

## **Euroscepticism and Trade Unionism: The Crisis of ‘Social Europe’**

The signing of the Treaty of Maastricht and the transformation from the European Community to the European Union can be regarded as a turning point after which opposition to integration (now named as ‘Euro-scepticism’) became ‘embedded’. The hitherto ‘permissive consensus’ which rendered opposition to integration as marginal and residual began to break down and was replaced by a more contested process in which opposition became a more pervasive and enduring, if not permanent, response to integration (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). However, it can be argued that for trade unionism, the inclusion of a social chapter in the Maastricht Treaty marked, not the emergence of ‘Euro-scepticism’, but its retreat in the face of a new wave of ‘Euro-enthusiasm’. This was based around the new mobilising project of ‘Social Europe’ that filled the ‘vacuum of inspirational ideology’ following the collapse of communism, the crisis of social democracy and the subsequent triumph of neoliberalism (Hyman, 2003: 3-4). This ‘Euro-philic’ turn was epitomised by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which has been its elite vanguard. However, even the ETUC began to take a more critical approach to integration as the social dimension stalled in the 2000s and this has been accompanied by increasing popular dissent amongst workers who have borne the brunt of the Euro-crisis (Taylor & Mathers, 2004). In this context, the unions have become increasingly marginalized following the EU’s well-documented turn to neoliberalism, the post-Lisbon hardening of ‘ordo-liberalism’, the turn to austerity in the context of the Eurozone crisis and the post-2009 clash of legal hierarchies illustrated in the Laval-Viking-Rüffert cases.

There are, however, marked divisions both within and between European trade unions in respect to the most appropriate response to the dynamics of European integration (see Hyman, 2010). This chapter will trace and explore the increasingly critical orientations of

European trade unions to European integration in order to highlight the complex, contested and multifaceted nature of Euro-scepticism amongst European trade unions. In the next section, we present an overview of the main developments and dynamics that have contributed to a growing disillusionment of European trade union towards European integration. We then provide a series of case studies that highlight the growing negative orientation to European integration and the institutional dynamics of the EU amongst trade unions in the UK, France, Sweden and at the European level. We conclude by deconstructing the concept of Euroscepticism as applied to trade unions and present a typology of the divergent orientations of European unions to questions of European integration.

### **Trade unions and Euroscepticism: An Overview**

The Euroscepticism literature which developed from the 1990s focused on political parties and public opinion and only recently has it become interested in civil society (Leconte, 2010). Research specifically on Eurosceptic discourse or campaigning by trade unions is relatively rare which tends to reflect the opportunity structure in which unions operated during periods of European institution-building. In the context of a decline of oppositional ideologies within the labour movement, a policy environment developed that was friendly to ‘social partnership’ and this encouraged a pro-European belief structure that corresponded to the automatic internationalism of the trade union ideational repertoire. From the beginning, the leaders of Europe’s main (non-Communist) union confederations were ideologically committed to European integration as a touchstone of democracy. The legacy of WWII and, in the context of the Cold War, these unions became ‘professional Europeans’ (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013:179) and were co-opted willingly into the project of constructing a European economic community. In the 1980s, the establishment of the Single Market offered trade unions the opportunity to contribute to the future development of

European institutions and policies (Gold, 1993). Under the Commission presidency of French social democrat Jacques Delors, this opportunity was institutionalised in the ‘social dialogue’ process which was formalised in the Maastricht Treaty. During this period, the ETUC itself underwent consolidation of its structures and its membership, bringing in sectoral federations as well as formerly oppositional national confederations (Coldrick, 1998). The ETUC’s relatively weak material resources made it dependent on the Commission, whilst its internal divisions both made independent mobilisation less likely and encouraged it to find common ground in pro-integrationist lobbying (Ross & Martin, 1999).

The pro-integrationist ideology linking the EU with fundamental values of democracy and international cooperation is thus a strong basic reference and labour movement internationalism has prevented the emergence of ‘hard’ Euroscepticism. In recent years, however, the generation who led unions at the period of European institution-building have given way to younger leaders whose world view was not shaped by WWII and the Cold War. Moreover, the strong salience of European integration in the framing of union policy creates a space for the expression of critical views – soft Euroscepticism - despite the constraining effects of pro-integrationist ideology and institutional cooperation. The European dimension of union activity has been a source of tensions from the beginning and these tensions reflect divisions within the labour movement within each member country and between different national traditions and practices (Hyman, 2001, 2003). These tensions and challenges have become more pronounced as the political promise of a ‘Social Europe’ characterised by strong workers’ rights and institutions of social dialogue failed to materialize (Greenwood, 2003). The ETUC objective for a more parliamentary and consultative decision-making structure was not delivered as part of the institutional architecture associated with the Single Market (Rath, 1993) and subsequent treaty reforms and the issue of workers’ rights has gradually disappeared from the policy agenda. As Phelan (2009:187) notes ‘European

integration has been marked by a “democratic deficit” which has allowed corporate interests to dominate the process and to initiate a largely neo-liberal agenda, leaving Social Europe an ill-defined pipedream for the left and a useful rhetorical device for EU decision-makers’.

