

3. 1919: ILO LEGITIMIZE INEQUALITY

[...] the prospects for a "policy change" coming about in the ILO are poor in a short time perspective. However, by utilizing a variety of strategies in a consistent way, the future for a gender responsive policy in the ILO is more optimistic."

Anne Therese Lotherington & Anne Britt Flammen, 1991

The First World War was putting into question views on women and paid work. Even if many women during the war worked temporarily outside of their homes, paid or unpaid, the result was not a decrease in the gender division of labor, rather the contrary. The division of labor was reorganized during the war and women got the least qualified jobs. The postwar period saw a deepening of this renewal of a gender division of labor as an effect of a nostalgic and ideological longing for so called traditional family values, in combination with a post war economic depression. The gender division of labor is not to be confused with the number of women in paid work. These numbers were increasing. The gender division of labor is about segregation (both in paid and non paid work), whereas paid work is about earning a wage. Both mention work. Therefore they are often treated as integrated with each other. The fight for a paid work -- before as well as after the Great War -- was as well a question about who had the right to the better paid job with a higher status. Men saw their former monopoly on many jobs being questioned by women. After the war, men did what they could to fight off such a competition. The situation from before the war was repeated. Men expected the better works and urged to get such positions as they were breadwinners. But they met resistance. Women really needed to support themselves, not least the widows and the women who would never find a provider because the large toll of men killed during the war. And employers hired women. Thus, tensions continued in the labor market.¹

Soon after the war, in the year 1919, the International Labor Organization (ILO) was founded, as decided in the Versailles peace treaty. ILO was to become a part of the League of Nations, but with an organizational structure of its own. This new organization, ILO, got as one of its assignments to deal with, decide

¹ For example Higonet 1987; Glucksmann 1990; Wikander 1994a.

upon and spread international conventions concerning the labor market. ILO was founded with two main concerns: to see that the international competition was not too distorted by different conditions for labor in different countries and to install peace at the social arena. The words "social justice" was to become the symbol of ILO's intentions. Its special way of decision making, with a decision making assembly consisting of representatives of three groups, representatives of states, of employers and of trade unions, was a unique construction.²

Already before the war - in 1906 - two international conventions on labor protection had been formulated and accepted by a diplomatic congress in Basel, in which state representatives from several European countries participated. One of these conventions was a night work prohibition for women in industrial work, specifying also how late women could work in the evenings and how early in the mornings as well as how many hours they had to rest during the night. This prohibition had been prepared and negotiated at the initiative of a pseudo-official lobby organization for introducing international conventions in the labor market, l'association internationale pour la protection légale des travailleurs / the International Association for Labor Legislation / die Internationale Vereinigung für gesetzlichen Arbeiterschutz. It was situated in Basel and had three official languages.

Its successor International Labor Organization, specializing in international labor legislation, had a broader legitimation than the old one in Basel. ILO agreed to take over, as its own, the night work prohibition for women with some additions even. It was going to disseminate it in the world during the whole of the 20th Century.³

² Solano 1920 gives us an inside view through articles by several of those who were at the negotiations after the foundation of the ILO ; Phelan 1925; "social justice", Johnston 1970:8ff; Riegelman & Winslow 1990:1.

³ See also Chapter 12; "Congrès international pour la protection légale des travailleurs tenu à Paris au Musée Social du 25 au 28 Juillet 1900. (Cette étude est due à notre collaborateur M. André Lichtenberger)" *Musée Social, Bulletin mensuel*, Année 1900, No 8. Août: 261-296, later = Congrès ... des Travailleurs, Paris 1900 II; letterhead 1905, File: Denkschrift, Frauen, Nacharbeit, 10 400, Pre-ILO, The Archives Unit of ILO, Genève; Périgord 1926: 65; Shotwell Vol 1 1934: 476; Observe that several other congresses and organisations already during the war had been involved to prepare for the international cooperation after the war. Johnston 1970:8ff; *Night Work of Women in Industry*. 2001; Jasmien Van Daele, Magaly Rodríguez García, Geert Van Goethem, Marcel van der Linden, eds., *ILO Histories. Essays on the International Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century*. Bern, Berlin etc: Peter Lang 2010 with my article "Demands on the ILO by Internationally Organized Women in 1919" pp 67-89 and others.

