

## 12. BERLIN 1904: SUFFRAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

... the organizational energy and skill required to pass protective legislation conflicted with the continuing struggle toward women's equality.

Alice Kessler-Harris, 1982

In 1904 Germany was to arrange the international congress connected to the International Council of Women. For the first time, it was organized by the national council. Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine was since 1897 accepted as the representative for Germany. In English it was called the German National Council of Women. The congress took place in Berlin, in the great concert hall, die Philharmonie, centrally situated near Potsdamer Bahnhof.<sup>1</sup>

The president of the Swedish suffrage movement, the historian dr Lydia Wahlström, was present at the international women's congress, in German called Der Internationale Frauen-Kongress. She judged that the ICW was gradually being accepted by everyone, including the conservative women activists. She saw herself as one of them. She was there to give a speech on that Swedish women recently had managed to get a national organization for woman suffrage,<sup>2</sup> probably not aware of that suffrage was still controversial inside the ICW.

In Berlin, outside the congress and in opposition to the cautiousness of the ICW, the foundation was laid for an international organization for woman's political citizenship. A constituent assembly met the 4th of June, a couple of days before the opening of ICWs quinquennial. The new organization was called the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. The idea of launching it in Berlin at this time, was to make it possible for interested women to join the new initiative as well as to participate in the congress, during the same stay in the city. It was both a provocation and a complement to the older less brave ICW. A person could join both organizations via national organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> The congress was held in connection to the Third Quinquennial of the ICW, held the 8th-10th of June. ICW Berlin 1904: XXI-XXV; Berlin 1904: 1ff; Die Philharmonie is gone now. Its main entrance was to Bernburger strasse 22a u 23 and a side entrance to Köthener strasse 32. *Handbuch, Berlin 1904*: 42f as well as the inside of the cover.

<sup>2</sup> Berlin 1904: 538ff.

The International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), here called the Alliance, was to have the same structure as ICW, with national member organizations. Susan B Anthony, now 84 years old, whose "life-work now could be said to have reached its fulfillment, stood up and received enthusiastic ovations from the audience" when the rules had been accepted, wrote Lydia Wahlström. She was present at the birth of the new international suffrage movement. Under the North American Carrie Chapman Catt it grew to a movement, that gathered and coordinated a large following.<sup>3</sup>

### The congress in Berlin in 1904

The international women's congress in Berlin was large and well organized. It did mention suffrage, with discretion,<sup>4</sup> and at the same time deepened a view on woman, which stressed femininity as complementary to masculinity. The aim of the congress was to show how women saw themselves and present all what women were able to do. It was similar to, but in a grand scale, the former congresses in Paris in 1889 and 1900, with philanthropic tendencies. This moderate type of congresses had their importance as arenas for women. It allowed women to appear publicly with an audience, which was rather unique. In Germany it was prohibited for women to appear in a political context. The congresses stimulated women's interest for questions outside of family matters. To participate at a congress was to defy the picture of woman as meek and passive. The demands raised were not very radical even if the congress in itself must be categorized as courageous.

More than 2 000 participants had registered for the day time meetings in sessions. In addition meetings were held in the evenings for the general public. 6 000 persons came to these. The congress was respectable. The empress Augusta granted the official representatives of the ICW an audience to which also Susan B Anthony was welcome.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dagny 1904:271f; 277ff; Rupp 1997:21f och 159-179.

<sup>4</sup> The congress was held the 13th -19th of June 1904, ICW Berlin 1904: XXI-XXV; The book is based on messages to the press, delivered during the congress. Berlin 1904: Vorwort Vff. See also *Bilder vom Internationalen Frauen-Kongress Berlin, im Juni, 1904*.

<sup>5</sup> ICW Berlin 1904: 158ff; *Handbuch für die III. Generalversammlung des internationalen Frauenbundes in Berlin vom 6.-11. juni 1904 und für den internationalen Frauenkongress in Berlin vom 12. - 18. juni 1904*. Herausgegeben vom Lokalkomitee. Berlin: Habel, 1904:100f, after this called = *Handbuch Berlin 1904*; 3000 were delegates and 8000 came to meetings according to *Jn des Femmes* No 145 Juillet 1904; Between 2000 and 3000 participants according to *Aftonbladet* 18/6 1904; Wahlström 1949:197.

