

## WOMEN'S ECUMENICAL LIAISON GROUP

Cartigny, December 8th-12th, 1969

### Re: Functions and Tasks of the Group

- I. We are a "liaison group". Whom are we linking up with whom? Whom are we informing about whom, and about what?

Some possible answers:

- linking up the women's organisations in the different Churches with each other;
- linking up lay movements with nuns, deaconesses and women who have studied theology;
- linking up the Division of Ecumenical Action or the "Consilium de Laicis" and the Joint Working Group with the women at the "grass roots", and vice versa;
- forming links among ourselves as a small group of "experts" which may have some influence;
- etc., etc., etc.

Whichever of these tasks **receives** our main attention, we come up against the same obstacle: our group of ten is too small and its composition is too one-sided. On the other hand, if we want to bring together women representing the whole world, we can no longer meet for financial and other reasons. How can we overcome these difficulties?

The following possibilities exist and have been mentioned by several people:

- a network of women-correspondents in all countries. (Who should appoint them and on whose initiative?)
- what would we like these correspondents to tell us, and what would they want us to tell them? (One letter received suggests that they should look through publications and work-material to see what would be important for our **group** and its work).
- the formation of work-groups similar to ours in all continents. (Where they already exist, an important task of coordination has to be done).

## II. Ecumenical Education

The following points of view may play a rôle here:

- It is not sufficient to draw the attention of our organisations and congregations to small things which they can easily do jointly. That is not ecumenical dialogue. What we have to do is to re-examine the whole of our work as Churches and as organisations through the dialogue with others in different situations. How is this to be done?

- At Taizé in 1967 there was a call for a "dialogue au niveau de la vie", a dialogue on the human, existential level. The experiences of life in its different aspects must be brought into the ecumenical conversation:
- e.g. mixed marriage: the real human fellowship between man and wife is stronger than the fact of belonging to different Churches. What conclusions are to be drawn from this, and how can this viewpoint carry conviction?
- e.g. intercommunion: the experience of the fellowship between people who cooperate in work in the world makes it impossible to understand the refusal to allow them to receive the Sacrament together. In this situation what is the meaning of loyalty and faith?
- Similar experiences are being made everywhere today. How are they to become fruitful for the life of the whole Church, and for its theological thinking?

But the opposite is also true: there are failures and setbacks, and we should not conceal them. How do they arise? How are they to be dealt with? Or how are they to be avoided?

- The gulf is widening more and more between the world (which is breaking increasingly away from all connection with the Church - and with religion?) and our efforts in the churches for unity. The gulf between the "progressive" and the "conservative" forces within the Churches is also widening. How do we view the situation in our own immediate environment? What does "ecumenical education" mean in this context?

Can our group make any contribution in the sphere of "ecumenical education"? Is that possible on the world-wide level?

Possibilities:

- Experiments could be described and evaluated as concretely and exactly as possible (along the lines of the "Monthly Letters about Evangelism" published by the DWME of the WCC).
- The organisation of further regional conferences (like the one at Taizé in 1967) for different groups of people (could we perhaps work out definite suggestions and criteria for the programme of such conferences, so as not to go over all the same ground again?)
- A joint project or joint projects.

Any other proposals?

### III. Strategy

This involves the right combination of study and action; insights which have often already been expressed (e.g. cooperation...) must be translated into action, and this action should lead in turn to fresh reflection, new studies and new insight. It would be worthwhile to discuss at what point today we think action should be taken about the cooperation between men and women, and between clergy (priests, nuns) and lay people.

Possible approaches:

- The inadequate representation of women and of the laity on all the Committees of the Churches and of the ecumenical movement. The higher the level of the Committee, the worse the situation is. Do we see any

possibilities of changing this? any possible "strategy"?

- Are there any themes to which we should like to give priority?

Some suggestions for stimulating thought:

Women and "development", i.e. the importance of women (as educators and often as the preservers of tradition) for the development of a country - their importance for a Church (on the one hand) and the effect of development on women (on the other hand).

Ordination of women

Emancipation and discrimination

Mixed marriage

Family Planning

"Familismus" (see paper by Ernst Lange)

Monogamy and "the new morality"

etc., etc.

Where do we see priorities? If we see them, what conclusions do we draw?

#### IV. Administration

We must be clear about the working methods and working possibilities of our group:

- To whom are we answerable? What is expected of us by the people who gave us our mandate?
- Who is financing our work? (budget - secretariat - travel expenses, etc.)
- How often do we meet?
- What possibilities have we apart from the annual meeting(s)?
- With whom are we cooperating? with which Committees of the WCC and of the Vatican?
- With what world organisations (e.g. the International Conference of Catholic Organisations, the YWCA, the World Day of Prayer for Women, the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, etc.)
- With what (national?) women's organisations and how? (i.e. how can we really reach the "grass roots"? cf. I)
- Constitution of the group; tasks of the "Chairmen" and of the Secretariat (or Secretariats).

All the questions raised here can and must be implemented by other questions. They are merely intended as a basis for discussion. The questions of administration are just as important as the questions concerning the aims of our group.

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