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THE CHRISTIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND THE DANISH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

Scandinavia and Denmark have been characterised by the fact that strong employer and employee organisations, with a high degree of organisation and agreement coverage, are set up within a well-established negotiation and agreement system (Due et al. 1993, Jørgensen 2002). Employees have been organised in a “unitary trade union movement”, which has been in a strong negotiating position over for vis-à-vis to employers as a result of its monopoly on labour. This is a distinctive Scandinavian tradition where this criterion is important. Trade unions founded on religion or politics as is known in the Southern European countries for instance, are not known in the Scandinavian systems.

The most recent development in Denmark, however, breaks away from this development. Ideologically alternative trade unions have emerged and have developed into a declared clash of interests to the unitary trade union movement (Due & Madsen 2009). Their growth takes place at the expense of the established trade union movement and is a problem, in particular, for the manual workers’ trade union movement, the central organisation, LO (The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions). This competition between the new and the established trade unions is increased by the fact that, to a smaller degree, employees are organising themselves in trade unions.

In the rest of North-west Europe, the trend is not precisely the same. Social democratic and Christian trade unions co-exist in a number of countries without fierce competition and hostile relations. However, this does not apply to Germany where the central organisation DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) just like the Danish LO, interprets the Christian trade union movement as a threat to the agreement monopoly. In other parts of Scandinavia, the phenomenon does not exist. Similarities in the Scandinavian labour market political systems and in the employees’ values and organisation relationship can, however, suggest that the other Scandinavian systems will face similar challenges in the future.

This paper is interested in the break in the unitary trade union movement that can be registered in Denmark and what effect ideological trade unions have on the agreement system. The focus of the analysis is on the largest and oldest alternative Danish trade union, The Christian Trade Union Movement (KF). It is to be investigated how KF affects the Danish agreement system and the established trade unions’ positions of power. The paper begins by providing an overview of the organisation development on the labour market and points out some general factors of the societal development the development of society, which contributes to explaining KF’s growth. With

reference to Industrial Relation's theory on negotiation systems, the paper will then examine KF's core values, KF's initiatives for institutional changes and KF's importance at the workplace level. The paper builds on an ongoing organisation analysis by KF as well as quantitative and qualitative data that covers the period 1999 – 2008 (Scheuer 1999, Dahl Sørensen et al. 1994, Bild et al. 2007, Caraker 2008).

BACKGROUND – ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Denmark is characterised by an institutional collective agreement system with exclusive access for strong employer and employee organisations, a high degree of organising on the part of employees and a high coverage of collective agreements. State politics have strengthened the growth of union membership and monopoly on the formation of agreements (Due and Madsen 1993, Jørgensen 2002). All the way up to the middle of the 1990s, this system has proved to be strong and successful. This applies to the organisations' ability to organise members (i.e. the organisation's disposition), the ability to represent them (i.e. legitimacy) and the ability to create norms by agreements being transferred to the non-union employers (i.e. collective agreement coverage). The most recent trends for trade union organising as well as a new liberal government policy, places a question mark, however, on the essential characteristic of the Danish Industrial Relations (IR) system.

Table 1. Wage earner membership of a trade union 1990-2009

| Union | Year | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2009 |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| LO (manual workers) | | 65,3 | 67,1 | 65,0 | 60,3 | 54,3 |
| FTF (semi-professionals) | | 16,5 | 16,7 | 17,8 | 19,1 | 19,7 |
| AC (professionals) | | 5,2 | 6,6 | 7,6 | 8,6 | 10,0 |
| LH (leaders) | | 3,6 | 3,8 | 3,6 | 4,0 | 4,4 |
| Unions outside central organisations | | 7,9 | 3,1 | 2,8 | 3,0 | 3,2 |
| Ideological alternative unions | | 1,6 | 2,7 | 3,4 | 4,9 | 8,5 |
| Total union members | | 1.972.755 | 1.984.978 | 1.989.942 | 1.893.275 | 1.817.613 |
| Total employees | | 2.638.312 | 2.638.398 | 2.664.900 | 2.655.500 | 2.663.100 |
| Organisation coverage | | 74,8 | 75,2 | 74,7 | 71,3 | 68,3 |

Source: Statistics Denmark: Statistical Yearbook.

The table illustrates three independent developments in the trade union organisation. To begin with, the total degree of organisation is declining. The organisation percentage has declined from 75% in 1995 to 68% in 2009. This reflects a growing labour force as well as the fact that organisations in a lesser extent have been able to organise the employees. A generation problem is pointed out here, in particular. The older generations with a high organisation tendency are leaving the labour market and the younger generations with lower organisation tendency are entering the labour market. The trade union leaders' concern about the decreasing degree of organisation is reinforced by the fact that the percentage of employees who are members of an unemployment insurance fund are also on the decline. In the period 1995-2009 by 10 percentage points (Due & Madsen 2009).

