

## **THE BOURGEOISIE OPPOSITION'S SPEECH ON THE ROLE OF THE STORTING UNDER A ONE-PARTY RULE 1945-1953**

### **INTRODUCTION**

House of the elected representatives, called Congress, Parliament or Storting, it is the legislative branch which embodies the highest symbol of democracy in Western societies. Its absolute rule, one could rationalise, would be the rule of the people that has shown their will through their vote. This assumption can be faulty, we can even call it a myth, but it holds up to the present as a strong influence in our views on politics.

In this work we put forward the question of how the role of the legislative branch in Norway changed from the times of Liberal democracy to the post-war era in the context of corporate developments and the effective rule of one political party.

The post-war era has been seen by many as an era of the common man. There is no doubt that living standards, job and social security of the citizens in the industrialised world outmatches anything previously witnessed in history. The mechanisms that allowed this economic miracle have been the combination of mixed economies and universal social security systems; in other words, the corporate and welfare states.

A condition for these developments was the expansion in size and jurisdiction of the state administration. Areas previously out of its reach came to be regulated by a new bureaucracy of experts. It has been a long process traceable as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century, if not further. However, when trying to define a direct background of the contemporary Western corporate states, we should turn to the experience learned by the Great Depression. We can easily identify the influence of the memory of this crisis deep into the post-war era. The corporate and welfare

states in the U.S. and Europe were instituted, in the last instance, as a response to the periodical crises originated within capitalism, and the big economic crisis in the 1930s in particular. The outcome, the breakthrough of corporatism, was a change comparable to that from feudalism to capitalism. Industrial conflict had been avoided, and class struggle was substituted by the concurrence of organised interest groups.<sup>1</sup> Workers and employees have been granted a security unthinkable a century ago; they never had it so good. It was certainly a revolution.

This has not been a natural or lineal process. Its development as well as its particularities in every nation can perhaps be best understood by its apparently common social source: the “elite of the diploma”, the “organisation man”,<sup>2</sup> the “professional elite”. But it is still not clear to what extent these professional managers, certainly inventors of the new social system philosophy, are also its rulers. What is important here is to point out that as the state becomes a great provider, a new bureaucracy expands, and politics becomes a trade of professional politicians. The rules of Liberal democracy have been left behind. And many of our preconceptions around what democracy is and should be are challenged.

Previous to corporatism, organised interests exercised influence mainly through the political parties they supported, but nowadays they also have lobbies and negotiate to make their voices heard directly with the administration. For the most part, labour conflicts are dealt with in negotiating tables among representatives of the government, management and Trade Unions. Organised interests have found perhaps not a perfect representation but yet a rightful. This is a key feature of corporatism; deals at the top assure cooperation and coordination among the

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Perkin, Harold. The Rise of the Professional Society. England since 1880. London, Routledge, 1989. Passim.

<sup>2</sup> These are terms coined by William H. Whyte in his study of American corporations. Cfr. The Organization Man. New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956.

different economic and social interests. These deals take place next to but not as part of the everyday work of the legislative branch.

The corporate breakthrough in the post-war era was welcomed overall, but there was still a parallel flow of doubt and criticism. I can only write with certain knowledge about the American case. Here critics on both extremes of the political spectrum regarded it as a threat to democracy. The intellectuals who emigrated from Central Europe, and who reinvigorated the American Right, shared this assumption with more moderate thinkers.<sup>1</sup> Neoliberalism and the New Left could find some of its roots in such viewpoints where corporatism and democracy are opposite concepts.<sup>2</sup> However, the large consensus in American politics from the end of the Second World War until the sixties suffered little damage from these currents of thought.

In America, the groups opposed to a larger state complained about the excessive power of the corporate oligarchies that were involved in the main decisions at National level. In their view, the Congress became weakened as the executive and the central administration expanded. A corporate axis monopolised power.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the political parties served as electoral machines that held the unorganised electorate powerless and captive. There were voices that spoke of collectivism, decadence of the democratic institutions, alienation of the individual, and so on.<sup>4</sup> Is the scenario they depicted true? Most probably not.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nash, George H. The Conservative Revolt. I have read the translation to Spanish: La rebelión conservadora. Buenos Aires, Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> A good example of an author who takes this belief as a leading assumption in his works is Wright C. Mills. The Power Elite. I have as well read it in the translation to Spanish: La élite del poder. México, FCE, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Nash. Op. Cit. Passim.

## Our Problem

Corporatism has been the framework of the contemporary Norwegian democracy. Post-war Norway was characterised by the institution of a corporate and a welfare states. In these, organised interests have a representation and a say in the decision-making process outside the electoral process. Labour, in its golden age, arranged a set of institutions to consult and negotiate with these organised interests. The “bargaining table”, thus established, represented to some, such as the sociologist Stein Rokkan, the real government of Norway.<sup>1</sup> To the political opposition after the war, the real power holder was the ruling party, which was in command of such scheme. The parliamentary basis of the Norwegian democracy was in these two interpretations minimised by the new state of affairs. Did Norway indeed abandon parliamentarism?

This work focuses on the period between Liberation and the third Storting election in the post-war era (1945-1953). During these years, one of the main topics of the political debate revolved around the ruling instruments the Labour party had chosen in order to run the “mixed economy” Norway adopted. The constitutional problem and the state of parliamentarism, summoned in the discussion on the role of the Storting within the corporate scheme, were key issues.

The Labour party is the main actor in that story. An absolute majority in the Storting allowed it to materialise its initiatives on corporatism and welfare. From the first post-war parliamentary elections to the King’s Bay accident, corporatism in Norway was one with the one-party rule.

Here, some questions come to mind. Did the One-party rule neutralised the Storting? If so, in which way? Was it turned into a screen that diverted attention from

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Rokkan, Stein. “Norway: Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism.” In: Robert A. Dahl (ed.). Political Oppositions in Western Democracies. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966.

the real power game? Did it lose its role or did it play a different one in a new version of democracy? What was the actual role of the Storting, then?

The position of the Labour party on such issues has been thoroughly documented and studied. I reckon the opposition's has been so as well. However, I plan to contribute to the analysis of the latter through a study of the public stand of the political opposition on the role the Storting played in the period 1945-1953. Three Storting elections took place during these years and a relevant polemic developed and was given a solution, namely, the enabling acts debate. Once finished, it opened the way for a relative consensus era that Trond Nordby extended until the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

And here comes another set of related questions: who ruled the country in the eyes of the political opposition? Were the bourgeoisie parties willing and ready enough to participate in and influence the corporatism in formation? Were they putting forward initiatives to make the Norwegian state more efficient and democratic? Was there a chance for the political opposition in the context of a One-party rule?

We will go first over three different theories on the postwar political system in Norway, and then we will try to establish how the bourgeoisie political opposition depicted the political process in Norway during this time. In an exercise of historiography and of History of Ideas, we will ask them about a central question in their own elaborations, and which is the problem we try to solve here: what role the Storting played in the context of the new power relations and political ideas of the post-war era.

The assumption and thesis in this work is that the Storting was not put aside and still occupied a relevant place alongside the corporate scheme that came to

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby, Trond. Korporatisme på norsk 1920-1990. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1994.

being in the post-war era. It might have been dispossessed of its unchallenged reign as the political arena *per se*, but it might as well have kept a big role in the political process. Our point of view is that Norwegian democracy was reinvented then. Its new features might have brought diverging signals to the contemporaries. Particularly when compared with a Liberal model, coming from the past, and accentuated for historical reasons in the case of Norway. The old basic assumption challenged by the new developments was that all political power should rest within the walls of the Storting building.

### **Our Sources**

We use in this work some of the classic studies on the question of the role of the Storting, namely, Seip, Rokkan and Nordby. They have established the terms of the discussion, and so are unavoidable sources. We also make use of general works on post-war Norway for an overview of the main issues and events.

The first-hand material used in this work is electoral programmes, propaganda brochures and papers, reports by political parties, and a few political memoirs. We deal basically with political speech and not with facts and figures. Here we find depictions of the political scenario of that time that have passed through a filter. This complicates our research but widens its possibilities at the same time. What they lose in accuracy and impartiality, they gain in another area. They show us a perspective of the scenario and a picture of the viewer himself. They reflect, among other things, the interests, the goals, the concepts, the myths, and the prejudices.

However, in this context, the sources used in this work have limitations too. They show us basically the public face of the political debate in this period. Circumscribing to propaganda material, a couple of political memoirs, and second-

hand material, we can only guess what happened in the inner circles of the political parties, and what the negotiation process was like.

There are some other problems to solve on the way regarding the nature of our sources. In politics, the language is plagued with terms that hide, cover, or glamourise. Jens Arup Seip call them “substitute terms”. They dress the argumentation with fancy tones. In this way, when we read “individual”, we should sometimes think “businessman”, some other times a particular elite or organised group. And then “consumer” replaces “individual” and the meaning stresses with varied consequences, making the unveiling process a bit more complicated. Concepts and statements can also be vague enough to open the way for several interpretations that accomodate to circumstances. “Public control”, to give just one example, suited a range of definitions by the ruling parties and the political opposition.

We also run across the problem of making sense of the rationalisations in the texts. It is not uncommon to find hardly compatible arguments put together in order to back a claim. The purpose is therefore more important than the logical sequence.

The ideas, ideals and values expressed in political documents might or might not be internalised, but they do not represent in general an outlook but a position. And so, they are put to negotiation in relation to the developments, the moves of the political opponents, the likes of the constituency and the groups they try to appeal. Even when they seem to remain the same for long periods and can be invoked as part of a dignified tradition, they are, in fact, periodically reformulated, thrown into different contexts, given different weight in speech; “constitution”, “freedom”, “parliamentarism”, to mention just a few. This does not mean that we deal with pure Machiavellian language, but that statements in politics have a use; they are, in the

last instance, ideological. In other words, we are dealing with speech in the context of power struggle.

Afterwards, comes an important question to understand the meaning of the speech: the relationship between the words and the deeds—and the facts. We read about promises; we should check against what was delivered to evaluate. We read claims; we should try to prove them or discard them. We read, for instance, about the marvels of free enterprise, but the party in question might be negotiating on the grounds that limits in competition are unavoidable; and the business community itself might have left behind long ago the principles of free competition as ineffective.

With those considerations in mind, we will start with a definition of some traits of corporatism in post-war Norway and by going over the main theories revised in this work.



## CHAPTER I. THREE THEORIES: THE STORTING, CORPORATE STATE AND ONE-PARTY RULE IN NORWAY

### The Concept of Corporatism

What is corporatism? Following the definitions by various writers, one can describe it as follows: Corporatism is an informal political arrangement where the government and the organised interests maintain contacts of different kind for consultation, or in order to get to a consensus or to reach common decisions, outside the parliamentary arena.<sup>1</sup>

Definitions can sometimes work better if they are general enough. What they lose in precision, they get in flexibility. However, as we descend into the particular, we need to specify. Trond Nordby, for instance, analyzes the Norwegian political system using both a descriptive and a functional categorisation of corporatism. In the first one, he breaks down the different approaches of state intervention beside the Storting in three categories, namely, negotiating corporatism,<sup>2</sup> corporatism under the administration,<sup>3</sup> and inner-corporatism.<sup>4</sup> Useful as they are, we will not use as such these categories in this work, but we will assume the term “corporatism” includes them all. As to the second classification, he makes use of the models elaborated by

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<sup>1</sup> This is what one can make from the definitions by Harold Perkin ( Op. Cit. ), Stein Rokkan ( Op. Cit. ), Nordby ( Op. Cit. ), and I politikkens sentrum. Variasjoner i Stortingets makt 1814-2000, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 2000), Terje Kili ( Norway-A corporative state: Its Historical and Ideological Background, Sandvika, Norwegian School of Management, 1995), and others.

<sup>2</sup> “Forhandlingskorporatisme”, where the state and the interests involved set salaries and work relations. In the private sector, the state works as a mediator between labour and administration. It also embraces the negotiations around support to agricultural and fishing organisations. Cfr. Nordby. Korporatisme...; and by the same author, I politikkens sentrum... “Nye Kontakflater og endrede omgivelser”.

<sup>3</sup> “Korporatisme under forvaltningen”, represented by the state councils, which incorporate representatives of the parts involved and eventually of the government, and that work beside the political and administrative institutions created by the Constitution. They are linked directly to the administration and established by the government in council or by a department. Cfr. Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> “Indre korporatisme”, or the professional organisations’ representatives’ inroads in the administration, in which they themselves become the political bureaucracy regarding a specific area. How influential and independent they are within the administrative structure is a matter to define in every case. Cfr. Idem.

Philippe C. Schmitter<sup>1</sup> to describe the degree of control exercised by the state before the organised interests; that is to say, the categories “state corporatism”, “social corporatism”, and “corporate pluralism”. We will go back to these last definitions later on.

Corporatism is an important feature common to all Western democracies. Harold Perkin, in his study of modern England, wrote that the corporate state had an intrinsic connection with the welfare state. They both are products of the same ideal and motivation. They are the materialisation of the rising of the professional elite and the professional ideal it created.<sup>2</sup>

Corporatism, maintains Nordby, offered a solution to the problem of representation of the organised interests but has established another one: what becomes of those interests that are not organised or are left out of the negotiating table? Corporatism also keeps away from public debate certain handlings and the making of certain decisions; it operates outside the parliamentary arena. It challenges, in short, the classic concept of democracy.<sup>3</sup>

This is one of the main issues in this work. There is a widespread pessimism around the role of the parliament in our societies and the fairness of our political systems.<sup>4</sup> And we could add, it also easily aroused suspicions about handlings of vital issues in dark corners of politics. Corporatism in Norway got its breakthrough

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby. Korporatisme... Apud. Schmitter, Philippe C. “Still the Century of Corporatism?” In: Review of Politics, No. 36, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> This elite embraced the professional managers representatives of shareholders, the representatives of particular professions and voluntary organisations, Trade Union representatives, the members of the local government and the lobbies, governmental ministers and civil servants. They have, according to the author, progressively taken control of politics and economics since early in the century, leaving behind the old parliamentary rule, the hegemony of the private capitalist and his free-market mentality, as well as the revolutionary aspirations of the proletarian movements. They have instituted the rule of organised interests rather than that of individuals or social classes. Cfr. Perkin, Harold. Op. Cit. Passim.

<sup>3</sup> ”Ett ankepunkt [i kritikken mot korporatisme] har vært at organisasjonene får for mye makt, noe som blant annet bidrar til økte statsutgifter. Enkelte har dessuten hevdet at organisasjonenes maktstilling står i veien for åpne debatter og reelle flertallavgjørelser. Dessuten har kritikken vært rettet mot den skjevheten i representasjon som rammer uorganiserte interesser og organisasjoner som holdes utenfor korporative organer som tar seg av saker som berører deres interesser.” Nordby. Korporatisme... P. 11

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Nordby. I politikkens...

after the Second World War with a socialist majority in parliament. Then the opposition raised these issues in the electoral struggle, as we will see in another chapter.

In the post-war period the controversy around corporatism and democracy had a clear political orientation. The opposition accused Labourite corporatism of intending to replace the parliamentary rule. We might get to a different conclusion from theirs, but we depart from the same polemic: does the corporate system create an arena that substitutes, overlaps with, or complements the parliamentary one? Should we consider all direct contacts between the organised interests and the government as the real power deals?

### **Some Traits of Corporatism in Norway**

Corporatism in Norway follows the general trends we mentioned before, but it shows some particular features. Its development, even if mainly a deal at the top of the professional elite, has responded to claims originated in the agricultural and fishing organisations, as well as in the Trade Unions.<sup>1</sup> As agricultural and fishing interests pushed their way into the corporate scheme, they included their demands in the development of the welfare state, and certainly contributed to its profile. On the other hand, Labour's singular composition in membership, embracing in its ranks not only industrial workers, but agricultural wage earners, fishermen, and forestry workers

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<sup>1</sup> "I hvert fall gir norsk historie eksempler på at myndighetene, når de har grepet til korporative ordninger, har imøtekommet krav som har kommet fra grupper innenfor primærnæringene og arbeidsklasser." Nordby. Korporatisme... P. 38. Perkin points out that the welfare states have developed according to the solutions coming from the professional elite. Factory workers were actually more inclined, he wrote, to improvements in salaries more than to the development of universal social benefits, for example. Cfr. Perkin. Op. Cit. We can say the same on corporatism in the last instance. It was the professional leaders of the Trade Unions and the agricultural and fishing interests who pushed those claims into the corporate system.

alike,<sup>1</sup> and the inroads of the *Bondeparti* in support of its constituency, account for that influence.<sup>2</sup>

Norwegian corporatism has roots older than the Labourite take-over. *Venstre* administrations had intervened in the primary economy through regulation on prices and through subsidies to farmers since the 1920s; and had introduced “marketing centrals” that coordinated efforts in the areas of production and sales to ensure a fair price for agricultural products.<sup>3</sup> The negotiations on salaries, prices and tariffs in these areas, would become an undisputed segment of the corporate system.

However, we find the key factor towards corporatism in the partnership between the Trade Unions and Labour. Labourite control of the parliament was the context of corporate breakthrough in Norway.<sup>4</sup>

A long-lasting corporate strategy on the Labour side is characteristic of Norway. It is true that the *Venstre* governments in the interwar period had started state expansion and Wilhelm Thagaard’s career as head of the Price Directorate embodied thoroughly the latent corporate orientations on the side of the radical wing of *Venstre*, but it was only Labour that stated those principles as key ones in its programs. Labour had already begun the professionalisation of its higher ranks in the 1920s,<sup>5</sup> and with it a turn to political solutions and cooperation schemes instead of the traditional socialistic methods.

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<sup>1</sup> On the peculiar composition of Labour’s constituency. *Cfr.* Rokkan. *Op. Cit.*; Salminen. *Pension Schemes in the Making. A Comparative Study of the Scandinavian Countries*. Finland, The Central Pension Security Institute, 1993. Chapter 2: “Economic and Political Organization of Social classes in the Scandinavian Countries”.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Baldwin (*The Politics of Social Solidarity. Class Bases of the European Welfare State 1875-1975*. England, Cambridge University Press, 1990) shows how the primary economy interests played an important role in the making of the welfare state in Sweden. His conclusions can also be applied to the Norwegian case, and they can also help us understand how these interests influence the built-up of the corporate scheme

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr.* James A. Storing. *Norwegian democracy*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1963. P. 8-11. And Larsen, Karen. *A History of Norway*. New York, Princeton, University Press, 1950. P. 521-524.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr.* Nordby. *Korporatisme...* “Skiftende holdninger til korporativ organisering”.

<sup>5</sup> *Cfr.* Bull, Edvard. “Fra bøndernes og husmennenes samfunn til den organiserte Kapitalisme”. In: Dahl, Ottar, *Et al. Makt og motiv...* Power has tended to concentrate in Norway in larger organisations and institutions since the 1920’s. The conflict between labour and capital in Norway concentrated also in the negotiations

Labour's En norsk treårsplan of 1933 was the basis for later corporate thinking in the labour movement, though the party did little to achieve the goals stated there. It did not aspire to substitute private enterprises but to create new socialised capital that would, in turn, cooperate with the private sector, which would also be under public regulation and control. The plan contemplated the creation of a National Planning Commission and a National Economy Department in order to coordinate the different policies of finance, industry, trade, labour and agriculture. A Corporate Council would be created and formed by members of all economic sectors. This council must be institutionalised through constitutional reforms and should work along with the Storting to reach complete political and economic democracy.<sup>1</sup>

Many outside the Labour party tried to separate planning and "socialism". They saw the planned economy coming and looked for ways to accommodate to it. Some wanted science to become a guide to neutralise politicised projects of planning and the party politics in general. A "middle way" without an ideological profile and oriented to secure social harmony looked appealing to them.<sup>2</sup>

Tradition, states Nordby, had given the Storting a power beyond practical and reasonable terms. In the 1930s, it was considered in certain circles that the executive branch was too limited to carry out the duties of administration. The excessive attention to details and too much influence of local interests above the common ones had already been heavily criticised in the interwar period and some solutions were

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between LO and NAF, being the first major agreement involving the two in 1935 (*Hovedavtalen*), the same year Labour took over.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Kili. Op. Cit. According to him, this was the first structured speech on corporatism in Norway. Drafted by Ole Colbjørnsen and Axel Somme, it intended to attract workers as well as farmers. It was inspired by the New Economic Plan of the USSR and by radical British ideologists as Keynes and Hobson. Kili suggests that corporatism in Norway is rooted in the early thirties when it appeared as a political strategy of the now democratic and reform-oriented Labour party for its purpose to enhance economic and political democracy in the long run, but under the immediate pressure of the problems posed by the Great Depression.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Seip, Anne-Lise. "Science and Social Policy. The Norwegian Debate in 1930s." In: Scandinavian Journal of History. No. 16. She mentions the case of Throne Holst from the firm *Freia* as one promoter of corporatism from within the industrial elite.

suggested. The positive intervention of the state began to be seen under a different light as the organised interests became steadily more powerful. Solutions were formulated. The Labour plan written under the war and called *Fremtidens Norge*, or more commonly known as *Blåboka*, contained some of them.<sup>1</sup>

The *Blåboka* talked about economic democracy as an organic and harmonic cooperation between labour and capital, and foresaw a free Norway as a synthesis between planned economy and social control, on one side, and personal initiative and political freedom, on the other. Most important, the Storting should transfer some decision power, and limit its work to establish the guidelines for the government, grant money, and exercise control over the administration.<sup>2</sup> *Fremtidens Norge* turned out to be the basis for the Common Political Program (*Fellesprogram*) of 1945, in which Labourite views prevailed.

The corporate developments that took place in Norway in the pre-Second World War period under *Venstre* governments were understood as exceptional and only legitimate in crisis situations. The Great Depression would change that. The memory of the crisis and its rampant unemployment would permeate the Labour Party's corporate plans in the future.

All of this makes it difficult to include Norwegian corporatism in the all-embracing diagrams of the welfare and corporate states like that of Peter Flora<sup>3</sup> in which the built-up of the welfare-corporate states in Western Europe has been basically a Liberal adventure detached from the particular political processes; a pragmatic, rational approach towards an inner goal of the capitalist system.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby. *Korporatisme...*

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Flora, Peter. "Introduction". In: Peter Flora (ed.). *Growth to Limits. The Western European Welfare States Since World War II*. 2v. Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1986. (Vol. I. Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark).

Edvard Bull on the other hand understands the arrival of corporatism, or “organised capitalism”, as he calls it, as an extension or a culmination of capitalism.<sup>1</sup> He might have stated that as a counterbalance to the claims of socialisation through Labour’s policies. Labour was, indeed, the right instrument for Norway to overcome the cyclical economic crisis of capitalism.

Perkin’s theory of a professional society, though not focused on the Norwegian case, helps us overcome the discussion about socialism or capitalism in the orientation of Labour policies towards corporatism. Moreover, it is the best to explain how an agreement in the elite circles could develop and sustain in Norway. In his opinion, the corporate solution has reached beyond a transformation of capitalism: classic capitalism finished a process of disintegration, and a new era began. In our opinion, the Norwegian case confirms that the classical Liberal version of capitalism is dead.

### **Corporate Pluralism in Norway. Stein Rokkan’s Theory**

Stein Rokkan’s essay on “Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism”, a classic on the subject, depicted corporatism in Norway in the 1960s as a negotiating table. Issues were discussed, agreements reached, and decisions made, outside and beyond the Storting and the eye of the public opinion. A forum in which, according to Stein Rokkan, “votes count, resources decide”.<sup>2</sup>

Stein Rokkan also enunciated the theory of “Plural corporatism”. In this, the enlargement of state intervention implied the empowering of the organised interests. The government had started building up a large network of consultative boards and

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<sup>1</sup> Edvard Bull wrote to this respect: ”*Den organiserte kapitalisme*: Det er min påstand at under Arbeiderpartiets regjeringstid er kapitalismen blitt fullstendiggjort. Ikke frikonkurransens *privat* kapitalisme, men en organisert kapitalisme, der også statsbedriftene hører hjemme.” ”Fra bøndernes...” P. 233. I disagree with the idea that Liberal capitalism somehow was completed by entering into a new phase.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Rokkan. *Op. Cit.*

councils for the representation of all relevant interests and had turned itself into the nexus, a mediator, in a triangular relation among agricultural and fishing associations, capital and labour. At the outset of Labourite rule, Rokkan wrote that the Labour government could have backed the claims of the Trade Unions and made their interests prevail, but then it would have weakened its position in the elections and would have put too much tension in the bargaining process and perhaps ignited industrial violence. It simply could not avoid consultations and bargains with the other major interests.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, he adds, electoral results lost influence; the key in the corporate system was organisational action, namely the capacity to hurt or halt the productive system. Relevant state decisions did not then originate in the Storting but in the bargaining table, the meeting point of trade union leaders, representatives of the farmers, of the smallholders and of the fishermen, and the delegates of the Employers' Association.

