

International Federation of Women Lawyers, 1949 Convention
Radio Address by Selma Moidel Smith, May 27, 1949

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The Fifth Convention of the International Federation of Women Lawyers met in Los Angeles from May 14 through May 19, and an imposing list of delegates was present. They included: Hon. Margaret B. Campbell of Canada, Dr. Filomena Quintana of Chile, Dr. Isabel Sierro of Cuba, Dr. Angela de Chacón of Costa Rica, Dr. Esther Talamantes of Mexico, Dr. Isabel Regala of the Philippines, Dr. Alma Paredes of El Salvador, Dr. Luisa Perez Perozo of Venezuela, Dr. Anny K. Maas of Czechoslovakia, Mr. Annie Willet-Roosenberg of Holland--yes, in Holland her title is Mr.--, Marija Alminauskis of Lithuania, Julla Saethern of Norway, Maria Del Arco of Spain, Seving Diblian of Turkey, Senator Mary Garret Lydia Vikos of Italy, of Indiana from the U.S.,/and last but not least Congresswoman Milady Félix de L'Official of the Dominican Republic.

I was honored to have the delegate from the Dominican Republic as my house guest during this convention and found it an excellent opportunity to exchange views on the position of women in general and women lawyers in particular in our respective countries. Milady de L'Official was especially well-informed, being the only woman in the Congress of her country, having been elected to that office in 1942 when the women were granted the vote and full equality at that time.

The program planned for the convention tested the physical endurance of the hostesses as well as the delegates, and commenced on Sunday, May 15, at 4:00 P.M. with the opening plenary session in the City Council chambers in the City Hall at which time Mayor Bowron addressed the delegates and the general public who attended. Each delegate was seated in the semi-circle used by members of the City Council when in session, and the flag of each nation represented was flown. We were very pleased with the addresses given by each one of the representatives, whether in English or her native tongue which was then translated, all of them stressing the theme of the united Americas and one world.

Following the plenary session, Mayor and Mrs. Bowron entertained the delegates at their reception room in the City Hall with a delightful tea.

That evening a very beautiful buffet supper and dance was given at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel with each delegate appearing in her national costume.

The following Monday morning, in spite of the late hour of retiring the night before, a very earnest work session opened at 10 A.M. at the Olive Hill Foundation with a few words of welcome by Judge Mildred Lillie on behalf of Gov. Earl Warren. The various committees which began their very fruitful work included those on Domestic Relations as well as a separate committee on Domestic Relations Clinics, Comparative Constitutional Law, World Court and Post-War problems, Legislation, Administrative Law and Procedure, Penal Law and Procedure, Legal Education, Juvenile Law, Immigration

Nationality and Naturalization. Excellent papers had been previously submitted by each delegate and translated so that copies could be distributed and thereby facilitate discussion. Many members of the International Federation of Women Lawyers who could not travel from their distant countries had sent in their papers so that we could have the benefit of their views nonetheless.

At the close of the first work session, the delegates were taken on a tour of the Warner Bros. Studios, and from there to the San Fernando Mission, after which we all thoroughly enjoyed a real California barbecue at a San Fernando ranch. The evening was completed with visits to our various radio and television studios.

The following morning, May 17, commenced another very fine work session at Olive Hill, and through the courtesy of the Foundation, a very delectable buffet lunch was served, after which the delegates and members were addressed by Presiding Judge Clarence L. Kincaid of the Superior Court, and by Eleanor Jackson, a war trials prosecutor, who discussed the civil and political rights of Japanese women under the new constitution. Since the Federation does not have any Japanese members, it was most enlightening to learn of the present status of Japanese women through Miss Jackson who stressed that although many changes are apparent, it is yet to be seen whether it is purely on the surface, for the benefit of the American occupation forces, or whether their ancient customs have actually undergone such major changes as to permit women to vote and hold office.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent in continued work sessions, but at 6 P.M. ^{select} the delegates and members were entertained at the home of Gladys Towles Root with a most lavish cocktail party. From there, to a very bountiful dinner with the Los Angeles Business Women's Council celebrating an astrological birthday party and all those present were divided at tables according to the astrological sign under which they were born, and their futures were forecast.

The next morning, which was Wednesday, May 18, we visited the Los Angeles Juvenile Court and Juvenile Hall, and these were of particular interest to all the delegates who met our commissioners and viewed our customary proceedings. As if from one extreme to another, the delegates were then entertained at luncheon at Bullock's in Pasadena, and needless to say, women are women the world over when it comes to seeing beautiful clothes being modeled during the luncheon, not to mention a shopping tour through the store.

