

LABOUR MOVEMENT, FEMINISM AND POLITICAL CHANGE

CONC's Secretariat for Women's Affairs during the Spanish Transition to democracy (1976-1981)

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General Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain (1939-1975) suppressed political freedom, banned strikes and trade unions and tried to ensure that women remained in private sphere, so it developed a set of laws designed to put burdens on women's work in regular job market, especially married women's.¹ Labour movements and conflicts thus acquired both a significant political meaning during the dictatorship. As a matter of fact, the worker's movement Workers' Commissions (in Spanish *Comisiones Obreras*, CCOO) was considered one of the most effective ways to fight the dictatorship since the 1960s, when it emerged. This encouraged many people to join it and they did not always correspond to the image of industrial labourer.²

Women's participation in social movements was one of the ways to confront female adscription to private sphere and a way to take in about citizenship.³ On the other side, we have to take into account the difficult relationship between women and labour movement in the 19th and 20th centuries, due to the masculine definition of 'working class'.⁴

Some historical contexts encouraged worker's organisations to modify this definition a little so as to stimulate women's mobilisation. In addition, female workers' participation in trade unions has, on occasion, softened some male union leaders' antifeminism.⁵

¹ RUIZ FRANCO, Rosario. "Nuevos horizontes para las mujeres de los años 60: la ley de 22 de julio de 1961", *Arenal*, 2:2, 1995, pp. 247-268. CARBAJO, Judith. "Mujeres, trabajo y salario. Jornada, promoción y capacidad adquisitiva de las españolas (1965-1975), in CUESTA, Josefina (dir.). *Historia de las mujeres en España. Siglo XX*, vol. II, Madrid: Instituto de la Mujer, 2003, pp. 256-330.

² MOLINERO, Carme and YSÀS, Pere. *Productores disciplinados y minorías subversivas. Clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España franquista*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1998, pp. 1-17.

³ DUCH, Montserrat and FERRÉ, Meritxell, *De súbdites a ciudadanes. Dones a Tarragona, 1939-1982*. Tarragona: Cercle d'Estudis Històrics i Socials "Guillem Oliver" del Camp de Tarragona, 2009, pp. 227.

⁴ ROSE, Sonya. "Class Formation and the Quitanessential Worker", in HALL, John R. (ed.). *Reworking Class*. Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 133-166, among others.

⁵ WEITZ, Eric D., "L'home heroic i la dona eterna. Gènere i política en el comunisme europeu, 1917-1950", *Afers*, 33-34, 1999, pp. 391-414. CANNING, Kathleen, "El género y la política de formación de

Marín Corbera, Martí; Domènech Sampere, Xavier; Martínez i Muntada, Ricard (eds.): *III International Conference Strikes and Social Conflicts: Combined historical approaches to conflict. Proceedings*, Barcelona, CEFID-UAB, 2016, pp. 839-849. ISBN 978-84-608-7860-5.

Studies on female militancy in CCOO during the Francoism prove women's participation since the origin of the movement. Furthermore, they also demonstrate the masculinisation of CCOO, which resulted in female worker's difficulties to be seen as representatives of the working class, to be leaders, and to get their claims as women workers defended by the organisation.⁶

Franco's death modified the setting sharply. In a context of great social and political mobilisation, there were deep political changes, which included the legalization of parties and trade unions (CCOO was legalized on 27th April 1977). Women's public roles changed significantly during those years, when the feminist movement emerged and developed. This paper aims to study the Secretariat for Women's Affairs (in Catalan *Secretaria de la Dona*, SD from now on) in National Workers' Commission of Catalonia (in Catalan *Comissió Obrera Nacional de Catalunya*, CONC from now on), which was the Catalan federation of CCOO's trade union confederation. Studying SD development can help to understand the interaction between labour movement and feminist movement in a context of political change and economic crisis. Focusing the study on the area of Catalonia allows a nuanced exploration in a significant location, given the strength of both feminist movement and union activity and the impact of economic crisis in the area.

clase social: nuevas reflexiones sobre la historia del movimiento obrero alemán”, *Arenal*, 2:2, 1995, pp. 175-218.