Lydia Wahlström was impressed by "the wise and dignified leadership" and remarked in a slightly critical tone that the participating women were "beautiful and magnificent" in "often very expensive and intensely 'feminine', sometimes too extravagant, dresses". With satisfaction she noticed that clothes, inspired by the empire-style, with a low cut collar and without corset was common among German women. She appreciated the harmonic sphere surrounding Anglo-Saxon women. Nowadays, she commented, women did not any longer choose to point out their demands for equality through their clothes. "The type copying a man was seldom seen, and if you saw one, she was an elderly lady, who had been around at a time, when it had been necessary to fight and scratch for 'die Frauenrechte'". The congress and its audience gave her the impression that the "period of persecution" was over and the women's movement had been socially acceptable.<sup>6</sup>

The head organizer was Marie Stritt, president of Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine, and as such the natural president also at the congress. She was seen as fairly radical inside the organization she was leading. In her inaugural speech she mentioned that big steps forward had been taken since the ICW congress in London five years earlier.<sup>7</sup>

By scrutinizing her speech we can see how a prominent German activist officially presented her view on women. It is probable that she expressed herself vaguely, not to offend anyone in the disparate organization she was the head of. But sometimes she was clear indeed.

Marie Stritt assured that woman's peculiarity/ *Eigenart* should not be damaged if women got more power in society:

Above all this congress will forcefully correct the already thousands of time corrected but reoccurring misunderstanding that the women's movement, which wants to extend rights and duties for women, should intrude upon the female peculiarity/*Eigenart* and destroy it.<sup>8</sup>

Through underlining the difference between men and women as a peculiarity, "*Eigenart*", something feminists avoided, Stritt chose to divert

<sup>6</sup> Two articles by Lydia Wahlström in *Dagny* (quote 279) 1904: 277ff & 295ff. See Wahlström 1949: 197.

<sup>7</sup> Berlin 1904:2f; Marie Stritt was president for BDF 1899-1910. Weiland 1983:261f; The national councils were 19 according to ICW 1904:152, fifteen according to Lefauchaux 1966:350; the same history about international women's congresses, only counting the ICW congresses from Washington 1888 etc can be read in "Zur Einführung", *Handbuch, Berlin* 1904.

<sup>8</sup> "Vor allem aber wird dieser Kongress eine nachdrückliche Berichtigung des alten, tausendfach widerlegten, aber immer noch tausendfältig wiederkehrenden Irrtums erbringen, dass die Frauenbewegung, indem sie erweiterte Rechte und erweiterte Pflichten für die Frauen anstrebt, die weibliche *Eigenart* beeinträchtigen, ja zerstören würde." Berlin 1904: 5

accusations of women activists for not being feminine. Typical for a conservative view of women was to speak about "duties" and of women's duties as different to men's. Defenders of equality spoke rather about "rights". Marie Stritt coupled duties and rights verbally when she wanted the world to understand that "femininity" was not to vanish but increase and become an asset, a resource:

It (the women's movement UW) will be able to convince all who want to hear and understand, that exactly through women's emancipation - and only through it - will woman's *Eigenart* be enobled and advanced and show its best side, both in the family as in the broader society, locally and in the state. *Not to be similar to the man* (italics UW) but to become even more herself, the woman demands the right to decide over her own person...<sup>9</sup>

In her presentation Stritt put in, as a side theme, a polemic with feminists, when she said she wanted to make the *Eigenart* of woman better and that emancipation was not "to be similar to the man". She painted a malicious portrait, alien to every feminist who wanted equality. Feminists were never talking about similarity with men or any biological equality. They asked for justice. Opponents to feminists often used the biological difference as an argument against emancipation of women: women were to be a complementary force in society. That Stritt chose to hint that there were women who wanted to be similar to men, shows either a populist rhetoric with a feeling for the *Zeitgeist* or bad information. The last was hardly the case.

With ambivalence Marie Stritt said that it was important that women were not assigned femininity but should be given the opportunity to decide themselves, at the same time as she promised that women were not to be like men. From her way of reasoning, some in the audience could conclude that women were not going to take men's positions or places. Others could, on the contrary, conclude that women should be given the possibility to decide themselves, to shape their own identity. Through emancipation woman should develop even more into the ideal image of woman as a higher moral being.

Stritt's speech shows all the paradoxes of the discourse in which most women had to argue. There is no doubt that Stritt wanted to emphasize women's right to define herself and decide about herself, in a time with notions of men

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<sup>9</sup> " Es wird vielmehr alle, die hören und verstehen und sich überzeugen lassen *wollen*, davon überzeugen können, dass gerade durch die Emanzipation der Frau - und nur durch sie - ihre weibliche *Eigenart* veredelt, erhöht, in der Familie wie im weiteren Gemeinschaftsleben, in Gemeinde und Staat, erst zur richtigen Geltung gebracht werden wird. Nicht um dem Manne *gleich* zu werden, sondern um mehr und ganz *sich selbst* sein zu können, fordert die Frau das Recht der freien Selbstbestimmung auch für sich ..." Berlin 1904: 5

and women as different prevailed. Left for Stritt, as leader of a bourgeois organization with strong internal tensions, was to stress that women *themselves* ought to have the freedom to define *in which way* they were different to men, at the same time as the foundation was an *Eigenart*. Thus whatever women found that they *really* were, should in no way threaten the state or the family. Stritt laid out a norm to which women had to relate, a frame for women's new shapes as emancipated. Stritt did not give an opening for a free definition of femininity. With her limited vision for women, the president opened the congress.