The main trajectory of European integration has been marked by the subordination of social policy to economic objectives; while Eastward enlargement in 2004 and 2007 intensified the likelihood of social dumping between member states (Bieler, 2006) and appeared to many trade unionists as a ‘Trojan horse’ for liberalisation and marketisation (Meardi, 2013). The Viking-Rüffert-Laval cases of 2008-9 further highlighted how European integration favoured market freedoms over collectively agreed workers’ rights (Bücker & Warneck, 2010). The project of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) highlighted the subordinate status of employment and social policy, but also intensified the process of ‘endogenisation’ (Ross, 2006) of European policy, with national budgets increasingly the subject of European scrutiny (Bieler, 2005, 2006; Erne, 2008, 2015). Before the financial crisis of 2008, the impact of EMU was felt in a downward pressure on wages and, in some countries, took the form of ‘social pacts’ in which unions agreed to wage restraint in a trade-off between the pursuit of members’ interests and policy influence (Erne, 2008; Phelan, 2009). After 2008, the new conditions of German-led ‘ordo-liberalism’ (Apeldoorn, 2013) have radically altered the relationship between member states and between member states and the EU, and squeezed the space for trade union action at European level (Erne, 2015).

Since the 1980’s, therefore, the salience of European integration for European trade unions has increased whilst the space for effective union intervention at both the European and domestic levels has narrowed and this has reduced the potential space for internal dissent and the development of oppositional strategies (Mathers, 2007; Taylor and Mathers, 2004).

However, the space for strategic action and for dissent varies considerably across countries and is based on divergent structural, institutional, associational and organisational

opportunity structures. In an overview of trade unions in ten Western European societies, Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman (2013: 179) highlight both considerable cross-national diversity and a range of common themes including a widespread ‘disorientation’ in union positioning as unions are caught between their formal/institutional support for the EU and growing discontent among their members. The rise of Eurosceptical attitudes in public opinion across member states has altered the context in which unions formulate their strategies and the referenda held on EU membership or treaties have highlighted the disorientation of union leaderships and provided a space for dissenting positions. In the following sections we explore in more detail the changing orientations to European integration and emerging discourses of Euroscepticism in the UK, France, Sweden and the European level.

### **British Unions: Pragmatic Europeans**

The official position of the British trade union movement towards European integration has undergone a series of twists and turns since the inception of the EEC. These have reflected the relative balance of power between the Left and Right of the broader labour movement with sceptical perspectives being associated largely with the Left and enthusiastic perspectives with the Right. Consequently, the ‘quite astonishing conversion’ (Rosamond, 1993: 420) of the TUC in the late 1980s to being enthusiastically in favour of integration is comprehensible largely in terms of the shift to ‘new realism’ amongst nearly all unions and the increasing marginalisation of critical currents and unions on the Left. Teague (1989) divides the response of the TUC towards European integration into four periods (pre-1972, 1972-5, 1976-9, and the 1980s onwards). The earliest period was characterised by a ‘wait and see’ policy over integration which was an expression of, and an attempt to overcome, political divisions between three main camps: pragmatists, pro-Europeans, and anti-Europeans. The sceptical perspective was supported most strongly by the Left whose

opposition reflected the position of the CPGB: membership of the EEC being equated with a surrender of British sovereignty, a weakening of parliament, an attack on the working class and a renunciation of the power to plan the national economy' (Callaghan, 2007: 205).

Defending national industrial planning was a key element of the Left's opposition to EEC membership during the 1975 referendum (Radice, 2007) and support for a 'national progressive-socialist strategy', to which the EEC was seen as a barrier (Mullen, 2007: 222).

The unions' shift to opposition between 1972-5 was marked by votes against membership at three successive TUC congresses (Teague, 1989) to which the block votes of the left-led TGWU and AUEW were crucial (Rosamond, 1989).

The 1975 TUC congress defeated an anti-EC motion and for Dorfman (1977), this period marked a growing engagement with, and endorsement of, EC institutions driven by waning domestic political influence in the context of a weak Labour government and economic recession. Engagement produced few results and soon gave way to a 'firmly anti-European' position in the early 1980s that was expressed at the 1981 TUC congress in a resolution calling for withdrawal without a referendum. Sceptics in these debates were from unions associated with the Bennite Left. However, electoral defeat for Labour in 1983, and the defeat of the miner's strike of 1984/5, eroded the influence of the radical left (Mullen, *op cit*) and contributed to a steady drift to the right and the increasing dominance of 'new realism'. The TUC embraced the potential political opportunities offered by the EU as union influence domestically diminished first under the Conservative and later under the New Labour governments (Bieler, 2006; Taylor, 2009).

The shift to a pro-EU position in the late 1980s marked a pragmatic engagement with European integration rather than an ideological conversion to Euro-idealism (Ryner, 2007). The policy coalition between the 'pro-Commission' and 'sectoral pragmatist' union camps became more influential than the significant minority of 'left sceptics'. Moreover, the most

sizeable of the sceptical unions also came to accept the inevitability of membership. This pragmatist outlook was expressed in the document 'Europe 1992: Maximising the benefits, minimizing the costs' (TUC, 1988) whose title suggests that membership was assessed largely in instrumental terms. This suggests a shift in the terms of the debate from a question of 'membership' to a question of the 'meaning' of European integration as UK unions aligned with the social/Christian democratic design and against the neoliberal project (Rosamond, *op cit*: 429). This debate over meaning was evident in relation to EMU with unions in transnational production sectors favouring EMU as a means of securing jobs in the manufacturing industries and unions in domestic production sectors associating EMU with public sector job and service cuts due to the strictly defined convergence criteria. The TUC decided that the benefits of EMU outweighed the costs and added its emphasis on the pursuit of the 'European Social Model' (Bieler, 2006).