⁶ GARCÍA-NIETO, María Carmen. “Les dones i el moviment obrer al Baix Llobregat durant el franquisme”, in BORDERÍAS, Cristina (ed.) and BENGOCHEA, Soledad (coord.). *Les dones i la història del Baix Llobregat*. Vol. 2. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Comarcals del Baix Llobregat- Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2002, pp. 101-118. BORDERÍAS, Cristina; BORRELL, Mònica; IBARZ, Jordi; VILLAR, Conchi, “Los eslabones perdidos del sindicalismo democrático”, *Historia Contemporánea*, 26, 2003, pp. 161-206. DÍAZ SÁNCHEZ, Pilar, “La relación de las mujeres trabajadoras y los sindicatos durante el franquismo y la Transición” in CERRADA JIMÉNEZ, Ana I. and SEGURA GRAÍÑO, Cristina (eds.). *Las mujeres y el poder. Representaciones y prácticas de vida*. Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 2000, pp. 323-338. DÍAZ SÁNCHEZ, Pilar, “Disidencias y marginaciones de las mujeres en el sindicalismo español”, *Sociología del Trabajo*, 56, 2006, pp. 101-116. MUÑOZ RUIZ, María del Carmen. “Género, masculinidad y nuevo movimiento obrero bajo el franquismo”, in BABIANO, José (ed.). *Del hogar a la huelga. Trabajo, género y movimiento obrero durante el franquismo*. Madrid: La Catarata: 2007, pp. 245-285. LÓPEZ HERNÁNDEZ, María Teresa, “Participación y representación sindical femenina en Comisiones Obreras (1970-1982)”, *Cuestiones de Género: de la Igualdad y de la Diferencia*, 4, 2009, pp. 121-146. VERDUGO, Vicenta, “¡Compañera! ¡Trabajadora! Las mujeres en las CCOO del País Valenciano: de la dictadura franquista a la Transición democrática”, *Historia, Trabajo y Sociedad*, 3, 2012, pp. 11-34. VARO, Nadia. *Las militantes ante el espejo. Clase y género en las CC.OO. del área de Barcelona (1964-1978)*. Alzira: Germania, 2014.

Feminist movement and labour militants

The World Conference of the International Women's Year, which was organised by United Nations and held in Mexico in the summer of 1975, set the feminist movement in motion in Catalonia during the Transition. The dissatisfaction on how the official organisations conducted the commemoration of the International Women's Year led some women to organise the first Catalonian Conference on Woman (in Catalan *Jornades Catalanes de la Dona*), celebrated in May 1976. The conference was organised by the Women's Department of the United Nations' Friends Association, which was led by women with different (antifrancoist) political backgrounds and were involved in several women's associations. The conference preparation itself helped to create new women's associations and to change their purposes. The conference was held in April 1976. Neither political parties nor trade unions took part in it 'officially', as they were forbidden. Nevertheless, CONC sent a representative. She was Núria Casals, the only women who was in the secretariat. She was sent because she was a woman, but at this moment she intended to speak out against feminism because she thought that it only defended the bourgeois women's interests. However, she changed her mind because 'they were talking about many thing that I had never thought that they were politics, and there were issues that I lived through in my daily life.'⁷

The Catalonian Conference on Woman has been considered the trigger for the Catalan feminist movement during the Transition. As a matter of fact, one of its consequences was the creation of CCOO Female Group (in Catalan, *Grup de Dones de CCOO*), in a period when the socio-political movement CCOO began its transformation into a trade union.⁸ The CCOO Female Group began its regular activity in the summer of 1977 and joined the Catalan Feminist Coordinator (Coordinadora Feminista). In the beginning of 1978 the group consisted of a stable core of 15 to 20 female CCOO militants.⁹ It expanded first in the city of Barcelona and then in its metropolitan area. The group activity and expansion explain the creation of the SD during the First

⁷ Arxiu de Comissions Obreres de Catalunya (hereafter AHCO), interview with Nuria Casals Pérez.

⁸ RAMOS, Gemma, "Trajectòria de la CONC, 1976-1988", in GABRIEL, Pere (coord.). *Comissions Obreres de Catalunya, 1964-1989*. Barcelona: Empúries-Ceres, 1989, pp. 81-129. REDERO SAN ROMÁN, Manuel and PÉREZ DELGADO, Manuel, "Sindicalismo y transición política en España", *Ayer*, 15, 1994, pp. 189-222.

