THE WORK OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S GROUPS AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND THE PAN-AMERICAN UNION, 1919 – 1939

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[1] Carol Miller 'Geneva – the Key to Equality': Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations" 12.

Introduction

When Dale Spender interviewed several feminists for a new book in the 1980s, she asked one feminist, Mary Stott, what she did during the time that there was no women's movement. Her response was: "'What do you mean, when there was *no* women's movement? There's always been a women's movement this century!'" (Spender title page).

Stott's reply is remarkable, but the fact that the question was asked is even more emblematic. Generally, the word 'feminism' or the phrase 'women's movement' are brought into context with either the 1960s and 1970s, or the with the fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995. As Stott's pointed reply exemplifies; this is clearly not the entire truth. This research will aim to discover more about the women's movement, particularly on the international level, during the 1920s and 1930s.

When one begins the endeavour of researching women's rights during the 1920s and 1930s one very quickly gets steered towards endeavours in favour women's suffrage and other causes in the national sphere. While the importance of these causes should not be underestimated, the accounts based solely on national movements do not portray the whole picture of women's movements. As despite popular accounts, women's rights were greatly advocated and fought for at the international level.

This research will thus argue that the endeavours in favour of women's rights at the international level are of great importance, filling the gap of the lacking historical account of women's rights movements in international thought (Sluga 2015 111). When one thinks about the international level, it should come as no surprise that the first organisation to come to mind would be the League of Nations. Indeed, many battles of the international women's organisations were fought at the League of Nations. However, this research aims to show that the League of Nations spent little effort to support women's rights relative to certain regional organizations. Indeed, as argued by many critical scholars, the field of International Relations often lacks a regional point of view, one that challenges the conception that the West is the only legitimate point of view (Acharya 648). As such, this research argues that the international organisation that was most vital to the promotion of equal rights for women was in fact a regional one; the Pan-American Union.

In this research, these two gaps are addressed. Thus the question this research intends to answer is: how did internationally minded women's groups in the 1920s and 1930s attempt to achieve their feminist goals on the international level? First, the theoretical background and methodology are laid down. Then, the second chapter provides an extensive overview of the

historiography preceding the end of the First World War on both the League and Pan-American level. The third chapter gives an overview of the 'official' positions that women were granted on League committees, which indeed helped the awareness about women's rights, but did not directly contribute to the feminist aims of equal rights. Finally chapter 4 will show that the issues of equal rights, the nationality of women, and the legal status of women were lobbied extensively at the international level. In their endeavours, the internationally organised women showed that the Pan-American Union was of invaluable worth for women's equal rights. The international women's groups showed flexibility and a great sense of innovation which led them to achieve unprecedented successes. This in turn now serves as proof to us in the 21st century that making history is not just done by Caucasian, western, men.

Chapter 1
Theory and Methodology

The theoretical background of this thesis is threefold. Firstly, feminism plays a central role in conducting this research. This theory helps to clarify and demonstrate the reasoning which guided international women's movements in their work and towards the goals they aimed to achieve. Secondly, internationalism theory is vital with regards to the means used by international women's movement and the particular strategies they chose in order to achieve their goals. And thirdly, regionalism provides the research with a necessary critical view on IR that has led to the realisation that the arena of the American region has played an important part in achieving the international women's groups feminist aims.

Feminism

Feminism challenges IR theorists to re-examine global politics by including women and their experiences in both historical and contemporary accounts. IR feminists have aimed to place emphasis on the fragmentary depiction of fields such as global politics and global economy, by arguing that the theories of and studies in these fields cannot be considered complete if the stories, contributions, and argumentation of women are not included.

The reason for this lack of inclusion of women in International Relations is, according to feminism, due to certain socially constructed characteristics, which can also be defined as gender: "characteristics such as strength, rationality, independence, protector, and public are associated with masculinity" (Dunne et al. 206). And, as will become apparent in this paper, interwar international women's groups added to these the characteristics of men: war-makers and fighters. Women, on the other hand, are described by "characteristics such as, weakness, emotionality, relational, protected, and private" (Dunne et al. 206). Interwar international women's groups added to these the characteristics: maternal and peace-maker.

As can be seen by these characteristics, gender - in its most generalised form; there are of course many exceptions – is defined by oppositions: men are strong, women are weak, or; men are war-makers, women are peace-makers. These characteristics thus portray that there is a relation between them, if you are the one, you are by definition not the other and so they "depend on each other for their meaning" (Dunne et al. 206). This notion of being either the one or the other is salient when looking at the work of international women's groups during the 1920s and 1930s. As Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor argue in their article "Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement: A Collective Identity Approach to Twentieth-Century

Feminism", the sense of being someone opposed to an other, creates a feeling of identity. Rupp and Taylor refer to this as a "collective identity" (364). For, as will become clear from the research in the upcoming chapters, the international women's groups, especially those working via the League of Nations during the interwar years, formed a sense of "us" versus "them". A perfect example of this is a phrase from Mary Sheepshanks in *Jus Suffraggi,* the internationally distributed magazine created by the International Alliance of Women: "Men have made this war; let women make peace – a real and lasting peace" (Jus Suffraggi 14, December 1918, printed in Rupp and Taylor 376). The international women's groups also had many differences of opinion within their own camps, which led to disputes and the splitting off of women's groups who mostly worked to achieve the same goal. However, as Rupp and Taylor rightly argue, these disputes and arguments did not diminish the "sense of togetherness" these women shared, nor did it undermine their collective identity as feminist internationalists (364).

A second important factor in feminism is power. Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prügl, in their article "Feminism and Constructivism: Worlds Apart or Sharing the Middle Ground?" explain that that IR feminist consider two approaches to power. The first approach considers power to be located in ideologies. These ideologies enforce the dominance of men, certain institutions and even broader economic systems such as capitalism. The second approach considers power to be located in identities. This approach considers the subjugation of women to be inherent in discourses that "understand the self as the source of agency and create this self in opposition to an 'other' that provides a reference point of what the self is not" and thus "the self emerges through a denigration of this 'other' (116-117). The formation of identities based on a "self" and an "other" therefore is based on a power-relation, and subsequently the endorsement of the self and belittlement of the other.

Internationalism

Jacqui True, in chapter 8 of Bellamy's *International Society and its Critics* argues that the lack of the inclusion of the role of women, and their unequal treatment, "has been justified by reference to national, religious, or cultural tradition, and subject not only to the sovereignty defence and norm of non-intervention, but also to gendered norms of privacy that ensured men like states could do as they pleased inside their own 'territories'" (155). Women's rights were traditionally, if at all, only considered to be a national issue. This is reflected in David Armitage's Modern International Thought. In his book, he describes how historians "assumed that self-identifying nations, organised politically into states, were the primary objects of

historical study" (17). However, at a certain point, the idea of the national being the sole vehicle through which history should be analysed became questioned. As a result, the paradigm shifted from the national to the international as the focus of international thought. This shift "poses a challenge to intellectual historians, who have not written widely about the internationalisation of their field" (18). This challenge is also recognised by Glenda Sluga. In her article "Turning International: Foundations of Modern International Thought and New Paradigms for Intellectual History", she makes a vital point concerning the absence of women from intellectual history: "The salient points of that absence in the context of (the) foundations of modern international thought are its double-qualities, namely that the place of women in an internationalised intellectual history is dependent to a significant extent upon their place in the old state-focused history of political thought" (111). For, as she rightly argues, it can be no surprise that women are not mentioned in international thought, since there is still so much struggle with regard to the place of women in the domestic sphere (111-112).