Only a few speakers would contradict her view on women. That woman's *Eigenart*, her peculiarity, should lead to differences in her economic citizenship was often accentuated. And it had consequences for the vision of the political citizenship. But some radical women opposed this view on women. As usual, women were not agreeing. Women had different opinions.

Open lectures for the general public were held in the evenings. No discussions were allowed then. During the day, meetings were for delegates. Four parallel meetings took place, four themes were to chose among. They all had room for discussions but no resolutions or definite positions were to be taken.<sup>10</sup>

In her inaugural speech Marie Stritt called women's work "the most burning woman question, the question of bread ...". Three of the themes of the congress dealt with women and industrial work, even if very few workers were present. Alice Salomon, who in London had defended protective legislation for women, belonged to the organization committee. She was fairly young and had quickly made a name for herself in the international women's movement. She had been present at the women's congress in Berlin in 1896, in Zurich at the congress for worker protection in 1897 and in Paris, at the more philanthropic woman congress in 1900. In Germany she and Jeanette Schwerin had been working to support Factory Inspection and to get women employed as inspectors. Since 1900 she was on the board of Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine. She and Schwerin had influenced the organization to a positive attitude to special labor legislation for women. At this time Salomon researched for her doctoral thesis dealing with the reasons for differences of wages between men and women.<sup>11</sup> At the

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<sup>10</sup> Berlin 1904, Inhalt & 3ff, 177; Handbuch Berlin:75-101.

<sup>11</sup> "Der brennendsten Frauenfrage, der Brotfrage ..." Berlin 1904: 4; Berlin 1904: X; Weiland 1983.

congress she was in the chair of all meetings taking up women's industrial work. This was her field. She was the expert.

One of these was a session on women in factories, held in the Beethoven hall, situated a bit away from the center, hard to find and thus without a large audience. Alice Salomon regretted that few women from the working class had come from abroad. They had neither money nor time to come. Political reasons were the cause of a lack of representatives by the German working class women. Still Salomon hoped that the session should inform the congress of the conditions of working women, and awaken the consciousness of bourgeois women.<sup>12</sup>

Miss Henriette van der Mey, Amsterdam, gave the introduction. Time and again she stressed the need for protective labor legislation for women. As a socialist, she defended the right to organize and the normal trade union opinion that special legislation in combination with unionizing was the way to better work conditions for women.<sup>13</sup>

A German Factory Inspector, Dr Marie Baum, Karlsruhe, made an analysis of the condition of the woman worker in factories. She confronted the gender division of work right on and contrasted a woman's less good possibilities in the labor market to the much better for a man. Women's competence was always devalued and they were systematically excluded from opportunities to ameliorate their professional skills. About special legislation, she was vague and could be apprehended as a sceptic about the good with a worker protection for women only. But she put the accent on other topics.<sup>14</sup> As a Factory Inspector, her duty was to see that a night work prohibition for women was respected and thus she had difficulties to criticize it openly.

Margaret Bondfield, England, spoke in favor of special legislation and the same did Rosika Schwimmer, Hungary. Others spoke about shorter working hours but avoided to point out the night work legislation as most important. The debate wandered on from protection to other social reforms, as an eight hours working day and child care, over to political rights. The question of suffrage was raised. The discussion on woman's position as labor was thus brought over to her powerless position in politics. According to several speakers, the solution to the problems in the labor market was to be found on the political level. Not until

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<sup>12</sup> 14 June, Berlin 1904: 177f; Handbuch Berlin 1904: 81; "Internationaler Frauenkongress", no signature. *Vorwärts*, 1.Beilage Nr 139, 16 Juni 1904.

<sup>13</sup> Berlin 1904: 188; Handbuch Berlin 1904: 81.

<sup>14</sup> Berlin 1904:188ff.

women were legislator together with men, was it of any use to discuss for or against protective labor legislations.<sup>15</sup>

When an audience once again gathered in the Beethoven hall, the title was distinctly "Protective labor legislation for women". In her introduction Alice Salomon did mention that women had different views on such labor legislation, which had been evident at earlier international women's congresses. But in Germany, all women now agreed about the positive effects of a legislation. And she emphasized that this question was central for the women's movement. In the position taken for or against a protection of woman, was more than this; it was a position about the very goal you wanted the movement to strive for. Salomon pointed to motherhood and biological differences. She spoke for two kinds of protection for women: one of shorter working hours for all women, another an assurance for mothers who were pregnant and gave birth. She placed these two on an equal footing, in the same category.<sup>16</sup> For her, these two regulations should respect men's and women's different natures. Her logic shifted - from the general, all women all the time, to the particular, some women some of the time - sliding in the same way as Beatrice Webb, admired by Salomon, had in London.