Rokkan's functionalistic perspective has been very influential. For instance, one author widely referred to in this work, Francis Sejersted, agrees with Rokkan as to describing the political system in Norway as "pluralist". After discussing the outcome of the debate around the enabling acts in the years 1952-1953 and theorising on Labour's retreat from its radical law proposals, Sejersted concludes, as Rokkan, that this process ended up at a bargaining table where the organised interests could make their voices heard as parts involved in administrative decisions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>2</sup> When discussing Lindebrække's choice between political work in the Stortinget and chairmanship in the *Bankforening* to get to influence economic policies in Norway, Sejersted admits that Rokkan's scheme applied to the situation prevailing in those times. Cfr. Francis Sejersted. Opposisjon og posisjon. 1945-1983. Oslo, J.V. Cappelens Forlag A/S, 1984. (Høyres Historie 3). P. 124-130.



## **Jens Arup Seip and the One-Party Rule Theory**

Another theory, coming from the side of historians, questioned the pre-eminence of the Storting in Post-war Norway from another point of view: the One-party rule theory. Contrary to the functionalistic understanding of corporatism, a structural perspective that reduces the influence of party politics in the actual role of the Storting, this theory stresses the relevance of political handlings.

In the first parliamentary election, the Labour party assured socialist absolute majority in the Storting. From that day until the King's Bay incident, Norway lived under a one-party rule. The Storting remained in exile until an accident and a tortuous process of cooperation of the non-socialistic parties torn this rule apart. Until then, the political decision-making process was monopolised within the Labour ranks.<sup>1</sup> Such is the famous statement by Jens Arup Seip. According to him, Labourite take-over meant the end of the previous regime in two ways: a one-party hegemony instead of an open society, and the coming of the welfare (-corporate) state.

Seip elaborated further: The One-party rule nullified in practice the Storting and neutralised the opposition. Labour's majority in the Storting occurred in the context of strict parliamentary group obedience to the hierarchy in the party. The government became an executive committee of the party. Being an electoral machine with huge political and administrative resources, Labour left behind any opposition counterbalance to its power. In the political market, they offered and provided most of the welfare solutions and gained an image of guardians of the reconstruction and prosperity to the eyes of the voters.

The Labour party was different from the rest, with a tendency to an inner-control structure led by the General Secretary. During the Postwar era, the Prime

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Seip, Jens Arup. To linjer i Norsk Historie. Fra embetsmannsstat til ettpartistat. Høyre gjennom hundre år 1880-1980. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1987. "Ettpartistaten".

Minister and the General Secretary (alternatively Gerhardsen and Torp) were the heads of power in Norway. At the same time, the administration in Oslo took control over the rest of the country. Seip used concepts as “Caesarism” and “Stalinism” to describe the scenario. But even knowing this, the political process in Norway, stated Seip, had become a mystery.

If we accept this characterisation as correct, we have run across a striking similarity with what was happening in the United States and Great Britain. Wright Mills wrote on a post-war America<sup>1</sup> where the Congress was relegated to a servile position before the executive, where the parties were big corporations themselves, and where the common citizen, apart from the organised interests, was powerless. Between this and the power elite there were the experts, the officials of the corporate state. Perkin affirmed that in the post-war era the British Parliament lost power before the executive.<sup>2</sup> Labourites and Conservatives fought to obtain a mandate from the electorate to enable professional politicians to handle politics. The government controlled the Parliament to a larger extent than the opposite, while the National leadership of the parties controlled the MPs and the party members, and the Primer Minister ruled over the party.

Seip also highlighted the fact that the new political scheme implied a bureaucratic pact that brought together the old bureaucracy and the new one instituted with the expansion of the state. A deal at the top between the old and the new elites to solve the structural failures of Liberal capitalism and maintain what nowadays is called corporatism and the rule of experts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Op. Cit.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Perkin. Op. Cit.

<sup>3</sup> “Det skjer ikke som forespeilet en opphevelse av klasser i betydning sosiale elementer med egen stilling i produksjonsprosessen og spesielt forhold til produksjonens frukter. Men det kommer til et samarbeid på toppen mellom næringslivets menn og byråkratiet i utvidet –til sammen en bred samling av teknikere som gjennom ettpartisystemet har velgerne under kontroll.” Jens Arup Seip. Op. Cit. P. 43.

Labour instituted corporatism; the party would lose its hegemony, but corporatism stayed. Was corporatism in Norway in its earliest stage one with the One-party rule? Were those two parallel phenomena? Edvard Bull understood them as separate ones and criticised Seip's theory because it implied that the one-party rule characterised post-war Norway. The new social system, argued Bull, was not determined by the new political setting, but by the organised capitalism that came to being.<sup>1</sup> We, on the contrary, have reasons not to disregard Seip's assumption that both were intertwined.

Before getting to a further discussion it is time to include an overview of a social theory with an opposite direction to these two already presented, that of Trond Nordby's.

### **The Storting at the Centre of Politics. Nordby's Theory**

The background of Seip and Rokkan's theories is a political tradition in which the Storting should rule almost alone in the political process. Trond Nordby puts this tradition into question and asserts that the parliamentary tradition in Norway, contrary to other political systems, implied a perhaps too powerful Storting whose authority over the executive branch has not been properly compensated.

He maintains that, in spite of the continuous strengthening of the central administration, parliamentary rule in Norway has been preserved and the Storting is still at the centre of politics.

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<sup>1</sup> "Den organisering av kapitalismen som foregikk i mellomkrigstida, har først i etterkrigstida fått sine fulle utslag. Dermed er vi inne i den perioden Jens Seip karakteriserte som ettpartistatens. Ordet var ikke helt vellykket, siden Arbeiderpartiet aldri behersket situasjonen slik at regjeringen kunne være sikker på å bli sittende over neste valg. Men framfor alt har det vist seg, etter at Seip holdt sitt foredrag i 1963 under Lyngregjeringens korte uker, at den ene partis regime kunne falle sammen uten at vi merket noe større til det (...). *Det kan ikke ha vært det ene parti som var poenget i vår nye samfunnsform.*" Edvard Bull. Op. Cit. P. 233.

Nordby's main thesis about the role of the Storting is a good counterweight to previous, less optimistic, theories on how parliamentarism has been developing in Norway.

It is through the presentation of the parliamentary forms, traditions and issues in Norway that Nordby gives us a context that we can use to evaluate what the role of the Storting was in the post-war period. The author also gives us a practical parliamentary framework to work with, that of negative parliamentarism: as long as the Storting can force a government to depart after a vote of no confidence we can talk of parliamentary rule.<sup>1</sup>

The issue raised by the opposition after the Labourite take-over was of the increasing delegation of power from the Storting to the administration. The polarisation of the debate led to affirmations of a threat of dictatorship and an actual inner corruption of the political system. The negotiations behind closed doors, the influence of the big organisations, were seen as diminishing not only the jurisdiction but the role of the Storting to the extent of some circles of the opposition announcing the end of parliamentary rule.

Nordby conceives this pessimistic view as a result of a faulty perspective. He pinpointed the trends that, after the Second World War, have come to change the Norwegian political system, namely, those towards corporatism, pluralism<sup>2</sup> and the rule of experts. These trends are related, in his analysis, with delegation of power or change of the forms and means of the legislative branch. Nordby admits that the Storting has lost influence in two directions, both limiting its area of jurisdiction,

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<sup>1</sup> "Etter overgangen til parlamentarisme (...) har regjeringsdannelsen vært underlagt valgdemokratiet; det vil si at en regjering må gå av dersom Stortinget krever det, og når regjeringsfløyen taper sitt parlamentariske grunnlag i valg". Trond Nordby. *I politikkens...* P. 27.

<sup>2</sup> In Nordby's case, "pluralism" has two different meanings. Here it is different from that given to it by Rokkan and Sejersted. For Nordby: "Det pluralistiske innslaget handler, så lenge Stortinget stilles i sentrum, en lobbyvirksomhet og komitéhøringer." *Ibidem*. P. 206.

through the international agreements and through the enlargement of the administration. However, he does not agree with the statement that the activities of lobbies and interest groups weaken the Storting. He disagrees as well with those who affirm that the Storting is just devoted to symbolic politics or to details in the law-making process.

Nordby wrote that these developments were sooner or later accompanied by the proper counterbalances and that they never challenged,<sup>1</sup> but reoriented, the supremacy of the Storting as the centre of politics.<sup>2</sup>

### **Opposition or Complement? A Reconsideration of the Three Theories**

It is best to begin our analysis going over the criticism against Rokkan and Seip by Nordby. In an earlier book by Nordby, Korporatisme på norsk, the author criticised, on the side of social theory, Rokkan's description of the pluralist corporatism reached in Norway in the fifties. The Labourite government, he stated, did not limit itself to the role of mediator in a system where organisations ruled to the extent their resources allowed.

Rokkan experienced an era of high political consensus around the goals of the welfare state in Norway. He saw the organised interests acquire representation and being empowered by the corporate scheme to put their demands forward, and he thought of it as the rule of organisations. In a perspective that might apply better to the American case, he stated that a plural corporatism ruled in Norway.

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<sup>1</sup> The contacts between the different parts involved taking place outside the Storting, according to Nordby, do not necessarily break the parliamentary order: "Med tanke på den kontakten de folkevalgte har med byråkrater, må vi spørre hvorfor ikke slike kontakter skulle finne sted så lenge det handler om utveksling av informasjon. Hvis det er tilfellet, trues verken maktfordeling eller parlamentarisme." Idem. P. 158.

<sup>2</sup> The author puts it this way: "De folkevalgte står (...) overfor en langt mer autonomi og kompleks forvaltning, og de er heller ikke i stand til å detaljstyre på samme måte som før gjennom lover og bevilgninger. Den store utfordringen er å stå fram som et normdannende sentrum i samfunnet, og legge føringer gjennom retningsgivende debatter." Idem. P. 202.

Nordby, however, attentive to the evidence on the structure of the corporate handlings, focused on the state involvement, and did not find those organisations so freely influencing the system.<sup>1</sup> Nordby questions the term “corporate pluralism”<sup>2</sup> to describe post-war Norway. He would rather use the term “social corporatism”<sup>3</sup> since corporatism was a series of deals at the top of the power elite, and in a context where the big organisations enjoyed a monopoly in their own area.<sup>4</sup> These deals took place within a framework and an agenda set by the government.<sup>5</sup> Nordby indeed states that the Labourite corporate project headed in the direction of “state corporatism”.<sup>6</sup>

What came out of the enabling acts debate in the fifties was, in Nordby’s perspective, a “modus vivendi” among the Establishment that assured political stability in the corporate arrangement.<sup>7</sup> The business community and the non-socialistic opposition could feel less bound to one-sided decisions and more taken

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<sup>1</sup> ”Rokkans forestilling om en ’korporativ pluralisme’ har altså dominert norsk samfunnsforskning, og det har stått som uomtvistelig sannhet at de korporative organene i første rekke styrker organisasjonenes maktstilling. Den følgende analysen må leses som et forsøk på å snu dette perspektivet – slik at vekten legges på spørsmålet om hvorvidt de samme organene fungerte som statlige styringsredskaper”. Nordby. Korporatisme... P. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> Here Nordby gives the term a meaning in relation to what Rokkan and Sejersted wrote about. He describes pluralism as a corporate scheme with “åpne diskusjoner der makten ligger enten hos organisasjonenes medlemmer eller hos velgerne i politiske valg og konkurrerende organisasjoner.” Ibidem. P. 13.

<sup>3</sup> In this scheme: “reelle overlegninger mellom eliter fra stat og organisasjoner der staten likevel sitter med et overtak, og topptunge organisasjoner som har monopolisert representasjonen innenfor sitt område.” Idem. P. 13.

<sup>4</sup> About Rokkan and Sejersted’s statement on a pluralist corporate system in Norway, affirms Nordby: “Etter mitt syn treffer denne begrepsbruken dårlig. La gå at de politiske myndighetene langt mindre enn i gjenreisningsårene styrte ved diktat og at det ble gitt større åpninger for reelle overlegninger og forhandlinger. Men det meste av virksomheten foregikk fremdeles i fast organiserte former, samtidig som lederskapet på begge sider av forhandlingsbordet – i hvert fall for lønnsfastsettelsens del – bygde videre på ’toppfolkenes partnerskap’. Til forskjell fra det som kjennetegner et pluralistisk system, beholdt også de store organisasjonene hele tiden monopol på å representere innenfor sine interesseområder”. Idem. P. 123.

<sup>5</sup> “Videre er det – i hvert fall i Norge – de offentlige myndighetene sentralt som oppnevner statlige utvalg. Dessuten avgjør myndighetene hvilke problemer statlige utvalg skal behandle. I tillegg utformer de mandater og instruksjoner og bestemmer hvor lenge et utvalg skal sitte sammen. Når det handler om rådgivning, er det opp til myndighetene å avgjøre hvorvidt de skal følge det rådet et utvalg gir. Likeledes er lønnsforhandlingene omgjerdet av legale og institusjonelle rammer, som gjør at organisasjonene vanskelig kan holde staten utenfor om den først ønsker å gripe regulerende inn (...)”. Idem. P. 26. Also Cfr. Nordby. I politikkens...

<sup>6</sup> Here there is complete state control. Cfr. Nordby. Korporatisme...

<sup>7</sup> ”Samlet sett var årene mellom striden rundt pris- og rasjonaliseringsloven og oljekrisen i 1973/74 den perioden av nyere norsk historie som har vært mest preget av konsensus. I hvert fall mellom ’toppfolkene’ innen organisasjoner og partier var det en grunnleggende enighet (...)”. Nordby. Idem. P. 67-68.

into account; in other words, empowered in the final corporate deal. However, this did not establish a pluralist rule.

On the other hand, the criticism by Nordby towards Seip's theory rests on the assumption that the Storting was very active in the period mentioned, and that the opposition was not as powerless as Seip declared. Indeed, Labour had to yield to some pressure from the opposition to keep its electoral success. Gerhardsen, he adds, could not be compared to a Caesar.<sup>1</sup>

Nordby disagrees with the extreme parliamentary pessimism that Seip's essay represents. He replies that the Storting was and is still at the centre of politics and has only reduced its area of influence, given up the old detailed handling of issues, and dealt with a more autonomous and complex administration. Delegation of authority in certain limited areas is contemplated in the parliamentary rule, and in the Norwegian case, this has been done without evading the necessary parliamentary control over the organs established and their work. During the Labourite golden period, the foundations of parliamentary rule remained intact, namely, the vote of no confidence, and the capacity of the Storting of getting the cabinet members to respond for their office; this last one, a prerogative that proved useful in the case of King's Bay.<sup>2</sup>

We can profit much from Nordby's remarks. However, the overview Nordby gives us on the role of the Storting in history does not give us a definite answer to our main problem. We can agree that the Storting could no longer be the place where all political power was concentrated; it had accumulated power without the proper counterbalances; delegation of power was healthy and reasonable. But he has also given us reasons to suspect a real threat against the rule of the Storting in his

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby. I politikkens... P. 281-282.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Ibidem.

comments on Rokkan's theory. He himself enlists the dangers posed to the parliamentary rule brought by the post-war changes, mainly the informal handlings between parties and parts that did not reach public light and tied the opposition before an issue was handled in the Storting.<sup>1</sup> Then the existence of a bureaucracy with political ambitions and its correlation with the enabling acts as its tool to gain more room for action,<sup>2</sup> and finally the factual shrinking of the Storting's area of influence.

Inner corruption should perhaps not be identified, and in this Nordby could be right, with the structural arrangement of politics in Norway, but during the post-war period there was a danger that a Storting controlled by the party enabled the administration to avoid democratic control. A "culture", he admits, that prevailed during the Labourite golden age.<sup>3</sup>

Even when Nordby proves that the role of the Storting preserved its centrality in politics during the post-war era, namely, that the corporate advances impulsed by the Labour government did not rule out the Storting as an arena of negotiation or as the law-making organ, there are still some questions to ask. What about the factual relation between the Storting and the government in the Labourite golden age?

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<sup>1</sup> "En negativ effekt av uformelle forhandlinger kan også være at standpunktene låses før Stortinget skal behandle saken. Når slike forhandlinger før er avsluttet, kan det bli vanskelig for opposisjonspartiene å gå imot regjeringens forslag – om de skulle ha skiftet standpunkt etter at forhandlingene fant sted. Ikke minst må det være kritikkverdig at partienes gruppeledere får anledning til å hevde sin mening uten at partienes øvrige gruppemedlemmer er tatt med på råd." *Idem.* P. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Here, Nordby makes the interesting observation that experts were not independent from the politicians to this respect, since they enjoyed delegated power and had to wait until there was the political will for them to start building up policies to their benefit. "...de har aldri hatt monopol på bestemte politiske og administrative oppgaver. Derimot har de sluppet til når de administrative og politiske makthavere har hatt brukt for dem ---som under planpolitikkens æra." *Idem.* P. 199.

<sup>3</sup> "En løpende trussel mot den etablerte maktfordelingen er indre perverteringer (...). Under et flertallsstyre kommer trusselen fra den andre siden, ved at regjeringen –med støtte fra regjeringsfløyen i Stortinget –trumfer sin vilje gjennom og unndrar seg demokratisk kontroll. Dette skjedde under Arbeiderpartiets storhetstid. Den gangen ble det i tilknytning til Kings Baysaken tatt et nødvendig oppgjør med denne 'kulturen'." *Idem.* P. 173.



During the post-war era, did the Storting control the government or vice versa?<sup>1</sup> Was it, as the bourgeoisie opposition put it, that when one knew what Labour planned, one knew what would happen? In other words, did the Labourite elite in fact use the Storting as an instrument of power?

The theory developed by Jens A. Seip touched a key question. Namely, how did the party work? When Rokkan underestimated the electoral process, he also put aside the issue of the actual political rules or took them for granted. Nordby, faithful to a sociological perspective, was not consequent with the study of the political will to exercise control through the corporate system. Seip admitted he could not answer such a question, but he also provided us with some hints that make sense under the light of other references.

In the relation between the government and the Storting in the period he studied, Seip wrote that the first dominated over the second, and that the government, in the hands of Labour, concentrated power in the leadership of the party. The initiative of the two Labour Prime Ministers, Gerhardsen and Torp, would be decisive in the orientation of the corporate arrangements.

Nordby does not rule out Seip's characterisation of personal power and wrote that Gerhardsen was more oriented towards state control than Torp, under which administration the Sjaastad's committee's proposal on rationalisation was dropped. And he mentions the case of the Coordination Council (*Samordnigråd*), appointed to be a consultative organ for the government and the administration and where the main economic groups were represented and consensus among them was built. This

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<sup>1</sup> Jens Arup Seip gives two important teachings about political history in his review of the collection Det norske Stortings historie on the period 1814-1964: the relation between the government and the Storting is an essential question, and only getting inside political parties' lives can we get a lot from the study of politics. Cfr. Seip. Tanke og handling i norsk historie. Oslo, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1968. "Stortinget som statsmakt".

Trond Bergh called a substitute of the Storting.<sup>1</sup> Gerhardsen used this corporate organ as an instrument of power.<sup>2</sup> He took advantage of the prevailing consensus during the reconstruction period and a majority in the *Samordningsråd* to pass his own proposals, to legitimise his own positions, and to bind the other participants in the negotiation. However, he would witness the fading of this council and the consensus around it as the reconstruction period ended. The council tried unsuccessfully to take charge of the making of the National Budget against heavy opposition and ended up as a secretariat from 1952 to 1954, when it was formally dissolved.<sup>3</sup> Its successor, the Cooperation Committee (*Samarbeidsnemnda*) established in 1951 by the Ministry of Finance was founded under less ambitious state control guidelines, but not under pluralistic direction.<sup>4</sup>

One of the motivations of corporatism on the government side has been to make the organised interests co-participants of certain decisions. To get their approval and bind them, as Nordby acknowledges.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nordby gives this reference on Bergh. In paper, this council was "et rådgivende fellesorgan for de departementer og direktorater som går inn under dets mandatområde" (Nordby. *Korporatisme...* P. 112). Among those areas, it included reconstruction works, price policies, employment, currency regulation, income agreements, and rationalisation of production. It embraced representatives of the state administration (the Price director, the Labour director, and the director of the *Statistik sentralbyrå*), the industry, commerce, agriculture, fishing, and the labour movement. The government decided on the number of members and which organised groups could take part. Cfr. *Ibidem*.

<sup>2</sup> The council was directly under responsibility of the Primer Minister's office. The way it worked in practice, the departments and directorates monopolised the right to put forward proposals. "I en tidlig fase brukte Gerhardsen rådet når han skulle løse i havn økonomiske politiske avgjørelser som stod strid om. Det gjaldt særlig subsidier, priser og lønninger. Særlig de første par årene – inntil reorganiseringen i 1946 – var rådet slik satt sammen at Gerhardsen alltid kunne regne med flertallets støtte. I tillegg hadde han god anledning til å styre via sine folk i rådet – framfor noen gjaldt dette formennene (...).

"De standpunktene flertallet i rådet inntok, kunne i neste omgang brukes til å legitimere den politikken regjeringen førte". *Idem*. P. 114-115.

Also Cfr. Bergh, Trond. *Storhetstid (1945-1965)*. Oslo, Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1987. (Arbeiderbevegelsens Historie i Norge, 5). "Økonomisk og industrielt demokrati – innflytelse og medansvar".

<sup>3</sup> "En umiddelbar årsak til at Samordningsrådet havarerte, var at det hadde vokst fram indre spenninger rundt faste konstellasjoner. Den økende polariseringen skyldes at arbeiderbevegelsens 'naturlige' fiender etter hvert regnet det samarbeid gjenreisningen krevde, for å være over. Dessuten hadde de ulike opposisjonsgruppene greid å samle seg organisatorisk (...)" Nordby. *Korporatisme...* P. 64.

<sup>4</sup> That is the evaluation by Nordby (*Ibidem*. P. 64) in his criticism to Sejersted on the same topic. According to Nordby, Sejersted interpreted the *Samarbeidsnemnda* as one corporative channel resorted to by the opposition in the search for opportunities outside the parliamentary arena dominated by Labour. He gave a description of the work of this council that Nordby sees as more compatible with social corporatism.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. *Idem*.

There is another point we should go over. The time scope of Nordby's study on the role of the Storting is not the most appropriate for ours. In his, the power of the Storting is seen in a perspective in which the period of Labour's attempts to direct the economy loses some relevance. Although his statement that Norwegian corporatism has never implied that the Storting have a functional nature that can be easily accepted, and is not necessarily rejected by assuming the validity of the theory of One-party rule in the post-war era, his conclusion that the authority of the Storting in law-making and tax setting has not been challenged can be questioned when referred to this specific period.

The assumption of the Storting remaining at the centre of politics does not really contradict the thesis of a One-party rule. Labour, in this last theory, controlled the Storting through its majority. The majority responded to a party discipline not seen in Norway before. The government, in other words, had control over it and could eventually use it as an instrument of power. Labour even opposed the proposals to enhance referendums and the power of dissolution of the Storting put forward by the opposition. This could have threatened the legislative status quo now in their favour.

One wonders whether it is possible, as Nordby interprets in the case of corporatist models following Schmitter, to talk about different kinds of One-party states. Among others, the former Soviet Union would be an example of total control of the political scenery by a party; Mexico under the revolutionary government would exemplify a society which enjoyed power division and a theoretical rule by the Congress, a political opposition, and free elections contemplated by the constitution, but where the ruling party in practice had control of the electoral process. In these two instances, the legislative branch could be regarded as the recording machine of the ruling party's resolutions. Norway during the golden age of Labour would be

another type where free elections were a fact, but in which a party managed successfully to hold power for a couple of decades.<sup>1</sup> We are to define what role parliament played in this last case.

Corporatism vs. One-party rule. What characterises Postwar Norway best is perhaps a question wrongly stated. The thesis of this work is that a specific form of corporatism and the one-party rule represent a unity in the period right after the end of the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Seip himself gives us an overview on One-party-ruled countries at the time he wrote his famous essay: "Det fins rene ett-partistater, hvor velgerne i valg ikke har noe valg. "Det fins en annen type hvor ett eneste parti har oppsuget all politisk makt, og innforlivet den med seg gjennom lengre tid. Hvor der riktignok er en opposisjon, men hvor dens utsikter til å bli regjeringsdyktig er meget små. Vi har et slikt system i India, i Frankrike, under De Gaulle, i mange afrikanske stater. Vi har det i Norge". To linjer i Norsk Historie... "Ettspartistaten". P. 27.

## CHAPTER II. PARLIAMENTARISM AND ONE-PARTY RULE. THE VIEWS OF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION

### Three Issues of Parliamentarism: Electoral Law, Plebiscites and Dissolution Power

It seems that the politicians of the opposition in the period here studied described One-party rule and corporatism as a unity. They did not make use, of course, of these terms, but they express them in other ways in their speeches. The main arguments by the political opposition against the changes Labour promoted in the administration and the economic system were that they were undemocratic, unconstitutional, and economically dangerous. They represented a threat of abuse of power and a rupture with the parliamentary order. Let us go over each of these claims. First, that of Labour overlooking the people's will.

