

## Article

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### "White Collar Unions in Denmark"

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# White Collar Unions in Denmark

Albert A. Blum  
and  
Allen Ponak

*In this paper, the authors present evidence as to why the Danish experience may be relevant to those concerned with the issue of white-collar unionization.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Danish trade union movement has been remarkably successful at organizing white collar workers. In 1970, about 52 percent of the white collar employees in Denmark belonged to trade unions — a decrease from 55% in 1965. (This figure may be somewhat inflated because some blue collar public employees may be included.) In 1965, the percentage of blue collar workers organized had reached 69% (See table 1). This rate stands in contrasts to that of the United States — where only 11.2% of all white collar workers were unionized in

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1968 and to the rate in England where less than 30% of white collar workers had joined the ranks of organized labor in 1964.<sup>1</sup>

Although obviously successful in attracting many non-manual employees into unions, Denmark has been less successful than Sweden, where in 1968 about 70% of the white collar workers had signed membership cards in labor organizations. And yet, white collar unionism in Denmark is at least in one respect more interesting to study than Sweden. In Sweden one federation of labor (Swedish Central Organization of Salaried Employees, TCO) represents white collar workers while another federation (the LO) represents the blue collar worker. In Denmark, on the other hand, two labor organizations compete for the support of white collar workers although each has tended to differ somewhat in the types of white collar employees each has organized. One is a union which is part of the mainly blue collar Danish labor federation, LO (*Landsorganisationen*) while the other is a separate federation made up of about 80 white collar unions. Therefore, in Denmark, we can explore the issues discussed in many other countries as to whether white collar employees are best organized along with or separate from the manual workers.

Moreover, because the Danish labor movement appears to have found some of the answers to the perplexing problem of how to attract non-manual workers to sign a union membership card, and because it is still not content with the percent it has organized and is in the midst of a vast organizing drive, the Danish experience may be additionally relevant to those concerned with the issue of white-collar unionization.<sup>2</sup>

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The vast majority of organized white collar employees in Denmark belong to either *Handels- og Kontorjunktionsforbundet* (HK) or to the unions which make up the *Faellesradet for danske Tjenestemand-*

<sup>1</sup> Jan PLOVSING, *De Nye Middelklassers Organisations problematik i Danmark*, Thesis, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 1971, p. 60-61; Albert A. BLUM, *et al.*, *White Collar Workers*, Random House, 1971, pp. 7-9, 36-38; George S. BAIN, *The Growth of White-Collar Unionism*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 189-215; Adolf STURMTHAL, *White Collar Trade Unions*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1967, *passim*; and Everett M. KASSALOW, *Trade Unions and Industrial Relations: An International Comparison*, New York, Random House, 1969, pp. 196-201.

<sup>2</sup> Background information concerning the characteristics of union members in Denmark can be found in Albert A. BLUM with Leif Sølling, «Who Belongs to Unions in Denmark,» *Industrial Relations Journal* in Great Britain, Fall 1972.

og *Funktionaerorganisationer* (FTF). While HK is affiliated to the Danish labor federation, LO, the other, FTF, is a separate and independent federation of white collar unions. In 1970, FTF was the slightly larger of the two organizations, boasting a membership of 161,100 compared to the 141,000 workers belonging to HK (See Table 1).

TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES IN DANISH UNIONS, 1970 <sup>a</sup>

Total White Collar Membership in LO	196,500	
HK		141,000
Kornmunicipalarbejderforbundet (municipal employees)		18,200
Dansk Funktionaer-Forbund (clerks, tradesmen, custodial workers)		12,000
Privatbanefunktionaerernes Forbund (railway)		400
COI Affiliates		24,900 <sup>b</sup>
Dansk Postforbund (postmen)		11,600
Dansk Jernbane Forbund (railway)		9,900
Dansk Lokomotivmands Forening (railway)		1,800
Hospitals forbund pa Statshospitalerne (mental hospitals)		1,600
Total White Collar Membership in FTF	161,100	
FTF affiliates		151,900
COI Affiliates		9,200 <sup>b</sup>
Dansk Politiforbund (policemen)		6,300
Dansk Kriminalpolitiforening (police detectives)		1,400
Dansk Toldtjenesternaends Forbund (customs)		1,500
Falngaert Kokkenpersonales Forbund (foremen)	30,900	
COI-27 affiliates who do not belong to either LO or FTF	6,900 <sup>b</sup>	
Dansk Arbejdsmands-og Sccialarbejder Forbund (salaried academics)	27,800 <sup>c</sup>	
Other	39,800	
Total Number of Unionized White Collar Employees	463,000	
Total Number of White Collar Employees	882,700	
Percent of White Collar unionized	52%	

SOURCE : Jan Plovsing, *De Nye Middleklassers Organisationproblematik i Danmark*, University of Copenhagen 1971, pp. 60-61.