Regionalism

There are many voices of criticism regarding the manner in which IR is studied, of which feminism is an excellent example. Another example is regionalism; a theory that challenges the fact that "centers of learning remain clustered in the developed West" (Acharya 649). Amitav Acharya rightly argues that the West has been the main point of view of IR scholarship and that the Rest is recognised, however only as areas of specialised study, and not as a legitimate point of view (648). Regionalism, in turn, challenges the common state-centred manner of studying IR, and thus emphasises the legitimacy and agency of the region (Baylis et al. 402).

Acharya continues to argue that "developing countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa played a significant but hitherto unacknowledged role in the creation of postwar norms and institutions" (652). In this research I will expand on this argument, detailing how regionalism in the Americas was vital for the creation of norms and regulations regarding women's rights during the interbellum.

Another, more recent, characteristic of regions is that they vary greatly in whether they support American power (Katzenstein 13). This is an important note to regionalism in the Americas; the regional power of the U.S.A. As will be seen later in this research, the relations within the international organization that exemplified American regionalism – the Pan

American Union – has been the subject of the U.S's imperialistic aims and hegemonic behaviour and this particular relation is of importance for this research.

Methodology

In light of the fact that this research is mainly based on a literature review and on the analysis of primary sources, the main method that is used for this thesis is closed textual analysis of these sources. Out of these, the primary sources were obtained via archival research. In order to conduct archival research in a most productive way, I found Marc Trachtenberg's suggestions in his book *The Craft of International History* very helpful. Especially the suggestion to "allow the project to take its own course", has led to a more expanded conclusion to this research than initially expected.

Chapter 2
Historiography

In the years before the end of the First World War, several events occurred that are of particular importance when investigating the role of international women's organizations at the international level. In this chapter, I will discuss the origins of two important international organizations: the League of Nations and the Pan American Union. Secondly, the beginnings of the international women's movement will be analysed, with the main focus on the Congress of Women in The Hague in 1915.

The International Congress of Women, 1915

The suffrage movement was already well on its way when the centuries turned and the twentieth century began. This movement, which intensified after the French Revolution, lead to an increasing emphasis on nation-states and nation-centred thinking, and gained a powerful voice. This voice was only focused on the national sphere, its main goal being full voting rights for women (Offen 213). With the outbreak of the First World War, sentiments changed. As the first Dutch female physician and perhaps the most famous Dutch women's rights activist Aletta Jacobs notes in her memoirs: "And so I increasingly came to the conviction that women had a higher call to fulfil. It was our duty to protest against the reckless destroying of treasuries of art, the tearing up of families, the cruelly sacrificing of young human lives, and to generally do everything to stop the continuation of this insane war[2]" (Jacobs 302). With this line of thought, Jacobs defines women to be essential for the task of peace-making and ending the bloodshed, by which she therefore places women on the opposite of war and fighting. Consequently, in February 1915, Jacobs called together similar female thinkers from the Netherlands and surrounding countries for a meeting to discuss this sentiment. As a result, this group decided to organise an international women's congress in The Hague in April, 1915 (Bussey and Tims 18). What is striking here, and must be noted, is that Jacobs invited to this meeting women from surrounding countries, regardless of their countries' position in the war. Germany was very much included; two German women – Dr.

[2] Own translation from original Dutch text: "Aldus kwam ik meer en meer tot de overtuiging dat de vrouwen een hoogere roeping hadden te vervullen. Het was onze plicht te protesteeren tegen het roekeloos verwoesten van kunstschatten, het uiteenscheuren van gezinnen, het wreedaardig opofferen van jonge menschenlevens, en in het algemeen alles te doen om het voortzetten van dezen waanzinnigen oorlog tegen te gaan" (Jacobs 302).

Anita Augspurg and Linda Gustava Heumann, sat on the International Committee on the Resolutions and over 35 women from different German organisations attended ("Internationaal Congres van Vrouwen, Den Haag 28, 29, 30 april 1915"). Thus, the call for this international women's congress came from both neutral and belligerent powers. Moreover, not only did the women who attended come from countries which had played very different, sometimes even adversarial, roles in the war, they also insisted on the need to not have any discussions on who was to blame for it beginning. Instead, the women focused on discussions about how to reach a peaceful end of the war (Offen 260), thereby considering the goals of peace and ending the war being the only one of importance, showing that they had the capacity to create constructive dialogue, rather than appointing blame for the war. In other words, while men were busying themselves with appointing blame and fighting, internationally minded women rose above that and thought of ways to bring peace.

Envoys

The Hague Congress of 1915 concluded with twenty resolutions. One of the most notable of these was resolution 20, which read:

> "Envoys to Governments: that envoys shall carry the message expressed in the Congress Resolutions to the rulers of the belligerent and neutral nations of Europe and to the President of the United States" (Report of the Hague Congress, 1915, quoted in Bussey & Tims 21).

The women followed up on their resolutions, and started their journeys to the leaders of Europe and the U.S. They described their mission as: "to place before belligerent and neutral alike the resolutions of the International Congress of Women held at The Hague in April". And, to "especially [....] place before them the definite method of a conference of neutral nations as an agency of continuous mediation for the settlement of the war" (Manifesto issued by Envoys of the International Congress of Women printed in Bussey and Tims 22).

Bussey and Tims, who, throughout their book, write on quite a positive tone and do not shy away from using exclamation points, argue that these women were welcomed by the statesmen and that, because of the women's efforts, "the calling of a neutral conference for mediation had become a matter of serious discussion by government officials, the press and public opinion in all the countries concerned" (22). In the abovementioned Manifesto, the envoys of the Hague Congress suggest a similar atmosphere, highlighting responses from

statesmen such as "'Yours is the sanest proposal that has been brought to this office in the last six months'" (Manifesto issued by Envoys of the International Congress of Women printed in Bussey and Tims 23).

The women who started this mission were already organised in several organisations. Many of these will be discussed in the following chapters, however it is important to mention two in this section. One of these is the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (hereafter: IAW). When, after four years of war, the peace talks began in 1919, the IAW wasted no time to ensure their inclusion. In the U.S., the delegates of the IAW went to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to ask for the inclusion of women via the establishment of an International Women's Commission. This plan worked, and the Supreme Allied Council decided that women's organizations would be consulted when the issues in fact featured "women's interests". Unfortunately, even though this appeared to be a major step forward, it would prove to be a limited success. For, as Bussey and Tims explain, "women's interests" meant merely "the special interests of women and children, not issues of war and peace or women's suffrage" (262).

