

## National Women's Conference

### The Praesidium: Mme. Nagy's Speech

The two-day National Women's Conference convened by the National Women's Council (Summary Part IIB, No. 881, p. 4) opened on 16th November. Mme. Jozsef Nagy, the Minister of Light Industry, was in the Chair. The honorary praesidium included Kallai, Karoly Kiss and Marosan.

Opening the proceedings, Mme. Jozsef Nagy said: "The task of this conference is to discuss problems of the greatest interest to women and families, and the further tasks of the women's movement." She read out the telegram from the Hungarian Party and Government delegation now in Moscow, greeting the delegates and wishing them every success in their work. (Budapest 15.00, and WPI 16.11.57)

### Zsuzsa Ortutay's Report

The main event of the conference appeared to be a report "on the activities and tasks of the international women's movement" by Zsuzsa Ortutay. The first phase of the work done by the movement since the counter-revolution had been characterised by the organising activities of Communist women and members of the old Democratic Union of Hungarian Women (MNF SZ). The second phase had begun with the meeting of the National Council of Women and the drafting of its programme. The majority of women approved that programme, which took public opinion into consideration.

The meetings organised by the women's councils, she said, proved that most women were loyal to socialism and rallied behind the Party and the people's power. After the defeat of the counter-revolution, many had come to understand the meaning of international solidarity. The primary aim of the women's movement was to bring women with differing opinions closer to the ideas of socialism. The "common denominator with those who do not share our views" was "a firm stand in favour of the policy of the Party". They had to work together with women who professed views differing from theirs but were progressive and patriotic and wanted to improve the people's lot. The Party's leading role made itself felt in the women's movement through the work of communist women.

### Equal Rights: Regime's Social Achievements

Speaking of equal rights for women, Mme. Ortutay said that 25.5 per cent of students at universities were now women, as compared with 18.5 per cent in 1938. The principle of equal pay had been put into practice in Hungary. Infant mortality had fallen by 50 per cent since 1938, which proved that mother and child care had greatly improved. On an average, rents were only 2.3 per cent of wages in Hungary, while in capitalist countries the percentage was 30 to 50 per cent. But there were obstacles in the way of equal rights for women. They included "obscure conditions" and financial conditions. Too few women were skilled workers and only a very small number were chairman of producer co-operatives.

### Problem of the Working Mother

Many people believed it was a bad thing that so many mothers went out to work, Mme. Ortutay said. But the education of youth and the position of women were questions which could not be solved by keeping women at home. The fact that women were working was one of the consequences of social and technical development, not only in a socialist system but also in a capitalist regime with the difference that the former assured women equal conditions of work with men's. As to the moral problem of youth, it was a world-wide one. In conclusion, Mme. Ortutay listed "the demands women were addressing to the Government" as more houses, more places in day nurseries and nursery schools, and more classrooms. (WPI 16.11.57)



#### Other Speakers

The second day of the meeting was attended by Kallai, Marosan and Komocsin. Komarov and several members of the Soviet Government delegation were in the Praesidium.

Anna Fekete, Secretary of the County Szabolcs women's council, said that much political education still remained to be done to increase the influence of the women's movement among Hungarian women. Chauvinist and nationalist views, which still existed, must be boldly opposed. Demands must always be in keeping with the country's capacity and economic position.

Mme. Jozsef Katona, a delegate from County Zala, spoke on the position of women in the producer co-operatives. In many co-operatives half or even 60 per cent of the members were women, but they were not adequately represented in the management.

Mme. Ferenc Kiss, of Budapest City District No.14, called for more respect to be shown to teachers.

Mme. Pal Bodonyi, Secretary of the Budapest women's council, said that the women's councils in Budapest were doing useful work to improve the position of women.

Gyorgy Marosan greeted the conference on behalf of the Party and the Government. (Budapest 19.00, 17.11.57)

Mme. Zuyeva, the RSFSR Minister of Culture and one of the Soviet October Revolution anniversary delegates, asked Hungarian women to rally even more closely round their Party and Government. (Budapest 19.00 and MTI 17.11.57)

#### Election of Officers

The conference elected Mme. Laszlo Erdei President, Zsuzsa Ortutay Secretary, and Mmes. Lajos Scherczel, Mihaly Makoldi, Virag Moricz, Janos Peter and Gergely Bubinczi vice-Presidents.

The conference issued an appeal to Hungarian women asking them to take an active part in the work of building socialism. (MTI 17.11.57)