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The prominence of women in politics in the Nordic countries

Janet M. Berkeley
San Jose State University

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The prominence of women in politics in the Nordic countries

Berkeley, Janet M., M.A.

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THE PROMINENCE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS
IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Political Science
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Janet M. Berkeley

December, 1991

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Fauneil J. Rinn

Dr. Fauneil Rinn

Charles Kunsman

Dr. Charles Kunsman

Mary Elizabeth Carroll

Dr. Mary Elizabeth Carroll

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

M. Lou Lewandowski

ABSTRACT

THE PROMINENCE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS
IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

by Janet M. Berkeley

The Nordic countries--Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, have more women in their political systems than anywhere else in the world. They have an average of 30% female representation in their governments. Currently, the three leading parties in Norway are led by women and the country has a female Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. Iceland has a female President, Vigdis Finnbogadottir.

This thesis traces the history of women in Nordic politics from 1850 to 1945 and then from the post-World War II era to the present. It discusses seven factors that have contributed to female political success in the region: social conditions, education, women in the workforce, equality councils and legislation, the electoral system, political parties (including results of a survey conducted by the author of 60 Nordic political parties), and women's organizations. It is noted that none of these factors alone have contributed to the prominence of women in the politics of the five countries, but a combination of them.

It acknowledges that, while there are still obstacles to be overcome and while the Nordic countries are not a Utopia for women, the progress that has been made has been remarkable.

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INTRODUCTION

The Nordic countries--Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden--have led the world this century in numbers of women in major political positions. The smallest country, Iceland, whose population is about 250,000, is a dramatic example of the tendency throughout the area for women to hold political office, as news stories in the world's press related. In 1980, Icelanders were the first people to elect a woman president, Vigdis Finnbogadottir. Later that decade, Iceland captured front pages again when its women's party became the first such party in history to win parliamentary representation. The power of Iceland's women had already been demonstrated and widely reported in October 1975, when a strike called by women leaders ground the country to a halt for 24 hours.

As illustrated by Table 1, the Nordic countries are far ahead of other democracies, showing two or three times more women in national legislatures than the others.

TABLE 1:

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SELECTED POPULARLY ELECTED
NATIONAL LEGISLATURES OR EQUIVALENT BODIES.

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN</u>	<u>YEAR</u>
AUSTRALIA	2.4	1986
BELGIUM	7.5	1986
CANADA	9.6	1986
DENMARK	24.0	1985
FINLAND	31.0	1985
FRANCE	5.5	1986
WEST GERMANY	10.0	1984
ICELAND	15.0	1985
INDIA	6.6	1986
IRELAND	8.0	1987
ISRAEL	8.3	1986
ITALY	8.0	1984
JAPAN	1.4	1986
NETHERLANDS	19.0	1984
NEW ZEALAND	12.6	1986
NORWAY	35.0	1986
SPAIN	5.0	1982
SWEDEN	28.0	1986
UNITED KINGDOM	4.3	1987
<u>UNITED STATES (H. of R.)</u>	<u>5.0</u>	<u>1986</u>

Source: Randall, 1987.

The aims of this paper are twofold. First, it will provide evidence that the number of women in key political positions is large enough to warrant the common sense view that the Nordic countries have been pioneers in moving toward equality for women in political life. At the same time a cautionary note will be sounded. For these countries are not at all close to the simple standard suggested by the question, "If women comprise roughly 50% of the world's population, why are women not half of the representatives in the world?" By that standard, women are still underrepresented in the Nordic countries. The second aim of what follows is to explain, as far as possible, why there are so many women in noteworthy political roles in these countries. What factors make these nations open to fuller women's participation in political life than found elsewhere? Definite answers to this question will not be provided, but the hope is that informed and informative discussion will expand understanding of the place of women in those lands.

The first chapter will trace the history of women in politics in this part of the world, taking each country one-by-one. This chapter begins the task of explaining the phenomenon of the political prominence of women. Chapters two and three look at salient reasons for women's prominence, including the results and an analysis of responses to a survey devised by the author and sent to 60

political parties of the Nordic countries. The fourth and final chapter returns to the topic of why, despite their undeniable political achievements, Nordic women do not approach the level of political equality that these achievements might seem to assure.

Chapter 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter begins at 1850, when Nordic women began organizing for suffrage and change. The second section concentrates on the post-war era to the present. But it may be parenthetically noted that the ancient Viking laws did not distinguish between the sexes. Bitten Modal believes that these ancient laws are responsible for the favorable legal position of women today. She writes that while Viking males were away, the women were in charge, so that "equal rights for women were a necessity."¹

1) 1850 - 1945

As in other democracies, it was the nineteenth century when the Nordic feminist movement developed. The "growth of the movement was a gradual affair and because its modes of operation were law-abiding and peaceful, it avoided the dramatic events of the feminist struggle in other countries."² Women's organizations started mostly in the cities, where middle and upper class women who were discontented with their situation could more easily communicate with one another. The most important aim of the movements was to gain the vote for women. Working class women, with less time and money to spare, tended to join

trade and women's unions, rather than suffrage organizations.

DENMARK

Denmark's 1849 Constitution made no mention of women having the right to vote or be elected to the the Folketing or Landsting, the Danish lower and upper chambers. The lawyer, Algreen-Ussing, articulated a common view in his address to the framers of the Constitution: "It is accepted everywhere that minors, the incapable, women, and criminals, should not have the right to vote."³

In 1871, Mathilde and Fredrik Bajer founded the Danish Women's Association (DK--Dansk Kvindesamfund), which was mostly concerned with educational and legal reform. In 1898, when the parliament again ignored the question of votes for women, the Danish Women's Association's Suffrage Federation formed in response. Many Dansk Kvindesamfund members left to join this new association, but still worked closely with DK.

Some Danish women who thought the pro-suffrage efforts were still moving too slowly broke away to form yet another group, the National League for Women's Suffrage. By 1910, "the National League had 11,000 members in 160 branches and the Federation had 12,200 in 144 branches."⁴ Women finally earned the right to vote at the local level in 1908 and at the national level in 1915. But the new right to vote did not quickly lead to women being elected to office. Table 2

shows that during the years 1918 to 1943, women never made up more than 2.9% of the members of the legislature.

TABLE 2:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE FOLKETING 1918 - 1945

<u>ELECTION</u>	<u>TOTAL / WOMEN</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
	<u>ELECTED/ ELECTED</u>	<u>ELECTED</u>
APR. 1918	139/4	2.9
APR. 1920	139/3	2.2
JUL. 1920	139/3	2.2
SEP. 1920	148/3	2.0
APR. 1924	148/3	2.0
DEC. 1926	148/3	2.0
APR. 1929	148/4	2.7
NOV. 1932	148/4	2.7
OCT. 1935	148/3	2.0
APR. 1939	148/3	2.0
MAR. 1943	148/2	1.4

Source: Factsheet Denmark, 1985

Denmark was the first country in the Western world to appoint a woman to its cabinet. "In 1924, Nina Bang became the first woman member of a government...For some weeks in 1917, Russia's Alexandra Kollontai had been People's Commissar for the Soviet welfare system. But Nina

Bang was really the world's first woman member of a government."⁵

FINLAND

The first rumblings for change had occurred in the 1860s in Finland. Women were increasing their social activities and wanted to vote. Haavio-Mannila writes, "Union, Women's Movement Association in Finland (Unionen, Kvinnosaksförbund i Finland) was established in 1892, as a result of friction within the Finnish Women's Association (Suomen Naisyhdistys), founded in 1884."⁶ Unionen fought hard for women in the areas of education, wages, and suffrage. After achieving the vote for women at the national level, Unionen worked to gain them the municipal vote and succeeded in 1917.

In 1906, while still part of Russia, Finland enfranchised both men and women within their borders. The Russians regarded this step as a local issue that did not impinge on the interests of their empire. Thus Finland became the first in Europe to give women the vote and the third in the world, after New Zealand and Australia. According to Kurki, "the municipal right to vote was not obtained until 1917, in connection with Finland's declaration of independence from Russia."⁷

The first women elected to the parliament were described as "champions of the feminist and labor movement as well as advocates of public education and temperance."⁸

In Finland's first elections, women won 9.5% of national assembly (Eduskunta) seats: an impressive first showing. However, the percentage stayed at around that number until after World World War II, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE EDUSKUNTA 1907 - 1945

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1907	9.5
1908	12.5
1909	10.5
1910	8.5
1911	7.0
1913	10.5
1916	12.0
1917	9.0
1919	8.5
1922	10.0
1924	8.5
1927	8.5
1929	8.0
1930	5.5
1933	7.0
1936	8.0
1939	8.0

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979

ICELAND

There were two main women's organizations in Iceland: the Association of Icelandic Women, founded in 1894, and Kvennettindafelag Islands, formed in 1906. Universal suffrage was granted in Iceland in 1915, but women could vote only if they were more than 40 years of age. It was not until 1920 that all Icelandic women could vote and run for office in the Althing, the world's oldest parliament, having been established in 930 A.D.

There was no female sitting in the Althing until 1923, when Ingibjorg Bjarnason was elected. Before World War II there was only one other woman elected to the Althing, which occurred in 1934 (see Table 4). Among all the Nordic women, Iceland's have had the fewest elected to the legislature.

TABLE 4:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE ALTHING 1916 - 1945

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1916	0
1919	0
1923	2.4
1927	0
1931	0
1933	0
1934	2.0
1937	0
1942	0

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979.

NORWAY

Norwegian public opinion was influenced in the direction of a favorable attitude toward the emancipation of women by the plays of Henrik Ibsen, most notably A Doll's House (1879) and Hedda Gabler (1890). The Norwegian Association for the Promotion of Women's Interest was established in 1884. Eleven years later, Gina Krog started the Women's Suffrage Association. As early as 1901, women could vote at the local level, provided they could meet a property qualification.