The second international women's organisation that was very active during the peace talks was the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (hereafter: WILPF). In May 1919, the WILPF organised a follow up conference on The Hague Conference of 1915. This conference took place in Zurich and began simultaneously with the publication of the terms of the Versailles Treaty. As a consequence of the synchronised timing of these two events, as Glenda Sluga explains in her article "Female and National Self-Determination: A Gender Re-Reading of 'The Apogee of Nationalism'" the Zurich conference of 1919 became a forum for criticism on the League of Nations (507). Offen extends this explanation, stating that the WILPF's disappointment was based on the fact that neither Wilson's "Fourteen Points" speech, nor the resolutions of the Hague Conference of 1915 were sufficiently integrated (263). There was, however, one provision that offered quite some delight: article 7 of the Covenant. This article states the following:

> "All positions under or in connection with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open equally to men and women" (League of Nations Covenant).

Even though it would later turn out that this provision would not fulfil its purpose to the satisfaction of the international women's groups, it was at the moment of publication met with

enthusiasm and can be considered a positive result of the work of, amongst others, the IAW and the WILPF.

The League of Nations

At that time, Woodrow Wilson was serving as the 28th president of the U.S from 1913 until 1921, and so he presided as commander in chief during the First World War, which the U.S. entered in April 1917. On January 8, 1918, Wilson delivered his famous "Fourteen Points" speech, in which he presented to the people his "programme of the world's peace" (President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points). At the end of the same year, the armistice was completed and peace negotiations were imminent. According to Erez Manela, in his book *The Wilsonian Moment*, Wilson's speech – or, in effect, Wilson himself – was received with great enthusiasm (17). One particular point of the "Fourteen Points" speech is important for this research:

> **"XIV.** A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike" (President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points).

In this point, Wilson gives the people a glimpse of his envisioned masterpiece: a League of Nations. And so, Wilson – being the first sitting U.S. president to do so - sailed over to Europe to attend the peace negotiations at Versailles and to gain support for his League of Nations (Manela 19). As is known, peace was made, and the League of Nations was established on June 28, 1919, with its aim "to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security" (League of Nations Covenant).

The Pan American Union

The other international organisation that is of great importance to this research is the Pan American Union (PAU). The Pan American Union, which credits itself to be the oldest international organisation of the world, has a rich and long history and was founded upon the ideals and ideas of Simon Bolívar – also named the Liberator – in the 19th century (The Organization of American States 2-3). After republics of the Americas gained independence from their former Spanish, Portuguese or Britain colonial powers and formed nations of their own, Bolívar envisioned continental unity for the Americas in order to achieve peace and

stability. And thus, in 1826, Bolívar initiated the Congress of Panama, where he proposed a "Treaty of Union, League, and Perpetual Confederation". Notwithstanding his wish for continental unity, Bolívar was not too keen on including the United States in this new union, for he believed that the U.S.A as a federation could be a threat to the unitary forces that he foresaw. In fact, it is argued that Bolívar's wish for continental unity was meant to act as a form of protection from the U.S.A (Castro-Klarén 47-48).

Even though the "Treaty of Union, League, and Perpetual Confederation" had not been signed in 1826, the "idea of Pan American cooperation was not lost sight of", according to Leo Stanton Rowe – director general of the Pan American Union from 1920 until 1946 – as written in his account of the Pan American Union in 1940 (2). Rowe continues by attributing the fact that it took over sixty years before substantial foundations for the PAU were laid to the incompetence of governments to "ratify the treaties and conventions" that were "signed by their respective delegations", thereby impeding Bolívar's ideals to flourish into actual action (2). And so, after sixty-three years, in 1889, the First International Conference of American States was held in Washington. One year later – on April 14, 1890, since then known as Pan American Day – the Commercial Bureau was established under the International Union of American Republics, with a small mandate focussing on commerce. In 1910 the Commercial Bureau was renamed the Pan American Union, with a more elaborate mandate that focusses on peace, prosperity and security in the continent. Later, in 1948, the organisation gained its current name; the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Pan American Union became its secretariat (Organization of American States 2-3).

According to the Charter of OAS, the OAS is "within the United Nations, […] a regional agency" (Charter Organization of American States 3). In reality, according to the PAU itself, "the character of agency in the relations of OAS to the United Nations is limited to the maintenance of peace and the pacific settlement of disputes" and that "in other fields of law […] the OAS functions independently of the United Nations" (Organization of American States 3-4). This implies that even though the OAS abides by the principles of the UN (and likewise the PAU the principles of the League), it nevertheless functions as a regional organisation in its own right. The following research will in fact argue in favour of this sense of regional organizational independence, and how this independence was used to further accomplishing the feminist aims of international women's groups. However, this research will also demonstrate that, even though the Pan American Union was a regional organisation with independence from the League, this did not mean that the PAU was immune to the influence of other hegemonic powers.

Pan Americanism

Leo Stanton Rowe describes the Pan American Union as a demonstration of "the persistence and continued vitality of the idea of inter-American cooperation" and emphasises that "concern for international security from within and without is a chief attribute" (1). Rowe hereby refers to two principles of the OAS charter, namely:

> "e) Every State has the right to choose, without external interference, its political, economic, and social system and to organize itself in the way best suited to it, and has the duty to abstain from intervening in the affairs of another State;"
>
> and
>
> "h) An act of aggression against one American State is an act of aggression against all the other American States" (Charter Organization of American States 4).

In these two phrases, both the principle of non-intervention and of the well-known Monroe Doctrine are laid down. Rowe argues that these principles, which he says are backed by popular public opinion, "demand[..] the use, when necessary, of the peace machinery created for the settlement of inter-American controversies and inspires joint action if external events threaten the peace of the American republics" (1). It is important to note that this account was written by Rowe in 1940, at which time the world was knee-deep in World War II, which lends important historical context to his depiction of American unity and strength.

Nonetheless, there are many scholars and IR practitioners who argue Pan Americanism to be nothing more than an instrument for the U.S.A. to maintain their hegemonic position in the continent and exercise their imperialistic aims. Katzenstein, for instance, argues that "in its approach to the Americas, the Janus-faced U.S. imperium has often surrendered to its territorial abuses" (227). K. Lynn Stoner, who wrote an excellent account of Pan American Feminism, to which this research will refer again, notices that "Pan Americanism was a mask for troubled inter-American diplomatic relations" (81). She provides convincing evidence in support of this argument. In 1928, the United States had continuously expressed their imperialistic intentions for over thirty years and the Latin American countries were growing quite weary of being regarded as a "backward" region that needed American guidance in order to flourish. In return, tensions were rising in Cuba as

well; President Gerardo Machado had just forced the constitution into his re-election, and the country was also facing economic issues (Stoner 82). And thus, during the Sixth Conference of the American States in Havana, Cuba, in 1928, tensions were expected to reach a boiling point. Stoner aptly argues that "Pan Americanism seemed a parody of itself when Presidents Gerardo Machado and Calvin Coolidge opened the Sixth Conference of American States with claims of their respect for Pan American principles" (82-83). Indeed, the first two motions expressed during the Sixth Conference were "expression of appreciation to the President of the United States of America" and "expression of gratitude and appreciation to the President of the Republic of Cuba" (Brown Scott 1931 308). Nevertheless, actively defending the PAU, Rowe describes "the record of the last fifty years in the peaceful settlement of inter-American disputes" as "one of which all republics may be well proud" and by which "the American republics are performing their highest service to humanity" (7-8).

