

UNRESTRICTED

TRUSTEESHIP

TUTELLE

T/PET/General/1
21 March 1947

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

TRUSTEESHIP

Petition from the International Alliance of Women,
Middlesex, England.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has received the following communication in the form of a petition concerning the terms of a Draft Convention on Social Policy in non-Metropolitan Territories drawn up by the International Labour Organization as they relate to Trust Territories, with particular reference to discrimination against workers on the basis of sex. This communication is herewith transmitted to the Trusteeship Council for its consideration in accordance with Article 87, paragraph (b) of the Charter of the United Nations.

MAR 31 1947

/INTERNATIONAL

Reg. No. 1506-7-1
March 14-47

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities.

Headquarters Secretary:
Katherine Bompas

Headquarters:
45, Kingsway, Wembley,
Middlesex, England

10th March 1947

To the Chairman
Trusteeship Council
United Nations,
Lake Success
U.S.A.

Sir,

Our attention has been called to the terms of a Draft Convention on Social Policy in non-Metropolitan Territories drawn up by the International Labour Organization to be presented to the International Labour Conference in Geneva in June of this year.

This Draft Convention has a section dealing with the prohibition by law of discriminations against workers based on race, colour, religion or tribal association. Discrimination on the grounds of the sex of the worker is not included, and was indeed expressly excluded on the plea that by its inclusion regulations prohibiting the work of women underground, or similar measures, would be impossible. This pretext for leaving women outside the operation of the law is inadmissible since while international conventions lay down principles which the signatories accept, national legislation to give effect to them must always take into account harmony with existing legislation on minor points.

The proposed Draft Convention is at variance with the principle of the equality of the sexes stated in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations and with the repeated declaration that there shall be no discrimination based on sex. In this Convention there is a very serious and vital discrimination based on sex, namely that male workers are to have the protection of the law, while in a separate section, women workers are only recommended to the "competent authority" to receive such protection and safeguards as, having regard to local conditions, are appropriate and practicable.

This Draft Convention would apply to the people for whose well-being the Trusteeship Council has been set up and we have no doubt that that Council has been informed of its terms. As an international organization to secure the equality of the sexes, we feel bound to call your attention to this serious threat to that principle. Women of native races are still frequently depressed and even enslaved by tribal custom - those

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very "local conditions" to which the competent authority is to have regard in affording them protection. The fact that their status is low is but an added reason why every legal protection considered necessary for men should be afforded to them. If at present there may be few women directly affected, surely equality under the law is something which they must enjoy in principle and in practice for the probably growing number who will gradually need it.

May we express our urgent hope that this matter will receive the urgent consideration of your Council, which we feel sure, is fully conscious of the vital importance of raising the status of women in all races now evolving towards a more complex social organization.

We are, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) M. I. Corbett Ashby
Hon. President

(Signed) Katherine Bompa
Secretary
