

National Council

of  
National Council of Women



# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES

*Affiliated with the International Council of Women*

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July 10, 1946

Honorable Harry S. Truman  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

At a recent three-day Inter-Continental Conference which was sponsored by the National Council of Women of the U. S. and the National Council of Women of Canada, and attended by outstanding women representatives from the six continents, the following recommendations were adopted by unanimous vote:

## I. To solve the problem of world famine:

1. That each fulfill any and all commitments to the several international agencies concerned with feeding the peoples of the world, such as UNRRA, Combined World Food Board and the Food and Agricultural Organization.
2. That the administration of relief and rehabilitation be enforced on a non-political basis in every receiving country.
3. That their respective governments set aside at the source and ship promptly the full quota pledged by each nation, of wheat, rice, grain, seeds, fats, oils, meat and other proteins for relief to Europe, South Africa and the Far East.
4. That they insist on whatever other rationing may be necessary to discharge this moral obligation.

We wish to draw particular attention to section 4, of the above, as it is obvious by now that the food needs of Europe, the Far East and South Africa cannot be met by voluntary effort. The public opinion polls show clearly that the people of the United States are ready and willing to have food rationing restored, so that the hungry peoples of the world will be fed. Despite the reassuring statements issued by former President Hoover and Secretary of Agriculture Anderson, common sense dictates that rationing by governmental directive not only will yield more food for relief, but will enable authorities to plan on a statistical, instead of a hit-or-miss, basis, for the fulfillment of quotas to distressed areas.

II. To solve the problem of displaced persons:

1. Every national organization in every member nation of the United Nations should apprise their respective governments of their desire to assure satisfactory living conditions and opportunities for rehabilitation to displaced persons while they are awaiting permanent resettlement.
2. As a practical solution to a world problem which challenges Christian conscience, they should request their respective governments to absorb a proportionate quota each of the non-repatriable displaced persons under a United Nations passport issued for that purpose, and which would be accepted as a fully credited identification paper by all members of the United Nations.
3. They should indicate to their government leaders at once their whole-hearted endorsement of the recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry which urged that 100,000 Jews be transported to and settled in Palestine without delay.
4. They must demand that all homeless children now in concentration camps be temporarily housed in foster homes which are willing to receive them, under the supervision of the international agency responsible for displaced persons, and furthermore, that their adoption by previously investigated private families be facilitated, under a United Nations passport.
5. During the acute housing shortage, national organizations in every country should demand:
  - a. That priorities on building materials be given to provide shelter for families.
  - b. That governments be asked to assume low-cost housing projects to provide decent homes for lower income families.

We heartily commend your stand with regard to point 3, above, and urge that the United States expedite arrangements for the admission of 100,000 Jews to Palestine.

We view with concern the attempts of the authorities in the British Zone of Germany to compel refugees to return, against their will, to their original homelands and ask that the policy of the American Zone remain independent of British policy and in the best interests of the displaced persons. In this connection, we earnestly ask that machinery be set up without delay to care for the residual care of displaced persons which will remain after the UNRRA camps are closed down. The recent pogroms in Poland, coupled with the public admission that the government in power is helpless to cope with anti-Semitic outrages in that country, make understandable the refusal of Jewish displaced persons to return to Poland; while the resistance of Catholic refugees to Russian ideology, offers an equally valid reason for their reluctance to be sent back to their former homes. Regardless of British policy, therefore, we ask that the United States continue to be guided solely by the Golden Rule in our government's treatment of all displaced persons.

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As for point 2, namely, the admission of displaced persons to this country under a United Nations passport, we ask this as the only possible solution to the general problem. If each of the fifty-one nations of the United Nations would agree to absorb a proportionate percentage of the non-repatriables, there would no longer be a pitiful remnant of the human family without a permanent home. Christian conscience demands that this be done, and we submit this to you for thoughtful consideration.

The complete findings of the Inter-Continental Conference are attached to this letter. As women who desire to share in the responsibility for winning a lasting peace, we gladly place ourselves at our nation's service for the development of any projects and plans which will implement what we consider a minimum program for the betterment of mankind, in accordance with our democratic principles of government.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Ambrose N. Diehl  
President

CC: Honorable John G. Winant  
U.S. Delegate, United Nations  
Economic and Social Council

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Chairman  
United Nations Commission on Human Rights

Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, President  
United Nations Economic and Social Council

Mr. George L. Warren,  
U. S. Delegate, United Nations  
Special Committee on Displaced Persons

SUMMARY OF THE INTER-CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE

May 6-7-8, 1946

By Mrs. Luella S. Laudin  
National Council of Women of the United States, Inc.