Although small in number, there are authors that defend Rowe and the PAU. David Barton Castle, for example, recognises that Rowe's arguments are considered to be idealistic, yet also quite cynical, as one must keep in mind that Rowe was an American, and thus could have American imperialist aims as his incentive to promote the PAU so fiercely. However, Castle argues, that the Pan-American movement "embodied notions that reflected a sense of noble purpose […], the philosophy of internationalism, the Western Hemisphere idea, and 'progressive' economic theories" (34) claiming that Rowe was in fact concerned about his fellow countrymen's disregard for the Latin American countries (38). It is true, indeed, that Pan-Americanism is based on this "noble purpose" of unity and internationalism and a sense of a higher cause. However this does not negate the argument made on the influence of American imperialism, nor does it negate that the PAU effectively served as a mask for troubled continental relations. As will be outlined below, feminists cleverly used both sides of the PAU coin –the idealistic and imperialistic aspects – to their advantage as they aimed to advocate their cause of equality.

Chapter 3
Women at the League of Nations

In this research, the focus will be on five groups: the International Council of Women (ICW); the International Women Suffrage Alliance (IAW); the Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF); the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW); and the National Women's Party (NWP). With regards to their goals, these five groups can be divided in two groups. On the one hand, there are the big three – ICW, IAW, and WILPF – who defined women's needs based on their social roles and advocated mostly for special legislation for aimed at improving the position of women in society. These organisations were described as the 'social organisations' or 'reformists'. On the other hand, there were groups such as the NWP and the IACW, who were firm supporters of establishing equal rights legislation, and opponents of special legislation for women. These organisations were referred to as 'militant organisations' or as 'equalitarians' (Miller, Carol 1994 223). This clear opposition between the groups caused many discussions and backlash, sometimes obstructing the women in achieving their feminist aims. Nonetheless, despite their disagreements, the international women's groups still succeeded in working together on some areas, and, as Leila Rupp in her book *Worlds of Women, the Making of an International Women's Movement* argues: "the most crucial characteristic of women's movement organizations [was] the inclination to align with other women's groups (5). For then, they proved to be a voice that could not easily be ignored.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, article 7 of the League Covenant stipulated the equal access of both women and men to positions of the League. In her preface to the 1927 brochure *Women at Work in the League of Nations* – a brochure that gave an extensive summary of the presence and work of women in League organs –, Margery Corbett Ashby dubbed article 7 the "women's great charter in the League". She further wrote:

> "Women sit in the Assembly, and on several Commissions of the League. A few women have been appointed to very responsible positions, and their work has been of such fine quality as to deserve further recognition for the abilities of other women" (2).

This chapter provides an overview of the results of article 7; the presence of women at several League bodies. Even though the presence of these women can be regarded as a great

accomplishment, one must be aware of the fact that these women were generally appointed because of the gender characteristics that were attributed to them: carer, maternal, and even schoolteacher. The fact that these women served on these committees did not directly challenge the more feminist issues such as equal rights and women's unequal legal status. It does, however, exemplify the growing notion that women had something to contribute to international issues.

Women on the Permanent Mandates Commission

There were a few women appointed to organs of the League, such as Marie Curie on the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation or Eleanor Rathbone on the Child Welfare Committee. These positions were, however, merely advisory and not in any political sections (Pedersen "Metaphors of the Schoolroom" 190). As Susan Pedersen describes in her article "Metaphors of the Schoolroom: Women Working in the Mandates System of the League of Nations", women were involved in the League's mandates system. As one of few, the Mandates Commission had a protocol that described that out of the nine members, at least one women should be included. This protocol was due to lobbying by international women's groups, claiming that only then could the special interests of children and women in the mandates be safeguarded (191/194). This inclusion of a women in the Mandates Commission could very well be regarded as a positive result from the lobbying efforts of international women's groups, backed by article 7 of the League Covenant.

In this article, Pedersen further argues that the presence of women in the mandates commission justified non-consensual rule, which was the backbone of the mandates system. For, the perceived identity of women – nurturing, maternal – changed the logic of the mandates system from power and force, to tutelage (192). Thus, the great powers were not subduing the mandatory territories; they were teaching them how to, one day, become self-governing. The presence of women backed this argument well. In the case of the mandate system, the perceived identity of a women being nurturing, maternal and a good measure of civilization, was used as an argument by both the feminists and by the commission itself. For, the feminist used this argument in order to get a women on the Commission, and thus have more equal inclusion of men and women, while the Commission itself used this same argument to legitimize their policies.

Women on the Advisory Committee on Social Questions

Another subject on which the role of women was important was the trafficking of women and children. This subject was in the mandate, amongst others due to the lobbying of feminists in 1919, of the Social Section of the League, which was the only section that was headed by a woman (Offen 355). This woman, renowned for her nursing work in World War I, was Dame Rachel Crowdy. Even though she was head of a League Section, the recognition that should have been awarded her remained absent, for she was never granted official director status (Sluga "Female and National Self-Determination" 512). According to the extensive summary of *Women at Work in the League of Nations*, in 1927 there were eight women in the Committee that dealt with the prevention of the trafficking in women and children (17). This was an unparalleled number, and Carol Miller's research in "The Social Section and Advisory Committee on Social Questions of the League of Nations" indeed points out that "women usually enjoyed equal representation on the social committees" (154). And, as also pointed out in Miller's research, these women's efforts were not without result. One of their tasks, for instance, was to monitor policy ideas that were put forward by the Committee and make sure that women's rights were not violated. Moreover, there were women's groups which argued that "procurers for the traffic should be punished regardless of the age and moral character of the women involved". This notion of women's rights, which Miller also links to human rights, was new, and eventually was laid down in the 1933 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic on Women of Full Age (159). Moreover, the women in the Committee, amongst whom Grace Abbott, pushed the League to start an extensive inquiry to the amount and span of trafficking across the world, for the sources that they had at that time were minimal and inconclusive. This grand investigation led to the drawing up of a convention that would legally bind League members to stop with the state regulation of prostitution. Another result of this investigation was, according to Miller, that it "linked the traffic in women to the low status of women", which supported the call for a worldwide investigation into the status of women (161). This investigation, as will be argued in the following chapters, was one of the greatest achievements of international women's groups.