Secondly, the membership and percentage of all trade union members for the central organisation, LO, are decreasing, whilst the membership and percentage of all trade union members are increasing for FTF (Confederation of Professionals in Denmark) and AC (The Danish Confederation of Professional Associations). Danish employees are becoming better educated, more of them are achieving medium or long-term further education and this provides more members for FTF and AC.

Thirdly, the membership of ideological alternative trade unions is seen to increase significantly. Altogether, the ideological alternative trade unions have grown from 2% in 1995 to 9% in 2009. KF proves to be the largest trade union with a total of 107,270 members as well as 68,453 members of

the unemployment insurance fund and a 6% share of all trade union members. KF cooperate and enter into agreements with the Association of Christian Employers (KA) with 950 members. KA employs 9.000-10.000 employees, which is less than ½% of employees in Denmark.

In the 1990s, the growth of the ideological alternative has primarily taken place as growth for KF. In 2002, the newly elected VK government (Liberal Party of Denmark/Conservative People's Party) changed the rules for unemployment insurance so that all trade unions were authorized to organise themselves cross-disciplinary. This meant further favourable conditions for new trade unions that wanted to compete on the price. Their membership grew with greater speed than KF's due to offers of an even cheaper membership fee. The cheap price of membership must be seen in context with the fact that the ideological alternative trade unions only enter into collective agreements to a small extent. As a result of this, they have been seen by the established trade union movement as "free rider" organisations. This means that they do not have the costs connected to producing the collective good and, because of this, can they lower the price on membership. The ideological alternative trade unions predominantly attracts members from LO trade unions (Ibsen 2007, KF 2010). That the price alone for trade union membership makes LO members choose the alternative is, however, a simplified explanation.

In more general terms, the attempted explanation refers to the fact that the 20th century's class society has been fundamentally changed on a great number of points. In a profound widespread sense, the class society has become "de-proletarianised" and the success of the welfare state has made collective security schemes universal. This has occurred as a result of historical compromises and the institutionalising of the cooperation between employee and employer organisations – and their integration into corporative solutions in the state (Jørgensen 2002). Surveys show that an increasing minority among the established trade union movement's members does not positively concur with values about solidarity and collectivism (Lassen et al. 2005). The norm of trade union membership is no longer a majority culture at most of the workplaces within the LO area anymore (Bild et al. 2007). This is a crucial change from the setting of norms in the "classic industrial society" (Beck 1997). It can be assumed to mean that the majority of KF members as well as LO members, who consider changing to the ideological alternative trade unions, only encounter a normative pressure to a smaller degree. The value development in the working class with diluted standards of obligation, provide good growth conditions for the ideological alternative, including KF.

Historically, KF's growth has been the strongest in the new industrialised areas in west Denmark and within the private service industry, agriculture, trading and restaurant and hotel business as well as in smaller craft-tradition companies. These are still areas, in which KF gain the largest support, but currently the foothold is also being won more strongly in the larger urban areas (KF 2009). As a result of these occupational structural processes, new layers have emerged. The new layers are not socialised for organised labour's society policy, solidarity understanding and collective setting of norms (Hoff 1989, Caraker 2008). As we will see, this member composition will be of importance to KF's organisation work.

THE IR SYSTEM

The Danish labour market is, in an international comparison, characterised by a high degree of collective organising and a strong institutional organisation and agreement system, with a voluntary quality. Historically, the system has gone through a number of changes. Pressure has come about from state intervention in collective agreements, EU directives, new balances between collective agreement regulation and political regulation and stronger coordination between labour market policies. And yet the system has proved robust to directly eroding changes.

The premise for the analysis in the following is that we are dealing with a strong institution system with common values, negotiation institutions and organisations that possess legitimacy. The IR system is seen as characterised by: Recognition of interests of the industrial actors and different

interests as legitimate; alignment of the asymmetrical relations in an institutional system; consensus on the system's ideology, norms and rules of the game; conflict regulating mechanisms that make conflicts possible as well as their solution through compromise-seeking behaviour and finally, that the legitimisation of the interests take place through democratic representative interest aggregation and democratic procedures for the adoption of a result (Due et al. 1993, Jørgensen 2002).

With the starting point in these characteristics, in the following I will examine how KF places itself in relation to this system. First of all, this applies to those values KF and KA have developed as the basis for their negotiation system. Subsequently, how KF's work for the organisation interests will be taken up in relation to the political level. Here, the focus is on the policy changes KF works for that are of importance to the agreement system. The last level is the de-central workplace level. This level sometimes receives unfair treatment in IR analyses, for which there is no reason. The legitimacy at the central level depends on whether the members' problem interpretations are reflected in those interests that are formulated by the leaders at the central level. Thus, an interest interpretation and an interest representation take place. In principal, this includes everyone at the workplace, because in Denmark the collective agreements are area collective agreements and apply regardless of which trade union one is a member of. That is also an organising mechanism. Many empirical investigations indicate that organisational control and coordination is an independent source in order to be able to utilise power resources and this has been of importance to the Scandinavian labour movement (Schmidt 1997). Thus, the central and local levels are seen as communicating vessels. Therefore, focus is also on the workplace level.