Three discussants started; two were for and one against special legislation. In comparison with the London congress, the breadth of views had diminished. Helene Simon, Berlin, spoke for protection and will here represent both the proponents. She had studied at the London School of Economics and been influenced by Beatrice Webb. Her German influences were the so called Katheder-socialisten, foremost Gustav Schmoller. Simon's two heavy arguments were, that a protection of women was a tactical political move and that women were weaker and different because they were mothers. She found that a general worker protection was urgent, not controversial any longer and she was of the opinion that a special protective legislation for women was to be seen as a first step towards a general legislation. She stuck to the strategy the German Social Democrats had followed and she repudiated that men were out to harm women with this special legislation. If women's work conditions became better via legislation, they should be able to organize. A worker protection for them should

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<sup>15</sup> Session "Frauenarbeit und Mutterschaft", Berlin 1904:195ff, 206; Handbuch, Berlin 1904:81.

<sup>16</sup> Berlin 1904: Inhalt, 444f; Handbuch Berlin 1904: 87; according to Lily Braun were both bourgeois and Social Democratic women in Germany in agreement on night work prohibition for women in 1900. Braun 1901.

help working women to get better paid and not force them away from the labor market.

Simon also touched upon the sensitive question of industrial homeworkers. Her way of taking it for granted that women had other "duties" than men, deserves to be scrutinized:

... the woman is in no way less worth than a man and not even weaker; she is only more overworked than he, because she has to serve two masters at the same time: her duties at work and at home.<sup>17</sup>

Simon used the expression "two masters". But it was impossible for her, after expressing this as a fact, to see that the masters might be the employer and the husband. She perceived the reality otherwise. For her the masters were not real persons, only metaphors for duties. A woman was not serving two real masters but she had a double burden. Despite her criticism of women's harder work and life conditions, Simon left real men outside the analysis. The expression woman's duties was used by those, who accentuated differences and different responsibilities for men and women. With the "two masters" Simon could explain why women were worn out. She did not see any real men around, even if, now one hundred years later, it is impossible not to see how near she was to talk about gender relations between men and women.

Then Helene Simon spoke on protection of children. That belonged in the sphere called "women's duties". Protection of children should be introduced by worker protection of mothers as well as of young girls, who might later become mothers. A woman's body was in danger in industrial work. Simon wished for a protection for all women as well as a special protection "before and after giving birth" together with a financial support. This should create a natural gender division of labor. A woman should get "equality in work with men, because the natural duties of her sex should be highly valued".<sup>18</sup>

Her arguments was a mixture of insights into real pregnancies with views of motherhood in general. It contained concepts as "natural duties" and an attempt to upgrade woman by special treatments. Her view on equality can be made explainable by looking at her choice of a word and of the German language. Let us look at the German word "Gleichstellung". It has no equivalent in English (but

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<sup>17</sup> "... nicht um eine Minderwertigkeit handelt es sich hierbei, nicht einmal um die Frage, ob die Frau an sich schwächer sei als der Mann; sie ist überlasteter als er, weil sie zwei Herren zugleich dienen soll: gewerblichen und häuslichen Pflichten."(448) Berlin 1904:447f.

<sup>18</sup> Berlin 1904:449f.



in Swedish). In French there is "égalité", in English "equality", in Swedish "jämlighet". In German this was often called "Gleichheit", which literally means "similarity" and not equality. German seems to have no good equivalent to "equality"/ "égalité"/ "jämlighet". "Gleichheit" or "Gleichberechtigung" or "Gleichstellung" are the words to use in German. "Gleichstellung" means equal standing/equal position which is less distinct than "equality". A distinction between Similarity and Equality are hard to make in German. Discussions about gender relations easily became vague.

"Gleichstellung" was the goal for Helene Simon, and with that word she could with ease talk about difference and nature. But she never really explained what kind of "Gleichstellung" could be the result through a strict gender division of labor, which she presumed was the best. Her wish was a general worker protection. She was inside a way of reasoning in which "general" and "Gleichstellung", were both positive. And she was at the same time talking about women's special needs. She - as well as others - did not clarify how to join them. She wanted higher wages for women and a possibility to work outside of the homes, but how much and in what capacities was vague. Motherhood was important to her, with a great influence over women's lives and works. A life-giving woman was the only woman, in Helene Simon's speech.