The legacy of the pre-war years was quite notorious in several key issues in economics and politics. There is a paragraph of the Common Political Programme (*Fellesprogrammet*) of 1945 in which we identify the heritage of a pre-war debate on parliamentarism, and that was mentioned and invoked several times in the political speeches:

På det nye Storting må valgloven endres for at Stortinget kan bli det best mulige uttrykk for folkeviljen (...). Det gjennomføres en forenklet samlet budsjettbehandling og en parlamentarisk praksis som kan styrke Regjeringens stilling og ansvar. Spørsmålet om folkeavstemning og oppløsningsrett tas opp til ny utredning.<sup>1</sup>

In the pre-war years, the role of the government had not been seen as strong enough to carry out the policies and administrative work required in National politics, and the Storting had been criticised for its excessive detailed handling of

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<sup>1</sup> "Fellesprogrammet. De politiske partienes samarbeidsprogram for gjenreisningen". In: *Norsk innenriks politikk*. Compiled by Knut E. Eriksen and Geir Lundestad. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1972. (Kilder til moderne historie II.)

administrative questions.<sup>1</sup> The rule of the Storting had created an imbalance among the three powers and it should be compensated with, on one side, a praxis in which the government was not so restrained and, on the other, with the resource to referendums and the power of dissolution of the Storting consecrated by law.<sup>2</sup>

On the same lines, the goal of designing a new electoral law, in which the proportional representation gave the parties as many representatives as the total percentage of voters in their favour, became an issue.

These questions had originally aroused from the circumstance resulting from coalition governments in which the administration was very dependent of the balance of forces within the Storting. A plebiscite or the dissolution of parliament could solve debates in which a decisive majority was difficult to achieve. In a few words, they were considered a good option regarding the problem of govern ability in the pre-war times.

A qualitative shift took place after the Second World War and the coming of a Labour majority. They became electoral issues during the period studied here, but were raised by the political opposition not as a way to set limits to the rule of the Storting and to enhance the power of the administration, but for the opposite: as a strategy to put breaks on the majority rule in parliament, as a sort of veto power against the government, as well as a way to press for a consensus that satisfied also the opposition parties.

It was the assumption that there was a One-party rule what changed the nature of the debate. What could lead to a further argumentation in favour of a

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<sup>1</sup> Stortinget's "Grunnlovjuristeriet", it was called. Cfr. Bernt A. Nissen. „Demokratisk fornyelse“. In: Samtiden, 1945. P. 302-308; and Chr. S. Oftedal. "Folkestyrets teknikk". In: Samtiden, 1945. P. 216-217.

<sup>2</sup> Trond Nordby points out accurately that the theory of balance of power contradicts a Storting rule, and that the exaggeratedly detailed administrative work of the Storting had been criticised during the interwar period. This issue has not been solved properly up to our days, according to the author. Cfr. Nordby. I politikkens sentrum... "Sætrekk ved norsk parlamentarisme".

limitation of the power of the Storting for the sake of the division of power principle and an effective administration, changed directions to a discussion about the losing of the prerogatives of the legislative and judicial branches before the executive, and ultimately to the demand of a Storting rule over the government. The main issue became the delegation of power away from the Storting and the threat of abuse of power by the majority party.

This curious phenomenon introduced a tension in the speech that was peculiar to the debate on constitutionality and parliamentarism in those years. As we try to make sense of the electoral speech of the opposition, we find out that the argumentation was not always coherent. Sometimes contradictory or not very compatible arguments were put together to respond to the needs of the political struggle. Besides the demands of expressing or hiding political purposes or interests, the speech of the different opposition groups was also in the making, carrying a burden of tradition, and replying to the speech of Labour.

#### **a) Quest for a new electoral law**

The use of referendums and of the power of dissolution of the parliament was not included in the constitution, neither was it consecrated by costume,<sup>1</sup> whereas the problem with the electoral law was the opposite. It was bound to the constitution and a change towards a more simplified order that represented “the people’s will” was thus difficult to achieve. A two-third majority was required to pass any constitutional change.<sup>2</sup> And there was the further obstacle of the *bondeparagraf*, whose annulment

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<sup>1</sup> Idem.

<sup>2</sup> Nissen insisted in 1950 (“Foran siste etappe i valgordningssaken”. In: Samtiden. 1950. P. 162) that it was a pity that two thirds of the electoral commission were needed to change the electoral law: “Det verste ved grunnlovsbindingen er nettopp dette, fordi det medfører at enhver justering blir et politisk tautrekkingsspørsmål. For å få en forandring må det 2/3 flertall til, og dette er vanskelig å oppnå, fordi det alltid er lett å mobilisere minst femti distriktsrepresentanter som føler sine interesser truet hver gang det skal forandres på noe”.

was opposed by the *Bondeparti*.<sup>1</sup> There was in the beginning a very small possibility of agreement among the bourgeoisie parties around the issue of a new electoral law.

The magazine *Samtiden*, a liberal publication oriented to the Old *Venstre*, offers us a couple of articles on those issues written right after the war by an editor, Bernt A. Nissen, and a member of the Storting, Chr. S. Oftedal, both *Venstre* men. The first added to the problem the issue of representation of organised interests and claimed that the constitution had to adjust to the times to make democracy (*Folkestyre*) prevail. Since the recourse to dissolution and plebiscites, necessary for a more effective government, was not contemplated in the constitution and could not be defended on the side of constitutional zeal, he used the argument that parliamentarism itself was not constitutionally grounded. So it was not at risk if there were any constitutional changes to come in this area.<sup>2</sup> The second asked for trust in a strong government and the recourses mentioned, and advocated a simplified electoral system.<sup>3</sup>

The overwhelming Labourite party machine was not yet the biggest problem for these opposition writers. However, it soon became relevant. Among the bourgeoisie parties, *Venstre* was particularly active in the work to get the recourses already mentioned approved,<sup>4</sup> and joined the others in regarding the prevalent

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<sup>1</sup> The *bondeparagraf* determined that the distribution of representatives between country and urban districts had to be 2 to 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Det står ingen ting i Grunnloven om folkeavstemning like litt som det står noe om parlamentarismen". Nissen. *Demokratisk...* P. 307.

<sup>3</sup> "Vi må ha mot til å vise tillit [til regjeringen].

"Vi må igjen gjøre folkestyret folkelig, gjennom store linjer og et enkelt system: enmannskretser". Oftedal. *Op. Cit.* P. 216-217. Since 1919, there was a proportional representation (*forholdstallsvalg*) electoral system in Norway based on the d'Hondts method of distribution of seats in the Storting; thanks to this, Labour could enjoy a majority of seats in the post-war era without enjoying a corresponding absolute majority in the National vote. In 1953, after negotiations between the opposition, particularly *Høyre*, and Labour, the *bondeparagraf* was annulled and the d'Hondts method was replaced by a modified version of the Sante-Lagües method. These developments advanced the cause of the bourgeoisie parties.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Nordby. *I politikkens sentrum...*



electoral system at the end of the war as another tool in the Labourite quest for power:

Regjeringens styrke har vist seg å være ensidig og smalsporet. Til sine tider har den hatt styrke nok til å gå sine egne politiske veger, takket være en urettvis valgordning, som har ført til et utrettvist flertall for Arbeiderpartiet på Stortinget, uten at partiet har flertall i folket. Den populært kalte Oksvikianske valgordningen, som ble vedtatt med odelstingspresident Oksviks dobbeltstemme, var midlet som sikret partiet representant-flertallet på Stortinget.<sup>1</sup>

In 1953, Oftedal still considered a comeback of what he termed a “mindretallsparlamentarisme” a worse threat than a majority rule. However, he stated that the different political views in the Storting, meaning the different parties, should have a proportional representation in government. Then the lack of consensus that might eventually appear would be solved through plebiscites. It was a big shift from his original position.<sup>2</sup>

The leadership of *Venstre* proposed a plural composition of government in the National Assembly of 1953:

Venstre vil arbeide for en regjering sammensatt av alle store partier –ikke som en midlertidig ordning etter første eller neste valg,-- men som en varig ordning bygget på det grunnsyn at i tidens vansker vil et samvirke over partigrense være den viktigste og beste løsning.

En regjering sammensatt med forholdsvis på mange representanter for partiene som hvert parti får i Stortinget, vil gi den politiske fasthet land og folk krever og trenger.

...Slik som kommunestyret velger ordfører og formannskap kan Stortinget velge statsminister og regjering.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Per Bergsvendsen. *Venstre-politikk 1945-1951. En framstilling av Venstregruppens arbeid i Stortinget*. Kongsvinger, Norges Venstrelag, 1951. The new electoral law did not get an approval of the majority in parliament, but was passed after Olav Oksvik, Labour Minister and then president of the Odelsting, used his decisive vote in favour of the law.

<sup>2</sup> ”Hovedsaken er at under de nye omstendigheter vil partipolitikk i gammeldags forstand ikke kunne drives. Da vil det være riktig at folkets forskjellige politiske syn, slik det har gitt seg uttrykk i Stortinget, blir forholdsmessig representert i regjeringen. Uenighet eller usikkerhet i avgjørende spørsmål innenfor Storting og regjering, eller mellom Storting og regjering, bør legges fram for folket selv med referendum...” Oftedal. ”Stortingsvalg og regjeringsmakt”. In: *Samtiden*, 1953. P. 175-176. Trond Hegna replied to Oftedal from the Labourite side and stated that parliamentarist rule implied a majority party (Cfr. “Regjeringsparti og opposisjon”. *Samtiden*, 1953. P. 228-236). There is unfortunately no place in this work to follow debates of this nature any further.

<sup>3</sup> *Venstre årsmelding for 1953*. Oslo, Arne S. Mørk, 1954. P. 24.

The appeal to make the people's will prevail had been mixed already with the claim that Labour imposed the force of its majority in both the composition of government and the voting of the Storting. A tyranny of the majority was being suffered. If plebiscites were now advocated by Oftedal as a means to go over disagreements within the Storting or the government, or between both, it was under the hope to break that majority through popular vote. A plebiscite would not have had the limitations of the electoral system in function. Even though it would not bind the government to yield to the outcome, it might, the opposition expected, prove the mandate of Labour not representative.

This form of empowerment that the opposition looked for came out in the electoral propaganda as empowerment of the voters. On these lines, *Venstre* included the demand for a fairer electoral system and the recourses of plebiscites, power of dissolution in its election programs as a means to build up democracy (*folkestyre*) and, it claimed, empower the voter. In the *Venstre* 1949 program it said:

Ny valgordning som gir alle stemmeberettigede samme politiske innflytelse på landets styre gjennom utjevningsmandater, og gir velgerne mer å si når det gjelder kåringen av representantene. Folkeavstemning i viktige saker. Spørsmålet om oppløsningsrett utredes.<sup>1</sup>

The 1953 program is even clearer in its argumentation:

Gjennom utjamningsmandat må valgordningen gi hvert parti den representasjon på Stortinget som det skal ha etter stemmetall in folket. Den enkelte velger må få mer å si ved personvalget. Hove til folkeavstemning i viktige prinsipp saker. Rett til å oppløse Stortinget og skrive ut nye valg.<sup>2</sup>

*Høyre* shared in general this point of view. In its election programmes, the plead to revise the electoral arrangement to match the people's will in 1945, became a party compromise for a fair electoral system in 1949,<sup>3</sup> and added:

<sup>1</sup> Valgprogram for Venstre 1949. Oslo, Abeco, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Valgprogram for Venstre 1953. Kristiansand Fædrelandsvennens trykkeri, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> In 1945, *Høyre*'s electoral programme declared: "Valgordningen revideres for å sikre et valgresultat som er overensstemmende med folkets vilje" (*Høires program ved stortingsvalget 1945*. Oslo, Fabritius

Høire vil arbeide for at velgerne gjennom folkeavstemninger gis en mer direkte innflytelse på avgjørelsen av viktige samfunnsspørsmål.<sup>1</sup>

The *Bondeparti*, which did not mention the issue at all in its 1945 election programme, shared this last argument in 1949<sup>2</sup> and then again in the 1953 elections, after the case of the *Bondeparagraf* had been lost for the party.<sup>3</sup> The *Kristelig Folkeparti*, which barely asked voters in 1945 to read the Common Programme on this issue, summarised a common argumentation of the opposition in its 1949 electoral programme:

Flertallstyre i samsvar med folkeviljen, men også med mindretallets rett til å legge fram sitt syn og hevde sine meninger. En bedre valgordning som gir partiene de mandater som stemmetallet tilsier.<sup>4</sup>

In 1953, the *Kristelig Folkeparti* only mentioned that the Common Programme had not been totally satisfied, and so the party would continue fighting for a truly fair electoral system.<sup>5</sup>

Opponents claimed that a fairer electoral scheme would, claimed the opposition, on one hand, enable the minority to take over, one condition of democratic rule, although the tensions among the bourgeoisie parties made this unattainable in practice<sup>6</sup> and electoral results were indeed frustrating. The debate on

Rotationstrykkeri, 1945); and in 1949: "Høire vil arbeide for en rettferdig valgordning, som sikrer at Stortingets sammensetning er i samsvar med folkets vilje" (Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949. ?, Emil Moestue A.s., 1949).

<sup>1</sup> Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949...

<sup>2</sup> "[Stortinget] skal velges etter en valgordning som gir en mandatfordeling svarende til partienes virkelige styrke. Spørsmålet om oppløsningsrett og folkeavstemning bør tas opp til utgreiing". Til vern og trygd om heim og bygd. Bondepartiets valgprogram 1949. ?, Emil Moestue A/S, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> "Arbeide for en valgordning som gir Stortinget en sammensetning i samsvar med folkeviljen, må fortsette". Bondepartiets program Stortingsvalget 1953. Stavanger, Dagbladet Rogalands Trykkeri, 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Kristelig Folkeparti. Program ved Stortingsvalget 10 oktober 1949. ?, 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Kristelig Folkeparti. Program ved Stortingsvalget 12. oktober 1953. Drammen, Centraltrykkeriet, 1953.

<sup>6</sup> "Det foreligger en teoretisk mulighet for en såkalt 'borgerlig samling', men også bare en teoretisk. I praksis er motsetningene mellom de 4 ikke-sosialistiske partier så sterke, og linjene så pass forskjellige at en samlingsregulering av ikke-sosialistiske partier vil være lite hensiktsmessig og ikke tilrådelig. Kristelig folkeparti vil si nei. Venstre også". Oftedal. "Stortingsvalg..." P. 176. Also Cfr. Sjur Lindebrække. Tro og tillit. Personlige og politiske erindringer. Oslo, Aschenhoug, 1983. "Formene for samarbeid".

the electoral law served, on the other hand, the purpose of helping try to make look Labour's legitimacy questionable.

## **b) Referendums and dissolution power**

Trond Norby states that the parties on the opposition generally turn to the recourses of referendums and power of dissolution in their search for influence in the policy-making process, whereas a party in power goes in the opposite direction.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the opposition in the Storting pressed to achieve these Common Programme goals, whereas Labour opposed them. The recourse to plebiscites and the power of dissolution also became part of the main electoral issues in the party programmes of the opposition, and it was discussed in committees of the Storting after the war.

*Venstre* asked for plebiscites to solve important issues in both 1949 and 1953.<sup>2</sup> The *Kristelig Folkeparti* only mentioned directly the recourse to advisory referendums in its program of 1953.<sup>3</sup> And so did the *Bondeparti* with the addition that they should be held as well up to a minority in the Storting.<sup>4</sup> *Høyre* had asked for a constitutional reform to open the way to plebiscites in 1945.<sup>5</sup>

In 1947, the government decided not to be consequent with the Common Programme on this issue. The power of dissolution was handled again in the electoral committee created by the Storting in 1948, and which presented a report in

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby. I politikkens sentrum.... This seems to be an accurate rule in Norway's history. However, Nordby's long-term perspective makes him put aside the particular functions of the political speech in each shorter period. An issue does not mean the same throughout the times. It is developing. This function and the particular context help us understand the actual meaning of that speech. In the same fashion, in politics the function of the speech implies certain concrete interests and immediate goals, and it is compelled, for the sake of these, to exaggerate the opposite points of view, to make something obscure or simplify it.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Valgprogram for Venstre 1949, and Valgprogram for Venstre 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Kristelig Folkeparti. Program ved Stortingsvalget 12. oktober 1953.

<sup>4</sup> "Bondepartiet går inn for oppløsningsrett lagt i Stortingets hånd og for adgang til rådgivende folkeavstemning også etter krav fra et mindretall i Stortinget." Bondepartiets program Stortingsvalget 1953...

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Høires program ved stortingsvalget 1945.

1952. The majority, formed by the bourgeoisie parties and the Communist representative, proposed that it were put into action in cases of stalemate and when certain issues should be put forward to the voters, in a sort of substitute of a plebiscite. The majority rule was divided on the issue of who would hold the authority to request it, the government or the Storting. At the end, the Labourite minority managed to block this proposal.<sup>1</sup>

The opposition brought about the question on plebiscites in the debate on the main issues of the times. In the debate on the Lex Brofoss 1947, a fervent advocate of plebiscites in *Høyre*, Storting representative Smitt Ingebretsen, showed us again what the aims behind the recourse to a plebiscite were. Namely, to guarantee that the proposals of the opposition were taken into account in the key issues; and to put issues forward to the voters directly, so the odds of the opposition might improve. The decisive issue to vote on in a referendum, in the words of Smitt and his *Høyre* fellowmen, was the alternative between socialism and democracy:<sup>2</sup>

Jeg skulle ønske at vi i dag hadde hatt anledning til folkeavstemning, og en dag får vi se å få det inn som et ledd i vår konstitusjon. Jeg tror at ved en anledning som denne skulle man appellere til folket. Ingen av oss kan vite hvor flertallet er, vi kan tro det ene og vi kan tro det annet, men det skulle være anledning til å spørre direkte i en sak av så vidtrekkende betydning som dette (...). Da burde også folket vårt fått en klar og grei problemstilling så det selv fikk velge om det ville følge den gamle linje eller om det ville følge den sosialistiske linje.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1952, Smitt Ingebretsen suggested in the Storting that, since there was no consensus among all parties, a plebiscite on the electoral question was

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby. *I politikkens sentrum...* P. 123-136.

<sup>2</sup> This is another topic to discuss later. *Høyre* put it this way, but the other bourgeoisie parties did not see it that simple. *Venstre* considered it a decision among three options: the socialistic (Labour), the conservative (*Høyre*), and the social liberal (*Venstre* and eventually the other middle parties too). Cfr. *Valgprogram for Venstre 1949*.

<sup>3</sup> *Stortingets handlinger 1947*. Tidende. Kgl. prp. om lov om prisregulering og annen regulering av ervervsmessig virksomhet. June 24th, 1947.

necessary to have voters decide between a fair representation in the Storting and the “extra” support Labour got with the prevailing scheme.<sup>1</sup>

The National Assembly of *Venstre* in 1952 proposed advisory referendums on the issues of the annulment of the *Bondeparagraf*, the electoral system, and the price and rationalisation laws.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it reminded that to establish plebiscites constitutionally would strengthen democracy. However, when the price law was finally handled in the Storting in February next year, *Venstre* decided not to put forward the demand of a plebiscite, even though there were some among the Storting group in favour of it.<sup>3</sup>

### **Constitutional Order, Parliamentary Rule, and Labour’s Mandate: The Issue of Division of Power**

Constitutional order and parliamentary rule, assumed pillars of Norwegian democracy, did not seem to the opposition to harmonise in the political praxis of the post-war era. It has already been mentioned that this question was put forward to the public opinion. It is clear that the argumentation of the bourgeoisie parties to this respect revolved around their claims of concentration of power by Labour.

Let us begin our analysis of the opposition views with some articles written in *Samtiden*, since they provide us with a context lacking in the electoral propaganda.

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<sup>1</sup> ”Det er to prinsipper som står klart mot hverandre. Mindretallet vil ha en sammensetning i Stortinget som svarer til sammensetningen i folket mens Arbeiderpartiet vil ha et ’styretilllegg’, for å bruke deres eget uttrykk (...). Og når det ikke har lyktes å avgjøre partiene imellom om det skal være et styretilllegg eller ei, da er det naturlig å vende seg til folket og spørre hva det vil”. I kamp for frihet og folkestyre mot statsdirigering og byråkrati. Høyres innsats i Stortinget 1952 og 1953. En oversikt ved Birger Gotaas. ?, Høires Landsstyre, ?. P. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Venstre. Årsmelding for 1952*. Oslo, Arne S. Mørk, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Nissen. ”Stortingets Venstreforening”. In: Det norske Storting gjennom 150 år. Oslo, Gyldendal norsk forlag, 1964. Vol. IV.

When Nissen stated that the parliamentary rule was not constitutionally grounded and that a constitutional revision was necessary,<sup>1</sup> he continued a pre-war way of thinking towards a delimitation of the Storting's area of influence for the sake of higher administrative efficiency. The bourgeoisie opposition would not be consequent with this line in the years to come. The parliamentary question was going to be reformulated.

In the Norwegian parliamentary tradition, the Storting ruled over the government, in spite of the fact that the constitution required a division of power that would assure a system of "check and balances" and prevent abuse of power by any of the constitutional powers. When rationalised, this contradiction was open to different solutions: either the status quo of parliamentary rule or a turn to a stronger government.

Labour's recourse to enabling acts, supported by all parties during the reconstruction period, but then attacked as unnecessary and harmful if they were to become permanent controls, determined the opposition's stance in favour of the road back to Storting rule. The enabling acts allowed the central administration to make decisions in the economic area outside the parliamentary arena. The delegation of power to legislate, to set taxes and to allocate public funds from the Storting to an administration monopolised by Labour in the economic area became the engine that propelled the constitutional debate.

The issue that limited the pattern of political consensus of the times, according to the political opposition, was: should the government have the main role and decision power in the organisation of the economy at the expense of the private

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nissen. "Demokratisk...".

initiative? Did Labour have a constitutional mandate to operate deep changes in the economic structure of the country?

The debate on the constitutionality of the delegation of power of the Storting would be coloured by the claims of a threat of bureaucratic rule and administrative abuses. It was not a debate on specific paragraphs of the constitution, for the most part, but one on the spirit of the constitutional order, in the face of the incoming economic changes. We will go over this point later in this work.

In 1953, Trond Hegna, on the Labourite side, defended the opinion that parliamentarism indeed required a majority rule to work.<sup>1</sup> This was a point of view attacked by the opposition since the beginning of the post-war era. Already immersed in the enabling acts debate, in 1949, a voice from the extreme right, Per Vogt from *Farmand*, was not alone in stating that a party in absolute majority broke the logics of parliamentarism.<sup>2</sup>

In the same year, a rather radical academician, Johan Vogt, elaborated and complicated further the question. Democracy, he wrote, was the “folkestyre” delegated to elected representatives.<sup>3</sup> Until here, Norway was evidently democratic. However, this representation took place within the context of party machineries where oligarchies dominated. There was a latent threat of a party oligarchy that could get enough popular support and parliamentary basis, to establish itself as a dictatorship. In this context, real democracy, and thus parliamentarism and constitutionality, implied that power should not be concentrated. On the same lines, democracy relied on the prevalence of a set of Liberal individual and minority freedoms (Human rights, rule of law, and intellectual freedom), which could be

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Hegna, Trond. ”Regjeringsparti og...”.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Vogt, Per. ”Valgets krav”. In: *Samtiden*, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Vogt, Johan. ”Hvor meget skal vi betale for hva vi kaller frihet?”. In: *Samtiden*, 1949.



summed up in the right to opposition to the power holders.<sup>1</sup> In this case, Labour. We find such arguments appear constantly in the bourgeoisie opposition's propaganda.

Victor Mogens too, in 1951, tried to solve the primary contradiction between constitutionality and parliamentary rule under the criteria of opposition to power concentration.<sup>2</sup> Norwegian democracy, he wrote, implied both the constitutional order and a parliamentary tradition not grounded in the constitution. There was a need of adjustments in this arrangement to preserve the division of power and avoid the danger of abuse. The current system privileged the right of the majority party. Which way to go? Parliamentarism should suffer for the constitution to prevail:

Dette parlamentariske prinsipp, med regjeringen som stortingsflertallets lydige tjener, fører til at det parti som har parlamentarisk flertall, behersker både Stortinget (og dermed lovgivningen og budsjettet) og regjeringen (og dermed utnevnelsen av embetsmenn, bl. a., høyesterettsdommene). Den utøvende og den dømmende makts uavhengighet blir derved fiktiv. Den gjensidige kontroll mellom de tre statsmakter som grunnloven forutsetter blir eliminert.<sup>3</sup>

If the recourse to dissolution of parliament and referendums, advocated by the political opposition, was regarded as a tool against deterioration of the democratic order, enforcement of the duty of an independent and impartial Supreme Court to revise all laws approved by the Stortinget before they were sanctioned by the King became another opposition's cause.

*Venstre* representative Chr. Oftedal in an article from 1953 agreed that Labour had destroyed the division of power the constitution demanded, and added that the most important task then was to give back to the Storting and the Supreme Court the ability to supervise the work of the government.<sup>4</sup> Parliamentarism should fade away.

