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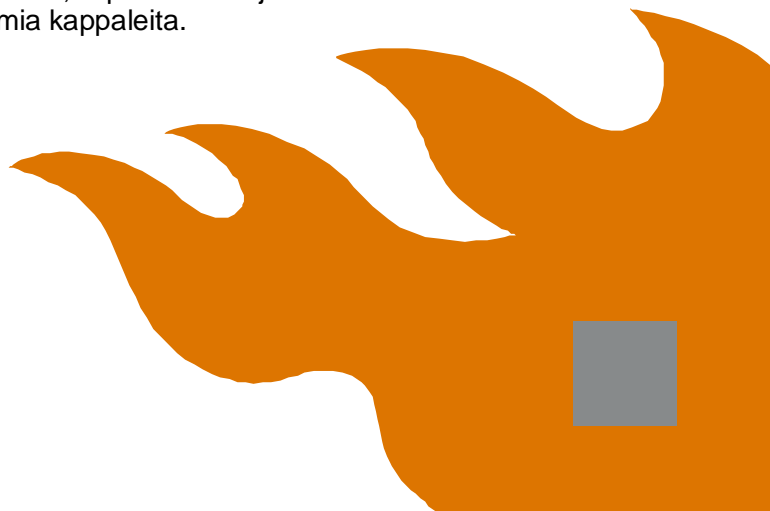
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Inger Elisabeth Haavet

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MILK, MOTHERS AND MARRIAGE

FAMILY POLICY FORMATION IN NORWAY AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Inger Elisabeth Haavet

The welfare states of the Nordic countries are well-known for their family-friendly policies, enabling both mothers and fathers to combine family with outside employment.¹ In terms of fertility rates, such policies seem to have been fairly successful. Today, all the Nordic countries are marked by relatively high rates of both fertility and working mothers, something that distinguishes them from many other European countries. On the other hand, a decline in the fertility rate is emerging. This can to some extent be explained by increased insecurity caused by new pressures on welfare benefits and increased unemployment. While still referring to the Nordic welfare model as family-friendly, it must be seen in connection with the will to support the notion of gender equality in work and childcare, and to secure the income of those who for different reasons cannot support their children themselves. This paradigm has developed coherently in all the Nordic countries since the 1970s. In the preceding fifty years however, a greater diversity existed among the countries. Sweden was in many ways the most progressive country among the Nordic neighbours, providing good conditions for the realization of a family model of double incomes. But also Denmark and Finland had similar aims during that period. Norway, on the other hand, was more reserved, applying more "maternalistically" oriented policies, founded on the male

¹ I here define family policies as all attempts to support parents in their efforts to provide and care for their children, to regulate the relationships between families and society and between members of the family group. In the framework of welfare, a family is constituted by the birth of a child, rather than by a wedding. Support can be in terms of economic benefits, payment in kind, practical help, services or protection. Even ideological pressure, which was an important force behind the earliest reforms, can be seen as family support.

breadwinner model.² The clearest expression of this is the lack of good kindergartens, the more widespread practice of female part-time work and the character of the benefits for single mothers that stimulated to home-staying care rather than paid employment.

The formation of a new political field is a process of several stages. In family policies, the stages of initialization, public argumentation, decisionmaking and conceptual implementation have been in progress for a very long time within a fast changing society. In this chapter, I explore how the welfare of families became a theme of discussion and political activity in Norway by drawing explicitly on experiences from its Nordic neighbours. I will in particular pay attention to the Swedish experience defined as the most progressive of them all. Family welfare affects individuals, groups and institutions. Thus, many reforms can be defined as family policy. The following analysis emphasizes reforms concerning the relations between children and parents, and, in particular, how society has aimed at regulating and supporting this relationship in order to achieve the welfare of the families.

Roots of and the Formulation of Family Policies

In a Norwegian setting, the term family policy was introduced in a party program as late as in 1970 after a century-long process of making the field of family life a political issue, blurring the borders between the public and the private spheres. As part of this process, family matters of political interest were included in other political goals, partly as a means to legitimize them, partly because the field had not yet found its place and its form. Educational reforms, sickness benefits, industrial protection laws and industrial injury benefits, taxation laws, and marriage legislation are examples of political areas where family policies could be located. The field of family policy often developed simultaneously in the Nordic countries. Nevertheless, their solutions differed or appeared at different times, depending on national characteristics regarding economy, culture and the gallery of participants.

An important initiative in the field of family policy was the Nordic

² For a discussion on the concept "maternalism", see Eirinn Larsen: The American introduction of "maternalism" as a historical concept, in NORA, 1997, no. 1, pp. 14-25

joint efforts to create a common legislation in the field of marriage. This resulted in quite similar laws on marriage in all the Nordic countries within a period of twenty years - starting with the Norwegian Law on Divorce of 1909 and concluding with the Finnish Marriage Reform of 1929. These reforms granted wives equality in marriage, revoking male supervision and giving housework and childcare equal status as a providing activity. Thus, women gained equal individual rights, but also the responsibility of providing for their families. Though complementarity between the spouses was assumed, individual rights and responsibilities were paired with the breadwinner model of family provision. The introduction of this marriage legislation was an important step in the progression towards the Nordic welfare states with an active family policy, by broadening the field of political action across earlier borders between the private and the public arenas. The marriage legislation is important to the understanding of what Helga Hernes named as "the Woman-Friendly Welfare State"³. The laws were formulated through a common Nordic project and were progressive in stating that man and woman shall be regarded as equal in marriage, and granting divorce on fairly liberal grounds.⁴

The care-needing child is the main focus of policymaking towards families. Society's concern for the care of children is of course of a much older origin than the term "Family Policy". Here, I will distinguish four different roots of family policy: The growth in and application of statistics and science, social philanthropy, population policies, and the growth of feminist movements. These elements were all present throughout the Nordic countries, forming chronological trends rather than national characteristics. Statistics threw light on social problems in the 19th century, and the growth of science brought about solutions in the era of developmental optimism around the turn of the century. Philanthropy was regarded as the most common answer to challenges and possibilities not yet structured within the framework of "natural" public tasks previous to the formation of the welfare state. Particularly during the inter-war period, population trends and policies became forceful catalysts, motivating the development of a welfare policy on families. Feminism

³ Hernes 1992

⁴ Bradley 1996, pp. 13-28

appeared most strongly within the framework of the welfare state from the mid-1960s onwards. At the beginning of the century, family questions were often debated within the mental framework of maternalism, something that could cause ambiguity among many feminists.

