the word "satisfying", since it was characteristic of man never to be satisfied. Secondly, he wondered whether the list of "physical, intellectual and moral needs" was really exhaustive. In his opinion, the point was really covered by the general reference to "a decent living" and by the provision for a "reasonable limitation of working hours". If the Commission attempted to be more precise, it would meet with very serious difficulties and would run the risk of leaving out something important.

Mr. KIMOU (Greece) said that there were two types of amendments before the Commission: the proposals for an additional paragraph comprising some form of a guarantee of implementation, and the proposals for drafting changes. On the question of the guarantee, the position of all delegations which favoured the text of article 1 was sufficiently clear and required no further elaboration.
With regard to the other amendments, he supported the USSR proposal (E/CH.4/L.46) to delete the word "minimum" from sub-paragraph (b) and the Chilean proposal (E/CH.4/L.62/Rev.2) to redraft sub-paragraph (b) (1). He could not, however, agree to the introduction of the words "for men and women workers" in sub-paragraph (b) (1), as suggested by the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CH.4/L.24). In that point, he shared the views expressed by the representatives of Sweden and India. He shared the United Kingdom representative's reasons for objecting to the Hungarian amendment (E/CH.4/L.56) and he could not accept the Yugoslav amendment (E/CH.4/L.63/Rev.1/Corr.1) because he did not think it would be to the advantage of the workers to make their wages dependent on the profits of the undertaking for which they worked.

The representative of Poland had referred to the working conditions for women in the tobacco industry in Greece. If necessary he could give a similar explanation to that given by the United Kingdom representative regarding his country. The Polish representative seemed to think that everything was perfect in the People's Democracies. His delegation however, was willing to admit that conditions in Greece were not perfect and that was why it wished to include the principle of equal pay for equal work in the draft covenant. The Greek representative on the Commission on the Status of Women had in fact been one of the sponsors of that proposal.

H. KHA (India), replying to the observations made by the USSR representative at a previous meeting, said that her opposition to the inclusion of a reference to equal pay for men and women was entirely consistent with her delegation's attitude to the inclusion of that phrase in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She was perfectly aware of the gross discrimination against women not only with regard to the right to work but also with regard to many other rights, both economic and political; but both sexes were covered by the word "everyone" and by the non-discrimination paragraph in the general clauses. A specific reference in article 21 alone would weaken the position of women with regard to the other articles.

She could not appreciate the United Kingdom representative's position in connexion with equal pay for men and women in his own country. She could understand that some countries might be unable immediately to accord all the
rights to everyone and that the United Kingdom's economic difficulties might
make a general curtailment of purchasing power desirable; but she could see no
warrant for curtailing the wages and salaries of women alone. The Commission
must ensure the enjoyment of human rights by everyone, regardless of sex or any
other consideration.

Mr. WAKED (Tunisia) said that the existing text of article 21
(E/1992) should be retained, though it did not provide for any specific
obligation, with a few comparatively minor amendments. In view of the
explanation given by the representative of the ILO, he would support the first
USSR amendment (6/C/4/L.46). The Chilean text (E/C.4/L.60) proposed for
sub-paragraph (4) (4) was closer to the language already adopted in an
international convention and should thus be preferred to the existing text, to
which the wording of the second USSR amendment (6/C.4/L.46) might well be added.
The Yugoslav amendment (E/C.4/L.63/Rev.1/Corr.1) was excellent in principle,
but it was inadequate because it mentioned only two of the many possible factors
the cost of living and the profits of the undertaking. He could accept the
Uruguayan amendment (E/C.4/L.60) without hesitation, as it gave a clear definition of the conditions to be ensured. The inclusion of the non-discrimination clause proposed in the first Chilean amendment (E/C.4/L.62/Rev.2) would be useful, notwithstanding the existence of the general article, because it would help to abolish existing discrimination, especially in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, where it was particularly widespread. He would have been prepared to vote for the second Chilean amendment, as he favoured the inclusion of specific obligations in the article, but would have to abstain in view of the Chilean representative's explanation that it meant that the right would have to be enforced immediately, not progressively, so that no delay would be allowed on account of the lack of available resources. To support an amendment thus interpreted by its sponsor would be inconsistent with his delegation's vote on the same question in the general clause.