A night work prohibition for women was accepted by most of the countries joining the League of Nations in 1919. Eventually it was also introduced in other countries. Such a prohibition is still valid in some poor countries of the world. The convention has been one of the factors shaping the roles of men and women in the labor market as different from each other. It contributed to create and/or stabilize a gender division of labor for paid work but also had consequences for unpaid work. Unpaid work at home for the need of the family remained during most of the 20th century a woman's "duty".

Peace negotiations in Paris

A war is not easy to end. The peace negotiations in Versailles after the First World War became a long process. The Commission of Labor Legislation, called the Labor Commission, was one of three preparatory groups founded in January of 1919. The North American Trade Union leader Samuel Gompers was its president. He was positive to special legislation for women. The Commission was to deal with questions concerning the possibility of an international regulation of the labor market and about the details of a foundation of the International Labor Organization.⁴

During the preparatory period, different groups with opinions of their own, turned via selected representatives to the Commission, to have a say about the outcome. Some of these were keen on influencing the treatment of women in the organization to be. Among the first arrivals in Paris were Margaret Bondfield, important in the English Trade Union movement, as well as Mary Macarther and Sophy Sanger. Macarther was the president of a big trade union for women, the National Federation of Women Workers. Together with Bondfield, she was important both in the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Industrial Council in Great Britain, organizations which since long time had been supporting special laws for women parallel with work to make women's work conditions better. Sanger had been active in the foundation of the British section of the International Association for Labor Legislation, the organization behind the so called Berne Convention of 1906, that is to say the already existing convention

⁴ Johnston 1970:12ff.

which forbid women to work at night. Thus all three of them were keen on a continuation of a night work prohibition for women only.⁵

But others were also eager to lobby. The large International Council of Women (ICW) promoted its partly contradictory demands. The Council would like to see the same possibilities for men and women, which for example was formulated as a wish for equal pay for equal work. ICW wanted women to take part on the same conditions as men in all the international commissions dealing with the organization of work. On top of this, the Council wanted, according to two historians who have written a rather uncritical story about women inside of ILO, "... limitation of the working week to forty-four hours and suppression of night work for women, where possible, *without creating a situation unfavorable to women*".⁶ The addition that such a prohibition should not be unfavorable for women, must be seen as a sign that ICW was aware of that the night work prohibition for women and other special laws for women were controversial even among its members. Despite those expressions of an equality policy ICW wanted to keep the already functioning international convention prohibiting women to work at night, adding a specific treatment that women should have a four hours shorter working week than men. The Commission was preparing a convention on a 48 hours working week. Probably ICW was wishing for a shorter Saturday for women, so that they could clean and shop before men came home to rest. Such a view was behind a shorter Saturday for women already implemented at some places.

Other women's organizations also sent representatives to Paris. Several of them arrived late. And women had had no possibility to coordinate their demands. Some groups demanded equal pay for equal work. Someone asked a right to a half day of work once a week, as also suggested by ICW. Others demanded, also as ICW, that women should have representatives at ILO. The influential American group the National Women's Trade Union League supported, as ICW did, the night work prohibition for women. Someone wanted that ILO should put on the agenda a period of paid leave for women giving birth. Most of

⁵ Sanger 1920; Kessler-Harris 1982:208f; Mappen 1985; Riegelman & Winslow 1990: 20ff; Gordon & Doughan (2001) 2002:102, 169, 184f.

