

Future Possibilities

Full employment is one of the foremost goals of the Swedish labor movement. In addition, there is a highly valued "work ethic" in Sweden which influences every woman's choice to seek employment outside the home. Together these egalitarian values could be used to counteract the other inequalities which I have mentioned.

What effects the current economic crisis will have on Sweden's future employment policies, however, is causing concern for many women. They are the hardest hit by unemployment, have less job security, and even run the risk of losing their foothold in the labor market as public expenditures for services are being cut back and advancing technology threatens to eliminate their positions in the office. Costs of daycare are rising and only 30% of all eligible children under seven have places in municipally-supported daycare programs. For the age-group seven to twelve, only 29% of children in Stockholm have recreation centres where they can go after school.¹⁵

Although the white-collar union estimates that there are 120,000 part-time women workers who need full-time employment, the tendency to work part-time will continue to dominate married women's choice of employment unless a shorter work day is implemented. They are realistic simply in assessing their own capacity to combine paid and unpaid labor, given the fact that Swedish men, despite all efforts to change their attitudes, do not appear to be significantly assuming their fair share of household responsibilities.

Increasingly, women in Sweden, especially in the urban centres, are expressing what seems to be a single-mother alternative. Combining full-time employment and caring for children leaves little room for maintaining the traditional marriage or living-together arrangement. Indeed the changing structure of the family can be said to consist of a variety of forms. The primary mother-child relationship forms the basis of the family unit, but the family cycle seems to be more likely to vary over time. This fact has yet to become accounted for in policy-making, and transition phases between family forms is often difficult due to housing problems and all the needed support systems.

I believe that women's organizations must align themselves in a stronger independent women's movement and use

their strength to transform the system. This transformation should be based on the integration of production needs and reproductive values. Perhaps then Sweden will realize its greater potential to achieve equality between men and women and a more human society for our children. If not, current efforts in the direction of equality will only apply to the "Sara Videbeck's of our age."

¹Gunnar Qvist, *Konsten att Blifva en God Flicka/The Art of Being a Good Girl* (Kvinnohistoriska Uppsatser, 1978).

²"Planning and Organizing Alternatives Stemming from the Sphere of Reproduction," *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 25 Supplement (1982); and *Kommunals Kvinnor pa Livets Trappa* (Kommunalarbetareforbundet, 1980).

³This section is based on Yvonne Hirdman's excellent chapter "The Socialist Housewife" in Brita Akerman's *Vi Kan, Vi Behovs* (Akademi litteratur, 1983).

⁴Siv Gustavsen, *Labor Market Policy Related to Women and Employment in Sweden* (Arbetslivscentrum: Conference Report, 1981).

⁵*On Being Swedish* (Florida: University of Miami Press).

⁶Statistics are taken from *Jamstalldhet pa arbetsmarknaden/Equality in the Labour Market*. Statistik from *Labor Force Sample Surveys* (1983).

⁷See Marianne Petersson, *Deltids Arbetet i Sverige/Part-time Work in Sweden* (Arbetslivscentrum report, 1981), and Monica Magnusson, *Shiftwork* (Arbetskyddsfonden, 1981).

⁸See Birgitta Wistrand, *Swedish Women on the Move* (The Swedish Institute, 1981), p. 60.

⁹See M. Sterner and Furst G. Mellstrom, *Improving Working Conditions and Advancement Opportunities of Women. The State Administration Taken as an Example; A Comparative Study in the USA, Sweden and the FRG* (Dept. of Sociology, University of Gothenburg, 1980). See also Anita Dahlberg, *Jamt eller Iland* (Arbetslivscentrum) for a discussion of the effects of neutralizing the equality concept in legislation.

¹⁰*Konsten att Blifva en Flicka*, p. 166.

¹¹See "Scandinavian sexual equality a myth," *Scandinavian Business World* (Nov.-Dec. 1981).

¹²Birgitta Wistrand, *Swedish Women on the Move*.

¹³"Editorial Introduction" to Special Issue on Women, Work and Democracy, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1982).

¹⁴Ulla Rensner and Evy Gunnarsson, *Sjalvstyrande grupper i fyra statliga forvaltningar*, 1982.

¹⁵Statistik, 1983. See note 6.

*This paper was prepared for the Second International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women held in Groningen, the Netherlands on 17-21 April 1984.

Diane Afzelius is a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. She is employed at the Center for Working Life in Stockholm and was Chairperson of the Stockholm University Forum for Women Researchers and Feminist Research in 1983-84.

NEATH MY STOMACH

O my dreams are heady and bruised
when I sweet think of you
out hungry and alone

For betrayal
those empty shelves
call pride
it's bellowed name
cry cry again
the final caw

And my wrath
moves dangerous and cold
neath my stomach
neath my starry starry breasts
I'll wait only once
for that slow burn of dawn
for the love of you

In betrayal
there is no honour
an eye for an eye plucked
my heart a wicked queen

Naked with a stranger
revenge
is an unforgiving power.

Mona Fertig
Vancouver, British Columbia