As the neoliberal direction of integration has sharpened, and especially since the financial crisis and austerity politics, the trade union movement as a whole has increasingly questioned the balance sheet of 'social Europe' and the various camps have become more clearly defined. The issue of EU membership was debated heatedly at most TUC congresses leading up to the referendum in 2016 and three main positions became increasingly clear. The Euro-idealist camp was epitomized by TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady who argued that the founding vision of a social market bound by social solidarity had been attacked by conservative forces. She called for unions to join with left of centre campaigns and parties to form a new European project focused on the revitalization of 'a social Europe that delivers rising living standards - a fairer distribution of wealth and power - for all' (TUC, 2013). The Euro-pragmatist camp was epitomised by Len McCluskey the General Secretary of the largest union in the UK, UNITE, who called for the issue of EU membership to be settled by a referendum while arguing for continued UK membership. This was justified largely in

instrumental, but also in idealist terms. At the UNITE policy conference in 2014, McCluskey suggested that, ‘the advantages of EU membership, particularly in terms of social protections and supporting manufacturing investment, outweigh the disadvantages for our members ...’ and that in a referendum, ‘Unite will be there arguing for the benefits of internationalism and a real social Europe’ (Unite, 2014). The Euro-sceptic camp was epitomised by the late Bob Crow, ex- General Secretary of the RMT. The RMT was the most prominent union in this camp and supported campaigns against the ‘Euro’ and the EU Constitution. It proposed motions highly critical of the EU to successive TUC Congresses in the 2010s which were seconded by the Prisoner Officer’s Association and the Baker’s, Food and Allied Workers Union. After its expulsion from the Labour Party, the RMT also provided candidates for the ‘No2 to EU’ Party in the European parliamentary elections whose platform made the case for withdrawal as a prerequisite for programmes of public investment and public ownership including rail renationalisation. The outright scepticism associated with the RMT was thus based on the argument that EU membership locked in neoliberalism and withdrawal was necessary in order to pursue a democratic socialist strategy based on nation state sovereignty (Baimbridge et al, 2007).

The 2015 TUC congress passed a statement on the referendum that while noting the increasingly ‘neo-liberal ideology’ shaping the EU, argued for a positive ‘Social Europe’, and called for ‘remain’ as withdrawal risked millions of jobs (TUC, 2015). This idealist, but mainly pragmatic, approach was evident in the discourse of ‘risk’ to workers’ jobs and rights which permeated and dominated the TUC campaign for ‘remain’.

### **French unions: Divided Europeans**

The Treaty of Rome and the establishment of the EC highlighted the deep ideological divisions that existed with the French trade unions. The ‘mass and class’ CGT (*Confédération*



*Générale du Travail*) linked at that time to the PCF (*Parti Communiste Français*) opposed the Common Market outright as a Trojan horse for US imperialism, and a way of dismantling workers' rights and of creating a mobile reserve army of labour.<sup>1</sup> The CGT's position was also determined by its alliance with other Communist-linked confederations within the World Federation of Trade Unions. In contrast, the EC was supported by the CFTC (*Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens*) which had been inspired at its formation by the social doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and *Force Ouvrière* (FO) which had been created following an ideological split from the CGT and was marked by a strong anti-Communist stance. FO was a founder member of the ETUC in 1973 and the CFTC joined in 1975. When the CFDT (*Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*) was formed in 1964 by former members of the CFTC influenced by 'new left', anticolonial activism, it also became a key member of the reformist international trade union movement and joined the ETUC in 1975. The ideological divisions within the French labour movement were weakened following the fall of the Berlin wall. The PCF went into decline and the CGT loosened its links with the party and began to engage more systematically with collective bargaining. The CGT left the WFTU in 1995, became a member of the ETUC in 1999 and by 2003 was represented on the ETUC executive committee. However, public debates around the Single Market during the 1980s revealed ongoing tensions and ambiguities between the unions as they repositioned themselves ideologically.

The socialist U-turn of 1982-3 was framed explicitly as a response to a European demand for austerity and all the union confederations expressed a fear of 'social dumping', highlighted in cases such as Eurodisney and Rush Portuguesa.<sup>2</sup> However, the subsequent rapprochement with the then EC was based on the idea of a strong 'Social Europe' of workers' rights which President Mitterrand championed in the 1980s together with the French president of the Commission Jacques Delors. The latter established 'social dialogue' which brought unions

into the decision-making process on a formal basis and this has been a constant feature of the French vision of European integration as articulated in public opinion surveys. This tension was partly defused by the socialist administration's call for political oversight of economic policy coordination as the EU moved into its preparations for a single currency. However, the tensions within the union movement, both between confederations and within them, came back to the fore in the period after 1995 when welfare state retrenchment and labour market deregulation were justified by reference to the constraints imposed by EMU (Jefferys, 2000). The union movement fragmented further with the exodus of significant numbers of CFDT members unhappy with its support for right-wing austerity policies to 'autonomous' unions, initially in the public sector. Meanwhile, public opinion had shifted decisively away from a 'permissive consensus' to a more sceptical assessment of the benefits of EU membership and calls for a 'different kind' of Europe (Milner, 1992). Trade union members and potential constituencies were overwhelmingly situated in the socio-economic categories more likely to oppose integration (Grunberg, 2006; Ivaldi, 2006), as well as being disproportionately situated in the public sector which saw particular threats from EU deregulation and budgetary cuts.

