

Immigration and European Trade Unions

**– A comparative study
of the British and Finnish trade union response
to immigration and immigrant workers**

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Acknowledgments

The widespread disadvantage of immigrants in the European labour markets is well documented. What are the different labour market actors doing about this? Who should be doing something about this? These were the main questions I was asking myself as I was embarking on this project. Throughout this project, many people contributed to my thinking, however, and added to my list of questions, and for that I would like to thank you. I especially would like to offer my special gratitude to my supervisor Fran Bennett at the department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Oxford who continuously pushed me to think further and deeper about the issues I was attempting to address and gave me generously of her time as I was writing the different drafts of the manuscript. I would also like to thank my colleagues, especially April Gallwey, for the numerous inspiring conversations we had at the library and on the way to the library regarding the different European social policy actors. I also thank the Institute of Migration and especially Dos. Elli Heikkilä who encouraged me to pursue this line of research, gave me access to their resources, and encouraged me to continue on to doctoral studies. Lastly, I am greatly indebted to my family and my fiancé, Martin, for their encouragement and support all through the project.

1. Introduction

Across the world, an estimated 175 million people live outside their country of birth, 100 million of whom are labour migrants (Heikkilä, 2005). Although the majority of migration takes place between developing countries, in today's Europe immigration has grown to the point that of the European Union's 380 million people, 20 million are immigrants (Heikkilä, 2005). In the context of economic globalization, the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century have witnessed increasing migration, especially for employment purposes. Within Europe, increasing competition is seen between nation states trying to attract the most qualified professionals. Changes are made to immigration policies, creating so called 'fast track' procedures through which professionals can enter foreign states more easily (Mahroum, 2001). However, not only are high skilled workers and professionals sought after and mobile; labour migration to European countries also involves the movement of unskilled immigrants. In fact, several European countries depend on the labour of unskilled foreign workers in significant sectors of their labour markets, such as agriculture, building and civil engineering and domestic service (Heikkilä, 2005).

Numerous reports have highlighted the direct and indirect discrimination which immigrants experience in European labour markets (Craig, 2002). Not only do recent immigrants experience drastically higher rates of unemployment, but when managing to find employment their pay is often significantly lower than that of the white majority (Morissens & Sainsbury, 2005). Also, problems - from rejection of qualifications acquired in the nation of origin to institutional racism - are common experiences among immigrant job seekers. As a great majority of the welfare provisions (e.g. pensions) in European countries are gained through a long-term and stable connection to the labour market, immigrants are in a particularly vulnerable position. Consequently, today European political actors are facing new challenges concerning the position of immigrants in their national labour markets (Wrench, 2004).

Agencies from local and national to regional (e.g., the EU) levels are all potentially important actors in removing immigrant barriers to the labour market. There are numerous non-governmental actors that strongly influence, whether positively or negatively, the labour market integration process of migrants. These vital institutional actors include churches, trade unions, employers' organizations, political parties, the media, and other civil society actors. Such non-governmental partners are important in two ways. First, they function as direct partners in the implementation of policies. But they are perhaps even more important as political actors. 'They may influence the political climate and political outcomes, and may be important agents in combating exclusion, discrimination, and xenophobia' (Artto, 2006).

Researchers working on immigrant barriers to labour markets have been especially calling for an investigation to the 'potential role of *trade unions* in reducing workplace resistance to the employment of foreign-born workers with a view to developing their potentially positive institutional role in labour market integration' (Valtonen, 1999, p. 64, emphasis added).

Wrench (1986) argued that ‘more than any other public or private employer, local authority or government agency, *trade unions* are a key sector where equal opportunity and anti racism should be addressed with the utmost priority’ (p. 1, emphasis added). Trade unions have a role in two different areas: promoting equality in the workplace in general and also within their own organization (efforts which include tackling racism among the union membership as well as their own leadership). If trade unions fail in this challenge, or decide not to take it upon themselves to support this group of workers Wrench (1986) argued that it would have particularly severe implications for immigrant workers.

Having shown that trade unions have a potentially important role in aiding the integration of immigrants and fighting the widely cited labour market disadvantage of immigrant workers, this thesis will explore how European trade unions have in practice reacted to immigration and immigrant workers’ disadvantage in the labour market. Specifically in this study I attempt to answer two related questions:

1. What kinds of positions have trade unions taken towards immigration and immigrant workers in Western European countries, as exemplified by the response of the trade unions in two significantly different types of Western European countries, the United Kingdom and Finland, since immigration first became significant in each national context (post war Britain and late 1980s/early 1990s Finland)?
2. How were the newcomers treated upon arrival by the unions and, in the light of the labour market disadvantage of immigrants, how are trade unions dealing with issues of *equal* versus *special* treatment?

To give a context for this inquiry, I will analyze several important factors which might influence the position which trade unions in different countries take towards immigration and immigrant workers, such as the overall differences between trade unions (e.g. density, and the institutional framework in which they function) and the type of immigration regime and immigrant groups present in the national context. In order to investigate the range of potential responses by trade unions two countries with significantly different industrial relations systems are studied, The United Kingdom and Finland. Through this exploration, I will highlight the similarities and differences between Finland and the United Kingdom and show how this comparison can help us understand the way in which European trade unions have decided to respond to the issues of immigration and the presence of foreign born workers. I will then show why we might see differences in the reactions of the British and Finnish trade unions towards immigrants and immigration. The last part of this thesis will analyse the response British and Finnish trade unions have made towards immigration and the presence of immigrant workers.

2. Methodology, terminology and conceptual issues

Although it can be argued that investigating the responses which trade unions have made towards immigration and immigrant workers is important from several perspectives, Lunn (1999) has noted that in practice this topic is very poorly researched, and in fact very few studies beyond descriptive case studies of particular events or country cases exist. Only two substantial comparative studies exist, one by the European Trade Union Confederation surveying its membership (including both Finland and the UK) in 2003, and another by Pennix and Roosblad (which included the UK, but not Finland) in 2000. To my knowledge, no academic studies on the position of the Finnish trade unions toward immigration and immigrant workers have been conducted, while only a limited academic literature from the British context is available.