Women for Disarmament and Peace

Indeed, women were present at some League committees, however these were mostly limited to committees that dealt with social questions and therefore did not attribute as much to the feminist aims of equal nationality or equal rights. Yet, the fact that women were granted

positions on these committees did attribute to the increasing notion that women could in fact contribute to the League's work. Besides, not all efforts from international women's groups that were in line with League objectives were carried out from within the League. In 1925, the League of Nations set up a Disarmament Commission, and one of its objectives was to organise a worldwide Disarmament Conference. The international women's groups were immediately keen on this idea, and started campaigns on both the national and international level. The WILPF, for instance, gathered more than 10,000 signatures in the U.S. that undersigned a resolution stating that the envisioned conference should discuss the complete disarmament of the world. Moreover, another fine example of the WILPF national sections was the organised 'Peace Pilgrimage' in the U.K, which went from north to south, from east to west and conducted over 1,000 meetings. Bussey and Tims, who enthusiastically describe these events, rightly argue that it was remarkable that WILPF members found it possible to overcome "nationalist fears and hatreds" in order to "promote the objects of the League" (50-51). Eventually, in 1932 – six years after the establishment of the Disarmament Commission – the World Disarmament Conference took place in Geneva. Concurrent with this event, the international women's groups founded their own committee: the Women's Disarmament Committee (later to be named the Peace and Disarmament Committee) in 1931. The ICW, IAW, and WILPF were among the international women's groups that were members. This committee had launched an enormous, worldwide, campaign, in which they collected signatures of women for peace and disarmament. And so, on February 6th, 1931, the women delivered their petitions with over eight million signatures, out of which six million were collected by WILPF, to the League (Offen 363). Yet, the Disarmament Conference did not achieve any tangible results, much to the disappointment of the international women's groups. Indeed, when in 1939 Europe got thrown into yet another war, the disarmament efforts could officially be called a failure. However, as Rupp argues, to focus solely on this failure would undermine the enormous efforts of international women's groups for peace and disarmament, as well as the great support that they received (218). Offen takes this argument even further, cleverly claiming that it might have been the "mellow mood created by this massive women's peace initiative" that contributed to the League's positive sentiment towards the idea of collaboration with women in 1931 (363). Even though it is quite difficult to establish any causal relations in a research as this, it is nonetheless quite plausible that the above-mentioned initiatives and participation on League level helped further the international women's movements feminist causes.

Chapter 4

"The feminist dimensions of women's international work"[3]

In her article "'Geneva – the Key to Equality': Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations", Carol Miller very aptly argues that the argument that women, after they won the vote, merely focused their efforts on disarmament and peace on an international level, "fails to consider the feminist dimensions of women's international work" (219). As the previous chapter gave some examples of how women secured their place in organs of the League, the accounts fail to demonstrate the efforts that internationally minded women undertook to achieve their feminist aims of equal rights or equal nationality rights. In fact, this research points out that there is an argument that can be added to that of Miller, and that is that the previously mentioned examples only show what passed at the League of Nations – and thus merely looks at feminist dimensions of women's international work from a Western point of view – and not on a regional level, more specifically the Pan American Union, which, in fact, turned out to be vital.

The Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organisations

The previous chapter has shown some examples of the efforts of women in committees of the League. However, as Bussey and Tims argue, the presence of women and their voice "was no more than a whisper in the assembly of nations" (73). Women's presence at the League was meagre – there were, for example, only 15 women present at the Tenth Assembly in 1929 – not even close to the amount that international women's groups wished it to be. Therefore, by initiative of the ICW, the Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organisations was established, in 1925. This committee consisted of both the big three as well as six other international women's organisations, its aim was to "secur[e] the appointment of women to the international and expert Committees of the League of Nations" (73-74). This committee is one example of how international women's groups decided to cooperate on an international level in order to stand a better chance in achieving the goals they had in common. And, as can be deducted from the previous chapter, in some ways they achieved this goal, for there were indeed women appointed to League official organs and had great influence there. What needs to be kept in mind, though, is that the organisations that

[3] Carol Miller 'Geneva – the Key to Equality': Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations" 12.

were member of the Joint Standing Committee, the big three amongst others, were all considered social feminists and did not include any equalitarian feminists.

Equal rights

One organisation that firmly disagreed with the big three was the NWP. The NWP was an American-based women's group, well-known for their militant strategies during the suffragette movement. Alice Paul and Doris Stevens, the NWP's most famous feminists, were infamous for their picketing actions in front of the White House, an act for which they were arrested, imprisoned and even went on to hunger strike over in protest. When eventually the vote was won with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the NWP changed goals. As despite, the fact that there would be no distinction made for the American people to vote on basis of sex, this did not mean women enjoyed the same rights as men. As a pamphlet of the NWP called "Women As Persons Under The Constitution" in 1944 argued: "Many people mistakenly believe that women do possess all the same rights before the law as men, because the right to vote has been incorporated into the Constitution" (Armstrong 2). Therefore, the new objective of the NWP was to achieve full legal equality for men and women. To this purpose Alice Paul drafted an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1921, meant to provide civil and political rights to the American people, regardless of sex, and thus would ensure that women "in the fullest sense, [would be] persons before the law" (Armstrong 3). According to Beatrice McKenzie, in her article "The Power of International Positioning: The National Women's Party, International Law and Diplomacy, 1928-34" both Alice Paul and Doris Stevens received advice from James Brown Scott, an international law attorney affiliated with the Institut de Droit International in Paris and the American Institute of International Law. Scott advised the two women that the best way to achieve change in domestic legislation was via international legislation. Stevens and Paul, already exploring this new field of legislation, therefore focused their efforts on drafting an international treaty that would legally ensure full equality for women and would subsequently establish the same on the domestic level (McKenzie 131-133). To this purpose, Alice Paul drafted an Equal Rights Treaty in 1928. This treaty was established with the same prospect as the Equal Rights Amendment (hereafter: ERA), however the means through which this aim of legal equality would be established had changed. With the Equal Rights Treaty (hereafter: ERT) as their sword, the NWP would use the international arena to fight their battle.

Because the NWP was an American-based organisation, their strategy was also American-based, and therefore decided to, quite cleverly, use the hegemonic role of the

U.S.A. to their advantage (McKenzie 130). The most logical international arena to operate in, at that time would have been the League of Nations. However, the U.S.A never joined the League due to domestic protests. Fortunately for the NWP, there was another transnational organisation where the U.S.A. did enjoy a hegemonic status; the Pan-American Union (PAU).

Pan-American feminism

Long before they were welcome at the Pan-American Union, Latin American women were active in pursuing their feminist goals and ideas. Francesca Miller, in her book *Latin American Women and the Search for Justice*, gives an extensive account of Latin American feminism. She points out that as early as in 1873, Brazilian women were printing journals with feminist calls, and in 1910 the Primer Congreso Femenino Internacional was held, which was visited by over 200 women from Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay (Miller, Francesca 1991 69/72). In 1915, the second Pan American Scientific Congress was held in Washington. Women were active visitors of the previous Scientific Congress, however, as Europe was at war at that moment, and revolution was spreading across Latin America, the Congress decided that women had no place in the audience, banishing them to a spectator view from the balcony (Miller, Francesca 1990 13).