The Role of Infant Mortality in Family Policy Formation⁵

While talking about a woman-friendly welfare state, above all, we are speaking of women as mothers. It is rather their offspring than the mothers themselves that have been the ultimate targeting group for welfare policies. The incomplete family, most frequently consisting of a single mother with children, was the first category of "target family", accentuating the growth of family policy as a paradigm. These families have always constituted a vulnerable standard of the generosity of the welfare state. The social need revealed itself most clearly in this group, and the attention was mainly aimed at helping the innocent victims of illegitimacy - the illegitimate children.

Nordic statistics around 1900 not only showed that the infant mortality was higher in the first year of living for illegitimate children than for legitimate children, but also that the gap between the two groups was increasing. This development was the strongest argument for doing something about the social conditions. Statistics revealed the problems and their variations in time and space, thereby making them curable - and science provided a usable solution for social reformers. In the same manner as welfare policy generally has developed from a social policy paradigm of rescuing to one of general living condition, one might say that the fight for infants' lives was the seed to the development of a general paradigm of family policy. The first wave of legislation adopted around the turn of the century partly aimed at solving social problems through public action, partly at regulating private behaviour in an advisable direction. Governments intervened to re-establish, and to some extent to compensate, for the lack of accordance with the ideal family model - the model of the breadwinner. The state chased a providing father. Its goal was to evoke the father to fulfil his duty to provide for

⁵ For an overview, also see Lokke 1998, Bideau et al. 1997 pp 38-61, Hubbard et al. 2002

his family and thus free the mother from outside work to take care of their children at home. This was especially explicit in Norwegian social policies. In 1915, a Norwegian national law was adopted, stressing the responsibilities of the fathers and the legal rights of their offspring. In the other Nordic countries, these issues were to a larger degree dealt with on the municipal level.

There were many participants in the process of legislation in the Nordic countries, and political struggles often occurred previous to the application of a new set of solutions. Professional interests and philanthropic organisations did have a political impact, and individuals could make a huge difference in this period. Around the turn of the 20th century, there were still possibilities for political enthusiasts outside the system of political parties. In Norway, Katti Anker Møller was one of the most eager enthusiasts. She grew up in a liberal family and was early concerned with the destiny of the many women who bore too many children and those who were abandoned by their lovers. She became a radical feminist, though with a bias for maternalism. Her claims ranged from free abortion to state-financed mothers' wages. Twenty years old she married a landowner and agricultural politician, and both in her private and public life, she made use of all her experiences and contacts with channels of influence. She arranged lectures and exhibitions, wrote articles in the newspapers and established clinics for maternal hygiene, childcare and birth control. Even though she did not have the right to vote, she managed to throw the spotlight on her issues by using all available media. Being Johan Castberg's sister-in-law (he was appointed Norway's first Minister of Social Affairs in 1913) gave her an opportunity to put pressure on him. While the Norwegian state by means of legislation primarily undertook the normative role of the educator, private organisations and local authorities particularly gave financial and practical help to mother and child.

The policy of the state establishing a standard for the behaviour of the provider/breadwinner was not new in the 19th century. It was based upon the old heritage of the population politics of the mercantilist state. In 1763, it was stated by law in the kingdom of Denmark, Norway and Iceland that fathers had an obligation to pay child support for illegitimate children under the age of ten. In 1821, parents' obligation to pay maintenance was established for all children. With increasing social mobility, it became important to specify that parents and other relatives had a

responsibility, for one thing, to keep down the expenses of the system of poor relief. This was also partly the motivation for continually ascertaining by law the fathers' duty to support around 1900. It should not be easy to escape from one's duty to provide for the child. A strong increase in non-marital births during the 19th century contributed to placing the issue of the father's duty to provide for his children on the agenda. In 1863, the Poor Relief system was granted the right to intervene towards poor providers. In 1892, it was decreed by law that the father of an illegitimate child was obliged to support the child, all depending on his financial means. Poor payers could be denied emigration. Similar laws on the duty of fathers to pay child support were enacted in Denmark in 1888 and in Sweden and Finland in 1889. But as long as everything depended on the mothers' will and ability to claim child support, the legislation had little impact. Icelandic statutes were the toughest regarding the duties of fathers - after the year 1900, even widows had to pay child support for the results of their late husbands' youthful sins.

In Norway, the most significant legal requirements concerning illegitimate children were "The Castbergian Children's Acts" of 1915. To a large degree, the law did secure equal rights for children to inherit and to carry their father's name regardless of their legitimacy. This was considered very radical and caused a tremendous debate - which also contributed to a protracted legislative process.