IDEOLOGY AND VALUES

Theoretically, we must first of all understand The Christian Trade Union Movement as an organisation of employee interests in relation to an employer side, but secondly also as a new type of organisation in relation to those mechanisms that function in the IR system.

The Movement's legitimacy has historically been substantiated by being an alternative to the class struggle and organisation coercion. The Movement was founded during the big labour struggle in 1899 between the employers and the trade union movement which led to the world's first general agreement, the *Septemberforliget* (September Agreement). The Movement was founded as an alternative to the labour movement's atheism and anti-Christian propaganda and socialistic perspective (Honoré 1985). Even though the Christian workers were against the trade unions' utilisation of strikes and other union struggle actions, they defined the difference in interest in regard to the employer side. Employee interests were seen as necessary to articulate, but within the concept of a community with the employers about Christian values, harmonic cooperation relations and peaceful forming agreements (Honoré 1985). For this purpose, the Christian employers and employees chose a corporative form of organisation. The two organisations were incorporated into the Danish Christian Confederation with common core values, organisation and management. In the regulations for KF and The Association of Christian Employers (KA), the organisations refrain from using the right to conflict to solve disagreements. KF enjoins its members to not actively contribute in any form of work suspension and breach of this can lead to exclusion. It was not until 1931 was KF separated from KA as an independent organisation. Close ideological connections to Danish religious revival movements (inside Danish National Church, in particular Indre Mission – The Church Association for the Inner Mission in Denmark) were affirmed organisationally through the regulations. Membership of the church organisations was made into a prerequisite for political election to competent assemblies and to hold management positions in the trade union (and KA) (KF 1910, Honoré 1985). The Christian Trade Union Movement has thus always been a distinct political and ideological movement, just in another direction than the social democratic. However, societal development and the strong member growth have pushed a modernisation through. The corporative organisation is, at any rate, officially revoked (KF 2003). The Christian core values has waned in the union's propaganda because since the end of the

1980s, the new growth has comprised employees who do not perceive themselves as active, practicing Christians (Sørensen et al. 1994). The spreading of secular values in Denmark in recent times is reflected in the organisation's policy development and recruitment. Vulnerable to criticism for insufficient independence on the part of the employer and revival movements as well as criticism of closed "representative" assemblies, the Danish Christian Confederation was closed down in 2003 and the formal relationship in the regulations for the revival movements were annulled in 2005. This was accompanied by a strong emphasis on the individual wage earner in the hub of safeguarding interests and a new focus on how the individual optimises usefulness on a market of trade union services.

Due to this development, an analytical frame of reference, which places the emphasis on Christian values and corporative interest convergence, is insufficient in an actual analysis of KF. Instead, I will argue that neo-liberalism can be used as a better key to understanding KF's core values and efforts. There seems to be close convergence to classic liberalism, as formulated in a theoretical context in F.A. Hayek's, *The Road to Serfdom* (Hayek 1944). The main points here are the individual, freedom, market and the supremacy of the law. The leading liberal politicians in the Danish government parties, who have submitted a neo-liberal policy, also explicitly on the trade union question, have a great deal in common with Hayek's philosophy (Haarder 1980).

"*The individual*" and "*freedom*" are two central concepts in liberalism. The individual is the component society is built on, different from all others, with own desires and rationality, for whom one common model for a good life cannot be set up. Social benefits in a neo-liberal sense are what all the affected individuals define as benefits, i.e. the coincidental convergence of individual desires. The collective interest here is only seen as the sum of random individual preferences and the majority's interests are therefore in no way more valid or qualified than the minority's. Even though a great majority is for a strike, the majority cannot order the individual to participate against his conscience or personal preferences. This is the liberal interpretation of the relationship between the individual and the collective, consequently a negative relationship. Freedom is the most important goal for neo-liberalism. Those areas on which collective decisions are made should be limited so freedom cannot be violated. KF does not criticise that individuals choose specific collective organisations instead of others, if this is done so based on the individual's free will. Neo-liberalism does not criticise that collective organisations act as such, but only as the potential threat they pose to the freedom of the individual. KF does not question LO's right to exist and organise. It is the compulsory aspect that violates the personal freedom ideal and the free market behaviour that is complained about.

If the individual's freedom is threatened by the collective organisations, the *state* must ensure the individual's freedom. This is where there is a contrast in the liberal way of thinking: Collective regulations can be a necessary evil and therefore they should be limited to the absolute necessary and lie within legal frameworks. According to KF, the state should defend the individual against organisation monopolies like trade unions when they infringe on the individual. On this basis, KF has conducted a historically protracted struggle for the negative union freedom. It has been the focal point for KF's political ideological offensive since the beginning of the 1970s. KF has submitted a spate of cases in the period 1970-2005 where members of KF have been dismissed with reference to the organisation monopoly, or where workers have broken away from the collective organisations in protest. The breakaway members are examples of individuals who action individually and set themselves apart from the trade union's collectivism. KF sees the breakaway members as freedom fighters against totalitarian trends in the trade union movement.