From Bullock's we went to the Huntington Library and Art Gallery at San Marino, and it was with great difficulty that we were able to induce our guests to leave in the late hours of the afternoon.

That evening we showed our guests something of the Sunset Strip with dinner and dancing at Ciro's, and our guests showed us something of dancing in the South American manner as it should be done.

Next morning, Thursday, May 19, delegates were shown through our Superior and Municipal Courts, and we assured them that in the next few years, we hoped that if they visited us again they would

find us in one major courthouse. Probably the most unique luncheon of the convention followed, in jail. As guests of the Sheriff, we were served our luncheon at the County Jail, waited on by women inmates, and we ate with the same utensils used by the prisoners.

From the jail, we traveled to our closing plenary session at USC where the Resolutions committee presented the various measures, which I shall take up in just a moment, for the vote of the membership. Each nation had one vote, and each delegation had selected its own member who would cast the vote for that nation. After discussion of each proposed resolution, the roll of nations was called, and each appointed delegate rose to cast her nation's vote as yes, no or pass.

The Chancellor honored the members with a tea in his suite at the University, following which the closing banquet was held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, the members again appearing in national dress.

Of very great importance are the resolutions which were passed by the International Federation. The only regret expressed by the members was that at least another week could have been used as work sessions, so eager were they to exchange their views on the laws of all the nations, particularly those laws concerning women and children. Among the more important are the following:

1. Whereas, there are many nations having laws and constitutional provisions whereby women lose their own nationality upon marriage, it is resolved that the International Federation of Women Lawyers recommends the adoption of laws in all countries that

women shall not lose their nationality by reason of marriage.

2. Whereas, the United States is not qualified to sign the Bogotá Conference by reason of the discrimination in civil rights against women in the U. S., it is resolved that the International Federation of Women Lawyers advocates the proposal and ratification of the equal rights amendment now pending before the Congress of the United States, providing for equal rights under law for men and women, so that the U.S. may be qualified to sign the Bogota Conference.

3. Whereas, there are many member nations where married women do not have the legal capacity to contract concerning either their own property or the community property of the marriage, it is resolved that the International Federation of Women Lawyers favors the adoption, by all nations, of the principles of full capacity of married women to enter into contract concerning their own or the community property of the marriage, and that all discriminations in law against women by reason of marriage, be removed.

4. Whereas, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in session in Paris on December 10, 1948, contains Article II, providing "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" end quote, and whereas in the constitutions of various countries of the world most recently adopted, there are provisions abolishing discrimination in law by reason of sex, race, color, or creed, it is resolved that the International Federation of Women Lawyers favors the adop-

tion, by all nations having no such provisions, of an amendment to their respective constitutions providing that there shall be no discrimination against any person by reason of sex, race, color, or creed.

5. Whereas, much hardship is occasioned by reason of the fact that certain persons from other countries come to the U. S. for the purpose of studying and may thereafter work part-time in order to continue their studies and therefore be ordered to return to their homeland, it is resolved that the International Federation of Women Lawyers request the immigration authorities of each country to remove the requirement that students attending school or college in the U.S. who work part time be required to return to their homeland, provided, however, that such work is done solely for the purpose of aiding them to continue to pursue their studies.

In the field of juvenile law, a set of 5 resolutions were presented and passed asking first, for a uniform juvenile court code for the entire world; second, for the appointment of three persons to head the juvenile court; a judge, who shall be a lawyer trained in juvenile delinquency, a doctor, trained in psychiatry and a social worker; third, asking for separate prisons for adults and for juvenile offenders, and lastly, asking that first offenders on misdemeanors be returned to their parents and no records of the offense kept.

One resolution was passed over the United States vote of "No", and this was a resolution asking the government of each country to lend or give a sum of money to persons wishing to marry so that they would be able to marry, financially at least. The

countries sponsoring the resolution did so out of concern for the large number of persons who live together without benefit of marriage because of their financial inability to establish a home, and for the large number of illegitimate children resulting from such unions. But the opposition of the U.S. delegation was based, among other things, on our inability to foresee where the money was going to come from as well as the generally questionable character of the resolution from a social and political standpoint. From the purely economic standpoint, it is difficult to ascertain what sum would be considered sufficient to enable persons to establish a home.

In all, however, it may be said that all those who attended the convention most certainly profited richly in the exchange of ideas and information, in learning the good and bad features of each other's legislation, and most certainly, in learning to work together, toward a common end of progress for all nations in one world.