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<sup>1</sup> "Demokrati betyr ifølge denne andre utlegning i første rekke opprettholdelse av de såkalte umistelige menneskerettigheter, rettssikkerhet og åndsfrihet, det vil si, retten til opposisjon mot de maktavende". *Ibidem*. P. 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Cfr.* Mogens, Victor. "Konstitusjonelle garantier". In: *Samtiden*, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*. P. 330.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr.* Oftedal, Chr. S. "Stortingsvalg og...".

His proposal of a plural government, commented before in this work, was complemented with one on the extended use of investigations by the Storting committees to fulfill that same supervision.

It is interesting to see how the way back to a Storting rule could be pursued with arguments opposed to parliamentarism. All paradoxes gain meaning when keeping in mind the purpose they serve, namely, to break the One-party rule, and the fact that the bourgeoisie parties were not making any electoral progress.

Let us go now over the claims of the opposition parties in the electoral material.

The bourgeoisie opposition did not manage to form, if ever attempted to in this period, a single block. And, although the One-party rule reflected in the constitutional issue indeed put them on the same side, there were some visible differences here as well. In the same fashion, the bourgeoisie opposition did not seem to have succeeded in making this the most relevant issue for the public when casting their votes.

*Høyre* had been a party used to recurring to constitutional guarantees as cautions directed to protect the privileges of officials and economic interests. What in the beginning was meant as a hindrance to democracy, had changed during the turbulent Depression years to a defense of democracy before the threat of dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> *Høyre* will extend this formulation in the post-war debates. In its 1945 election programme, not permeated yet with the problem of Labourite majority, but still bringing up war issues, it reads:

Høire vil verne grunnloven og folkestyret så enhver trygt og fritt kan hevde sin politiske oppfatning. Grunnlovens karakter som grunnlov må ikke ødelegges ved en lettere adgang til å forandre den. Ingen form for diktatur og sensur må tales.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Seip, Jens Arup. "Høyre gjennom hundre år". In: To linjer i norsk historie...

<sup>2</sup> Høires program ved stortingsvalget 1945.

Later on, *Høyre* enlarged the scope of its speech about the threat of dictatorship and its defence of constitutionality and parliamentarism. The right to criticise the power holders appeared as well as a concern. The prerogatives of the Storting on the organisation of the national economy were highlighted in the 1949 election programme:

Høyre verner om Grunnloven og folkestyret... Stortingets lovgivnings-, beskatnings- og bevilgningsmyndighet må hevdes uavkortet. Systemet med fullmaktslover (Lex Thagaard m.v.) som flytter viktige avgjørelser fra Stortinget til departementer og direktorater er ukonstitusjonelt og udemokratisk og vanskeliggjør den offentlige kritikk. Ingen form for diktatur eller sensur må tåles.<sup>1</sup>

Hambro, in his usual role of protector of the Storting, claimed the same year that it was important: "å vinne folkestyret tilbake for landet og igjen gi Stortinget den plass det skal ha etter vår konstitusjon både når det gjelder lovgivningsmakten og bestyrelsen av landets pengevesen."<sup>2</sup> Gotaas proudly wrote that "Det har vært Høires oppgave i denne periode [1945-1949] å stå vakt om forfatningen og folkestyret og om Stortingets rettigheter overfor et overmektig regjeringsparti..."<sup>3</sup>

The centre parties did not emphasize the issue of protection against dictatorship in their 1945 programmes. That would change in the next election period, by a debate on the Lex Brofoss, which continued the Lex Thagaard on state price control.

The *Bondeparti* reacted strongly to the delegation of power to the administration, not to governmental intrusion in the economy as such, in its election programme of 1949:

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<sup>1</sup> Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Fra fellesprogram til partidiktatur. En kamp mot sosialismens oppmarsj under gjenreisningens maske. Oversikt Høires arbeid på Stortinget 1945-49. ?, Høires Landsstyre, 1949. P. 319.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*. P. 462.

Bondepartiet vil arbeide for å styrke den husbondrett Stortinget etter Grunnlov og tradisjon skal ha. Dets makt skal ikke begrenses, verken av et forvaltningsbyråkrati eller av de store organisasjoner. Stortingets lovgivende og bevilgende myndighet skal ikke kunne delegeres.<sup>1</sup>

The *Bondeparti* included in its 1949 program a defence of the independence of the judicial system from the administration and asked for all administrative decisions to be given a legal foundation publicly.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Kristelig Folkeparti* emphasized in its 1949 programme the right of the political minority to oppose and express itself: "Flertallstyre i samsvar med folkeviljen, men også med mindretallets rett til å legge fram sitt syn og hevde sine meninger."<sup>3</sup>

*Venstre* did not elaborate on this issue yet in its 1949 programme, but made evident its opposition to the delegation of power from the Storting as unconstitutional and dangerous to the division of power. In a brochure written by Worm-Müller, chairman of *Venstre*, it reads:

Venstre vil stå på vakt om grunnloven og passe på at ikke Stortingets myndighet undergraves av en stadig sterke sentralisert administrasjon og at ikke viktige avgjørelser gjennom en utstrakt fullmaktslovgivning unndras Stortinget, domstolene og folkets kontroll...<sup>4</sup>

He also touched the issue of the democratic mandate of Labour to carry out a structural change in the economy:

[Folkestyret] forutsetter at et flertall i Stortinget, som ikke har flertall i folket, ikke kan foreta en omveltning i de politiske og økonomiske forhold.<sup>5</sup>

The ongoing debate on the contradictions between constitutional order and parliamentary rule did not show up on the surface of the propaganda material of the

<sup>1</sup> Til vern og trygd om heim og bygd. Bondepartiets valgprogram 1949. ?, Emil Moestue A/S, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Til vern og trygd...

<sup>3</sup> Kristelig Folkeparti. Program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Worm-Müller, Jac. S. *Venstre*. Oslo, Norges Venstrelag, 1949. P. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*. P. 5.

opposition. Both were consecrated principles that were profitable to advocate.

Pointing out those contradictions would have disturbed the purpose of emphasizing the prerogatives of the Storting, in order to prove Labour's policies questionable to the public eye. However, that debate was not ignored. Simply, the role of the Storting was placed beyond it and shown as a matter of fact. Thus, the *Bondeparti* stated in its 1953 election program:

Den rett Stortinget etter *Grunnlov, tradisjon og folkestyreprinsippet* har som lovgivende og bevilgende myndighet hevdes uavkortet. De folkevalgte organer –ikke administrasjonskontorene- skal ha den avgjørende myndighet i samfunnet.<sup>1</sup>

*Høyre* and the *Kristelig Folkeparti* wrote on the same lines in their 1953 programmes.<sup>2</sup>

In regards to the other main issue discussed here, *Venstre* went easier on the delegation of power to the administration on its 1953 programme and called for an open administration rather than excluding delegation as such:

Viktigere administrative avgjerder må grunngis, og det må bli letter høve til etterprøving. Spørsmålet om åpen administrasjon skal greies ut.<sup>3</sup>

By this time, *Venstre* had adopted a friendlier attitude towards state regulations as an effect of the change in the chairman position—Bent Røiseland succeeded Worm-Müller—and the take-over by the radical group that supported the new chairman.<sup>4</sup> However, in coming to terms with delegation of power, *Venstre* did not break from the bourgeoisie point of view, but made clear a prevailing trend that had been obscured by electoral considerations on the opposition side.

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<sup>1</sup> Bondepartiets program stortingsvalget 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Høires program 1953. Dreyer, Stavanger, trykt som bilag til "Vårt programblad", 1953; and Kristelig Folkeparti. Program ved stortingsvalget 12. oktober 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Valgprogram for Venstre 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Rovde, Olav. Venstre i prislovdebatten 1952-1953. Hovedfagsoppgave i Historie. Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 1972. "Bakgrunn og byrjing".

Contrary to what one reads in the opposition's propaganda, we can assume that the bourgeoisie opposition was aware of the fact that delegation of power in certain areas, as long as it happened under supervision by the Storting, was not unconstitutional. It did not necessarily break with the principle of division of power. It seems too that it was widely understood that delegation of power was necessary and inescapable for the economic goals ahead. The demand of a more open administration in this sense reflects best the question to solve. This is perhaps what we should see as the main objective behind the rhetoric in the speech of the opposition parties.

### **Delegation of Power and Constitutionality**

There are questions in this chapter that we have answered only partially. One of them was whether delegation of authority from the Storting to the central administration was unconstitutional. Keilhau, a non-partisan opposition writer, stated that such delegation was not grounded in the constitutional *jus neccesitatis*, as Wilhelm Thaggard had stated in defence of the price control laws and in response to Keilhau's criticism,<sup>1</sup> but was a matter of natural law.<sup>2</sup> We wrote before that if the Lex Thagaard had been approved and put into effect right after the end of the occupation without parliamentary debate, the subsequent developments of state regulations followed strictly the established legislative procedures.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Thagaard, Wilhelm. "Herr Keilhau på krigsstien". In: Samtiden, 1952. P. 409-422. Thagaard responded to an article called "Planøkonomi og prisdirektorat" by Keilhau (In: Samtiden, 1952. P. 343-359).

<sup>2</sup> "[Thagaard] finner nemlig at forordningen av 8. mai 1945 (altså den første Lex Thagaard) var begrunnet i den ekstraordinære situasjon; det vil si at Regjeringens adgang til å gi den må søkes i den konstitusjonelle nødrett. Men denne er ikke grunnlovfestet i Norge. Den er naturrett—og ikke noe annet enn naturrett". Keilhau. "Prisloven, naturretten ...".

<sup>3</sup> Although it is a claim by Labourite followers, I have not found evidence to doubt it. Cfr. Larssen. "Etter Stortingsvalget". In: Samtiden, 1953. P. 541-551.

Wilhelm Thagaard had replied Keilhau reminding him of the control power the Storting was granted over the regulatory organs and of the inescapable necessity of such delegation.

...den loven som flertallet foreslår, i vesentlig grad er å anse som en rammelov. De viktigste generelle reguleringer forutsetter særskilt samtykke fra Stortinget enten i form av plenarvedtak, slik som de andre medlemmer av flertallet har foreslått, eller ved særlover slik som jeg har ment det mest praktisk.

...  
Lovforslaget inneholder også bestemmelser om utvidet parlamentarisk kontroll med bruken av de reguleringsfullmakter som foreslåes lagt til administrasjonen (...). Når Stortinget delegerer lovgivningsfullmakter til administrasjonen, er det fordi Stortinget finner at det er mest praktisk at bestemmelsene gis av de administrative myndigheter. Det forslaget går ut på er å skape et fast grunnlag for at Stortinget kan føre kontroll med hvorledes lovgivningsfullmaktene blir brukt.<sup>1</sup>

It was not during the Labourite golden period the first time in Norwegian history that general enabling acts had been instituted.<sup>2</sup> However, the contemporary debate on the subject suggests that there was, indeed, a sort of legal vacuum regarding the delegation of authority to administrative organs. Thagaard stated on the proposal on a permanent Price law:

Bortsett fra plikt til meldning om avgiftsordninger etter prisloven, har vi hittil ikke hatt faste lovregler om kontroll med utøvelsen av delegert lovgivningsmyndighet. Også her er det altså spørsmål om en vidtrekkende reform.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned before, the debate about the constitutionality of the delegation of power revolved around an interpretation of the “spirit” of the constitution more than on analysis of the text.<sup>4</sup> In the same fashion, the claim that delegation of power

<sup>1</sup> Thagaard, Wilhelm. *Op. Cit.* P. 421.

<sup>2</sup> Nordby registers as the first enabling acts in Norway the concessions laws of 1909 and 1911, regarding acquisition of estate and regulation of waterfalls correspondingly, and asserts that the enabling acts in the Labourite golden period constituted a more quantitative than qualitative change. Cfr. Trond Nordby (red.). *Arbeiderpartiet og planstyret 1945-1965*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1993. Nordby, ”Statsutviklingen under Arbeiderpartiet”.

<sup>3</sup> Thagaard. *Op. Cit.* P. 421.

<sup>4</sup> Lindebrække put it this way in his rationalisation of the issue when applied to the enabling acts: “Det er ikke først og fremst de juridiske betraktninger som her er avgjørende, men (...) et prinsipp som ikke har funnet formelt uttrykk i Grunnlovens skrevne ord, men som i virkeligheten bærer alle bestemmelser i Grunnloven.

eroded the parliamentary rule clashed in principle with that on the constitution establishing a division of power. The second had run previously in direction to ask for more power to the government at the expense of the Storting. To make these two issues point to the same direction, namely, the way back to rule by the Storting, was the logical result of the political opposition's quest to prove questionable the constitutional mandate of Labour to exercise changes in the economic structure of the country. The bourgeoisie parties enriched their political capital advertising themselves as protectors of both constitutionality and parliamentarism.

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Skulle vi gi prinsippet grunnlovsparagrafsform—og det kan bli nødvendig å gjøre det for å minne om Grunnlovens dypeste vilje og mening”. Lindebrække. Tro og tillit... P. 92.



## CHAPTER III. THE BOURGEOISIE PARTIES AND CORPORATISM

### Labour's Making. Corporatism in Post-war Norway

The corporate plans that Labour made in the *Blåboka*—a nickname given to *Fremtidens Norge*, a plan to cope with the tasks of reconstruction after the war—conceived a synthesis between a planned economy and public regulation, on one side, and personal initiative and political freedom, on the other. A compromise between capital and labour, arranged in close collaboration with the state. In this context, the Storting should limit its authority to set the guidelines the government had to follow, allocate money and keep the administration under control.<sup>1</sup>

All these plans were never carried out completely, but they were pretty influential in the making of the Common Political Programme (*Fellesprogrammet*), which established the National political and economic guidelines of the reconstruction period. Even more important, it instituted corporatism as a duty of the government. Although the programme reflected the Labourite position rather than a common proposal, and it is difficult to pinpoint when the programme's "spirit" was put aside later in the post-war era, it is a valuable indicator of the political consensus of the times.

The Common Political Programme indeed shows that the goals of a welfare state had been accepted by all parts, and that a mixed economy was seen as the best means to achieve them. Universal employment and increased production in a context of fair distribution of wealth for all constituted from then on not a radical point of view, but the core of the centre towards which all politics tended in the post-war Norway.

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<sup>1</sup> Vid supra "Some Traits of Corporatism in Norway". Cfr. Nordby. Korporatisme... P. 54-55.

It reads in one of the programme's paragraphs:

For at vårt samfunn kan fore en effektiv og målbevisst politikk med dette formål [øking av produksjon og retterferdig utdeling] for øye og nytte ut all privat og offentlig virkelyst, initiativ og foretaksomhet fullt ut i *tillitsfullt og planmessig samarbeid mellom staten og de private interesser, omorganiseres sentraladministrasjonen og utstyres med de nødvendige organer for denne oppgave*. Det opprettes bransjeutvalg i alle næringer og et samarbeidsråd som skal være Regjeringens rådgiver i økonomiske, finansielle og næringspolitiske spørsmål. *I sentraladministrasjonen gis det plass i ledende stillinger også for folk fra det praktiske liv, og i utvalg og råd får staten sine egne representanter*. De øvrige medlemmer av utvalg og råd oppnevnes av Regjeringen blant folk som er pekt ut av næringslivets og arbeidernes og funksjonærenes egne organisasjoner. Reglene for myndighetsområde og arbeidet fastsettes av Stortinget.<sup>1</sup>

This paragraph touches the main traits of the corporate arrangement in the making: the expanded role and size of the central administration, the formal cooperation and coordination between private enterprises and public offices, the representation of organised interests, the rule of experts, and the ultimate pre-eminence of the Storting.<sup>2</sup>

As one could expect, the political debate to come did not revolve around the legitimacy of these principles but on the way to put them in practice, in other words, on the ruling strategies. The public regulations and control of the economy that followed in consequence remained out of significant criticism in the first two years of the post-war era, the most critical for the recovery of the country, since their convenience was evident. And cooperation and coordination in economics and politics were repeatedly invoked in the political debate all along the period studied here, if with corresponding different connotations, by both ruling and opposition parties.

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<sup>1</sup> Fellesprogrammet. "Økonomisk politikk". In: Norsk innenriks... My underlining.

<sup>2</sup> This pact among elites, a deal at the top, presented in Norway the main features Harold Perkin referred as those of a "professional society". The political struggle during the period here studied reflect the dispute between private and public professional he wrote about in his two most famous books. Cfr. Perkin. The Rising of the Professional Society..., and also The Third Revolution (Routledge, an imprint of Taylor & Francis Books Ltd., 1996).

Nonetheless, as stated in the contents of the Common Political Programme, the actual shape of the corporatism put in practice after the war was in most part Labourite initiative and making. At the outset of the war, the bourgeoisie parties had little chance to impose their views or to reach an electoral breakthrough that separated Labour from power. Labour was much better prepared than the rest of the political forces in Norway and managed to outplay them. It enjoyed the advantage of not having interrupted its work during the Nazi occupation.<sup>1</sup> Its close relationship with the *Landsorganisasjon* (LO), the main Trade Union, made Labour co-participant of the power and reputation that the unions managed to maintain. The Labourite elite was more politically conscious than the others, met the end of the war with a well-crafted programme, and was ready to assume the political responsibility ahead. Labour's programmes were oriented to the future and did not recoil on issues related to the war, as for example, *Høyre* did in their 1945 election programme.<sup>2</sup> Labour was also under a young elite ready and eager for change, a point in favour in a context where the pre-war political ways were not modern enough to face up to the political tasks ahead. Last but not least, Labour was benefited by the increasing number of industry workers in the country, and the lowering of voting age to 21, with Labour being the favourite option of young Norwegians.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “[Arbeider]partiet kunne (...) høste fordelen av at arbeiderbevegelsen i motsetning til de andre politiske strømningene hadde maktet å opprettholde en illegal virksomhet i Norge og blant fanger på Grini og i tyske konsentrasjonsleire, i tillegg til en ganske omfattende politisk aktivitet knyttet til LOs sekretariater i Stockholm og London. Både Venstre og Bondepartiet kom svekket ut av krigen. Deres fremste ledere var enten døde, som J.L. Mowinckel, eller brakt i vanry av sin holding under okkupasjonen, som Jens Hundseid. Høyre hadde også alvorlige lederproblemer”. Even Lange. *Samling om felles mål. 1935-1970*. Oslo, H. Ascheoug & Co., 1998. (Ascheougs Norges Historie, v. 11). P. 122

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Lyng. *Brytningsår. Erindringer 1923-1953*. Oslo, J.W. Cappelens Forlag AS, 1972. ”Det radikale gjennombrudd”; and *Høires program ved stortingsvalget 1945*, where there is an appeal to voters to consider the results of an investigation to find out who was responsible of the 1940 events leading to the failure to resist the German invasion, “Oppgjøret etter krigsårene”, and meant to point out Labour's guilt and *Høyre*'s solid stance before the circumstances. I relied on John Lyng's description of the advantages Labour enjoyed, since it is a first-hand source enriched with insight knowledge of politics and written when time allowed a perspective, features that make up for the partisan side of it.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Bergh. *Op. Cit.* “Samling om Arbeiderpartiet”.

The *Arbeiderparti* had become by now sophisticated machinery with a hierarchical structure and strong discipline within its ranks. And in this solid structure, the Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen was the keystone. Lyng described him as a master in cooperation and teamwork, a “maskin-politikker”,<sup>1</sup> a man of the times<sup>2</sup> in comparison with the old-fashioned politics Hambro continued in *Høyre*.

Einar Gerhardsen’s contribution to the political developments of the times can hardly be underestimated. His pause in the executive and transfer to the Labour’s group in the Storting from November 1951 meant in fact a lessening in both the control ambitions of the party and in the Machiavellian strategies.<sup>3</sup>

Gerhardsen assembled a large staff that made of his office one able to control and evaluate the materials from the different Ministries as efficiently as never before, and compete with them in expert judgement and political initiative.<sup>4</sup> Even more important was the fact that Prime Minister Gerhardsen, and later Oscar Torp, prevailed over the Labourite Storting group. This last event permeated the political scenario in the post-war era.

Corporatism in the post-war Norway was the core of the “economic democracy” the party promoted.<sup>5</sup> Nordby points out an essential feature of post-war corporatism in the country, namely, the movement in two directions: rule of experts

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<sup>1</sup> Lyng. *Op. Cit.* P. 132.

<sup>2</sup> A foreigner, Connery, saw in him a politician that ruled the country in a paternalistic fashion, the hero in the paradise of the common-man (Cfr. Connery, Donald S. *The Scandinavians*. London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966. “Norway. The Golden Mean. Einar Gerhardsen”). Unfortunately, we cannot start an analysis of the main personalities of the opposition. The sources used in this work do not give enough references on the political features of other opposition leaders, namely, the party chairmen Hambro of *Høyre*, Trædal of the *Bondeparti*, Nils Lavik of the *Kristelig Folkeparti*, and Jac. Worm-Müller and Bent Røiseland of *Venstre*.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Nordby. *Korporatisme...* P. 64-65.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Lyng. *Op. Cit.* ”Stortinget –partier og personligheter.”

<sup>5</sup> “...’økonomisk demokrati’. Dette var et begrep med skiftende innhold, men på denne tiden [rundt 1949] ble det særlig brukt om et utvidet samarbeid mellom staten og organisasjonene i arbeids- og næringslivet, altså en form for korporativ ledelse av det økonomiske liv”. Bergh. *Op. Cit.* P. 191. Sejersted broke down the economic policies of Labour under the category “economic democracy” in corporatism, socialisation, public controls and regulation, and democracy within the firms. Cfr. Sejersted. *Op. Cit.* ”Modernisering og selveierdemokrati”. In this work, though, the term “corporatism” means the consultation and cooperation organs as well as the public controls and regulations in the economy.

and consultation of the parts involved.<sup>1</sup> This embraced an expansion of the administration to organs where hearings and negotiations took place. It also made a new bureaucracy of experts that cohabited with the old one, and which, contrary to the previous, was eager to avoid public supervision and control. Labour under Gerhardsen's influence used this development for its purposes of consolidating power and getting approval to governmental policies.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of the state councils, which grew in number considerably,<sup>3</sup> they were appointed by the central administration, which also decided their tasks and duration. The proposals a council could come up with were not binding and it was up to the administration to take them into account.<sup>4</sup> In few words, their work empowered the government. This was the case of the *Samordningsråd*, where the office of the Prime Minister was heavily involved and openly manoeuvred to get the participant organisations under political control.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, the pre-eminence of the Storting was not challenged in principle or in the legislative routine. Although the first step into corporatism in Norway, the *Lex Thagaard*, came along with the Liberation day, without parliamentary debate, the delegation of power to the diverse offices dedicated to enforce the regulations was carried out following the complicated procedures of Storting approval.<sup>6</sup> As the period went on, Labour had to honour the prerogatives of the Storting in more explicit ways to cope with the political needs of the moment, as was the case with the proposal by

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Nordby. *I politikkens sentrum...*. "Innledning".

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*. "Maktens deling etter systemskiftet".

<sup>3</sup> "Nedsettelse av statlige utvalg skjøt fart under Arbeiderpartiets storhetstid. I 1936 hadde det vært i alt 261 utvalg (permanente og midlertidige). Den 'arven' Arbeiderpartiet etterlot seg, var i 1966 kommet opp i 954". *Idem*. P. 184.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*. "Innledning".

<sup>5</sup> *Vid Supra*. Chapter 1. "Opposition or Complement...".

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. Larssen. "Etter Stortingsvalget". In: *Samtiden*, 1953. P. 541-551. Larssen was editor of *Arbeiderbladet*.

the Sjaastad committee on a permanent price law.<sup>1</sup> It did not exclude the fact, though, that the Labour majority in parliament allowed the party to keep this instance under political control.

The opposition criticised heavily the Labourite plans on corporatism for privileging industrialisation through big corporations, as well as supporting the merchant navy and the export industry. The opposition had a strong case when affirming that the strategy led to a centralisation of the administration in Oslo.

So far, we have made abstraction of one trait of the Labourite rule. It had come to be evident before the debate of the enabling acts in 1953 that Labour tended to the centre of politics. If it pushed for public regulation and controls, it did not attempt to socialise all means of production. A planned economy implied coordination and cooperation, not a nationalisation crusade, as the path of socialism.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it relied on private initiative to a greater extent to that the bourgeoisie were usually ready to acknowledge, and never planned to promote a massive take-over of the economy.<sup>3</sup>

The business interests widely accepted the corporate arrangement as profitable and cooperated in general terms with the administration. However, they did not give up other channels of political pressure or their ambitions of a corporatism fit to their specific interests. *Libertas* exemplifies it very well. Industrial circles had launched plans for a development in big corporations in accordance to Labour's

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<sup>1</sup> Vid infra. Chapter IV. "Ideology in Action. The Enabling Acts Debate".

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Bergh. Op. Cit. P. 168.