The individuals must have the right to freely choose, which points to the *market* as the most important means to ensure freedom. Neo-liberalism considers competition as superior because it is the only method, after which the individuals' actions can be adapted in accordance with each other without forced intervention or regulations on the part of the authorities. Transferred to

organisations, the free trade union choice where one chooses the best of the organisations that compete on the market is to be preferred instead of trying to gain influence in the existing organisation. In KF, the liberal market way of thinking dominates in the recruitment of members. Trade unions and employees are seen as being on a trade union market where organisations compete at attracting employees by appealing to their individual preferences. The members are seen as “customers” who shop in a “store”. The trade union offers a range of products on the shelves, decoded according to marketing analyses, which the members combine and purchase based on their own preferences. Corresponding to this way of thinking, KF has replaced the word “member” with “customer” in their regulations and in their agitation (KF 2009). This is not a traditional trade union concept, which gathers members collectively to define the organisation’s goals on which KF bases its work. It is, on the other hand, the perception of trade union members as free, utility-maximised market players.

At the individual level, KF does not distinguish between individuality and individualism, i.e. between how the members positively or negatively affect the communities they are a part of at the workplaces. Individuality, such as need satisfaction without weakening the community and individualism, such as selfish actions without thinking of the consequences for the community (Bild et al. 2007), are not action maxims KF is trying to clarify in relation to and further educate the members about. At organisation level, the relationship between members and organisation is basically an individual relationship. KF does not organise and further develop the “professions” – i.e. does not organise members around a community according to education. The relationship between the organisation and members is essentially an individual relationship.

However, as an employee organization KF also works to protect membership interests by placing themselves in a special position between employer and employee. KF has proposed legislation, a wage-earner law as a supplement to the collective agreements. The proposal contains some existing legislation in some areas and a number of agreements from the collective agreements. The law is meant to secure some basic rights for all groups of wage-earners, and in addition the proposal is to present an overview of all general knowledge of rights at the labour market (KF 2009). None of the political parties in the Danish parliament are in agreement as to the proposal of a wage-earner law. Neither is the proposal supported by the established trade union movement. They argue that the law will break away from the tradition, in which the organizations within the collective bargaining system in a voluntary way negotiate agreements. But the proposal reflects the fact that about 27 pct. of Danish employees in the private sector are not covered by a collective agreement, and members of KF are overrepresented in this group (Bild et al. 2007, Caraker 2008, DA 2009). Given KF's weak structural and organizational capacity (Wright 1978) - this refers to use of power resources towards the employer side – the proposal can be seen as another way to ensure workers' basic rights. So even if liberal optics are useful for studying KF's values and part of KF's practice, attention should also be drawn to the fact that KF organized and acts in a traditional way as interest organization for employees in the Danish labour market.

A similar separation between the individual and the collective is set up by Mancur Olson. Olsen sees a contrast between individual and collective rationality. For the individual member it would be rational, in a liberal sense, if it is the others who are active in the provision of a collective good and then “free ride” on the collective endeavours. According to Olsen, trade unions have two options to solve the problem. To emphasise the collective by forcing everyone who works within the area to join or it can provide a service to the individual member so the membership will be advantageous from an individual usefulness view (i.e. to produce a selective good or the so-called by-product theory) (Olsen 1965). With these two options, the science has conducted a long discussion with Olson (Offe 1985, Elster 1985, Andersen 1988, Hagen 1997). There has been objection that other reasons exist for joining a collective organisation than selfishness or being forced to do so. Likewise, it has been pointed out those competing organisations that do not have the costs connected to producing the collective good, can produce and market the selective good cheaper

and thus attract members (Andersen 1988). Claus Offe finds Olson's determination lacking. Offe is criticising Olson for only using an analysis where costs and benefits are defined based on own interests in material benefit maximising (Offe 1985). According to Offe, trade unions cannot be viewed in line with other professional organisations. Olsen disregards that unequal socioeconomic interests are not articulated on equal terms. It is more difficult for the workers in a trade union compared to the capital to define their collective interests based on the many individual interests and then overcome the various assessments of the advantages and disadvantages of a given action. Offe points out that the workers must render an active effort in order to be united organisationally, define their interests, form a collective identity and agree on a common foundation based on the multiple needs and priorities of many members. In this way, the collective trade union strategy is dependent on the members' active support. The less such support takes place, the more difficult it will be to achieve the collective goals. If a collective dialogue does not take place to define and reach goals, market forces and individual choice can be of importance (Offe 1985).