/Mrs. RÖSSEL
Mrs. RUSSEL (Sweden) explained that she had never intended to imply that conditions in Sweden were satisfactory; of course they were not, nor were they in any country. What she had said had been that the inclusion of the principle of equal access to the civil service by men and women in the Swedish Constitution had been of great assistance in ensuring the application of that principle to work, wages and similar matters. To cite and criticize conditions in other countries was not helpful; everyone knew that there was still much to be done.

At the thirty-fourth session of the International Labour Conference, it had been decided after lengthy discussion that Article 7 of the Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value should state that the appraisal of jobs was to be made on the basis of the work to be performed rather than of the workers performing them. The difference was of the utmost importance.

Many problems would have to be solved before the principle could be fully applied, particularly those of equal access to vocational training, to promotion, to welfare and social services for women and to the furthering of public understanding. A great deal of work on those lines was now being accomplished by the Swedish trade unions and the national and international women’s organizations. To have the principle formally laid down would be of the greatest help in that work, but its formulation must be absolutely clear-cut.

She was particularly grateful for the appreciation of that principle shown by the male members of the Commission, the more so as it had not always been displayed in other international bodies. The best way to show that appreciation would be by interpreting paragraph 2 of the general clause and the word “everyone” as covering both men and women, and by stating that interpretation as clearly as possible. Otherwise the position of women in connexion with such articles as Article 28 would not be properly safeguarded.

Mr. KOVALENO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the USSR draft amendment (E/CH.4/1.46) should be supported since it was an attempt to comply with General Assembly resolution 214 (VII). The principles involved were embodied in the Ukrainian Constitution, in particular in article 99. He did not, of course, expect the Commission to incorporate such constitutional
provisions bodily into the draft covenant, but the principle underlying them should most certainly be stated in it. The representative of the Commission on the Status of Women had supported the inclusion of similar provisions.

The USSR amendment, furthermore, was wholly in keeping with resolution 121 (VI) of the Economic and Social Council and with the provisions of the Charter.

Some delegations had expressed a reservation to equal pay for men and women on the ground that it was already covered in the general clause. The failure to include it would, however, give the impression that the Commission believed the conditions in that respect were everywhere satisfactory. Previous speakers had shown how unfounded any such belief would be; and many further examples of gross discrimination could be cited. The representative of the United Kingdom had added that plea, but his later remarks had seemed to disprove his own argument. He had stated that specific obligations were implied in the general clause, but had gone on to admit that the United Kingdom could not immediately give assurance that these obligations would be honoured. That seemed to show that some States did not want the clear-cut statement of an obligation.

The United Kingdom representative had added that, as many countries might not be able to fulfill the obligation immediately, there was no reason for its inclusion in the draft covenant; in other words, no discrimination with regard to sex existed, the Commission should not draft provisions to put an end to it. That would, of course, frustrate the Commission's entire work.

The representative of Sweden had stated at the previous meeting that the provision regarding the equality of men and women in regard to remuneration had been included in the Swedish Constitution. Nevertheless, the principle of equality between men and women was enunciated in other articles. Thus, the provisions of the Swedish Constitution themselves contradicted the Swedish representative's argument that there was no need for a specific reference in the draft covenant.

His delegation wholeheartedly supported the fourth USSR amendment (E/CN.4/L.46); the addition proposed would enable the rights to be effectively enforced.