<sup>3</sup> The opposition had to acknowledge this fact sooner or later. In 1953, analyses of the renewed Labour majority within the opposition did it. Before the election, in an election newspaper, Erling Wikborg from the *Kristelig Folkeparti* wrote an account of this and other features of the prevailing political consensus. Cfr. Erling Wikborg. "Skillelinjer i dagens politikk". In: Oslo Kristelig Folkepartis valgavis 1953. Oslo, A/S Indremisjonstrykeriet, 1953.

plans, but with a decision-making structure where the authority laid in business interests' own hands.<sup>1</sup>

It was not surprising. As Seip stated in his renowned essay, Labour had managed to reach an agreement between capital and labour that finally excluded industrial conflict and prevented economic crisis. A satisfying deal oriented to increases in production and better living standards for larger segments of the population; a crucial advantage for Labour in the pursue of electoral victory. Labour became a great provider that could afford the luxury of ruling the country paternalistically.<sup>2</sup>

### **Political Opposition and Corporatism**

The bourgeoisie parties criticised the post-war corporate arrangements for disempowering the Storting and, they claimed, leading to dictatorship. Did they, however, oppose corporatism as such? Now it is time to see how the bourgeoisie parties interpreted the corporate needs of the system.

In general, the bourgeoisie parties took for granted a corporate arrangement, but lingered away from the Labourite extreme of the pendulum in different degrees. And they altered their stance with time. When it came to political propaganda, in general terms, their reaction against the closed state regulation of the economy aggravated all the way from the times when reconstruction needs made consensus prevail until the end of this period, 1953, when a settlement was reached regarding a price control law.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sejersted wrote to this respect: "Dette var en linje fra de planer som var lansert av sentrale næringslivsfolk, og som ble særlig klart uttrykt gjennom Studieselskapet for norsk industri. Dette var planer for en samordnet storindustriell utvikling på linje med Arbeiderpartiets planer, men med en beslutningsstruktur som la myndigheten i næringslivets egne hender". Opposisjon og posisjon... P. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Seip. To linjer i norsk historie... "Fra embetsmannsstat til ettpartistat..." .

<sup>3</sup> Vid infra. Chapter IV. "Ideology in Action. The Enabling Acts Debate".

It is not possible here to go over the whole account of the development of the opposition's speech. Running the risk of oversimplifying, here comes a description in general terms. Let us start with the end of the pendulum opposite to that of Labour.

For an urban party concerned for business and functionaries' interests, *Høyre* had a hard time coping with the new political demands of the times. *Høyre* tried to represent best the private initiative, but in spite of its reputation, it hardly reproduced conveniently the main concerns of the business community. This became clear as to a corporate approach. The pre-war leadership that made their way almost intact to the period after liberation carried a heavy luggage of Liberal philosophy. Hambro, an academician, was its main character.

There was, of course, a process of development of the political speech within the ranks of *Høyre*. The arrival of representatives John Lyng and Sjur Lindebrække, the first being vicechairman of the party from 1950 while Hambro spent long periods abroad, reshaped *Høyre*'s speech and oriented it towards corporatism. It was from 1947 on that cooperation and collaboration on economic matters gained a fixed place in *Høyre*'s agenda, thanks mainly to Lindebrække's initiative.<sup>1</sup> A focus on consumers' interests and a struggle not against regulation as such but against detailed controls also gained momentum.

A simple example of how *Høyre* evolved its views on corporatism as seen by the following. For the first Storting election after the war, *Høyre* included in a propaganda brochure a criticism against "state capitalism" without challenging the needs of public regulation during the reconstruction period:

Høire er ikke mot nødvendig regulering og samfunnsmessig kontroll på det økonomiske område. Men Høire er mot alle vidtgående inngrep, som kveler

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<sup>1</sup> "Det er da også på det rene at det fra 1946-47 frem til 1953 i praktisk talt hver eneste innstilling fra Høyres fraksjon i [Finans]komiteen og under debattene i Stortinget kan henstillinger fra Høyre til Regjeringen om samarbeid til løsning av sentrale finanspolitiske spørsmål". Lindebrække, Sjur. Tro og tillit... P. 131.



foretaksmheten og den enkeltes arbeidslyst, som gjør staten til en plagsom overformynder og den enkelte til en brikke i statskapitalistiske disposisjoner.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1950s, Lindebrække reformulated the arguments in favour of a corporate system resting on voluntary cooperation (*frivillig samarbeid*) between the public authorities and the business community, and away from the state control (*statlig dirigering*) of the economy pursued by Labour:

Prinsipielt sett kan de reguleringer det blir spørsmål om, gjennomføres på to forskjellige måter: gjennom statlig dirigering –påbud, forbud og straffebestemmelser—eller gjennom frivillig samarbeid mellom statsmakten på den ene siden og det private nærings—og arbeidsliv på den annen side. Det siste alternativ forutsetter, som alt samarbeid, et tillitsforhold mellom dem som skal arbeide sammen.<sup>2</sup>

The dubious stance of the early post-war era before negotiations between the business community and the central administration was transformed by the group around Lyng and Lindebrække into a position that tried to match *Høyre's* view to the post-war trends through a progressive view, a modern conservatism.<sup>3</sup>

In 1945, *Høyre* responded to the Labourite “economic democracy” with an interpretation of its own, elaborated by the circle around Realph Norland. Its main features were the demand of decentralisation of capital and administration, along with an idealistic picture of a society made up of individuals owning their own means of production and of small enterprises.<sup>4</sup> *Høyre's* “economic democracy” also advocated protection of the primary sector and crafts.<sup>5</sup> This was an alternative, based

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<sup>1</sup> *Høire kan du stole på!* Norrøna Boktr. A.s., 1945

<sup>2</sup> Lindebrække. ”Statsdirigering og tillitspolitikk”. In: *Samtiden*, 1953. P. 131.

<sup>3</sup> In a brochure of 1945 (*Drammens Høire. Til våre meningsfeller*. Handels Sc. a/s, 1945), it reads: ”Konservatisme betyr fremskritt, velstand, øket levestandard og større folkelykke”. Nonetheless, the big leap towards a really innovative concept of conservatism began with the full acceptance of the welfare state by the party in its 1949 programme. Cfr. *Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949*.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. *Fra Høires Centralstyre. Foredragsdisposisjon august 1945*. 1945; and *Velgeren oppslagsbok for Stortingsvalget 1945*. Oslo, P. Soelberg Trykkeri, 1945.

<sup>5</sup> According to Sejersted, this is one of the points in the brochure ”Økonomisk demokrati” by Realph Norland from 1945. Cfr. Sejersted. *Opposisjon og posisjon...* ”Modernisering og selveierdemokrati”.

on the works by Friedrich Von Hayek,<sup>1</sup> to planned industrialisation. It was a cry against big corporations, centralisation, and state monopolies.<sup>2</sup> Here we find a strong defence of private property and of an economy based on private initiative in a small scale. There was a rather secondary concern in this argumentation that came to be essential afterwards when those first arguments had proved a failure. The bucolic dream vanished, and it was necessary to avoid being criticised as a party of the business community: a defence of consumers.

The point made was that, in an economic democracy, it was the consumers who decided whereas in the economic dictatorship exercised by planned economy the bureaucrats had the decision power.<sup>3</sup> In 1949, *Høyre* advocated an economic system fuelled by the competition between those who produced and sold the products, for the sake of those who bought them and enjoyed them.<sup>4</sup>

According to Sejersted, the *Høyre* that emerged from the war had not been untouched by the modern economic theories that preached state intervention to stimulate demand.<sup>5</sup> But the circle in favour of this approach did not constitute a majority, and certainly did not get its points of view publicised in the election programmes. The attachment to the economic guidelines of liberalism satisfied the business community to a certain extent, but the radicalism of the party created a tension with the business interests it tried to represent. However, they collaborated

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Von Hayek is considered the key figure in the revival of liberalism in the twentieth century. His most famous work was The Road to Serfdom, published in 1944. Here he established that the economic road taken by the Western World, away from Liberal economics, went in direction of socialism and against the individualistic values that built up Western civilisation.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Høires program ved stortingsvalget 1945. "Økonomisk demokrati".

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Fra Høires Centralstyre. Foredragsdisposisjon august 1945. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> "Høire vil at produksjon og omsetning skal rette seg etter forbrukernes behov. Det forutsetter en sunn konkurranse mellom dem som produserer og omsetter varene. Bare på den måten kan forbrukerne skaffes de fleste, de beste og de billigste varer. Under en fri omsetning er det forbrukerne som bestemmer –under en statsdirigert økonomi er det offentlige kontorer". Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949.

<sup>5</sup> "Høyres talsmenn var ikke upåvirket av de moderne synsmåter. De hadde nær kontakt med yngre fagekspertise som Erling Petersen, Thor Bang, Arnljolt Strømme Svensen og Olaf Malterud, og deres argumentasjon peker i retning av at også de ville hevde at de tenkte realøkonomisk og nasjonaløkonomisk, og at staten måtte kunne stimulere den totale etterspørsel når det var nødvendig". Sejersted. Opposisjon og posisjon... P. 62.

with *Høyre* to advance their political views and granted it more money and logistic support than to the other bourgeoisie parties.<sup>1</sup>

The party did not go in the beginning for a moderate version of corporatism to accommodate to the times. However, Lyng and Lindebrække would do their share in order to shrink the gap.<sup>2</sup>

*Venstre* was a more plural party than *Høyre* and there internal divisions were customary. Within the party there were visibly two different approaches before state control of the economy. The *Oslovenstre* was more supportive of the kind of public regulation of the economy carried out by Labour. It was somehow influenced by the work of Wilhelm Thagaard, a *Venstre* man and chairman of the Price Directorate, and saw corporatism and delegation of power away from the Storting with less distrust, always pointing out that detailed controls were harmful. The *Landsvenstre*, on the other hand, opposed Labourite policies in the name of a freer economy. After the drawback in the 1949 election, the balance went on the side of the latter and its clearer opposition to governmental policies. It had been stated at the National Assembly in 1950 that the party had lost voters because of the questionable position the party favoured on the main National issues, which had made *Venstre* look like a satellite party of Labour. The *Landsvenstre* proposed a marked distance from the

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<sup>1</sup> Steinar Riksåsen states that in the period 1947-48 the amount of money granted by *Libertas* to the opposition parties' press was as following: The *Bondeparti* received 20 000 Nkr; *Venstre*, 189 468 Nkr, and *Høyre*, 1 174 477 Nkr. *Venstre* and *Høyre* got also money and logistic support for the built up of their party organisations. The latter, of course, received also the biggest share in this area. Cfr. *Libertas* 1947-1953. Hovedfagsoppgave i Historie. Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 1972. "Et år med samarbeid".

<sup>2</sup> Jens Arup Seip wrote on *Høyre*'s stance on planning: "Partiets alternativ til statlig planlegging ble (...) ikke fri konkurranse, men plan i privat regi—en privat ledet planøkonomi var Lyngs formulering i 1950. Handling i denne retning var forberedt under krigen med 'Studieselskapet for norsk industri' og ble senere fulgt opp med 'Næringslivets forskningsinstitutt' støttet av *Libertas*". To linjer... "Høyre gjennom hundre år 1880-1980". P. 99.

governing party and accused the newspaper *Dagbladet*, regarded as the spokesman of the *Oslovenstre*, of having given the wrong impression to the public.<sup>1</sup>

However, after the arrival of Bent Røiseland to the position of chairman of the party in the National Assembly of 1952, the power relations within the party changed drastically. The radical wing the new chairman belonged to, along with a moderate group represented by Helge Seip, took over. Now state intervention was no longer depicted as socialism, but as continuation of the *Venstre* traditions of Social-liberalism or Social-radicalism.<sup>2</sup>

In general, *Venstre*, beyond internal divisions, held a very positive approach to corporatism, and accepted it as the core of economic democracy. It was regarded by the party as a development of Liberal politics<sup>3</sup> and the best means to increase production, maintain full employment, enhance fair equalisation between social groups and geographical regions, and avoid conflicts among the main economic actors.<sup>4</sup>

*Venstre* proposed a way between Labour and *Høyre* in its effort to place itself as the true representative of the centre politics. It was called a “Liberal planned economy”. The main point of this plan of a mixed economy was to create and maintain cooperation and mutual trust among all the participants in production of the economy as a whole, as well as inside the workplace. It was a version that appealed to the business community, rewarded their leadership in industry and acknowledged the social compromise adopted by capital.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Venstre årsmelding for 1950*. Oslo, Abeco Industri A/S, 1951. Such rationale continued even after the 1953 election. Cfr. Iveland, Einar. ”Venstre etter Stortingsvalget”. In: *Samtiden*, 1953. P. 603-609.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Rovde, Olav. *Op. Cit.* ”Landsmøtet 22.-24. mai 1952”.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Joakim Ihlen. *Økonomisk demokrati og overskuddsdeling*. Skien, Norges Venstrelag, 1951. Ihlen placed itself in the Conservative wing of *Venstre*.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Per Bergsvendsen. *Venstre-politikk 1945-1951...*

<sup>5</sup> ”Blant næringsdrivende er det i vår tid jevnt over den innstilling at de som står som ledere av de private bedrifter skal betrakte seg som forvaltere av et viktig produksjonsmiddel i eiernes, de ansattes og samfunnets interesse”. Ihlen, Joakim. *Arbeid og kapital I. Det moderne demokrati*. [Oslo], Norges Venstrelag, [1949]. P. 14.

The state, asserted *Venstre*, should play a main role in the coordination of economic efforts to assure their social orientation. State intervention was well justified in those cases:

Statens oppgave er å kontrollere [det private næringslivet] til beste for hele folket, og å supplere det der det ikke strekker til, f. eks. når det gjelder å sikre full sysselsetting.<sup>1</sup>

*Venstre* considered that if production and prices had to be regulated, it should be under public and not private responsibility. A typical statement of the “Liberal planned economy” reads as follows:

...samfunnet har ansvar for at det er plan og stabilitet i den økonomiske utviklingen for landet som helhet. Derfor skal det –i samarbeid med næringsorganisasjonene—legge vilkårene til rette for en effektiv produksjon og full sysselsetting.<sup>2</sup>

However, *Venstre* marked a distance from the corporate ambitions of Labour by stating that Liberal planned economy was not connected but opposed to a scheme where the state dictated over private business, as Worm-Müller, chairman of the party declared in 1949:

Vi er for økonomisk planlegging, for en planøkonomi, så fremt og så langt de kan forenes med de idealer og formål vi kjemper for.

Men vi står steilt mot en sosialistisk planøkonomi, en allmektig stat som lammer de personlige tiltak og som kan føre bort fra demokratiet.<sup>3</sup>

*Venstre's* corporatism, claimed the party, then dominated by the *Landsvenstre*, was for democracy; Labour's, for dictatorship. As Røiseland and the radical wing of the party took over from 1952, as we mentioned before, the Labourite rule stopped being associated with socialism and dictatorship. The party welcomed the turn of Labour away from detailed state controls and for a more active role of the

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<sup>1</sup> Kortner, Olaf. *Venstre. Idé og gjerning*. Oslo, Norges Venstrelag, 1951. P. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Worm-Müller, Jac. S. *Venstre...* P. 10.

Starting in the economic regulations.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the party did not abandon the objective of differentiating its position from that of the government. In this quest, rhetoric came handy, as we will see in the enabling acts debate.<sup>2</sup>

One of the other two centre parties, the *Bondeparti*, a party of agricultural interests, saw advantages in the corporate scheme and supported a more open and direct role of organised interests in the political decision-making process. In the same fashion as *Venstre*, though, the party criticised the corporatism instituted by Labour for being an imposition over the private initiative:

...de offentlige inngrep og reguleringen [må] få en ganske annerledes beskjeden plass enn de har i dag. De må ikke komme som et uventet diktat ovenfra men vokse fram som et krav i næringen selv, og administreres i samarbeid med denne.<sup>3</sup>

It was in this context that the *Bondeparti* made the state responsible of equalising standards of living for the people in different trades, in the city and in the countryside, but at the same time accused the Labour government of socialism. It was not corporatism but the Labourite version that the party put into question.

The *Kristelig Folkeparti* referred readers of its 1945 programme to the *Fellesprogram* to find out what the party stood for on economic policy. It was a sign of how much the party supported the prevalent economic arrangement. Although the *Kristelig Folkeparti* was the least explicit in this issue, one can infer from the many hints on economic questions in the propaganda material that this party was the closest within the bourgeoisie opposition to the Labourite economic democracy.

However, like the other centre parties, the *Kristelig Folkeparti* advocated enlarged influence of the business community in the corporate scheme:

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Rovde. *Op. Cit.* "Prislovutvalet, proposisjonen og venstrealternativet".

<sup>2</sup> *Vid Infra*. Chapter IV. "Ideology in Action. The Enabling Acts Debate".

<sup>3</sup> *Til vern og trygd...*

Gjennom sine organisasjoner må de enkelte næringers utøvere med sine rike erfaringer tas med på råd når retningslinjene for vedkommende næring eller næringspolitikken trekkes opp.<sup>1</sup>

In resemblance to the other bourgeoisie parties as well, the party objected

Labourite corporatism through the claim that it put aside the Storting:

...partiet vil også forbeholde seg å øve kritikk overfor organisasjonene på begge sider, når de med altfor stor makttynge vil lede politikken inn i spor hvor det blir organisasjonene og ikke de folkevalgte organer som bestemmer retningslinjene.<sup>2</sup>

In a few words, the party understood the need of coordination and cooperation to meet the goals of a welfare state and showed itself very understanding of Labourite ways, but it opposed state control when imposed over the business community and seemed to challenge the Storting supremacy.

### **Ideology and Propaganda in the Bourgeoisie Parties**

The previous section is meant to help understand the context in which the opposition speech on corporatism and One-party rule developed in the electoral propaganda. What the opposition made of that takes us back to Seip's theory; corporatism and One-party rule formed a single unit and led to a single outcome: disruption of the parliamentary system.

This was the primary point of conflict. In politics, conflict is usually over dimensioned; disagreements are exaggerated, cases overrated, and ideology is stressed to a maximum. This is what we find too in the debate around corporatism and One-party rule in relation to the parliamentary order.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristelig folkeparti program ved Stortingsvalget 12. oktober 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Ullmann, Ragnar. "Kommunevalget 8.oktober". In: Kristelig Folkepartis valgavis i Oslo 1951. Oslo, Vårt Lands Trykkeri, 1951.

### **a) The concept of ideology**

But what is indeed the meaning of ideology? In politics, we tend to identify it with a political theory, a party programme, and so on; and we always associate it to a particular interest and to a deviation from facts. There is, in my opinion, some of truth in these assumptions: Ideology blurs facts and responds to concrete interests, but it depends mostly not on what is said but on the usage a statement is given and the concrete context.<sup>1</sup> Defending the market economy and private initiative for the sake of economic vitality can be right or wrong, and is not necessarily an ideological statement. Exaggerating the importance of private initiative as producer of wealth and demanding a turn back to a free market economy to empower business interests within a corporate scheme where Liberal capitalism was buried long time ago, and where proletarian rule is only a fancy ghost, is definitely ideological. Ideology is a very important part of political capital. Ideological statements are the daily bread of politics and no party or politician can go about without them. Keeping this in mind we can understand, for example, how after a long succession of Storting debates on a price law in which free economy was obsessively defended against so-called socialist inroads, John Lyng could affirm in an internal meeting of *Høyre* in 1953 that between his party and Labour's proposals there was just a difference of degree.<sup>2</sup>

### **b) Bourgeoisie parties and ideology around corporatism**

In general terms, during the period 1949-1953, which embraces the three first Storting elections of the post-war, the bourgeoisie parties opposed mainly the

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<sup>1</sup> Ideology is commonly used when referring to a set of ideas. That is, in our opinion, wrong. We would rather use the term "point of view", or simply "ideas" for this case.

<sup>2</sup> "Det var en lang vei fra 'Lex Brofoss' in 1947, via Sjaastad-komiteens forslag og til Arbeiderpartiets moderate forslag til bare en prislov i Stortinget. På et styremøte i Høyres stortingsgruppe kunne Lyng hevde, under henvisning til at utsagnet måtte bli innen fire vegger, at det i realiteten 'bare var en gradforskjell' mellom Høyres og Arbeiderpartiets forslag". Sejersted. Opposisjon og posisjon... P. 108-109.



concentration of power in Labour hands under the ideological assumption that the growth of the state was inversely proportional to individual freedom.<sup>1</sup> In this fashion, we see the struggle put in terms of democracy versus the threat of dictatorship, a crusade not only against excessive economic controls, but also against socialism.<sup>2</sup>

We find a recurrent analogy between Labourite policies and a hidden, slow but secure, path to socialism. And also an analogy between what happened in the war, nazism, and what happened in the Soviet Union, communism, and what could happen under the Labour rule. The assimilation of these three different types of One-party rules allowed the opposition to elaborate on the dialectics of power concentration in the hands of a political party:

...verden kjenner heller ikke noe eksempel på at statsdirigert planøkonomi og sosialistisk tvangshusholdning kan gjennomføres innenfor rammen av det vi i Vest-Europa forbinder med en demokratisk forfatning.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, we run across the manipulation of elements of the classical Liberal speech on democracy, freedom and market economy. This characterises the speech of *Høyre* for the most part, but we find it also in that of the other bourgeoisie parties. When it came to criticise and oppose the enabling acts, they came handy. The debate on the price law in 1952-53 witnessed a wide use of them to weaken Labour's position.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Jo mer allmektig staten blir, jo mer maktesløst blir det enkelte menneske", as *Høyre* put it in its 1949 programme. Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949. There are a lot more examples, but it is impossible, and unnecessary, to make reference to them all.

<sup>2</sup> The terms used are "sosialisme" and "statsdirigering", associated with the bureaucratic rule and concentration of power, and opposed usually to "democracy" and healthy "public control".

<sup>3</sup> Velgeren oppslagsbok for stortingsvalget 1945. Oslo, P. Soelberg Trykkeri, 1945. P. 10. A *Høyre*'s brochure.

<sup>4</sup> Vid infra. Chapter IV. "Ideology in Action. The Enabling Acts Debate".

## The threat of dictatorship and the Storting

The main complaint remained the same all along this period: “Idag er situasjon at når vi vet hva Arbeiderpatiet vil, da vet vi hva resultatet blir.”<sup>1</sup> This statement by Hermann Smitt Ingebretsen from 1952 reflected a common assumption on the opposition side. Nonetheless, was it indeed dictatorship?

The insinuation did not get to be a plain accusation but the statement of a probability: threat of dictatorship. It was intended to make the voters understand that the path the Norwegian economy was following led to the end of democracy, and a renovated Labour majority in parliament could well complete the way. One example among many:

...er Venstre redd for at den veldige maktkonsentrasjonen på statens hånd i lengden kan true de individuelle rettighetene som liberalismen framfor alt vil verge. Vegen er ikke lang fra det sosialistiske velferdsamfunnet –hvordan det nå vil bli—til den totalitære staten.<sup>2</sup>

This was seldom taken as a claim of factual dictatorship, but it did lead in some cases to complaints that individual freedom was at stake and that the mentality proper to what we could term an open society was vanishing.<sup>3</sup>

The Storting was the guarantor of political freedom. If the opposition was right and the Storting was being put aside, the elected representatives had therefore no real power. We would be talking, in fact, about the opposite of democracy.

When Jens-Arup Seip wrote about the Storting “in political exile”,<sup>1</sup> he found the right way to summarise the best arguments of the opposition in just one sentence.

<sup>1</sup> I kamp mot frihet og folkestyre..... A quotation from a contribution in the Storting in June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Kortner, Olaf. Venstre. Idé... P. 69.

<sup>3</sup> A brochure by a doctor, a *Venstre* woman, Karoline Mathisen (Sannheten lever videre... om den individuelle frihet sett i forhold til vår tid. Tromsø, Troms Fylkesvenstrelag, 1951.), argues that a mass mentality had already spread in Norway. She insinuated that Labour had bought the masses with material prosperity, and had managed to create such passivity that criticism and opposition were neutralised. She even wrote that people were discouraged because: “...alle ting i realiteten er bestemt på forhånd”. In a political ad in the brochure, the party showed agreement with her position: “*Venstre er klar over farer ved massementaliteten, gruppeinteressene og byråkratiet—vår tids ‘nessekongevælde’*”. Such display of conservative ideology was unusual in the party’s speech, but shows the reach of the rhetorical arsenal of the opposition.

