



Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität (Anti-Feminism in the Kaiserreich. Discourse, Social Formation and Political Mentality) by Ute Planert

Review by: Kirsten Heinsohn

Social History, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), pp. 114-115

Published by: [Taylor & Francis, Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4286624>

Accessed: 11/12/2014 04:57

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Taylor & Francis, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Social History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität* (1998), 447 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, DM84.00/EUR42.95). [Anti-feminism in the Kaiserreich. Discourse, Social Formation and Political Mentality.]

Although the opposition to women's emancipation runs through the political culture of the *Kaiserreich* like the proverbial red thread, Ute Planert's study of the the German League to Combat Women's Emancipation (*Deutscher Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemanzipation*) is one of the first studies to focus specifically on the political discourse and social origins of these anti-feminists.

For Planert, political anti-feminism represented both a systematic critique of modernity and modernization (260) comparable to the anti-Semitic movements which flourished during these years and a response by the bourgeoisie to the moral dislocation caused by these changes. The aim of the bourgeois politicians, Protestant and Catholic organizations, associations of teachers and clerks, public health officials and eugenicists who formed the backbone of the political anti-feminist movement was to halt these trends, if not turn back the clock, by combating two of the more threatening manifestations of this modernizing process: democracy and women's emancipation.

In her opening chapters, Planert lays out her argument via an analysis of the publications of organizations representing both the affluent, politically conscious, nationalistically inclined *Bürgertum* and the equally nationalist section of the petty bourgeoisie. Political anti-feminism was pervasive in these circles, and for Planert many of their ideas are distilled in the words of Heinrich von Treitschke, the historian and editor of the influential *Preußische Jahrbücher*, who declared that 'government (or authority, *Obrigkeit*) is masculine; that is something which is self-evident' (36). However, Planert claims that the very stridency of Treitschke's affirmation of the ostensibly self-evident gender of the political itself reveals the anxiety resulting from the growing confusion of the gender order by the last years of the century, when the rapid growth of the number of bourgeois women's associations, the participation of more and more women in communal politics and voluntary social activity, and the widening demand for women's suffrage were all undermining the political masculinity of Treitschke and many others. The turning point in the history of German political anti-feminism came with the founding of the league in 1912 as a vehicle for the active – rather than merely reactive – opposition to unsettling forces of social change.

Planert complements her analysis of anti-feminist discourse with a study of the activities of the league, the social background of its members and its close connections to many other influential associations on the nationalist right, including the *Alldeutscher Verband* and the *Bund der Landwirte*. Although a quarter of the members of the League were women (a figure higher than that of the Social Democratic party), women were only elected to subordinate positions in accordance with the league's belief in the masculinity of the political.

The last chapters of the book chart the fortunes of political anti-feminism and the League from the immediate pre-war period through the early years of the Weimar Republic, and they explore the contradictions of the movement and the inconsistencies in its strategies during this period. The law governing voluntary associations passed by the Reichstag in 1908 permitted women to join political parties for the first time, and women played an active role in the campaigns leading up to the next national elections, which saw the Social Democrats make substantial gains at the expense of the Conservatives. The problem was that, although the anti-feminists feared the effects of the feminization of politics, they persevered in their efforts to

organize women to halt the process of their own emancipation. The fortunes of the League suffered a severe blow in the last years of the war with the emergence of more modern, radical nationalist parties, such as the German Fatherland party, which aggressively sought to mobilize women in its anti-republican cause. Although a number of organizations had mobilized conservative women since the end of the century, in this new situation the League and its ideas began to appear hopelessly old-fashioned. With the enfranchisement of women in 1919, the institutional and ideological framework for debating the role of women in society underwent a fundamental transformation which deprived the League of its identity and *raison d'être*. In the early 1920s, the ideas, membership and organizations of the League were gradually submerged in the *völkisch*, nationalist and anti-Semitic movement – and especially the Nazi party – as the focus of political anti-feminism shifted from the suffrage question to the family and the population policies of the Weimar welfare state. This trend was further strengthened as the older aim of restoring the patriarchal family was replaced by the quasi-utopian, latently homoerotic vision of a 'men's union' (*Männerbund*) as the masculine antidote to women's emancipation and the debilitating consequences of the feminization of the political which forever loomed on the horizon of the Weimar right.

Kirsten Heinsohn
University of Hamburg

Dorothy Porter, *Health, Civilization and the State: A History of Public Health from Ancient to Modern Times* (1999), viii + 376 (Routledge, London, £50.00/\$85.00, paperback £16.99/\$25.99).

Dorothy Porter, Wellcome Reader in the History of Medicine at Birkbeck College, University of London, has written a 'textbook' in '*the history of collective action in relation to the health of populations*' (4, emphasis in original). Based primarily on the literature from the last four decades on public health in Europe and the United States, Porter's book seeks to reach beyond the 'grand narratives of progress' (1), inspired by nineteenth-century scientific medical advances in such books as René Sand's *The Advance to Social Medicine* (London: 1952) and George Rosen's *The History of Public Health* (New York: 1958). Porter is guided by the work of Max Weber and Norbert Elias in her attempt to explore 'how collective actions which aimed to regulate or improve the health of populations were involved in changing the historical relationship between the civilizing process and state formation in European and North American societies' (7). She regrets as a 'tragic inadequacy' (8) that her book, devoted as it is to the long chronological sweep from the pre-modern to the post-modern eras, cannot include a discussion of other areas of the world or of historical demographic change. There is, also regrettably, no discussion of mental health or psychiatry and no stated justification for its omission. And, since in Porter's account 'individuals and their behaviour . . . are a subsidiary analytical category to collective social action in relation to population and groups' (4), we learn next to nothing about the people affected by, and reacting to, state public health policy. Thus, again regrettably, while women are part of the discussion in brief sections of text on modern population policy and social welfare work, gender as a category of analysis in matters of health and the body is not used. In a sense, then, Porter's work reproduces some of the subject-matter limitations of the earlier works of Sand and Rosen while removing their triumphalism.

Within its limits, however, Porter's book is an excellent chronological survey of the subject