In 1923, the tide began to change. During the 5th Pan-American Conference in Santiago, Chile, the Guatemalan delegate Maximo Soto Hall put forth an unprecedented resolution, in which he addressed 5 points regarding the rights of women. Among these 5 points were:

1. "To recommend the Governing Board of the Pan American Union to include in the program of future Conferences, the study of the means of abolishing the constitutional and legal incapacities of women, for the purpose of securing […] the same civil and political rights for women that are today enjoyed by men."

   and

5. "To recommend to the Governments that women be included on the Delegations, in order that they may be able to participate in the work of future Conferences" (Scott 1931 245).

Not only was this resolution an important acknowledgement of the wish for equal rights for women, it also must be noted is that this resolution was put forth by a man as women were not allowed on delegations. Through this resolution, a movement within the Pan American Union was set in motion which could not easily be stopped. No doubt feeling supported by the above-mentioned resolution, Cuban feminists sat together in January 1928, to draft a document which would ensure equal rights for women and men before the law. One day before the Sixth Pan-American Conference would take place in Havana, Doris Stevens and Alice Paul from the NWP joined the Cuban women. Together, they completed the ERT and prepared to present it at the Conference (Stoner 84-85).

In March and February 1928, the sixth Pan-American Conference was held in Havana, Cuba. As already mentioned before, the sixth Conference was held in an environment of internal suspicion masked with "moral aloofness" and a sense of pretence (Stoner 84). The delegates attending the Conference were adamant on keeping up appearances, and thereby putting emphasis on optimism and Pan-American idealism. As Stoner aptly argues: "male delegates, charged with justifying their existence in the face of notable violations of the spirit of Pan Americanism, spoke loftily of their mission and ignored their failures" (Stoner 84). Exactly this environment of pretence was an ideal environment for the Pan-American feminists to further their cause.

And so, on February 7, 1928, the following motion was adopted:

> "The Sixth International Conference of American States agrees:
> To invite, with extra-official character, the representatives of the various feminist associations which have requested an audience, to set forth before the Conference, at a Plenary meeting and after its agenda has been exhausted, their viewpoints on the matter of civil and political rights for women."
> (Scott 1931 324)

With this motion, the Pan-American Union granted the feminists sufficient momentum to actively speak about their cause, linked – though not officially – to the Pan-American Union. Unfortunately, even though Doris Stevens had the momentum to promote the ERT, the treaty itself enjoyed no breakthrough at the Conference. Scholars agree that Stevens, who was one of the eight speakers at the plenary session, spoke with great vigour about American women and how they considered their goals higher than that of nationalism, to which the PAU often seemed to succumb. Nevertheless, the accounts differ when regarding the amount of PAU

delegates that actually attended the extra unofficial plenary meeting. The room was packed with Cuban women, but Stoner argues that two-thirds of the official delegates left, while Towns claims that almost all delegates were present. Whether the official delegates were present or not, the plenary session could very much be considered a success, for just nine days later, a new resolution was put forward:

> "The Sixth International Conference of American States resolves:
> That an Inter-American Commission of Women be constituted to take charge of the preparation of juridical information and data of any other kind which may be deemed advisable to enable the Seventh International Conference of American States to take up the consideration of the civil and political equality of women in the continent." (Scott 1931 408).

The resolution was adopted with anonymous vote, and so the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) was established, with NWP's Doris Stevens as chair (Stoner 89). Even though the establishment of the IACW – also known by its Spanish name Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres – was initiated by the PAU, it could very well be argued that the IACW is another manifestation of U.S. hegemony within the PAU. First and foremost, Stevens was made chair, with the support of Scott, who are both Americans. It is also argued that democratic chairmanship and knowledge of Latin American feminism was not on the top of Steven's priority list (Towns 791-792). Furthermore, there are scholars who argue that there are fundamental differences between Latin-American feminism and U.S.A feminism. For, where U.S.A. feminism was mainly considered to be equalitarian, Latin-American feminism focused more on the specific feminine characteristics, and accepted their socially defined roles (Miller, Francesca 1991 74 / Stoner 80). Moreover, the next steps of the IACW also prove the hegemonic role of the U.S. in the IACW, as the main focus would very much be on equal rights, leaving no space for social feminism.

The issue of women's nationality

By the end of the 1920s, the NWP's cause of an Equal Rights Treaty had made minimal progress. However, another issue of women's rights quickly came to the foreground, demanding many feminists' attention. This issue was the question of women's nationality. As Sluga points out, after the first World War, many European states created new legislation that ensured that if women nationals married a foreigner they would lose their nationality. On top

of this, the women who would lose her own nationality would not have the certainty of gaining the nationality of her new husband, thus leading to many women ending up stateless (511-512). This inconsistency among states with regards to women's nationality was, together with international trade agreements and arms limitation treaties, discussed in 1930 at the Conference for the Codification of International Law, in The Hague (Pfeffer 463). The newly-founded IACW took up the issue of nationality during their first meeting from 17 until 24 February 1930, where they concluded the Equal Nationality Treaty (ENT). The delegate of Chile agreed to present this ENT to the Hague Codification Conference which was to take place two months later (Scott 1934 220).

The pressing issue of women's nationality was not only recognised by the IACW. The ICW and the IAW – the social feminists – also found women's nationality an important issue which needed to be addressed. In a report about the nationality of women to be submitted to the Codification Conference, several reformist women's groups laid down the "changes [that were] now being asked for". The most pressing was: "that a woman should have the right to retain her own nationality on marriage and that she should have the same choice of nationality as a man" (MacMillan "The Nationality of Married Women" 9-10). In March 1930, simultaneously with the Hague Codification Conference, the ICW and IAW held a 'Joint Demonstration' in order to influence the conference and they were eventually allowed to speak before the conference (Zimmermann 6). However the results of the Codification Conference, laid down in the Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws, The Hague 12 April 1930, were not even close to being satisfactory for the international women's groups. The chapter that laid down the principles regarding the nationality of women, Chapter III, included 4 articles which were all considered as "utterly unsatisfactory and at least partly based on unacceptable principles" (Zimmermann 6). For, even though the first page of this Convention states:

> "BEING CONVINCED that it is in the general interest of the international community to secure that all its members should recognise that every person should have a nationality and should have one nationality only" (Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws, The Hague 12 April 1930 1),

the Chapter regarding the issue of nationality is only focused on women (and children), making no comment on men (3). The League itself also recognised that the Conference was no success. A report of the 1930 conference is included in the United Nations Documents

Concerning Development and Codification of International Law of 1947. This report states that even though the conference had not succeeded in "reaching satisfactory results in all the subjects on its agenda" (84), "the Conference was relatively most successful in the matter of nationality" (82). There was one recommendation made as a result of the Codification Conference which was met with satisfaction. This was Recommendation VI, which asked states to consider "whether it would not be possible … to introduce into their law the principle of the equality of the sexes in matters of nationality' and 'to decide that in principle the nationality of the wife shall ... not be effected without her consent either by the mere fact of marriage or by any change in the nationality of her husband" (Scott 1931 507). Nonetheless, the overall sentiment regarding the Codification Conference was mainly dissatisfaction, for the convention ultimately did not grant women nationality rights that were independent of their husbands (Zimmermann 3).