There were plenty of examples of politicians trying to achieve it first, like this of *Venstre* representative Lars Ramndal in 1951:

Det er sagt ofte at der er i Stortinget makta burde liggja, det er her sakene burde avgjerast, men det viser seg at Stortinget vert set utanom i mange høve. Det er Prisdirektoratet som dominerer både regjering, departement og Storting.<sup>2</sup>

Or *Høyre*'s Hans P. Lødrup in 1946:

I dag er det i folkets hus, ikke i Stortinget, avgjørelsene treffes.<sup>3</sup>

The bourgeoisie parties fancied promoting their cause as a crusade for the supremacy of the Storting. When necessary, the only public control the bourgeoisie parties accepted fully was that exercised by the Storting. The delegation of power from the Storting to the Directorates and other administration organs, and the work of state councils and other instances of consultation and negotiation, were criticised with words like those of Stranger's, a *Høyre* man, in the 1949 Finance debate in the Storting: "etablering av små storting ved siden av det egentlige".<sup>4</sup> Even the Common Political Council, created under the Common Political Programme in order to reach consensus among the political parties, arose scepticism for the representatives of the bourgeoisie parties in the Storting, who called it "The High Council" where decisions were reached before the cases could be dealt with in parliament.<sup>5</sup>

### **a) The bourgeoisie parties on "Democratic centralism"**

The claims of parliamentarian disruption, the consequence of concentration of power by a single party, could be broken down in several categories. First, the inner-discipline in Labour ranks, the so-called "democratic centralism" was questioned. It

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<sup>1</sup> "Stortinget har vært i politisk eksil mellom Elverum og Kings Bay". Seip. To linjer i norsk historie... "Fra embetsmannsstat..." P.56.

<sup>2</sup> Bergsvendsen. Venstre-politikk 1945-1951... P. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Lødrup, Hans P. "Noen konservative synspunkter". In: Samtiden, 1946. P. 442.

<sup>4</sup> Fra fellesprogram til partidiktatur... P. 364.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Lindebrække. Tro og tillit... "Tverrpolitisk om økonomi".

was not proved illegal, but it was shown as a case of corruption. As early as 1945, it was said by *Høyre* that Labour, through such partisan discipline, had power over the government, the Storting, the Trade Unions, and the rationing system.<sup>1</sup> Party membership influenced appointments in public offices, including the Supreme Court.<sup>2</sup> The strong collaboration around the line set by the party elite was, if not assimilated, compared to communist strategies.<sup>3</sup>

*Venstre* affirmed that, on the contrary, its representatives in parliament did not get directives by the party and were only tied to the programme they were elected for and their own consciousness.<sup>4</sup> On the same lines, *Høyre* presented itself as a party following the Liberal fashion, where their members of parliament represented their constituency before their party.<sup>5</sup> We assume that the *Bondeparti* and the *Kristelig Folkeparti* would certainly have chosen the same description for their attitude to party discipline.

Democratic centralism embraced also the close collaboration between the *Landsorganisasjon* (LO) and the Labour party. Here the opposition cried corruption again. This unfair relationship, they argued, granted financing and votes to Labour and political power to LO, and had no counterbalance, they claimed, on the

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Til husmødre og yrkeskvinner i Tønsberg*. Tønsbergs Aktietrykkeri, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1949 *Høyre*'s election programme, it reads: "Ansettelse i offentlig tjeneste må ikke skje på grunnlag av en medlemsbok eller som partipolitisk belønning". *Høires program ved stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949*. In 1949, and also in 1953, the *Bondeparti* established in its election programme that: "Partipolitiske omsyn må ikke gjøre seg gjeldende ved ansettelse i styringsverket". *Til vern og trygd...*. Per Vogt stated ("Valgets krav"... P. 413): "En (...) forutsetning for at det dirigerte samfunn skal kunne fungere etter de dirigerendes hensikter er at de rette folk sitter i de rette stillinger; derfor den tydelig markerte og kynisk innrømmede nepotisme som har holdt sitt inntog i Arbeiderpartiet". Victor Mogens, *Op. Cit.*, made the same accusation pointing out that Supreme Court appointments were included in the inner-corruption of the political system.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Bergvendsen. *Venstre-politikk 1945-1951...* "Democratic centralisme". Also: "I arbeiderpartiene som har gått lengst i en slik partidisiplin, er det en i praksis gjennomført regel, at ingen i Stortingets eller kommunestyrenes partigruppe får lov til å stemme imot partiets beslutninger i viktige spørsmål". Lødrup. *Op. Cit.* P. 437.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*. In fact, there was a freer flow of ideas in *Venstre* than in other parties, as one can see in their political propaganda and in the *Venstre*-oriented publication *Samtiden*.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Sejersted. *Opposisjon og posisjon...* "Partiorganisasjonen – et tung løft".

opposition side. It was, for them, an “umoralsk spill” that took the political power away from the constitutional sources to a political force without public responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

When *Libertas* was made public by the Labourite press, business support to political organisations came into heavy criticism. The bourgeoisie parties that benefited from it and, as in the case of *Høyre*, took an active role in its creation, thought best to deny their collaboration. The only thing they managed to do was to insist that the same treatment given to *Libertas* be given to Labour’s press and Labour’s financing by LO.<sup>2</sup>

Collective membership in Labour granted to LO workers was heavily criticised. The principle of collective membership, it was said, made belonging to a Union in LO the equivalent to forced support to Labour:

Venstre er mot kollektivt medlemskap i politiske partier. Vi mener det er galt å tvinge folk i andre generasjoner til å bli tilsluttet et parti, som de ikke hører hjemme i, simpelthen fordi et flertall på et møte gjør vedtak om det.<sup>3</sup>

The political influence the Unions had over its members, as well as the propaganda LO carried out in which, opposition spokesmen accused, elections were depicted as a class conflict where Labour was to prevail for the benefit of the Norwegian working classes, were a matter of concern in the opposition’s speech.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “...ved denne utvikling er maktens flytning fra de konstitusjonelle og ansvarlige organer til ukonstitusjonelle og politisk uansvarlige organer utenfor Storting og regjering ytterlige fremskyndet.” Lødrup. *Op. Cit.* P. 442.

<sup>2</sup> The organisation *Libertas* was founded in 1947, and its partner *Industria*, in 1948. The business community tried to make public its point of view on economics through the publications and research supported by these two organisations. *Høyre* got financing for its newspapers and party organisation, but had to deny collaboration not to help its political enemies prove that it was a party of the business community. *Venstre* and the Bondeparti received as well support from *Libertas* but to a lesser extent. *Cfr.* Riksåsen, Steinar. *Op.Cit.* and Sejersted. *Op. Cit.* ”Partiorganisasjonen—et tung løft”. *Venstre* complained that Labour had the same approach towards its press: ”Forholdet til pressen, der Arbeiderpartiet har bundne partiaviser under en felles ledelse som ansetter og avsetter redaktører taler sitt tydelige språk”. *Venstres alternativ*. Oslo, Norges venstrelag, 1949. And that same year, it asked for the financing of the parties to be made public. *Cfr.* *Valgprogram for Venstre 1949*.

<sup>3</sup> *Venstres alternativ*... P. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> ”Hvis alle fagorganiserte arbeidere. Som det nylig er sagt, skal betrakte valgkampen som en alvorlig konfliktsituasjon hvor de har de samme plikter og det samme solidaritetsansvar som under en regulær lønnskonflikt, går vi et skritt mot diktaturet”. Worm-Müller, Jac. S. *Venstre*... P. 5.

However, if the excessive influence of the unions in post-war Norway was criticised, the bourgeoisie parties welcomed the involvement of organised interests in the political decision-making process through consultation. Here too the speech on the role of organisations in politics was affected by the criticism to the axis LO-Labour. Let us go over just one example.

In its 1949 election programme, the *Bondeparti* addressed the issue of organisations' influence in society. The draft of the programme showed how much a party which was born and developed as representative of specific interest groups supported an open intervention of organised interests in National politics:

I et moderne samfunn er organisasjonene et nødvendig ledd til vern om en gruppes felles interesser. *Ut fra respekten for det enkelte menneskes rett må staten også på organisasjonene innrømme dem de samme rettigheter og de samme midler til å kjempe for sine mål.* Avgrensningen må også være den samme, alle organisasjoner må innordne seg under vår demokratiske samfunnsordning og statens husbondrett. Å finne den rette avgrensning av organisasjonenes maktområde og deres innordning under samfunnsmakten er en oppgave som nå bør tas opp.<sup>1</sup>

The final text, though, gave a very different impression and could be interpreted as a caution against the excessive power granted to organisations in politics:

Organisasjonene, *frie menneskers sammenslutning til vern om sine interesser*, er nødvendige i et moderne samfunn. *Men de må innordne seg under vår demokratiske samfunnsordning og statens husbondrett.* Innenfor denne ramme skal de alle ha den samme rett til å arbeide for de interesser de er satt til å ivareta. Å finne den rette avgrensning av organisasjonenes maktområde og deres innordning under samfunnsmakten er en oppgave som nå bør tas opp.<sup>2</sup>

The paragraph on the role of organisations in society in the *Bondeparti's* election programme of 1953 went for a clearer stance against the corruption of the system implied by the axis Labour-LO. It reads:

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<sup>1</sup> Utkast til valgprogram for Bondepartiet 1949. My underlining.

<sup>2</sup> Til vern og trygd... My underlining.

Organisasjonsretten må være lik for alle næringer og i alle yrker, og alle organisasjoner må stilles likt. Organisasjonene må på sin side innordne seg vår samfunnsordning, bygges opp etter demokratiske prinsipper og være partipolitisk nøytrale.

Ingen må tvinges inn i en organisasjon for å kunne skape seg sin egen virksomhet, eller for å få et arbeid.<sup>1</sup>

We have reasons to assume that the other bougeoisie parties' conclusions did not differ much from these statements.

### **b) Bureaucratic rule and the role of the Storting**

An accusation as powerful and conclusive as that of a road to Nazism or communism was the implementation of a bureaucratic rule. There was less controversy over this point within the opposition than over others.

All the parties seemed to agree that the transfer of power from the Storting to the state bureaucracy was a threat to democracy.

We have mentioned the arrival of a new bureaucracy in the Labourite golden era. Mainly, the social economists that reshaped the Ministries of Finance and Commerce, as well as other offices, brought with them plans of coordination and state regulation of the National economy that fit the interests of the political elite. The power exercised by those functionaries over economic enterprises, an odious sign of pernicious state intervention in the eyes of the business community, constituted the rule of experts stigmatised as "Bureaucratic rule".

The bureaucratic rule stemmed from the administration offices where the detailed economic controls were enforced. The new politicising bureaucracy was accused of escaping public control and handling cases behind closed doors. The

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<sup>1</sup> Bondepartiets program Stortingsvalget 1953.

granting of power to this bureaucracy through enabling acts, argued the opposition, made this possible.<sup>1</sup>

During the same period they amassed too much power, the criticism continued, the administration concentrated in the Oslo offices, burying self-rule in districts and counties.<sup>2</sup> An argument that came handy in local election campaigns.<sup>3</sup>

The argumentation developed even further: The administration experts were pushing for more unnecessary and economically harmful regulation. The bureaucratic rule repressed private initiative and prevented the country from reaching its economic goals. A growing bureaucracy, an “elefantsyke” apparatus,<sup>4</sup> which absorbed manpower that otherwise would be really productive, put the entrepreneurs before too many procedures and administrative obstacles for them to start new businesses. It also created economic insecurity since it was given the power to decide economic changes without relation to fixed routines or market mechanisms. The economy would stagnate sooner or later since how, they asked rhetorically, could it be possible to create jobs out of bureaucratic offices?<sup>5</sup> And how do people whose only business experience was theoretical could assume full responsibility and cope with the everyday problems of business and advance in this area better than experienced business leaders motivated by the prospect of profits?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ”Venstre vil stå på vakt om grunnloven og passe på at ikke Stortingets myndighet undergraves av en stadig sterkere sentralisert administrasjon og at ikke viktige avgjørelser gjennom en utstrakt fullmaktslovgivning unndras Stortinget, domstolene og folkets kontroll...” Worm-Müller. Op. Cit. P. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Lindebrække stated that it was Labour’s doing and purpose ”... en tilsvarende og omfattende maktkonsentrasjon i kommandoplassene i statskontorene i Oslo”. I kamp for frihet og folkestyre... P. 395.

<sup>3</sup> For example in the *Høyre*’s election program of 1947 in Sandefjord: ”Sandefjords fremtid ligger ikke i et system av statssosialisme og statskontroll som sentraliserer all makt og innflytelse i Oslo”. Høires program ved kommunevalget i Sandefjord 1947. Sandefjord, Handelstrykkeri, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Lyng. Op. Cit. P. 227.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Han begynte i et skur. Oslo, Norsk Trykk & Papirindustri A.s., 1947. A *Høyre*’s propaganda brochure.

<sup>6</sup> A nonpartisan opposition writer, Wilhelm Keilhau wrote in 1952: “[Arbeiderpartiets] Forslaget [til fullmaktslovene] vil i realiteten overlate [ansvar] til noen akademikere uten selvstendig erfaring fra produksjonslivet, uten kjennskap til arbeidskårene, uten bransjekyndighet og uten økonomisk ansvar å skalte og valte med all økonomisk virksomhet i landet”. Keilhau. ”Prisloven, naturretten og liberalismen”. In: Samtiden, 1952. P. 546. And added the following year: ”...ikke noe normalt menneske vil kunne tenke seg at



The bureaucratic rule was another sign of the hidden but smooth path to socialism and dictatorship, according to this *Kristelig Folkeparti* extract from 1949:

...og så kommer det tragiske, --det lyse, optimistiske menneskesynet fører like inn i tyranniet når en ikke vet andre midler enn stadig strengere kontroll, stadig sterkere sentralisering for å få opp arbeidstempoet, --det er der sosialisering farer særlig viser seg i at det ikke er lang til diktaturet.<sup>1</sup>

A common electoral practice of the times was to show the election as the choice between two irreconcilable poles: democracy and socialism.<sup>2</sup> *Venstre* stressed the gap between its approach to public or social control of the economy and that of the Labour government by means of this opposition, being socialism the hidden teleological nature of the bureaucratic rule:

...sosialisering ikke er forenlig med økonomisk demokratisering. I virkeligheten er sosialisering og økonomisk demokratisering en selvmotsigelse, fordi sosialisering må føre til mer byråkrati og sentraldirigering og til fjernstyring av de enkelte bedrifter.<sup>3</sup>

It was claimed by *Høyre* that the business interests were tied in their collaboration with the administration. The risk of seeing their interests damaged, stated the argument, and compelled the business interests to be submissive to the dictates of the central administration. Again, the right to criticise the power holders was threatened:

Der hvor kritikken undertrykkes, forsumpes folkestyret (...). Når folk ikke lenger tør ha mening om Regjeringen --av hensyn til sin karriere-- og ikke tør øve kritikk overfor Regjeringen av frykt for å miste sjansen til å gjøre forretninger med den, er det fare på ferde.<sup>4</sup>

departementsfunksjonærer kan forstå bedre enn bedriftsledere og enkeltmenn hvordan reservene bør anvendes for å hindre innskrenkninger i produksjonen og fall i levestandarden". "Hva betyr Stortingsvalget i 1953?". In: *Samtiden*, 1953. P. 291. Keilhau was a social economist (*sosialøkonom*) who had collaborated with the exile government during the war.

<sup>1</sup> Ullmann, Ragnar. "På prøve". In: *Kristelig Folkepartis valgavis i Oslo 1949*. Oslo, Vårt Lands Trykkeri A/L, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> It can be found in all parties. Only an example from one centre party, the *Bondeparti*: "Valget står i år faktisk mellom folkestyre og mindretallsdiktatur, mellom demokratiet og sosialiststaten". *Til Velgerne i Oppland*. Gjøvik, Samholds Trykkeri, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Ihlen. *Arbeid og kapital I...* P. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Lindebrække. *Tro og tillit...* P. 42-43. A quotation of Smitt Ingebretsen.

*Høyre* too came up with the argument that the real question of democracy at the moment was not a matter of class interests, the benefit of the many at the cost of the few privileged, but of choosing or opposing the rule of the few in the administrative offices over the rest of the population.<sup>1</sup>

There was a further elaboration that opposed two different kinds of regime, namely, a bureaucratic rule (*forvaltningsstat*), imposed by Labour, and a rule of law (*rettsstat*).<sup>2</sup> Among the bourgeoisie parties, it was adopted only by *Høyre* later on.<sup>3</sup>

There was also the issue of the protection of the individual rights before administrative decisions that were not supervised by the Storting or the Supreme Court. Such decisions could break the rule of law. This gave a chance to appeal to the reputation of the Liberal freedoms and question the doings of the Labour administration. The demands of supervision by the Storting and the Supreme Court and of administrative openness constituted a strong argument in the repertoire of the bourgeoisie opposition.

### **The Issue of Parliamentary Control of the Bureaucracy**

We left unanswered a question that we are now able to confront: what was the point of the opposition in advocating empowerment of a Storting in Labour hands? It certainly implied a protest against the delegation of power to the administration as well as against corporatism under Labourite premises, but there was another reason.

Lindebrække commented on the Common Party Council, where a number of decisions were reached by an assembly of representatives of all parties before they

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<sup>1</sup> This was the way representative Løvset from *Høyre*, among others, put it when questioning the majority's proposal on a permanent price law in 1953: "Han konkluderte med å si at prisloven var noe mer enn et stykke økonomisk lovgivningsarbeid. Den er et ledd i bestrebelsene på å overføre makten fra de mange til de få, fra folket til byråkratene. Den er et anslag mot vårt demokrati". *I kamp for frihet og folkestyre...* P. 433.

<sup>2</sup> *Cfr.* "Rettsstat-Forvaltningsstat-Folkestyre". In: *Farmand*. No. 35, August 29th, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Seip wrote: "I Høyres program fra 1945 er 'rettsstat' ('rettsstaten gjenreises') på ukontroversiell måte rettet mot nazitidens overgrep. Fra 1961 fikk ordet en sentral plass og da rettet mot Arbeiderpartiregjeringens bruk av fullmaktslover". *To Linjer i...* "Høyre gjennom hundre år 1880-1980". P. 80.

reached Parliament, that it had produced a healthy democratic development through personal contacts that help mutual trust, a better definition of party lines, and moderation in the government policies. He remarked that the work in the Council had pushed the opposition to adopt more elaborated arguments and a wiser attitude towards cooperation.<sup>1</sup> *Høyre*, the party most consistently opposed to overempowerment of the administration, waved the flag of voluntary cooperation in the economy and in politics at least since 1949. The centre parties were just careful enough to condemn what they considered excesses of Labour, but hardly ever corporatism. A corporate arrangement was a tacit agreement. Nonetheless, there was an aspect the bourgeoisie parties could not come to terms with.

*Høyre*, as usual, made it very clear. The voluntary cooperation proposed by the party pointed out what kept it from joining the prevalent corporatism. Sejersted argues that *Høyre* considered the business community unable to make their position prevail in hearings and negotiations with the administration whereas the Labour government got stronger with such cooperation and approval. He further adds that the more cooperation the business interests *Høyre* represented had with the central administration, the weaker the contacts between them and the party. Compromises at this level had a terrible effect on the party, he concludes; once there was an agreement between Labour and those organisations, *Høyre* was tied.<sup>2</sup> However, this reflected, on one side, the disagreements between *Høyre* and the business community more than any structural flaws; and on the other, the hindrance that

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<sup>1</sup> “Det ble skapt nærmere personlig kontakt, og tross all meningsforskjell fant selve samarbeidstanken dypere forståelse. Det er i seg selv en betydelig vinning for en sunn demokratisk utvikling.

”Jeg er også sikker på at drøftelsen om samarbeid—nettopp der hvor samarbeidslinjen ikke vant frem—ga større klarhet om årsaken til meningsforskjell og politiske skillelinjer. Det førte igjen med seg et betydelig innslag av moderasjon i regjeringspartiets politikk og en særlig oppfordring til saklighet hos opposisjonen”. Lindebrække. *Tro og tillit...* P. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Sejersted. *Op. Cit.* ”Partiet i organisasjonssamfunnet”.

meagre electoral progress represented, since *Høyre* was far and away of being able to advance the business community interests in parliament any further.

The bourgeoisie parties could not take fully the prevailing corporate scheme because it was developed under Labourite premises. In this point, the main argument of the opposition was that public or social (*samfunnsmessig*) control was best achieved when embodied in control by the Storting.

The corporatism the opposition criticised was the one designed by Labourite experts. There were among them key personalities that would embody the ideal of scientists annoyed by the political pressure and oriented to results.<sup>1</sup> However, the administration was well kept under political control. The new bureaucrats enjoyed delegated power and could not prevail over their political masters. Their so-called independence empowered the Labourite rule as a vehicle for concentration of power. The opposition parties saw the need of placing those bureaucrats under a wider political control in which they themselves could play a role.

We should not take the criticism by the opposition parties to a so-called bureaucratic rule as an attack to the rule of experts. It was not stated that a Storting rule implied avoiding professionalisation of the public or private bureaucracy. The bourgeoisie opposition was aware of the importance of specialised expertise for a more efficient productive process. They only disagreed with a scheme where public experts took over and the private ones were relegated to a secondary position. They argued lack of experience and self-interest on the side of the administration bureaucrats, a natural hindrance to the expansion of economic enterprises. They lamented the routine of too much red tape, the concentration of capital, and the administrative centralisation they associated with public bureaucracy and the central

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<sup>1</sup> That is, for example, how Lindebrække describes the personality of Labour's Erik Brofoss. Cfr. Lindebrække. *Tro og tillit...* "Politiske alternativer".

administration organs under it. But they never questioned the need of a new specialised bureaucracy in politics and economics.<sup>1</sup>

The opposition maintained on this issue that there were two alternatives: to accept and develop the prevailing corporate system or to preserve the traditional parliamentary order. As it has been shown in this work, this was an ideological position that somehow blurred the real interests involved in the dispute. But it was not a statement out of place and we should not rule out, either, the guild pride of Storting representatives and an honest attachment to the assembly's mystique. There was, indeed, a consecrated rutinary parliamentary approach by which it was, at least in paper, still possible to deal with all the administrative needs of consultation and expert advice, as well as with the requirement of partisan agreement that would allow govern ability: the work of Storting committees.

The work of Storting committees, where the most meaningful part of the parliamentary life takes place, involves consultation from all sides in question and a proportional representation of all political parties, with the presence of government authorities.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the work by the state councils might accomplish at least one of these requirements, but does not imply a proportional party representation.

The decision-making process at this level had some disadvantages. First, it

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<sup>1</sup> Corporatism, we have asserted before, is the brainchild of expert elites in politics and economics. It is not merely a natural, scientific approach to the tensions and problems of a post-industrial society, but the invention of a specific social group. A fairly successful approach, we should add. To what degree has it been developed in Norway or elsewhere out of convenience and to what degree out of the will power of the leaders of the professional society, is hard to say. The argument of the need of scientific specialised knowledge in all areas has also an ideological side and has been manipulated in order to expand the jurisdiction and power of the expert elite. In 1949, Per Vogt theorised on the irrational motivations of corporate development and mentioned a tendency to strengthen order and central authority, one coming from the 1920s, and the drive towards concentration of power: "Og plandirigeringen ble derfor etterhånden ikke bare mål for den økonomiske politikk, men også middel for den rene politikk". *Op. Cit.* P. 412.

<sup>2</sup> "Mangeårig kontorsjef i Stortinget, Erik Mo [uttalte at]: 'Stortingets egentlige saksbehandling foregår i komiteene, hvor alle sider av saken gjennomgås og drøftes og hvor nye opplysninger innhentes gjennom møter med vedkommende statsråd og departementets embetsmenn eller med representanter for organisasjoner og næringsliv". Nordby. *I politikkens sentrum...* P. 156.

empowered the government, and so the One-party rule, given by the peculiar structure and routines of the state councils in Norway. Secondly, the political parties enjoyed a secondary place, since the organisations they proved to represent could face the central administration on their own. Thirdly, and most importantly, any agreement reached in negotiations outside the parliamentary arena bound the participants before any public debate on the matter. They could not afford to change their positions afterwards, either.

In this context, the bourgeoisie parties could agree that the consensus reached through Storting committees was, as the lawyer Johs. Andenæs put it,<sup>1</sup> the perfect solution to the problem of democracy and rule of experts. This could be interpreted and advertised as recourse to more comprehensive knowledge and plural political consultation. This is why advocating the rule of the Storting under a Labour majority meant empowerment of the opposition.

The main mechanism of the One-party rule in Norway, Labour control of the Storting, had been achieved and maintained through electoral victories. To this respect, the opposition protested against a deed, concentration of power, and warned against a threat, abuse of power and dictatorship. This warning can also be classified as ideological. Lindebrække, pondering on it years later, explained the situation in these milder words:

Vi følte det slik at opposisjonen i ikke liten grad ble neglisjert –at den politiske beslutningsprosess langt på vei ble flyttet over fra stortingssalen i Arbeiderpartiets grupperom. Gjennom sitt flertall i Stortinget hadde Arbeiderpartiet så utvilsomt den konstitusjonelle makt—det var spørsmål om måten å håndheve makten på. *Det er ikke riktig å snakke om maktmisbruk –*

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<sup>1</sup> “Folk som har sitt kjennskap til Stortingets arbeid bare fra avisenes referater av de store politiske debatter, er ofte ikke oppmerksom på at de aller fleste saker blir avgjort i Stortinget enstemmig og uten debatt på grunnlag av en enstemmig komitéinnstilling. I dette ligger en veldig rasjonalisering av Stortingets arbeid, som bare er mulig på grunn av regelen om at de politiske partier er forholdsmessig representert i komiteene. Når representantene vet at kyndige folk av forskjellige politiske grunnsyn har arbeidet med emnet og står sammen om stillingen, kan de føle seg trygge uten selv å gå alt for dypt i saken. Komitésystemet gir derfor på sin vis bidrag til løsning av problemet demokrati og fagstyre”. Johs. Andenæs. ”Demokrati og fagstyre”. In: Samtiden, 1949. P. 6-7.