By 1913, all women could vote at Norway's national level. There was only 0.8% female representation at the local council level in 1901. In 1915, at the first election in which women voted, 54% did so, but no women were elected. The first woman elected to the Norwegian parliament, the Storting, was the Conservative Party's Karen Platou in 1921. But she did not start a trend, for by World War II the representation of women at the national level had returned to 0.7% (see Table 5).

TABLE 5:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE STORTING, 1915 - 1945

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1915	0
1918	0
1921	0.7
1924	0
1927	0.7
1930	1.3
1933	2.0
1936	0.7

Source, Haavio-Mannila, 1979

SWEDEN

Sweden's first women's political organization was called Association for Married Women's Property Right (Foreningen for gifta kvinnors aganderatt), which was set up in 1873. One of the most famous Nordic women's groups, the Fredrika Bremer Society, was formed in 1884 and led by Anna Whitlock. In 1889, it petitioned the parliament to allow women to vote for members of the lower house. In 1903, the National Association for Women's Suffrage was established, which worked to bring women's enfranchisement to reality on the national political scene.

In Sweden, in 1862, the only women allowed to vote in local elections were those 25 years of age and over, unmarried, and able to meet certain other qualifying conditions, such as land ownership. These restrictions resulted in a small group having the opportunity to vote. By the start of the 20th century, the Social Democratic and Liberal Parties had declared in favor of female suffrage and had the issue on their agendas.

Even though the Swedish organizations had large memberships, which might seem to have given them great influence, they had to wait longer for the vote at the national level than any other Nordic women. Universal suffrage was not granted in Sweden until 1921. According to Statistics Sweden, in 1922, "Kerstin Hesselgren was the first woman to be elected to the Swedish parliament,"⁹ the

Riksdag. There was a 14.8% difference between the sexes in voter turnout - men, 62%, women, 47.2% - at that election. But by 1940, the gap had narrowed to 4.5%. Before World War II, the proportion of women in the Riksdag never rose above 4.7%.

TABLE 6:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE RIKSTAG, 1922 - 1945

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1922	1.3
1925	1.6
1929	1.1
1933	1.6
1937	2.6
1941	4.7

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979.

By 1921 Nordic women could vote and run for office at all levels. As shown by Table 7, other democracies took from two to four decades longer to grant women's suffrage, although Austria, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands did so about the same time as the Nordic countries.

TABLE 7:

DATES OF FEMALE SUFFRAGE EXTENSION IN WESTERN EUROPE AND THE
UNITED STATES

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>YEAR</u>
AUSTRIA	1920
BELGIUM	1948
DENMARK	1917
GERMANY	1919
FINLAND	1906
FRANCE	1945
GREECE	1952
IRELAND	1922
ICELAND	1915
ITALY	1945
LUXEMBOURG	1918
NETHERLANDS	1919
NORWAY	1913
SWEDEN	1919
SWITZERLAND	1960
UNITED KINGDOM	1928
UNITED STATES	1928

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979.

After women gained the right to vote, some of their organizations slowed the pace of their work for equality. The years leading up to and during World War II saw little progress toward the full inclusion of women in political life. Before World War II, maximum female representation occurred in Denmark in 1918 (2.9%), Finland in 1916 (12%), Iceland in 1923 (2.4%), Norway in 1933 (2.0%), and Sweden in 1941 (4.7%).

2) Post-World War II

World War II proved to be a catalyst for Nordic women, not just in politics, but in other spheres as well. After 1945, their countries underwent economic growth, a large shift in population to the cities, and a movement from agricultural to service industries. There were more women in the workforce than ever before.

In the 1950s and 60s, there was much discussion over sex-roles and equality. A 1955 United Nations' report confirmed that women still played a small political role in Europe's political systems.

At the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s, the Nordic women's movements, which had been in a lull following the gaining of suffrage, had a rebirth, inspired by the civil rights and women's movements in the United States. This second wave of activism included younger women, who were influenced by the arguments put forth by American feminists.

The new women's movement had a different agenda from the earlier one, as noted in the following comment: "Where traditional feminists primarily sought equality and demanded a public policy to achieve it, the new feminists also sought power; where the old sought to achieve their aims mainly through consensus, the latter also recognized the necessity of conflict."¹⁰ The new groups tended to be open to women only, while some men had been members of the first women's organizations.

The second movement took various forms in the five countries. New women's groups were created, while some of the old ones were revamped, as illustrated in the ensuing country-by-country discussion.

DENMARK

In Denmark, the Redstockings were formed in 1970. They were one of the most radical of the Nordic groups. They resorted to some unusual ways to get their message across, e.g., they would not pay full fare on buses because women's pay was so much lower than that of men. They also attracted much attention on their street marches.

The slogans that they developed, "Personal Means Political" and "Private and Public are Complementary,"¹¹ conveyed a meaning like the American version, "the personal is the political," which was that all problems faced by women are the fault of the political order and not that of the individual woman.

The Redstockings consisted of mainly middle-class women who met in groups of five to ten to discuss issues. As the 1970s moved on, some women broke away from the Redstockings and formed other groups because they were dissatisfied at its inability to mobilize working class women. One of these groups was called Women's Front (Kvindefronten) but they too proved unable to reach working class women.

As the Table 8 shows, the largest increases in women's representation were in the election of 1971--6.2%--and 1979 --6.9%. By the end of the 1970s nearly a quarter of the Folketing were women. The current 21-member Danish cabinet contains five women: Dybkjaer, Larsen, Laustsen, Lundholt, and Olesen, who are the Ministers for The Environment, Health, Housing, Industry, and Social Affairs, respectively.

TABLE 8:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE FOLKETING, 1945 - 1984

<u>ELECTION</u>	<u>ELECTED/WOMEN</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
OCT. 1945	148/8	5.4
OCT. 1947	148/13	8.8
SEP. 1950	149/12	8.1
APR. 1953	149/14	9.4
SEP. 1953	175/17	9.7
MAY 1957	175/15	8.6
NOV. 1960	175/17	9.7
SEP. 1964	175/17	9.7
NOV. 1966	175/19	10.9
JAN. 1968	175/19	10.9
SEP. 1971	175/30	17.1
DEC. 1973	175/27	15.4
JAN. 1975	175/28	16.0
FEB. 1977	175/30	17.1
OCT. 1979	175/42	24.0
DEC. 1981	175/42	24.0
JAN. 1984	175/47	26.9

Source: Factsheet Denmark, 1985

FINLAND

Finland had been hardest hit by the war and had the double blow of having to pay reparations to the Soviets, while receiving no Marshall Plan aid. Finnish women were viewed "as 'poor, but equal' - the proportion of women in the labor force and the Parliament being noticeably greater than in the other Nordic countries."¹²

Finland is divided into 15 electoral districts, each of which sends eight to 25 members to the Eduskunta, which is the 200-member parliament. As the first European country to allow its women to vote, Finland has been the leader of the Nordic countries for electing females to the central government, as shown by Table 9.

TABLE 9:

PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN IN THE FIVE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS
FROM 1918 TO 1984

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>DENMARK</u>	<u>FINLAND</u>	<u>ICELAND</u>	<u>NORWAY</u>	<u>SWEDEN</u>
1918	3	9	0	0	0
1920	2	10	0	1	2
1929	3	8	3	1	1
1939	2	8	2	1	4
1949	9	12	4	5	10
1958	8	14	2	7	13
1966	11	17	2	8	13
1977	17	23	5	24	21
1984	26	31	15	26	28

Source: Haavio-Mannila et al., Unfinished Democracy, 1981

Finland had the highest percentages of women in parliament until 1977, when Norway had a 1% higher representation. Finland gained the lead again by 1984.

One of the main theories about why women have been so successful in Finland is that they gained the right to vote in 1906 at the same time as men. Therefore, men did not get a head start in politics nor were they allowed to so entrench themselves in power that women would find it difficult to penetrate. Both males and females had to learn

the rules of the political game together. Another theory is that women may have been especially successful in Finnish elections because of the loss of males in the two World Wars.

The second women's movement was the least extensive in Finland. There was little new organizational activity because women were already working through traditional political channels as well as established groups. Unionen was still operating and in 1976 some younger, more radical women took over. A group called Feministerna was formed but did not attract too much attention because most of its members spoke Swedish.

As in Denmark, the largest increase in women's representation in the post-World War II era in Finland was at the beginning of the 1970s. In the 1970 elections women in the Eduskunta increased by 5%. By the end of that decade, female representation was just over a quarter, at 26% (see Table 10).

TABLE 10:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE EDUSKUNTA 1945 - 1979

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1945	8.5
1948	12.0
1951	14.5
1954	15.0
1958	14.0
1962	13.5
1966	16.5
1970	21.5
1972	21.5
1975	23.0
1979	26.0

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979

By 1990, there were four women in Finland's seventeen-member cabinet.

ICELAND

Iceland's Redstocking (Raudsokkahreyfingin) movement was established in 1970. In order to preserve its flexibility and independence, it tried to avoid alignment with political parties. In 1974 it established its program that "the women's struggle is a class struggle and the class

struggle is a women's struggle."¹³ At this time, some non-Socialist women left to join the Icelandic Women's Rights Organization. Maoist women also left and formed the Eighth of March Movement, which existed only for a short time.

By the end of the 1970s, Iceland was way behind the other Nordic countries in female representation in the central government (see Table 11). In 1977, when Iceland had a 5% female representation, Denmark's figure was 16.6%, Finland's 26%, Norway's 23.9%, and Sweden's 22.9%. Different factions and policy strategies had caused Icelandic women to lag behind other Nordic women in achieving their aims.

