

Geneva, September 11th, 1935.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

**NATIONALITY AND STATUS OF WOMEN**

**STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S  
ORGANISATIONS**

**(Supplement No. 2)**

**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS' INTERNATIONAL  
COMMITTEE OF TRADE UNION WOMEN.<sup>1</sup>**

It has been very satisfactory to note the considerable amount of progress which has been achieved since the war in the way of the political, civil, economic and social rights of women, and in a number of international fields of political, economic and social life.

In some countries, women have attained complete political equality, in others they have also attained complete equality in the way of civil rights. It cannot be denied, however, that in many countries — even those which are considered to be the most enlightened and advanced in the political and social fields — this evolution towards equality between the sexes has not proceeded at the pace set immediately after the war. On the contrary, in some countries, differential treatment and discrimination between the rights of men and women are still practised to such an extent that they arouse indignation each time the attention of public opinion, and especially that of women, is drawn towards them.

**POLITICAL AND CIVIL EMANCIPATION.**

There is a steady increase in the number of women who are struggling for their political and civil emancipation, and their efforts to attain equality continuously find more support among the whole body of public opinion, men as well as women.

The International Committee of Trade Union Women notes that the League of Nations is again taking up this question by placing the problem of the nationality and the general status of women on the Agenda for the Assembly.

The International Committee of Trade Union Women, in complete agreement with the International Federation of Trade Unions of which it forms a part, holds that :

(a) The married woman should have the right of option either to keep her own nationality or to take her husband's nationality, and that the nationality of a woman shall not be changed for the sole reason of (i) her marriage, (ii) a change in the nationality of her husband made during the marriage.

(b) The right of the woman to repatriation — *i.e.*, the right of the re-acquisition of former nationality, in consequence of the dissolution of the marriage by legal separation or by the death of the husband, which right already exists in many countries — should be made general by international agreement.

(c) In order that women ignorant of the law shall also be in a position to benefit from the laws, women must everywhere be informed of the legal position upon marriage, as well as in the event of a change of nationality on the part of the husband, and their declaration demanded.

<sup>1</sup> The letter transmitting this document to the Secretary-General states :

[*Translation.*]

"In this memorandum, the International Federation of Trade Unions' International Committee of Trade Union Women has put forward the point of view and expressed the wishes of nearly two million wage-earning women occupied in industry, commerce and transport, who adhere to the Federations which constitute the International Federation of Trade Unions."

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GENERAL STATUS OF WOMEN.

On the second point of the general status of women, the Committee is in general agreement with the principle of equality stated in the Treaty of Montevideo, but it would utter a warning against a hasty decision on this Treaty. It notes with alarm that the proposal to remove all legal distinction based on sex may be a menace to the protective legislation already secured for women workers by the movement in some countries.

It realises that the problems which are raised are of considerable complexity and probably of greater scope than is imagined by some organisations which urge the immediate and complete application of their demand. It would therefore recommend the greatest care and caution in the choice of terms and texts, which might easily give rise later on to abuses in the way of interpretation. It is enough to take as an example Article 1 of the Treaty of Montevideo on the subject of the status of women, which demands absolute equality between men and women. Such a formula could be interpreted as applicable also to social legislation and more particularly to legislation for the protection of women and the mothers of the future, which was certainly never intended by the authors of the Treaty.

In this connection, the International Committee of Trade Union Women urgently draws the attention of the League of Nations to the fact that, in any case, the examination of any social aspect, and of labour legislation, is and should remain the exclusive domain of the International Labour Organisation. The International Committee of Trade Union Women is convinced that it speaks on behalf, not only of the women workers it represents, but of nearly all women workers — employees, technicians and others — of the world when it demands the maintenance of social protection for women and mothers and an even more rapid development of protection in industry, commerce, agriculture and in work in the home, where the necessity is making itself felt with even greater urgency.

For all these reasons, the International Committee of Trade Union Women would propose that :

(1) All questions relating to the status of women should be submitted to a more thorough consideration and, if possible, should be examined in the first place by a consultative committee of representatives from international women's organisations.

(2) All aspects of the question relating to social and labour legislation should be remitted to the International Labour Organisation for consideration and report by the appropriate committee of that organisation.