The only person invited to speak against protective legislation for women was Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema, Rotterdam. She mentioned example from her home country, the Netherlands. In the congress book, her speech gets a summary in one page, whereas Helene Simon's speech is filling a bit more than five printed pages. The summary of Rutgers-Hoitsema's speech might be explained by a lack of manuscript, but that was not the case; a translation from the original was published in the Swedish women's journal *Dagny* that very same year. In print it covered six pages.<sup>19</sup> It was as long as Simon's talk. That it was not included must be explained as a choice by the editor of the volume, Marie Stritt. The Dutch Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema had and should go on having a positive connection to the Swedish women's movement on this topic, as will be clear at later congresses and culminate in events in 1911 and 1912.

The short version of Rutgers-Hoitsema's contribution depended probably on principles of favoring less provoking views when copy-editing the vast sum of

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<sup>19</sup> *Dagny* 1904:377ff; Berlin 1904:445ff.

contributions. Despite, or maybe because of, that Marie Stritt was called in question as a radical inside the German women's movement, she supported the German consensus on the question of night work prohibition. As a president, she had the responsibility to compromise, working for peace inside the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine.

What was Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema allowed to express in the shorter German version? She praised the positive effects the legislation had had on qualified women's work. In other fields, she said, it had been negative. Thousands of women had been discharged. They were unemployed, looking for new jobs, and this was lowering wages for both men and women in factories. Women's work was poorly paid. There was an increase of home industrial work and equality was far away when women could not earn their own living. "/W/omen's economic independence ", to Rutgers-Hoitsema the purpose of the women's movement, was in danger. Prostitution and contempt for women were consequences of special treatment, which also prevented a renewal in labor conditions. Rutgers-Hoitsema's demand, in the short version, was: "no special legislation for women, but a general worker protection for all workers in the same field". She wanted a shorter work day, longer free time for women after childbirth with full salary, and child care at state controlled nurseries.<sup>20</sup>

Does the shortened protocol differ from the longer version? The summary is correct. The content had not been distorted. What is missing is the tone of true engagement for the poor woman worker through the whole speech, concrete details of the outcome in some industries, the clear report on the negative effects the protection had had, as well as the distinctly formulated and politically nuanced demands on how legislation for real protection should look like. The Swedish journal for women, *Dagny*, part of the largest woman organization in Sweden, Fredrika Bremer-förbundet, printed the long version, pointing out that it was a direct translation of the speech held in Berlin.

Rutgers-Hoitsema started with a detailed description of the worker protection legislations in her home country. They concerned women and children, and had been introduced in 1889, similar to those in Germany and France. The bulk of her speech was about the consequences of these protective

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<sup>20</sup> "...die ökonomische Unabhängigkeit der Frauen" and "... : keine gesonderte Gesetzgebung für Frauen, sondern allgemeine Schutzbestimmungen, gültig für alle Arbeiter, die in der gleichen Industrie beschäftigt sind." Berlin 1904:450.

laws. She mentioned England, when talking about how the first protective legislation for women were introduced in the textile factories. The majority of workers had been women, with the result that the few male workers got the same reduction of working hours. The result was positive to everybody. But the contrary happened in England when the same legislation had been applied to the less mechanized weavings of linen damask cloth. The production process was more individual, and could thus be stopped or continued depending on the single worker. Qualified women could not any longer work as long hours as men, and were dismissed. The same thing happened at the large printing houses where daily papers were produced. Rutgers-Hoitsema said that discharged women had been employed in smaller workshops and for less pay, because the legislation gave the employers the upper hand in wage negotiations. As a consequence men's wages were also decreasing in these work places.

As many others she pointed especially to the printing houses. From Paris she reported that 5000 female printers had been discharged. Some of them had been allowed to stay on to fold newspapers, getting a quarter of their former pay. This story about night work folding the newspapers, not printing them, was reoccurring. How this kind of night work could be in accordance with the night work prohibition seems strange. In her story about the labor market, Rutgers-Hoitsema cited two sources. For England she referred to John Hobson in his description of the development of modern capitalism; he showed that discharged women by their competition in new fields caused diminishing wages for men. She also mentioned a Dr. Dodd, who in a dissertation showed that women in Germany were dismissed with the introduction of protective labor laws in the textile industry.

Rutgers-Hoitsema's conclusion was that "the *special* (her italics) protective laws" had damaged society; women workers were unemployed. As such they competed with men for other jobs and lowered men's wages. Women's work had lost most of its value in the labor market. At the end she said that "women's economic independence, which we all want to support and to which equality is bound, is more and more disturbed". The end result was that the revolution made possible by industrialization, was threatened, that contempt for women increased as did prostitution. Her demands for reforms were: 1) the same worker protection for all working in the same industry 2) a maximum work day for all workers 3) longer free time at childbirth and preserved pay and 4) state

founded "nurseries and Kindergarten" with good inspection, in all places where women worked in factories.<sup>21</sup>

Her speech was a defense of the socialist feminists' earlier demands for work protection for all and an equally long work day. To Rutgers-Hoitsema economic independence and equality belonged together. Her demands for a preserved wage and a long free time for a new mother were not common and her demand for nurseries was seldom heard.

