

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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THE International Federation of Social Workers will soon be ten years old. This tenth anniversary will be celebrated at the International Conference of Social Work to be held in Rome in January of 1961.

There are three international organizations in the general field of social welfare: the International Conference of Social Work; the International Association of Schools of Social Work; and the International Federation of Social Workers.

The youngest of the three international organizations which sponsor this journal, "International Social Work", it was born out of the efforts of the International Conference of Social Work which has been working for thirty years to bring together those responsible for social welfare activities in all parts of the world. The International Association of Schools of Social Work, by training qualified persons for so many years, and by helping them in their work, helped to bring about a professional awareness on the part of social workers who, in turn, federated their national professional associations into the IFSW.

This was not a new idea, since well before the Second World War, the permanent Secretariat of Social Workers had been created. However, it wasn't until 1948 in the course of an unofficial meeting of twenty people in New York, that it was decided to resume the idea of re-grouping professional social workers within the International Conference of Social Work.

Following up this idea, a meeting of representatives of the professional associations was held at the Fifth International Conference of Social Work in Paris in 1950, under the chairmanship of Mr. Melvin Glasser. Thirty-five organizations from twenty five countries were present, which indicated the enthusiasm which accompanied the "rebirth" of our organization in that marvellous summer of 1950.

Appearing at the end of the document recording the work of that group, are some fifty of the best known "names" in international social welfare. Permit me here to thank them most warmly, although I am sure that "International Social Work" will carry them the message of that small seed which they planted in the earth of France, at the Sorbonne, on that Saturday, July 22, 1950.

Let us review again the minutes of that constitutional session. Allow me to summarize:

1. There should be an international organization of social workers.
2. This organization should include only social workers, taking this term in its most restrictive sense.
3. The goals of this international organization would be the following:
 - a. The raising of professional status.
 - b. The raising of professional standards.
 - c. Help in the creation of new national associations for social workers.
 - d. Study of the principal problems of the profession.
 - e. Exchange of bulletins and all professional publications.
 - f. Hospitality and welcoming of social workers from different countries.
 - g. Cooperation among social workers in all cases where it is a question of the betterment of living conditions.

It is understood that this international association will never be made up of individuals, but only of groups of individuals, groups which are recognized on the national level. (This was passed by unanimous vote.)

A small Committee was then appointed to revise the statutes and make proposals for organization. From this group was elected the first Committee of the Federation, the members of which were:

Mr. Melvin Glasser, President, U.S.A.

Mr. Jean Nihon, Vice-President for Europe,
Belgium

Miss Ruth Libermann, Secretary General, France

Miss Mac Dougall, Treasurer, Great Britain

In spite of the great difficulty of continuing work in common without international meetings, important and effective contact was maintained, especially in Europe.

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Meetings, conferences, and seminars bear witness to the life of this young organization:

ITALY — 1951 — Conference of Nervi.

INDIA — 1952 — Meeting of the Federation at the time of the 6th International Conference in Madras, where the delegates were pleased to see again their old friend, B. Chatterjee, who has played an important role in the Paris meetings.

BELGIUM — 1953 — A meeting at Brussels of the three Benelux countries: Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg.

CANADA — 1954 — The 7th International Conference of Social Work met in Toronto. Unfortunately, difficulties had more or less paralyzed the Federation since Madras, and kept it from any action of a truly international character. Note was made of these difficulties, but, under the stimulus of Mr. Jean Nihon (Belgium), it was decided to adjourn and to come together in large numbers and strong at the next International Conference in 1956. Since this was to take place in Europe, the French National Association of Social Workers, the most important after the American Association, was asked to take the necessary steps to facilitate a new effort.

NETHERLANDS — September 4-6, 1954 — Amsterdam — 2nd Congress of the European Section of the Federation. The European Associations met readily to consider further training for social workers while they are working, and social service in industry. It was decided to start an examination of the conditions of social work practice in the world.

SWITZERLAND — 1955 — A seminar at Montreux with the help of the UN Bureau of Social Affairs in Geneva. Questions of Deontology were again studied with success. Each country gathered ample information, and their experiences were shared and discussed.

GERMANY — 1956 — Munich — 8th International Conference. Some brilliant correspondents

answered the inquiry which was planned at Toronto, and came to give their reports:

Mr. D. S. Howard — University of California, for North America.

