

The Conceptual History of Peace and Internationalism in the early Labour Movement

The international labour movement was heavily involved in the struggle for peace and antimilitarism as early as the in the days of the First International in the 1860s. Even greater emphasis was put on the issue of sustaining peace by the Second International, founded in 1889, and the subject was debated at congresses during the 25 years before the First World War.

The Scandinavian labour parties also accepted the task of antimilitaristic struggle as a part of its' socialist cause during the 1890s and handled it in different ways during the following decades. Extra important for Scandinavia was the ongoing crisis in the forced union between Sweden and Norway where the two national labour parties co-operated to avoid a war between the countries.

Even if a great deal of practical work was done to support the peace cause, one of the international labour movement's basic tenets was, however, that no 'real' peace would emerge until a socialist society was created. And that the international brotherhood between workers was more important than the national identity. These definitions of the concepts peace and internationalism altered heavily from the definition that for example the liberals and the bourgeois peace movement made during the same time.

Doing research om how these concepts was used by the early labour movement in Europe and Scandinavia during its' formative period is an important way of giving us new knowledge on how the international and national struggle was conducted. My presentation will focus on how the Swedish labour movement integrated a transnational debate about how the antimilitaristic struggle should be handled in their different national struggles and will especially highlight the internal debates on how the concepts peace and internationalism was used in the general socialist propaganda.