⁹ DONES DE CC.OO., "Dones treballadores", *Dones en lluita*, 1. Pavelló Repùblica, Grupo de Mujeres de CC.OO., "A todas las trabajadoras!! Resumen de las últimas actividades", CCOO Arxiu 2.

Congress of CONC (from 12th to 15th March, 1978). It was one of the ten secretariats that formed CONC Executive Committee.

Who were the women involved in the SD? According to some studies, women who began their militancy in CCOO during the 1970s were more interested in the Secretariat of Women's Affairs and, in general, in the feminist movement, than those who joined CCOO during the 1960s.¹⁰ Most women who enrolled in CCOO during the 1960s had negative or ambiguous attitudes towards specific women's organization in CCOO and feminism, especially those who had not lived the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Women who had taken part in catholic female workers' organisations previously (who sometimes had defended that they should be unified with catholic male worker's organisations) might have thought that women's organisations were out of date.¹¹ Women who came from communist militancy (PSUC, in Catalonia) and joined CCOO during the 1960s might have assumed that the most important social movement was the labour movement, as their party stated in those times. They thought that women's movement was less important and, consequently, if they took part in it they were discriminating themselves. In addition, the controversial end of the female organisation launched by the PSUC, Women's Democratic Movement (in Catalan *Moviment Democràtic de Dones*, MDD, that existed from 1965 to 1969 approximately) promoted negative opinions towards women's organisations.¹²

In general terms, women who joined CCOO since the late 1960s had more positive opinions towards the autonomous organisation of women inside CCOO. The female CCOO militants most involved in SD had some additional features in common. Most of them were born in 1950 approximately, so they did not took part in the MDD and were influenced by the feminist movement, developed when they were young. In addition, many of them had secondary studies,¹³ which might have helped them to question gender roles¹⁴.

¹⁰ BORDERÍAS, Cristina, et. al. "Los eslabones perdidos...". *Op.Cit.* Varo, Nadia. *Las militantes ante el espejo*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 126-128.

¹¹ AHCO, interview with Resurrección Fernández Páez. Interviews with ALV, (2008/02/08), María Rosa Salicrú Pinós (2008/02/29) and MTR (2007/02/17).

¹² AHCO, interviews with María Rosa Borràs Borràs, Teresa Buigas Poveda, Olga Miralles i Fossas, Pepa Monné Mola and Anna Morató Sáenz. Interview with Anna María Moya Guixa (2008/03/04-2008/04/01).

¹³ AHCO, interviews with Núria Casals Pérez, María Jesús Pinto Iglesias, Isabel Aunión Morro, María Dolores Carrión Cazorla, María Àngels Franco Sala, Aurora Gómez Cano and Cinta Llorens Sanz. Interviews with María Jesús Pinto (2008/05/22) and Núria Casals (2008/05/29).

¹⁴ Varo, Nadia. *Las militantes ante el espejo*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 128-129.

On the other hand, SD's chairwomen in CONC and USCOB (CCOO in Barcelona) were members of the party Communist Movement (*Moviment Comunista*, MC). Since 1975, this party encouraged their female militants to get involved in the feminist movement and created an autonomous female structure in order to promote the feminist theoretical work and changes in the organisation¹⁵. Furthermore, as MC was a minority party in CCOO (since most of its leaders were PSUC members), PSUC leaders in CCOO might have allowed SD being ruled by a MC member in order to get what they thought were more important Secretariats.¹⁶

Women involved in the SD combined their identity as workers with their identity as feminist. For women with families with low incomes, working was a need. However, during the 1960s and, specially, the 1970s, the industrial work became prestigious for several reasons. Spanish labour laws rarely regulated domestic service, as it was not considered properly a job because it took place in private homes. Consequently, when the government ruled the domestic service a specific juridical regime different from Labour Law was designed.¹⁷ Thus, labour conditions usually depended on the employer's good will. In addition, domestic service was poorly perceived, even among working class families and female workers.¹⁸ On the other hand, some female workers would rather work in the industry because they wanted a scheduled timetable and a 'visible' work.¹⁹

What is more striking, some women decided to proletarianise, because they thought that the best way to fight the dictatorship (and the capitalism) was getting involved in the labour movement. In order to do so, they thought that they needed to work as industrial labourers. Some of them left secondary or university studies²⁰ and

¹⁵ AGUSTÍN, Mercedes. *Feminismo: identidad personal y lucha colectiva (análisis del movimiento feminista español en los años 1975 a 1985)*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2003, pp. 123-126. MOVIMIENTO COMUNISTA. *Documentos fundamentales del Movimiento Comunista*. Movimiento Comunista, 1981, pp. 58, 65.