THE INSTITUTIONAL ENDEAVOURS

The Danish negotiation and agreement system has built-in rules in the labour market legislation, i.e. "institutional pillars" which contribute to the system's ways of functioning and the actors' positions of strength in the system. (An industrial relation juridical court set up by the state (the Conciliation Board) has existed since 1910). With increasing intensity since the beginning of the 1970s, KF has influenced the political level in order to get changes implemented in the labour market policy. This applies, in particular, to that part that supports the negotiation and agreement system. The changes in the institutional set-up have not come about exclusively with KF/KA's effort. The spreading of the liberal view of humanity and the market economic thinking must essentially be ascribed to the liberal Danish governments (1982-1993 and 2001-). KF has – so to speak – the ability to ideologically fill in period trends and operationalized the liberal ideas to action maxims.

Likewise, it is the liberal governments that have responded positively to KF's requests for changes in the set of rules regarding unemployment insurance. These are changes that have helped KF over difficult barriers in order to retain its status as an unemployment insurance fund and to achieve strengthened recruitment to this. In 1953, KF achieved a special position in legislation from the liberal government, which allowed KF to organise its unemployment insurance fund cross-disciplinary. Without this special position, KF would not have had the member foundation to remain a state-recognised unemployment insurance fund (Scheuer 1999). In 1979, KF applied to acquire the right to transfer members in the event of job change from the other unemployment insurance funds, i.e. from the established trade union movements' professional organised unemployment insurance funds. This took place under a government led by social democrats. The Ministry of Labour rejected the application for the transfer right with the justification that this right was connected to being transferred from one *field* to another *field* (KF 1979, Scheuer 1999). The Ministry's decision was a serious hindrance for KF to be able to utilise the growing recruitment potential. This could be found among the new employee groups who identified with KF's liberal values instead of the trade union movement's social democratic values. Therefore, KF took the rejection all the way to the courts and in 1981, Østre Landsret (Eastern High Court) decided in favour of KF (Honoré 1985). The institutional change meant strengthened growth for KF. This growth can presumably also be seen as both a protest from the right against the trade union movement's support of the Social Democratic Party (Nielsen 1987) and as a reaction against the fee for unemployment insurance increasing by 150% for unskilled workers in the period 1982-1989 (Lind 2007). By offering employees the option of only being a member of an unemployment insurance fund and by offering a cheaper trade union fee, KF became both a financial and political alternative for newly arrived employee groups.

In Denmark, the trade union movement has benefited well from the so-called Ghent system where the unemployment insurance is managed by trade unions instead of the state. Trade unions and

unemployment insurance funds have, politically and administratively, been two sides of the same affair. It has thus been natural for employees to be members of both places. From 2002, the government decided that all unemployment insurance funds, like KF, had the option of being organised cross-disciplinary. With the change, the government simultaneously clarified the freedom of choice for the individual to only be a member of an unemployment insurance fund. On this basis, KF experienced and, in particular, entirely new alternative trade unions, tremendous member intake. Together with another government bill in 2008, the so-called “municipalisation of the employment effort”, whereupon the local governments, just like the unemployment insurance funds, are to mediate work to the unemployed, the new law amendments are expected to mean a further drain on the trade union movement’s members. If this general trend continues, the legislation from 2002 will have the intended effect; that is, that unemployment insurance will be less effective as a recruitment machine for the established trade unions (Lind 2007).

The institutional pillars that are of further importance in assessing KF’s importance to the agreement system, is first of all the *Closed-shop agreements*, that give employees of specific trade organisations priority for employment; secondly, the *Right to establish goods and services blockades and sympathy conflicts* against a company in order to achieve a collective agreement; and thirdly, the *Right of conflict*. The three regulations have contributed to balancing the interests and positions of strength within the IR system and below, we will take a look at KF’s endeavours to remove or modify them.

Since the beginning of the 1970s, KF has conducted cases at the courts and The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on *closed-shop agreements* and *compulsory membership to an organisation*. This has taken place on behalf of employees, who when switching to KF were dismissed from their workplaces. The legal aim has been to affirm the negative union freedom that is not guaranteed in Danish law. With a number of rulings, ECHR has gradually pressured Danish governments, including social democratic governments, to bring Danish legislation on the union question in accordance with ECHR. In 2006, ECHR ordered Denmark to revoke the validity of closed-shop agreements through legislation, which was a great victory for KF.

Until that time, closed-shop agreements were estimated as including approx. 220,000 – 230,000 employees. In the abrogation of the agreements, KF has thus basically seen great recruitment potential for the organisation. The agreements have been entered into between the established trade unions and employer organisations/individual employers outside of The Confederation of Danish Employers (DA). On the other hand, they have not been permitted within DA’s area. The agreements are seen as part of the collective agreement system by the established trade union movement, i.e. as “closed shop”. This makes it easier for trade unions to control the recruitment of labour and to control that non-union employers do not undercut the union employers on wages and working conditions. It must be remembered that the Danish agreement system does not have an “erga omnes” mechanism, which generalises collective agreements to areas not covered by collective agreements. Thus, closed-shop agreements have been viewed by the trade union movement as one of several mechanisms in order to ensure such generalisation. It is not yet covered by research, what the abrogation of the closed-shop agreements means for the agreement conditions in the affected companies. We know from the national labour market statistics that the collective agreement coverage on the private labour market has declined from 77% in 2004 to 73% in 2008 (DA 2005-2009). However, the closed-shop agreements do not automatically lead to poor possibility of entering into and enforcing collective agreements. The biggest effect of the abrogation of the closed shop agreements can very well be the ideological. As with the introduction of the free choice of unemployment insurance fund in 2002, it is emphasised that the trade union membership and choice of trade union should be a free choice for the individual. On the other hand, a declining membership can, however, also be assumed to reduce the negotiation strength and reduce the possibilities of entering into collective agreements in the case of great differentiation between the employees.

