First Feminist Efforts: Statutes of the General German Women's Association (1865)

Abstract

Founded in 1865, the General German Women's Association aimed to foster women's education and to prepare them for employment – goals that challenged the traditional view of women. The association consisted solely of German women; men and meritorious non-German women were only permitted as honorary members with advisory functions. The association was financed through annual subscriptions, voluntary donations from men, and revenue from various events.

Source

STATUTES OF THE GENERAL GERMAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
Adopted on October 17, 1865 at the Women's Conference in Leipzig

§1. The task of the General German Women's Association is to work, with united strength, for the higher education of the female sex and for the liberation of female work from all the obstacles that stand in the way of its full development.

§2. Married and unmarried women who are of the age of majority obtain membership through a declaration of entry and a one-time entry fee of 1/2 Thaler and yearly dues of 2 Thaler. Younger girls can be admitted as observers without voting rights for yearly dues of 1 Thaler and can enjoy all privileges of the association.

§3. The income is derived from
a) yearly dues of the members,
b) voluntary contributions by men,
c) earnings from evening entertainments, concerts, lotteries, etc.

§4. Members who live in larger numbers in various locations are urgently requested to set up local associations that are to maintain active contact with the board.

§5. The running of the organization is assigned to members living in one particular city, which can be reappointed every year.

A board that shall administer the ongoing business, made up of five members residing that city, shall be appointed.
The board can also include male honorary members; they have a consultative voice.
The board, along with ten outside members, constitutes the steering committee that shall be convened on important issues and may co-opt other members.
The board and the steering committee are elected every year.

§6. If possible, there shall be a yearly Women's Conference convened in the city where members of the organization's board reside; its location shall change every year.
The local associations are obliged to send representatives to the Women's Conference.
However, participation is open to every member of the General German Women's Association.

§7. A revision of the statutes, if it is deemed desirable, can take place at every Women's Conference, but it

requires a vote of three-quarters of the members present.

Source: Louise Otto-Peters, *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb. Blicke auf das Frauenleben der Gegenwart.* Hamburg, 1866, p. 87 f; reprinted in Margrit Twellmann, *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung im Spiegel repräsentativer Frauenzeitschriften. Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung. Quellen, 1843–1889.* Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1972, pp. 136–37.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap

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