¹⁶ Interviews with María Jesús Pinto Iglesias (2008/05/22) and Núria Casals Pérez (2008/05/29).

¹⁷ MARTÍNEZ VEIGA, Ubaldo, *Mujer, trabajo y domicilio*. Barcelona: Icaria, 1995. ESPUNY, María Jesús, "La inclusión del servicio doméstico en los subsidios y seguros sociales (1944)", in *VIII Encuentros de Investigadores del Franquismo, Barcelona 21-22 de noviembre de 2013*. Barcelona: CEFID-UAB, Fundació Cipriano García, Red de Archivos Históricos de Comisiones Obreras, 2013, CD-ROM.

¹⁸ AHCO, interviews with Josefa Moral Siles and Ángeles Romero Pérez

¹⁹ DÍAS SÁNCHEZ, Pilar. *El trabajo de las mujeres en el textil madrileño. Racionalización industrial y experiencias de género (1959-1986)*. Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, p. 83. AHCO, interview with María Dolores Ramos Cazorla.

²⁰ AHCO, interviews with María Àngels Franco Sala and Joana Agudo Bataller.

others resigned from relatively qualified jobs.²¹ Moreover, some women with humbler backgrounds decided to work (or keep working) in the industry due to union reasons.²²

Paid work acquired a political meaning for women who took part in CCOO since the late 1960s. Some of them even made a considerable effort to identify themselves with the CCOO's definition of "working class". According to the CCOO (clandestine) contemporary press, when CCOO leaders and militants mentioned 'workers' or the 'working class' they were thinking mainly of industrial male workers, especially those who worked in the metallurgical industry.²³

The feminist movement emergence in 1975 and 1976 changed the setting. The feminist movement allowed many women to name ways of oppression that they had never thought of before. It also contributed to the integration of reproductive rights into the democratic rights and created a collective identity as feminist women.²⁴ As Alberto Melucci said, social movements create and spread new meanings, which are the result of the interaction among movement members. One of the most important new meanings is collective identity, which means identifying 'we'.²⁵

Women who enrolled CCOO during the Franco's regime identified themselves as workers. During the Transition, the development of the feminist movement and the SD might have contributed to reinforcing the identity of some of them as *female* workers, especially those who collaborated with SD.²⁶ However, we have to take into account that many women –enrolled during the 1960s or later– had an antifeminist discourse. They showed rejection against the feminist movement because they thought that labour movement was more useful to fight inequalities. Some of them considered the feminist movement unnecessary or too 'specific'.²⁷

²¹ AHCO, interviews with Núria Casals Pérez, María Jesús Pinto Iglesias, Anna Bosch Parera.

²² AHCO, interviews with Isabel López López and Ángeles Romero Pérez.

²³ VARO, Nadia. *Las militantes ante el espejo*. Op.Cit., p. 93.

²⁴ NASH, Mary. "La construcción de una cultura política desde la legitimidad feminista durante la Transición Política Democrática", in AGUADO, Ana and ORTEGA, Teresa M. (eds.). *Feminismos y antifeminismos. Culturas políticas e identidades de género en la España del siglo XX*. Universitat de València-Universidad de Granada, 2011, pp. 283-306.

²⁵ MELUCCI, Alberto, "Asumir el compromiso: identidad y movilización en los movimientos sociales", *Zona Abierta*, 69, 1994, pp. 153-180.

²⁶ AHCO, interviews with Adoración Díez Hernando and María Àngel Franco Sala.

²⁷ AHCO, interviews with Josefa Moral Siles and Consol Moreno Monterroso.

The most involved members SD created a unite group of women who identified themselves as feminist.²⁸ In fact, from the very beginning SD created the Women's Commission, where territorial and sectorial representatives met several times a year.²⁹ In this commission members of different left-wing parties, PSUC and MC, cohabitated. The resistance against Women's Secretariat in the trade union might have fostered its cohesion.