<sup>a</sup> The total figure for white collar employees is too high because some of the employees are designated in the public sector and would not normally be viewed as white collar in many other countries.

<sup>b</sup> Total COI equals 41,000.

<sup>c</sup> Research and Similar workers — not university professors.

HK is by far the older of the two organizations, having been founded at the turn of the century. It remained independent until 1932 at which time it joined LO because it felt the need for some kind of external support. A good indicator of the ineffectiveness of HK prior to 1932 was its small membership that numbered only 16,000 hardly a sizable sum for an organization that had been in existence for more than 30 years. By affiliating with LO, HK became the recipient of considerable aid. In particular, LO unions have lent their assistance by engaging in sympathy strikes in conjunction with HK organizing drives in order to pressure companies into signing agreements with HK.<sup>3</sup>

FTF, on the other hand, appeared late on the labor scene, although many of its constituent unions had existed for many years prior to the formation of the FTF in 1956 as an autonomous white collar trade union federation. It has remained independent and unaffiliated to this day and gives no indication whatever of relinquishing this status. Membership totalled 60,000 at its founding and has grown consistently since then.<sup>4</sup>

## STRUCTURE

Structurally the two organizations differ because the FTF is a federation in its own right with affiliated unions, while HK is a national union, a member union of LO. One manifestation of this difference is an additional vertical level in the hierarchy of FTF. (See Figure 1).

## FTF

FTF, as Figure 1 indicates, has a relatively decentralized organizational structure. Indeed, powers are distributed horizontally within the unions, the five individual sections retaining responsibility for their collective bargaining. FTF itself, as represented by the central apparatus of the organization, does not generally participate in negotiations. In the Danish industrial relations environment, where extreme centralization of negotiations is the rule, the decentralization of FTF is noteworthy.

The highest authority of FTF is the Congress which convenes annually. The Congress consists of the Executive Committee of the federation plus one delegate for each 500 active members in each of the five sections.

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<sup>3</sup> Letter, F. B. SIMONSEN, Treasurer, H.K., Copenhagen, Denmark, to Albert A. BLUM, July 24, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> Marvin MADSEN, Director, F.T.F., interview with Albert A. BLUM, May 6, 1968.

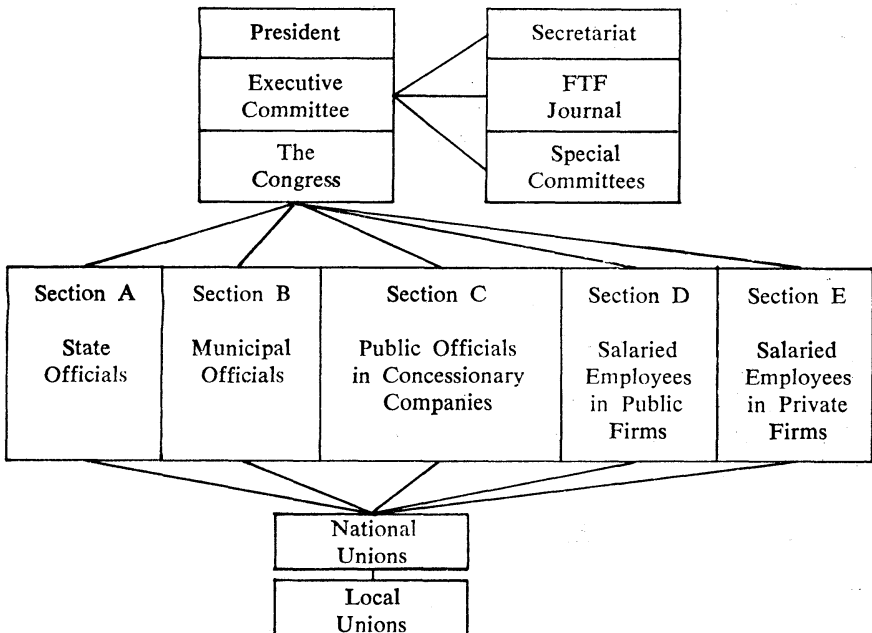
Besides formulating policy regarding general union business, the Congress listens to a report by the FTF president, fixes union dues for the upcoming year, and elects the president and the Executive Committee. All decisions reached by the Congress are made on the basis of majority rule.

The Executive Committee of FTF is charged with implementing the decisions prescribed by the Congress. In addition, it is the locus of decision-making between Congresses and is responsible for day-to-day policies of the organization. It is composed of eight members with the president of FTF serving as its chairman.

The Executive Committee delegates much of its authority to three subcommittees. The most important is the secretariat which is responsible for administering the normal operations of the union. Various special committees are also convened by the Executive Committee and deal with such topics as taxation, pensions, education and research.