The abrogation of the closed-shop agreements led to an increased intake to the ideological alternative trade unions from the LO trade unions. KF's gross intake in the 1st quarter of 2006, after the ruling of the Court, was 9,610 members compared to a gross intake of 5,100 members in the 1st quarter of 2005 (KF 2009). (The second, large ideological alternative trade union, the so-called Trade Union House (*Det Faglige Hus*), likewise experienced a large intake). However, the member potential is assessed by KF as being bigger because, among other things, according to KF's assessment, it has become clear that there continues to be unofficial pressure for trade union membership at some workplaces. Therefore, KF has carried on the struggle against closed-shop agreements to a struggle against unofficial trade union pressure. The aim is to expand existing legislation on discrimination to also include the social behaviour that sways towards trade union membership. KF sees the unofficial setting of norms as a hindrance so that KF can grow within the attractive, well-organised LO and FTF areas.

A survey from 2002 has made it clear that a majority culture for norms regarding trade union membership and democratic discipline still exists at some workplaces. One quarter of Danish employees work at workplaces where the norms exist as a majority culture. This applies in particular within industry, transport and the building sector (Bild et al. 2007). This majority culture makes it presumably only possible to change to an ideological alternative trade union in the case of a job change to a smaller collectively resolute workplace. Unofficial trade union pressure is also brought up by the independent state research institute, The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR). At the request of KF, DIHR has drawn up a report that shows the trade union pressure as "discrimination" and "harassment" of members of KF at the workplaces. Also discrimination from shop stewards happens. The DIHR report raises the question whether Denmark fulfils its human rights obligations on the basis of ILO conventions, UN conventions and sources of law from the European Council and the EU. Even though the conventions do not give rise to infer a general protection against trade union discrimination, according to the DIHR report DIHR expects that this will be possible to occur in the future. Therefore, DIHR presents proposals for law amendments, which expand the definition of discrimination according to race, religion, sexual orientation and political convictions to also concern discrimination according to trade union membership (The Danish Institute for Human Rights 2009). In this way, KF has taken a new offensive leap into the workplace arena. KF places importance on the individual rights over the collective set of norms, which gives the trade union movement strength in the IR system.

The right to establish goods and services blockades and sympathy conflicts against a company in order to gain a collective agreement is likewise a field of struggle between KF and the LO trade unions. This right is upheld in The General Agreement DA and LO have entered into. Here, it is established which rights and obligations the organisations guarantee each other in conflicts of interests. Thus, the right for using conflicts (strikes and lockout) can be notified in the case of renewal of agreements and formulation of agreements. This also applies even though the trade union that notifies conflict only has a minority of members at the workplace concerned. The LO trade unions have utilised this right from the beginning of the 1990s, when KF grew so heavily and attempted to form collective agreements. The LO trade unions have seen KF's collective agreements as a challenge to their agreement monopoly. Moreover, the LO trade unions have been concerned that increased competition around the forming of collective agreements leads to agreements that are less attractive than the existing or comparable agreements.

The diametrically different organisation interests have collided in lengthy long-standing and spectacular conflicts from the end of the 1990s. The conflicts have initially been battled out in areas in western Denmark where the LO trade unions were the weakest in terms of organisation and KF/KA as well as non-union employers were correspondingly stronger. In the course of the conflicts, KF has tried to retain the forming of collective agreements with the employers concerned and prevent the LO trade unions from entering into collective agreements. As far as KF is concerned, it has used the conflicts ideologically to emphasise the violation of the individual's freedom – against the totalitarian trends in the trade union movement and the state.

The result of the institutional agreement level is that the LO trade unions have, in general, prevented KF (and KA) from forming collective agreements. The critical battles have then entailed that KF and KA went to the political parties in 1989 to have a prohibition adopted against the initiation of union blockades on the labour market. KF maintained that it is a violation of the individual right and the affected organisations' right that the LO trade unions can initiate blockades. KF convinced The Liberal Party of Denmark and the Conservative People's Party (the later government parties from 2001) to submit a bill in the Danish parliament. The bill would entail that union blockades cannot be initiated where only 1) a minority from the organisation is working and the organisation pleads the right to enter into a collective agreement, 2) a collective agreement with another organisation has already been entered into, and 3) this commenced collective agreement does not deviate from the level that normally applies to corresponding work in that part of the country in which the company is located (Kirkegaard et al. 1999). Following the parliamentary election in 2001, the new VK government has, however, allowed itself to be influenced by DA and LO to withdraw the bill. LO and DA have maintained that organisations within each their central organisation, DA/LO and KA/KF, respectively, have a legitimate right to establish conflicts against members of other central organisations in the case of conflicts of interests. KF has thus unequivocally lost the battle in relation to the political level. At organisation level the battle is likewise lost due to LO's strong structural and organisational power resources in influential sectors. This makes KF's attempt difficult in achieving status as an important organisation providing collective agreements. Only a large member departure from LO in the sectors strong in trade union policy will be able to change this balance of power.