The SD during the Transition

The SD was created in May 1978 and, a month later, SM was created during the CCOO first Congress, when CCOO began a new stage as a legal trade union. The low rate of women among the union's leaders became clear during those congresses. In the CONC's Executive Committee, only 4 out of 51 members were women; in the CCOO Confederation's Secretariat, only 3 out of 43 members were women.

The feminist movement development and the action of some female militants helped to create and consolidate the structures devoted to defend female worker's rights in CCOO. It did not happen in all the unions. UGT, one of the most important ones, did not create a specific structure for women until 1983.³⁰ Although CCOO promoted the secretariats for women's affairs both in Spain and territorial federations, people involved in them noticed that other militants considered their work unimportant.³¹ In a survey carried out in 1979, 50% of representatives who met in SM's Conference stated that the union was indifferent to SM and activities for women, while 33.3% of them thought that the union was collaborative. In 1980 the answers were even more pessimistic, because 62% thought that the union was indifferent and 15.5% believed

²⁸ AHCO, interview with Cinta Llorens Sanz. Interview with Núria Casals Pérez, 2008/05/29. Interview with María Jesús Pinto, 2008/05/22.

²⁹ Fundación 1º de Mayo-Archivo de Historia del Trabajo (hereafter F1ºM-AHT), Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer, 35/06, Núria Casals, Secretaría de la Dona [sic]. F1ºM-AHT, Secretaría de la Mujer, 35/7. CCOO de Catalunya, "Informe sobre Balance y Perspectivas de la Secretaría de la Dona de Catalunya", October 1978.

³⁰ GARCÍA RODRÍGUEZ, Elisa. "Los 25 años del Departamento Confederal de la Mujer Trabajadora", in CAPEL, Rosa M. (dir.). *Cien años trabajando por la igualdad*, Madrid: Fundación Largo Caballero-Unión General de Trabajadores-Instituto de la Mujer. Madrid: Ministerio de Igualdad, 2008, pp. 267.

³¹ F1ºM-AHT, interview with Alicia de Diego. AHCO, interviews with Núria Casals Pérez and María Jesús Pinto Iglésias.

that it was collaborative.³² A report on Catalonian SD written by its spokeswoman explained that there were less suspicions and reluctances against the organisation than it had been, but ‘An additional difficulty is the incomprehension and devaluation of SD’s work. It is not shown with blatant opposition, but by not giving the resources needed to do the work (...) As we are undergoing an economic crisis is its thought that ‘priorities’ must be set in union’s action, so the efforts devoted to SM are seen as such a luxury’.³³ The early 1980s were quite difficult for SM. In fact, during the second (1981) and third (1984) CCOO Confederation’s congresses there were proposals of unifying SM with other secretariats, but in the end it remained independent.³⁴

During the Transition and the first years of CCOO as a legal trade union the secretariats for women’s affairs in Spain and Catalonia (and other territories) faced a complex situation, due to membership decrease, economical crisis and unemployment. The 1973 oil crisis resulted in a global economical recession, which in Spain lasted till mid-1980s, particularly affecting the region of Catalonia due to the importance of its industrial sector. Male unemployment rate in Spain was 15.6% in 1982, while female rate was 20.3%. The situation in Catalonia was even more serious, because male unemployment rate was 18.5% and the female rate 26.6%.³⁵

On the other side, union membership changed a lot during those years. Union enrolment grew fast, especially in 1977 and 1978 after legalization of unions in 1977. CCOO won the first union elections, followed by the socialist union UGT. The economical situation, political developments and union action changed severely the context and union membership decreased sharply. In the case of CCOO, the union had 1,840,907 members in 1978, while it had 778,474 members in 1981.³⁶ Consequently, the unions lost summon ability and funds. CCOO (and UGT after) accepted ‘Moncloa’s Pacts’ signed by government and opposition political parties, which established budget

³² F1ºM-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer de CC.OO., 4-4, ‘I Jornadas de la Mujer de CC.OO: Leyes protecciónistas’, Madrid, 17-18th March 1979, p. 39.

³³ F1ºM-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer, 35/06, Núria Casals, Secretaría de la Dona [sic], CCOO de Catalunya, “Informe sobre Balance y Perspectivas de la Secretaría de la Dona de Catalunya”, October 1978; “Proyecto de Balance de la Secretaría de la Mujer de la CONC”, July 1981.