Throughout the sessions of this Inter-Continental Conference, the emphasis has been placed on five world-wide problems which must be solved, if we are to achieve a lasting peace. We entered upon our deliberations on the premise that we would consider these momentous issues in terms of PEOPLE, rather than in terms of nations; for it is PEOPLE who are being deprived of human needs, and PEOPLE whose wants can be satisfied only through the cooperation of other PEOPLE. We were given a vivid picture of what these needs are, -- physical, economic, moral and spiritual, in each continent. We were informed of the bitterness and of the ethical void which exists in the hearts of some of the victims of enemy persecution in formerly Nazi-dominated lands, and of the effects of war-shattered economies upon their morale. We were warned that hungry and homeless people can offer poor resistance to ideologies antithetical to democracy, and that Nazi poison has taken firm root in the Americas and in Europe. We were reminded also -- and this should be noted particularly by the women of the United States -- that the Bill of Rights is still a paper document, and not a living reality, to many inhabitants of this nation, who have yet to attain full citizenship and equal opportunity.

There was a striking similarity in the thinking of all the speakers. From the far corners of the globe came almost identical statements, with deviations made only in consideration of problems peculiar to geographical location or ancient traditions which must be changed slowly. Again and again were reiterated the words: freedom, understanding, justice, integrity, cooperation and respect for the dignity of the individual; and always these were named as prerequisites to a lasting peace.

It was obvious that women in all parts of the world realize that mankind is indeed at the zero hour; that we know we are now living in a single community which is sprawled over the earth's surface; that we are united in our common desire for peace and security; that we want to assume our share of the responsibility for the attainment of these aims; that we are eager to do what we can, as individuals and as members of organized groups, to implement the United Nations Charter; and that we intend to use our vote to place in key positions only qualified men and women who will carry out our wishes. Most hopeful of all, perhaps, was the outspoken acknowledgement at every session, of our responsibility for our fellow man.

Dr. Phillips expressed this early in our meeting when she said, "You are not only your brother's keeper; you are your brother's brother." Beyond all question, it is apparent that we are aware of the path we must take to reach the new and better world which we so earnestly desire; but we have yet to demonstrate that we are prepared to take that path.

This is the general summary of the Conference. We come now to the report of the special Conference Committee which was appointed to present specific recommendations based on the sentiments expressed during the sessions.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON  
INTER-CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS  
MAY 8, 1946

For the two and a half days of this International Conference, we have probed deeply into the causes of war and have arrived at a basic truth which mankind has been attempting to ignore for nearly two thousand years. It is this -- that there is a price which must be paid for peace and that price is absolute, sincere, devoted and unwavering adherence, hour by hour and day by day, to the principle of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. Nothing less will do. Failing it, we are accepting war.

Once we have sealed our bargain with ourselves, which is where the practice of peace must really begin, the question is: ARE WE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE OF PEACE?

You of the Conference will meet your first test here and now, for your committee has picked up the challenge hurled at all of us yesterday by Dr. Lena Madelin Phillips and has outlined in the following what it believes to be a practical program for women at this critical hour.

Your committee's proposals are paired with the five major issues which have been so thoroughly explored throughout this conference:

I. STARVATION

1. Every national organization of all supplying nations must demand of their respective governments:

- a. That each fulfill any and all commitments to the several international agencies concerned with feeding the peoples of the world, such as UNRRA, Combined World Food Board and the Food and Agricultural Organization.

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- b. That the administration of relief and rehabilitation be enforced on a non-political basis in every receiving country.
  - c. That their respective governments set aside at the source and ship promptly the full quota pledged by each nation, of wheat, rice, grain, seeds, fats, oils, meat and other proteins for relief to Europe, South Africa and the Far East.
  - d. That they insist on whatever other rationing may be necessary to discharge this moral obligation.
2. In all the contributing countries, national organizations should demand:
- a. That all organized groups -- national, state and local -- eliminate bread, rolls, and cake from their menus at group luncheons, teas and dinners for which they are responsible whether these are held in restaurants, hotels, or private homes.
  - b. That they also request restaurant associations, private caterers and the dining facilities of all transportation systems to serve breadstuffs only upon request, and to conserve foods in short supply as much as possible.
  - c. That they sponsor educational campaigns in every community to demonstrate how left-overs can be utilized, how meals can be planned around foods not required for overseas relief, and how to avoid waste in any form.
  - d. That they urge home makers to continue to salvage waste fats.
  - e. That they ask their individual members to grow Victory Gardens.
  - f. That they suggest to their members a budgetary provision for regular cash contributions to bonafide private agencies which purchase and distribute food for relief.