The right to conflict: For a modernisation of the labour market relations KF and KA propose a negotiation and agreement system without the right to conflict. The mutual understanding should be based on a harmonic and peaceful negotiation relationship. As an alternative to the right to conflict, KF and KA point to a compulsory arbitration authority in continuation of the negotiation process where an organisation-independent chairman will have the deciding word for the solution of conflict of interests. Such a scheme is not in accordance with the Danish agreement system where the members have the final word through democratic voting. A compulsory arbitration authority can presumably not create respect around decisions and agreements and it can delegitimise a union democracy. More drastically, KF's and KA's policy for a future negotiation system will seriously change the premises for the norms and regulations that characterise the system today. Based on the conflict-oriented Industrial Relations theory, the negotiation and agreement system can be understood as a conflict partnership in which special conflict regulating mechanisms are built. These mechanisms provide the possibility for breakdowns of negotiations and conflict implementation that can initiate the organisations to compromise-seeking behaviour and through this get a result.

If the right to conflict is taken out of the system, the way in which KA and KF propose, the balance of power in the system will change to the advantage of the employer because the system already rests on prerequisites of power imbalance in the relationships due to the managerial right. The strike is a trade union's most drastic sanctions option. Even though there are no strikes, the trade union's influence and negotiating strength is, to a high degree, built on the effective strike being an implied threat. A trade union that forbids its members from striking, regardless of the situation, relinquishes a considerable part of its independent action options to the employer. This is subsequently emphasised by Scheuer (1999): that KF is not independent of the employer with a view to achieving negotiation results.

None of the political parties in the Danish parliament are in agreement on the proposal to do away with the right to conflict and strike in a future Danish negotiation system. Neither is it supported among a large majority of the Danish employees who retain striking as a right and actual "last option". The Danish negotiation and agreement system is thus not about to be adjusted with these fundamental rules and mechanisms. On the other hand, there can be an effect on the balance of

power: The presence of organisations on the labour market, the members of which may not go into conflict, can shift the balance of power between the employers and the trade union movement within the IR system. Trade unions have structural power resources as a result of the fact that they can impact the employers' production through strikes and they have organisational power resources as a result of the members' will and ability to participate and support the organisation's goals (Wright 1979). The growth of the ideological alternative trade unions, which all write off the members' right to strike, will slowly, be able to erode those power resources the trade union movement can mobilise through an industrial conflict. Such development will, to a higher degree, move the question on the effectiveness of an industrial conflict out to the workplace level. In this sense, the growth for the ideological alternative trade unions can prove to be a serious challenge to the trade union movement's position of strength within the agreement system and thus, for the system's functionality and legitimacy.

THE WORKPLACE LEVEL

In Denmark, the question of KF members' importance for collectivism at the workplace level has been investigated very little. A representative survey with 883 KF members in 1994 showed that the solidarity values are weaker among KF members than among LO members (Dahl Sørensen et al. 1994). The trend in this survey result has since been confirmed by a similar representative survey among Danish employees in 2002 (Bild et al. 2007). The 1994 survey has also compared the response distributions with corresponding question formulations in a representative survey conducted among LO members in 1992 (Jørgensen et al. 1993). The comparison shows that KF members (76%) to a higher degree than LO members (57%) experienced having "common interests with management in getting the company to operate". However, this could not be interpreted as a rejection of the fact that members of KF experienced contrast of interests to the employer. On a question of whether employees and employers have common interests in general at society level, 49% of KF members declared their agreement in question, while 47% found that employees and employers only have partial common interests (Dahl Sørensen et al. 1994).

The only qualitative Danish investigation in relation to the workplace level was shelved for a newly established industrial company in west Denmark (company B) where 25% of the industrial workers were members of KF (Caraker 2008). This is very unusual for larger industrial companies in Denmark and emphasises the extreme character of the case: How are collective interests influenced with such a large percentage of an ideological alternative? The investigation was conducted as a prolonged qualitative case study. In the same analysis, a similar case study was conducted in an industrial worker group with long-standing trade union traditions and strong collectivism (company A in eastern Denmark).