Already in 1909, an extensive Proposition to the Odelsting was produced,⁶ but it took six years before it was approved by the Norwegian parliament. This happened in 1913, when Johan Castberg, Norway's first Minister of Social Affairs, demanded as a condition to take office in the Government, that he was allowed to promote the "Children's Acts". His programme was expressed in an election speech the same year: *"And we must learn to pay more respect to a mother. We must learn to understand that the most important and most sacred task a human being can undertake is giving birth to a new human being - when she also assumes the full responsibility that follows".*⁷

A thorough special study concerning the survival rates of illegitimate children and their social status accompanied the parliamentary bill, and

6 Ot.prp. 13/1909

7 Castberg, election speech 1913

the arguments were hard facts about infant mortality: "*What the statistic investigations have brought to light regarding the living conditions of illegitimate children is of such a nature that the demands for efficient measures are now inevitable*".⁸

The study showed that during the period 1891-1900 in Norway, 191 illegitimate infants per 100 legitimate infants died. In Sweden, the relative was 178, in Finland 141, and Denmark 212. While the conditions for infants generally had improved, the conditions for illegitimate infants had deteriorated, particularly in the cities. The explanatory fact was that these children largely were placed in care, which enabled their mothers to work and provide for their families. Thus, children died from the lack of mother's milk and an adequate hygienic replacement during the first critical months. The remedy was to ensure that the fathers acknowledged their children and paid a sufficient child support, allowing the mothers to stay at home during the first nine months after childbirth, a suggestion made by the Director of the Central Bureau of Statistics.⁹ This was keeping in with the general opinion among researchers and reformers at the turn of century. The State's role was to enforce a solution within the private sphere by making both parents responsible for providing for their children. The Norwegian solution was the most radical, introducing equal rights to inherit. This was a significant demonstration of the ties of biological kinship between generations. According to the Norwegian Law on Adoption of 1917, even adopted children had to wait in line behind the legitimate children.

The authority attributed to statistics illuminates a changed mentality of society from 1870 onwards. The new individualism and the progress of medical science were other factors in the new eagerness to reform social conditions. The reformers now saw single mothers as victims of bad conditions and immoral lovers rather than sinners and "loose women". While the Absolutist State during Mercantilism had occupied itself with the quantity of the population, the quality of the population was more at the centre of the discourse at the end of 19th century. The aim was to save individuals and to prevent the loss of lives through information and hygienic and social improvements. Norway's first "sociologist", Eilert

8 Ot.prp. 13/1909, p. 11

9 Ot.prp. 13/1909, p. 18

Sundt, was, in his survey of the mortality conditions in 1851, on a mission to teach people to "count their days" and not give themselves in to a passive fatalism towards death. His opinion was that society should use all available means to prevent sickness, accidents and untimely death.¹⁰ In a European context, Sundt was not alone. One of the main arguments of Anne Lokke's doctoral dissertation about infant mortality in Denmark was that the statistical knowledge concerning variations in the causes for mortality put an end to the fatalistic belief that children died of childhood as old people died of old age.¹¹

The concept of infant mortality as fightable through a rational, modern, scientifically based childcare erupted inside European medical science during the 1860s and 1870s.¹² The effort was primarily addressing the cruel destinies of foster children, and the alliance between the medical profession and philanthropic organisations, with a strong female participation, contributed to improved hygienic and social conditions for many mothers and children. For instance was "the Organization of Foster Mothers" ("*Premieforeningen for plejemødre*") established in Copenhagen, and gradually the "Medical Childcare Programme" ("*Det medicinske borneplejeprogram*") achieved major authority. Midwives in the Norwegian cities of Bergen and Christiania began distributing pamphlets about this programme to all the women about to give birth. In addition, childcare clinics and the general trend for prophylactic hygiene contributed to a marked decrease in infant mortality in both cities.¹³ The criticism of the foster child system, or the system of angel makers ("*Englemakersystemet*"), as it was sarcastically called in Stockholm, was a common phenomenon in Europe. Demographic research of a newer date indicates that the problem probably was less extensive than activists and governments presumed. However, the criticism was probably a good rhetorical point on the way of making the death of children a political issue.

Children have been a popular target for welfare policy and philanthropy since the 1880s. A modern, emotionally based view on childcare was part of a domesticated ideology of women, originating from

10 Sundt 1855/1975, p. 6

11 Lokke 1998, p. 69

12 Lokke 1998, p. 12

13 Hubbard 2000, p. 346

Romanticism. Romanticism regarded a child as an innocent being to be protected, as opposed to Puritanism, which saw a child as a sinner in need of disciplining. The core of the matter was a profound respect for the child, and a glorification of childhood, a conviction that a childhood should be happy, and a hope that the quality of childhood, if being maintained into adult life, could extinguish the faith in original sin and serve to liberate the individual.¹⁴

The middle classes' nuclear family, in which children's emotional welfare was gradually emphasized, became the most respected model to imitate. Caring is also an emotional relation between parents and their children. Gradually mothers were given the opportunity to emphasize the care of their children and to receive advice and help when their own motherly love was not enough to keep their children healthy. While the thought of helping the poor and illegitimate infants was regarded as Utopian and even harmful to society until the 1870s, the fight for infants' lives was met with a comprehensive goodwill during the 1880s. The welfare of children became a mass movement surrounded by great sympathy and support.¹⁵

Maternal love was the foundation of the philanthropic child rescuing programme and the fight of physicians, politicians and Government against infant mortality that erupted. Within the female ideology, the role of social motherhood became an accepted setting for activities outside of one's home, and even those who were not mothers could thus seize meaningful activities in their female lives. Maternal love became an ideological force with a firm foundation in the Lutheran doctrines of calling that would motivate and legitimate the philanthropic rescue work among children.¹⁶ This work became very important as a pathfinder for governmental and municipal actions that were meant to reduce mortality. The loving philanthropic joined forces with powerful allies: the medical scientists and the statisticians. Everything pointed in the same direction: children put into care and fed by artificial nutrition ran a greater risk of dying. Children that were breastfed by their mothers both survived and

14 Cunningham 1996, p. 96

15 Lokke 1998, p. 443

16 Hammar 1999, pp. 23-26, Markkola 2000, p. 19 and 2001, pp. 236-256, Petersen (ed.) 2003, pp. 27-46

made their unmarried mothers respected citizens. The reformers meant that a mother that had embraced and breastfed her child would not give it away, but put all her love and effort into giving the child a safe home. In doing so, she would need help from society - a help that should both educate the father and be a safety net if the father totally failed to fulfil his obligations to provide.