The 2005 referendum on the draft EU constitutional treaty brought this crisis to the surface, amidst post-enlargement fears of 'social dumping' which featured heavily in the campaign and contributed significantly to the 'no' vote. Indeed, anxieties around the French social model have come to dominate political debates since the 1990s and form an important part of the context for the positioning of unions on the EU (Hobart & Brouard, 2011; Ross, 2006). FO was the only national confederation to vote against the constitutional treaty in the ETUC's internal discussion, whilst the CGT was one of only twelve affiliates to abstain (Hyman, 2010). The CGT leadership in particular was badly shaken by the referendum campaign. Its secretary general Bernard Thibault had asked the confederation not to give any

voting recommendation to members; however, he was resoundingly outvoted by the confederal committee which decided to advise members to reject the treaty. Thibault's personal authority was seriously weakened as a result, but the leadership's rejectionist position aligned it with membership views. In the referendum, 64% of public sector workers voted against the constitutional treaty in 2005, whilst between 56% and 61% of private sector employees voted (Ricard-Nihoul, 2005: 18). Following this divisive experience, the CGT leadership called for a referendum prior to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and denounced the 'integration by stealth' which characterised its adoption. The CGT's position brought it into conflict with the second-largest confederation, the CFDT, which had earlier made an outright call for a 'yes' vote in the referendum on the draft constitutional treaty, arguing that although it posed problems for workers, unions had the opportunity to contest negative policies later. The CFDT also later called for adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. The other confederations largely refrained from taking up explicit positions in the referendum campaign, torn between opposition to significant sections of the draft treaty and a civic commitment to voting in a context of dwindling turnout among members (Vivier, 2005).

Since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, opposition to the EU's economic strategy has hardened. Public disaffection with governments of right and left, and public fears around the impact of economic globalisation, have coalesced at a time of economic insecurity and austerity policies. In the absence of clear alternative strategies at either European or domestic level, unions have become increasingly unable to articulate a mobilising stance which is not simply oppositional or defensive. This dilemma was posed acutely in the 2014 European Parliament elections, which provided further evidence of public rejection of current EU policy, but also has to be seen in the context of anti-government protest behaviour: fewer than half of French wage-earners turned out to vote, and of these around 30% voted for the far-right Front National. Trade unions were also affected by this expression of discontent. Of the

main confederations, the most pro-EU, the CFDT, also saw the lowest abstention rate (45%) and lowest far-right vote (17%) among its members. The more oppositional unions FO and CGT (also more working-class in their membership composition) experienced a ‘shock wave’ as a significant number of members failed to respond to leaders’ civic call to turn out and reject the far right. Only around 48% of CGT members turned out to vote, and of these 22% voted for the far right (Rousseau, 2014). Between the CFDT’s uneasy ‘Euro-democratisation’ strategy and the CGT and FO’s increasingly Euro-critical mobilisation, French trade unions are still trying to work out how they can respond to public Euroscepticism in their wider economic and social policy strategy.

### **Swedish Unions: Reluctant Europeans**

The orientation of trade unions in Sweden to European integration has been framed by the exceptionalism of the Swedish model of social welfare and the ways in which the Swedish labour movement has contributed to the development of this model. Sweden is marked by highly centralized and disciplined trade union organizations with very high levels of union density. There are three trade union confederations: *Landorganisationen* (LO) includes manual workers’ unions, *Tjänstemännens centralorganisation* (TCO) organizes the unions of clerical and technical employees and *Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation* (SACO) organizes the unions of professional workers. An important component of the Swedish Model was the existence of close organizational linkages and shared policy commitments between the LO and the *Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti* or Swedish Social Democratic Labour Party (SAP). The SAP has enjoyed electoral success unparalleled by social democratic parties in other advanced societies and this is reflected in the key institutional features of the Swedish Model. The Swedish trade unions have faced a centralized and internally disciplined employers’ organization in the form of the *Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen* (SAF) or the Swedish Employers’ Confederation. These factors

contributed to the development of a highly centralized system of bipartite bargaining underpinned by a historical class compromise. This compromise is enshrined in the 1938 *Basic Agreement* in which employers accepted the right of workers to unionize in order to improve and protect their position in the labour market and unions recognized the right of employers to manage and control the organization of the workplace.

The Swedish model of welfare emerged from decades of social democratic theory and practice that resulted in a welfare system premised on the key principles of ‘universalism’ and ‘de-commodification’ (Esping-Andersen, 1990) and which resulted in a potent ideology that blended notions of community, nation and state around the notion of *folkhem* or ‘people’s home’ (Tilton, 1991). Research by Busermeyer et al. (2008) highlighted that Scandinavian unions were not only more sceptical about the development of a common European Social Model than unions from ‘continental’ systems, but also more sceptical than unions from ‘Mediterranean’ and ‘Eastern European’ welfare systems. The development of an ESM threatens the position of Nordic trade unions within their national welfare system and labour market regimes and, in the context of a comparatively generous welfare state, constitutes a potentially downward pressure on national social standards. However, Busermeyer *et al.*: *ibid*: 440) highlight that the ambivalence of the Nordic unions is also evident on the basis that the existence of Social Europe in some form provides protection from the competitive threats emanating from more recent EU entrants from the East.