FIGURE 1

STRUCTURE OF FTF



Five separate sections form the core of the organization. Together Section A and Section E account for close to 65% of FTF members. The largest of the two, Section A, is composed of public officials employed by the state and in 1970 had 70,000 members while Section E with 35,000 members includes salaried employees in private firms — namely, bank and insurance clerks. Section D has 28,000 salaried employees working for public firms and is the third largest section within FTF. Nurses are the mainstay in Section D. Then there follows Section B comprising public officials employed by municipalities which has 19,000 members. The smallest section in FTF, Section C, is composed of 9,000 public officials employed by concessionary companies. (A concessionary company is a government-sponsored private monopoly.)

It is clear that since Sections A, B, C, and D operate in public or quasi-public sectors, the vast majority of the FTF membership are either public servants or quasi-public employees. Only Section E operates exclusively in the private sector of the economy, and even then the emphasis is on banks and insurance companies, not white collar employees at work in manufacturing or in retail.

## HK

The organizational structure of HK is more vertical than that of FTF with power flowing more directly from top to bottom. Authority is not diffused among various sections as is the case in FTF. This facilitates an arrangement whereby the central body of the union directly controls the collective bargaining process for the entire organization. (See Figure 2).

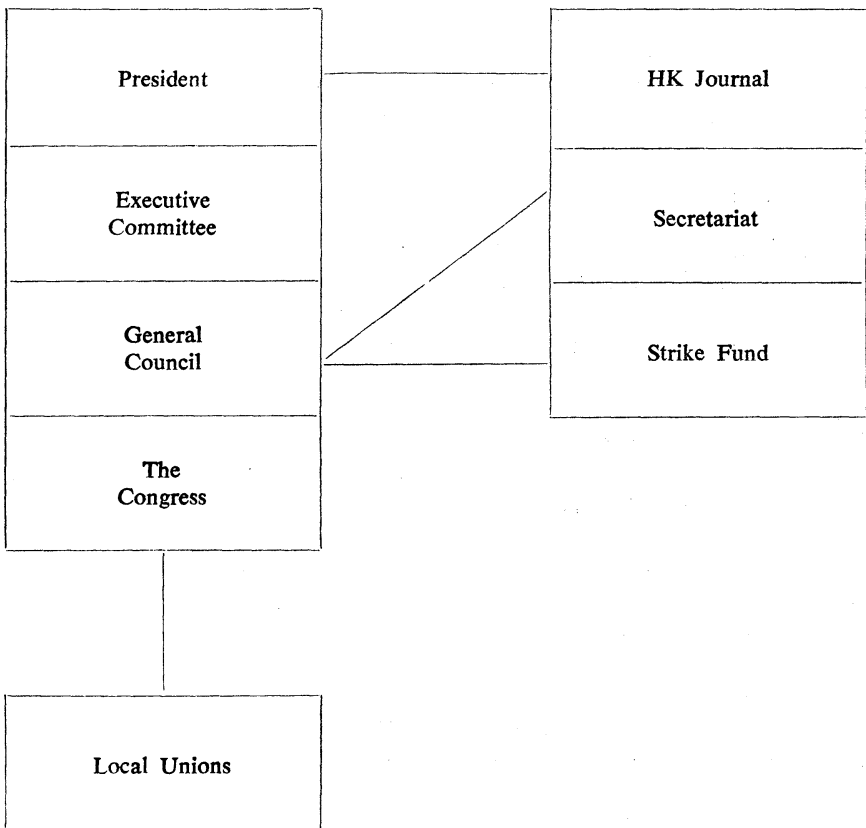
The highest authority of HK is the Congress which meets every four years. The Congress is composed of the members in the General Council and one delegate per every 400 members in each local. (A local with more than 3,000 members, however, is allowed only one additional delegate per every 1,000 members over 3,000.) The Congress is responsible for electing the president of HK and the members of the General Council. It also formulates union policy. All decisions are reached by majority vote.

In as much as the Congress convenes infrequently, the General Council yields the main powers. It consists of members of the union's Executive Committee plus 19 members elected by the Congress. The Council is responsible for making the key decisions between Congresses.

Though it must meet at least four times a year, it may convene more often during negotiation periods. The Council handles collective bargaining, in that it makes the critical decisions as to the acceptance or rejection of specific proposals of the agreement as a whole. The Council also has the ultimate responsibility for strikes, blockades, and other sanctions that at times are used. (All of these are somewhat restricted by the HK's relationship with LO and how collective bargaining is handled in Denmark which will be discussed shortly.)

FIGURE 2

STRUCTURE OF HK





The General Council also oversees the Secretariat — or the administrative branch of the union. In addition, the Council retains control of HK's strike fund and any request for its funds must be approved by the Council.

The Executive Committee carries out the policies adopted by the Congress and General Council and also makes the day-to-day decisions necessary to operate the union. It consists of nine members elected by the General Council, plus the president of HK, the vice president, the treasurer and the five managers who are heads of the various departments of the union.