Miss J. Albano — Pan American Union, for South America.

Mr. B. Chatterjee — for India and Asia.

Miss N. Parker — for Australia.

Miss M. Lerma — Europe.

This professional trip "around the world" was truly of the greatest interest, for it assured us that there was not only a community of ideas and of practice, but also an actual fraternity.

That is why the delegates to the meeting of the Council of the Federation were full of confidence. The provisional statutes drawn up after the Paris Conference stated that the Federation would become a judicial entity as soon as seven (7) national associations decided to join. At Munich, twelve (12) National Associations of Social Workers were represented, so it was possible to elect an Executive Committee, whose first job was to draw up final statutes. This Committee, for its part, designated as its representatives:

Miss M. L. Ginet (France) — President

Mr. Donald V. Wilson (US) —
Secretary General

Miss Hedda Fredenhagen (Switzerland) —
Treasurer

SWITZERLAND — August 1957 — The Executive Committee met in Brunnen, having for an agenda the discussion and adoption of new statutes. Fortunately, Mr. Marios Raphael (Greece) lawyer and social worker, lent his knowledge and great interest to this difficult task.

ITALY — September 1957 — At Belgirate, a new Seminar with the help of the UN on the subject of: "further training for social workers and how professional associations can put it into operation."

SWITZERLAND — September 1957 — A group met in Zurich to study social service in industry.

FRANCE — June 1958 — The Federation was responsible for presenting a report to the Congress

of the International Union of Family Agencies at Paris. The Executive Committee met on this occasion; new national associations joined, bringing the total number up to twelve (12).

JAPAN—Thursday, December 4, 1958 — The Federation held its Council Meeting in Tokyo. Many professional associations were represented. It was an opportunity to give really world-wide dimensions to our organization. The trip to Asia had permitted its representatives to make contact with the professionals in Middle and Far Eastern countries; Lebanon, Pakistan, Vietnam, Philippines, Japan. Among these, two have become members of the Federation: Pakistan and the Philippines. The Tokyo meeting also gave us the opportunity to meet, for the first time in large numbers, our friends from Australia who have always been faithful to the Federation, and this gave us great pleasure.

Truly, at Tokyo, eight years after the decisions reached at Paris, a milestone was reached: the possibility for professionals from all parts of the world to meet and understand each other perfectly in the pursuit of common goals.

A substantive meeting, also held at Tokyo, permitted emphasis to be placed on the ideas which unite us. The theme chosen by our two speakers, Miss Jane Hoey (USA) and Mr. M. Gore (India): "The Role of the Social Worker in the Mobilization of Resources to Meet Needs", was closely related to the subjects debated in the Conference. "International Social Work" echoed Mr. Gore, by publishing the remarkable intervention which he made in order to express the Asian point of view.

I want at this point to mention that indefatigable traveller, our Secretary General, Donald V. Wilson (USA) and thank him for being so often the ambassador of our Federation, trying everywhere, as he did

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in Tokyo, to explain the interest and importance of the organization of qualified social workers.

I must also mention in connection with this work of promoting our Federation, the activities of our Vice-President for Europe, Miss J. A. Lohnis, who is in charge of membership.

FRANCE—July 1959—Strasbourg — At the Executive Committee meeting, held in conjunction with the European Symposium of Social Service, applications for membership were considered from Associations in countries as different and as far apart as South Africa and Chile.

The Federation now has eighteen (18) association-members which fulfil the requirements established by the strict Admissions Committee. We should add to this history of the Federation its statutes and the names of its affiliated Associations. However, we have put the cart before the horse, as that material was published in the preceding issue.

A small bulletin "The Social Worker" is our house organ. It enables us to circulate news about the members, as well as to communicate important information. It is edited by Mr. Marios Raphael in Athens, and published in New York by the International Conference of Social Work.

We have never lacked help from the Conference, of which we are an Associate Member, and I am happy to be able to here thank its President Mr. George F. Davidson, and its Secretary General, Mr. Joe R. Hoffer.

At the end of 1959 our Federation received consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Rank has its obligations, dear social work friends of the whole world: to work better together, if you are already members of the Federation; to get to know us better, if you are not yet affiliated with our international professional organization.

To all, we say: "To Rome in January 1961".