

## Summary

In July 1886 the women workers at Rubens' Textile Mill in Copenhagen stopped work and demanded a raise in their wages and the abolition of the fine system. Having stopped work, they marched to the Weavers' Trade Union in Copenhagen to join up. The fact that the women were not organised at the time the strike began was to be a bone of contention in the dispute which followed between the Weavers' Union in Copenhagen and the National Union of Textile Workers, on one hand, and the women workers at Rubens', on the other; the final outcome was that the women organised their own Women's Trade Union. In an article in the Socialist newspaper, the *Socialdemokraten*, printed at the beginning of the strike, the women themselves wrote that they had, "initiated the struggle for women's right to have a say about their own situation". This may be interpreted to mean that the women themselves perceived the strike to be about something beyond higher wages. In the anniversary brochure from 1925, written by J.J. Møller, for many years the president of the union, the conflict between the trade union and the women is described as a conflict between female foolhardiness and male wisdom. Unthinkingly, the women had taken industrial action without any money, without giving a thought to the proper timing of the strike, and without being members of a trade union, whose support they subsequently had the gall to demand (which, incidentally, it gave). In short, the women had no understanding of the class-struggle, or as J.J. Møller put it, the long haul in the organisations as the road to a good result.

The women workers at Rubens' were not the only ones to establish their own trade unions for women exclusively. The question of whether women should organise independently or together with male workers was much debated, in the trade unions as well as in the Social Democratic Party. Gender and class – whether working women had goals and interests which they shared primarily with each other and other women or with working-class males – is a discussion which emerged together with the genesis of the women's emancipatory movement and the labour movement in the late 19th century, and one which has yet to find its conclusion, although from time to time the discussion has been of less than central importance. As long as men and women do not enjoy the same conditions, their interests will, from time to time, differ. The fact that throughout history other and more important things have been at stake than merely interests, also emerges from the Rubens' conflict and its af-



termath. In women's research, a distinction is made between sex as a biological phenomenon and gender as a social and symbolic phenomenon. The Rubens conflict is one among many examples of how symbolic gender interacts with social gender. The various ideas about which traits were masculine and which feminine left their mark on the interpretation of the conflict and thus on social realities.

Theoretically, the labour movement of the 19th century and until the birth of the new women's liberation movement was generally convinced that all kinds of oppression of women would automatically disappear under Socialism, although there was not at all times any general agreement about what Socialism was. It was only the women's liberation movement of the 1970s that queried whether the introduction of socialism would mean the termination of oppression of women. As a sort of full stop to be put after the debate which was raised by the women's movement and women's research in the 1970s and the early 1980s on paternalism and capitalism, Jane Lewis in 1985 declared (in the *New Left Review* nr. 149) that more theoretical debates would hardly add to our knowledge. What was needed was historical analysis of how the constitution of class and gender had interacted. A point of view which was, in fact, shared by others. The purpose of this yearbook is not to revive the old debate on paternalism and capitalism, but rather to introduce a number of articles which may contribute bits to the puzzle of the historical analysis of the relationship between gender and class.

The first article of the yearbook is by **Vibeke Kold** and is called, "Femininity', 'Maculinity' and the Division of Labour by Gender". As the title indicates, Vibeke Kold's purpose is to determine the contribution of gender ideology to the absence of equality between the sexes in today's labour market. The article surveys the last decade's research into the causes of the division by sex of the labour market, and the conclusion reached by Vibeke Kold is, firstly, that complex explanations are needed to explain such a complex phenomenon as the division of the labour market by sex. Secondly, that very often contradictions exist between content and function of the historically identifiable gender ideologies. It would be an oversimplification solely to perceive ideologies as a simple attempt to justify existing conditions. According to Vibeke Kold, the first stage of an analysis of gender ideology would be to uncover "the gender images found in the heads, in the mouths, and in the daily practices of the players". The point is that we often find contradictions between the mo-



re or less conscious expectations that are publicly stated and daily practice. Therefore, it is not as easy as it sounds to change attitudes as a way to increase equality. The gender ideology must be worked on in its many facets while endeavours are concurrently made to demolish the existing division of labour by sex.