⁶ Italics in Riegelman & Winslow 1990: 21; about ICW, Rupp 1997.

them raised the demand that women should have the same educational possibilities as men.⁷

Night work prohibition for women as an ILO convention

ILO's first annual meeting was held in Washington DC in the USA, from the end of October to the end of November in 1919, was called the Washington Labor Conference. The organization thus had a quick start. This conference was the reason for summoning an almost parallel women's congress, to try to influence the new international organization in its very beginning.⁸ The initiative to arrange such a congress shows the importance trade union women found in labor market questions and that they did not rely upon the trade union men to represent working women's views and wishes. The coming together was called the International Congress of Working Women and attracted representatives from trade unions from nineteen countries. It was arranged by the US based National Women's Trade Union League of America (NWTULA), which was positive to night work prohibitions beforehand.⁹ Women active in trade unions in most other countries were also positive to the idea of a special labor legislation for women. In the Nordic countries, women were of a different meaning. But the women's conference of trade unionists was not to agree totally with the formulations by ILO, and put up demands of its own. Women at the conference should ask for more reforms to integrate women in the new organization. They would not be accepted.

Already at the Peace negotiations in Versailles the organizational forms for the future ILO had been decided upon. Every land inside the League of Nations were to choose four representatives to ILO: two were to be appointed by the state in question, one should represent the employers and one the workers/trade unions. These four were allowed to bring along experts as advisers. The formal decisions should be taken by the assembly, meeting at an annual conference, consisting of the four representatives from every member country. ILO's annual conference could suggest "conventions" or "recommendations"¹⁰, which then

⁷ The Women's Trade Union League was first until 1912 a trade union which concentrated on organizing women and make agreements to strengthen women's positions. Since 1915 special legislation for women had been their preferential question. Kessler-Harris 1982: 205; Riegelman & Winslow 1990: 20ff.

⁸ Wikander 1910

⁹ *Resolutions Adopted by First International Congress of Working Women*. 1919; Shotwell 1920; Riegelman & Winslow 1990:26.

¹⁰ Solano 1920: Appendix III:293-333.

obligatorily had to be raised and discussed in the parliament of each member state. They might be refused or accepted as national legislation. This was a delicate balance, so as not to interfere with a nation's sovereignty at the same time as reaching international agreements. Not every nation ratified all conventions but all of the ILO conventions or recommendations were discussed at the national level in parliaments. ILO was to place its central office in Genève because that city was to be the head quarters of the League of Nations. The ILO office was to be headed by a Director. Moreover, the office was to publish a journal, gather and distribute statistics and keep in touch with the member states in all areas of concern.¹¹

First, let us look at decisions made at the first annual meeting of ILO, at the so called Labor Conference. Later this will be compared with the wishes raised by the women's conference, to show how this conference at some points clearly differed from those which became international norms.¹² An unexpected complication was that the USA did not join the League of Nations. This had been decided only one week before the opening of the so called Labor Conference. So surprisingly the host country of the meeting was outside of ILO. Albert Thomas was elected Director of the ILO. He was a French reform Socialist, who recently had been Minister of Arms during the war. He had been an active member of the French section of the International Association for Labor Legislation, which so eagerly had worked to spread a night work prohibition for women internationally. Such a prohibition was in place in French legislation since 1892. Albert Thomas was not going to show any interest whatsoever to employ women among higher rank officials inside ILO even if this had been high on the agenda of many women's organizations already during the days in Paris before the final Peace agreement. But Thomas accepted voluntarily women as clerks, researchers, proof-readers, linguistic experts and technicians inside his organization.¹³

ILOs annual Labor Conference could decide on two kinds of reforms for labor protection: one was a "recommendation", which was an askance that the suggestion should be taken seriously. The other was a "convention" and was a

¹¹ Solano 1920 Appendix III; *Berättelse över Landsorganisationens verksamhet år 1919*. 1921: 77ff.