TABLE 11:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE ALTHING 1946 - 1978

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1946	3.8
1949	-
1956	1.9
1959	1.7
1963	-
1967	-
1971	5.0
1974	-
1978	5.0

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979

As noted earlier, in the last ten years Iceland's political scene has been marked by three important events. In 1980, Vigdis Finnbogadottir became the first directly elected female president in the world. Five years later, Icelandic women staged a strike which ground the country to a halt for 24 hours. In the 1980s, Iceland's women formed a political party that became the world's first to win parliamentary representation as a women's party.

Vigdis Finnbogadottir is Iceland's fourth President since its independence from Denmark in 1944. Her election was helped by her country's increasing receptiveness to women getting involved in politics and by her high public profile as a television show co-host. She ran her campaign on a pacifist, feminist, nationalist, and cultural platform, and is now in the middle of her third term.

The job of President in Iceland is mostly ceremonial. She must approve the appointment of the Prime Minister and members of the cabinet and sign all bills into law. If the Government collapses, it is her job to appoint a member of the Alting to form a new one. Her post is similar to that of many Western European monarchs; she is expected to refrain from making political statements and to serve as a symbol of national unity.

Today the Icelandic cabinet has 12 members, one of whom is a woman, Johanna Sigurdardottir, the Minister for Social Affairs.

In October, 1985, the "Women's Day Off" or "Women's Strike" was held to protest what was referred to as "male privilege." (There had been a similar strike ten years earlier which took place on United Nations Day in the UN Women's Year.) About 90% of Icelandic women walked off their jobs to show that the country could not function without them. They were also protesting that women earned 40% less, on average, than men. Many homemakers also took part in the strike, and President Finnboggadottir stayed away from her office that day. The strike was organized to raise consciousness not just in Iceland, but throughout the world.

Iceland had always tended to lag behind the other Nordic countries in getting women into politics; for example, their first female cabinet member was not appointed until 1970. One of the reasons that it has been so difficult to get women into the Alting is its size; there are only around 60 seats. By contrast, the Swedish Riksdag has 349. The fewer the seats, the fewer the women describes how the size constraints have affected the efforts at representational equality.

Kvenna Frambothid (KF) grew out of the Red Stocking movement in 1981 and out of dissatisfaction with the facts that only three out of 60 parliamentary representatives were women and only 71 out of 1076 were local councillors. Members were also unhappy about the general inequalities

between women and men that they saw in Icelandic society. Kvenna Frambothid's efforts to gain power "began with the placing of candidates on a Women's List for the May 1982 local authority elections in Reykjavik and Akureyri."¹⁴ In those cities Kvenna Frambothid received 11.7% and 18% of the vote respectively.

The most remarkable political gains for women have been achieved by the Women's Alliance. This is a group that, a year after the municipal elections, broke away from Kvenna Frambothid and became known as Kvinnalistinn or the Women's Alliance. In the 1983 national elections, the Alliance fielded candidates in three of Iceland's eight constituencies and won 5.5% of the vote. The 1987 elections yielded an even greater success for the Women's Alliance; they had election lists in all eight constituencies and received 10% of the vote, which gave them six members in the new 63-seat parliament. This brought the total number of women in the Alting to 13.

What is so noteworthy about the 1987 election is that the Women's Alliance held the balance of power for a time. The Independence Party, which had the most seats, needed to form a coalition to have a majority, so they courted the Women's Party. But the Alliance was not willing to compromise its principles and decided to remain in the opposition. The women reasoned that if they joined with the Independence Party, their voices would not be heard as much

as if they were on their own in opposition.

The Women's Alliance members speak of themselves as more of a movement than a political party. The Alliance does not have a leader and aims to reach decisions by consensus. Working through small women's groups, members assume Alliance responsibilities for limited periods of time, "moving in and out of politics as it suits their home life and job."²⁵ The requirement of consensus has caused some problems because it is so time-consuming. The Alliance tries to reach unanimous decisions, but that is not always possible. For example, members were divided over whether Iceland should withdraw from North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

There are divisions of the Alliance in each of the eight Icelandic constituencies. Most of the members are between the ages of 25 and 50 and are from all types of backgrounds. They believe that women have different values from men and have too little influence in a patriarchal society. They want a re-evaluation of women's work outside and in the home. They also concentrate on women and children and on how policies affect them.

The following quotations from the Women's Alliance Policy Statement of 1987 illustrate the issues that concern the party, most of which center on the quality of family life and the place of women in society.

- that women's work be reassessed so that the pedagogic, service and care factors of traditional women's work be recognized as worthwhile,

- that people should have an option of shorter and more flexible working hours so that families can have more time together,

- that the government greatly increase its allocations for the building of daycare centers,

- that the priorities of the country's budgeting be changed so that people and the needs of the home are at the top of the list,

- that comprehensive legislation be passed on environmental issues and a ministry of the environment be established,

- that there be a decrease of centralization in Icelandic society and the increase of the distribution of power so as to give the population direct influence over the affairs which concern its daily life,

- that the needs of the family be taken as a guideline when housing policies are made,

- that the Alliance work against the build-up of armaments and military alliances all over the world and protect human rights,

- that the Alliance increase the influence of women on the economy, by greater participation in influential committees and boards.

Source: Women's Alliance Policy Statement, 1987

NORWAY

Norwegian women were extremely active in the new movement. There were two main groups: the new Feminists, formed in 1970, and the Women's Front, established in 1972. The older women's groups were also instrumental in the success of the movement in Norway. In 1976 Bread and Roses (Brod og roser) was formed after the Women's Front had broken up. The chief rallying point of Bread and Roses was that "capitalist society and women's emancipation are incompatible."¹⁶

In 1967, the National Council for Women, an umbrella organization for women's groups in Norway, began an information campaign focusing on the local elections. The information campaigns involved arranging "unconventional demonstrations, capturing the interest of the mass media,

and creating a widespread and intensive public debate."¹⁷ The Council wanted to encourage women to run for office and vote for other women. A committee was set up, headed by the Prime Minister, Per Borten, which had the goal of increasing women's representation. The success of the effort is shown by the facts that in 1965 women had comprised 5% of local councils, but that after the campaign the number more than doubled, rising to 12%.

The campaign organized around the 1971 local elections provided even more dramatic results. Many more women were involved in these campaigns, including the new women's movement groups. Also, some women had gained experience in politics via their work in 1972 on the referendum on whether or not Norway should join the European Economic Community. Norway voted no.

The results of the 1971 elections so exceeded expectations, that the elections have come to be known as the "women's coup."¹⁸ In three major cities, Oslo, Trondheim, and Asker, women were in the majority on the councils (56%, 54%, and 57% respectively). Six other cities now had 40% female representation. There was an uproar over the results. Some male politicians accused the women of using "undemocratic procedures such as crossing out names on their ballots."¹⁹ Despite the women candidates being approved by the political parties beforehand, many of the women were now accused of being incompetent.

In the 1975 local elections, before which the women's groups did not have an information campaign, the numbers of women increased on some councils, but there were no longer any councils with a female majority. Women's representation at the local level throughout Norway in 1975 was 15%. An information campaign was mounted before the 1979 local elections, when representation jumped to 22.8%, and women gained majorities on three councils. No uproar followed this time.

From the years 1965 to 1979, women's representation at Norway's local and national level more than doubled. A group of 400 women from different organizations and political parties came together to back a campaign before the national parliamentary elections in 1977. One of their many aims was to establish women in 50% of all top positions in Norway. This election yielded a 22.9% representation for women in the Storting (see Table 12).

TABLE 12:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE STORTING 1945 - 1977

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1945	4.7
1949	4.7
1953	4.7
1957	6.7
1961	8.7
1965	8.0
1969	9.3
1973	15.5
1977	23.9

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979

In the space of eight years, 1969 to 1977, female representation in the Storting increased by 14.6%. This was mostly due to efforts by the new women's movement and the Norwegian government itself. As in all other Nordic countries, except Iceland, female representation in Norway at the end of the 1970s was close to one quarter.

SWEDEN

In Sweden, the most important organization in the new women's movement was Group Eight, formed in 1968. A faction broke away from it in 1973 to form Working Women. The

government had focused so much attention on equality issues and developing policies that the women's organizations tended to play a less crucial role in Sweden than in Norway, for example.

In Sweden, like Finland, women worked more closely through the established political channels, because the Swedish government had been on the women's side in the equality debate. But there were "Women's culture festivals, women's camps, women's houses in several towns, 'women's struggle for peace' and women's courses at universities,"²⁰ all of which brought attention to the new movement.

Sweden's largest increase in female representation occurred in the 1974 elections with a 7.1% increase. This was the largest post-World War II gain in a single election out of all the Nordic countries (see Table 13).

TABLE 13:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE RIKSDAG 1945 - 1977

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1945	5.3
1949	7.4
1953	8.9
1957	10.2
1959	11.0
1961	11.2
1965	11.5
1969	13.8
1971	14.0
1974	21.1
1977	22.9

Source: Haavio-Mannila, 1979

In Sweden, from 1932 to 1976 and again from 1982, the Social Democratic Party has held power either alone or in a coalition. The current Swedish Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson, has eight women and fourteen men in his cabinet. Percentages at the local level reflect parliamentary statistics, "Over 30% of the municipal councillors are women. Women are best represented (42%) on the county councils, whose responsibilities include the health and medical services."²¹

The new women's movement in the Nordic countries has played a pivotal role in increasing women's representation in that area. The movement has influenced government action and has helped gain media attention and voter approval of the goal to elect females to office.

It is noteworthy that in the second half of the 1970s, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden were close to a 25% female representation in their governments. By contrast, by the mid-1980s, other major industrial democracies were not even approaching that proportion (see Table 1) Australia was at 5.4%, Canada, 9.6%, West Germany, 10%, Japan, 1.4%, United Kingdom, 4.3%, and the United States, 5.4%. The next chapter suggests some reasons for this marked disparity.