Dora Montefiore, London, spoke in the debate. Her contribution got quite some space in the book on the congress and had many of the same ingredients as Rutgers-Hoitsema's.<sup>22</sup> She insisted on an economic citizenship and put forward also the importance of organization and political citizenship. Montefiore chose a rhetoric way of expression. Four guiding principles were to direct the women's movement:

- I. We should define more exactly than we do now what we mean by the State, and by State Protection.
- II. Women in Industry should always be protected as adults, never as children.
- III. Any such proposed legislation should be examined and tested by women, as to whether it is inspired by spurious sentiment, or by the self-interest of others.
- IV. The ideal we should set before working women should be self-protection on the same lines as men, first through Trade Unionism, and secondly through the Parliamentary vote.<sup>23</sup>

As Harriot Stanton Blatch did in London in 1900, Montefiore pointed to men's need of protection. Hard work could damage men as well as women, with consequences for society. Montefiore contradicted Rutgers-Hoitsema at one point, saying that it was not true that men and women had gotten better work conditions where women were in majority as worker. Instead, as a response, the employers had introduced a system with male foremen, to make women produce as much as before in their shorter hours.<sup>24</sup>

Alexandra Gripenberg's contribution to the debate was similar to her speech in London five years earlier. Her arguments against protection were three. Firstly, special legislation was principally against equality: same rights and special privileges were not compatible. Secondly, who could be certain that

<sup>21</sup> Probably Hobson (in the journal "Hobsen"), *Dagby* 1904: 377ff. The English national economist John A. Hobson had in 1894 published *The evolution of modern capitalism*.

<sup>22</sup> Berlin 1904:451ff.

<sup>23</sup> In English in the congress book, written in several languages. Berlin 1904:451f.

<sup>24</sup> Berlin 1904:451ff.

special legislation would not be diffused further. Thirdly, legislation should restrain women from earning a living but not put an end to bad work conditions.<sup>25</sup> She lifted up what had been hinted at earlier: women were afraid that a prohibition could be expanded, for example to encompass all women's right to work, or all married women's right to work. Women had apprehensions that the night work prohibition for women was not the first step to a similar prohibition for men but on the contrary the first step to more hindrances for working women.

Else Lüders, Berlin, supported the protection of women and declared that "the ambitions for equality" was leading to the wrong assessments. Equality in the labor market was typical for feminists to raise, she said,<sup>26</sup> which was correct. And it confirms that the concept "feminist" was connected to the question of equality. At the congress were only a few feminists present. Equality had also been underlined by Rutgers-Hoitsema: she had spoken about the threat to "our right to equality"<sup>27</sup>. She had not chosen the German word "Gleichheit", chosen by Lüders, but "Gleichberechtigung" probably not to be misunderstood. She spoke clearly about rights!

Another German woman expressed the same disgust as Lüders of the foreign "feminists" and their criticism of special legislation:

It is satisfying that the bourgeois women's movement in Germany, has not made the same error as feminists in other countries, where they have rejected special measures for women in the name of equality".<sup>28</sup>

This speaker and Lüders both choose the word "Gleichheit", with its double meaning of equality and similarity. Maybe it could be possible to interpret the last contribution as that feminists existed in Germany but that they did not do the same mistakes as foreign ones. But the plausible interpretation is, that the speaker put the label "feminist" on those who wanted to look at women as individuals with the same economic rights as men.

Lily Braun, one of the few representatives of unionized women at the congress, uphold, as the Social Democratic Party did, that protective laws gave

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<sup>25</sup> Berlin 1904:455f.

<sup>26</sup> "...Gleichheitsstreben der Feministen..." Berlin 1904:456.

<sup>27</sup> "...unsere Gleichberechtigung..." Berlin 1904: 450.

<sup>28</sup> "Es ist erfreulich, dass die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung Deutschlands nicht der Irrtum der Feministinnen anderer Länder teilt, die um der Gleichheit willen besondere Vorkehrungen für die Frau verwerfen." Berlin 1904:463.

women better work conditions. The proof was an increase of women working in industries.<sup>29</sup>

The great final meeting of the Berlin congress was taking place on a Saturday. Under the heading of "The foundations and the goals of the women's movement" two speakers appeared: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Helene Lange. The famous Charlotte Perkins Gilman was admired and debated as a theorist, connected to the North American women's movement. She had been present also in London in 1899 and was a socialist. She was an outstanding orator in the younger generation. Through her book *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relations Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, published in 1898 she was an acknowledged authority. Her book was translated into German and several other languages. In 1903 she had gone further with her analysis in the book *The Home: its work and influence*. She was of the opinion that women were suppressed at home; the household had to be totally changed if women were to be emancipated. Charlotte Perkins Gilman called her speech in Berlin "A new theory on the woman question".

