



Status of Women Commission.

March 24th, 1954

Political Rights of Women -

Statement of the delegate of the Women's International Federation, Mrs. Dora Russell.

Madam Chairman:

Listening to the contributions made by the distinguished members of this Commission, it is impossible not to be impressed with the progress that has been made in the political rights of women since the United Nations Charter came into being. But, in reflecting on those advances, we here, most of whom, as women, enjoy considerable status, are inclined to pass too rapidly over the position of women who are still little more than slaves.

To women in non-self-governing territories and Trust territories and in others where they have not attained full political rights, or have none, the Charter of the United Nations has become a symbol to which they appeal when struggling against opposition and oppression. In its relations with women of the non-self-governing territories my organization has found many instances of the faith of such women in the power and influence of the United Nations, and, in our consultative status to the U.N. we act as a link or bridge between women whose countries are not directly represented here.

On our Executive Committee alone - apart from our larger body, the Council - sit representatives of 28 countries ranging from Western Europe and Scandinavia to South America, Eastern Europe and the Middle and Far East. It is thus possible for us to obtain a wide perspective of the aspirations of women all over the world. We did, in fact, furnish to the Economic and Social Council in October 1953 a document on the Social Situation of Women and Children compiled from our own investigations and from reports made or sent to our Conference In Defence of Children in Vienna, and our World Conference of Women at Copenhagen.

These statements we have received from women of non-self-governing territories raise in one's mind the question as to whether they have not at present a firmer grasp on the needs and purposes of women than those of us who have longer enjoyed emancipation.

In Great Britain, for instance, where the right to vote was won in 1918 we have to-day only about 20 women members of Parliament. To take but one other example, it cannot be said that there is equality of opportunity for women in Britain in the medical profession. We speak of educating women to make use of their rights and to play their part as citizens, but

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[manuscrito] Dora Russell.**

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