Chapter 2

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROMINENCE OF WOMEN

IN NORDIC POLITICS

Informed speculation on the reasons for the success of women in politics in the Nordic region yields seven factors that, although intertwined, will be discussed separately below. The first two--social conditions and high levels of education--may be regarded as generated by common sense as well as research; the other factors rest on research, including a survey conducted by the author, which will be discussed in Chapter three.

1) Social Conditions

What do these social conditions have to do with there being more women in politics? The answer is that the societies have evolved to a level where they can devote more time to women's issues and developing equality.

There are only 22.5 million people in the entire region; indeed, Iceland is the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Their small populations have made it easier for the societies to be ethnically and religiously homogeneous, i.e. Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, or Swedish in their respective countries, and more than 90% of Nordic people are Lutheran.

TABLE 14:

SOCIAL STATISTICS OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

	<u>DEN.</u>	<u>FIN.</u>	<u>ICE.</u>	<u>NOR.</u>	<u>SWE.</u>
<u>ETHNIC</u>					
<u>HOMOGENEITY</u>	99%	94%	97%	98%	91%
<u>LUTHERAN</u>	90%	90%	95%	94%	95%
<u>FEMALE LIFE</u>					
<u>EXPECTANCY</u>	77.5	78.8	79.5	79.5	79.1
<u>MALE LIFE</u>					
<u>EXPECTANCY</u>	71.5	70.4	73.5	72.7	73.1
<u>LITERACY RATE</u>	99%	99%	99%	100%	99%

Sources: World Almanac, 1990, The World in Figures, 1988

The Nordic countries are noted for having a cultural "passion for equality." From the societies described in their ancient folktales to the modern social democratic welfare state, equality has been a major concern. This dominant philosophy has facilitated the promotion of women in all areas.

Among European countries, the Nordic people's

standard of living is exceeded only by Switzerland, as the following table shows.

TABLE 15:

GNP PER PERSON, IN THOUSANDS OF POUNDS STERLING FOR 1986

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>GNP</u>
SWITZERLAND	20.4
NORWAY	16.4
DENMARK	16.1
SWEDEN	15.7
ICELAND	14.9
WEST GERMANY	14.7
FINLAND	14.4
LUXEMBOURG	13.3
FRANCE	12.8
AUSTRIA	12.5
HOLLAND	11.9
BELGIUM	11.4
ITALY	10.5
UNITED KINGDOM	9.6
IRELAND	6.9
SPAIN	5.9
GREECE	4.0
PORTUGAL	2.8

Source: The Economist, November 21, 1987, p.4

The high progressive taxes that Nordic citizens pay to support their welfare systems have helped lead to among the highest life expectancies in the world, among the lowest infant mortality rates, a 99% to 100% literacy rate, and low levels of unemployment (see Table 14). For example, the Swedish government spends about 8% of the national budget on labor-market policy, which includes paying for relocation or retraining of the jobless.

In all the Nordic countries, womb-to-tomb welfare systems provide housing, pensions, education, and medical care, as basics. While some complain about high taxes, the majority appear to be supportive and proud of their welfare systems. President Vigdis Finnbogadottir of Iceland said of her own country, "Our complete social security system works very well. No one is left to die here--the system protects everyone. That's what I like about Iceland."²²

There is little terrorism--the assassination in 1986 of Swedish Prime Minister, Olaf Palme, being a major exception --and the crime rate is low. There are few slums in the Nordic region. The people are peace-loving; Sweden and Finland have neutral status. These countries are not perfect, they do have their problems, but they seem to have fewer chronic ills than other Western industrialized countries.

2) Education

Nordic women are now better educated than ever before. There was a huge expansion of the educational systems in the 1960s and 1970s. In Norway, for example, "...education was the first of the public sectors to undergo major reforms based on principles of equalization and improvement in quality and quantity."²³ Common sense dictates that the expansion and improvement of the system could only have benefitted both females and males. The importance of education in that country is reflected by the fact that one in 20 people in the labor force is a teacher.

There are close to equal numbers of females and males at all educational levels. Further, more women are studying non-traditional subjects than used to be the case. But each sex still tends to cluster in certain areas - women specifically in teacher education, social welfare, and liberal arts. The benefits to women's equality of higher education do not require extensive explanation; studies indicate that the more education women have, the more likely they are to move into higher positions in politics as well as other fields.

3) Women in the Workforce

After World War II, the Nordic countries joined in the industrial expansion taking place in the West. People left the farms and migrated to the towns. Today, most people

live in urban areas: 84% in Denmark, 61% in Finland, 90% in Iceland, 80% in Norway, and 85% in Sweden. The demand for workers in urban centers is great, especially because of the huge expansion of the service sector. Women, including both full and part-time workers, now constitute close to half of the workforce in all the Nordic countries.

TABLE 16:

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN PAID EMPLOYMENT IN 1964 AND 1985

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1985</u>
FINLAND	44.0	47.5
SWEDEN	36.7	47.1
DENMARK	34.8	45.6
UNITED STATES	34.1	43.7
NORWAY	29.6	43.5
CANADA	28.4	42.4
FRANCE	35.2	41.8
UNITED KINGDOM	34.3	40.1
BELGIUM	31.1	39.8
JAPAN	39.8	39.7
AUSTRIA	38.4	39.5
WEST GERMANY	36.9	38.7
AUSTRALIA	28.2	38.4
NEW ZEALAND	26.1	36.1
GREECE	32.2	35.4
ITALY	28.2	35.0
IRELAND	26.6	29.6

Source: Forbes, Public Administration, Spring 1989, pp.22-3

As in other parts of the Western world, many Nordic women raise their children alone, but the prevalence of

daycare centers has enabled mothers to work. Married women are more likely to work than stay at home. Many women are also entering traditional male jobs, e.g., "crane drivers, bricklayers, metalworkers, bus drivers, policemen and cooks."²⁴ That governments give incentive money to employers who hire women in these positions is a salient example of how equality for women is promoted by public policy.

In the past, women did not possess the time, money, or connections needed to participate fully in politics. It was not until the 1970s that a significant number of women entered the workforce. Employment opened doors for women and helped give them the means and the relevant experience to become politically involved.

4) Equality Councils and Legislation

The Nordic countries have given much attention to equal status policies. While females are not actually of equal status to men, significant efforts have been directed toward that end. Equality councils were set up in Finland, Norway, and Sweden in 1972; Denmark in 1975; and Iceland in 1976. A regional effort was encouraged in 1974 when the Nordic Council of Ministers resolved that "in every government administration a person shall be appointed to keep contact with other Nordic administrations on the issue of equality."²⁵

In Denmark, Iceland, and Norway, equality councils work independently with their own secretariats, while in Finland and Sweden they operate within both the Ministry of Labor and the Prime Minister's Office. These councils have the responsibility of drafting equality legislation, doing research for and publishing reports, and promoting equality in politics, job training, education, and the workforce. There are equal status committees at the local level, in all of the Nordic countries except for Denmark.

In addition to equality councils, legislation has been passed that strongly affects women's status. Denmark has two equality laws: one concerning equal pay and the other equal treatment. One drawback for the equality effort is that they may both be superseded by union agreements. Finland's bill has three main parts: it bans sex discrimination in general, it bans sex discrimination in the work place, and it promotes measures to achieve equal status. Iceland's act, passed in 1976, mostly concentrates on employment discrimination.

Norway's Equal Status Act of 1979 states that its principal objective is "improving the position of women... and providing equal opportunities for education, employment, and cultural and professional advancement."²⁶ Norway's Act is enforced by a Commissioner (Ombud), an Appeals Board, and the courts. According to Norderval: "Since the Norwegian equal status ombud began her work, the number of

complaints and cases initiated by the ombud herself have varied from around 650 annually to more than 1000. The largest group of complaints has dealt with advertising of positions, hiring and promotion, and equal pay."²⁷

In Sweden two words are used to describe equality. One is a new word that was introduced into the Swedish vocabulary in the early 1970s, "Jamstallldhet," which refers to "equivalent conditions, opportunities, and responsibilities for all, women and men, rather than to the principle that everyone is essentially the same."²⁸ The word recognizes that there are differences between people and contains the idea that whether the differences be behavioral or biological, everyone should have the same practical opportunities in life. The word does not have an English equivalent. The other word is "Jamlikhet" which roughly translates as "equality" and means "the philosophical or ethical principle of equal worth of every human being regardless of sex, race, religion, or origin."²⁹

The Swedish Equal Opportunities Act requires employers actively to promote equality in the workplace and prohibits sex discrimination. The Swedes also have an ombudsman (JamO) to enforce the act and promote equality. But there are some areas in which the ombud cannot intervene.

In 1988 the Swedish Riksdag adopted a government bill on equality policy to the mid-nineties. The bill contains a five-year plan of action which sets its sights much higher

than the current equality policy. The plan describes certain goals and measures to attain them, to be achieved by specified times. Five of the main sections of the plan deal with the role of women in the economy, the influence of women, and with equality in education, the labor market, and the family.

At the international level, the Nordic countries followed the request of the 1975 United Nations International Women's Conference to establish national plans of action. These plans, which heralded the start of the Women's Decade in 1975, focused on the family, employment, education, and political participation. They covered a range of equality issues and put forth suggestions about how to put the measures into effect.

Legislation has been the formal attempt to achieve equality in the region. But there is still a great deal of gender segregation, especially in the labor market. While there are no firm figures showing the extent to which legislation has eased women's entry into and rise in politics, laws have helped to raise consciousness towards women's issues and have given women a means to seek government enforcement of their rights.