HK membership is distributed among four principal groups. Two groups dominate the union retail clerks employed by « butnik » or shops and office workers employed by private firms. Recently, the third group, state and municipal employees, have grown in importance and now number about 35-40,000 members. Still, the majority of HK members (unlike FTF) work in the private sector. The fourth category is made up of those workers who do not fit into any of the above classifications.

#### POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

HK and FTF differ concerning many things but surely one difference which is of major importance is their different attitudes towards politics. Perhaps the most off-cited consequence of HK's affiliation to LO is the obligatory support HK must give towards the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Prior to its affiliation with LO in 1932, HK followed a politically non-partisan approach. Its affiliation to LO, however, required a change in tactics since LO formally support SDP. The closeness between LO and SDP is reflected in the reciprocal representation on the boards of the two organizations. Part of the fees that HK pays to LO ultimately help the SDP. As a vice-president of LO stated: « If you are a member of LO you are required to pay the fee fixed by Congress. Part of this money goes to support the Social Democratic press and another part goes to the Social Democratic Party. »<sup>5</sup>

Officials of HK strongly defend their union's commitment even though many of them believe that HK's identification with the SDP does stand in the way of organizing some non-manual employees who

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<sup>5</sup> « Topleder-Udtalsler on Forholdet L.O.-F.T.F. » *Fallesradet*, 1966, No. 4, p. 70.

are not as uniformly committed to the SDP as are the union leaders.<sup>6</sup> HK officials, nonetheless, argue that it is vital for the union to be involved in direct partisan politics so that white collar workers would be assured of representation on a political level. But HK does insist that each member of the union is free to hold whatever political view he or she chooses and that no member of HK has been prevented from joining any other political party.

FTF's political philosophy differs fundamentally from that of HK's. According to FTF's director, Marvin Madsen, the initial establishment of FTF grew out of a desire of many white collar workers for a politically neutral organization. Hence, it is Madsen's belief that the question of partisan action for FTF is not even a debatable issue. Moreover, Madsen also has observed that white collar workers had tended to polarize toward either of two political parties, the SDP and the Conservatives, clearly making consensus for partisan action difficult. If FTF attempted to support, under these circumstances, a particular political party, the ensuing battle could conceivably destroy or weaken the organization.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Madsen believes that political neutrality does not imply political abstinence. Although FTF has refused to adopt a fixed posture towards the various political parties, it has often taken stands on relevant political issues. In fact, the FTF has frequently cooperated with LO. Indeed, Madsen has claimed that he could not remember a recent political issue over which the two federations had disagreed. And, it has been this desire to have a unified front in supporting specific political actions that has prompted HK and FTF to forego bitter attacks upon each other which one might have expected given the fact that they compete with each other for members.

#### NEGOTIATING TACTICS

HK's affiliation to LO also curtails its negotiating autonomy. Under the highly centralized Danish collective bargaining system, the LO is responsible for establishing a minimum settlement pattern on general issues to which its affiliated unions are expected to adhere. The affiliated unions may bargain on special issues relevant to the industry or occu-

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<sup>6</sup> Albert A. BLUM with Jan PLOVING, « Organizing Danish White Collar Workers : The Attitudes of White Collar Union Officials, » *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> « Top Organizationers Format at Kaempe for-of ikke om-funktionærern, » *Fallessradet*, 1966, No. 6, p. 92.

pation involved. Although this formula works to the advantage of a weak or lower paid group of workers, and has helped HK in the past, it has at times produced friction between HK and the rest of LO.

During the 1967 negotiations, for example, HK attempted to secure larger salary increases than what had been deemed acceptable to the parent federation. As a result, leaders of the LO and some of its affiliated unions placed great pressure on HK, urging it to accept the agreed-upon amount. As a result, HK ultimately backed down and adopted the lower figure.

Despite HK's eventual retreat, its stand generated a good deal of controversy. Within HK, many members were angered by the smaller eventual settlement. On the other hand, one blue-collar union official believed, as did many other LO officials, that HK's demand had been excessive and that, in fact, HK was using the demands as a propaganda device to attract members to HK. The blue-collar union official believed such tactics undermined the proper function of negotiations. Another blue-collar official pointed out that if HK had been successful in its demands, his blue-collar union would have been forced to renegotiate its own settlement. As a result, each union would become concerned with its own self-interest rather than with the overall good of the labor movement.

FTF unions are free of the direct restraints under which HK operates. FTF-affiliated unions theoretically can keep whatever concessions they can win. They need not follow any general settlement or conform to some broad pattern. Yet, since LO accounts for the vast majority of union members, it is unlikely that FTF on its own could deviate radically from the wage pattern dictated by LO. Nonetheless, since some FTF unions negotiate on a company-by-company basis while HK negotiates with many companies at once, FTF unions would appear to have greater latitude and flexibility in obtaining settlements. One should, however, add that as HK has grown in membership and strength, its impact on LO and on employers has also grown. It can carry more weight in collective bargaining by its growing influence on LO bargaining strategy. Thus, HK was more satisfied with the 1969 and 1971 negotiations than it had been with the just discussed 1967 agreement.