¹² See more differences in Wikander 2010: 67-89

¹³ Solano 1920 Appendix III. Phelan 1949: Chapt. 1; Riegelman & Winslow 1990: 28ff; Mallet 1992; Auslander & Zancarini-Fournel 1995.

strong demand. In both cases it was up to the state in question to accept it or not. Acceptances, so called ratifications, were to be renewed every tenth year.¹⁴

The first annual meeting, the Labor Conference in Washington, had five points on the agenda: a 48 hours work week; to prevent unemployment; regulation of child work; regulation of women's work. As the fifth and last point was the question of the two international conventions that were already in place; one prohibiting women working at night and one prohibiting the use of white phosphorus. Both were limited to industry and both had been agreed upon in Berne in 1906. Were they to be recommended also by the ILO? Two of the five points on the agenda concerned women and women only. No women were to decide upon them. Besides these points there were some general principles to be accepted, more or less connected to women and their relation to men: among them the principle of "equal pay for work of equal value".¹⁵

The expression "of equal value" meant more that equal pay for equal work; it meant comparisons between different kinds of work and better evaluation of work done by mostly women. It was a demand for an evaluation of work content. At the same time this way to express the demand, seems to accept the gender division of labor. In practice, such a wording about jobs of "equal value" was to be of very little practical importance during the whole of the 20th century, even if tried and failed. Anyhow, as a good intention, it was there already in 1919 as one of the basic principles of the ILO. Another principle was that the national factory inspections should employ women, which was already the case in several European countries as well as in the USA.

The Labor Conference was agreeing on the following propositions; a convention about an 8 hours work day, that is a work week of 48 hours; a recommendation of a priority for solving the problems of unemployment; a convention about women's right to work leave before and after giving birth; a convention about a night work prohibition for women and two conventions about restrictions of child labor. This means that the meeting decided to continue the so called Berne convention of 1906 of a night work prohibition for women, which already existed in many countries.¹⁶

¹⁴ Solano 1920 Appendix III; *Berättelse över Landsorganisationens verksamhet år 1919*. 1921: 86-98.

¹⁵ Butler 1920; *Berättelse över Landsorganisationens verksamhet år 1919*. 1921 85.

¹⁶ Butler 1920; Solano 1920: Appendix IV; *Berättelse över Landsorganisationens verksamhet år 1919*. 1921: 86-98; Wikander, Kessler-Harris, Lewis 1995.

Factory Inspector Betzy Kjelsberg from Norway gave voice to the Nordic women's opposition to a night work prohibition for women only. This negative view had been manifested several times before, at international as well as Nordic congresses organized by women. This state employed Factory inspector declared that she was against special legislation because protective legislation ought to be to the benefit of all. She could accept a special protection for mothers with children under one year of age.

I am against protective laws for women, except pregnant women and women nursing children under one year of age because I believe that we are furthering the cause of good labor laws most by working toward the prohibition of all absolutely unnecessary night work. It is hard to see old worn out men and young boys in the most critical period of development work during the night. Many accidents have taken place in the middle of the night when the workers are most tired.¹⁷

She thus pointed to the fact that all night work was dangerous and that there were groups of men, for which is was at least as dangerous as for women, for young men and very old ones. She was as spokesperson for the resolution which Social Democratic women had failed to have accepted at the Socialist Women's Congress in Copenhagen in 1910. Other women had raised similar demands earlier.

Kjelsberg underlined the necessity of a protection of real mothers and the practical reforms that ought to be implemented for women who were mothers. This had been the Nordic women's addition to the feminist discourse on night work since a decade ago. Women, who were pregnant or took care of babies needed protection. But women in general did not. Mothers with older children were not either seen as in need of special protection according to these views. Putting it this way can be seen as a polemic stand against those in the women's movement, who were talking constantly about maternity, that ought to give all women a special legal position. Motherhood and its relevance at the labor market was one of the differentiating themes, that was accentuated within the first waves of an international women's movement.