In this study, the material on which my analysis is based includes all available secondary literature. In addition, since in the Finnish case no such literature exists, I undertake a document analysis of the public statements and documents made available online by the Finnish unions. Rather than analysing all the individual unions in both countries, my analysis will look at the statements by- and secondary literature related to the Trade Union Confederations in each country. In the United Kingdom, all individual unions belong to a single Trades Union Congress, TUC, whereas in Finland three different confederations exist. SAK, The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, represents most of the blue collar workers' unions, while STTK is the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees and AKAVA is the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland¹.

Throughout this study, I will use the terms immigrant and immigrant worker to refer to both first and second generation immigrants. The analysis will be restricted to permanent legal migrants, including refugees, but not asylum seekers as they are not allowed to work in either country nor native ethnic minorities (i.e. Roma) unless to highlight a particular point. The focus of the study is the response of the trade unions to first generation immigrants, but because in the UK case the language of the documents does not always highlight whether it is referring to first or second generation immigrants, rather the general term 'black' is often used to refer to both groups, a limitation of this study is in its inability to analyze those differences in every case.

3. Immigration Regimes in the Western European Context

When trying to understand the widely differing responses of trade unions towards immigrants, it is important to look further than the industrial relations systems within which they operate and to understand the immigration policies of the nation states in which the trade unions are themselves embedded. Several authors have created typologies of such responses (e.g. Pennix, 2004). Castles (1995) has created a typology relevant in the Western European context. One

¹ All translations from Finnish to English are made by the author of this paper.

type of immigration regime according to Castles can be called *differential exclusion*, where immigrants are seen as temporary workers with limited political and social rights (e.g. Germany). As such temporary workers are not expected to stay beyond a few years, this regime deems it useless if not counterproductive to invest in the integration of the immigrants. In the *assimilationist* regime, immigrants are given full rights but are expected to behave in ways identical to the native people. The prototypical example of the assimilation regime is France. Lastly, the pluralist or multicultural immigration regime accepts immigrants as full members of the society and allows them to maintain some cultural differences. Most strongly this model is applied in Australia and Canada and in Europe significant elements of it can be found in Sweden, the Netherlands and Britain according to Castles (1995). The Finnish ministry of Labour (the ministry most responsible for immigration related issues together with the ministry of the interior) has also since the late 1990s formed its immigration policies within a multiculturalist framework (Ministry of Labour, 2005). Therefore, within this important institutional structure, the Finnish and British trade unions are embedded within a similar ideology and function.

The national immigration ideologies naturally influence trade union practices towards immigrants, as they are required to behave according to the equal opportunities policies in their country. The British unions have since the 1970s been operating in the context of race relations legislation, whereas in Finland it was not until 2004 that formal legislation prohibiting racial discrimination was created. Both the Finnish and the British trade union confederations have signed the so called 'Firenz agreement' prohibiting racial discrimination in their own work (ETUC, 2003), and since both the United Kingdom and Finland are part of the European Union they have had to abide by the Racial Equality (2000/43/EC) and Employment Equality (2000/78/EC) directives - though these were not implemented until 2003. Also, being a member of the EU, in both countries the freedom of movement of labour must be respected.

4. Immigrant groups, their rights and labour market disadvantage

Related to the immigration regime described above, the responses of trade unions towards immigrants are clearly affected by the types of immigrants present in their national context and the formal rights that the immigrants possess. Wrench (1996) has argued that from the perspective of trade unions, the working populations of the EU can be divided into five categories, the relevant factor dividing all potential workers (immigrants and natives) being the legal status of the worker. Accordingly, Wrench (1996) has made the following categorization (p.3):

1. Citizens. Living and working within their own country of citizenship.
2. Citizens of an EU member state who work in another country within the Union.

3. Third country nationals who have full rights to residency and work in a member state (Non-EU denizens).
4. Third country nationals who have a right to stay on the basis of a revocable work permit for a fixed period of time.
5. Undocumented or 'illegal' workers.

This categorization can further be divided into that of white and non-white. In all categories, the non-white workers are more likely to suffer disadvantage than the white group (Wrench, 1997). Today, in the UK and Finland most migrants and their descendants are found in groups 1, 2 and 3 (refugees, asylum seekers or immigrants entering through a family unification programs) (Coleman, 2003, Pikkarainen, 2005). Furthermore, in both countries, the legal status of the migrant is generally not an issue, and most relevant problems faced by these groups, especially those in group 3, is that of indirect discrimination (Wrench, 1996).

The United Kingdom has traditionally been a country of emigration (Coleman, 2003). Though small numbers of immigrants were arriving continuously until the Second World War, the numbers were too small to have any major political influence (Coleman, 2003). Most significant immigration to the UK resulted from the freedom of movement of the citizens of the Commonwealth countries after their independence, as well as from the Irish Republic until 1971 when this form of immigration was brought under the general immigration rules (Craig, 2002). Except during a period following the Second World War, very few people were recruited officially from these countries for working purposes, and most of them arrived spontaneously. 'The theory of British immigration policy until 1997 was clear' (Coleman, 2003, p. 10). 'It was "to keep to an irreducible minimum the number of people coming to Britain for permanent settlement with the exception of the need to satisfy the demands of the labour force, to fulfil obligations to dependants, and to international treaties on asylum"' (Immigration and Nationality Department Annual Report, as cited in Coleman, 2003, p. 10). Indeed, most immigration to the UK in recent years has been due to family reunification as well as through asylum seeking, the UK being Europe's most preferred destination (Coleman, 2003). Today ethnic minorities constitute approximately 7 per cent of the British population (Craig, 2002).

Finland has traditionally also been a country of emigration. Moreover, immigration to Finland never seriously took the form of official recruitment for labour purposes. Rather, most of the arrivals came either as UN refugees, asylum seekers, Ingrian Finns returning to Finland or persons coming through a family reunification program or having married a Finn (Heikkilä, 2005). It was not until the 1980s that immigration surpassed emigration and it was as late as the 1990s when immigration to Finland increased rapidly. The largest immigrant groups in Finland originate from Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Germany, the UK, the US and Vietnam (Statistic Finland, 2005). Today, approximately 2 per cent of the total population consists of immigrants, although most of the newcomers have settled in the southern coastal region near the capital, Helsinki, making the total population of the capital county approximately 3.4 per cent immigrant based (Heikkilä, 2005).