The negotiating strategies of the two organizations differ also. FTF stresses percentage increases in its wage settlements, thus reinforcing existing intra-organizational wage differentials. This tactic, FTF officials believe, since it maintains salary and hence status differentials, has

been particularly attractive to skilled and higher paid non-manual employees as well as to supervisors and, as a result, provides one of FTF's major sources of strength.

HK, on the other hand, negotiates flat across-the-board increases in the private sector where it has most of its members. This approach tends to raise salary levels for lower paid white collar workers proportionately more than for higher paid clerks. As a consequence, this tactic tends to compress the salary scale by reducing wage differentials among different levels of employees. On the other hand, for HK members employed by the state or municipalities, salary changes are similar to those secured by FTF — namely, percentage increases.

#### ORGANIZING TECHNIQUES

In an effort to attract more white collar workers to their ranks, HK recently launched a massive advertising and propaganda campaign. Begun in conjunction with the other unions in LO, the drive has been aimed at the white collar worker both at the work place and outside it. Posters and advertisements appear in public places as well as on buses and trains. They stress the benefits to be gained by joining a large organization such as HK, and that by joining HK, white collar employees would also have the additional support of LO behind them.

The campaign is also aimed at the current membership of LO and HK. To organize the unorganized requires the help of the organized — so HK and LO officials believed. HK, therefore, in cooperation with other LO unions, has tried to secure the support of shop stewards throughout the country and to make them aware of the importance of organizing white collar workers. They want blue collar workers to help convince their fellow white collar workers how important it is to join a union.

HK itself has sent special material related to organizing white collar workers to many blue-collar shop stewards. In addition, various LO affiliates have been urged to publicize the HK drive to their members. Special HK literature is circulated at the conventions of LO member unions. The Metalworker's union president, for example, sent a circular to all local presidents who in turn notified local stewards, impressing on them the need to assist HK in its organizing push.

Among union officials interviewed two very different reasons for supporting HK emerged. HK officials contended that the cooperation of

other trade unions reflected their recognition of the need to unionize the rapidly swelling ranks of white collar workers because the future of trade unionism lay among white collar workers. The LO officials interviewed tended to focus, however, on another specific explanation for their cooperation with HK. They claimed that the principal reason for assisting HK was to prevent the white collar union from using negotiations as an organizing device as they believed HK had in the 1967 negotiations. Indeed, the cooperation was partially a pay-off to HK for accepting the 1967 terms. But, in any case, much of this supposed cooperation in organizing has been only at the top when it existed at all. A survey of lower level union officials indicates little in the way of real HK-LO cooperation in organizing.<sup>8</sup>

FTF unions, on the other hand, seem to stick to much more traditional organizing tactics, mounting campaigns when workers in particular areas express interest in unionization and often focusing on the differences between HK and FTF concerning politics, merit increases and the like in trying to attract new members.

The two organizations differ, too, concerning whom to include when organizing a firm. While HK usually excludes supervisors from its organization, FTF does not. Besides feeling that supervisors are part of management, and therefore not appropriate organizing targets, many HK officials fear that if supervisors were permitted to join the union, they would soon dominate it, to the detriment of the majority of workers.

FTF officials clearly have no such fears, or do not care if it happens. FTF organizes virtually all white collar workers from the lowest levels to the highest. Excluded only are those higher supervisory personnel who can hire and fire as well as a unit's personnel director. Officials of FTF have insisted they see no potential conflict of interest in allowing supervisors and their subordinates in the same union. They argue that all white collar workers within an operation share common desires for higher wages, better working conditions, and more fringe benefits.

FTF has further argued that its organization has derived a good deal of its strength as a result of including the highest ranking white collar workers. These supervisors, because of their position in the unit, have the kind of information which has often considerably strengthened FTF

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<sup>8</sup> See Footnote 6 and Albert A. BLUM with Jan PLOVING, « Organizing Danish White Collar Workers : Attitudes of Blue Collar Workers, » unpublished manuscript.

at the bargaining table FTF officials have also claimed that supervisors have frequently played instrumental roles during organizing campaigns. Many lower level white collar employees more willingly join FTF when they saw that supervisors became a part of FTF.

#### INTER-UNION RIVALRY

Given the numerous differences in approaches between HK and FTF and the fact that they at times compete for the same kind of workers, it is not surprising that some animosity has existed between the two organizations. Although, at times, both unions criticize each other, HK appears to be more critical of FTF, perhaps caused by a feeling among certain HK officials that FTF is an intruder in parts of their domain.

Initial HK criticism of FTF revolved around FTF's political neutrality and its policy of organizing all white collar workers within a firm, including supervisors. The latter feature of FTF especially became a frequent target of HK attack. Because FTF unions include personnel who nominally could be classified as « management », FTF was accused of being a « yellow » or company union. HK further contended that such unions were primarily intended to prevent white collar workers from joining HK and the LO. FTF officials have vehemently denied these charges.