*snarere en tilvenningsprosess i bevisstheten om at en beslutning av Arbeiderpartiets gruppe i realiteten var ensbetydende med et stortingsvedtak.*<sup>1</sup>

It was not a dictatorship they fought against. The term “exile of the Storting” comes back as a more useful description of the period and the problem in question when placed in the proper context.

The political machinery of Labour was compared to that of the communist parties, but electoral factories did not represent the exception but the rule in modern party organisation. The direction of contemporary politics tended to party hierarchies in which a higher degree of discipline and a unity of purpose were necessary;<sup>2</sup> parties where political mobilisation mattered most. The bourgeoisie ones were plainly not well prepared enough to match Labour in this area. They had been overwhelmed.

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<sup>1</sup> Lindebrække. Tro og tillit... P. 202. My underlining.

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1946, a man connected to *Høyre*, and who quoted in his article authors like Ortega y Gasset and Harold Laski, Hans P. Lødrup, wrote that parties had “blitt mål i seg selv, og herrer over valgene og velgere”. Op. Cit. P. 436.

## CHAPTER IV. IDEOLOGY IN ACTION. THE ENABLING ACTS DEBATE

### Reconstruction and *Lex Thagaard*

An important chapter in the history of corporatism in post-war Norway is that of the enabling acts instituted under the Labour administration. They represented the ruling approach of the party, influenced the cooperation scheme between the government and the business interests, and were crucial on the issue of the role of the Storting. The opposition had a lot to say about them—and against them. In fact, the bourgeoisie parties saw in the enabling acts debate an opportunity to raise a decisive electoral issue. They took their chances—and they failed.

In the beginning, the enabling acts were directly connected with the problem of reconstruction after the war. The first task after Liberation day was to rebuild the areas destroyed during the conflict and put the economy fully to work again. Finnmark was at the top of the list. Some experts were of the opinion that it would take at least five years to take production back to pre-war levels. This implied a big mobilisation of resources and manpower, under the dangers of rampant inflation, due to high demand, and unemployment. A new economic crisis was not ruled out. In a longer run, industrial development and modernisation of the Norwegian economy were necessary if higher standards of living and social levelling were to be reached. In these circumstances, planning and public intervention were seen as unavoidable to control demand and coordinate state and private efforts.<sup>1</sup>

The government in exile in London had started the legislation that would provide the public authorities with the proper prerogatives to begin with the reconstruction work. The highlight of this work was a provisional decree known as

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Lange, Even. Samling om felles mål... “Inn i det lovede land. Samling på sosialdemokratisk grunn”.



"Lex Thagaard"<sup>1</sup> after the mastermind behind it, Price Directorate chairman, Wilhelm Thagaard.<sup>2</sup>

Thagaard, a leading figure in the making of the Trust law in the 1920s, saw his views on direct state controls in the economy get more support in the Labour party in the 1930s than in his own party, *Venstre*. His work in the London-based exiled government was key in the economic policies approved.

The decree was dated May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the same date as Liberation day. It allowed the Price Directorate (*Prisdirektoratet*) to intervene in the economic enterprises of the country as never before during peace times.<sup>3</sup> According to the "Lex Thagaard", the Price Directorate had a mandate to take any necessary measures under the extraordinary situation, namely:

- a. for å regulere og føre kontroll med priser, fortjenester og utbytter av alle slag,
- b. for å regulere og føre kontroll med produksjon, omsetning og annen ervervsmessig virksomhet med sikte på å motvirke skadelige konkurransereguleringer eller andre mislige forhold eller fremme en bedre organisasjon av virksomheten eller på annen måte medvirke til å gjenreise eller utbygge næringslivet.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the Price Directorate enjoyed the prerogatives to prevent a public or private firm from cutting down or stopping production or sale of a certain product or service. To make firms produce or sale a product or service to the amount, prices and conditions it considered best. To prevent both creation of new business in certain areas and the enlargement of existing ones in case of need. And to require firms to pay fees to be used for purposes of price control.

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<sup>1</sup> The official name was "Provisorisk anordning av 8. mai 1945 om prisregulering og annen regulering av ervervsmessig virksomhet".

<sup>2</sup> Thagaard had been a relevant figure of the radical *Venstre*, functionary in *Venstre* administrations, and who later joined the Labourite government. He was an advocate of direct government intervention in the economy to regulate competition and prices. This approach had been very popular in the 1930s.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Lindebrække. *Tro og tillit...* "Kampen om prisloven".

<sup>4</sup> "Lex Thagaard" §2. In: *Norsk innenriks politikk...*

In the beginning, the bourgeoisie parties came to terms with the “Lex Thagaard”, but not without first expressing concern because of the delegation of power to the administration and for the fact that business was not represented in the council that elaborated the law. The needs of the reconstruction period played in favour of acceptance of increased state intervention and of the instruments to carry it out.

Nonetheless, the issue became controversial and soon enough a matter of open political debate. As early as 1946, we run across statements that excessive state control did not lead to technological advance and better standards of living, but to the opposite direction. Planned economy, it was established by its most radical opponents, was incompatible with fixed laws and rules, and most importantly, defied the constitutional order and the individual freedoms. It was claimed as socialism.<sup>1</sup> Or even worse, it meant nazification.<sup>2</sup> The statement that state expansion threatened individual freedom came to the surface often in the speech of the opposition when attacking the enabling acts, but in 1945 it had not come up in the bourgeoisie party programmes yet, although there is a warning by *Høyre* against the dangers of socialist planned economy in its 1945 programme.<sup>3</sup>

The enabling acts debate became the most visible sign of political disagreement in the period studied in this work, and reached its climax in two episodes in the Storting forum. The first in 1947 regarding the proposal of a new temporary Price law, known as “Lex Brofoss”. The next in 1952-1953, when a

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<sup>1</sup> In one of many examples, Cfr. Schlytter, Thomas. “Industrien og staten—og friheten”. In: Samtiden, 1946. This article was written in response to another written by the engineer L.A. Conradi (“Industrien og staten”. In: Samtiden, 1946), who supported planned economy on the grounds that it enhanced more economic security and better standards of living for the population. It might be wrong to call Schlytter representative of the political atmosphere, being a rightist writer, but his statement in this article does show some of the common arguments the political opposition make use of in these years.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Schlytter. “Vår økonomiske politikk”. In: Samtiden, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> ”All sosialistisk planøkonomi går ut over forbrukeren”. Høires program ved stortingsvalget 1945. ”Økonomisk demokrati”. And in a brochure: “All statsdrift betyr pulverisering av ansvaret, ukyndighet og byråkrati, inngrep og restriksjoner”. Høire kan du stole på!...

permanent law on prices and rationalisation was discussed in parliament. We will focus mainly on the bourgeoisie parties' contribution in these two Storting debates in the following section.

## **In Defence of the Storting. Opposition Parties and the Debate on *Lex Brofoss***

### **Introduction**

A big leap for corporatism in Norway took place in 1947, when a proposal on a new temporary law on prices and rationalisation, the “Lex Brofoss”, was debated in the Storting, and other corporate arrangements came into the picture, too.

The National Budget, a yearly plan for the economy as a whole, was put forward by Erik Brofoss, the Finance Minister. He was soon appointed as the new head of the Ministry of Commerce, instance that became the leading planning organ since then. Additionally, the cases of the branch councils<sup>1</sup> and the Employment law were discussed in parliament.<sup>2</sup>

The “Lex Brofoss” would continue the “Lex Thagaard” with certain additions. It allowed public authorities to intervene directly in a business to promote rationalisation of production, and contemplated police intervention to enforce payment of taxes and fees. On the other side, it established yearly reports on the taxation imposed by the Price Directorate to the Storting; this was supposed to represent a chance for parliament to exercise control on the deeds of the Directorate.<sup>3</sup>

We have already gone over the ideological side of the bourgeoisie parties' speech. The reader should keep those comments in mind while reading through the

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<sup>1</sup> *Bransjeråd*. The dictionary gives us a long definition of the term: ”council appointed by the King and made up of representatives for a line of business or an industry and for the state, in order to further cooperation within the business and between it and the state”. (Haugen, Einar. *Norwegian-English Dictionary*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1996). The branch councils were instituted right after the war.

<sup>2</sup> *Cfr.* Sejersted. *Op. Cit.* “Økonomisk-politisk opposisjon”.

<sup>3</sup> ”Midlertidig lov om prisregulering av 1947”. Kapittel II, §5. In: *Norsk innenriks politikk...*

following. Let us just remark that in the 1947 debate, under a widespread consensus that the crisis times were still there, and an agreement on the welfare and economic goals to reach, the opposition tried to make the distinction between democratic planning and socialistic one. For this purpose, the role of the Storting, the banner of Norwegian democracy, became the centre of the discussion.

#### **a) Lex Brofoss and parliamentary rule. *Høyre's* contribution**

As usual, we will start with the largest opposition party, *Høyre*. The main public concern of the party as to the enabling acts was the role of the Storting before a bigger and more powerful central administration.

The proposal for the new temporary Price law was dealt with in the parliamentary committee in charge of affairs relating to the Ministry of Justice (*Justisnemnda*), where John Lyng participated as representative for *Høyre*. When the case was later discussed in the Odelsting in June 1947, Lyng was also the main spokesman for the party.

Lyng focused on the constitutionality of the enabling acts and not on the economic needs of the moment and the pertinence of economic controls. Lyng's was the most elaborated contribution on this particular point during the 1947 debate. He argued that through an enabling act (*fullmaktslov*) a great deal of authority of the Storting in the economy was delegated to the government. Jurisdiction of these two powers was thus made unclear, which went contrary to the constitutional order and the parliamentary tradition, since:

Først og fremst at de uhyre viktige statsfunksjoner som vi karakteriserer som den 'lovgivende', den 'bevilgende' og den 'beskattende' myndighet, skal utøves av Stortinget selv, etter at sakene er underkastet en åpen og fri

drøftelse i Stortingets frie forum, med rett for enhver av de valte representanter til å gi uttrykk for sitt syn.<sup>1</sup>

The prerogatives granted to the central administration in taxation and price setting, explained Lyng, allowed it to implement comprehensive measures outside of the Storting's budget and jurisdiction. Those decisions took place behind closed doors and curtains, away from public supervision.

He also asserted that if the Labourite majority in the Storting enjoyed, in principle, a mandate to carry out changes, it was within the limits of the constitutional framework, according to which it had also the duty of enforcing the abovementioned prerogatives of parliament. It was not entitled to delegate them. The Storting could well replace the enabling acts with special legislation (*særlover*), which would not threaten the legal and legislative system, whereas by sanctioning enabling acts, the Storting established an instance in competition with itself.

Lyng criticised too the argument that enabling acts were necessary as long as there was still an extraordinary situation. In his opinion, if the situation was extraordinary in economic terms, it was not in the understanding that the Storting was able to assemble and fulfill its constitutional duties and carry out its corresponding administrative tasks.

On the other hand, in the economic sphere, continued Lyng, the enabling acts broke the logics of the system. They challenged, first, the principle of legality by granting a public instance the power to interfere in private business and individual rights without reference to a law approved in parliament.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, plenipotentiary

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<sup>1</sup> Stortingets forhandlinger 1947. Tidende. P. 459.

<sup>2</sup> “[Legalitet] er et prinsipp som har en dobbelt adresse. Det sier for det første at enhver generell regel som gir en offentlig instans eller en offentlig tjenestemann rett til å gripe inn i privatfolks økonomiske eller personlige rettssfære, skal være vedtatt av den lovgivende forsamling i lovs form. Og det sier på den annen side at enhver inngrep som en offentlig administrasjon foretar i en privatmanns personlige eller økonomiske rettssfære, skal ha en klar påvisning, en klar hjemmel i en lov vedtatt av den lovgivende forsamling”. Ibidem. P. 461.

powers in the economy plagued with insecurity and unpredictability a business environment where fixed laws and rules were vital.

The bureaucratic rule would seriously damage economic enterprises, he said. The Storting work represented a much better alternative to economic issues, even under a Labourite majority, than the relative expertise of the administration officials. The highest political instance could not be challenged under the assumption that it could not provide the necessary expertise. To define the economic guidelines was a task for the elected authorities, whose representativity could not be replaced by any expert organ, concluded Lyng:

Det er også en av de grunner som gjør at jeg føler meg mer betrygget når en avgjørelse treffes av arbeiderpartiets gruppe i denne sal, enn når den treffes av arbeiderpartiets regjering, at stortingsgruppen representerer en så meget videre skala av faglig innsikt fra alle yrker, enn den overordentlige store kompetanse, som kollegiet av fagministere representerer.<sup>1</sup>

Next to Lyng, on *Høyre's* side, Lindebrække charged with complementary arguments. Although he spoke on the same lines as Lyng on the representativity of the Storting and its preeminence over expert instances,<sup>2</sup> he admitted that most of the accusations on a rule of experts in Norway were exaggerated.

He asserted that price control was indeed necessary, but something was out of doubt to him: price controls should be decided in the open parliamentary forum, where the opposition can make its voice heard, and that was not what the Labour proposal implied.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem.* Tidende. P. 539

<sup>2</sup> "Storting er ikke bare et nominelt eller numerisk uttrykk for de politiske maktkonstellasjoner i samfunnet. Men det representerer vårt lands forskjellige yrker og næringer og alle samfunnslag, og hele denne sum av innsikt og erfaring skal gjennom komitébehandling og gjennom debattene her i salen vurdere og avgjøre de spørsmålene som det her gjelder." *Ibidem.* P. 489.

<sup>3</sup> "...det er min overbevisning at en økonomiskosialisering av vårt land bidrar til å undergrave evne og vilje til åpen og fri opposisjon og dermed bidrar til å undergrave vesentlige forutsetninger for vårt demokrati". *Idem.* P. 487.

Another key point in Lindebrække's contribution was "...den statsdirigerings- eller sosialiseringslinje som Regjeringen går inn for".<sup>1</sup> He connected this with the issue of the constitutional role of the Storting, too. One of his leading arguments was:

Det første problem er dette: Hvilket behov er det idag for kontroll og regulering av yrkeslivet?

Og det annet problem er dette: Av hvem og på hvilken måte skal denne kontroll og denne regulering besluttet og gjennomføres?<sup>2</sup>

He answered to the first question saying that the need of controls and regulations was different in all economic areas. And to the second, that the constitution granted only the Storting with the powers of legislation, allocation of public funds and setting of taxes. The enabling acts could take the Storting away from its rightful place in financial policies.

The economic issue, according to Lindebrække, was not really a question of economic effectiveness, but one on governing principles. Depriving the Storting of its lawful prerogatives threatened the very nature of democracy, he said:

...vi mener at det er Stortinget, og Stortinget alene, som skal vurdere og avgjøre prinsippene i reguleringspolitikken og trekke opp rammen for den. Og det må Storting gjøre ved spesiallover og ved spesialbestemmelser for det enkelte næring.<sup>3</sup>

The reports by the Price Directorate to the parliament were, he claimed, simply not enough and did not solve the essential constitutional question.<sup>4</sup>

On the side of the old members of the elite of the party, Hermann Smitt Ingebretsen defended *Høyre's* point of view on economic democracy<sup>5</sup> and complained that the business community had not taken part in the making of the law as it corresponded in peace times. He used stronger words than Lyng and

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem.* P. 486.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem.* P. 487.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem.* P. 489.

<sup>4</sup> "Det er klart at stortingsmeldinger og stortingsinterpellasjoner og stortingsforespørsler både prinsipielt og praktisk på ingen måte kan erstatte selve Stortings lovgivende og bevilgende myndighet". *Idem.* P. 489.

<sup>5</sup> *Vid supra.* Chapter 2. "Opposition and Corporatism".

Lindebrække and called Labour's policies a "reaksjonær revolusjon".<sup>1</sup> A resource to a referendum, he added, would be a good democratic solution to the debate.<sup>2</sup>

#### **b) The role of the Storting in a planned economy. *Ventre's* contribution**

*Ventre*, concerned about its centre party role, and in the name of social liberalism, presented a more moderate criticism of the enabling acts, but was no less strict as to the pre-eminent role of the Storting.

*Ventre* was clearly in favour of economic regulations, and in the case of the "Lex Brofoss", it just made a distinction between the public controls it advocated and the "sosialisering av samfunnet"<sup>3</sup> Labour intended to accomplish. *Ventre* claimed to want to bring the Storting completely into the picture to take charge of the guidelines of the planned economy so as to make it really democratic.

Lars Ramndal was chairman in the *Justisnemnda* at the time and was also the main spokesman for his party in the debate. First, Ramndal asked whether there was need for extra regulation and whether regulation was a measure in time of crisis or a goal in itself. He answered to the first with a negative; some of the existing regulatory measures should indeed be lifted. The second was a rhetorical question, and he just added the extraordinary controls did nothing but to extend the crisis period.

He argued that the common man should be protected against economic policies that privileged big capital and centralised decisions in Departments and built up a bureaucratic rule.

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<sup>1</sup> St. forh. 1947. Tidende. P. 503.

<sup>2</sup> On details about Smitt Ingebretsen's proposal on a referendum, Vid Supra. Chapter 2. "Three Issues of Parliamentarism..."

<sup>3</sup> St. forh. 1947. Tidende. P. 456.



However, since economic controls could not be ruled out, the Storting should take over their making. This was the opposite direction, he claimed, to the one taken by the administration and its questionable legality and constitutionality:

Det lovframlegget ein har her, Ot. prp. nr. 152 og inst. O.X., meiner vår fraksjon tek bort frå Stortinget for mykje av den makt Stortinget skal ha, det legg makta i hender som vi meiner det ikkje er vanleg å leggja ho i etter norsk lov. Eg kjenner til at det er dei som meiner at makta bør delegerast endå vidare. Det er overlag interessant at Prisdirektoratet i sitt framlegg, som er prenta som vedlegg til Ot. prp. nr. 152, går inn for å delegera heile makta over til Prisdirektoratet.<sup>1</sup>

The price law, proceeded Ramndal, had gone out of bounds. The controls over what and how much a business should produce were unnecessary and out of place in a price law. The firms themselves should be able to decide how and how much to rationalise and modernise production.

On the side of party politics, the approval of such law, he said, could work against the prevailing cooperation that its party was willing to offer to the ruling administration.<sup>2</sup>

Another *Venstre* representative, Ketil Skogen, pointed out that it was not certain whether the Storting could provide the law protection against state intromission in the rights of the citizens. There was a risk, he said, that the current development ended up in a police state and dictatorship. And asked: “Er staten til for mennesket, eller er mennesket til for staten?”<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, in *Venstre* fashion, he acknowledged that it was not an issue of deciding whether Norway should have regulations and planned economy, but an issue of how far it should be taken, and of

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*. P. 455. Ramndal added: “...vi kan ikkje skjøna, vi kan ikkje tenkja oss, at det er i samsvar med vanleg norsk rett og med konstitusjonell rett at til dømes ei føresegn eller eit vedtak, eller berre eit reglement frå Prisdirektoratet, skal avskipa lovføresegner som Stortinget tidligere har gjevi”. P. 458.

<sup>2</sup> “Når vi etter drøfting ikkje fann at vi ville gå på denne vegen, var det av vi så langt som mogleg ville ta eit sakleg samarbeid med dei som i dag sit ved makta. Vi ville ikkje i utengsmål koma med framlegg som kunne takast opp slik at vi ville bryta samarbeid”. *Idem*. P. 455.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*. P. 492.

how beneficial a bureaucratic rule would be for the economy in the international context.

### c) The individualistic point of view. The *Bondeparti*'s contribution

The *Bondeparti* adopted a more Liberal position. The tendency in the enabling acts debate was in this case towards sympathising with *Høyre*'s position on defence of the private initiative. On these lines, Lars Trædal on behalf of the *Bondeparti* came up with a more Liberal speech than that of the other centre parties. He described Labour's proposal for a price law as the collectivistic outlook at work. Such view, he continued, challenged the Liberal principles on politics and economics. In it, the Storting delegated its regulatory powers to potentially dangerous instances:

Det [...] som gjev seg av dei synsmåtane eg har peika på, er dette: Folket som skal inn under regulering, må sjølv avgjera og ha hand om dette livsviktige spørsmålet. Det folkevalte organ, Stortinget, lyt derfor vera vår med å overføre reguleringsmakt til personar og institusjonar som kan få øve til å øva urett og gjera skade ved evneløyse eller maktmisbruk.<sup>1</sup>

A modern society, he stated, required economic controls, price control included, both in crisis and normal times, but to a different degree in every case. He implied, as well, that the enlargement of the state economic controls in Norway was not rational but political. It was the collectivist point of view at work.

His party, on the contrary, advocated the individualistic point of view and could not agree with such premises that might result in abuse of power.

The *Bondeparti* considered regulations a necessary evil to prevent abuse by the private initiative, but no more. The state should limit its role, instead, to give the right conditions for that private initiative to flower:

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<sup>1</sup> Idem.

...vi held det for å vera avgjerande politisk visdom til kvar tid å finna den rette avgrensing mellom staten og individet sitt maktområde (...). Det positive krav til staten er etter vårt syn at staten skal—ikke konkurrera med individa og skapa motsetningstilhøve til dei, men derimot leggja vilkåra til rette så det kallar på og ankar deira verkefong.<sup>1</sup>

The majority proposal, he concluded, intended to reshape Norwegian democracy, and its approval meant a plenipotenciary power for Labour to proceed with its revolutionary policies.

#### **d) The radical social point viewpoint. The *Kristelig Folkeparti*'s contribution**

The *Kristelig Folkeparti*, following the principles of its “radical social viewpoint”, adopted a position openly in favour of economic regulation, but joined the rest of the bourgeoisie parties in asking for a Storting command over the economic regulations, in criticising the use of detailed controls, and in warning about the danger of a bureaucratic rule.<sup>2</sup>

On those lines, representative Erling Wikborg claimed that the Price Directorate carried out too many detailed controls in too many cases, but stressed also the importance of state control mechanisms to prevent an economic crisis. Norway had not come back to a “normal situation”, and there was no more free market to rely on in order to achieve the economic goals:

Jeg tror ikke at den såkalte frie konkurranse ville kunne nå å gjennomføre de mål jeg har nevnt, den har jo også for en stor del opphevet seg selv. Derfor står vi vel nærmest ved et valg mellom de store sammenslutningers og bransjers regulering og den mer samfunnsbetonte reguleringer. Vi kommer ikke forbi at vi til en viss grad må legge en plan for utbyggingen av vårt næringsliv.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem.* P. 474.

<sup>2</sup> Representative Einar Hareide from *Kristelig Folkeparti* asserted that: ”Det er ei overmåte farleg utvikling dette med den byråkratiske lina i norsk politikk i dag”. *Idem.* P. 533.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem.* P. 537.

However, if controls were vital, the Price law had a political side perhaps more important than the economic one, said Wikborg, and here the Storting should preserve its role before the administration:

Fullmaktsloven åpner adgang til skritt av mer politisk enn næringsbetinget natur, og her gjør det seg gjeldende ikke liten engstelse ute i folket. Det er derfor nødvendig at Stortinget nøye følger utviklingen og treffer avgjørelsen i alle de tilfelle der det ikke er tvingende nødvendig å legge den til andre myndigheter.<sup>1</sup>

The party claimed to remain among the centre parties on this issue, but it seems that after the voting in which the “Lex Brofoss” was approved, they accused the *Kristelig Folkeparti* of having taking sides with Labour. The stance of the *Kristelig Folkeparti*, it was written for the local elections propaganda, was different from, on one side, that of Labour and the Communist Party’s, and on the other, that of *Høyre*’s:

[Kristelig Folkeparti har gitt] et eget forslag til prislov som for det første ikke inneholder de rigorøse bestemmelsen i Lex Thagaard, for det annet tillater småbedrifter å starte uten særskilt tillatelse, og for det tredje uttalte at Stortinget etter hvert skulle avgjøre for hver enkelt næringsgren om reguleringstiltak er nødvendig, og hvilke prinsipper en eventuell regulering skal foregå etter, mens Arbeiderpartiet og kommunistpartiet har gitt Regjeringen og Prisdirektoratet fullmakt til å foreta slike reguleringer.<sup>2</sup>

The *Kristelig Folkeparti* tried, in fact, to place itself in between the conservative and radical political positions in Norwegian politics, without taking a more critical stand before the government. A strategy that did not please either *Høyre* or the *Bondeparti*.

## A New Context. The Period Between the Big Debates

In the 1947 debate, constitutional and parliamentarian arguments ran above economic ones in the bourgeoisie parties’ speech. The constitutionality issue was put

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<sup>1</sup> Idem.

