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Conference of southern African trade union women

The conference has been scheduled for February 15-21 at the Holiday Inn in Gaborone, Botswana. Invitations have been sent to 22 trade union women from Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa and to a representative from OATUU. One American trade union woman has been scheduled to participate. An agenda has been developed and is being refined as speakers are confirmed.

Day Care Center/Mali

AALC's regional representative for west Africa has returned from Mali with the encouraging news that a location has been found for the day care center. We are now in the process of coordinating arrangements with the Malians regarding the center's equipment.

Zaire Women's Department (BUPROF)

AALC's representative in Kinshasa informs us that seminars have been held in each of the nine regions of the country: Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Kisangani, Bukavu, Mbandaka, Mbuji-Mayi, Matadi, Bandundu and Kanaga. All were directed by BUPROF's National Secretary Muadi Muamba and generated a great deal of favorable publicity in the national press. UNTZA's Women's Department, through these seminars, has apparently established itself as a viable force whose future projects should attract attention and support from other institutions in the country.

Day Care Center/Ghana

AALC's representative in Accra is in the process of hiring a woman to work closely with Rose Taylor of the Ghana Trades Union Congress in developing the groundwork for the pilot day care project.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

Q *enclose*
Women

TO : Mr. Norman L. Sweet, Director
Thru : Edward Hirabayashi, HRD *let for*

DATE: December 7, 1980

FROM : Jocelyn Albert, REDSO/WA *let for*

SUBJECT: WID: Report on the proceedings of UNTZa/BUPROF's Zaire working Women's National Symposium at Nsele, Dec. 3-6

Please find attached my report to you on the BUPROF symposium. It was an eye-opener: very interesting and instructive, and I want to thank you and your staff for the hospitality and support given to me during the week.

I hope to be able to return in January.

Distribution:

PRM: Mr. Boehm
SMO: Mr. Baranyi
DEO: Mr. Braddock
PHO: Mr. Belcher
MGT: Mr. McCabe
ARD: Mr. Peters
GDO: Mr. Singer

AALC: Mr. Hoffman
USICA: Ms Oakley
EMB : Ms. Chamberlin



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Zaire's Working Women Hold National Symposium

Report of proceedings

Jocelyn Albert, REDSO/WA

SUMMARY

The first national symposium of the working women of Zaire ended its four-day session on December 6 with a call for new social legislation for women, and an appeal to women workers to participate more actively in the country's socio-economic development through union activities.

The 57 women representing 8 regions who attended the conference at Nsele heard talks from representatives of the UNTZA, the UN organizations, and several ministries. Representatives from several diplomatic missions, including the U.S., Canada, the People's Republic of China, England and Holland attended the opening ceremonies and participated in evening dinner/debates. Sponsored by a grant of (\$20,000) from the African-American Labor Center and receiving a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Human Rights Fund, the symposium was

conducted by the Women's Bureau of the UNTZa. The goals of this first nation-wide meeting were both organizational and substantive, and resulted in a set of resolutions on social welfare of women to be presented first to the Executive Committee of the UNTZa and then to the President of the Republic. The two outstanding demands were for day care centers and for a change in the discriminatory legislation affecting working wives. END.

Fifty-seven women--30 participants, 7 observers and 20 staffers participated in the first national symposium of working women from December 3-6 at Nsele, the President's farm and conference Center 50 kilometers from Kinshasa. Delegates to the symposium from the 8 regions of Zaire had been selected earlier this year when Citoyenne Muadi Muamba toured the country drumming support among women workers. Citoyenne Muadi is the responsible--though not yet executive secretary of the Bureau pour les Problèmes Féminins (BUPROF) of the Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Zaïre (UNTZa). In addition to being a single parent of five children and full-time student

pursuing labor affairs in the evening school, she is also the dynamic, extremely hard-working moving force behind BUPROF. The success of the symposium is due largely to her seemingly indefatigable efforts.

BUPROF grew out of the Plan of Action of the 1975 Decade for Women Conference. An organizational meeting was held in Ngandu in May, 1979. BUPROF now numbers several hundred members in each regional chapter. This success despite overwhelming odds—a political system not very conducive to strong independent labour unions, a state of persistent economic crisis, and the inadequacy of communication and transportation networks in the country—is remarkable.

The delegates came mostly from two groups of working women: teachers and office clerks. There were also lawyers (jurists), and petites commerçantes. From discussions and observations, it seemed that a disproportionately high percentage—relative to the national average—were divorced, and custody of their children, and that the number of children was extremely high. Several women had more than 7 children alive.

This suggests that (1) women were from a relatively well-off socio-economic group, given their low incidence of infant mortality; and (2) either they came from an ethnic group with a matrilineal family structure and/or were better off than their husbands and had been given custody of the children by the Tribunal.