Making Immoral Seducers Become Decent Breadwinners

The Children's Acts regulated the responsibilities of the living father as a provider and simultaneously made it a public responsibility to settle and to collect child support - as did the other Nordic countries in various ways. The poorest mothers were given the legal right to claim support for the last months prior to delivery. Local authorities were to carry out the provisions concerning financial support, but their success depended on the effectiveness of the magistrates. If the father was destitute, there was nothing to get hold of. Prepayment of financial support was first introduced by the Norwegian public authorities in 1957. Still, a survey from the Norwegian city of Bergen shows that the Children's Acts meant a financial improvement for the unmarried mothers, though there was still a discrepancy between their financial needs and the benefits given.¹⁷ One of the laws established a responsibility for the local authorities to act as a provider. The statute concerning children's welfare granted a mother a small municipal benefit from two weeks before and up to six months after giving birth, providing she kept her baby. The benefit was modest, and not all municipals made mothers aware of their right. Married women with poor providers could also claim this benefit, but local authorities could demand repayment from the child's father.

Similar options were introduced in Sweden to get hold of child support from fathers in the 1917 Law on Illegitimate Children, including "the Ombudsman for Childcare" ("*Barnavårdsmannainstitutionen*"), which was intended to continuously observe both the mothers and the fathers of illegitimate children.¹⁸ The Swedish legislation took a strongly moralistic view of the fathers, but it did not go as far as the Norwegian law

17 Blom 1991

18 Bergman & Johanson (ed.) 2002, pp. 172-201

regarding the responsibilities of fatherhood. In Sweden, the right of the child to take the name of and to inherit from its father was introduced as late as in 1969. The Swedish legislation thus had a more normative orientation than the Norwegian, stating marriage as the fundamental framework of reproduction. In 1937, the Swedish Government granted family allowances to mothers. The first public assistance to single mothers in Denmark was implemented in 1888, when the authorities were granted the right to present the public expenses for prepayment of child benefits as poor relief to the fathers and thereby shaming them into paying. In addition, a municipal supervision of foster children was introduced. Only in 1939, with the introduction of "The Mothers' Relief Organisation" ("*Modrehjælpen*"), were Danish single mothers given the right to receive public benefits.¹⁹ However, several philanthropic organisations had earlier played an important role in providing welfare to mother and child, especially in the cities. In Denmark, illegitimate children were granted the legal right to paternal inheritance in 1937,²⁰ in Iceland in 1921, and in Finland 1922 -provided that the father recognised the child.²¹ Finnish children of reluctant fathers had to wait until 1975 before they could inherit them.²²

Norway was early in introducing far-reaching legislation aimed at regulating the behaviour of illegitimate fathers and the rights of their offspring. Norway was also to be alone in the inclusion of single parents into the public pension system. In the aftermath of the "Children's Acts", the municipal of Oslo on its own introduced a benefit including all single mothers, and several municipalities followed. Still, not all municipalities paid benefits to the unmarried mothers, in some places only widows and abandoned, married mothers were given the right to support, and the amount was often modest. A national benefit for single providers was introduced in Norway in 1964, including both widows and unmarried mothers; divorced mothers were included in 1971, and divorced fathers in 1980. Only in Norway, the State play the part of substitute supporting breadwinner while the other Nordic countries still refer the needy

19 Danish conditions, see Rosenbeck in Hjorth et al. 1996

20 Bradley 2001, p 40

21 Blom & Tranberg (ed.) 1980, p. 101

22 Bradley in Nord 2000:27, p 41

single providers to the means-tested social care benefits. According to the Norwegian law of 1964, the national benefit should cease when the youngest child reached the age often. In 1997, the benefit was reduced to a maximum of three years, and it was not granted if the youngest child had reached the age of seven. The era of the breadwinners has come to an end, even in Norway.

The "Castbergian Children's Acts" remained a vital political symbol and established a precedent for Norwegian family policy. They probably contributed to the fact that Norway, compared to the other Nordic countries, to some extent emphasised the function of motherhood more strongly in its family policy.

Nostalgia and Maternalism

Scandinavian family policy at the turn of the 20th century was primarily meant to bring in the principle of the functionally divided nuclear family within the working class. The first thing to do was to seek for a providing father. Only if he could not be found, mothers' rights to motherhood should be secured through public benefits. Gradually, arrangements were made to help the fathers to fulfil their obligations. Social benefits like the unemployment insurance and the sickness benefit system were gradually extended, increasing family benefits and consequently giving providers a larger return for their paid premiums than that of single employees. During the period of rising costs of living around the First World War, some steps towards introducing a family wage system estimating workers' wages according to family size were also taken.²³ This, however, was never established as extensively or systematically as the French system of family wages, though tested and to a certain degree idealized by some political factions during the first two decades of the 20th century.

Family policies have often been born out of nostalgic waves. When the care for children became a public interest, it was partly because the development of society caused conditions that made children a visible and public problem, obstructing their natural growth and development. The family was no longer the only arena for care giving, support and socialisation. A family-economy based household including work and education

23 Bjørnson and Haavet 1994, p. 208

did no longer constitute a natural setting for the upbringing of children. The workplace and the home were often separated in a modern society. The housing situation was rather wretched and the local playgrounds were poor. The problems of children were often considered a side effect of industrialisation and modernisation. One of the architects behind the Danish welfare programme in the 1920s and 1930s, K. K. Steincke, was also deeply concerned by the decay of modern society, comparing it with the downfall of the Roman civilisation due to immoral decadence. He was especially concerned with the decreasing fertility in the leading classes, and in 1920, he formulated a radical family support programme to counteract the devastating individualism of modern times.²⁴ Above all, he found it important to fight against the tendency towards two-children families. His thoughts were an important background for Danish family policy reforms in the 1930s, though modernised by ideas borrowed from Swedish population policy.