While Vibeke Kold's article is aimed at the analysis of existing conditions in the labour market, **Sonya O. Rose** embarks upon a renewed analysis of the industrialisation of Great Britain. Her article is a translation of the introductory chapter of Sonya O. Rose's book "Limited Livelihoods". In Yearbook nr. 19, we published a translation of Joan W. Scott's article "Women in the *Making of the English Working Class*", a critique of Thompson's famous "The Making of the English Working Class". In terms of substance, Sonya O. Rose's book can be perceived as a follow-up to this article. The introductory chapter has a short summary of Sonya O. Rose's arguments for giving the interpretation of gender a central position in a re-write of history about "the men and women who crated the first industrialised nation in the world". The history of the industrialisation of Great Britain has been written many times before. The reason why it is still interesting to view this history in a new light is, however, that this the first revolution of its kind in the world was the point of departure both for Marxist and many other social theories. Thus, "Limited Livelihoods" is not just a reassessment of a central period, but also to some extent of a number of fundamental theories of society and social evolution.

With **Svend Aage Andersen's** article "The History of Working-Class Culture; The Struggle for Souls" we return to Denmark in the period around 1870-1940. Svend Aage Andersen's article is a survey of conceptual discussions and formation of theories in recent research into Danish working-class culture. On this basis, Svend Aage Andersen advances his hypothesis that at least six different sub-cultures could be identified within the working class. The subdivision into six different behavioural types is based on male workers, however, the characterisation covers attitudes and behaviour vis-à-vis wage work as well as vis-à-vis family and conditions outside of work. Svend Aage Andersen primarily wants to stress that there has never been one single working-class culture, and never one single working class. Therefore, both the subdivision applied in Swedish research into working-class culture of the working class into the "skötsamma" (well-behaved) and the "bråkiga" (troublesome) working



class, as well as the 'wage-earner life-style' found in life-style analysis, where this life-style is contrasted with the life-style of the self-employed or the life-style of the careerist are much too simplistic. With his article Svend Aage Andersen indirectly raises the question of what it is that has glued together the many diverse groups of workers. Why were workers not only defined by others as a working class but also by themselves?

In her article "Matrons: A Trade for Unmarried Women", **Else Hansen** describe the struggle of matrons to gain recognition for their trade i.e. to be recognised as professional experts. The term 'matron' was originally used to describe the wife of the 'economist' of a hospital, i.e. the man in charge of the accounts and one who in other respects acted as the master of the hospital staff. A matron was an added extra, so to speak, since it was assumed that all women could cook. Around the turn of the century, hospitals were professionalised. At the same time they were given a new management structure. The economists disappeared, and thus matrons were faced with the challenge of redefining their role. The union of matrons' task was both to defend the right of women to have gainful employment and to maintain the matrons' trade as a proper skill requiring education, training and professional knowledge - being able to cook simply was not enough; working as a matron required specialist knowledge of nutrition, diets, etc. In short, a special education and training programme was required, being female did not suffice. In their struggle to gain professional recognition, matrons tried to put distance between themselves and the (unskilled) domestic servants and cooks and to place themselves in a profession at par with nurses. In their attempt to find their place in the hospital hierarchy and in society, matrons had to come to terms with their gender and their class. Who belonged where, and which norms applied to whom was thus an essential part of the matrons' struggle for trade union and professional recognition.