The investigation concluded that KF members were a part of the collective. They perceived themselves as – and were perceived by LO members as – a part of the workplace's social and professional community. They entered into the collective public at meetings and voting on equal terms and some of them were active on behalf of their colleagues. They developed interests convergent with the other industrial workers and their problem interpretations of the company's policy, which just like the majority of LO members, was based on a "they-we" antithesis to management. The survey does not confirm the assumption that joining KF expresses dissociation to taking industrial actions. Contrary to KF's regulations, KF members took the initiative to or supported union meetings and strikes and established democratic majority decisions in these forums. The dividing line on the question of taking industrial actions did not pass between the two groups, but down through both member groups in KF and LO.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that there was no organised KF activity for recruitment. This only took place sporadically and unofficially face-to-face between colleagues. The explanation is that the KF members did not perceive the membership as a *wanted* trade union policy alternative. However, the KF members justified membership with a cheaper fee. But based on biographical interviews, the memberships can be explained in-depth by KF members being oriented strongly towards

liberal values and the personal freedom concept which originates from their socialisation in social environments outside of the working class. On the question of expressing unconditional solidarity with others in comparable situations, the KF members were clearly more guarded. They did not support the unwritten rule that overtime is worked when a colleague is in a terminated position or supported other production units' work stoppages for specific demands. They were less obligated to the classic solidarity, which was not a fundamental value to them.

The decentralising of the Danish IR system has taken place since 1990. No transformation for the right to conflict was following the decentralisation. This means, that the centrally established norms, values and forms of action are left to local balances of power, cultures and employer strategies (Caraker 2008). The industrial workers built their collectivism up around the formal union representation and collective agreement. Therefore, the question is whether collectivism was weakened by a large "non-union" element of KF members. It is difficult to come to clear conclusions about this. One opinion among the shop stewards argued for, that the insufficient support weakened the impact in the negotiations. Another opinion argued against a weakened position. The arguments here were that there was support from all industrial workers in the given negotiation situations including KF members. Furthermore, an avoidance of decisions and negotiation results does not occur on the part of KF members. Finally, the importance of the local balance of power has become less, simultaneously with the shop stewards forming networks with shop stewards at the other factories in the group. In this way they have improved their position in regard to management in their own factory. Thus, the discussion between the shop stewards does not end up in a clear-cut conclusion.

And yet, one can argue for a weakening, not necessarily from KF members as such, but from the broader societal development of which KF members represent: The de-standardised life-cycle patterns and an environment with value pluralism and diluted obligation norms clearly impact this company. The large group of young as well as older "new arrivals" to the working class – socialised to a liberalistic set of values – was an important factor for the establishment of the collective in the company. The instrumental grounds for trade union membership becomes more intensely applicable in this group, while solidarity understanding is more weakly present. The discovered individual and collective learning processes substantiate that ways of thinking and forms of practice can change. Developments from self-seeking ways of thinking to closing up around the community could be observed based on the insight in the logic of collective action. Furthermore, a feeling of binding solidarity affecting and strengthened the common interests was developing. This also became applicable to KF members. But there were no clear-cut linear processes.

CONCLUSION

There are many reasons for the weakening of the LO trade union movement and KF is one of them. Some of the explanations for KF's success refer to general societal processes on individualisation and "detraditionalising". New social groups and layers achieve wage labour status and clash of interests to the labour movement's ideology, organisation principles and forms of struggle arise. This has created a new working class and employee identity, which KF's liberal ideology corresponds to. This is true for the emphasis of organisation freedom, of the individual's inviolability in regard to joint decisions and of the individualisation and marketisation of trade union memberships. So it is not Mancur Olsen's "free rider" theory that is the best theory to explain the change from the established trade union movement to the alternative trade union movement: Rather than a rational choice to profit from the collective good, there are broader values and preferences that control the choice of trade union. However, KF does not have a precise mandate from the members in the rejection of collectivism at the workplace level. Added to this, the circle of members is too differentiated. The collective learning processes at workplaces also include KF members in the genesis of common experiences and interest interpretations in relation to management.

As trendsetters for the market-economic concept, which LO trade unions have traced, KF has set new standards for individualisation and marketisation of trade union memberships. KF however, has a different demarcation between the individual and the collective. KF does not differentiate between individuality and individualism, i.e. between individuality such as need satisfaction within the community and individualism such as selfish actions without regard to the consequences for the community. For KF, the relationship between the organisation and the members is purely an individual relationship. KF does not organise members according to field and education and neither does it have collective structure perspective at the workplaces and internally in the organisation. This is a qualitative difference from the LO trade union movement, for whom it is necessary to build up workplace collectivism as a prerequisite for legitimacy and authority at the central negotiation level.

KF's work has weakened and weakens institutional pillars in the Danish negotiation and agreement system. This is true for the work to remove the closed-shop agreements, for the establishment of cross-disciplinary unemployment insurance funds and for the abolishment of the correlation between membership of an unemployment insurance fund and trade union. Corresponding weakening of the agreement system can be the result if KF achieves the support of the legislative powers to make blockades and sympathy conflicts illegal in conflicts of interests. The unitary trade union movement is challenged in Denmark and herein lies a challenge for the legitimacy of the entire system.

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