GRIEVANCES. The group of extremely articulate, vocal women lost no time in zeroing-in on their major grievances. The preparatory meetings held this fall had already helped to identify their primary concerns on the regional level. Foremost among the problems working women face are (1) the need for day care centers; and (2) the discriminatory social legislation which serves as a severe deterrent to working women.

1. A woman has no easy access to free or low-cost child care services and therefore in order to keep working while raising young children, she must pay for a baby-sitter. Since the husband (if she's married) assumes that child-raising is a woman's responsibility, he is unwilling to help pay for

baby-sitting services. In the urban setting, where a woman only occasionally has recourse to her mother's or other family members' help, she must assume the extra cost.

2. A married woman does not receive the same social benefits as does her husband: she is not entitled to a housing allowance, health care, pensions. Her husband's pension, in case of his death, may or may not go to her. In addition—and this was a bitterly discussed issue — a woman needs her husband's permission to work. Without his signature on the working papers, a woman cannot get a job.

3. Although legally, a woman is entitled to a maternity leave of 8 weeks before and 6 weeks after delivery, many employers do not respect this legislation, or insist that women take their annual leave in lieu of maternity leave. Women are enraged that even if allowed maternity leave, they only receive 2/3 of their salary during this time. Why, they ask, if we are just fulfilling a "natural biological process", one given enormous importance in African society, are we penalized for fulfilling our societal responsibilities?

The women addressed their concerns to the guest speakers from UNICEF, ILO, Nutrition Planning, UNTZA, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Unfortunately, most of the speakers, with the notable exceptions of Mlle. Pichonier of UNICEF, and Citoyenne Kashemwa of Social Affairs, insisted on lecturing the women on subjects they were all too familiar with already without offering any concrete suggestions.

UNICEF however, offered to fund projects proposed by the individual women's chapters, especially those projects encouraging the use of appropriate technology. The Secretary General of Social Affairs, Citoyenne Kashemwa, promised to help create day-care centers where possible.

SIDELIGHTS: Some of the conference's liveliest moments were during "non-working" hours, such as the dinner discussion led by Muadi with Mrs. Phyllis Oakley, of USICA and wife of the U.S. Ambassador, and Mme Jiao of the Peoples Republic of China fielding dozens of questions about the U.S. and Chinese women in the labor context. Another moment

was the dinner with Mme. Diara, the Guinea Ambassador to Zaire. And who knows how lively the soirée dansante was following the closing ceremonies?

RESOLUTIONS: Five resolutions/demands received unanimous conference support and now serve as the basis for further concerted action:
(The report of conference proceedings will carry the exact wording.)

1. Creation of day care centers;
2. Job training opportunities for women;
3. Introduction of appropriate technology and creation of co-ops and health care centers for rural women;
4. Change in legislation abolishing need for husband's authorization for employment and equal access to lodging, health care and other benefits given men;
5. Access to life insurance and assurance of maternity leaves;
6. Protection of labour force (both men and women workers).

OBSERVATIONS: The success of this conference is a good omen for the future of the BUPROF and the women's movement in Zaire. In a country where organizing anyone is a challenge and organizing women under the aegis of a political (or otherwise ineffective) body is virtually impossible, Citoyenne Muadi and her colleagues have thus far done a yeoman's job. Muadi appears to be neither a very political nor controversial figure, but rather a person with intellectual curiosity determined to get a better deal for the women. She wants to work closely with the recently created Secrétariat-Général de la Condition Féminine--and vice versa--and sees BUPROF not as a competitor but as a partner.

There are two main reasons for USAID/Embassy/USICA interest and support of BUPROF:

1. BUPROF by definition represents a fairly narrow strata of the Zairois population: the urban working woman. Given the rapid rate of urbanization in Zaire, however, this small group will multiply

quickly and as an organized body, can represent a formidable political force (and although I have no illusions of grandeur, West African urban/market mamas have been known to scare a few of Africa's top brass).

2. So few women's organizations appealing for grass roots support exist in Africa that those which do should be given whatever help we can offer.

AID might consider the following:

--Keep in close touch with the BUPROF leaders, and especially with the up-and-coming dynamic women listed below (attached).

--Urge the BUPROF women to participate in PCI training workshops;

--Encourage BUPROF participation (and the Secrétariat Général de la Condition Féminine) in AAO/Kigali's Women in Development training workshop and/or conduct a training seminar in conjunction with ECA/MUPOC on program design (this is a prelude to UNICEF involvement);

--Congratulate Hy Ho fman for . superb job.
He placed his mone on Muadi and she
provided splendid eadership.