Mr. JFREXVIC (Yugoslavia) wished to defend his proposal (E/CN.4/L.59/Rev.1/Corr/1) against criticisms by several delegations. The representative of India had had misgivings in connexion with the appraisal of fixed wages having regard to the profits of the undertaking and had wondered whether that could be applied to workers in State enterprises, the profits of which were regarded
were regarded as national revenue. Undoubtedly there must always be exceptional cases; but State enterprises had been known to raise wages, and there seemed no good reason why workers for the State should be less favoured than those in private employment. He could not agree with the representatives of France and the ILO that the two factors referred to in his proposal restricted the concept of fair wages; in the context of the article they were linked with many other factors. Obviously if there were no profits, as with some national post offices, fair wages would have to be appraised by other standards. The United Kingdom representative had cited the insurance of workers who accepted voluntary pay cuts when an undertaking was in difficulties they were not affected by the Yugoslav proposal. But it would be only fair that workers who would take pay cuts when an undertaking was in difficulties should be guaranteed a rise when things went well. He had accepted the suggestion of the representative of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CH.4/L.54) and had incorporated it in the revised version of his proposal. He could not accept any of the criticisms levelled at it, as it contained a principle that could not be affirmed too often. The representative of the United Kingdom had not convinced him that discrimination against women was justified when a country was in economic difficulties. While he greatly admired the efforts of the British people to surmount their difficulties, he still could not see why it should be the purchasing power of the women alone that should be curtailed, nor why it was impossible to spread the burden equitably. That was why he had supported the suggestion of the representative of the Commission on the Status of Women. His proposal had not been dictated by some bright idea of his own; it had been derived from things as they really were.

He would support the second Chilean amendment (E/CH.4/L.69/Rev.2). Be still had doubts about the fourth USSR proposal (E/CH.4/L.46). It was not for the State to make collective agreements, but merely to guarantee by legislative and other means conditions in which the rights stated in article 21 could be fully enjoyed. The State was not an employer and could not be responsible for collective agreements. All that the State could do was to guarantee, by legislative means, the conclusion of such agreements and if the opportunity arose, lay down the conditions or establish the framework within which they could be concluded.

Mrs. FIGUEROA (Chile) regretted that there had been some opposition to the Chilean amendment (E/CH.4/L.69/Rev.2). She had not been convinced by the remarks
remarks of the United Kingdom representative on the subject of equal pay for men and women. The adequacy or inadequacy of pay for any work bore no relation to the sex of the worker; what was just remuneration for a woman was just for a man and vice versa. While the explanation given by the United Kingdom representative of the economic situation in his country was no doubt valid, she could only agree with the Indian representative that the difficulties in question should not be overcome at the cost of sacrificing the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

It was obvious that, where the right to work was concerned, there was greater discrimination on grounds of sex than on any other grounds; she would venture to say that no other form of labour discrimination existed in the United Kingdom. The seriousness of such discrimination throughout the world was proven by the fact that the ILO had deemed it necessary to draw up a special convention on equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. Her delegation, after listening to the debate, was more convinced than ever that that principle must be specifically recognized in article 21 of the covenant. She hoped that the USSR and Yugoslav representatives would agree to replace the references in their amendments (E/CN.4/L.46, E/CN.4/L.63/Rev.1/Corr.1) to "equal pay for equal work" by the phrase "equal remuneration for work of equal value" adopted by the ILO, as important differences of principle were involved.

Mr. NOGOGU (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he had listened with much interest to the argument advanced, in particular, by the United Kingdom and French representatives, that the non-discrimination clause in the Chilean amendment was unnecessary because such a clause already existed in article 1, paragraph 2 as recently adopted by the Commission. A little thought showed that the argument was purely formalistic. The United Kingdom and French representatives had opposed paragraph 2 at earlier meetings, had voted against it and had announced their intention to continue their opposition. Their advice to the Commission to exclude an important principle from article 21 on the ground that it was already included in article 1, paragraph 2 was therefore disingenuous and should be treated with caution. For his part, he strongly urged the Commission to include in article 21 the ideas contained in the Chilean amendment.

/Be thanked
He trusted the United Kingdom representative for the explanation of the economic difficulties which presumably prevented the application in his country of the principle of equal pay for equal work. He did not for a moment doubt that the explanation had been offered in all sincerity, but in point of fact the roots of the trouble, in other countries as well as in the United Kingdom, went much more deeply. If that superficial explanation were accepted, the question asked by the Indian representative and other speakers -- why should economic difficulties be settled at the expense of the woman alone? -- could easily be answered by a fair re-distribution among men and women workers of such resources as a country could muster. The real reason for the continuing discrimination against women workers in a great many countries was that an underground struggle was still being waged to prevent women from achieving that economic equality which alone was the basis for the attainment of equal rights in all other spheres of human activity.