Trade unions in Sweden have been described as ‘reluctant Europeans’ (Miljan, 1977). The debate in Sweden has revealed three contentious positions with respect to membership of the EU: first, that EU membership would demonstrate the myth of Scandinavian exceptionalism; second that EU membership would recognize the new political and economic realities of a globalizing world and enable the progressive aspects of exceptionalism to be projected upwards; and third, that EU membership should be opposed as it would accelerate the erosion

of a superior form of society (Lawler, 1997: 566). Throughout most of post-war period, SAP and LO were opposed to membership of the EU on the grounds that it would threaten the sovereignty and neutrality of the Swedish state and the integrity of the Swedish Model. In 1990, in the context of a severe crisis, the SAP reversed its position and initiated the process of Swedish accession. Negotiations and a 'yes' vote in a referendum were completed in 1994 and Sweden acceded to EU membership on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995. There is evidence of emerging divisions within the LO and between the LO, TCO and SACO on the issue of EU membership. According to Bieler (1999, 2003, 2006) divisions between unions organizing in the domestic production sectors and transnational production sectors emerged on the issue of EU membership and then subsequently on the issue of EMU. While unions organizing in the domestic sector continued to adhere to the traditional SAP-LO position, for unions in the transnational sector, EU membership was the only strategy through which to regain control over transnational capital and international financial markets (Bieler, 1999). In the debate on EU membership, the leadership of both the LO and TCO were generally supportive, but were opposed by grass roots membership in the blue-collar sectors (Archer, 2000).

The subsequent debate on EMU highlighted the deepening of this division as transnational sector unions, not only continued to support deepening European integration, but also started to accept neo-liberal concepts and orientations (Bieler, 2003, 2006). The SAP agreed to support EURO entry at a special conference in 2000 and the LO also adopted a 'cautiously positive position', but set conditions for macroeconomic management that were difficult for the Government to accept (Widfeldt, 2004: 506-7). There were, however, divisions between unions organizing in the domestic and transnational sectors and between unions organizing 'core' and marginalized workers on the issue of how trade unions should respond to the pressures and dynamics of globalization on the Swedish Model (Bieler & Lindberg, 2008). The main divisions within the LO were between manufacturing unions such as *Metall* and

*Industrifacket* that were strongly in favour of the EURO and more domestically-oriented unions such as *Handels* and *Transport* that were deeply opposed. Whilst president of the LO Wajna Lundby-Wedlin signalled her personal support for the EURO, the membership rejected EMU by a factor of two to one and membership of TCO were equally divided on the issue. The SAP and the trade unions failed to develop a common position on EMU and the above divisions were exacerbated by working class and SAP membership alienation from a campaign that was also supported by political enemies in the form of business leaders and the bourgeois parties (Widfeldt, *op cit*: 509). In the referendum, EMU membership was rejected by a margin of 12%, LO members voted two to one against, TCO members were equally divided and the majority of SAP members voted against EMU entry.

The debate in Sweden has been tied inextricably to a debate on the future of Scandinavian exceptionalism and the erosion of what is seen as a superior form of society (Lawler, *op cit*: 566). There are shades of opinion on the EU in Sweden from the Europhilia of policy elites attempting to destroy the myth of Swedish exceptionalism to shades of Euroscepticism concerned with either projecting the Swedish model onto the European level or defending the Swedish model from the neo-liberal dynamics underpinning European integration. Trade unionists in Sweden occupy all these positions; although distribution between these positions is determined by cleavages between leadership and rank-and-file, export and domestic sectors and core and peripheral sectors of the labour market.

### **Trade unions at the European Level: Contesting Europeans**

In recent years, there has been a marked re-politicization of European integration as a result of the growing tensions between the regulatory regimes underpinning the single market and employment-based rights in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the impact of austerity measures. These developments have resulted in the development of an increasingly critical orientation towards European integration by actors at the European level and an increasing

tension between the ETUC and its constituent confederations over the growth and trajectory of 'Social Europe'. The emergence of more critical orientations at the European level can be located within the ETUC and in the involvement of trade unionists in more oppositional contexts such as the European Social Forums and the Euro-demonstrations.

Indications that the 'Europhilia' of the ETUC was beginning to fade emerged at the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, which took place in Seville in May 2007, and was intended to mark the new "offensive" which had gathered steam at the Eurodemonstrations of 2005 and 2006. The Seville debates on the new "mini-treaty" (one of three main subjects for debate, alongside flexicurity and coordinated wage bargaining) revealed sharp divergences within the ETUC. The TUC was critical of the ETUC leadership for its supportive position on the mini-treaty, and proposed a consensus text on the need for a charter of fundamental rights and a campaign against neoliberalism (Dufresne & Gobin, 2007: 78). The oppositional stance was badly received by Congress, and the main congress text was adopted unanimously, with just a few abstentions. Congress gave warm approval to pro-treaty speeches which were led by the French CFDT, and included the Italian CGIL, the Greek GSEE and Spanish CCOO, and articulated the argument that rejection of the treaty would lead to nationalism and that the treaty would allow the EU to domesticate transnational capitalism (Dufresne & Gobin, *ibid*: 79). The ETUC's 2011 Athens Congress highlighted a more important shift in the ETUC position. The ETUC expressed disappointment with the outcome of macroeconomic dialogue and the Lisbon process. From the end of 2008, it was argued, the Commission and Council had developed an austerity policy which ignored union recommendations and directly marginalised them. After 2005, the Lisbon process had also been redirected towards an over-liberalised approach which had generated an increasing disillusionment with Europe so that many workers now regarded it as a market union but not a social union (ETUC, 2011: 11). The ETUC leadership highlighted its growing disagreement with the management of the Euro