There are many similarities but also obvious differences between matrons and nurses. By the end of the 19th century both trades, for example, were typical occupations for unmarried women, and both trades have had to fight for trade union and professional recognition in this century. In her article "The Nurse Between Calling and Profession" **Esther Petersen** tells us the story of the professionalisation of nursing. One of the differences between matrons and nurses at the turn of the century was that at least the leading nurses in the Danish Council of Nurses had



their roots in what they themselves termed "the educated classes". Nor does it seem as if nurses ever felt the need to distance themselves from domestic servants, i.e. the lower classes. Nevertheless nurses did find it difficult to gain recognition for nursing as an independent profession. The first textbooks intended for nurses had been written by physicians, and nurses were clearly perceived as the physicians' assistants. The struggle to get out from under the shadow cast by physicians was what characterised the work of the Danish Council of Nurses far into this century. It is fair to say that, unlike the matrons, nurses primarily defined themselves in relation to and as different from men of the same social class. The education and training of nurses, and in particular the textbooks use, were to play a decisive role for nurses' efforts to attain an independent professional identity.

With Tapio Bergholm's article about "Tough Women in Kotka" we move to women in a completely different setting – women working as dockers. The point of departure for Tapio Bergholm's article is a number of industrial conflicts during the years immediately before and after the end of World War II. In 1945 a number of the branches under the National Union of Dockers, among them, the local branch in Kotka, demanded increased equality in the rate of pay between men and women. The women dockers of Kotka were particularly active, and they managed to get the men to join them in industrial action about this issue. It is an unusual story in every way. For one thing it was an unusual job for women. That the work was too hard for women, that in 1945 they ought to hand over the work to unemployed men, and that women's virtue was endangered by working in such close proximity to sailors (!) were all arguments against having women working in the docks used at one time or other. But despite the fact that not all men were enthusiastic about their female colleagues, the women succeeded in keeping their jobs, and, indeed, in 1945 in involving their male colleagues in a strike to gain higher pay for women. The label "tough women" was chosen by Tapio Bergholm himself. In the article he examines various explanations for the fact that the women managed to secure the special position in the docks of Kotka that they actually had, and reaches the conclusion that in addition to a number of other factors, their positions was due to the fact that they were hard as nails.

With Tapio Bergholm's article we leave the labour market. The next



three articles in this yearbook are concerned with life outside of work. The articles by Charlotte S.H. Jensen and Karin Salomonsson include observations about the expectations of public authorities to working-class women and girls. The reason why we know anything about themes like abortion and sexual norms and practices is that the women and girls which the articles discuss became a case for the public authorities. By transgressing against existing laws and norms they caught the attention of the authorities. In her article "Before Abortion was Legalised" **Charlotte S.H. Jensen** discusses the history of some of the women who, during the inter-war years, tried to have a criminal abortion. Why they did it and how. For the purpose of supplying the Maternity Commission with material for its work in the 1930s, material from 82 court cases brought against women who had attempted to have or who had had criminal abortions was collected. These reports form the basis of Charlotte S.H. Jensen's article. The material shows that most of the women were domestic servants, factory workers, or had similar jobs. Most of them were unmarried. So it was largely working-class women who were punished for having had a criminal abortion. It is Charlotte H.S. Jensen's assumption that the reason why better-off women occur so rarely in the source material is that they could afford paying for a "discreet stay in the country", whereas indigent women either tried settling the matter themselves or turned to various kinds of quacks. The Social Democratic Women's Associations, for example, fought for the establishment of sexual information clinics and for the legalisation of abortions on social grounds, but failed to convince the minister of justice K.K. Steincke and the Social Democratic Party about the legitimacy of their demands.

In her article **Karin Salomonsson** treats sexual norms and practices among the lowest strata of the working class, a kind of *lumpenproletariat*, in a Swedish town in the 1950s. Matters that can only be documented for posterity because they became a case for the public authorities. It has to do with a group of 12 ns 13 year old girls and their trade in sexual services. The article tries to find out what really happened. By reading the documents of the case from the point of view of the ethnologist, Karin Salomonsson arrives at an interpretation which differs from that of the Swedish authorities at the time. In her article Karin Salomonsson attempts to demonstrate the authorities' as well as the girls' perception of the situation and the events. The authorities classified the girls as anti-social. Neither fathers, mothers, nor daughters lived up to the Swedish



norms of the 1950s about the way in which decent workers behaved. But as Karin Salomonsson shows they were not people without norms and ethics. Even in this, the very lowest stratum of the working class, people strove to maintain a kind of dignity, pride, and solidarity. On the terms and conditions made available by their environment, this *lumpenproletariat* in some ways shared the values of the better-off part of the Swedish working class.

