The Secretary-General of the United Nations has received the following communication in the form of a petition concerning the terms of proposed "Convention concerning Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories" drawn up by the International Labour Organization as they relate to Trust Territories, with reference to discrimination on the basis of sex. This communication is herewith transmitted to the Members of the Trusteeship Council in accordance with Rule 85 of the Rules of Procedure for the Trusteeship Council.
OPEN DOOR INTERNATIONAL
for the Economic Emancipation of the Woman Worker

Please reply to the President
Anna Westergaard
Egehoj, Charlottenlund
DENMARK

To: M. Trygve Lie
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, U.S.A.

Sir:


The Open Door International has been examining the terms of the proposed International Labour Convention on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories which is to come before the International Labour Conference for adoption in June 1947 at Geneva, Switzerland. (See I.L.O. Report III, 1.)

We are greatly concerned to find that this Convention directly and deliberately contravenes the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, (which on many occasions lays down that there shall in the future be no discriminations based on race, colour, religion or sex) in that it excludes all adult women in such Territories from that Section of the Convention (Section IV) which lays down the principle of Non-Discrimination. Section IV calls for standards set by law, irrespective of race, colour, religion or tribal association. Women are excluded. This Section applies to males only.

Thereafter all women are segregated under a separate section of the Convention (Section VI). This Section calls for no standards set by law. It leaves women in their present position, namely in the power of "the competent authority" and merely calls upon the said competent authorities to "take such measures as having due regard to local conditions are appropriate and practicable to secure for women - adequate" opportunities of general education, training and employment, safeguards, protection against exploitation, etc. etc.

In short, Section IV - Non-Discrimination - confers complete equality of status and rights on every adult male worker in Non-Metropolitan Territories. Section VI - Status of Women - deliberately denies equality of status and rights to every female in such Territories.

Not only are women deliberately barred from the definite protections of legislation implementing Section IV (Non-Discrimination) of the Convention. Their complete segregation as a class apart in Section VI (Status of Women) debars or can debar them from every benefit conferred by legislation which may arise from all the other Sections of the Convention.
The First Discussion of this Convention by the I.L.O. last October (1946) leaves no doubt whatever that this policy of sex discrimination was deliberate.

At a later stage in this Discussion several of the old sex-discriminatory Conventions of the I.L.O. were recommended for adoption in respect of the women of the Non-Metropolitan Territories.

The adoption of this outworn, discredited and disavowed policy for millions of women in Non-Metropolitan Territories will affect them disastrously for many generations to come.

Moreover such a policy is a direct violation of the principles so often enunciated in the Charter of the United Nations and specifically inserted in connection with the International Trusteeship Council and Non-Self-Governing peoples.

The International Labour Organisation has recently become formally associated with the United Nations. We have examined the articles of Agreement between the two bodies. We not only find nothing therein to suggest that the I.L.O. is absolved from adhering to the Charter; on the contrary we find specific agreements in Articles VII and VIII to co-operate with the work of the Trusteeship Council and to carry out U.N. policy and principles vis a vis non-self-governing peoples. These are the very peoples with whom this Convention deals.

In these circumstances we address through you, Sir, to the Assembly of the United Nations a strong protest, and an urgent request that the United Nations shall ask the International Labour Organisation Conference to bring their Convention on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories into conformity with the full principles of Non-discrimination as set forth in the U.N. Charter, namely that there shall be no discrimination based on race, colour, religion, or sex.

We ask you, Sir, to lay this letter before the next Assembly of the United Nations, and meanwhile before the Chairman and members of the Human Rights Commission and the International Trusteeship Council.

We have the honour to be, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

/s/
Anna Westergaard
President (Denmark)

/s/
Julie Arenholt
Hon. Treasurer. (Denmark)

/s/
Elizabeth Abbott
Hon. Sec. (Great Britain)

/s/
Florence E. Key
Board Member (Great Britain)

(Consultative Committee of the Board of Officers of the Open Door. International.)

(Received United Nations 5 May 1947)