5) The Electoral System

The voting system in the Nordic countries is proportional representation (PR) from multi-member

districts. This system means that "a range of representatives are elected from each constituency and the parties are then represented in proportion to their number of votes."³⁰ It has been hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between this electoral system and the chances of women getting elected to government. A few systematic empirical studies (Rule 1981, 1984, and Norris 1985 being the most notable) have endeavored to demonstrate the validity of the theory. Table 17 illustrates a correlation between types of systems and percentages of women legislators.

TABLE 17:

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS OF 23 WESTERN STYLE DEMOCRACIES AND
PERCENT OF WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURES (LOWER
HOUSES, 1982)

<u>PARTY LIST/ PR</u> <u>SYSTEMS</u>	<u>SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICT</u> <u>COUNTRIES</u>
SWEDEN.....27.7	NEW ZEALAND.....8.8
FINLAND.....26.0	CANADA.....4.3
NORWAY.....23.9	FRANCE.....4.1
DENMARK.....22.9	UNITED STATES.....4.1
NETHERLANDS.....14.0	UNITED KINGDOM.....3.1
SWITZERLAND.....10.5	AUSTRALIA.....0.0
AUSTRIA.....9.8	
PORTUGAL.....8.8	<u>SINGLE TRANSFERABLE</u>
ITALY.....8.2	<u>VOTE COUNTRY</u>
BELGIUM.....7.5	IRELAND.....6.8
ISRAEL.....7.5	
W.GERMANY.....7.3	<u>NON-TRANSFERABLE</u>
SPAIN.....5.4	<u>VOTE COUNTRY</u>
ICELAND.....5.0	JAPAN.....1.6
GREECE.....4.0	

Source: Rule, 1987.

Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have a system of rank-ordering, where a candidate's success is determined by his or her position on the party list. In the rank-ordering system voters have to choose the candidates from the top of the lists. The safe positions are at the top, followed by the challenger and finally the "frill" positions at the bottom, where the candidates do not have a realistic chance of getting elected. Being competitive, with election success not a certainty, the parties must be sensitive to issues, so that "In the 1960s when one Nordic party put women high on the ballot, other parties felt they needed to do it too."²¹ Denmark and Finland have preferential voting systems, which allow voters to reorder the party lists and vote for anyone on the list. The preferential system has proved more beneficial to women than rank-ordering because voters can choose any candidate no matter what their position on the list.

Two other theories have been suggested to explain women's success in achieving election. Rule's theory is that "women and other underrepresented political minorities have a greater chance for election when the district magnitude [number of representatives per district] is high."²² Duverger's theory observed "that women are more likely to be nominated and elected by left than by right parties."²³ With respect to Duverger, logic would seem to dictate that parties on the right would be less likely to

welcome the breaking of tradition by involving women fully in public life. While these theories have yet to find empirical demonstration, the Nordic experience lends support to them.

Rule's 22-country study of district magnitude and the percent of women in parliament in 1982 showed Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden with the most women in their respective parliaments and the largest number of representatives per district (with the exception of Austria, Israel, Italy, and the Netherlands).

In countries that have single-member district systems, women have a lesser chance of being a candidate, because if a party can only put forth one candidate, it will more likely be a male. In multi-member systems, women do not have to defeat all the men in the district to run for office. With several candidates running in each district, one-on-one competitions are avoided. Women are often included to balance the ticket in these districts. To address women's demands and to appeal to women voters, parties often fill vacancies with women who can later seek election in their own right.

The proportional representation system also enables the existence and influence of small parties. The best example of this influence is the Icelandic Women's Party (Kvennalistinn), which in 1987 held the balance of power in the formation of a coalition government. The next chapter

will complete the discussion of the seven variables
affecting the political place of women in the Nordic region.

Chapter 3

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS CONTINUED: POLITICAL PARTIES AND WOMEN'S GROUPS

The subject of political parties, while part of the foregoing influential factors, deserves a chapter of its own because of the major part they have played in getting women into politics. Moreover, this author's survey of the parties generated so much data that their inclusion would have made chapter two too long. This chapter closes with treatment of the area's women's organizations.

1) Background of Political Parties

Most political parties in the area were established at the end of the 1800s and grew out of differing social, economic, and cultural groups. Although the parties vary a good deal, "...the Nordic political landscape has been largely dominated by five parties in two blocs: Conservatives, Liberal and Agrarian or Center parties on the one side, and Social Democratic and Communists on the other."³⁴

Most commonly, five parties have seats in the Icelandic Alting and the Swedish Riksdag, seven in the Norwegian Storting, and nine in the Finnish Eduskunta and the Danish Folketing. The number and types of parties are subject to change; for example, the Greens gained the 4%

necessary for representation in the Swedish Riksdag in the 1988 elections. This multi-party system leads to coalition or minority governments and a great deal of electoral competition, which, in turn, open up the process to women, as will be shown.

The parties were pioneers for systems that balanced candidates between the genders. In the mid-1970s in Norway, the Socialist Left Party and the Liberal Party established quotas that required their tickets to have a minimum of 40% of each sex. Because women had tended to be at the bottom of party lists, which often meant fewer votes for them, the two parties began alternating women's names on the lists. This was a great leap forward for women in Norwegian and generally in Nordic politics. Other parties had to follow suit owing to the competitive nature of the multi-party system.

One of the reasons that parties have been so responsive to women's demands is that women and men vote in close to equal numbers in the Nordic region. If parties alienate women, they could conceivably lose 50% of their supporters. According to Listhaug, "Recently, women have responded by voting more heavily for the party which best represents their interests."³⁵

Finnish women have had more support from socialist parties, particularly the Communists. They receive the least support from rural parties, although the gap is

diminishing. The country also shows geographical differences; there are more female politicians from Eastern than Western Finland. This is because there is less interest in politics in the East and "lack of political competition has perhaps made it relatively easy for women to enter political positions of trust."³⁶

In Sweden, the parties have had differing strategies for attracting women's participation. The Center Party, for example, concentrated on the reform of family life. This party has attracted women on account of its anti-nuclear and environmental stances. It has also made efforts to educate its female members about equality issues and encouraged them to join trade unions.

The Liberal Party in Sweden "focuses on equal opportunity and sees the future of women's work in ad hoc political groups."³⁷ The Women's Federation within the Party provides political training for members and also keeps pressure on the party to address women's issues. In 1972, the party introduced a 40% quota for representation of women on the ballot.

Recruitment and promotion of women are a major responsibility of political parties in the Nordic countries because of the political culture, which emphasizes modesty, so that jobs are not sought but offered to candidates. According to Norderval, "Appearing to want a political career may be the surest way not to get in."³⁸ A system of

sponsorship gives an influential role to the party leaderships. They are able to control who is chosen as a candidate and who is not. Norderval adds, "They lift people out of obscurity, groom heirs for the next election, and place their names in nomination for public boards, committees and councils, thus making them into well-known figures for whose candidacy a 'spontaneous' demand may later rise."²⁹ From the women's rights point of view, when more females enter the political arena, there is the likelihood that, as mentors, they can in turn sponsor even more women candidates.

The competition among parties has also been a great help to women. When women became a voting force to be reckoned with, political parties began to actively recruit them. Quota systems, while viewed as undemocratic by some, have been of enormous benefit to women. Most quotas stand at 40%. Even parties that do not have quotas are forced to cater to women to avoid defeat.

SURVEY RESULTS

In October, 1990, the author mailed a survey to 60 Nordic political parties, asking the following questions:

1. Approximately how many members are in your party and what percentage of them are women?

2. Does your party have special training programs for women, and, if so, what are they?

3. Please name the women that hold the top positions in your party.

4. What are the main issues on your agenda?

5. Other pertinent comments.

Four of the 60 were returned, as undelivered. Of the remaining, 17 replies were received. The answers to questions 1 and 2 are summarized below, by country.

TABLE 18:

RESULTS OF 17 REPLIES TO A SURVEY OF 60 NORDIC POLITICAL PARTIES (N/A = No Answer; N = No; Y = Yes)

<u>COUNTRY / PARTY NAME</u>	<u>TOTAL MEMBERS</u>	<u>% WOMEN</u>	<u>SPECIAL TRAINING</u>
<u>DENMARK</u>			
CENTRUM-DEMOKRATERNE (Center Democrats)			
	2,500	N/A	N
VENSTRE (Liberal Party)			
	80,000	33%	N

FREMSKRIDTSPARTIET (Progress Party)		
12,000	N/A	N/A
DET RADIKALE VENSTRE (Radical Liberal Party)		
10,000	46%	N
SLESVIGSK PARTI (Schleswig Party)		
4,500	35 - 40%	N
DANMARKS RETSFORBUND (Single Tax/Justice Party)		
1,000	33%	N
<u>FINLAND</u>		
SUOMEN ELAKELAISTEN PUOLUE (Pensioner's Party of Finland)		
300	42%	N
<u>ICELAND</u>		
ALTHYDUBANDALAG (People's Alliance)		
3,000	33%	N
KVENNALISTINN (Women's Alliance)		
1,000	99%	N
<u>NORWAY</u>		
SETERPARTIET (Center Party)		
50,000	31%	N
KRISTELIG FOLKEPARTI (Christian People's Party)		
58,000	60%	Y
FREMSKRITTSPARTIET (Progress Party)		
25,000	20%	N
DET NORSKE ARBEIDERPARTI (Norwegian Labor Party)		
180,000	40%	N/A

SWEDEN

CENTERPARTIET (Center Party)			
200,000	40%		Y
MILJOPARTIET DE GRONA (Green Ecology Party)			
6,000	50 - 60%		N
FOLKPARTIET (Liberal Party)			
44,000	47%		Y
MODERATA SAMLINGSPARTIET (Moderate Party)			
120,000	47%		Y
SVERIGES SOCIALDEMOKRATISKA ARBETAREPARTI (Swedish Social Democratic Labor Party)			
1,014,565	35%		Y