The ICW and the IAW were not the only groups which were disappointed by the results of the Codification Conference; the NWP was also discontented. As a result the NWP, together with their British equivalent the Six Point Group, founded a new international women's groups: the Equal Rights International (hereafter: ERI). The ERI's headquarters was settled in Geneva, and the organisation was headed by the Scottish-English feminist Helen Archdale. Via the ERI, with its headquarters in the same city where the League of Nations was seated (a strategy also carried out by the WILPF, who had its headquarters in the magnificent Maison Internationale), the NWP could continue their international work in the League of Nations (Pfeffer 464). And so, feminists from both the reformist and equalitarian side began to work together against the results of the Codification Conference, and British feminist and lawyer Chrystal Macmillan of the IAW and NWP's Alice Paul consequently initiated a "formidable protest to ensure that the Hague Convention would not be the final word on the subject" (Miller, Carol 227).

Their combined efforts did not remain unnoticed. As a result of the international women's groups protests, the Council of the League of Nations eventually agreed in January 1931 to put the nationality of married women issue on the agenda for the next Assembly, which was to take place in the fall of 1931. This outcome was also due to efforts from representatives from countries within the Pan-American Union, specifically Peru, Guatemala and Venezuela, who requested "the Council to examine the possibility of women co-operating more fully in the work of the League" ("Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace: Report by the Secretary-General" 1).

The Council decided to invite several transnational women's groups to form a consultative committee that would "submit to the Assembly a report on the question" of "the continued study of the nationality of women" (Scot 1931 507). And so, in January 1931, the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality was established, consisting of, amongst others, the ICW, WILPF, ERI, and IACW, and thus including both equalitarian and reformist women's groups (Scott 1931 507). This new committee, chaired by Chrystal Macmillan, was granted unprecedented benefits at the League, even though it was never constituted as an official League body (Miller, Carol 1994 227). James Brown Scott, in his collection of documents of the first six Pan-American Conferences, placed a footnote above the title of the abovementioned resolution, which states: "In the interest of historical accuracy it is necessary to record that the initiative of the Council's action came from the Inter American Commission of Women" (507). Although it is quite difficult to assign the passage of this resolution to merely one international women's organisation, it is in fact accurate to state that the Latin American delegations' initiatives concerning equal nationality at the League and the Codification Conference were of significant importance to the cause.

Even though the Consultative Committee exemplifies cooperation and a new layer that "served as a space of opportunity for promoting and establishing within the circle of women's internationalism organizations new profiles, new policy agendas", the Committee was nevertheless from the beginning subject to conflict and disagreement (Zimmermann 12 /14). According to Zimmermann, there were two main issues; the first was the equalitarians' aim to use the Committee as a platform to promote equal rights and the ERT. The second issue was the reformists' objective to combine the equal nationality rights with supplementary legislation that would ensure independence of choice and citizenship (14-15). Hence, the reformists argued that it would be wise to ratify the Hague Convention, for it ensured at least tolerable nationality rights for married women. This did not mean that these rights should not be improved, however the reformists considered this to be a path that had to be undertaken on the national level.

The ERI and the IACW, on the contrary, were firmly against ratifying the Convention (Miller, Carol 1994 229-230). This fundamental disagreement is referred to as the 'clash of 1932'. This clash eventually resulted in the Consultative Committee handing in two separate reports to the League Assembly. One was signed by the ICW, IAW, and others, pressing the League to consider the nationality issue from an individualization standpoint "demanding for women as well as for men 'the right to keep their nationality of origin'" (Zimmermann 15). The other report was undersigned by, amongst others, the ERI, WILPF, and the IACW. This

report was quite less implicit as the former, incontestably claiming that "the equality principle should be a general principle to be applied to all international legislation" (Zimmermann 15-16). Clearly, the conclusion that can be made here is that the Consultative Committee – established in response to the demands of the international women's groups it consisted of – did not achieve its objective. This unmistakably also had consequences for their efforts at the League, and thus, in 1932, the League Assembly "disgusted with the inability of organized women to speak 'with a united voice'" chose to support the ratification of the Hague Convention (Rupp 148). The equalitarian camp, strongly opposing the Hague Convention, embarked on an intense lobbying strategy with daily visits to the Peace Palace, which eventually led to the Dutch police being commissioned to bring the women to a halt and not let them get inside the Peace Palace. The NWP then focused their efforts on the U.S.A. For, if the Hague Convention would be ratified, that would mean that the domestic 1922 Cable Act – also known as the "Married Women's Independent Nationality Act" – would be reversed. Eventually, after lobbying from both the NWP, James Brown Scott and Congressman John Cable – the congressman who proposed the 1922 act – the U.S.A. was the only country that voted against the Hague Convention (McKenzie 136-137). Despite this small success on the American side, the Hague Convention was still ratified in 1937 (Rupp 148).

Success at the Pan-American Union

The results of the Consultative Committee were disappointing for all international women's groups. In addition, the principle of equal rights had also received disappointing reactions from the League. In the 1932 report of the Secretary-General, the first observation that is put down is that "the Secretary-General doubts whether the present item on the Assembly's agenda can properly be held to cover the question of "equal rights" and that he will merely see the recommendations made in favour of increased cooperation with women's groups as "a reminder of the recourses which the interest of women in the essential purposes of the League places at the disposal of its executive organs" (3-4). At the Pan-American Union, however, success was more imminent.

In 1933, the Seventh Pan American Conference took place in Montevideo, Uruguay. At this Conference, two major issues were discussed: the ENT and the ERT. The Convention on the Nationality of Women stated that "there shall be no distinction based on sex as regards nationality, in their legislation or in their practice" and that it would "be ratified by the High Contracting Parties in conformity with their respective constitutional procedures" (Convention on the Nationality of Women 1). James Brown Scott, in his account of the

Seventh Conference, copied the text of the Convention and referred to it as being "short but epoch-making" (219).

The ENT was less wide-ranging than the ERT, for it merely focused on nationality legislation, while the ERT promoted equal rights for all (McKenzie 138). The NWP's high expectations for the Pan-American Union appeared to be well-founded. The ENT received positive acknowledgements, and got signed quickly by many delegates save one: the delegate from the U.S.A. (McKenzie 140). Apparently the then-sitting President Roosevelt did not instruct his delegates to sign the ENT; an action that the NWP perceived to be the doing of reformist women's groups, who enjoyed close ties with Eleanor Roosevelt (Pfeffer 465). Fortunately for the NWP, due to their lobbying efforts in DC and the IACW lobbying efforts at the Conference, Roosevelt eventually instructed his delegate to sign the ENT, on one condition: that the promotion of the ERT would be suspended (McKenzie 140).