More recently, FTF has drawn the wrath of HK for alleged jurisdictional intrusions. HK has claimed that FTF is infringing on HK's traditional jurisdictional areas. The HK was ready to recognize that FTF had some natural areas of jurisdiction, such as nurses, teachers, shipmasters and pilots among others, but that there were areas where FTF should keep out. Singled out for criticism has been the FTF union, *Sammonslutninger of Firma-Funktionærer* (SFF), which had been actively attempting to unionize white collar workers of large private firms, an area HK has historically claimed.

Despite the conflict, or perhaps because of it, HK and FTF have attempted to conciliate these differences and the animosity between both groups has decreased markedly during the past few years. HK recognizes that it can no longer ignore the realities of FTF's many accomplishments. Moreover, some labor leaders in Denmark have claimed that since both organizations are concerned with similar kinds of workers and with similar kinds of political legislation, they should work more closely together. Thus a leading LO official has argued that the HK and LO should be more interested in helping white collar people rather than fighting over them.

LO is particularly interested in peaceful HK-FTF relations because it wants FTF support in political matters.

The FTF asserts that its general policy is to avoid fights with HK. If HK is in the midst of organizing a group of workers, the FTF says that it will refrain from interfering in any way. Reciprocally, if FTF is involved in the organization of certain workers, it has tried to convince HK to keep out.

Because both unions have recognized that cooperation between them might be better than conflict, they have been meeting together to see if they could work out some kind of agreement. They finally did in 1969 when they approved a jurisdictional agreement concerning employees who work for municipal governments. In it, FTF received jurisdiction over civil servants, doctors, secretaries, and hospital laboratory workers in Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, Gentofte and Søllerød, and over office employees in Gentofte and Søllerød. HK was granted jurisdiction over civil servants in 18 municipalities as well as over office employees in Copenhagen, Frederiksberg and 18 other municipalities. Thus, HK was given jurisdiction over 18 municipalities (1970 population, 502,000); FTF was given Gentofte and Søllerød (1970 population, 110,000); and both HK and FTF divided up the cities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg (1970 population, 734,000). FTF's jurisdiction may be somewhat larger than HK's in Copenhagen and Frederiksberg, but, in general, the overall agreement gave a larger jurisdiction.

The settlement, of course, does not resolve all potential sources of conflict. In fact, other jurisdictional agreements are now (1972) being negotiated. All of these actions do surely, however, reflect a desire to arrive at some sort of « modus vivendi. »

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In brief, the most important differences between the two organizations can be summarized as follows :

- 1) HK is an affiliate of the principal labor federation in Denmark, LO, while FTF is an autonomous white collar federation.
- 2) Through its membership in LO, HK officially supports the Social Democratic Party. FTF is politically neutral.
- 3) HK favors across-the-board wage increases in the private sector and negotiates for percentage increases in the public sector; FTF favors percentage increases.

- 4) HK excludes supervisors from the union. (There is a separate union for supervisors in Denmark.) FTF organizes all but the highest echelons of workers within a firm, thus including many supervisors.
- 5) HK, as member of LO, has to follow negotiation patterns on general demands established by LO. FTF unions can be more independent and can vary their wage agreements to suit local or occupational differences, but FTF settlements are nonetheless markedly influenced by what the LO secures in its general agreement.
- 6) HK's membership comes predominantly from the private sector while FTF's comes mostly from the public sector.
- 7) The structure of HK is relatively centralized while FTF's is decentralized.

The different approaches adopted by each organization reflects a basic divergence in strategies. HK, believing that the best interest of white collar workers will be served if they ally themselves with the rest of organized labor, has done just that — namely, affiliated with LO. In the process, HK has become more similar to its sister organizations within LO both in tactics and posture. For example, HK accepts across-the-board salary increases, support SDP (the workers' party), and excludes supervisors from among its ranks.

FTF, on the other hand, has clearly chosen to accentuate those special characteristics of white collar workers that FTF believes differentiate them from the bulk of organized labor. As a result, FTF has chosen to preserve salary and status differentials, has included subordinates and their supervisors in the same unit (playing on white collar workers' historical identification with management), and, of course, has remained independent of blue-collar dominated LO. This latter feature, in particular, exemplifies the widely-held belief that white collar workers are highly status conscious and would be very reticent to identify themselves with blue-collar trade unionism.

The differing approaches followed by the two organizations points up an even more fundamental philosophical dichotomy. In essence, HK operates under the assumption that the similarities between white collar workers and the organized labor movement are greater than the differences between the two groups. (It must be added, however, that HK insists on white collar employees in industry joining a separate white collar union rather than become a part of a blue collar industrial union.) FTF, on



the other hand, contends that the difference between the white collar worker and other workers are greater or are more important than are the similarities.