³⁴ BRAVO, Carmen; ARAGÓN, Jorge; BRUNEL, Susana; ANTÓN, Eva. *Trabajadora. Tres décadas de acción sindical por la igualdad de género (1977-2007)*. Madrid: Fundación 1º de Mayo-Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer, 2007, p. 68.

³⁵ ALCOBENDAS TIRADO, Pilar. *Datos sobre el trabajo de la mujer en España*. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1983, p. 138.

³⁶ SOTO CARMONA, Álvaro. “Comisiones Obreras en la Transición y consolidación democrática. De la Asamblea de Barcelona a la Huelga General del 14-D (1976-1988)”, in RUIZ, David (dir.). *Historia de Comisiones Obreras*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1993, pp. 507.

austerity and wage restraint, eroding unions that supported them. In addition, from 1979 to 1986 UGT and CCOO had divergent union policies, as UGT signed agreements with the employers' federation without CCOO.³⁷

In such a difficult situation, from 1978 to 1981 the main SM objectives both in Spain and Catalonia were reinforcing their organisation, fighting labour laws that discriminated against women and avoiding female unemployment. As for the first aim, secretariats of women expanded after the first CCOO Confederation's Congress. In Catalonia, there were secretariats for women's affairs in several territorial organisations, but initially the activity was mainly concentrated in the city of Barcelona, where there were secretariats for women's affairs in several sectors.³⁸

Another major aim for SM and SD was eliminating what were called 'protective laws', but were actually discriminatory laws against women's paid work. The first SD's conference (Madrid, March 1979) was dedicated to these laws, such as female workers banning from night work or some dangerous or unhealthy jobs. SM also claimed that employers should guarantee the workplace to women on maternity leave, because they were using these maternity leaves to reduce the workforce.³⁹ This conference intended to have an influence on 'Workers' Statute' (*Estatuto de los Trabajadores* in Spanish) law-making process. The Workers' Statute was issued on 10th March 1980. Although it recognized equal pay for equal work, SM and SD were highly critical about it because it did not include their claims and, in addition, domestic service remained excluded from the labour law.⁴⁰

SM and SD had to be fully aware of avoiding the introduction or keeping of discriminatory clauses in collective agreement. We have an example in the case of 'dowry'. In some sectors women lost their jobs when they got married and they received a sum of money called 'dowry' in compensation. The Employment Relations Act (1976) abolished it, but it could be maintained if the collective agreement accepted so.

³⁷ REDERO SAN ROMÁN, Manuel and PÉREZ DELGADO, Manuel, "Sindicalismo y transición política...", *Op.Cit.* SOTO CARMONA, Álvaro. "Comisiones Obreras...". *Op.Cit.*

³⁸ F1°M-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer, 35/06, Núria Casals, Secretaría de la Dona, CCOO de Catalunya, "Informe sobre Balance y Perspectivas de la Secretaría de la Dona de Catalunya", October 1978; "Proyecto de Balance de la Secretaría de la Mujer de la CONC", July 1981.

³⁹ F1°M-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer de CC.OO., 4-4, "I Jornadas de la Mujer de CC.OO: Leyes proteccionistas", Madrid, 17-18th March 1979.

⁴⁰ F1°M-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer de CC.OO., 4-4, "II Jornadas de la Mujer de CCOO", Madrid, 28-29th July 1980.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s many collective agreements kept the dowry.⁴¹ In fact, SD had to write a letter to the CONC's Textile Federation asking to retreat the claim of reintroducing it in the 1982's collective agreement.⁴²

Finally, from 1979 one of the major SM (and SD) objectives was avoiding female unemployment. The female unemployment was higher than the male one and increased for a longer period of time. In Spain 11% of women and 8.92% of men stated that they were unemployed in 1979. Male unemployment rose till 1985 and reached 20.13%, while female unemployment increased until 1988, with 28.24% of female active population.⁴³ In Catalonia many sectors based on female workforce, such as the clothing and knitwear sectors, became informal.⁴⁴

Part of the first SD's conference in November 1979 and all the second SM's conference in 1980 were devoted to female unemployment. Both of them criticized the weak union's action against female unemployment, because most of the union representatives thought that a man without job was an unemployed, while a women without a job was a housewife. Consequently, 'Women's dismissals are not considered a union problem (...) Mobilisation is proposed only when dismissals affect men.'⁴⁵ These conceptions affected both how union representatives negotiated with employers in cases of women being made redundant and union's more general policies. For instance, secretariats for women's affairs opposed the Basic Employment Act (October 1980) since it considered employment a family right and because the 'family responsibilities' subsidy was given, in principle, to men. The Second CCOO's Confederation Congress (Barcelona, 1981) rejected SM's position. Therefore, the union mobilisation intensity, the measures agreed by unions and government and conversion

⁴¹ Tonia Etxarri, 'La dote a cambio del puesto de trabajo', *Lluita Obrera*, 5, 15-30th April 1978, p. 15.