Kjelsberg's appeal against special laws for the general category of women and her words about the necessity of a worker's protection for all, were the outcome of a long debate in feminist circles. It had been going on not only in the Nordic countries but also on the European Continent and in Great Britain. Her

¹⁷ Riegelman & Winslow 1990: 30.

speech was far from a whim or the personal view of a single person, but founded on thoroughly discussed arguments against gender specific legislation. The importance with protection for all, because men needed protection as well as women, had been heard before. But the arguments had no impact in Washington. Norwegian Betzy Kjelsberg came from a country where a night work prohibition for women had not been accepted, mainly because of a harsh critique from middle class women's movement.¹⁸

According to Riegelman and Winslow – in their uncritical book on ILO and women - Maria Vérone from La Ligue Française pour le Droit des Femmes spoke also at this occasion. She is said to have read a list of demands which "did not in practice differ greatly from those the other organizations represented". About night work protection, this cannot be true at all. The lawyer Maria Vérone and the organization for women's rights that she was head of since 1904, was against all kinds of special laws for women in the labor market.¹⁹ Thus it might have been two women at this first annual meeting of ILO, who raised the objections from organized women to a gendered night work prohibition. But their attempts to promote equality had no effect. And even their public protests have been invisible in history writing afterwards.

The Labor Conference voted for an acceptance of the international convention of a night work prohibition for women. It was even extended; the Berne convention had only included industries with more than 10 workers. Now the convention included all industrial enterprises, except those run by family members only. The number of consecutive hours a woman should have to rest every night was increased from 10 hours to 11 hours. Possibilities were made for employers not to follow the legislation if it was impossible or inconvenient because of delicate products or technological processes. Exemptions were given for the employers.²⁰

Why was the prohibition of women's night work reestablished and even extended? The French Arthur Fontaine, working close to the socialist Alexandre Millerand during his period as a minister, and later on as a high official in the

¹⁸ Hagemann 1995: 267-289.

¹⁹ Dos VER, BMD; quote from Riegelman & Winslow 1990: 23; Gubin 2004: 171.

²⁰ Solano 1920: Appendix III: 315ff; the convention was to be implemented in July 1922 by those who accepted it. *Berättelse över Landsorganisationens verksamhet år 1919*. 1921: 92ff; an evaluation of the convention and all of its revisions during the 20th century was made by ILO, see *Night Work of Women in Industry*. 2001.

new organization ILO, already in 1920 summarized the different reasons for this. He looked upon the formation of the ILO as an important step to unite "the civilised nations of the western world in Europe and America /who/ have similar needs and habits of life which do not differ greatly".²¹ He developed an argument around the importance to cooperate with the trade unions and employers' organizations who wanted an equal competition between countries. Similar norms and opinions were spread via conventions. Through the "social justice", which ILO wanted to foster, peace was going to be secured. That the revolutions in Russia and the different temporary workers' sovjets in Germany and Hungary contributed to form closer bonds between the reformistic socialist movement, employers and states, was not denied.²²

But why was a prohibition of night work for women part of internationalizing "justice"? According to Fontaine it was of relevance because of the following, somewhat differing, reasons. The first reason was that some countries already had a night work prohibition for women in industry. It went without saying that these would gladly accept such a prohibition to be spread to other countries. Behind this reason is that employers would welcome the same regulations to avoid unfair competition across national borders; thus about justice between companies. The second reason -- except that it was not good for any worker "hygienically" to work at night -- was, according to Fontaine, that a woman's "domestic duties must be performed by her during the day". The thought behind this is not totally clear. Fontaine seems to mean that if women worked during the night, they should have to work both day and night. That women were to get time to do their work at home, if they worked outside the home during daytime, seems almost impossible. The third reason was, still according to Fontaine, was that night work was only necessary in industry where ovens were burning day and night. Such kind of work was anyhow not good for the physically weak woman. On the whole, he concluded, women's bodies were not suited for night work. The fourth reason had often been heard from trade unionists: women were not good at organizing and by that get better work conditions, contrary to men. The fifth reason was that if women worked at night, this could have negative consequences for the generations to come. In the sixth

²¹ "The civilised nations of the western world in Europe and America have similar needs and habits of life which do not differ greatly." Fontaine 1920: 164f.