Helene Lange, a teacher, was considered the most important in the moderate bourgeois women's movement in Germany. Since 1892 she was the editor of the monthly magazin *Die Frau*, which she thought of as her life-work. Since 1894 she was on the board of the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine and had been active in attaching it to the International Council of Women. She refused to work together with the socialist women's movement. She disliked the so called Left Wing in Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine because it wanted women to be able to unite motherhood with a profession or other work, and she upset of the dissolution of sexual morals. She spoke under the heading "The final goal of the women's movement".<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately Charlotte Perkins Gilman's contribution was not printed, probably because she, as several other American speakers, talked without a manuscript. According to the Swedish Lydia Wahlström she was "indisputably ... the most popular personality at the congress". Wahlström judged that it was due to her way of performing. The ovations that met Gilman was like "a success

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<sup>29</sup> Berlin 1904:456f.

<sup>30</sup> "Eine neue Theorie der Frauenfrage" and "Das Endziel der Frauenbewegung". Berlin 1904:601-615; Handbuch 1904: 101; On Charlotte Perkins Gilman, among others Määttä 1997, on the book p50ff; see also Gilman 1898, 1903. On Helene Lange, Weiland 1983:148ff; Lange 1901-1906.

at a theater, a manifestation by the emotional German audience in front of a brilliant mind, but also of beauty, dress, facial expressions and - a clear American pronunciation ...". Wahlström thought that Gilman sometimes got appreciation for too simple phrases. For example, when she said "It is not good that love should be mixed with money", she had been interrupted by wild applause.<sup>31</sup> But the quotation gives exactly a summary of one of the main thesis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's: women should be economically independent. Gilman was an evolutionist. From Darwin's theory she built her analysis of society; the natural development of women was hindered by traditions from an earlier period of history. Because of an unnatural "sexuo-economic relation" a woman was still depending on a man in the same way as his horse. She was supported by him. But free animals and free humans supported themselves. All hereditary characters of humans existed in both man and woman, of different sexes but of the same humankind. Women as well as men ought to be able to fulfill themselves and become economically independent. Gilman liked socialist ideas<sup>32</sup> and her conclusions were not far from the ideas of the socialist feminists, who demanded the same protective legislation for men and women. We might assume that the above or similar ideas were presented by Charlotte Perkins Gilman at the final meeting. She had recently finished another book called *Human Work*<sup>33</sup> and probably she shared her thoughts about the organic growth of society, where every individual has to find his or her area of work. That her contribution was totally different from the following is a matter of course.

Helene Lange, also accountant at the ICW, spoke as the very last. She started with a criticism of the history of radical women. Female pioneer, as Mary Wollstonecraft, had incorrectly thought that it was possible for women to have the same rights as men. Contrasting herself to Wollstonecraft, Lange confessed that she was of the same opinion as the conservative English politician Edmund Burke, that "... the order of society can not only be founded on reason but it must be founded on the human nature, and reason is but a small part of that".

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<sup>31</sup> Susan B Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Shaw also all spoke without manuscripts. Berlin 1904, Vorwort:VII; Quote from Wahlström 1949:198 ; Dagny 1904:281;. The protocol says "stürmischem Beifall" when Gilman spoke at another debate on the situation of the married woman. Berlin 1904:405.

<sup>32</sup> Määttä 1997: 31ff (overview of research); 50ff; Perkins Gilman had been active at the congress of the Second International in London in 1896, Knight 1994:631ff. Gilman 1935.

<sup>33</sup> According to Määttä 1997: 58ff this was the title of the book; compare the bibliography in Knight 1994:923; Gilman 1903 refers to the book *The Home: Its Work and Influence*.

It is not far-fetched to see in this an open polemic with the nature Charlotte Perkins Gilman spoke about which craved women's economic independence.

But Lange did not discard, of course not, all the woman emancipation even if she had serious reservation against some of its tendencies. Lange was of the opinion that a fight between man and women began with rationalism. The Enlightenment was to blame. Women had earlier on been the guardians of the spiritual values. The fight between the sexes had created hindrances for women's emancipation, some understandable and other deplorable. Among the too simple programs women had launched in the beginning of their movement, Lange mentioned "the dogma of total freedom in the labor market which had been put up against the urgent need of protective labor legislation for women". She bluntly put total freedom against the regulation for women. She did not mention the existence of the socialist feminist alternative, which had been put forward during this congress by Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema.