To pinpoint the disadvantages of modernisation was another strategy. Underlying the argument that the modern society was destroying domestic life was an active wage policy, as well as a struggle for labour movement interests, while others had a philanthropic motivation for their argument of devastating modernity. Even though the Norwegian industrialisation was both late in coming and limited in extension, Norwegian reformers were able to use the development of an industrial society as a lever for some of the best welfare systems in Europe. Family policy was also formed inside of this rhetorical setting.

Castberg had promoted a very normative "Children's Act". His view on the educational function of the authorities is an important background for understanding this normative bias, as is his basis in the criticism of capitalism. Even though he was a member of the Liberal Party, he did not support liberal principles in all matters.²⁵ Castberg pictured a just society implemented through intervention of the State. He had an unerring belief in the power of legislation to improve human and social life. By being one of the founders of Norwegian social policy, Castberg contributed to the positive view on Government - a characteristic of the Norwegian welfare system.

24 Steincke 1920, pp. 300-301, p. 344

25 Slagstad 1998, p. 144, p. 147

The hunt for a supporting father was also in harmony with the ideal of self-help of a left-wing state. However, Castberg's desire to introduce social reforms was met with some resistance. Farmers were, as a rule, a factor of inertia in the establishment of benefits and general social security. Generally, they would stick firmly to the principles of self-help and work. Their resistance was caused by fear of increasing the expenses to support the poor.²⁶ The expenses of the municipalities were not the only reason for the inertia of the farmers. In a perspective of gender and family, one perceives a feeling of alienation regarding the model of the breadwinner, where only one person had an income, namely the father and the breadwinner. Farmers had an understanding of the family as a "community" where all available hands were employed regardless of whom they belonged to, men, women or children. In the matter of public expenses, there was often a tendency to cling to this "outdated" understanding of family functions; the working mother was preferred to the caring, home-staying mother. The responsibility to support oneself was an even stronger principle than the modern family ideals to the farmers.

The maternalistic policy of Castberg and Katti Anker Møller was also to a certain extent influenced by the old financial thinking on families, while their policy developed into an expression of functionalism adjusted to a modern society. They both regarded society as a huge family or a functional unit, in which the functions of reproduction and particularly the upbringing of children were regarded as productive work to society. They brought the functionalism and complementarity of the ideal family into the public arena. They argued that both state and market benefited from the labour output of families, while the household economy carried all the costs and received no benefits. Katti Anker Møller's opinion was that the labour of families that was useful to society should be rewarded. Consequently, the state should pay mothers for their reproductive work.²⁷ As the Liberal Women's Movement thought this scandalous, she turned to the Labour Women where she was met with more understanding for her social claims. In the long run, the claim for mothers' wages could not survive - it conflicted with too many principles of the labour market

26 Bjernson in *Scandinavian Journal of History* 2001, p. 198

27 Møller: *Kvindernes Fedselspolitik*, lecture 1919, printed in Mohr 1968, pp. 149

with the popular view on family and its public/private functionality, as well as with the ideas of romanticism.

The Labour Movement supported the ideal of the breadwinner around the turn of the 20th century. It was the working class women that were "forced" to work outside their homes despite lacking decent supervision for their small children. Children and married women should be kept outside of working life. As early as in 1885, a proposal by the trade unions stated that children and women constituted a threat in the competition for work.²⁸ This view persisted in being dominant in the Labour Movement at least until the mid-1930s.

The Labour Movement played a significant role in the struggle against child labour. Children were to attend school and contribute to raising the cultural level of the working class. In the next period - during the 1920s - women were supposed to be good comrades and homebuilders. When Katti Anker Møller had proposed governmental compensation for women's reproduction work in the lecture "Women's Birth Policy" ("*Kvindernes Fødselspolitik*") in 1919,²⁹ the Labour Women supported the demand for maternal wages. Debates during the 1920s sharpened the arguments, and the demand for a maternal wage was gradually included in the work for a family allowance, which was carried in Norway and Denmark in 1946, in Sweden in 1947, and in Finland in 1948. It was seemingly easier to argue for the welfare of children than for the rights of their mothers. The remnants of the demand for maternal wages are present in the fact that family allowances are paid directly to mother instead of to the "paterfamilias", as is the case in many other countries.³⁰

While Katti Anker Møller followed up on her ideas by demanding a national maternal wage in 1919, Castberg was more successful in his reform proposals, which, for one thing, resulted in the Marriage Act of 1927- one of the outcomes of the Nordic cooperation on family law. This legislation secured equal status between the home-based work of wives and the role of men as breadwinners. It was easier to obtain a breakthrough in regulating civil law than making the state a competing provider in the field of gender. During this period, the Nordic legislative

28 Bjørnson 1993, p. 39

29 Haavet 1999, in Nord: 1999:9, pp. 145-156

30 Bjørnson and Haavet 1994, chapter 10

marriage reforms modernised gender relations and dismissed patriarchal structures. Though founded on a model of the functionally divided family, individual legal rights were equal and both parties were mutually obliged to provide for one another. Together with the liberalisation of divorce legislation and the right equitable division of matrimonial property, the marriage reforms paved the way for a Scandinavian welfare system based on individual rights.³¹