Source: Berkeley, 1990

The following parties did not reply, but their total memberships, when gleaned from other sources, are given:

DENMARK

FAELLES KURS (Common Course)			
DANMARKS KOMMUNISTISKE PARTI (Communist Party of Denmark)			
10,000			
DKP/MARXISTER-LENINISTER (CP of D/Marxist-Leninist)			
KOMMUNIST ARBEJDERPARTI (Communist Worker's Party)			
DET KONSERVATIVE FOLKEPARTI (Conservative People's Party)			
56,000			
DE GRONNE (The Greens)	1,000		

DET HUMANISTISKE PARTI (Humanist Party)
VENSTRESOCIALISTERNE (Left Socialist Party)
SOCIALDEMOKRATIET (Social Democratic Party) 110,000
SOCIALISTISK FOLKEPARTI (Socialist People's Party) 8,000
SOCIALISTISK ARBEJDERPARTI (Socialist Worker's Party)

FINLAND

KESKUSTAPUOLUE (Center Party of Finland) 304,000
SUOMEN KOMMUNISTINEN PUOLUE (Communist Party of Finland)
20,000
SKP-YHDENAISSYYS (CP of F-Unity) 10,000
PERUSTUSLAILLINEN OIKEISTOPUOLUE (Constitutional Party of
the Right) 3,000
DEMOKRAATTINEN VAIHTOEHTOE (Democratic Alternative)
SUOMEN KRISTILLIINEN LIITTO (Finnish Christian Union) 18,000
SUOMEN KANSAN DEMOKRAATTINEN LIITTO (Finnish People's
Democratic League) 70,000
SUOMEN MAASEUDUN PUOLUE (Finnish Rural Party) 20,000
SUOMEN SOSIALIDEMOKRAATTINEN PUOLUE (Finnish Social
Democratic Party) 97,000
VIHREA LIITTO (Green Alliance) 500
KANSALAISVALLEN LIITTO (League of Civil Power)
LIBERAALINEN KANSANPUOLUE (Liberal People's Party) 8,500
KANSALLINEN KOKOOMUS (National Coalition Party) 80,000
KANSALLINEN DEMOKRAATTINEN PUOLUE (National Democratic
Party)

SVENSKA FOLKPARTIET I FINLAND (Swedish People's Party of Finland) 56,000

ICELAND

BORGARAFLOKKURINN (Citizen's Party) 4,500

FLOKKUR MANNSINS (Humanist Party)

SJALFSTAEDISFLOKKURINN (Independence Party)

NATIONAL SOZIALISTIKI ISLONSKI VERKAMANNA FLOKKURINN
(National Socialist Icelandic Worker's Party)

FRAMSOKNARFLOKKURINN (Progressive Party)

REGIONAL EQUALITY PLATFORM

ALTHYDUFLOKKURINN (Social Democratic Party) 5,000

NORWAY

NORGES KOMMUNISTISKE PARTI (Communist Party of Norway) 500

HOYRE (Conservative Party) 170,000

VENSTRE (Liberal Party) 12,000

DET LIBERALE FOLKEPARTIET (Liberal People's Party)

SOZIALISTISK VENSTREPARTI (Socialist Left Party) 13,000

SWEDEN

SVERIGES ARBETAREPARTIET KOMMUNISTERNA (Communist Worker's Party of Sweden) 5,000

VANSTERPARTIET KOMMUNISTERNA (Left Party - Communists)
14,000

KRISTDEMOKRATISKA SAMHALLSPARTIET (Christian Democratic Community Party) 24,000

SVERIGES KOMMUNISTISKA PARTI (Communist Party of Sweden)
50,000

VARLDS SOCIALISTIKA GRUPPEN, SVERIGE (World Socialist Group,
Sweden)

Replies to the other questions on the survey are
discussed in the following section, by country.

The Danish Center Democrats replied that five out of
their nine parliamentary seats were held by women (Jakobsen,
Juncker, Holmberg, Albrink, and Pors). As noted, they do
not have any special training programs for women. Their
agenda focuses on continuing membership in the European
Community and NATO.

One-third of the Danish Liberal Party's members are
women. They have a committee on equality composed of both
sexes, but no special training programs. There are five MPs
(Severinsen, Nielsen, Dahl-Sorensen, Kock-Petersen, and
Larsen), the latter being the Minister for Health. The main
agenda issues of this party concern: the budget, tax-policy,
environment, energy, and social policy.

The Danish Progress Party did not reply to the
questions on the survey. A list of policies was sent; the
only issue relevant to this paper is their aim to remove the
power to call an election from the Prime Minister and give
it to the Queen (with the Folketing having some influence in
the matter).

The Danish Radical Liberal Party has a female

membership of 46%. Half of the parliamentary members are women (Lee, Arnold, Dybkjaer--Minister of the Environment, Olesen--Minister of Social Affairs, and Jelved who is the Leader of the Parliamentary Group). They replied that they had no special training programs but had a committee which dealt with questions related to women's issues. They also noted that the youth organization was active in this area. Their main issues are social, economic, and environmental. The ultimate aim of this party is to have the United Nations transformed into a genuine world authority.

The Schleswig Party is the political party of the German minority in southern Denmark. It has 4000 members, 35 to 40% of whom are women. The training programs offered by the party are for both males and females. Women holding important positions in the party are: the Deputy Chair, three of the Executive Committee members (out of a total of nine), four female Managing Committee members (out of 32), one councillor (out of nine), and one chair of the 13 district associations.

On Standing Committees numbers are as follows:

	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
a) elections/campaigns	8	1
b) general issues	7	0
c) technology, environment, local and regional planning	8	1
d) educational and cultural affairs, spare-time activities	2	4
e) public health and social welfare	4	2
f) financial and economical affairs	7	2

The Party replied that their main agenda issues were general political activities with an emphasis on the German minority in North Schleswig.

The smallest Danish party to reply was the Single Tax/Justice Party which has 340 women members out of a 1000 total. They mentioned that they had special training for women before 1973 known as "Retsforbundets kvinder" but the programs were disbanded because it was felt that, since women did not need special training, their training requirements should be the same as men's.

The only Finnish party to reply was the 300-member Pensioner's Party, which has a 42% female membership. They have no special training programs. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Party Council, the General Secretary, and the Second Chair of the Party are women. Their three main agenda

issues are: equality, raising the morals of politics, and guaranteeing social support for pensioners.

A third of the Icelandic People's Alliance's members are female. They have no special women's programs and have two women MPs (Helgadóttir and Frimannsdóttir--Chair of the Parliamentary Group). Since 1983 they have required a 40% representation in every party institution and committee. Their agenda is socialist in outlook.

The Icelandic Women's Alliance is the party of most interest to this work. Their 1000-member movement is 99% female and has attracted a great deal of world attention. In reply to the survey questions, they said that they have no special training programs because everything they do is related to women in some way. The women in top positions rotate due to the party's non-hierarchical structure. Their main issues are those of women; they also listed feminist ideology as an issue.

The Norwegian Center Party has a 31% women's membership out of a 50,000 total. They have a women's organization which was organized at a country-wide level in 1962. . Today, its main task is to maintain a forum where women can discuss policies that are often difficult to get onto the party agenda. The organization arranges conferences and gatherings for women, but it does not have any formal training programs. It also makes sure that the women's quotas (40% in all party organs since 1989) are

filled. The Party has three female MPs (Lahnstein--Vice-Chair of the party and Leader of the Parliamentary Group; Haarstadt--Chair of the Women's Organization; and Viken). They are a regionally-oriented party (formerly the Farmer's Party) and are against European Community membership.

Sixty percent of the Norwegian Christian People's Party are women. Their main orientation is towards family policy, and their Deputy Leader, Sollie, is female. The party has a 3000-member women's organization which provides training programs.

The statutes of the 180,000 member Norwegian Labor Party require that in all elections and nominations at least 40% of each sex must be selected. Their party leader is the Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. The reply did not mention whether there were any special training programs for women, but stated that every female party member is automatically a member of the women's section. The section leader is a member of the executive. They also did not name the women in leading positions, but returned the following statistics:

TABLE 19:

PERCENTAGES OF NORWEGIAN LABOR PARTY WOMEN IN VARIOUS

ORGANS

LOCAL COUNCIL.....35%

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE BODY.....44%

THE STORTING.....51%

GROUP LEADERS IN THE STORTING.....50%

THE GOVERNMENT

FEMALE PRIME MINISTER

STATE SECRETARIES.....41%

PERSONAL ADVISERS/SECRETARIES.....56%

PARTY ORGANIZATION

CENTRAL PARTY LEADERSHIP.....50%

NATIONAL COMMITTEE.....50%

COUNTY LEADERS (20).....30%

MUNICIPAL LEADERS (450).....30%

POLITICAL SECRETARIES AT THE NATIONAL PARTY OFFICE....46%

Source: Norwegian Labor Party to Berkeley, 1990

Main agenda issues of the Norwegian Labor Party concern: improving child care programs, appreciation by society of low-paying jobs, extension of parental leave, and equal wages between the sexes.

The 25,000-member Norwegian Progress Party has a 20% female membership. They have no special training programs

for women and only one female member of parliament (Ytterhorn). They listed their main agenda issues as: more individual freedom, lower tax rates, and liberalism.

Half of Norway's Socialist Left Party are female. They have a training program which deals with consciousness-raising towards equality and political work. The Party has 17 MPs, seven of whom are women. The Central Committee also has seven members, out of a total of 13. There are six women in top positions (Bang--Secretary of the Parliamentary Group, Lunde and Reinsvollsvveen--Leader and Vice Leader of the Parliamentary Group, As--Leader of Women's Politics, Sandvik--General Secretary, and Gulbrandsen--Political Secretary). Two of their main issues concern violence against women and female opposition to the E.C.