Though within the legal framework immigrants in the UK and Finland should not in principle face disadvantage in the labour market, the everyday reality of these groups is very

different. Although the detailed data describing the labour market disadvantage of immigrants (first and second generation) is often lacking or inadequate (Dickens, 1997), the broad picture can easily be sketched.

In Finland, several researchers have documented the labour market disadvantage of immigrants, especially those coming from developing countries (Valtonen 1999, Heikkilä 2005, Pikkarainen 2005, Forsander and Alitilppa-Niitamo 2000). Some of the main barriers newcomers from these areas face are 'high unemployment rates in Finland, the low esteem attributed to foreign work experience by Finnish employers and inadequate language skills' (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 485). Furthermore, issues related to ethnic discrimination of foreign-born job applicants are also evident in the Finnish labour market. Research by the Finnish Institute of Migration has shown that 'foreigners tend to have multiple handicaps like lower education, more extended family structures and less working experience (p.485)'. '[but] These factors can only partially explain their disadvantage in the labour market, with the much more fundamental problems remaining those associated with discriminatory practices linked to ethnic and cultural prejudices' (Heikkilä, 2005, p 495.).

One of the main consequences of these discriminatory practices can be witnessed by the extremely high unemployment rates of immigrants from developing countries, at levels above 70 per cent, and at 28 per cent on average for all immigrants, compared to 9 per cent for the overall population (Statistics Finland, Ministry of Labour, 2004). Pitkänen (1999) has also found that those immigrants able to find employment often do so in the service sectors or in low-skilled manufacturing jobs, with only one third holding a permanent contract. Even when the immigrants have professional skills and resources, it has been difficult for them to access the first job on the basis of these qualifications.

Looking at the labour market situation of first and second generation immigrants in the UK the picture does not look much better. The labour market data collected in the UK for a long time was decidedly 'colour blind'. Recent research by Twomey (2001) shows that Caribbean, Black African and Pakistani unemployment rates are three times the population average, and of economically active Bangladeshi a quarter are suffering unemployment. Even Indians, who have comparatively high educational levels, have noticeably higher unemployment rates from that of whites. Furthermore, Dickens (1997) argues that not only are first and second generation immigrants over-represented among those without jobs, but they are also over-represented in low quality jobs.

The disadvantages of immigrants and ethnic minorities go further, as the Low Pay Commission (1998) has found that even within the low paying sectors, Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers were more likely than others to be under-paid. Similarly, Blackaby and others (2002), investigating wage differentials between white and black groups, and controlling for other variables such as qualifications and unfavourable regional and industrial distribution, found a wage gap of £1.80 per hour in favour of the white groups.

A great deal of research has also documented institutional racism, exemplified by racist abuse, not being informed about promotion opportunities, having belongings damaged, being refused references, and on and on (Platt, 2002). This type of culture of 'antagonistic behaviour accompanied by failure of managers to take responsibility for it or action against it' has been widely cited in the UK and elsewhere (Platt, 2002, p. 122).

A survey conducted by the European Trade Union Confederation (2003), to which both the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the three Finnish trade union confederations belong, investigated the position of their membership on migrant and ethnic minority workers. Part of the survey asked the trade union confederations about the disadvantage of immigrant and ethnic minority groups in the labour market and both Finnish and British confederations cited disadvantage in the form of higher rates of unemployment, lower pay, slower promotion and facing bullying at work. In addition, the Finnish confederation claimed that immigrants in Finland also had suffered from lower initial qualifications. Clearly, then, the disadvantages experienced by immigrants in the UK and Finland are known to the employees' organizations.

5. Differences in Western European Trade Unions

A great variety of responses by trade unions exists towards first and second generation immigrants. These differences are partly due to the differences in the national contexts in which the unions operate. Ackers et al. (1996, p 2.) argue that 'National differences have created unions with distinctive religious, political and occupational forms and divisions'. These divisions can even be seen in Western Europe. In the Southern European countries unions were created within a framework of competition between the Catholic, socialist and communist confederations. In Northern Europe on the other hand, trade unions developed under a single Social Democratic or Labour hegemony (Ackers et al, 1996). Of course, such a categorization hides a great deal of diversity, as the industrial relations systems of the European countries also vary significantly.

Significant differences also exist between European trade unions with regard to their sociopolitical position as reflected by their density levels, power in collective bargaining and overall influence in the political system. In the Nordic countries, the rate of unionization is the highest in Europe, at 80 to 90 per cent, with a correspondingly high degree of influence (Hjarnø, 1996). In Southern Europe, on the other hand, unionization rates are low, at 10-15 per cent, and consequently the unions have significantly less power and influence. In the United Kingdom, current union density is approximately 26 per cent (National Statistics, 2006). Another variable creating differences in the functions of European trade unions is the balance between 'conflict' and 'consensus' in labour market regulation. In some European countries, the different labour market partners have significant levels of interdependence in their functioning, leading to high levels of consensus building in decision-making processes. Naturally, conflict is present in all systems of industrial relations; but in certain countries, this model is seen as more normal (Nielsen, 1996).

Finnish industrial relations can be described as a highly organized labour market, with relatively high levels of co-operation and consensus between the trade unions, employers' organizations and the state. Collective bargaining covers most parts of the labour market, and corporatist, tripartite decision making and implementation is widespread. Trade unions hold the responsibility to police the legally binding collective agreements, which gives them a

great deal of formal power. Over 80 per cent of the wage earners belong to one of the 77 trade unions (SAK, AKAVA and STTK, 2002).

In contrast to the Finnish model of industrial relations, the British unions do not have the political legitimacy of their Nordic partners nor the institutionalized cooperation (Wrench, 2004). Both trade unions and employers' organizations are relatively weak, and corporatism in the Nordic sense does not exist. 'Conflict and confrontation are seen as normal' in trade union relations with employers (Wrench, 2004, p. 8). In this liberal welfare regime, the market is expected to provide welfare and the government indirectly and directly supports its functioning (Esping-Andersen, 1999). In the recent history the British trade unions have also lost significant power, especially during the years of the Conservative government (1979-1997), and the position of New Labour has not been particularly warm towards the unions and is criticised by some for being too cognisant of employer concerns (Lewis and Surrender, 2004).