crisis. Prior to summer 2010, the ETUC supported the Council's proposals to strengthen economic governance of the Euro. However it expressed opposition to the composition of the task force (finance ministers rather than heads of state) and the focus on debt management and austerity policies. (ETUC, *ibid*: 12-13). The ETUC remains locked into the social dialogue process and the tripartite structures of economic governance in the hope of influencing policy, but in its new strategy, the elitist embrace has given way to a deep distrust of EU institutions. These discontents found more opposition expression in the involvement of trade unions in the European Social Forums (ESFs) that took place in Florence (2002), Paris (2003) and London (2004) and the Euro-demonstrations.

The European Social Forums were designed as deliberative spaces where representatives from a range of social movement and civil society organization could discuss alternatives to neo-liberalism and were modelled on the World Social Forum that had originally taken place in Port Alegre, Brazil in 2001. The leadership of large unions from UK, Germany and Sweden were absent from the first ESF in Florence, but representatives of the CGT and G10-Solidaires from France and the COBAS from Italy along with the RMT from the UK did attend (Bieler, 2006). As Bieler (*ibid*: 214-5) notes, while there were tensions between the established unions and the more radical social movement-oriented unions, neo-liberal globalization emerged as the main target for resistance generating a range of projects and proposals focussed around opposition to the Iraq war, the neo-liberal restructuring of public services as proposed by the European Commission, the Lisbon Summit and the GAT negotiations at the global level. The tensions between mainstream and radical trade unionism re-emerged at the Paris Summit as the ETUC organized its own summit prior to the ESF and no ETUC officials participated on the panels of the ESF. The concluding demonstration of the ESF was not attended in large numbers by the French unions leading commentators to argue that the established trade unions had attempted to put the brakes on a movement they

could no longer control (Bieler, *ibid*: 215) and as a result the Paris ESF was a cultural happening that had lost its political edge (Tormey, 2004). The London ESF, while smaller than the previous two forums, marked a re-engagement between established and radical unions. The ETUC was present at the main forum and the ESF was also attended by mainstream unions such as IG Metall and Ver.di from Germany and UNISON, GMB, T&G and CWU from the UK. There were also examples of large-scale mobilizations of European trade unions organized by the ETUC: from the 75,000 at Nice in 2000 to around 350,000 in total at a series of days of action in Madrid, Brussels, Berlin and Prague in May 2009. The Euro-demonstrations demonstrated the potential for mobilisation although the place of unions within the wider anti-austerity movement remains ambiguous.

### **Euroscepticism, Trade Union Reorientation and the Crisis of Social Democratic Trade Unionism**

The case studies presented in this chapter highlight the extent to which trade unions have developed increasingly critical orientations towards the direction and form of European integration. There are, however, questions as to whether these orientations can be captured adequately by the concept of 'Euroscepticism'. As Hyman (2010: 7) argues, the interpretation of opposition to particular aspects of European integration such as 'no' votes in referenda on accession or treaty change or entry to EMU leads to a rather tautological definition of 'Euroscepticism': these events being both consequences and elements in the definition the concept. There is clearly a danger of conflating 'Euroscepticism' with 'Europhobia' if the particular dynamics underpinning opposition to European integration are not explored adequately in specific times and contexts. Hence, Taggart (1988: 366) differentiates between 'contingent and qualified' opposition and 'outright and unqualified' opposition to the process of European integration and Lubbers and Scheepers (2005) differentiate between 'instrumental' and 'political' Euroscepticism. The evidence presented in this chapter suggest

that the dominant form of opposition amongst European trade unions is ‘contingent and qualified’ or ‘instrumental’. The work of Sørensen (2008: 8) allows further insights into more ‘political’ or ‘unqualified’ opposition. In this model, ‘economic’ and ‘sovereignty’ forms of Euroscepticism are complemented by ‘democratic’ Euroscepticism based on arguments concerning the democratic accountability of EU institutions and the specific content of EU policies and ‘social’ Euroscepticism on the over- or under-development of Social Europe. On this basis, Euroscepticism in Sweden is sovereignty-based and partly democratic, in France, Euroscepticism is mainly social but also partly economic and democratic and in the UK Euroscepticism is sovereignty-based and partly economic. Manifestations of Euroscepticism at the European level are principally democratic and social.

