

WOMEN'S ECUMENICAL LIAISON GROUP (WELG)

1970 - 1971

Third Meeting of WELG

→ The third meeting of WELG was held in Rome, October 26-30, 1970, at the headquarters of the RC Council on the Laity. The Group worked on ten "Case Studies" of ecumenical encounter which had been gathered by a sub-committee appointed in 1969; these were subsequently edited and distributed to women's groups, in English, French, German and Spanish, as orientation and stimulus for collaboration at local level.

→ An interim report was received on preparations for the European Conference on "The Image of Woman in the Mass Media" (see below).

→ A committee was appointed to explore with SODEPAX the possibility of a programme on women's contribution to Peace (see below).

The Group further pursued its 'exploration' of the multiple fields of ecumenical collaboration between women and women's groups at all levels. Communications were received on the evolving roles of women in the life and mission of the Churches, as well as on current movements for "women's liberation", especially in the United States of America, and their impact on other parts of the world.

The members attended a General Papal Audience. Pope Paul greeted personally the co-Chairmen (Dr. Marga Bührig and Miss Maria Vendrik), and addressed the Group, underlining the importance of women's influence not only in the home but in society generally and in the Church, and the many situations, he said, which "require your joint study, situations in which you are committed as women and where you must bring your specific witness."

European Conference on "The Image of Woman in the Mass Media"

The Conference will be held in Vienna, June 14 to 19, 1971. It will be attended by about 100 participants, including specialists from the various media and Church women, the latter mainly, but not exclusively, from Europe. In preparation for the Conference, a test survey was conducted in France, where women's groups were asked to monitor all the media during the month of January 1971 and to report their findings. The purpose of the Conference is to sensitize women to the picture being painted

in radio/TV, women's magazines and advertisements and to see how the media may be used to change the prevailing image. It was felt that this was an important field of action for Christian women, and an appropriate one for the European sub-committee (now part of WELG) which, previous to the setting up of WELG, has been responsible for joint meetings between the WCC Department on Cooperation of Men and Women and the Conference of Catholic International Organizations.

A WELG-SODEPAX Peace Project?

On February 16, 1971, members of a sub-committee appointed by WELG met in Geneva with the secretariat of SODEPAX to discuss the possibility of a programme on "women's contribution to peace". The idea of a women's conference on Peace, originally proposed at the second WELG meeting in December 1969, had been recommended at the SODEPAX Conference on Peace (Baden, April 1970).

At the meeting in February, it was generally felt that a world conference is not the best immediate approach to the problem. There was a consensus in favour of a "programme" including the following steps :

1. Enquire of women's organizations what they are presently doing about the education and "mobilization" of women for Peace.
2. Bring together a small group of specialists to make suggestions to women's organizations for local and national programmes.
3. Publish these suggestions as guidelines for local and national meetings.
4. Organize regional conferences.
5. Finally, a world conference.

During this initial period, the SODEPAX staff agreed to give secretarial and administrative assistance.

Women's World Day of Prayer

The contacts made and developed through WELG have been instrumental in furthering Roman Catholic participation in the Women's World Day of Prayer. At the meeting of the International WDP Committee, held in Bangkok in September 1970, two Roman Catholics from the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) were co-opted for the first time to the Committee. WUCWO has changed its own Day of Prayer from March to May in order to facilitate participation by its members in the ecumenical WWDP.

In some countries an RC representative serves on the National WDP Committee and there is already joint observance of the Day. Even where such observance is not yet realized, RC women's groups are encouraged by WUCWO to use the material prepared and to join separately in the WWDP.

Fourth Meeting of WELG

The Fourth Meeting of WELG will be held at Cartigny (Geneva), October 25 to 29, 1971.

In addition to reviewing the activities of the current year and receiving communications on new developments among women and women's groups, WELG will have to discuss the form in which it will present to the WCC/RCC Joint Working Group the findings of four years of its "exploratory" mandate. It will be remembered that, in December 1969, WELG adopted the following motion :

"That the WELG set 1972 as the termination of this present Group and request a meeting with the Joint Working Group, to evaluate with them the WELG findings during the period elapsed, determining at that time whether such concerns would require a similar liaison group of women to carry on, and in that case how it should be composed and financed."

WCC Members of WELG

Mrs. Athena ATHANASSIOU-TSOUDEROS (Greek Orthodox Church)
Dr. Marga BÜHRIG (Swiss Protestant Church Federation)
Frau Liselotte NOLD (Evangelical Church in Germany, Lutheran)
Dr. Margaret SHANNON (Church Women United, USA; United Presbyterian Church in the USA)
Miss Ruth WALKER (Council for Women's Ministry in the Church, Church of England).

WCC Staff : Miss Brigalia BAM and Dr. Madeleine BAROT.

RCC Members of WELG

Miss Pilar BELLOSILLO (President, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations)
Frau Marianne DIRKS (Germany)
Sister M. St. Charles HENAFF, o.s.u.
Miss Maria MEERSMAN (Belgium)
Miss Maria de Lourdes PINTASILGO (International Grail Movement).

"Consilium de Laicis" : Miss Rosemary GOLDIE
Miss Maria VENDRIK.

In addition, Observers are invited to the meetings from the World YWCA and whenever possible from countries outside Europe.