Into the Age of Social Engineering

In the Castbergian period, Norway joined a Nordic cooperation in the field of social reform more actively. But it was not an easy task. After the dissolution of the Union between Norway and Sweden in 1905, the relationship between the two countries was rather frigid. It was not a point for Norway to imitate the Swedish reforms, as, in the eyes of Norway, Sweden was associated with rigid traditionalism and arrogance. The Norwegians regarded themselves as better innovators of social policies than the Swedes. After the First World War and especially in the 1930s, positions changed. Sweden obtained the hegemony in Nordic social reform, admired and copied not only throughout Scandinavia, but also by the entire western world. Social democracy became the international basis for cooperation and reform, and the reforms were to a large extent outlined in the extensive Swedish reports on population policy, labour conditions, work relations and social policy. Social engineering became the new slogan - and it came from Sweden.³²

In many ways, the 1930s form a watershed in family policy. While the Nordic countries in the formative period yielded quite similar problem formulations, with Norway being the most active legislator, Sweden took the leading role in the 1930s and in many ways reformulated the reform programs. First and foremost, it was the theories of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal on population policy that became the strong force in the rethinking of social policy. Their book "The Crisis of Population", written in a Norwegian mountain cottage in the summer of 1934, became

31 Nord 2000:27, p. 19 and Melby, Rosenbeck and Carlsson Wetterberg 2001, pp. 210

32 See for instance Hirdman 1990, Stokholm Banke 1999

a powerful inspiration in welfare policy throughout Scandinavia and swept away much of the old, more or less nostalgic political ideas. After publishing their book, they were both engaged by the Swedish government to work on the formulation of the extensive population planning programs. Through this project, they obtained great moulding influence, both in Sweden and on an international level. Their programme was a programme for the future. "Social engineering" was their successful prescription for the modern society; family planning, economic and social planning, and the introduction of functional apartments with collective solutions for washing, cooking and caring were among their visions.³³ Social engineering was also a part of the prevailing eugenic discourse of the time: sterilisation programmes were implemented along with family support in order to "promote the capable and prevent the unfit".³⁴ This was also evident in K. K. Steincke's social programme for Denmark in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁵ In the Nordic countries however, most demographic theories were turned into radical social policy instead of remaining in conservative pronatalism. Or turning into fascism.

While Gunnar Myrdal was especially concerned with production and economics, Alva was the main architect behind the family policies. In their book, *"The Crisis of Population"*, she states: "The joy of having children is obvious and not influenced by the way the family is organised. But at present we observe that young families in rising numbers reject the joy of having children."³⁶

Alva Myrdal was convinced that the wife's economic dependency of her husband spoiled to a great degree the joy of having children. The lack of opportunity to combine work and motherhood was to her the most important problem: "There is a strong tension between the interests of families and their actual living conditions today, and the family crisis has become so intolerable due to the development of social conditions, that there is no other way forward than social reforms. Social problems demand social solutions". When she became Secretary of the Committee of Women's Work in 1938, she and her companions managed to shift the focus of

33 Nord 1999, pp. 158-161

34 Kublai 2002, 7. See also Section II in the Århus Report 2001

35 Stokholm Banke 1999, p. 40, p. 91

36 Myrdal 1934, Norwegian ed. 1936, p. 393

their mandate from the question of married women's right to work (in many countries, the employment crisis in the 1930s was followed by restrictions on the right of married women to work,³⁷) to the reverse question: The working woman's right to give birth and have children. The work of the committee resulted in legislation prohibiting the firing of pregnant or married women, followed up by reforms to facilitate the combination of work and care.³⁸

The Myrdal mode of social engineering was a powerful inspiration for social reformers throughout the Nordic countries, particularly in the Labour Parties. However, many of the Labour Party women and the Liberals that until then had been active in designing family policies, however, were hesitant to concur with some of these modern ideas. Many people were still influenced by the maternalistic visions of Castberg and Katti Anker Møller - as for instance the Liberal social reformer and children's spokesman Gerhard Wiesener, who formulated his vision of childcare this way: *"To me, the main issue is to support and to assist the homes. But what constitutes a home? First and foremost it is the mother. Among the classes we especially have in view - the population of workers with limited means - a home without a father may well be thinkable, but not a home without a mother. That is why a financial foundation must be obtained for the mothers of these social classes, so that they can dedicate themselves to being housewives"*.³⁹

For many years, there was ambivalence in the Norwegian opinion, even in the Labour Party, towards feminism and the radical family politics that were implemented by their eastern neighbours. Many working class families still considered it the best solution and a sign of relative prosperity to keep the wife at home. Norway being a poorer country and, unlike Sweden, being occupied during the five years of World War II, could not afford expensive reforms like the largescale building nursery schools. This contributed to the increasing distinctions between family policies in the two countries. Norway became "the different country".

Even in mid-war Norway, social reforms gradually came to benefit the "normal family". Once again, science played a significant role as a provider of arguments and as a supporter during the interwar period.

37 Lonna 1996, pp. 33-36

38 Frangeur 1996, p. 147

39 Soc. Medd. 1925, p. 253

The line from statistics to policy might be seen as an expression of the modernisation of social care where individual guilt was disregarded and individuals' rights and inherent worth were emphasised. The debate on childcare during the interwar period used arguments from medicine, hygiene and psychology. The arguments of Karl Evang - the future Director General of Public Health - on nutritional policy became vital to these debates. His arguments were based on large-scale surveys executed to chart the nutritional conditions for school children. The surveys uncovered that families with children from the lower strata of society did not have the financial opportunity to keep a proper scientifically healthy diet.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1930s, the public need went beyond helping those who lacked a provider. Unemployment, the shortage of housing and the population crisis cleared the road for a policy of improving general living conditions, which became the way the family policy of the Norwegian Labour Party was articulated.

Motherhood and Equal Rights - Towards a New Family Policy?