²² Shotwell 1920:41ff.

and last reason Fontaine declared that "...employment of women further tends to affect unfavourably the conditions of labor for men, for example through competition, because women are content to work for lower rates of wages".²³ Only in the very first reason and maybe in the last one, there might be discerned anything about justice; and then it was not about justice for women.

Arthur Fontaine's mix of explanations were followed by a finishing speech of defense, saying that these were "sound reasons" for reform, because they were not aiming at excluding women totally from the labor market. According to Fontaine, it had been easier to get an acceptance for the night work prohibition for women than to get a prohibition to use phosphor in the production of matches.²⁴ Arthur Fontaine did know about the discussions around a night work legislation. His arguments might sound contradictory but all were answers to themes discussed earlier although never at the same time. His defense managed to deal with most of them. Many arguments were about women's duties in the household and thus mostly about married women. And an ambivalence about women doing paid work at all was evident throughout. This was clear when he mentioned women's bodies as weak or that women ought to do household work. Other of his reasons were not the least about protecting women but about protecting men's wages or to assure the same conditions for competition between industries in different countries. The profits of men and of companies was put first.

Working women's international congress

The First International Congress of Working Women wrote a list of resolutions that differed from the positions taken by ILO in Washington. But it did accept a night work prohibition for women. The women's congress met during one week, the starting week of the ILO's meeting, the Labor Conference. Women from nineteen countries were present.²⁵ They united around ten resolutions. It is uncertain if any of these resolutions had any influence whatsoever on the decisions of ILO. For us, they are of interest because women

²³ Fontaine 1920:176 ff quotes 177 and 178.

²⁴ Fontaine 1920: 176ff, quote 178.

²⁵ Countries who could vote were Argentina, Belgium, France, India, Italy, Norway, Canada, Poland, Great Britain, Sweden, Tchechoslovakia and the USA. Without the right to vote, the following countries had representatives: Denmark, Japan, Cuba, the Netherlands, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland. *Resolutions Adopted by First International Congress of Working Women, Washington, U.S.A., October 28 to November 6, 1919.*

went public with their views. It has to be pointed out that the working women's congress was not limiting itself to resolutions concerning women's conditions: it was making resolutions on unemployment generally, on child labor, emigration and distribution of raw materials. It even took a stand in a very ardent political question, demanding a stop of the trade boycott against Russia, when that country was in the middle of a civil war.

Women demanded that there should be representative of their own sex on qualified positions inside ILO. They wanted the peace agreement altered as to what it said about representatives to ILOs annual decision making conference. They wanted six delegates from each country: two representing the state and two each for employers and workers. Half of them, or almost half of them, should be women! (They did not dare to prescribe that to the employers) . It was a radical demand, a long time before quotas for women were considered in other political arenas or at any arenas at all. But this women's congress demanded a quota on women. They demanded to be almost 50 percent in the decision making forum of ILO. But of course there could not be any changes made in the peace agreement.

Anyhow, women's list of resolutions was printed, distributed and is speaking of a congress of brave women with innovative thoughts. Votes for women was one of the big questions of the time. An equal representation to men – who did dare to ask that in any other context? But here, an international assembly of female trade unionists could agree upon the need to put forward such a demand.

In a resolution on work time, the congress asked for a work week of 44 hours, not 48 hours. The half day off on Saturdays for women, was practiced in many industries. Here it was put forward as a demand for everybody, not exclusively for women. It was a demand of equal treatment. But ILO did not alter its own resolution of its gender neutral convention of 48 work hours per week. This was radical enough and shows the growing influence that the quickly expanding trade unions had.