The Swedish Center Party has 200,000 members, 40% of whom are female. They have a Women's League (CKF) of 60,000 which is the largest women's organization in Sweden. It took 11 years to organize the women's group, which officially began in 1932. Today, training programs are available, mostly for the women in official positions but also at the grassroots level. They stated that the reason for the programs was that men are more familiar with the political environment and women need to overcome this obstacle. In 1986 the party elected its first female President, Karin Soder. There is now also a female Vice

President. Their main policies are concerned with: the equal distribution of social welfare, decentralization of power in society, and the environment.

The Swedish Greens replied that 50 to 60% of their 6,000 membership are women. Their policy is to train males and females together in political matters. They have three women in top party positions (Gisselberg--Female Spokesperson, Schorling--Female Group Leader in the Parliamentary Group, and Bjorling--Chair in the Political Committee). One of the party's main principles is gender equality: they have at least a 40% representation of each sex on all committees.

The 44,000-member Swedish Liberal Party has a 47% female membership. They have a women's federation called Folkpartiets Kvinnoforbund, which organizes programs at the local, regional, and national levels. It was created in 1935 and soon established itself throughout Sweden. FPK holds a national congress every three years, while the central committee meets about five times each year. Separate groups deal with different issues: consumer, international, handicap, work and employment, and environmental.

A pamphlet issued by the FPK lists their main concerns of the 1980s: to work against violence and pornography in video-films; to assist women dependent on alcohol or drugs; to discourage men's use of prostitutes;

battered women--their plight and how to prevent it; women and the economy; the pension rights of women; to encourage women to start their own businesses; women and power; the legal and social situation of refugee children in Sweden; international solidarity with women of the third world; and peace.

Many networks have been established by the FPK in Sweden, and they think that women in political life have a special responsibility to help other women starting out in politics. The party has three women MPs (Friggebo--Vice President of the Party and President of the Parliamentary Group; Westerholm--President of the Swedish Federation of Liberal Women; and Wibble--President of the Finance Committee of the Riksdag). At present, the party has a special two-year program called "every second seat to a woman" aiming for every other seat on political committees at all levels to be filled by a woman.

The Swedish Moderate Party has 120,000 members, 47% of whom are women. They have a women's organization called Moderata Kvinnoförbundet (MKF) which was founded in 1920 and has 50,000 members. They currently have a three-year program called "Action MKF" which teaches women candidates valuable political skills, such as leadership, public speaking, and debating.

They have two women in important positions (Troedsson --Deputy Chair of the Party; and Lindblad--Chair of the

Women's Association). They replied that their main agenda issues were: women's work, child and health care, the environment, Europe, and ethics.

The largest party to reply to the survey was the Swedish Social Democratic Party. Thirty-five percent of its more than one million members are female. The National Federation of Social Democratic Women in Sweden (SSKF), which was founded in 1892, provides training for women starting at the local level and culminating in a two-week seminar discussing women's political issues.

There are 39,000 members in the SSKF in 770 municipal clubs. The clubs are considered the most important part of the organization because they provide training at the grassroots level and influence local politics. All members of the clubs are party members who get together for study sessions and political debates. They send delegates to the SSKF congress who put forth issues to be discussed at that level. The most important issues of the SSKF are: the six-hour working day, the work environment of women, housing, immigrant women, childcare, international solidarity of women, the environment, peace and disarmament, and drug policy.

The Social Democratic Party has eight women ministers (Freivalds--Justice; Hjelm-Wallen--Development Assistance; Gradin--Foreign Trade; Thalen--Health and Social Affairs; Sahlin--Labor; Loow--Immigration; Wallstrom--Youth; and

Dahl--Environment and Energy).

In drawing general conclusions from the replies to this survey, it appears that there are many women involved in political parties but that only two parties (the Icelandic Women's Alliance and the Norwegian Christian People's Party) have more than 50% women members. The trend seems to be moving away from separate training programs and toward treating females and males as political equals. There are many women in top positions, but not in equal numbers to men.

2) Women's Organizations Related to Women's Parties

The culture of the five Nordic countries is such that belonging to groups is important. As discussed in the first chapter, women's organizations have played a key role in mobilizing women for politics. Their most important function has been to serve as pressure groups to keep women's issues on governmental agendas and in the public eye. Besides these groups, most of whom are organized under the National Councils of Women, there are others who work to further women's interests; these include housewives' associations and trade unions.

The National Councils vary in the Nordic countries. Indeed, the Swedish one was disbanded in 1981. The Danish National Council has the broadest base, with members including political party members, professionals, and trade

unionists. Iceland has two umbrella organizations, one emphasizing the traditional women's roles and the other championing women's rights. Finland and Norway do not allow trade unionists in their National Councils, which are thus less encompassing than the Danish and Icelandic Councils.

Women's parties have appeared every now and then, mostly as a reaction to the existing party system. They are rare because "experience in this region and elsewhere has shown that gender is a secondary type of political cleavage, and that women are as divided as men by primary class, ideological, and cultural identifications."⁴⁰ They also faced strong opposition from patriarchal societies and the established party system. When women were extended suffrage in the Nordic countries, there were three logical options open to them in regard to political party activity. They could set up their own parties; they could join established parties and organize their own women's sections within the parties; or they could join parties on the same basis as men. A country-by-country discussion of these three options follows.

In the 1909 Danish local elections, the women's list enabled a 13% representation. There have been women's lists at every local election since, but they have been of little consequence.

In Finland, males and females were enfranchised at the same time, in 1906. Women were elected straight away by

existing parties, so that the impetus for a separate party was not there.

Iceland had women's lists in local elections as early as 1908. At the national level, lists were organized in 1922, 1926, and 1983, which led to the establishment of the Women's Alliance (Kvennalistinn). Early women's lists in Iceland benefitted from the social and political situation: the political parties had not yet cemented their support bases within the new social groups that were emerging as Iceland moved from an economy based on agriculture to one based on industry. According to Styrkarsdottir, "During this transitional period, the absence of firm political loyalties worked in favor of women's lists, but the 'freezing' of the party system meant that by the late 1920s the women and their followers went over to what became the established political organizations."⁴¹

In Norway, non-partisan women's lists were entered in the 1901 local elections, but major parties opposed them. Lists entered in the 1973 elections gained fewer than 2,000 votes. A Norwegian women's party, organized in 1983, won 5.5% of the vote in the general election of that year.

Sweden has had women's lists and women's parties since 1924 but the focus in that country has been mainly on working within the existing parties.

Organizations of women within the political parties have been much more common than separate parties. They

began in the early 1900s in the Labor parties; soon the other parties followed. Some parties are split over what form these organizations should take: should women do the same party work as men or should they be organized separately? According to Torild Skard, men dislike factions but feel that separate women's groupings in the party attracts women. Women, on one hand, see the benefit of separate sections for training purposes and strengthening their position, while, on the other, believe that special sections isolate women instead of integrating them into the parties.

In Sweden, Iceland, and Finland, women's organizations within the parties are strong; whereas Denmark dissolved nearly all of its organizations in 1970 for reasons of equality. Newer parties are less likely to have separate women's sections, viewing males and females as political equals.

The size of the organizations ranges from small groups to mass organizations such as the SSKF in Sweden. They have been influential in training women for political work and providing them with the political know-how to move into higher positions. They have also been active in recruiting women for their parties and keeping women's issues high on party agendas.

Dahlerup and Gulli note that, "...in conjunction with women's sections in the political parties, women in

parliament, and local councils, the independent women's organizations have functioned as specialists on public policies concerning children, women and the family."⁴²

To the question "Why are there so many women in politics in the Nordic countries?" the seven reasons listed above--social conditions, education, women in the workforce, equality legislation, the electoral system, political parties, and women's organizations--provide the framework for an answer. No single reason is responsible for the phenomenon, which is, whatever else might be said of it, a situation in which multiple factors must be considered before one can explain the whole.

3) Comments on the Seven Factors as a Whole

None of the seven reasons standing alone is responsible for the success of women in government in the Nordic countries; rather, the success comes from the combination of factors. For example, it does not follow that a country's having a large number of women in the work force results in their high representation in government, as Haiti, India, and the United States attest. It also needs to be emphasized that each of the five countries has its own unique situation, so that the seven reasons for success are suggestive, not definitive, for the purposes of this study. Using Iceland and Norway as examples may serve to clarify these points.

If the seven reasons listed in the above chapters are applied to Iceland, six are strongly in place. Social conditions are good; women are well-educated and a huge proportion of them are in the work force. Equality legislation exists (their Equality Council was set up in 1976), and their electoral system of proportional representation facilitates women's entrance into politics.

Women's organizations, particularly the Redstockings, served as a springboard for women. The seventh variable, which is not so strong, is political parties. In Iceland they have not been as instrumental as in other Nordic countries, but this is possibly due to the small size of the Alting.

Since 1970, Norwegian women have made the most gains in politics among the five Nordic countries. Bystydzienski believes that there were three major factors behind this success. The first--long-term favorable preconditions--is the first reason listed in this thesis. The second two are unique to Norway. She lists specific environmental opportunities (e.g., the debate over whether Norway should enter the E.C.) and threats (e.g., the backlash following the successful 1971 campaign). She believes that these were the reasons that forced the coalition of established women's organizations and the new feminist movement to take action.

The other six variables have also strongly contributed to the advancement of Norwegian women. Norway

has the best equality legislation among the Nordic countries, and Eva Kolstad, the Ombud, is kept busy handling complaints. Norway is also a highly organizational society. By belonging to a variety of groups, women have been able to learn the organizational skills necessary to operating politically.