At the end of World War II, the functionally divided nuclear family was consolidated as a standard for all social classes. Motherhood was acknowledged as "a profession". Family allowances, which were adopted in all the Nordic countries in the late 1940s, became an expression of the general public responsibility for the living conditions of all children. In financial terms, the family allowance was a meagre contribution, but, seen in connection with tax deductions and other benefits, the public contribution was increased. The decades around World War II have been characterised as the golden age of families.⁴¹

Life was predictable and safe, the division of gender roles was clear, and mothers stayed at home with their children.⁴² But, as we have seen, already in the 1930s, there had been debates on the ideality of this family model. Sweden had the most modern policies, Norway the most traditional, and the other countries something in between, leaning more towards the Swedish model than the Norwegian one. Thus, speaking of

40 Haavet 1996, p. 38

41 Melby in Blom & Sogner (ed.) 1999, pp. 227-298

42 Myhre 1994, p. 98

the Nordic family policy model, we usually refer to something close to the Swedish official model.

Even though the functionally divided gender division seemed to create a safe and caring environment for the children, this standardized family pattern was based on financial dependency and had its costs. A family often became an enclosed box where the distribution of welfare and care were more private than earlier. Instead of trying to force middle class morals on the working class people, the state concentrated on the development of a universal health service, educational reforms and a system of tax deductions for breadwinners. The policy of improving general living conditions and an increase of wealth was very much in the public eye.

Eventually, the women took political action against the prevailing family ideology. The increasing numbers of women in paid employment during the 1960s-70s were both a reaction to constricted gender roles and a necessity for the development of a broader range of services in the modern welfare state. In fact, many families were also dependent on more than one income to make ends meet - now as then. However strong, the ideal of the breadwinner was insufficient to keep housewives at home when the family needed more money to pay its bills. As young people started to take longer educations instead of contributing to the family economy, it was time for the mother to join the labour force to keep up with the expenses. In the 1960s, and especially the 1970s, increasing numbers of working women, the feminist movement and a new openness when speaking of family policy and women's employment contributed to the snowballing of a new family policy. Demands were put to public authorities to organise for the two-income families, developing nursery schools and youth centres. It was favourably argued for the educational needs of children for friends of the same age and for professionally arranged playing conditions. Private life became a political issue again. The sociologist Harriet Holter and others published the book *"The Fat in the Class Society"* in 1975. It became a leading textbook on gender role research. The authors' aim was to transfer the issue of family life from the private sphere to the political arena. In 1925, while Wiesener considered the family as a naturally given and ideal arena for the upbringing

43 See for instance Dahlerup 1998, Blom in Blom and Sogner (ed.) 1999, pp. 29

children, which politics should contribute to maintaining and restoring, Holter and her co-workers considered family life a political construction and therefore historically changeable. Alva Myrdal wrote about the social problems and the social solutions of the population question, and when Holter writes about family life as a political problem, the parallel is striking:

"In our society and many others, the family unit has a special double character. On the one hand, it appears as a fundamental unit of society, a kind of prehistoric cell that can be found in practically all cultures and at all times. This gives it an appearance of political neutrality. On the other hand, a closer study will show that the character of inevitability and durability of the family can only be understood by its flexibility and manifold design, that is, by the dependency of the family institution upon the political and economic systems of society. This signifies that the problems assigned to family life in the final analysis are political problems".⁴⁴

During the fifty years between the diagnoses of Wiesener and Holter, family policy has developed as a political field. The time of Wiesener was a period of establishing social services targeting children and families, and a time when the natural differences of gender were emphasised as a foundation for social behaviour. The time of Holter was, on the other hand, marked by a feminist offensive in politics, aiming at a new approach to put the issues of family and childcare on the political map. It was a time when given differences were rejected as determining factors for social positions and functions. However, both periods were marked by centrifugal moves away from the home, a situation calling for political efforts. The earlier solution of family policy was to restore the home with a present mother as a security net. The newer solution was to establish a working infrastructure for the two-wage family.

In the early 19th century, the feminist attitude to family-related issues was ambivalent. Maternalistic arguments were used in the fight for women's right to vote, though in the long run, these arguments could lead to a "gender trap" of defining the feminine political arenas solely in terms of children and caring.⁴⁵ Maternalism constitutes no common ground

44 Holter(etal.) 1975, p. 9

45 Rönnback 2002, p. 113

for women solidarity.⁴⁶ Family policy of the 1970s was an answer to the struggle for liberation from narrow gender roles and financial dependency resulting from the division of functions between men and women. Only in the 1970s, the Women's Movement was boosted through their clearer profile on equal gender rights in family policies. As a consequence of pressure from the Women's Movement for reforms favouring families with two providers, the issue was frequently debated. Examples such as day care centres, well functioning arrangements for leave, and free abortion can be mentioned. Sweden was particularly playing a leading part, but all the Nordic countries were to the fore of this worldwide feminist movement.

During the 1990s, family policy was to a greater degree marked by a prevailing view on family as a negotiable project and caring as a commodity. Gender roles were discussed during the 1970s, but it was not until the 1990s that the discussions resulted in practical solutions, as fathers took a greater share of responsibilities for the care of their offspring.⁴⁷ The starting point for legislation and public assistance was the model of negotiation for measures designed to support the family in making its timetable functional. Freedom of choice has become an argument for reform policies, as e.g. the recent (1998) Norwegian cash benefit for parents with children under three years, intended to grant them freedom to stay at home with their children, hire a childminder or place their children in publicly funded nursery schools. The parents may also divide the maternity leave between them. Equal obligations between parents and financial independence have been the premises for reforms in family policy.⁴⁸ An important goal is the freedom of choice to both work and care. Domestic work is gradually taken over by the market through the trade in service (cleaning, ready-cooked food), while family life increasingly centres on its leisure time. The most radical change in family policy in recent years is the changed role of fathers who to a larger extent spend time with their children. A hundred years ago society was hunting for a providing father. Today, we also want children to have considerate and caring fathers.⁴⁹

46 Kulawik 1999, p. 78

47 Boje and Leira 2000

48 Leira 2002

49 Berk Brandth and Elin Kvande in Jensen et al 1999, pp. 81-97

The entry of women into Government and "the State Feminism"⁵⁰ have made family policy one of the hottest topics in modern political debate. It has been of great importance to families with children particularly through the increased number of nursery schools and proper leave arrangements. To a great extent, families still have the main responsibility for their own welfare and standard of living. Public authorities serve as substitute breadwinners to only a small group of children and on a scant level. Families are primarily producers of welfare - not clients.