Unsurprisingly, European trade unions have adopted differing positions on significant policy issues, one being that of immigration and ethnic inequality. A major comparative study investigating the response of European trade unions to first and second generation immigrants was conducted by Pennix and Roosblad (2000). In their study, they consulted the country experts of seven European countries² on the issue of trade unions and immigration. The results of their study highlighted a number of different positions which trade unions in Western Europe have taken on immigration and immigrant workers. Furthermore, based on their comparative study, Pennix and Roosblad were able to draw conclusions as to some of the major factors that may have affected the unions' response to immigrants and immigration. According to Pennix and Roosblad, the involvement of trade unions in the socio-economic decision making at the national level and the power which they hold in the national context may have major implications for their position towards immigrants. They argue that powerful trade unions involved in major decision making in a corporatist system have fewer recourses (or decide to allocate fewer recourses) to make immigration a major issue, as they have to deal with other significant issues in their everyday work. On the other hand, the less powerful union confederations in other countries can take a more activist role (positive or negative), or decide more the issues that they want to become involved in, as they are not forced to take a position on each issue.

6. Basis for comparison

In the above sections I have shown that trade unions should, and are in a key position, to fight the widespread labour market disadvantage of immigrants. I have also shown a number of ways in which the trade unions in Finland and the United Kingdom are institutionally different, such as the *socio-political position* of trade unions, but in addition how it could be argued that they have relatively *similar immigration regimes* and *immigrant groups* to work

² The United Kingdom was included but not Finland

with, with the exception that the United Kingdom has received larger groups of immigrants who also began to arrive earlier. Making the comparison of the British and Finnish trade unions' response to immigration and immigrant workers, we can test the Pennix and Roosblad (2000) hypothesis that trade union confederations with less power and involvement in the national policy making (e.g. British TUC) have the freedom to take a more activist role with regard to immigrant issues than trade unions highly involved in national politics (e.g. Finnish unions).

7. The First Dilemma

The first main research question concerns the response Finnish and British trade unions made towards immigration when it first became politically important. Specifically this section attempts to answer the questions: How have the British and Finnish trade unions reacted to immigration? Did they cooperate with the employers and the state in the employment of foreign workers in their own countries, or did they resist?

The dilemma of how to respond to the potential increase in the labour force by an inflow of foreign workers, not necessarily accustomed to the working standards and wages normally demanded by the native workers in Western European countries, was a difficult one for trade unions. Should the unions cooperate, or resist immigration? Understandably the unions feared that the arrival of a foreign work force could be to the disadvantage of the native workforce, by bringing down wages and working conditions and by supporting obsolete industries. Also trade unions feared that foreigners could be an alternative source of labour for employers during industrial disputes (Pennix and Roosblad, 2000). On the other hand, trade unions also realized that in certain sectors migrant labour was necessary for the important industry's future. Lastly, Pennix and Roosblad (2000) argue that trade unions have at least verbally adhered to a tradition of international solidarity of all workers. Resisting immigration too openly could be viewed as not being in keeping with this solidarity.

7.1. Trade Unions and Immigration: the case of Britain

The question of how to react to immigration became applicable in the United Kingdom after the Second World War. Lunn (1999) argues that generally two types of accounts of trade union response to immigration exist. One account comes from Wrench (1986, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2004) and colleagues, who argue, according to Lunn (1999), that the trade union response to immigration has been one of 'overarching hostility displayed by the predominantly white British majority trade unionists towards other ethnic groups of workers' (p.70). Lunn (1999) goes on to argue that this 'model builds on a very conventional and much reproduced version of that history' (p.70) and uses early manifestations of hostility by select groups of trade unionist as evidence. The other category of work on this topic, according to Lunn (1999), lacks any detailed analysis 'either by neglect or intent' (p.71). He concludes that

‘there is a real danger that the general reader, from whatever perspective, is left with the impression that “race” themes played only a scant part in trade union history during these years and that unions were mere bystanders in these wider debates’ (p.71). In his chapter, ‘Complex encounters: trade unions, immigration and racism’, Lunn (1999) tells a third type of story about the response of trade unionists to immigration in post World War Two Britain, one that recognizes the well researched examples used by Wrench and others, while at the same time highlighting a more nuanced and complicated relationship that trade unionists had towards immigration. Nevertheless, as John Wrench continues to be regarded as the expert on the UK trade union response to immigration (Pennix & Roosblad, 2000) and in my investigation found his research most comprehensive, in answering the first question I will use the account of John Wrench, supported by the work of others where available.

In his most recent account of British trade unions and immigration, Wrench (2000) argues that due to the fact that most immigrants arriving in the UK came from colonial and ex-colonial countries, the TUC had no direct involvement in the decision making related to immigration. He goes on to show that initially trade unions were relatively sympathetic to migrants from the ex-colonial countries, but that later in the 1960s and 1970s trade unions were in support of the legislation, implemented by both the Conservative and Labour governments, which in effect stopped non-white Commonwealth immigration, while leaving the possibility for white colonial citizens to migrate to Britain. The arguments justifying these positions according to Wrench were not framed in the classic labour market style (e.g. fear of downward pressure of wages), rather they were framed primarily in social terms: ‘Immigrants failed to integrate properly’ (p.189).

In his account of the post World War Two situation in the UK, Lunn (1999) cites research by Miles and Phizacklea (1977), who give a detailed account of the TUC’s position towards Commonwealth immigration and black workers between 1954 and 1973. Miles and Phizacklea (1977) show in their study how prior to 1955 the TUC made no formal reference to race relations, racial discrimination or immigration, but argue that this was not to say that the TUC did not realize that this was an important issue. Lunn (1999) argues that the position of British trade unions towards immigration was a combination of support to the Labour government’s efforts to recruit labour from any sources due to shortages, while at the same time wanting to get enough concessions (e.g. nationalization, welfare reform) in order to convince the rank and file that enough safeguards were in place to protect ‘British’ jobs. Later, between the years of 1968 and 1973, Miles and Phizacklea claim that the ‘TUC’s constituency broadly fell in with the policy of control of immigration on a racial basis’, but Lunn (1999) argues that Miles and Phizacklea (1977) do also ‘recognize that there were dissenting voices within the ranks of the Congress delegates over the years and identify a broad pattern of anti-racist sentiment and political platforms...and voicing of criticism directed at the labour movement itself for its downplaying of British racism’ (p.79).