The discussion in this chapter has also highlighted the extent to which critical orientations towards the EU do not always result in a rejection of the project of European integration and an affirmation of the democratic autonomy of the nation state. As Erne (2008: 19-26) highlights, such a ‘democratic nationalization’ strategy is only one of four possible strategies based on whether unions pursue a democratic or technocratic strategy and whether the strategy is aimed at the national or European level. The traditional focus of the ETUC and other union organization operating at the European level has been a strategy of Euro-technocratization based on support for regulatory EU decision making and the incorporation of organized labour within the institutional machinery of the EU. However, increasing doubts over the efficacy of this strategy has led unions to pursue an alternative Euro-democratization strategy based on the politicization of EU decision-making, the organization of European collective action and an attempt to generate a European public sphere. The fourth strategy is technocratic renationalization and is based on support for competition state nationalism. The strategy chosen by unions ‘are neither simply chosen nor simply domestically predetermined, but also the result of social struggles’ (Erne, 2008: 22). However, Erne later revised this

framework in the conditions of hardened ‘endogenisation’ of austerity after 2008, and acknowledged that the distinction between different types of strategy had become blurred (Erne, 2015) and the chances of successful mobilisation significantly reduced. The potential for unions to pursue a successful ‘Euro-democratisation’ strategy is likely to be limited by the declining political and economic power of trade unions (Phelen, 2009) including the disarticulation of the linkages between trade unions and social democratic political parties at the national level (Hancké, 2009; Taylor et al., 2011). This means that identifying alternative strategies for unions in relation to the EU must take into consideration the linkage between unions and parties and be analysed in terms of the crisis and reformulation of social democratic trade unionism (Upchurch et al., 2009). The close and enduring institutional linkages between LO-SAP in Sweden, the increasing tension between the Labour Party and trade unions in the UK and the absence of a dominant party-union nexus in France are also important factors in directing the strategic direction of trade union orientations that are critical to the European integration project.

## **Notes**

1. See for example the CGT general secretary Benoît Frachon’s speech to the World Federation of Trade Unions congress in October 1957.
2. Eurodisney had been found to recruit workers in other EC states and pay them less than French employees. The Rush Portuguesa case involved a Portuguese temporary employment agency which recruited workers there on local pay and conditions to work in France. See Milner, 1992.

## **References**

- Apeldoorn van, B. (2013) The European capitalist class and the crisis of its hegemony. *Socialist Register*, 50.
- Archer, C. (2000) 'Euroscepticism in the Nordic Region' *European Integration* 22(1): 87-114.
- Baimbridge, M., Whyman, P. B., & Burkitt, B. (2007) 'Beyond EU neoliberalisation: A progressive strategy for the British left' *Capital & Class*, 31(3): 67-91.
- Bieler, A. (1999) 'Globalization, Swedish trade unions and European integration: From europhobia to conditional support' *Cooperation and Conflict* 34(1): 21-46.
- Bieler, A. (2003) 'Swedish trade unions and economic and monetary union: The European Union membership debate revisited' *Cooperation and Conflict* 38(4): 385-407.
- Bieler, A. (2005) European integration and the transnational restructuring of social relations: the emergence of labour as a regional actor? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 43(3): 461-84.
- Bieler, A. (2006) *The Struggle for a Social Europe: Trade Unions and EMU in Times of Global Restructuring* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bieler, A. & Lindberg, I. (2008) 'Swedish Unions and Globalization: Labour Strategies in a changing global order' in A. Bieler, I. Lindberg & D. Pillay (eds.) *Labour and the Challenges of Globalization* London: Pluto Press.
- Busemeyer, M. R., Kellerman, C., Petring, A. & Stuchlik, A. (2008) 'Overstretching solidarity? Trade unions' national perspectives on the European economic and social model' *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 14(3): 433-52.
- Bücker, A. & Warneck, W. (2010) *Viking-Laval-Rüffert: consequences and policy perspectives*. Brussels: European Trade Union Institute.
- Callaghan, J. (2007) 'Pivotal powers: The British Labour Party and European unity since 1945' *Capital & Class*, 31(3): 199-215.

- Coldrick, P. (1998) 'The ETUC's Role in the EU's New Economic and Monetary Architecture' *Transfer : European Journal of Labour and Research* 4(1) : 21-35.
- Dorfman, G.A. (1977) From the Inside Looking Out: The Trades Union Congress in the EEC *Journal of Common Market Studies* 15(4): 248-271.
- Durfresne, A. & Gobin, C. (2007) 'Vers une offensive syndicale européenne? Le 11ème Congrès de la Confédération européenne des syndicats' *Chronique Internationale de l'IRES* 108: 70-80.
- Erne, R. (2008) *European unions: Labor's Quest for a Transnational Democracy*. Ithaca, NY ILR Press.
- Erne, R. (2015) A supranational regime that nationalizes social conflict: explaining European trade unions' difficulties in politicizing European economic governance. *Labor History*, 56 (3): 345-368.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* Cambridge: Polity.
- ETUC (2011) *Activity report 2007-11*, Brussels: European Trade Union Confederation.
- Gold, M. (ed.) (1993) *The social dimension: employment policy in the European Community*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Grunberg, G. (2005) 'Le référendum français de ratification du traité constitutionnel européen du 29 mars 2005' *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 23(3) : 128-44.
- Gumbrell-McCormick, R. & Hyman, R. (2013) *Trade unions in Western Europe. Hard times, Hard Choices* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hancké, B. (2009) 'Cooperation and competition among European labor' *Labor History*, 50(2): 200-4.
- Hobart, S. B. & Brouard, S. (2011) 'Contesting the European Union? Why the Dutch and the French rejected the European constitution' *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(2): 309-22.