Until now, operating with apparently contradictory philosophies, both organizations have enjoyed good success at attracting new workers to their ranks. It is, of course, difficult to judge whether both will retain their appeal in the future. It is possible that as the ranks of white collar workers continues to expand both unions will extend their rapid growth with neither organization dominating the field entirely. Yet, it is also possible that one union could emerge clearly triumphant. If this does indeed occur, and if it can be attributed to white collar workers favoring one of the organization's philosophy over another, it could have important implications for other countries, especially where traditional approaches aimed at white collar workers have obviously failed.

### **Les syndicats de cols blancs au Danemark**

Le mouvement syndical danois a remarquablement bien réussi dans le recrutement des cols blancs. En 1970, 52% d'entre eux adhéraient aux syndicats et, en 1965, le pourcentage atteignait 55% contre 69% pour les cols bleus. C'est beaucoup par comparaison avec les États-Unis où à peine 11.2% des cols blancs étaient syndiqués en 1968 et 30% en Grande-Bretagne.

Dans ce pays, deux fédérations syndicales cherchent à regrouper les cols blancs, mais elles recrutent des catégories différentes d'employés. L'une, Handels-og Kontorfunktionaerernes Forbund (HK) fait partie de la Confédération danoise des travailleurs tandis que l'autre, Faellesradet for danske Tjenestemandes-og Funktionaerorganisationer (FTF) est indépendante. La FTF groupait 161,000 membres en 1970 et la HK 141,000. La HK est la plus ancienne puisque sa fondation remonte au début du siècle. Indépendante originellement, elle est affiliée à la centrale depuis 1932. La fondation de la FTF ne date que de 1956 alors qu'elle regroupa au départ quelque 60,000 membres. Il n'a pas cessé de croître depuis.

Les structures de ces deux fédérations diffèrent beaucoup de ce fait. La FTF est une organisation relativement décentralisée, le pouvoir se situant au niveau des syndicats constitués en cinq sections individuelles qui ont la responsabilité de la négociation collective, la fédération elle-même n'y participant généralement pas. L'autorité supérieure en est le Congrès constitué des membres du conseil exécutif et d'un délégué par 500 membres de chacune des cinq sections, qui se réunit une fois l'an. Le conseil a la responsabilité d'exécuter les décisions du Congrès et de les appliquer au jour le jour. À cette fin, il délègue d'ailleurs son autorité à trois sous-comités dont le plus important est le secrétariat.

D'autre part, les cinq sections forment l'armature de l'organisation : ce sont la section des fonctionnaires de l'État qui compte 70,000 ; la section des salariés de l'entreprise privée, principalement les employés des banques et des compagnies d'assurance, qui en groupe 35,000 ; la section du personnel des services publics forte de 28,000 membres, incluant les infirmières ; la section des em-

ployés des municipalités et la section des régies d'État. Comme on peut s'en rendre compte, la FTF recrute ses adhérents principalement parmi les employés des services publics ou quasi-publics.

La structure de l'autre fédération (HK) est beaucoup plus centralisée. C'est la fédération elle-même qui est responsable des négociations collectives, même si le Congrès en constitue l'autorité supérieure. Celui-ci est composé du Conseil général et d'un délégué pour chaque 400 membres. Le Congrès élit le président et formule la politique de la fédération. Le Conseil général est formé des membres du comité exécutif et de 19 autres membres élus par le Congrès. Ses adhérents se partagent entre quatre groupes différents de salariés : employés de magasins, employés de bureau des entreprises privées, employés municipaux et employés de catégories diverses.

Ce qui précède permet de pressentir que les deux fédérations s'inspirent d'une philosophie différente sur bien des points, mais là où la divergence est la plus marquée, c'est sûrement dans leur attitude en matière de politique. La HK, affiliée à la Confédération des syndicats, doit obligatoirement appuyer le parti social démocrate. Une partie de la capitation payée à la centrale sert à subventionner cette formation politique, quoique les membres, individuellement, peuvent opter pour le parti politique de leur choix.

Par contre, la philosophie politique de la FTF diffère fondamentalement de celle de la HK. Elle est neutre en matière politique. Les questions politiques n'y sont guère débattues. D'ailleurs, il faut remarquer que l'allégeance politique de ses membres se polarise autour du parti conservateur et du parti social démocrate, ce qui aurait pour conséquence de conduire à des controverses entre les partisans de ces deux tendances. Cette abstention n'a cependant pas pour effet d'empêcher le groupement d'aborder des sujets qui confinent à la politique. Aussi, en certaines circonstances, y a-t-il eu coopération avec la centrale syndicale sur des questions précises où l'intérêt des travailleurs était en jeu.