7.2. Trade Unions and Immigration: the case in Finland

Though immigration to Finland began in noticeable numbers in the 1980s, and accelerated in the 1990s, the first official trade union statements on the issue can be found from the late 1990s and early 2000s. The arrival of the first significant groups of immigrants in the early 1990s coincided with one of the most serious economic recessions in Finland's history. Clearly at that time the trade unions confederations were preoccupied with the massive unemployment and other economic issues, and it should perhaps not come as a surprise that no immigration related statements are available from early 1990s. Also, as described earlier, immigration to Finland has been mostly on humanitarian grounds and those coming to Finland to work have been mainly professionals from other Western countries, with existing work contracts.

The first 'immigration and asylum' programme in Finland was approved in 1997. Finding the 1997 legislation inadequate by 2004, the Ministry of Labour set up a working group whose task was to develop a second immigration and asylum programme, this time focusing on increasing the amount of employment-based immigration. All labour market partners were invited to give their position on the plan before it was finalized and approved. In March, 2006, together with the employers' organizations, the three trade union confederations made a statement regarding their position on the proposed new legislation (Työmarkkinajärjestöjen yhteinen kannanotto, 2006).

In their combined statement, the labour market partners stated their common goal of improving the overall society's and the work places' attitudes towards immigrants, as well as developing better conditions for a 'multicultural work-life'. According to the labour market partners, ten years ago, when Finland decided to join the EU, with the support of the labour market organizations, it accepted the basic principle of freedom of movement of people. Today, due to the ageing population, Finland faces a serious risk of labour shortages and as a solution to this problem, the labour market partners highlight the need to first and foremost increase the employment levels of native Finns, as well as the immigrants already present in Finland. In addition, they point out that employment-based immigration is needed to supplement, not to replace, the Finnish labour force. In order to ease the employment of foreigners, the labour market partners suggest that a better system of accrediting degrees gained abroad as well as retraining of foreigners is needed. Also, the partners claim that it is important that the foreign-born workers feel welcomed and are allowed to maintain their own culture and identity while respecting Finnish laws. For their part, the labour market partners commit themselves to 'easing the development of a positive atmosphere at the workplace and to prevent preconceptions, ignorance and racism' (Työmarkkinajärjestöjen yhteinen kannanotto, 2006).

In addition to this common statement, each of the three Finnish trade union Confederations has made its own statement with slightly different emphasis on the issue. AKAVA, the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals, emphasized in its statement (Björbacka, 2006) the need for Finland to attract more highly educated immigrants. According to AKAVA, in order for Finland to continue performing well in the global markets, it needs to have a more multicultural labour market. Highly educated workers could improve the knowledge base of the Finnish labour market and increase innovation (Piekkari, 2006).

AKAVA also argues that immigration to Finland has to be balanced and controlled, with only few short-term permits allowed, so that foreign professionals may plan a permanent stay in Finland. Preventing the ethnic segregation of the Finnish labour market is also important to AKAVA, as well as calculating the costs of immigration, such as schooling, housing, and social and health care. AKAVA would also like to see changes made to the Finnish immigration law in such a way that more foreign students and researchers can enter with increasing ease (Björbacka, 2006).

STTK, the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees, also stated in its declaration support for ‘the controlled and sustainable internationalization of the Finnish labour market’ (STTK, 2005). They highlight though that ‘multiculturalism is not a goal of itself, rather it is a consequence from internationalization’ (STTK, 2005). STTK emphasizes the need to make sure that the work contracts of foreign workers are legal and observed, as this group’s protection is more difficult than that for indigenous workers. STTK believes that while important, working to prevent racism and discrimination is difficult. They cite research from Sweden which shows that the darker the skin colour of an immigrant the harder it is for that person to find work. This, STTK thinks, should be kept in mind when recruiting workers from other countries. Most importantly, STTK argues for the need to consider carefully what level of resources it is reasonable to dedicate to the recruitment of foreign workers compared to attempting to keep the Finnish workforce in Finland and improving the employment rates of all potential workers (native and immigrant) already present in the country (STTK, 2005).

SAK, the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, representing most of the blue collar workers’ unions, has expressed the view that Finnish immigration policy should have a clearer employment focus. This increased employment-based immigration should be done in a controlled fashion, ensuring that migrants are treated fairly. SAK also ‘agrees with the Ministry of Labour working group that *regulation of immigrant labour based on the availability of labour in the Finnish economy should remain in place*, while widespread unemployment continues’ (SAK, 2005 p.2 emphasis added). In order to combat the grey economy and the use of irregular foreign workers, SAK proposed various measures, including a regulation system ‘requiring employers of foreign workers to be entered in the tax withholding register’ (SAK, 2005, p.2). Altogether, SAK is interested in first and foremost protecting the labour market from an increase in the black market as well as ensuring that the indigenous workers do not lose jobs as a consequence of immigration.

As described above, the rhetoric of the Finnish trade union confederations in their public statements is cautiously supportive of increased employment-based immigration, as long as the native workforce is not neglected. The confederations’ public statements can interestingly, however, be contrasted with the statements made by the rank and file members.

In their article ‘It is hard to find workers from the home country’ (7.2. 2006), Turun Sanomat, one of the major newspapers from Southern Finland, explores the labour shortage experienced by the ship building plant in Turku, Finland. Aker Yards, a major ship building company, had only a few days prior to the appearance of the article announced an order for a massive cruiser to be build, news that meant that work would be available at this plant for many years to come. ‘Big plus, that work continues, but where will we get the workers?’, said the main shop steward. The employees are afraid that work is being asked to be done by

workers brought from abroad, writes Turun Sanomat. “Before, one could rejoice with the news of a new order more genuinely when the work was being done by native forces” says another shop steward.

Perhaps surprising similarities can be found in the position which Finnish and British trade unions took towards immigration when it first seriously presented itself. In the 2000s, though not directly racist in rhetoric, the Finnish trade unions emphasize the need to increase the employment of native Finns and the need to consider how difficult it is for foreigners, especially with darker skin tones, to find gainful employment. Though the statement made by the labour market partners highlighted the need to tackle immigrant discrimination, other issues such as preventing the growth of the black market or segmentation of the labour market were emphasized. The acceptance of increased employment-based immigration seems to be strictly on the groups of predicted and already present labour shortages in certain sectors of the labour market. Though AKAVA spoke directly about the need for Finland to create a more multicultural labour market, their idea of multiculturalism is limited to representatives from highly educated groups.