- Hyman, R. (2001) *Understanding European trade unionism. Between market, class and society* London: Sage.
- Hyman, R. (2003) *Trade Unions and the Ambiguities of Social Europe* Paper presented at the IIRA World Congress, Berlin, September.
- Hyman, R. (2010) 'Trade unions and Europe: are the members out of step?' *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations* 65(1): 3-29.
- Ivaldi, G. (2006) 'Beyond France's 2005 referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty: Second-order model, anti-Establishment attitudes and the end of the alternative European utopia' *West European Politics* 29(1): 47-69.
- Jefferys, S. (2000) 'A Copernican revolution in French industrial relations. Are the times a'changing?' *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(2): 241-60.
- Lawler, P. (1997) 'Scandinavian Exceptionalism and the European Union' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 35(4): 565-94.
- Leconte, C. (2010) *Understanding Euroscepticism* Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Lubbers, M. & Scheepers, P. (2005) 'Political versus Instrumental Euro-scepticism: Mapping Scepticism in European Countries and Regions' *European Union Politics* 6(2): 223-42.
- Mathers, A. (2007) *Struggling for a social Europe. Neoliberal globalization and the birth of a European social movement*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Meardi, G. (2013) *Social Failures of EU Enlargement. A Case of Workers Voting with their Feet* London: Routledge.
- Miljan, T. (1977) *The Reluctant Europeans* London: Hurst
- Milner, S. (1992) 'French trade unions and the Single European Market' *Modern and Contemporary France*, 51(3): 11-21.
- Mullen, A. (2007) 'The British left: For and against Europe? A historical survey' *Capital & Class*, 31(3): 217-231.

- Phelan, C. (2009) 'Trade unions and the European Union's democratic deficit' *Labor History* 50(2): 187-93.
- Radice, H. (2007) 'Britain and Europe: Class, state and the politics of integration' *Capital & Class*, 31(3): 27-46.
- Rath, F. (1994) 'The co-ordinates of trade union policy on Europe' in W. Lecher (ed.) *Trade unions in the European Union. A handbook* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 235-92.
- Ricard-Nihoul, G. (2005) *Le 'non' français du 29 mars 2005 : comprendre, agir*. Research Paper no.44. Paris : Notre Europe.
- Rosamond, B. (1993) 'National labour organizations and European integration: British trade and '1992' *Political Studies* XLI: 420-434.
- Ross, G. W. (2006) 'Danger, one EU crisis may hide another: social model anxieties and hard cases' *Comparative European Politics* 35(4): 423-434.
- Ross, G. W. and Martin, A. (1999) *The Brave New World of European Labor: European Trade Unions at the Millennium* New York: Berghahn.
- Ryner, M. (2007) 'US power and the crisis of social democracy in Europe's second project of integration' *Capital & Class* 31(3), 7-26.
- Sørensen, C. (2008) *Love me, love me not.... A typology of public Euroscepticism* EPERN Working Paper 19 <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=epern-working-paper-19.pdf&site=266> Accessed 05/12/2014
- Taggart, P. (1998) 'A touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in contemporary Western European party systems' *European Journal of Political Research* 33(3), 363-388.
- Taylor, G. (2008) 'Europe: The double-edged sword of justice? New Labour, Trade Unions and the Politics of Social Europe' in G. Daniels and J. McIlroy (Eds.) *Trade Unions in a Neo-Liberal World: British Trade Unions under New Labour* London, Routledge, 342-67.



- Taylor, G. and Mathers, A. (2004) 'The 'variable geometry' of European trade unionism: The case of the European Trade Union Confederation' *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 10(3): 267-285.
- Taylor, G., Mathers, A. & Upchurch, M. (2011) 'Beyond the chains that bind: The political crisis of unions in Western Europe' *Labor History* 52(3): 287-306.
- Teague, P. (1989) 'The British TUC and the European Community' *Millennium* 18(1): 29-45.
- Tilton, T. (1991) *The Political Theory of Swedish Social Democracy: Through the Welfare State to Socialism* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tormey, S. (2004) 'The 2003 'European Social Forum: Where next for the anti-capitalist movement?'' *Capital & Class* 28: 149-157.
- Trades Union Congress (TUC) (1988) *Europe 1992: Maximising the Benefits, Minimising the Costs* London: Trades Union Congress.
- TUC (2013) Revitalising Social Europe available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/international-issues/europe/ec-social-agenda/revitalising-social-europe> (last accessed 13/07/2016).
- TUC (2015) General Council statement on EU Referendum available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/about-tuc/congress/congress-2015/general-council-statement-eu-referendum> (last accessed 13/07/2016).
- Unite (2014) Unite urges Labour party to hold EU referendum available at: <http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/unite-urges-labour-party-to-hold-eu-referendum/> (last accessed 13/07/2016).
- Upchurch, M., Taylor, G. & Mathers, A. (2009) *The Crisis of Social Democratic Unionism in Western Europe: The Search for Alternatives*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Usherwood, S. & Startin, N. (2013) 'Euro scepticism as a Persistent Phenomenon' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51(1): 1-16.
- Vivier, B. (2005) *Référendum sur le traité constitutionnel: les syndicats dans l'embarras*. Paris : Institut Supérieur du Travail (available at <http://istravail.com/article231.html>, accessed 30 September 2014).

Widfeldt, A. (2004) 'Elite confusion and public defiance: Sweden's Euro referendum in 2003' *West European Politics* 27(3): 503-17.