

WOMEN OF THE PACIFIC AND EAST ASIA MEET IN MANILA

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In January last, two important Conferences were held in the Philippines: a regional meeting of the International Federation of University Women, and the triennial Conference of the Pan-Pacific and South-east Asian Association, or, to use its old name, P.P.W.A. Though many members of the W.C.T.U. are interested in the I.F.U.W. meeting, I shall report the P.P.W.A. Conference, because of its wider coverage and W.C.T.U.'s official place in the movement.

Twenty countries sent delegates and observers, namely, **Hawaii, Tonga, Samoa, Guam, the Carolinas, the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, New Guinea, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Formosa, Thailand, Burma, India, Pakistan, Ceylon and U.S.A.**

The place of meeting was the University of the Philippines, about 8 miles out of Manila. It is not always realized that Manila was terribly heavily bombed during the last war, and has been, to a considerable degree, rebuilt since 1946, the year when it became a Republic. A whole article could be written on this beautiful modern city, with its fine bridges over the Passig river, its up-to-date harbour facilities, its elegant commercial buildings and well-equipped modern homes, but my purpose is to give an over-all description of the conference arrangements.

Most of the delegates travelled by plane and were met at the airport by charming Filipinas, who presented us with garlands of the lovely perfumed sampaguita, their national flower. The picturesque building, where we lived on the University Campus, was the only old building in use, the faculty buildings being modern structures erected since 1946, when the Philippines became a republic.

To make us comfortable, the various Women's Committees had borrowed bedroom and lounge furniture, and had lent their own bedside lamps, bedspreads, flower vases etc., and kept our rooms bright with lovely fresh flowers. We were able to use the long tropical verandah for quiet talks, discussion groups or hastily called committee meetings. Delegates and observers—in all about 500—held general meetings in the commodious bamboo hall, which was charmingly decorated with palms and the flags of the nations. Asian countries took it in turn to arrange the floral decorations on the stage, and none of us will ever forget the exquisite stylized arrangement of cream, pink, and rose frangipani, or the glowing red gladioli of Formosa.

In the dining room and cafeteria, we rubbed shoulders with the undergraduates, who were most friendly and helpful, and so willing to talk of their

privileges at the University—for education at all stages is highly prized by the Filipinos.

Theme of Conference

The theme of the Conference was **Economic Interdependence**, the principal headings being **Participation of Women in Social and Economic Life; Education of Women and Girls; Handicrafts and Home Industries; Ideals, Problems and Progress in Social and Economic Conditions**. Addresses were given by representatives of different countries, so that as many points of view as possible would be heard.

For example, under the heading of "Handicrafts," Japanese and Tongan delegates read papers, an American delegate spoke on "crafts in Occupational Therapy," an Australian dealt with "Revivals of Handicrafts and Home Industries." Then followed an address by the Pakistan representative on the work of E.C.A.F.E. The addresses were followed by group discussions and round tables, which were more intimate and greatly enjoyed by everyone.

Series of Visits

Another extremely important part of the programme was the series of visits made to local Health and Education projects, to United Nations' schemes of various kinds, and to community and rural reconstruction centres. Fisheries and backyard fish ponds are an important part of the local economic set-up, as fish and rice are the most important articles in the Philippine diet.

The various trips enabled us to see the countryside and villages or barrios with their collection of nipa huts, built of matting and bamboo, and raised on stilts. Paddy fields, salt beds, plantations of papaya, bananas and sugar cane soon became a familiar sight to us all. The contrast between the Manila scene and the country scene was most marked. The nipa huts, though very picturesque and in many ways suited to the needs of the people, lacked sanitation of any kind, and there was absolutely no privacy.

The people of the villages and the city were equally charming, happy, kindly and forgiving. Their country had been successively occupied from the sixteenth century by Spanish, Americans, and Japanese. The hardships endured during the few years before their liberation are indescribable, and yet, today, there remains a cheerful determination to tackle their problems of health and education services, of economic reconstruction and of building a democratic regime, where the importance of the individual will be fully recognized, both as a human being and as an intelligent voter.

Hospitality was lavish—we were entertained by Mrs. Magsaysay, wife of the President, at the

(Continued on Page 9)