In the UK, after the Second World War, the TUC also supported labour migration on the basis of labour shortages while at the same time emphasizing the need to protect indigenous workers. The racist rhetoric of trade unionists in the UK during this time is quite well evidenced in the literature (Lunn 1999, Wrench 1986, 1996, 1997, Miles and Phizacklea 1977) and few argue that it did not exist. In Finland, making racist comments directly is prohibited by legislation today; yet, ‘modern’ or covert racism is present, within the general public and trade union rank and file, as evidenced by the article in Turun Sanomat.

Furthermore, as Pennix and Roosblad had suggested, trade unions deeply involved in several aspects on the nation state’s policy making may have less willingness and/or resources to take up the issue of immigration (until it becomes politically perhaps unavoidable). This hypothesis is quite well supported by the slowness with which the Finnish trade unions responded to immigration. As shown above, though immigrants began to arrive in significant numbers in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the first official statements were not made until the 2000s.

8. The second dilemma

The next section of this paper attempts to answer the second set of questions: following the arrival of immigrants, how did the trade unions first respond to these people as potential members? Furthermore, since not long after their arrival the labour market disadvantage of immigrant workers became evident, how did trade unions respond to this? Treating everyone the same would only help to institutionalize the disadvantage experienced by the immigrants, but at the same time, if the union devotes extra resources to immigrant issues, this can happen at the expense of creating resentment and resistance on the part of the indigenous workers who may consider the immigrant groups to be receiving special treatment. This has been phrased as the ‘equal versus special treatment dilemma’ (Pennix and Roosblad, 2000).

8.1. Trade union treatment of immigrant workers: the case of Britain

In the UK, the fact that trade unions had in the post World War Two period taken a racist approach to immigration complicated their position towards those foreign workers who had nonetheless arrived (Pennix & Roosblad, 2000). On the one hand, trade unions were aware that it was of the utmost importance that migrant workers join unions, to protect native workers from all the threats of foreign labour (e.g. wage suppression), while at the same time, having originally taken a negative position towards the arrival of especially dark-skinned migrants, convincing the rank and file now that it was important to incorporate the workers in the union might prove difficult (Castles, 1990). Indeed, several researches have documented the 'early open racism of white trade unionists, the poor example set by trade union and Labour leaders, the early resistance by black workers to their treatment and their organization among themselves to fight racism of both employers and unions' (Wrench, 1997, p.1).

The post World War Two British trade union movement treatment of immigrants can also easily be described as 'colour blind'. Even as late as the 1970s, Vic Feather, the then General Secretary of the TUC, made a statement that has since become one of the most commonly cited examples of this: "The trade union movement is concerned with a man or woman as a worker. The colour of the man's skin has no relevance whatever to his work" (quoted in *Sunday Times*, 3 December 1972, as cited in Wrench, 1997).

More significantly, Lee (1984), Miles and Philackzea (1977) and others have shown several cases, such as Imperial Typewriters in Leicester in 1974 and Coneygre Foundry in 1967-8, where the union withheld support from black workers who were protesting about the discrimination against them in relation to the white workers. Perhaps one of the most famous of these examples comes, however, from Mansfield Hosiery in 1972, where Asian workers were being denied access to the 'best paid jobs on knitting machines and the union had failed to support the Asians in their attempts over many years to gain promotion. When a strike was called in 1972 over this issue, and other discriminatory practices in the payment system, the union helped the management hire 36 outside trainees, all of whom were white, for the knitting jobs' (Wrench, 1986, p.7). Wrench (1986) argues that the eventual success of the strike was not due to the efforts of the union, but rather to the local community organizations, political groups and Asian workers from other factories.

Furthermore, Wrench and colleagues have shown cases of racism by 'unsympathetic, unenlightened or even racially-bigoted shop stewards and local officials, and the reluctance on the part of the unions to take disciplinary action against racist offenders' (Wrench, 1986, p.4). Lastly, though black workers have shown a higher than average propensity to join unions in the UK - 56 per cent of Asian and West Indian employees were union members compared to 47 per cent of white employees, according to the Policy Studies Institute (1982) - they lack influence in leadership positions. In fact, even in 2002, when the European Trade Union Confederation made its study about the position of immigrants in the European trade unions, they found that in the TUC very few of the leadership were ethnic minorities.

In the 1970s, a significant shift took place in the stance TUC took towards immigrants. The move away from what some argue was a racist, laissez faire position to a more positive activist role was caused by a number of factors. One of the most influential reasons was that of the well published examples of union racism, combined with an increasing frustration felt

by black trade unionists. Furthermore, in 1974 the House of Commons Select Committee stated: ‘...the record of the TUC is similar to that of the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) in that both organizations have declared their opposition to racial discrimination, but have taken wholly inadequate steps to ensure that their members work effectively to eradicate it’ (McIlroy 1982. p. 5, as cited in Wrench, 1986). Also, a significant lobby of grassroots activists in the trade unions, local councils and the Labour party had grown who were regularly voicing their opposition to racism in all its forms. Lastly, the early 1970s had witnessed a worrying growth in the National Front, and the ‘TUC having dropped its opposition to race relations legislation, now started an active campaign against racism in the movement’ (Wrench, 1986, p.9).

Virdee and Grint (1994) and Martens (1999), among others, have studied the development of the issue of the ‘equal versus special treatment’ of immigrants in the UK. Martens (1999) writes that unions ‘seem to have difficulty in coming to grips with equal treatment’ (p.224), one reason being the general confusion that exists around the terms ‘equal treatment’ and ‘equal opportunity’ (Wrench, 2004). Following the classification of MacEwen (1995), it is possible to identify four approaches to ‘equal treatment’ or ‘equal opportunities’. These approaches are:

1. The *equal treatment approach*: Everyone is treated the same regardless of ethnicity. The so called ‘colour-blind’ approach.
2. The *level playing field approach*: Recognition of the need to remove unfair barriers (e.g. discrimination), so that all have the same opportunities.
3. The *equal opportunities approach*: Aim is to increase the long-term proportional representation of minorities by having ethnic monitoring and targets. ‘Positive action’ to counteract effects of past inequalities.
4. The *equal outcome approach*: Quotas and ‘positive discrimination’ to achieve short-term proportional representation of minorities.