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It is understood that the above restrictions should continue until the condition of world famine and starvation no longer exists.

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## II. HOMELESSNESS

1. Every national organization in every member nation of the United Nations should apprise their respective governments of their desire to assure satisfactory living conditions and opportunities for rehabilitation to displaced persons while they are awaiting permanent resettlement.
2. As a practical solution to a world problem which challenges christian conscience, they should request their respective governments to absorb a proportionate quota each of the non-repatriable displaced persons under a United Nations passport issued for that purpose, and which would be accepted as a fully credited identification paper by all members of the United Nations.
3. They should indicate to their government leaders at once their whole-hearted endorsement of the recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry which urged that 100,000 Jews be transported to and settled in Palestine without delay.
4. They must demand that all homeless children now in concentration camps be temporarily housed in foster homes which are willing to receive them, under the supervision of the international agency responsible for displaced persons, and furthermore, that their adoption by previously investigated private families be facilitated, under a United Nations passport.
5. During the acute housing shortage, national organizations in every country should demand:
  - a. That priorities on building materials be given to provide shelter for families.

- b. That governments be asked to assume low-cost housing projects to provide decent homes for lower income families.

### III. DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS

1. National organizations should demand that all discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color or creed be abolished, if necessary, by the adoption of legal measures which will insure justice to all, in order that a world of equal responsibility, equal rights and equal opportunity be created for all human beings.
2. They must safeguard the right of every eligible individual to full educational opportunities and the abolition of quota systems in institutions of higher learning.
3. All women's organizations in countries under democratic systems of government should demonstrate their complete acceptance of the equalitarian idea by insuring the full participation of representatives of minority groups at public interest gatherings.
4. To aid in the development of human brotherhood, women must make every effort to promote understanding, good will and respect for differences in their daily contact with all other human beings, and most important of all, they must instill these attitudes in their children.
5. Women in democratic countries must constantly guard against the danger to world peace inherent in the deliberate fostering of racial, religious and class hatreds, and take vigorous steps to combat such movements.

IV. NATIONALISM

1. All women should impress upon their government leaders their strong disapproval of the creation of any bloc in world politics, and support the United Nations.
2. They should engage actively in educational programs which promote an understanding of the problems, customs, and traditions of all other nations.
3. They must implement their faith in the United Nations by informing their respective governments of their willingness to surrender a necessary portion of national sovereignty to the United Nations.
4. They should elect only internationally minded men and women to all public office and urge the appointment of similarly qualified men and women to all official international organizations.
5. They should watch all pending legislation which has an impact upon world understanding and use their influence with their government leaders to prevent a return to power politics and secret diplomacy.
6. They must give full support to the principle of a United Nations Trusteeship of atomic energy
7. They should give full support to and insure adequate financing of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO).
8. In their respective countries they should encourage the presentation of radio broadcasts and motion picture films which promote world understanding and the concept of global citizenship.

9. Because of the effect upon the attitudes of youth, they should examine school textbooks, particularly geographies and histories to insure the elimination of material which fosters excessive nationalism and distrust of other countries.

V. ECONOMIC BARRIERS

1. Women should support fully all proposals for the expansion of world trade and a sound international trading system to prevent economic warfare and nationalism.
2. They should urge world regulation of tariffs so as to promote freer trade which all the nations need for prosperity.
3. They should guard against the economic exploitation of countries which are now being granted their political freedom.

Your Committee wishes to point out that the conclusion reached by the Inter-Continental Conference coincide with the findings of the United Nations women delegates, who in an open letter from London, February, 1946, urged the following:

1. To recognize the progress women have made during the war and participate actively in the effort to improve the standard of life in their own countries and in the pressing work of reconstruction so that there will be qualified women ready to accept responsibility when new opportunities arise.
2. To train their children, boys and girls alike, to understand world problems and the need for international cooperation as well as the problems of their own countries.
3. Not to permit themselves to be misled by anti-democratic movements, now or in the future.

4. To recognize that the goal of full participation in the life and responsibilities of their countries and that of a world community is a common objective toward which the women of the world should assist one another.

The unanimity of opinion on the part of the two groups of women becomes understandable when it is borne in mind that each had the same objective; a blueprint for women's "full participation in the life and responsibilities of their countries and that of a world community....." directed toward the practice of peace.

Committee on Inter-Continental Recommendations:

Miss Harriet Parsons, Canada

Dr. Olive R. Russell, Canada

Mrs. William Barclay Parsons, Jr., USA

Mrs. Luella S. Laudin, Chairman, USA

Unanimously adopted by the  
Inter-Continental Conference

May 8, 1946