With **Liv Emma Thorsen's** article "The Electric Refrigerator and other Memories" we have moved to a different location, to the Oslo of the years between and after World War II. The article is based on interviews with men and women who grow up in the working-class estate "Kampen" during the inter-war years. It is Liv Emma Thorsen's purpose to shed light on working-class culture by analysing the interviews about physical objects. She does so by using people's memories of certain objects as markers of difference between the sexes and markers of class distinction. One of the interviewees, for example, tells us about taking a girl home after they had attended a dance, and how she asked him up. While sitting in the living room, drinking coffee, he heard an odd sound like a motor starting up, and he asked what it was. The girl said, "Oh, that's only the refrigerator starting up." The girl was middle-class, whereas the narrator was working-class. The natural way in which she talked about refrigerators and his ignorance of the fact that there were other kinds than the ones in which you yourself put a block of ice, became the symbol of class differences for the narrator and made it clear to him that he had moved outside the place where he belonged. In this way, Liv Emma Thorsen demonstrates how physical objects and the memory of them can be used to analyse things so non-physical as culture and values.

With Liv Emma Thorsen's article we leave the historical analyses to return to discussions of theory. In her article "History, Feminism, and Post-structuralism", **Hilda Rømer Christensen** looks at gender and class in a manner radically different from the other articles. The article begins by surveying the debate between (Marxist) feminists and post-modernists. On this basis, Hilda Rømer Christensen formulates a number of theses concerning the way in which the development of the strategies of modern women's liberation movements can be understood from a post-modern position, how this history can be read methodically. It is her contention that we have moved into a post-modern epoch. With this,



women and a post-modern women's movement – if that is not a contradiction in terms – have, perhaps for the first time, a chance of getting rid of the way in which modern society has made men and women counter-points both as symbolic and as social genders. One of the fundamental suppositions of post-modernism is that reality and discourse – the way in which we talk about reality – are not autonomous from each another. In other words, only now that we are leaving behind us industrialised society we can begin to interpret and understand modern industrial society without being trapped by the use of language made by this society or by its perception of itself.

Whether a post-modern deconstructivist position will make us better able to understand modern society than the other approaches introduced in this yearbook, is something we shall leave to the reader to determine. What the article does show, is that norms and concepts of masculine and feminine, in short the symbolic gender, has played a central role for the labour movement and the labour market, and thus for the shaping of social gender. They also show that we are dealing with relatively complex relations between gender and class, and that Jane Lewis was right in claiming that there was a fertile field waiting to be cultivated. Historical analyses of the mutual effects of the process of constitution of gender and class is a field of research which is far from exhausted yet.

Outside the scope of the theme, we bring an article in this yearbook by **Aage Hoffmann** on the genesis of the programme "Denmark of the Future". Unlike a number of previous discussions and assessments of this programme and its implications for post-war history (in Denmark), Aage Hoffmann's article is based not as much on his reading of the programme as on a minute scrutiny of the source material concerning its genesis. On the basis of source material that has not so far been examined, Aage Hoffmann tries to shed light on the role played by the various actors in the process. For one thing, Aage Hoffmann reaches the conclusion that the role played by Jens Otto Krag has been overestimated, probably because his subsequent prominent role in the Social Democratic Party and Danish society has been projected back in history. Aage Hoffmann also concludes that the interpretations made in the 1970s and 1980s of the programme being a tactical attempt to contain the communists cannot



stand up to the light of contemporary sources. Finally, Aage Hoffmann can distinguish between a party line and a trade union line in the issue of who was to be entitled to exercise greater influence on the decision making proces in the enterprises – the government or the trade union movement.

We hope you will enjoy a good read!

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