

May Day Poster Stamps from Sønderborg, Denmark

Beginning in 1890, May 1 has been recognized as the international day of demonstration and celebration of the labor movement, and the day was, and continues to be, marked by both trade unions and party associations. While the labor and workers' movement are often considered an activity supported mostly by Communist parties internationally, in Denmark the movement is more closely aligned with the Social-Democrat party.

Sønderborg, Denmark, is a city near the German border in Sønderjylland (South Jutland) in the Slesvig (Schleswig) region. After World War One, the residents of Sønderborg began to honor the labor movement with a local "1. maj-festen" (May Day Festival) which included parades and speakers as well as other activities. The committee that sponsored the festivals decided, in 1922 to issue special commemorative poster stamps, which were sold to raise funds to support the festival activities. Purchasers of the stamps were encouraged to use them on correspondence or the affix them inside their union membership books to show their solidarity with the workers and labor movement.

The Sønderborg stamps are quite rare now, and a 1956 letter from the Arbejdernes Fællesorganisation for Sønderborg og omegn (Workers' Joint Organization for Sønderborg and surrounding area) suggests that there were no stamps issued for the years 1930, 1941, 1944, and 1945. But there is, in fact, a stamp from 1930, and others may exist as well.



Early stamps in the series use generic images related to "labor" or workers. The 1937 stamp depicts Prime Minister Th. Stauning. From 1942 on stamps depict logos of various affiliated trade unions.

Several of these stamps (perhaps all) were printed by I. P. Jensens Trykkerier, and some have been featured in their sales materials (1926, 1929, 1930, 1935). I. P. Jensen was one of the foremost printers of Kvittringsmærker, which mostly included smaller size party and union dues stamps, plus savings and rebate stamps, and the occasional advertising & event publicity poster stamps.

Images on this page are all of original stamps in approximately their actual size.

Here are some of the stamps missing from the previous page, as well as a continuation of the series. Some of these are only available right now as scans of poor quality photocopies.



1924 - The same image was re-used in 1933



1926 - This image was taken from I.P. Jensen's catalog.



1927 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1929 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



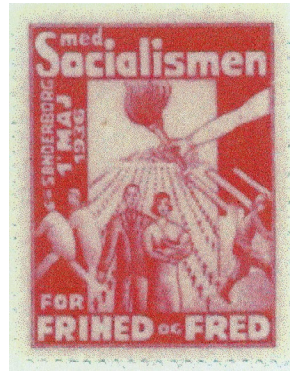
1929 - Image from I.P. Jensen's advertising folder.



1930 - Image from I.P. Jensen's advertising folder.



1931 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1936 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1938 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1939 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1942 - Scan of original stamp.



1943 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1946 - Scan of original stamp.



Presumed to be 1947 - Poor quality photocopy of original stamp.



1948 - Scan of original stamp.

Beginning in 1942 the logos of the various trade organizations were shown. At each festival the organizations would traditionally display banners with their logos.

1942 - DAF - Dansk Arbejdsmandsforbund (Danish Confederation of Workers).

1943 - DSMF - Dansk Smede- og Maskinarbejder-Forbund (Danish Blacksmiths and Machinists' Association).

1946 - This is unclear - it could be ASF - Arbejdernes Samariter Forbund (Workers' Samaritans Association) or it could be AFS - Arbejdernes Fællesorganisation Sønderborg (Workers' Joint Organization of Sønderborg).

1947 - Dansk Mølleriarbejder Forbund (Danish Mill Workers' Union).

1948 - Possibly JMF - Jysk Mejeriforening (Jutland Dairy Association).



1949 - Scan of original stamp.



1950 - Scan of original stamp.



1951 - Second-generation scan of original stamp.



1951 - Second-generation scan of original stamp.



1952 - Second-generation scan of original stamp.

1949 - DSF - Dansk Skrædderforbund (Danish Tailors' Association).

1950 - DTAF - Dansk Tekstilarbejderforbund (Danish Textile Workers' Union).

1951 - This is unclear - there is not enough detail in the logo to determine the specific union or organization.

1952 - SFD - Samvirkende Fagforbund i Danmark (Cooperating Trade Unions in Denmark).

I have not seen evidence of any other similar fundraising stamps for any "1. maj-festen" in other cities or towns, and there are relatively few other related fundraising stamps from Sønderborg.

The stamps illustrated below were printed by I. P. Jensens Trykkerier of København (Copenhagen).

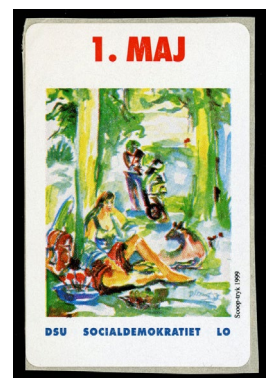


Fundraising stamp from the Workers' Joint Organization of Sønderborg, 1938, for a Building Fund. Text at bottom translates to "We Need a (meeting) Hall". Stamp at left is an actual stamp, at right is an image from Jensen's catalog.



Fundraising stamp from the Social Democratic Association for Sønderborg. Image is from an advertising flyer from Jensens Trykkerier.

Not from Sønderborg, the images below show other "May Day" ephemera and poster stamps used in Denmark.



The item at left is a "street tag". These were frequently worn on clothing, usually attached with a pin.

At right are three poster stamps, from as late as 1999, showing that the "1. Maj" movement was even popular in more recent times.

All images in this article are shown at approximately actual size.