The ERT, which read:

> "The contracting states agree that upon the ratification of this treaty men and women shall have equal rights throughout the territory subject to their respective jurisdiction" (Scott 1934 221)

was indeed only signed by four countries: Ecuador, Cuba, Uruguay and Paraguay, and was therefore not ratified, instead it was presented as a recommendation to other nations, that was open for voluntary adherence. Scott, passionately backing Stevens, commented that "[i]n law and in fact, the present document should be, and one day will be, known as the 'Stevens Equal Rights Convention.'" (221). And so, at the end of the Seventh Pan American Conference, equal nationality was established via a Convention, but the principle of equal rights, once again, came up short.

The Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations

While the NWP and IACW had been lobbying the Pan-American Union to support their efforts, the ICW and IAW had also been busy with their cause. In 1931, a new form of cooperation amongst reformist international women's groups was established: the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations. This committee was borne out of the wish of the feminists in the Joint Standing Committee, who regarded the mandate of that committee to be too narrow (it merely focused on appointing women for positions at the League). Thus, the mandate of the Liaison Committee was written accordingly, and it stated

that the committee would "deal with general questions arising in connection with the League of Nations" (Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations, n.d. (1936?); Minutes 16/07/1931 printed in Zimmermann 7). One important aspect of this mandate was that the Liaison Committee would deal with matters regarding the cooperation between international women's groups and the League of Nations. Seizing this opportunity, ERI responded to this mandate in February 1932 by presenting the ERT to the Liaison Committee (ERI had become member of the Liaison Committee in 1931). ERI considered the ERT to be the only way to achieve equal rights for women, however they claimed to be willing, for the time being, to work with the League. In this matter, we see again the fierce difference between the reformists and the equalitarians. ERI promoted the concept of establishing a separate general women's committee under the League of Nations, while organisations such as the IAW were convinced that including more women in the already existing committees of the League was the way forward. Regardless of the ERI's standpoint, the Liaison Committee sent a letter to the League's Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond, explaining that the Committee did not support the idea of a separate women's committee, "since the establishment of an official committee of this kind would, in effect, emphasise and perpetuate that difference in status which the Committee desires to obliterate" (Annex 1 to ("Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace: Report by the Secretary-General" 6). The Liaison Committee included ERI in the letter, which led to much protest from ERI's side. These differences notwithstanding, after the NWP and IACW's successes at the Montevideo Conference in 1933, the ERI gained new impetus to promote their treaties, and they pressed the feminists in the Liaison Committee to lobby their governments for the Montevideo Convention (Zimmermann 20).

Inquiry into the legal status of women

Finally, the League of Nations became the place where the international women's groups would focus their efforts. In 1934, ten Latin American delegations pressed the League to investigate in the status of women (Miller, Carol 1994 231). The Liaison Committee, urged by the ERI, also continued their lobbying at the League, and in 1934 and 1935 worked on their own 'International Convention on the Status of Women', which embodied a "renewed effort to bring about more substantial and more general engagement of the League with promoting the equal status of women" (Zimmermann 20-21). Moreover, the Consultative Committee exercised the same message to the League, and, knowing that the Assembly of 1936 would discuss a revision of the Covenant, urged for a rewriting that would bring the

Covenant in line with the principle of legal equality and would therefore explicitly include legal equality for all (Zimmermann 17 / Offen 358). This enormous collective effort of lobbying at the League did pay off, yet not to the extent that was desired. The League concluded in 1935 that the revision requested by the Consultative Committee would not be possible (Zimmermann 17). Moreover, the adoption of the Liaison Committee's 'International Convention on the Status of Women' was also denied by the League (Zimmermann 21). However, regardless of this disappointment, the year 1935 would initiate a fundamental change for the international women's groups. The Assembly of 1935 passed a resolution, influenced by the Montevideo Nationality Convention, in which it asked governments to provide the League with information on the rights, both political and civil, of women in those governments' countries. Simultaneously, the Assembly also asked the ILO to conduct a similar examination of women's rights under labour legislation (Miller, Carol 1994 232). With regards to the influence of the Montevideo Nationality Convention on the League's decision to pose this request to its delegates, Eisenberg argues that the Assembly passed a resolution that should draw "the attention of its member states to the existence of the Montevideo Nationality Convention and to the fact it was open for accession by all states". And that, considering the fact that the Hague Convention was still not ratified, but nonetheless also promoted by the League, meant, de facto, that "the Montevideo clauses had supplanted the Hague formulation as official league policy" (12). This argument supports the suggestion that the successes achieved at the 7th Pan-American Conference in Montevideo were indeed vital for the general international awareness of women's rights.

The examination by governments requested in the Assembly of 1935 was laid down in a report, presented by the Swedish Senator Kirsten Hesselgren (Miller, Carol 1994 237). The report recommended the League to conduct an inquiry into the legal status of women and thus, at the Assembly of 1937, the League of Nations established a Committee of Experts, and they would conduct a League-sponsored inquiry into the legal status of women around the world (Offen 358-359).

Conclusion

The envisioned inquiry into the legal status of women thus began at the Assembly of 1937. Throughout 1938 and 1939, the Committee met several times to set out their course of action. During these meetings, international women's groups were very much involved. Finally, the Committee started their inquiry by setting up the questions that needed to be answered, and divided these into public, private, and criminal law sections. Unfortunately, problems arose when the committee had to select a legal institute that could deal with both these matters of legislation and had the capacity to interpret non-Western law. These problems led to the delay of the deadline to 1941, at which time the world was knee-deep in the Second World War (Eisenberg 13). And so, the League of Nations' inquiry into the legal status of women was suspended.

Many scholars who have written on the subject of international women's groups consider the League inquiry in the legal position of women their biggest achievement. As Leila Rupp rightly argues: "the simple recognition that women's position was an appropriate subject for international action represented a giant leap forward from the assumption in 1919 that women's rights could be handled only on the national level" (220). Indeed, there are many scholars who rightly see the inquiry, and the whole international women's groups movement, as a basis for what was yet to come. Carol Miller, for instance, observes that the inquiry in fact laid the foundations for the creation of the UN Status of Women Commission in 1946 (237). Rupp continues this argument, and adds to it that "women from the great transnational organizations, then, played a critical role in winning a place for women's equal rights in the UN Charter. She concludes with the observation that the international women's movement before the Second World War formed the basis for the UN Decade for Women Conferences and eventually the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which she argues is a "prehistory we should not ignore" (224-225).

Although the above made observations are all accurate, this research also set out that the ways in which the international women's movements endeavoured to achieve their goals is just as important. The fact that the Pan American Union gave the NWP and the IACW the necessary forum where the ENT could be passed and unprecedented attention could be given to equal rights for women, gave them the needed leverage to push for equal rights for women at the previously apprehensive League of Nations and contributed to the increasing recognition of the legal status of women at the end of the 1930s.

The different international women's groups worked, despite their ideological differences, for matters such as women's nationality rights and the legal status of women. In their efforts, they showed great flexibility, using the fact that they were internationally based to their advantage. This research showed that there is more to the work of international women's groups than just their endeavours at the League of Nations. The other side of the spectrum, namely the feminist aims of these women at the Pan American Union, are significant and prove that the regional is very much a place where progress can occur with a legitimate point of view, indeed a place for 'thinkers', and not 'cameras' (Acharya 648).

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