Lange wanted to protect the high moral pretensions of the women's movement. She was disappointed by the new "esthetic individualism", which Ellen Key had introduced in the movement. It had not a high consciousness of the social question. Lange also asked if such a policy was good for children, because it praised egoism and the natural. She warned the women's movement to follow impulses and instincts.

The final goal, what was it? Women should use their femininity, their "Eigenart", in the service of society and in all fields. Lange was not fond of Ellen Key's individualism with its accent on a personal motherhood, but she praised, as Ellen Key, women's peculiarity, their "Eigenart". Her wish was a combination of the new female individualism with an "upgrading of the special talents and capacities women had". The new individualism should not turn women's interests to the small world but stimulate them into political activities. She was open about her support of special legislation for women:

Thus, it is natural that one of the most important social policy questions is to try to win a woman back to her work as a mother, to get her out of the monstrous treadmill, via a wise and suitable protective labor legislation for women workers.

Protective legislation was for Lange the means to save women as mothers. Special legislation for women should open the doors to women's influence. Her best scenario was women with children at home, far away from the awful factory.



Thus the women's movements final purpose should be to get woman's Eigenart into the society for the good of everybody, at the same time as women with children should stay at home.<sup>34</sup> Unmarried women, of course without children, could be active for the society at large. Married women without children had no place in Lange's future dream society.

Helene Lange and Charlotte Perkins Gilman could probably agree on one thing only, the dangers of too much individualism. Lange's ideal woman was motherly in a way totally alien to Gilman. But motherhood/ maternity was a winning concept. This was evident from earlier discussions at the congress on women and industrial work. And a mother was part of a family, not an individual.

The view on woman and work that we get from the important speeches in the beginning and end of the congress and as well from the contributions at the relevant sessions, focused often on women's duties and women as mothers. The rejection of special legislation for women was smaller than before, fewer persons were invited to criticize such legislation.

The book on the congress was produced and edited by Germans and all in all this shows that opposition against special treatment of women in the labor market was losing ground. But still the socialist feminist demand on equality in the labor market for all was heard. Charlotte Perkins Gilman had been invited, also Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema. Their presence was not so big in the book about the congress as their contributions and charismatic appearances had been in the eyes of the participants. For the world around and for the coming generations, the proceedings from the congress downplayed the vivid and appreciated resistance to unequal labor legislation.

Radical women often judged the suffrage question as the most dynamic and important. In Berlin it got its international organization at last. Radical women saw suffrage as one of many equality reform, after which the equality in the

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<sup>34</sup> "...die gesellschaftliche Ordnung nicht allein auf die Vernunft gegründet werden müsse, sondern auf die menschliche Natur, von der die Vernunft nur ein sehr Kleiner Teil sei"(606); "...dem Dogma der vollen Berufsfreiheit auch gegenüber den dringendsten Forderungen des Arbeiterinnenschutzes..."(609); "...jener ästhetische Individualismus, wie ihn Ellen Key in die Frauenbewegung eingeführt hat"(610); "Auf die Frauen angewandt bedeutet das nichts anderes, als die volle Wirkung ihres Frauentums, ihrer Eigenart, auf alle Lebensäußerungen der Gesamtheit"(611); "...die Verwertung der eigenartigen Frauenkraft"(612); "Deshalb bleibt es natürlich doch mit die wichtigste sozialpolitische Aufgabe, durch einen den Verhältnissen vorsichtig angepassten Arbeiterinnenschutz die Frau aus der ungeheuren Tretmühle der Industrie für ihren Mutterberuf zurückzugewinnen. Sonst wuerde hier allmählich ein Stück weiblichen Einflusses verloren gehen, das an keiner anderen Stelle zu ersetzen, auf keine andere Weise wieder einzubringen wäre."(612f), Langes tal: Berlin 1904:606ff.

labor market would be easier to achieve. The vote was for them one step further, a part of the whole package of equality.

Thus suffrage was more and more taking center stage for radical feminists. But they were going to be disappointed; the political citizenship was not such a great step towards equality. The focus on suffrage was to result in that the struggle for economic citizenship including a fair gender division of labor was put aside in a longer perspective. And the mobilization around suffrage could and would also get support from women who were quite satisfied with a strict gender division of labor and the upgrading of women as mothers.

The international - as well as national - meetings and congresses for woman suffrage were multiplying. The suffrage congresses arranged by the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), were held quite often after its foundation in Berlin in 1904. Congresses took place in Copenhagen in 1906, in Amsterdam in 1908, in London in 1909 and in Stockholm in 1911. At the last mentioned, night work and a critic of the prohibition for women only, was to create yet another new international organization for equality in the labor market. The IWSA congress in Budapest in 1913 was to be the last before the First World War. No congresses for suffrage were summoned during the war.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rupp 1997: 302.