The debate on article 21, as on the other articles, was concerned not with drafting, as some had maintained, but with basic principles; and the opposition to the USSR amendment was certainly not on stylistic grounds. The Commission was facing the choice, on the one hand, of carrying out the General Assembly's instructions contained in resolution 514 (VII) to make the covenant on economic, social and cultural rights more effective by emphasizing that there must be no discrimination against women workers -- an action the effect of which would be not to weaken articles which contained no clause on non-discrimination, but rather to draw attention to a field in which discrimination was particularly vicious -- or, on the other hand, of failing in its duty, in which case the USSR delegation would continue both in the Commission and in other organs of the United Nations to defend the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Turning to point 4 of the USSR amendment (E/1854/4/464) he said that the suggested passage did not mean that collective agreements had to be determined in content by the State or be subject to State control; rather, whatever its economic or political system, the State would undertake the obligation to create the necessary conditions so that the rights of wage-earners could be implemented, either by law or by means of collective agreements.
...the United States representative would not preclude differences in wage-scales, depending on the particular collective agreement, but would at least prevent remuneration from falling below the minimum described in article 21. The United States representative's objection to that amendment was in utter disregard of a century of the labour movement which had led to the adoption in all the countries members of the Commission of some labour legislation, inadequate though it might be. All States had accepted the principle that there must be some regulation of working conditions by means of law; the Commission's task was to extend that principle rather than to deny it.

Mr. M. I. (Commission on the Status of Women) said that the Commission had represented the deeply concerned with the subject of equal pay for equal work for men and women workers. She thanked the Yugoslav representative for including in the original version of his amendment (E/CN.4/63/Add.1/Corr.1) a reference to "men and women workers". That amendment now brought out two important principles: that there must be no discrimination on any grounds as colour, race and religion, and, in particular, that there must be no discrimination on the grounds of sex. That such a provision was necessary was borne out by the fact that the ILO had recently drawn up a convention entirely devoted to the subject of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. The Commission on the Status of Women was anxious that action should be taken to eliminate discrimination against women workers wherever it existed.

Mr. W. I. (Uruguay) was unable to accept the view expressed by the United States representative at an earlier meeting that article 24 would be a better place for the Uruguayan amendment to article 21 (E/CN.4/63/Add.1). The purpose of the amendment was to define more precisely the remuneration, described in article 21, to which all workers were entitled.

While he shared the United Kingdom representative's objection to the work "satisfying" in the Uruguayan amendment, he felt that the amendment would nevertheless improve the original text of article 21 by clarifying the meaning of such vague terms as "a decent living". Literally speaking, of course, no human need could ever be fully satisfied; dissatisfaction was the divine
spark which kindled mankind, urging it to ever greater progress, and there was every reason to hope that, as time went on, living and working conditions would continue to improve. He had spoken of "physical, intellectual and moral needs" because that formula had become traditional and would be readily understood by everyone as all-inclusive.

Turning to the various other amendments before the Commission, he said that he would vote for the first paragraph of the Chilean amendment (E/CN.4/L.62/rev.2), since in his view article 21 should contain a non-discrimination clause. He would vote for the deletion of the word "minimum" in sub-paragraph (b), as proposed by the USSR representative (E/CN.4/L.66), and for the Yugoslav amendment (E/CN.4/L.63/Rev.1/Corr.1) if the Yugoslav representative consented, as it seemed that he had, to replace the words "equal pay for equal work" by the ILO phrase, to which the Chilean representative had drawn attention. He would also vote in favour of the USSR amendments to sub-paragraph (e) (E/CN.4/L.46, point 3) and for the USSR addition to article 21 (E/CN.4/L.46, point 4), under which the State would guarantee the right recognized in that article. If that amendment should be rejected, he hoped to have an opportunity of voting in favour of the corresponding paragraph in the Chilean amendment (E/CN.4/L.62/rev.2, point 2).

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.