

## INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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### INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF SOCIAL WORKERS (IPSSW)

At the time of the **First International Conference on Social Work in Paris July 2-13, 1928** the suggestion was made that an International Association of Social Workers be formed. A number of social workers from England, France, Scandinavia, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia got together and commissioned an organizational meeting to be called. The meeting approved the idea of an international professional association, and at the **Second International Social Work Conference in Frankfurt am Main, July 10-14, 1932**, provisional statutes of what was called the **International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers** were voted July 13 with representatives from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Social Worker organisations from these 8 countries are the founding members of IPSSW. The provisional statutes were divided in two chapters, on membership and aims:

#### **Membership**

*Every organisation of social workers can acquire membership. Nations without corresponding organisations but with similar ones as Kindergärtnerinnen, superintendants of manufactories, industrial assistants etc. are also admitted.*

*Nations without any organisations at all, but having social workers may be represented by individual personalities.*

*One organisation from each country may obtain membership, unless special reasons speak for the admittance of more than one organisation of the same country. Admission of any organisation besides the one that belongs to the founders depends on the latter's consent.*

*In countries with national minorities as well as in those that have no central organisation, several groups may acquire the membership. Admission of new organisations can only take place after consulting those associations that have founded the International Secretariat.*

#### **Aim**

*The aim of the International Secretariat is:*

*Exchange of experiences concerning all fields of welfare work/ welfare work in a wider sense*

*Giving information referring to social work in the different countries*

*Exchange of periodicals or other publications of the national organisations*

*Protection of social workers who visit foreign countries  
Observation of the working conditions of social workers*

The first seat of IPSSW was in **Berlin**, but moved soon to **Geneva** when Hitler came to power in Germany. In 1934 it was moved to **Prague**, where it stayed until 1948, when the political situation in Czechoslovakia made it impossible to uphold this kind of activity. In the period between 1938 and 1946 the secretariat was unable to function due to the German occupation and later the Second World War. The **Third International Social Work Conference**, and the last before the war, was held in London in 1936. A fourth conference planned in Prague 1940 never took place.

When the Secretariat had to give in in 1948 there were plans to move the activity to the United States. However, it was decided to only continue the activities of the Secretariat as a branch of the International Conference of Social Work. This led to activities to form a new international body for professional social workers. At the **Fifth International Social Conference on Social Work** in Paris in 1950 (the Fourth had been held in Atlantic City and New York in 1948), an agreement to form a new body was approved provided that seven national associations would become members. This aim was achieved in 1956, when the **International Federation of Social Workers** was formed in **Munich**. A new Secretariat was established in **New York**, sharing office with the **National Association of Social Workers**.

There is to my knowledge no collected description of the activities of IPSSW in the pre-war period. A lot of correspondence has been taken care of, however, and could one day maybe be used to develop a presentation. What can be read from the correspondence (which is in English, French, German and partly in Czech) is that in addition to the conference activities, IPSSW was active in seeking contact with social worker organizations in different countries to broaden its membership and also to engage in study visits and assistance to social workers wanting information about social work abroad. The eternal discussion about what professional social work is and is not is also reflected in the correspondence, among other items a cross-country study in the tasks of female police officers.

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Tom Johannesen, Secretary General, IFSW