Wrench (2004) shows how the TUC has moved in successive steps through these stages and today its policies are a mixture of stages three and four. As argued earlier, in the 1960s the TUC believed that special treatment of immigrants was not necessary, and indeed, would be discriminatory towards the white trade union membership. However, in the 1970s the TUC began to move towards the ‘level playing field’ approach, as it began to develop educational and training materials on racism and equal opportunities for trade union courses (Wrench, 2004). In 1979, the TUC recommended to all its affiliated unions that they create a policy on racism, and in 1981 it published ‘Black Workers: A TUC charter for Equal Opportunity’, which encouraged a more active role of the unions against racism (Wrench, 2004). By the 1980s, the TUC had already moved to creating special equal opportunities structures that incorporated elements of positive action, such as reserved or additional seats on national executive committees for members with immigrant background. National officers whose responsibility it was to deal with issues affecting immigrant workers were also trained at that time. Individual unions were also setting up separate committees to deal with race and equal opportunities and several created self-organization structures for their immigrant members

(Virdee and Grint, 1994). An Equal Opportunities Review in 1993 (as cited in Wrench, 2004) covering two thirds of the TUC membership showed that of all responding, ten had a national committee for race equality issues, nine had some immigrant full time officials, and almost two thirds had produced literature in ethnic minority languages and taken other positive action steps such as organizing conferences for members with immigrant background.

Comparing the work of all its affiliated membership, the European Trade Union Confederation showed that in 2003, the British TUC was one of the few to have engaged in efforts to incorporate immigrant issues into collective bargaining and had produced guidelines for the negotiators on issues such as religious practices at the workplace, language training for immigrants, outlawing harassment, recognition of foreign qualifications and so on.³ Furthermore, in its report to the ETUC (2003), the TUC shows that not only have the unions in the UK made special efforts to bargain on behalf of their immigrant members, but they have also been successful in reaching agreements on seven of their ten claims.⁴ Lastly, the TUC affiliate unions have managed to negotiate with some large employers, such as Ford, GEC Marine, Grattans, Wessex Trains and DT to gain agreements such as including prohibition of harassment in the disciplinary code (BT), establishing the post of a diversity manager, targets and timing for actions against racism and discrimination (Ford) and discretionary rights for employers to bank up to ten days a year over two years to take 20 days off to visit a relative abroad. Altogether, compared to all the other ETUC affiliates, the British TUC is one of the few confederations who have taken the most activist positions towards fighting racism and creating special policies for their immigrant membership (ETUC, 2003).

8.2. Trade union treatment of immigrant workers: the case of Finland

In Finland, for the first ten years after the arrival of immigrants, trade unions made no, or few, comments regarding their presence. The first time issues related to immigration were agreed upon was in collective bargaining in 1998-1999, as a result of which the need for a development project was agreed upon (STTK, 2006). A networking project called *Mosaikkierinlaisuuden etu* (Mosaic, the benefit of differences) and a research project supporting it were created. The idea of the *Mosaikki* project was to increase equality in the workplace, and to acknowledge the benefits of diversity in the workplace, and both the workers' unions and the employers' organizations took part in the development of the project (STTK, 2006).

Typical of the functioning of the Finnish labour market, the three trade union confederations have made common efforts to ease the integration of immigrants into the labour market and the trade unions, especially in the 2000s. Together the three confederations have produced 'A Guide for Immigrant Workers', which covers issues such as 'the Finnish labour market model', how to join a trade union, why it is important to be a member of a trade

³ The TUC was the only member affiliate who incorporated in their guidelines for collective bargaining all the 10 issues listed by the ETUC. Other issues included "general statements", access to training, promotion and other workplace benefits, special training for immigrants, organizing leave, religious practices and food in canteen, and religious practices and uniform or dress.

⁴ The only issues that the TUC has not been successful in reaching agreements on are special training for immigrants and religious practices and food in canteens and uniform or dress.

union and contact information for the central organizations and the individual trade unions (SAK, 2006). Also, a common publication titled 'The Finnish Trade Union Movement - what every employee should know' was produced in association with the SAK information point in Tallinn, Estonia. This publication covers issues such as the achievements of the trade unions movement, how collective agreements and trade unions work and the benefits of trade union membership. This publication is available in English, Estonian, Russian, Polish and Finnish (STTK, 2005).

Analyzing the content of the three trade union confederations' publications separately it seems that SAK has taken the most active role in integrating immigrants into its work. SAK reports that approximately 12,000, or one per cent, of its members are immigrants (SAK, 2006), whereas such figures are not available for the other confederations. Nevertheless, PAM, the Service Unions United, an affiliate of SAK, states that there is reason to believe 'that many more than 12,000 immigrants could be part of SAK' (PAM, 2006). Though no exact figures are available, SAK believes that there are some union activists who are immigrants (ETUC, 2003).

Much of the effort which SAK (as the best example of the three, the other having done even less) has made in terms of incorporating immigrants into the unions has involved the making of public statements, that call for all labour market partners to take more action to help the integration of immigrants. SAK believes that for a number of reasons immigrants are not familiar with the trade union movement (e.g. lack of such a movement in their own country, or the illegality of being a member of such an organization in their native country) and therefore it finds it important to provide immigrants with information regarding the role of trade unions in Finnish industrial relations as soon as they arrive in Finland (SAK, 2006). Some of the SAK affiliates have produced recruitment materials in the most common immigrant languages (Russian, Estonian and English) (SAK, 2006).

Since 2002, SAK has had a multicultural working group whose responsibility it is to advance the development of multiculturalism in the organization, as well as to communicate with immigrant organizations. Furthermore, SAK has coordinated two major projects intended to promote tolerance and multiculturalism in the workplace. The first of these projects, called 'ETMO' – Multiculturalism as a Resource - was developed as part of the European Union EQUAL projects in the years 2001-2005. The central objective of the project was to '(come up with ideas), develop, produce and try out such methods, materials and training and good practices as would promote tolerance and multiculturalism at workplaces and improve the employability of immigrants' (Sintonen, 2005). The partners in the project were six trade unions, central organizations of workers and employers' organizations and labour authorities. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the project a major research study was incorporated as part of it, conducted by the research department of SAK.