Conclusion

Security is a basic value of the welfare state. Security against loss of income, for an adequate health service and protection against external dangers represent basic rights. In the Norwegian history of family policy, social security has become a significant goal, often through the societal diagnosis of insecurity being a striking feature in the conditions for the upbringing of children.

Principally, one may question why security has been the dominating paradigm in the reasoning on family policy. Perhaps it was politically and strategically agreed upon, and by expressing the insecurity of society, a breakthrough for political action would be achieved in a field that had formerly been categorised in the private sphere. Professional arguments could be borrowed from medicine, psychiatry and social psychology. However, is it possible that the strategy of introducing this private area of insecurity into the political field has put too much focus on stability as a goal and on the insecurities of societal changes? Furthermore, has this given family policy a reactionary mark and made it less suitable to address current problems? Present debate often presents nostalgic arguments regarding the epoch of the housewife of the 1950s being presented as the prototype of an ideal way of bringing up children. Nostalgia tends to idealise the past. We now know that the family of the 1950's frequently was not the haven in a heartless world that the nostalgists claim it to be. Many tragedies were hidden behind the common demand for the protection the sanctity of private life. Is it possible that the generations of

parents and grandparents feel more threatened by the changes in society than their children do?

Security can be achieved through protection, but also through learning to overcome situations that threaten the social or individual security. Safety through protection against dangers has been expressed through childcare measures, health care, social insurance and occupational protection. Different laws and actions from the end of the 19th century onwards share a new understanding of society and development as a potential danger to the welfare of children. In Norway, the focus on security led to a nostalgic and conservative family policy, concentrating on the support of homes. Sweden and Denmark established more offensive political goals regarding childcare, including an earlier and stronger development of nursery schools. The reports of the Swedish Commissions of Population formulated a more complete family policy than the other Nordic countries, and made an example for advocates of an active family policy in other countries. In the Nordic countries and in Europe, the reports, particularly the book of the Myrdals - *"The Crisis of Population"* (*"Kris i befolkningsfrågan"*) - became an important basis for the debates in social and family policies. Thus, in Sweden, Alva Myrdal had a larger impact on most Scandinavian family policies than were the case of Katti Anker Møller. Important to understanding the differences between these two, and thus between Norwegian and Swedish family politics, is the time gap of 30 years between the two activists' main working periods. Being 30 years earlier, Katti Anker Møller was part of the maternalistic wave, while from the 1930s, Alva Myrdal foresaw the "gender trap" of maternalism and opposed the narrow gender roles following from maternalism.⁵¹

In Norway, family policy was quite radical at an early stage between 1900 and 1920. In a period when gender roles primarily were thought of within the framework of complementarity, this pioneer status may have effected that family policy also later on emphasised the mother-child dyade at home. The other Nordic countries, especially Sweden, experienced their great period of family policies later, in the 1930s focusing more strongly on families in general and the struggle for equal rights. One issue was the right to employment, and feminists engaged in the fight against the exclusion of married women from the labour

51 Rönnbäck 2002, p. 113

force. The dying infants and unhappy single mothers were no longer the main focus. The ideas of the Myrdals now became a powerful force that influenced all other countries in all matters of social policy. Equal rights to employment for men and women, day care institutions, school meals and housing policies were important elements in their vision of a better society for both children and parents. Their theories differed from the Norwegian efforts 20 years earlier. The Norwegian social policy was shaped by the philanthropic paradigm and a poor economy, the state being an administrator rather than an economic actor, while the Myrdals took an offensive attitude to state intervention and economic growth.

The post-war era was the golden age of the male breadwinner model throughout Scandinavia, but particularly so in Norway. However, a reaction to this was forthcoming. Feminism - with its slogan "Private is Political" - pushed the phrase "family policy" into the political vocabulary of the 1970s. It is rather paradoxical that it came into use during a period when the traditional target unit of family policy; "The Breadwinner Family", nearly had reached its expiry date, being replaced by a term for "family" in which individual freedom of choice was the main objective. In the history of family policies, such paradoxes form a persistent feature. It was difficult to implement changes in private lives through public policymaking, and conceptualisation often retreated to nostalgia. Stating the hazards of modernisation made way for arguments of secure solutions for the vulnerable, but at the same time causing the cementation of traditional family life patterns when applied to families in general. The vision of the breadwinner family was part of the organic aim that characterised the epoch of Romanticism in the history of ideas.⁵² An organic philosophy where men and women have complementary roles and are essentially different and dependent on each other conflicts with the modern ideal of feminism. Feminism envisions a family model built on genuine equality of status, where both men and women partake in work of caring as well as providing financially for the family. The friction between these ideas in itself created a foundation for a new term for family policy.

Ironically, we can now say that the Norwegian "backwardness" in the post-war era seems to have been a catalyst for the new era of "State

52 Stokholm Banke 1999, p. 13

Feminism" in the 1980s and 1990s. Many radical reforms in family policy have been introduced or expanded in this period in Norway, while Sweden have deconstructed their system of support to families.⁵³ Increasing birth rates is one result of a more expansive family policy. It remains to be seen whether this Nordic success will persist or decline under the new pressures on the welfare state since the turn of the millennium.

53 Ulla Bjørnberg in Göranson (ed) 2001, pp. 46-56