Les deux fédérations ne recourent pas à des tactiques de négociation identiques. L'affiliation de la HK à la LO (Landsorganisationen) restreint son autonomie en matière de négociation. En effet, sous le régime très centralisé des rapports collectifs du travail au Danemark, c'est la LO qui a la responsabilité d'établir les bases générales de règlement dans les conventions collectives, bases auxquelles les syndicats affiliés sont obligés d'adhérer. Même si cette formule a valu un certain nombre d'avantages aux groupes de salariés les moins bien rémunérés, elle a été à l'origine de frictions entre la HK et la LO. Ceci s'est produit en 1967 alors que la HK a tenté d'obtenir des augmentations de salaires plus généreuses que celles que la centrale considérait acceptables. Les dirigeants du LO ont dû faire des pressions considérables pour faire accepter le règlement proposé. Et il s'ensuivit que beaucoup des membres de la HK étaient mécontents. Les dirigeants du LO ont reproché à la HK d'avoir ainsi agi dans un but de propagande ce qui est de nature à saper la valeur de la négociation collective.

Les choses en vont autrement dans le cas de la FTF. Les syndicats ne sont pas obligés de se conformer à des normes générales. Cependant, parce que la LO est un organisme beaucoup plus puissant du fait qu'elle regroupe la masse des cols bleus, la FTF ne peut pas s'éloigner beaucoup des lignes maîtresses tracées par celui-ci. Étant donné que la HK négocie par branche ou secteur industriels, celle-là dispose d'une plus grande latitude dans son action.

La stratégie des négociations diffère aussi d'une fédération à l'autre. La FTF s'efforce d'obtenir des augmentations en pourcentage, ce qui a pour effet d'élargir les écarts des salaires. De ce fait, il en résulte qu'elle est attrayante pour les employés non-manuels dont une bonne partie est composée de spécialistes et de cadres. L'attitude de la HK est à l'inverse. Elle cherche plutôt à obtenir des majorations uniformes, ce qui a pour conséquence de comprimer les échelles des salaires et de réduire les écarts entre le traitement des diverses catégories de salariés.

Les techniques d'organisation valent aussi d'être examinées. Au cours des dernières années, la LO a tenté un effort considérable de propagande auprès des cols blancs parce que, avec la croissance de plus en plus accélérée du secteur tertiaire, l'avenir du syndicalisme repose sur l'adhésion généralisée des cols blancs.

D'un autre côté, la FTF agit d'une façon plus traditionnelle en matière d'organisation. Elle s'engage dans des campagnes de recrutement lorsque des travailleurs d'un secteur donné s'y intéressent.

De même, les deux fédérations ne recherchent pas l'adhésion des mêmes catégories de travailleurs. C'est ainsi que la HK exclut de ses rangs des contremaîtres tandis que la FTF les y admet. N'en sont exclus que les cadres supérieurs qui ont le pouvoir d'embaucher ou de congédier. Ses dirigeants estiment qu'il ne saurait y avoir de conflits d'intérêts entre ces personnes et la masse des employés de bureau parce que les uns et les autres recherchent les mêmes fins : des traitements plus élevés, de meilleures conditions de travail et des avantages sociaux plus intéressants.

Étant donné toutes ces divergences entre ces deux fédérations de cols blancs, il ne faut se surprendre qu'il y ait entre elles une certaine rivalité et parfois de l'animosité. La HK reproche principalement à sa concurrente de se tenir à l'écart de la politique partisane et d'accepter dans ses rangs les cadres subalternes et moyens. La HK reconnaît que certains champs d'activité, en particulier les infirmières et les enseignants, sort de la compétence de sa concurrente mais elle estime que cette dernière doit lui laisser la voie libre ailleurs.

En dépit de cet état de conflit, les deux organismes se sont efforcés, au cours des dernières années, de concilier leurs divergences et d'atténuer leur animosité. Dans les milieux du travail, on croit de plus en plus que les deux organisations devant vivre côte à côte auprès de mêmes catégories de travailleurs dont les problèmes se ressemblent, elles doivent s'entraider. De fait, en 1969 elles ont réussi à se mettre d'accord quant à leur champ de compétence respectif pour ce qui est des employés municipaux.

En résumé, comparant ces deux fédérations de cols blancs, on peut retenir les faits suivants : 1. La HK est affiliée à la principale centrale syndicale danoise et la FTF est une fédération autonome ; 2. La HK appuie le parti social démocrate et la FTF est neutre en politique ; 3. La HK favorise des augmentations en pourcentage ; 4. La HK refuse l'adhésion du personnel de maîtrise et la FTF recrute cette catégorie de salariés ; 5. La HK suit dans ses négociations les lignes établies par la centrale à laquelle elle est affiliée et la FTF, indépendante, peut conclure des ententes qui tiennent compte des situations particulières régionales et professionnelles ; 6 La HK regroupe principalement les cols blancs du secteur privé et la FTF recrute ses adhérents dans le secteur public ; 7. La structure syndicale de la HK est centralisée tandis que celle de la FTF est décentralisée.