The second such project, coordinated by SAK, called 'PETMO'- how to initiate multiculturalism into a workplace - is also funded by the EU through the EQUAL scheme, and follows on from the work done with the ETMO project. The aim of the PETMO project is to create the readiness and expertise to develop diversity within working communities, to promote multicultural understanding and to improve the employability of immigrants (Sintonen, 2004). The ultimate goal of the PETMO project is to develop a training programme

for diversity initiators for different work places. This project is still under way, and is expected to finish in spring 2007. Interestingly, PETMO is being done as part of a transnational cooperation project called, DEAL- Diversity, Equality and Access to Learning - in which one partner is the TUC, with their project called 'High Road', which involves the training of Union Learning Representatives whose task is to identify learning and training needs of different groups of workers, immigrants being among them, and to arrange appropriate learning opportunities for them.

At the individual level, AKAVA and STTK have not initiated separate projects attempting to integrate immigrants into their work, but together with SAK and the employers' organization they agreed as part of the March 2006 statement to begin a training programme directed at managers and shop stewards, that includes publications and an educational initiative which attempts to develop good ethnic relations in the workplace (Työmarkkinajärjestöjen yhteinen kannanotto, 2006). At the level of public statements, as described in the previous section, STTK and AKAVA have acknowledged the disadvantages immigrants face in the labour market and the need to work against these barriers.

Following the equal opportunities framework of MacEven (1995) described earlier, it could then be argued that the Finnish trade unions have made public statements exemplifying the 'level playing field' approach, where recognition of the need to remove unfair barriers exists, but that for the most part only SAK has taken steps to overcome them. Though programmes directed at improving the position of immigrants in the labour market have been designed, no targets or monitoring schemes have been devised to attempt to increase the representation of immigrants in the union movement itself, which would exemplify reaching stage three in MacEven's classification. Criticisms of this sort (i.e. positive rhetoric, but no action) were often made of the TUC until the 1970s, as exemplified by the House of Commons Select Committee report of 1974.

9. Conclusion

Interesting similarities and differences in the positions which Finnish and British trade unions have taken towards immigration and in their treatment of immigrant workers can be found by reviewing the relevant literature. The (perhaps surprising) similarities can be found in the early responses of the unions towards immigration; but significant differences are present in the treatment of the immigrants on their arrival. Though the British unions had to respond to the issue of significant immigration 50 to 60 years earlier than the Finnish unions did, they adopted very similar initial positions. In both cases, the early attitude towards immigrants was at best cautious, and concerns regarding the position of the indigenous workers predominated. From the literature review and analysis of the statements of the Finnish trade union confederations, it becomes evident that for a significant period of time after the arrival of the first immigrant groups in Finland (1980s and early 1990s), the unions made no, or few, public statements about this. Similarly, in the UK, in the early 1900s when the trade unions were

more powerful than today, they also for a significant period following the arrival of the immigrants from made no formal public references to it.

Following World War Two the British unions realized that it was in their interests to support the arrival of immigrants, as a significant labour shortage would otherwise have prevented recovery from the war (Wrench, 1986) and made statements in support of it. Similarly, today in Finland, as the country faces increasing labour shortages, the trade unions are taking a positive position towards increased employment-based immigration, with the reservation that the number of immigrant arrivals be connected to the needs of the labour market. Nevertheless, in the later stages of immigration, (1960s and 1970s), the British unions were in favour of only white immigration, and perhaps consequently their treatment of immigrant workers was characterized by hostility (Miles and Philackzea, 1977). It was not until the 1970s that the TUC went through a major change in its treatment of immigrant workers; and today, within the European trade union context, it might even be considered the trail-blazer in the fight against the disadvantages of immigrant and ethnic minority workers in the labour market by some stakeholders.

Following the delayed and cautious response to the increase in immigration in Finland in the 1990s, the Finnish trade unions have slowly begun to address the disadvantages faced by immigrants in the labour market. Initiatives such as the ETMO and PETMO projects have been developed since 2000, with the aim of easing the participation of foreign-born workers in the Finnish labour market. Interestingly, however, the majority of the funding for these multiculturalism initiatives comes from the EU, rather than from the trade unions themselves, which may lead one to question whether these programmes would have been created without the financial investment of the EU.

In comparing the response of the Finnish and British trade unions to immigration and immigrant workers, does the prediction derived from the comparative work of Pennix and Roosblad hold? It is the case that, from the analysis here of their responses, it becomes clear that the British TUC has taken a significantly more active position towards immigrants than the Finnish trade union confederation. Though at first the active position of the TUC, some argue, was characterized by hostility towards immigrants, today the Finnish unions among others may have a lot to learn from the British unions positive actions (e.g. language programs designed for immigrant workers, positive discrimination to increase immigrant representation in the executive).

In terms of evaluating the overall impact of all the efforts by the British and Finnish trade unions to protect immigrant workers, only a few conclusions can be drawn, however. While the British TUC has been significantly more 'positively active' than the Finnish trade union confederations, one should not ignore the work done by the Finnish trade unions to protect all workers, both indigenous and foreign-born, in terms of general collective bargaining for working conditions and wages. In the highly organized Finnish labour market, the employers are very accustomed to reading the collectively negotiated wage tables when determining appropriate salaries, and trade union representatives are present in almost all workplaces to oversee the treatment of all workers. Also, while the British unions may on paper be making great efforts to integrate immigrants and protect them in the labour market, the overall power of the British unions has been so significantly reduced since the 1970s that the impact that

they have on the life of any worker, including immigrant and ethnic minority workers, may be questioned. Nevertheless, this does not suggest that the effort the TUC has made to advance the position of immigrants is invaluable. Pennix and Rooseblad (2000) would argue that it is perhaps because of their weak position in the national politics that the TUC is able to take on this activist role.

Major labour market barriers remain for immigrant workers, especially high levels of unemployment, in both countries, and significant effort is still needed from all the labour market partners. From the simple equality perspective, as well as following the activation emphasis of the European Union Employment Strategy, the Finnish and British labour market partners cannot afford to be complacent with regard to the position of immigrant in their national labour markets. Not only do the Finnish and British labour markets need the labour of immigrant workers; equally, immigrants have the right to work to support themselves and their families.

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