ILO had suggested a convention that women should have the right to free time from work, six weeks before and six weeks after giving birth. And they should get free medical care and paid for living costs. The women's congress agreed to this. But among the congress women there were different opinions on the basis for the right to payment during the weeks of maternity leave. A

minority thought, that such a right should be limited to women who earned money and also to those married to a man who earned a wage. Their demand was thus connected to work in the labour market, to employment. Note that it included married women married without work. The arguments for this should have been interesting to hear. It was not a clear equality demand, because the husband's work could do as well. On the other hand, the maternity pay was going to have a clear relation to waged work. It would exclude many women, those with a small shop or other enterprise, farmers and all without a regular money income. But the lone wage working mother was included. This minority demand can be understood as a wish to keep demands within the frame of the arena of the ILO; of labor.

But the majority of the women at the congress were even more radical. They wanted to give a compensation to any mother, even those without a connection to the labor market. The majority wanted to see a payment for the concrete motherhood, for the birthgiving and the task to care for an infant.

In addition to this, the women's congress asked for a department inside the ILO, that should support research on pregnancies and care of small children and also disperse such information among its member countries. These demands were not at all considered. Probably they were seen as too far from the ILO and its purpose. But the women at the congress had shown that they considered giving birth as work among other kind of work! Is it not said that a woman is in labor when giving birth? Indeed, the congress women were trying to extend the concept of labor even to reproductive labor and beyond. It was a courageous attempt, which totally should have altered the program of the ILO. The women's congress wanted to see an ILO where giving birth and raising a child was counted as work, with a special field of knowledge and research. It was a utopian wish. Maybe considered absurd. It was passed over in silence.

Concerning night work -- the focus of this book -- the Working women's congress wanted the older Berne convention of 1906 to be renewed by the ILO. It also demanded that night work should be defined as work between 21 and 06; thus giving a rest period of nine hours. It was more than the ILO convention asked for. The women had also an additional formulation to their resolution on night work. It was about men and actually about equality:

It /= the congress/ further urges that night work shall be prohibited by law for men except in so far as it may be absolutely necessary through the

special nature of, or the continuity of the occupation or in case of essential public service..²⁶

The women of the congress wanted to put a stop to night work whenever possible. Also for men. A similar view on the future of a night work prohibition had been heard in some socialist circles; the night work prohibition of women was only to be the first step towards a general prohibition. Such a wish for a general prohibition was seldom raised, since night work had been forbidden for women. But female trade unionists had not forgotten this long term aim and wanted it to be written down.

Feminists, in Paris and other places, had for a while wished to wait with special legislation on night work until it could encompass all. In Washington the demand for an equality legislation was coming from the other side, from the side which so far accepted the night work legislation for women. They wanted it to be extended to men. Women from differing standpoints were thus striving towards equality in the labor market. Socialist feminists had been fighting for equality during decades already. Now, when the night work prohibition was more or less a fact in many states, the strategy had to be renewed. This book is all about the earlier struggles around the prohibition/the protection. ILO disregarded the demand to include men, even as a prospect for the future.

Before the First World War some of the leaders in the collaboration to spread labor legislation, had hoped that international conventions might be the beginning of a common European trade policy.²⁷ A hundred years later we can see that the ILO has survived as an organization, keeping its focus on labor rights. It did not expand into a trade organization. For this other organizations were established and today the European Union has grown to something much more than a cooperation for trade. But the ILO is still around, as the remnant of the peace treaty of 1919. Its conventions can never be abolished, once accepted. But as they have to be re-approved ever 10th year, some of them become obsolete, not used any more.

²⁶ Resolution 4, *Resolutions Adopted by First International Congress of Working Women, Washington, U.S.A., October 28 to November 6, 1919*: 6.

²⁷ Letter fr Hans von Berlepsch, Shotwell Vol 1 1934:478f, Appendix 8.