⁴² F1ºM-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer de CC.OO., 36/09, Secretaría de la Mujer de la CONC, "Para el Secretariado de la Federación del Textil de Barcelona", Barcelona, 25th January 1982.

⁴³ INEbase, labor market,

http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t22/e308_mnu&file=inebase&L=0

⁴⁴ LLOPART, Íngrid. "Trebballadores invisibles: una anàlisi sociològica de les confeccionistes a domicili a Molins de Rei", in BORDERÍAS, Cristina (ed.). *Les dones i la història al Baix Llobregat*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2002, vol. 2, pp. 167-193. JÓDAR, Pere; MENDOZA, Rocío; SANZ, Gonçal. *La confecció submergida. Característiques sòcio-econòmiques del sector de la confecció a Santa Coloma de Gramenet*. Vic: Eumo Editorial, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Ajuntament de Santa Coloma de Gramenet, 1991, pp. 23-40, 81-84, 173-186.

⁴⁵ F1ºM-AHT, Secretaría Confederal de la Mujer de CC.OO., 4-4, "II Jornadas de la Mujer de CCOO", Madrid, 28-29th July 1980, *La mujer: un paro silencioso. II Jornadas de CC.OO. Secretaría de la Mujer*, p. 4.

plans were far more beneficial for people who worked in masculinised sectors than for workers in sectors with many women, such as textile and clothing.⁴⁶

In those circumstances, it is easy to understand women's discontent against union action. According to surveys carried out among industrial sector workers in 1978 and 1980, after legalization of union men and women who worked in the industry joined unions in similar proportion (57.6% and 54.7%, respectively), but in 1980 more women left unions (in 1980 36.3% of male workers and 18.8% of female workers were union members). It also happened in CCOO, since in 1978 30.3% of female workers were members, while in 1980 only 9.7%. According to Díaz Sanchez and López Hernández, the union's lack of attention towards female workers' claims and female unemployment may explain why more women left unions.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, we also need to take into account that many of them lost their jobs.

The political change in Spain had a major influence in women's status in the union CCOO. As we have seen, the emergence and development of feminist movement from 1975 encouraged some female CONC militants to claim their rights not only as workers (regarded in those times mainly in male terms), but also as *female* workers. Many female CONC members rejected feminism, but some of them, as a consequence of feminist movement emergence, decided to form a group of women inside the union and considered themselves feminists. Nevertheless, they had to face resistance, because many leaders and militants thought that defending female workers rights was too 'specific'. The situation became even worse from 1979, because membership decrease and severe unemployment made some CCOO's members think that defending female workers' rights and employment was a 'luxury'. After all, workers were mainly men for them, and female workers could always 'return' to their homes.

⁴⁶ BRAVO, Carmen; ARAGÓN, Jorge; BRUNEL, Susana; ANTÓN, Eva. *Trabajadora*. Op.Cit., p. 77. SAN JOSÉ, Begoña. "Feminismo y sindicalismo durante la transición democrática española", in MARTÍNEZ TEN, Carmen; GUTIÉRREZ LÓPEZ, Purificación; GONZÁLEZ RUIZ, Pilar. *El movimiento feminista en España en los años 70*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2009, p. 359; SARASÚA, Carmen; MOLINERO, Carme. "Trabajo y niveles de vida en el franquismo. Un estado de la cuestión desde una perspectiva de género", in BORDERÍAS, Cristina (ed.), *Historia de las mujeres: perspectivas actuales*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2009, p. 346.

⁴⁷ DÍAZ SÁNCHEZ, Pilar, "La relación de las mujeres trabajadoras...". Op.Cit. p. 112. LÓPEZ HERNÁNDEZ, María Teresa, "Participación y representación...". Op.Cit., p. 140-142.