As in the other Nordic countries, Norway has a high voter turnout, with women voting in similar proportions to men. Norway has an electoral feature called "kumulering" or cumulation. This feature allows voters to eliminate one or more names of candidates from the party ballot, and then to give extra votes to other listed candidates by writing in their names. The 1971 "women's coup" was said to have been a conspiracy among women to make the identical changes in their ballots, by using kumulering. In the past, however, the practice had mostly been used to cross off the names of women candidates and to write in votes for favored males.

Elections occur every two years with alternation at four year intervals among national, local, and county levels. Public authorities and the political parties pay for campaigns, which is a benefit to women, who are generally less well-off than men.

Today, Norway has more women in its cabinet than any other country in the world. In 1986, Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, perhaps the most famous Nordic politician of the 1980s, broke female representation records at the

national level by including eight women in her eighteen-member cabinet. In 1989, her Labor Party lost power and the new majority was a center-right coalition government of the Conservative, Christian Democrat, and Center Parties led by a man, Jan Syse. The coalition was dependent upon support from either the Labor Party or the rightist Progress Party. However, there were still eight women in the cabinet, which had 19 members.

In November, 1990, Brundtland returned as Prime Minister after the collapse of the Syse coalition government. The main reason for the collapse was the diverging opinions between the Center and Conservative parties over the question of Norway's joining the European Community. In Brundtland's new cabinet, the eight ministries led by women are: Justice, Health and Social Affairs, Trade and Shipping, Agriculture, Labor and Government Administration, Fisheries, Culture and Scientific Affairs, and Development Cooperation.

Women are represented in high numbers at all three levels of government. Municipal councils comprise 31% women, county councils 40%, and the Storting 34%. Government-appointed committees have a 38% representation of women and municipal-appointed committees 36%. Studies of trends in Norway forecast that by the beginning of the 21st century, most elected politicians will be female.

Chapter 4

A PARADISE FOR WOMEN?

Women have made enormous gains in the Nordic political arena, but there are still obstacles to be overcome before the ideal of political equality for the sexes is to be close to reality.

While Nordic women have been more successful than almost any others in politics, it is certainly not a political paradise for them. Despite the equality laws, there is still discrimination. Some still believe that politics is men's territory. Except for Finland, men were granted the right to vote before women, allowing them to set up the rules of the political game and entrench themselves in the system. Before World War II, politics was completely dominated by males.

The Nordic countries have a history of being patriarchal societies, and such long traditions are hard to break. On the other hand, they have a reputation for caring about justice and seeing it as linked to equality.

Prevailing attitudes and day-to-day reality mean that women involved in politics, especially at the local level, have three jobs--their regular job, their political job, and their housework. This triple burden results in some very tired women, and avoiding that burden is a main reason for women's reluctance to take part in politics. In Sweden,

for example, one authority notes that "...the average woman with a full-time job and with children under age 16 has the longest 'working hours' of any category of people in Sweden: 74 hours a week."⁴³ Yet the number of women is increasing who make the decision to involve themselves in politics.

When Gro Harlem Brundtland was offered the post of Norwegian Environmental Minister, her spouse, Arne, became a house-husband and looked after their four children. That was an exceptional case, though. While some non-Nordic people may think that Nordic men tend to be the Arne Brundtland type, sharing equally in household tasks and in raising children, for the most part it is still the Nordic women who bear the main responsibility of the home.

Women are under-represented on committees and are clustered in certain ministries. They are mostly to be found in the "female" areas dealing with education, culture, health, and social welfare. Men still dominate foreign affairs, economics, defense, business, finance, and industry. Danish politician Grethe Fenger Moller asked the question, "Is it because these areas are in fact more important, or is it because male-dominated society's norms decide which tasks have the most prestige?"⁴⁴ Moller believes that the situation is because of the male dominance.

There is also a lack of women in behind-the-scenes politics. In the Nordic countries, there is a great deal of

political involvement by private sector businesses and interest groups. This gray area of non-elected persons having a large impact on policy is a common phenomenon in industrial democracies.

According to Skard and Hernes, "Recruitment to public committees is based on one's occupational status, one's organizational membership, and one's position in the public hierarchies."⁴⁵ There are women in elite corporate positions, but at percentages nowhere near their numbers in government. The equal status laws require that both sexes be represented on public committees, but, again, women tend to be grouped in "female" areas.

The argument is often heard that there are not enough experienced women to fill quotas or influential positions. To counteract this point, one of Sweden's oldest women's organizations--the Fredrika Bremer Society--compiles a special list of women who are qualified for certain high-level assignments.

Another feature of Nordic politics is that the less visible--but not necessarily the less powerful--the committee or group, the fewer women members. It seems that women have been placed on committees that attract more limelight, seemingly to prove that efforts have been made to include more women. The committees that operate behind the scenes show a clear preponderance of men.

The shifting nature of power in these pluralistic

societies means that different groups are gaining and sharing power. Harriet Holter believes that "...women's institutional participation is inversely related to the importance of the institutions and that women have achieved penetration of superfluous or shrinking institutions."⁴⁶ So while it is clear that there are more women in politics, how much their actual political power has grown is a question to be determined.

It also is alleged that when Nordic women achieve political power, they lose some of their readiness to discuss women's issues. Sissel Ronbeck, a Norwegian politician, implied that championing women is not smart politics when she commented, "You know you have the choice, whether to talk about women's issues or be heard."⁴⁷

Some politicians, both female and male, claim that equality has been achieved, so women's issues do not need special discussion anymore. Others, such as those in the Icelandic Women's Alliance, believe that real equality is still a long way off and should be high on political agendas. Members of the Women's Alliance are vehement about not adapting to male political procedure. They argue that, to be successful, women should not have to adapt to the traditional ways of politics. Their MPs at times, have been ridiculed but they have continued to hold their ground and to demand to be heard.

One Danish politician, Grethe Fenger Moller, believes

that women are also judged differently from men. Her view is that when a male politician is seen on the television, the first impression is not that he is a man but the content of his speech, but that women politicians are first and foremost seen as women. Because women are still a minority in politics, their novelty wins them more mention. But much of the mention does not include political attitudes and views; rather, it involves, as Moller said, "appearance, weight, the color of your eye shadow, your clothes, budget, and private life."⁴⁸

Women also constitute nearly half of the workforce in the Nordic countries. The equal status laws have attempted to bring about equality in the workplace, such as equal pay for equal work. But the problem remains that the workforce is gender-segregated and that there is still a difference in the average wage between the sexes. Norderval refers to the situation as the "ghettoisation of women in low-paid part-time jobs"⁴⁹

A favored occupation for women is teaching. The discrepancy of formal vs. real equality is illustrated by Norwegian statistics showing that "...in spite of the fact that around 55% of the teachers in the primary and secondary school are women, only 8.5% of them are principals or leading administrative personnel."⁵⁰ Danish statistics are even worse: 54% of teachers are women, but "only 4% of school leaders are women."⁵¹

Women dominate in the service and welfare industries in jobs that are often extensions to what they do in the home, e.g., food preparation, making clothes, cleaning, managing household accounts, and caring for the children, the old, and the sick.

The Nordic governments are employing different schemes to get more women into traditional male occupations and more men into previously "female" jobs. Subsidies are offered to companies that hire females or males as apprentices or regular employees in jobs that are dominated by the other sex. There are also on-the-job and retraining programs. Despite these efforts, many occupations remain thoroughly dominated by one sex.

Because women tend to be employed for fewer hours during a lifetime and in lower status jobs than men, their social security and other retirement plans yield less. In Norway, the National Insurance grants additional pensions to those who have worked full-time with no long breaks. As reported by Dahl and Hernes, "Those who work part-time or take breaks in their professional lives to take care of their homes and families, stand few or no chances of obtaining enough points to avoid becoming a minimum pensioner."⁵²

There is a large female membership in the Nordic trade union movement. Using Sweden as an example, the unions have not been as instrumental as they might have been in putting

women into powerful leadership positions or on their boards and committees. However, this situation is slowly changing; unions now have individuals who are assigned to work on issues of equality and to work with local representatives on women's issues.

In the trade union hierarchy, few women are at the top. According to Silen, "Of the 2.2 million members of the predominantly blue-collar Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) 43% are women. But only 7% of the members of LO's executive board are women."⁵³ One of the reasons for their lower union involvement is that women have less time to take part in union activities than their male counterparts. Covert or overt sex discrimination is another factor. Similar statistics are reflected in other trade union movements in the Nordic countries.

Perhaps when more women have been in power for a longer time, people (especially males) will feel more comfortable with women in public office, viewing them primarily as politicians. Although there is still much to be done, Nordic female politicians have fared better in gaining acceptance than female politicians in other parts of the world.

While Nordic women still tend to cluster in areas of politics, education, and the workplace, a remarkable number have gained access to and established themselves in areas that have previously been male-dominated. Therefore,

although the Nordic region cannot be called a "paradise for women" in equal rights and political access for women, it leads the world on those accounts.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a brief political history of Nordic women from 1850 to today, revealing their progress toward full political participation. Seven factors that are explanatory of why women have been so successful in politics were discussed, including results from a survey conducted by the author. No single factor was found responsible for women's exceptional advances in the region but, rather, a complex combination was put forth as explanatory.

After noting special features pertinent to the subject matter, the thesis ended with acknowledgement that, while there are still obstacles to be overcome and while the Nordic countries are not a Utopia for women, women have made more progress in the politics of the Nordic countries than anywhere else in the world. The countries provide examples of what a true democracy might really be, as reflected in this statement by Tove Stang Dahl, a Norwegian law professor, "A government which recruits its ministers from the entire political population will turn out to be a better government than one recruiting from only half the population."⁵⁴

ENDNOTES

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