<sup>2</sup> ”Redegjørelse om Lex Thagaard”. In: 20. Oktober. Valgavis for Kristelig Folkeparti i Aker og Oslo. Oslo, A/S Morgenpostens trykkeri, 1947.

straight. The role of the Storting in the economic policies became the centre of the debate. How much it affected the public opinion is difficult to say. What is evident is that it did not help the bourgeoisie position advance in the next Storting elections in 1949.

In between the two main episodes of the enabling acts debate, the controversy continued, but the circumstances had changed. Physical reconstruction was finished around 1950, and the production levels reached by this date overcame those of the pre-war times. The extraordinary regulations of the first years were reconsidered, but it was not clear yet which of them should be taken away.

Most importantly, there was a reconsideration of the economic strategies within the Labour leadership and the core of the experts in the administration. It had to do with a shift in priorities and orientations in the political agenda of the ruling party. As increasing production was regarded as the means to socialism, and the cooperation with the business community showed more practical to achieve the goals of industrialisation, a turn away from Thagaard's influence took place. Key characters Erik Brofoss, head of the Minister of Commerce, and Finance Minister Trygve Bratteli, disagreed with the approach preserved by Thagaard, in which legislation and direct state intervention were the best means to strengthen the economy. Close cooperation between the central administration and business organisations, they thought, could do the trick better.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the Defense Minister, Jens Chr. Hauge, led a group of Labour politicians who favoured more room to market mechanisms than to direct intervention.<sup>2</sup> The scepticism from within the party would only grow, as the final debate got nearer.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Lange. Op. Cit. "Blanke ark og fargestifter. Styringsmodellen finner sin form." And Bergh. Op. Cit. "Produksjon—veien til velstand".

<sup>2</sup> "Som Rune Slagstad har påvist, vokste det fram en indre opposisjon i Arbeiderpartiet, der Jens Chr. Hauge [forsvarsminister] var den drivende kraften.

For a nation that tried to build a bridge between East and West, at the end, Norway had to take sides. Alignment with the West brought along a change of orientation also in the economic area. The Marshall Plan, that granted aid to Norway since 1948, affected the choice of economic strategies to follow.<sup>1</sup> The American corporate approach influenced the making of the Norwegian one. Americans were not the advocates of free market rules the Norwegian extreme Right would like them to be,<sup>2</sup> but their approach to industrial harmony was more oriented to voluntary cooperation with business interests, and they pressed Norway to lift up direct controls as quickly as possible. As a matter of fact, the ongoing cooperation between LO and the big Norwegian corporations materialised in the American-sponsored *Norsk Produktivitetsinstitutt* (NPI), which opposed further state inroads in the economy.<sup>3</sup> The participation of Norway in the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), founded as a result of the Marshall Plan, and the consequent requirement of more openness in the international market would also influence the outcome of the debate on the enabling acts.<sup>4</sup> Liberalisation of the economy was welcome too as a means of the planned economy.

There were some events in the political arena that shaped the background of the debate of the fifties. The Justice Minister, O.C. Gundersen, made public in 1950 a

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... ”Framfor noe tilhørte han en gruppe politikere innen Arbeiderpartiet som var kritisk til det mest vidtgående statsstyret regjeringen la opp til, og som i stedet ønsket å gi mer rom for markedsløsninger. Med tanke på den pågående debatten over pris- og rasjoneringslovgivningen, mente de at den beste strategien for øke produktiviteten var å legge til rette på bedriftsnivå snarere enn å gripe til statlig styring”. Lange, Even. *Op. Cit.* P. 60-62.

<sup>1</sup> Nordby mentions the American pressure to go further in the economic controls contained in the enabling acts. “At den dramatiske omleggingen fant sted akkurat i 1952, må forstås i lys av de betingelsene amerikanerne, i tilknytning til Marshall-programmet, satte for å gi Norge teknisk og økonomisk bistand”. Nordby. ”*Korporatisme...*” P. 62. He also wrote that this represented a choice between the Soviet and the American models. Also, *Cfr.* Lange, Even. *Op. Cit.* “Inn i det lovede land”.

<sup>2</sup> *Farmand* always pointed out that the huge American economic development was caused by free market strategies in order to back their claims that Norway should go the same way.

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr.* Lie, Einar. *Ambisjon og tradisjon. Finansdepartementet 1945-1965*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1995. ”Striden om pris- og rasjonaliseringslovene”.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr.* Lange. *Op. Cit...* ”Samarbeid ute og hjemme.”

proposal called “Om særlige rådgjerder under krig, krigsfare og lignende forhold”, best known as “Den svarte loven”. This proposal of an enabling act contemplated extraordinary faculties for the government in case of war. It seems that those faculties were not favoured by all sides, while some circles traditionally close to Labour opposed them. Radical intellectuals argued against it, and so did the *Justisnemnda*, where Labour enjoyed a majority. The Justice Minister and the government were in a difficult position, and finally Prime Minister Gerhardsen backed down. The strategy Labour followed was to work out in parliament a new proposal acceptable to all parts,<sup>1</sup> a significant step that showed the inclination of Labour to safe political solutions.

In 1952, the Supreme Court faced the issue of constitutionality of the Price law in a concrete case. In a plenary session, the Supreme Court decided that the fees imposed to the whale companies under the enforcement of the Price law were not unconstitutional.<sup>2</sup> This decision influenced the emphasis granted to the constitutional issue in the speech of the opposition in the debate to come.

### **The Bourgeoisie Parties’ Position Between the Two Storting Debates**

In the years between the approval of the Lex Brofoss and the proposal by the Sjaastad committee, *Høyre* kept criticising the resolutions of the Price Directorate. Lindebrække stated in 1951 that the Finance Department had the constitutional responsibility of mastering the economic controls and the Directorate did not.<sup>3</sup> Following the new trends within the party, representative Guttorm Granum proposed during a Storting session in February that year that the Finance Department in

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Lyng, John. *Op. Cit.* “Den svarte loven”.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Sejersted. *Op. Cit.* “Konflikten om fullmaktslovgivningen og den konstitusjonelle utviklingen”.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. To år i opposisjon mot en overmektig sosialistflertall. Høires innsats i Storting 1950 og 1951. En oversikt ved Birger Gotaas. ?, Høires Landsstyre, 1953. P. 319.

cooperation with the business community established a Council with representatives of the private sector and the authorities with the mandate to put forward proposals on price resolutions that could enhance consumers' interests.<sup>1</sup> In the debate on the budget of the Price Directorate in June that same year, Hambro admonished the government and the Finance Minister to inform the Storting on the work of the Price Directorate, since it was unknown to which levels the decisions there were taken.<sup>2</sup>

*Venstre* criticised detailed controls further in 1949 with an argument that had become popular among the opposition parties, namely, by asking for regulations in a framework shaped mainly by the monetary, financial and taxation policies of the government. The firms should adapt to them on their own.<sup>3</sup> This, stated the party, was a better strategy to guarantee full employment than direct state intervention.

In its 1949 programme, the party asserted that indirect controls would also increase pleasure in one's work, entrepreneurship and personal responsibility, in other words, the inner forces of economic progress, and concluded: "Målet er fritt valg av yrke og varer".<sup>4</sup>

The party still maintained that private initiative alone could not achieve full employment, and only public control and planning could,<sup>5</sup> *Venstre* continued its opposition to the regulations on production contained in the Price law.<sup>6</sup> Including the distinction between the kind of the regulations *Venstre* wanted (*samfunnskontroll*) and the ones Labour had imposed (*samfunnsregulering* or *samfunnsdirigering*).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*. P. 216-218.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*. P. 319.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. *Venstres alternativ*... P. 9-11.

<sup>4</sup> *Valgprogram for Venstre 1949*.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Olsen, Oscar. *Venstre og sosialpolitikken*. Oslo, Norges Venstrelag, 1949.

<sup>6</sup> In 1951, the party stated through Olaf Kortner: "[Venstre] ville ikke gi myndighetene rett til å forby en virksomhet å stanse eller innskrenke driften, heller ikke rett til å tvinge en virksomhet til å produsere bestemte varer eller tjenester til priser og vilkår som staten skulle fastsette". *Venstre. Idé og...* P. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Olsen. *Op. Cit.* P. 68-69.



In 1952, the party stated that a big case like the enabling acts should be put forward to the voters in a referendum.<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the enabling acts debate, director and *Venstre* man Joakim Ihlen wrote in 1953 that it was cooperation between state and business, and within the workplace, what could secure full employment and effective rationalisation of production. Such cooperation, it was implied, should be informal and voluntary, and only for special circumstances there should be legislation on it.<sup>2</sup> He stated that the ruling party itself had come to this conclusion.

Voluntary cooperation in economic planning seemed to have been widely accepted by all the bourgeoisie parties by the time the next round of the parliamentary debate began. On these lines, the *Bondeparti* requested in its 1949 programme more freedom for the private initiative and that controls and regulations were to be set and administered in cooperation with the business community.<sup>3</sup>

The *Kristelig Folkeparti* contributed to the criticism by complaining about the size and composition of the new administration. Decentralisation, filling up of forms limited to the minimum feasible, and a taxation system that did not discourage individual initiative or jeopardise production, were some of the demands of the party.<sup>4</sup>

## **Towards the Final Consensus. The 1953 Debate.**

### **Introduction**

After the approval of the “Lex Brofoss” a committee was appointed in 1947 with the instructions of elaborating a proposal for permanent price and rationalisation law.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Venstre. Årsmelding for 1952.*

<sup>2</sup> ”Så vidt jeg forstår er en også på arbeiderpartihold blitt klar over at rasjonalisering av næringene bare kan skje ved samarbeid mellom næringene selv, mellom disse og våre myndigheter og at bare under spesielle forhold kan bli bruk for særlover”. Ihlen, Joakim. *Økonomisk demokrati...* P. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Til vern og trygd...*

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. *Kristelig Folkeparti. Program ved Stortingsvalget 10. oktober 1949.* Erling Wikborg. ”Kristelig Folkepartis hovedlinjer ved stortingsvalget 1949”. In: *Kristelig Folkepartis valgavis i Oslo 1949.* Oslo, Vårt Lands Trykkeri A/L, 1949.

The Sjaastad committee, named after the LO lawyer Gustav Sjaastad and under the influence of the head of the Price Directorate, Wilhelm Thagaard, included representatives of the business community as part of the minority group.<sup>1</sup>

Trond Bergh affirms that Sjaastad and the Labour government had been concerned, a few years prior, about the constitutional problems and the issue of individual rights involved in the enabling acts legislation. Labour wanted to be regarded as a democratic and legally responsible party.<sup>2</sup> There were signs of more political carefulness in the work of the Sjaastad committee. It increased the control by the Storting over the administrative organs empowered by the acts. So argued director Thagaard:

Lovforslaget inneholder også bestemmelser om utvidet parlamentarisk kontroll med bruken av de reguleringsfullmakter som foreslåes lagt til administrasjonen (...). Det forslaget går ut på er fast grunnlag for at Stortinget kan føre kontroll med hvorledes lovgivningsfullmaktene blir brukt.<sup>3</sup>

The committee came up with a proposal of two separate laws in March 1952, one for price control, and the other for rationalisation of production.<sup>4</sup> The last of them confronted fierce opposition.

It was very difficult for Labour to defend the proposal on rationalisation of production. Up to 1952, rationalisation had not played a significant role in the economic policies. There was no administrative apparatus to enforce the regulations in this area, and by 1952, it became evident that there would not be any. There was not any real enthusiasm in Labour for a rationalisation law.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> They were the director Paul Frank from Norges Handelsstands Forbund, the attorney Arne Poulsen from *Norges Håndverkerforbund*, and the directors I. H. Støre and Jens Wilhelmsen from *Norges Industriforbund*. Cfr. *Norsk innenriks politikk...* "Prisloven av 1953. Sjaastadkomitéen—sammensetning og fraksjoner".

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Bergh. *Op. Cit.* "En retrett".

<sup>3</sup> Thagaard. "Herr Keilhau...". P.421.

<sup>4</sup> "Lov om fremme av rasjonalisering, bedre organisasjon og utbygging av den økonomiske virksomhet".

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Lie. *Op. Cit.* "Striden om pris- og rasjonaliseringslovene".

The executive reconsidered the political risks involved and amended what the committee had put forward. Torp's government made public its proposal on a Price law in September 1952. The Rationalisation law was discarded, but some of its elements were attached to the Price law proposal. Overall it was a more moderate version of what the Sjaastad committee had put forward.<sup>1</sup> The Finance minister, Bratteli, presented it to the Storting, and then the government proposal was sent to the Finance committee, which made public its own contribution on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1953. The debate in the Odelsting began on May 28<sup>th</sup>.<sup>2</sup>

The defence of the traditional role of the Storting on the opposition side continued in the parliamentary debate, but it lost preeminence before the economic issue and the tacit agreement that there would be some sort of extraordinary powers in the state hands. The bourgeoisie parties, with the exception of *Venstre*, came up with a more Liberal speech in the 1953 debate, and other issues came forward, namely, ways for an effective control of the administration by the Storting, the protection of the individual before an administrative decision, a demand for a more open administrative decision-making process, cooperation between government and business in the making of the economic policies, and the recourse to mainly macroeconomic regulations in the economic planning.

#### **a) Trust to the business community. Lindebrække and Høyre's contribution**

Sejersted states that, previous to the Storting debate on a permanent Price law, Lindebrække suggested searching for an opportunity for bourgeoisie cooperation.<sup>3</sup> He argued that the party should join the minority fraction in the Sjaastad committee and support the proposal of a Trust law complemented with a temporary Price law.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Lyng. Op. Cit. "Striden om Lex Thagaard og reguleringslovgivningen".

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Lindebrække. Op. Cit. "Kampen om prisloven".

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Sejersted. Op. Cit.

Lyng suggested, on the other hand, a Trust law where some considerations regarding the need of further economic regulations in the first phase were contemplated and which would make a temporary Price law superfluous. The party leadership was divided. Hambro went for Lyng's proposal whereas Stranger and Smitt Ingebretsen supported Lindebrække's. This last proposal became the party's position during the debate.<sup>1</sup>

Once in the Storting session, Lyng assumed again the role of opponent to the price legislation due to constitutional concerns, whereas Lindebrække's contribution to the 1953 debate revolved more around the economic side rather than on the legal issue.

The constitutional issue had the same rationale as in the 1947 debate. It reads in *Høyre's* program of 1953: "Systemet med fullmaktslover er udemokratisk og ukonstitusjonelt, det flytter viktige avgjørelser fra Stortinget til departementer og direktorater og stenger for fri og våken offentlig kritikk".<sup>2</sup> The party stated in the same document that it still wanted to annul the permanent price legislation and give the Storting the ultimate authority in economic issues. The permanent Price law, it was stated in a brochure, was fundamentally wrong because it put the Storting aside:

Hvorfor er Høyre mot prisloven når partiet selv sier det er for kontroll med priser og bransjesammenslutninger?

Høyre mener at vårt land skal styres av folkets representanter i Stortinget, og derfor er vi imot at en betydelig del av Stortingets myndighet overlates til reguleringen og prisdirektoratet og setter disse i stand til fullstendig å omforme landets økonomiske struktur.<sup>3</sup>

Since the constitutional aspect of the debate, mainly the defence of the role of the Storting, does not differ substantially here from the 1947 position, we will focus now on Lindebrække's contribution.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*. "Konflikten om fullmaktslovgivningen og den konstitusjonelle utviklingen".

<sup>2</sup> *Høires program 1953*. This was indeed the same elaboration by Lyng from 1947.

<sup>3</sup> *Spørsmål og svar. Stortingsvalget 1953. Til bruk for tillidsmenn*. Oslo, S. & Jul Sørensen A/S, 1953.

Lindebrække tried to prove how the Price law did not fulfill the two purposes it was supposed to, namely, keep prices down and ensure full employment. It had been the Marshall Plan, he claimed, that saved the Norwegian economy. The economic argument to extend the extraordinary powers to the government was, thus, inoperative.

He claimed that *Høyre*'s proposal was all about taking power from the bureaucrats and transferring it to the consumers.<sup>1</sup> He proceeded, then, to explain what he called "våre egne positive forslag" with the goal of: "å skaffe forbrukerne de fleste, de beste og de billigste varer etter forbrukernes egen vurdering av ønske og behov".<sup>2</sup>

"Modern Liberal economic politics", he argued, required a voluntary cooperation between the public administration and the business community.<sup>3</sup> Lindebrække developed the theme of "Trust" (*Tillit*), which he explained in several ways. One of the most glamorous: "...frihet under demokratisk kontroll".<sup>4</sup> The state, he claimed, should give private initiative free room, and let the market rules work and intervene only when that trust had been betrayed:

Vårt forslag bygger på tillit til forbrukernes evne til selv å bestemme over sitt daglige liv og på tillit til at alle grener av norsk næringsliv, i jordbruket, i skogbruket, i fiske, i handel og industri og i skipsfart, har evne og vilje til å fylle sin oppgave som forbrukernes tjener i samfunnsholdningen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lindebrække's speech was later published as a brochure with the title: Markedet og forbrukerne skal bestemme—ikke myndighetene og direktørene. Høires alternativ til prisloven: En storstilet maktoverføring fra myndighetenes kommandosentraler til frie forbrukere. Sjur Lindebrækkes innlegg i prislovdebatten (Positiv Politikk. Nr. 10, July 1953. Tønsbergs Aktivtrykkeri).

<sup>2</sup> Stortingets forhandlinger 1953. Tidende. P. 360.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem. Tidende. P. 362.

<sup>4</sup> Idem. P. 363.

<sup>5</sup> Idem. P. 363.

In his concept of economic democracy, the interests of the business community were identified with those of the consumers, a term which, on *Høyre's* lips, seemed to have embraced both individuals and the common men.<sup>1</sup>

The alternative he presented to a permanent Price law was the continuation of the Trust law along with temporary and extraordinary legislation in order to protect consumers in extraordinary situations.

### **b) An active Storting. *Venstre's* contribution**

*Venstre* approached the enabling acts question in 1953 from a very different position from the one it held in 1947. Around the time the Sjaastad-committee proposal was made public in 1952, chairman Worm-Müller resigned from his position on the grounds that he could not bring the party together in the regulation issue. In the next National Assembly, the party elected Røiseland as chairman, a member with an opposite stance on state intervention.<sup>2</sup>

Along with Røiseland, an alliance between radicals and moderates displaced the conservative wing of the party from the top. Consequently, *Venstre* left behind the conservatives' approach of taking sides in the dispute against Labour. The party should now reaffirm its place in the centre, separate from *Høyre's* unconditional support to freedom for business interests, and emphasize the need of public control of the economy.<sup>3</sup>

There would not be a joined bourgeoisie block on the enabling acts issue in parliament. However, the party could not just back a Labourite proposal. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term "consumer" represents a step ahead in the Liberal speech. The earlier defence of the minority before the dictatorship of the majority addressed the individual and not the common man as such; that is to say, it referred more to the entrepreneur than to the wage earner. The turn of *Høyre*, a conservative party, to embrace vaguely the man in the street in its speech is connected to the ambitions of the party to become a National party not suspected of a class orientation and seen as another defender of the welfare state without giving up the support to business.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Rovde. *Op. Cit.* "Sjaastad-innstillinga".

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.* "Sjaastad-innstillinga", and "Landsmøtet 22.-24. mai 1952".

establish distance from Labour, and from Thagaard, the party would come up with its own alternative. A council was formed for such purpose. The composition of this council reflected the change in power relations within the party.<sup>1</sup> Radicals and moderates had the majority, whereas conservatives remained isolated.

Paul Ingebretsen was named chairman of the council for a *Venstre*'s proposal on a Price law in 1952.<sup>2</sup> The final proposal of this council accepted a permanent price law as a means for public regulations, but at the same time demanded that such law restrain from application to other economic purposes different from price setting, and also that its extraordinary powers were limited.<sup>3</sup>

In Ingebretsen's contribution in parliament, the supremacy of the Storting played a big role. He also adopted the principle of the defence of the consumer as a key issue regarding a Price law.<sup>4</sup>

Ingebretsen stated that free market was a relative entity, and one could not really talk about free competition any longer, but only about "healthy" (*sunnn*) competition. There were many factors that worked against a healthy competition in the context of free price setting. In this context, the duty of the state was to prevent negative or unrestricted competition.

Detailed economic controls had gone too far, for too long, but it was not pertinent to lift them all up at once either. It was still necessary to hold a public price control:

...[man] må fortsatt ha prislovbestemmelser. Problemsstillingen blir altså ikke det alternative: Enten prislov eller ikke prislov? Det blir: Hvilken prislov? Og hovedspørsmålet blir da hvor begrenset den bør være, eller hvor vidt den bør

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem.* "Prislovutvalet, proposisjonen og vestrealternativet".

<sup>2</sup> *Cfr. Venstre. Årsmelding for 1952.*

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr. Rovde. Op. Cit.* "Prislovutvalet, proposisjonen og vestrealternativet".

<sup>4</sup> Ingebretsen wrote a brochure on the Price law where he explained *Venstre*'s position in more detail. As to consumers' role in the economy, he wrote: "Forbrukernes frie valg skal bestemme sammenstningen og mengden av produksjonen". *Venstre og prisloven*. Utgitt av Norges Venstrelag. Skien, Polikarp Pettersens bok & Aksidenstrykkeri, 1953. P. 11.

gå, med andre ord, hvilket innhold loven bør ha. Hvilket navn en bruker, trustlov eller prislov, er av underordnet betydning.<sup>1</sup>

He thought a good approach was to put together the Trust law along with provisions on price control to create a law above both the Trust and Price laws, and of course, to avoid a permanent price law.

The Storting should, in his opinion, be in charge on deciding the form, extension and duration of price regulations. The system of reports to parliament by the administrative agencies empowered created only a small possibility of parliamentary control that was not sufficient.

The Storting should no longer play a passive role. The appointment of a Price Council (*Prisråd*), formulated in the government proposal, should not work as an independent control organ but rather help put regulations under effective parliamentary control:

For hvert år må Stortinget få seg forelagt de retningslinjer om Regjeringen [gjennom prisrådet] mener bør følges. *Stortinget skal behandle disse og gjøre vedtak som fastlegger, så langt det selv finner det hensiktsmessig, om reguleringstiltak er nødvendig, og i tilfelle hva disse skal omfatte og hvordan de skal utøves.* I samsvar med disse vedtakene, som er bindende, er fullmaktene til administrasjonen begrenset.<sup>2</sup>

A further parliamentary control should also be carried out to ensure protection to the citizens in case of arbitrary administration decisions.<sup>3</sup>

The best approach to fulfill the economic goals, stated Paul Ingebretsen, was through financial, credit, monetary and currency policies, that is to say, the macroeconomic framework, and not through detailed price controls, which should only be put into action in case the other means failed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. forh. 1953. Tidende. P. 365.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem. P. 367. My underlining.

<sup>3</sup> "...under hensyn til de enkelte borgeres interesser og krav på rettsikkerhet og en betryggende saksbehandling". Idem. P. 370. Ingretsen elaborated more on the issue in his brochure on the Price law. Cfr. Op. Cit. "Fullmakter til administrasjonen avgrenses", "Avgifter og utbyttegrensning".

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Ibidem.



### c) Corporatism in Liberal terms. The *Bondeparti*'s contribution

Jon Leirfall, spokesman of the *Bondeparti*, argued strongly against the proposal of a permanent Price law and called it “unnecessary” and “indefensible”.<sup>1</sup> It was free competition what set prices best, benefited consumers, and kept businessmen from earning too much, he claimed. Public controls of prices had not helped hold prices down. It had been proven unnecessary to maintain enabling acts and a big regulatory apparatus:

Vi meiner det har vori for mykje pirk og detaljarbeid, og for lite sakkunnskap, for lite effektivitet, for mykje skjema, for mykje vilkårlege avgjerder og for lite sunt skjønn.<sup>2</sup>

According to Leirfall, the bureaucratic rule enhanced by the Price law did not produce wealth and higher standards of living; it just distributed poverty. The Price law was also part of a scheme that privileged the big industry at the expense of the small and concentrated economic activities in Oslo. In the long run, this system led to socialisation and strict direct controls. Trying to hold full employment through economic controls represented a constant threat to democratic values. Trying to limit the prospect of profits, as the Price law contemplated, and all bourgeoisie parties criticised, would repress the entrepreneurial spirit.

As expressed elsewhere in the bourgeoisie opposition's speech, he pinpointed that the economic question should be solved through cooperation between the authorities and the business community:

Vi meiner at i staden for eit system med offentlege reguleringar og dirigeringar, burde den økonomiske utviklinga byggjast på eit samarbeid med dei organisasjonar som arbeider i næringslivet, på alle felt av det, og på at ein tekk opp til drøfting problem og tiltak som ein meiner kan og bør gjerast, og dei bør førast gjennom i samarbeid med organisasjonane.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. forh. 1953. Tidende. P. 371.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem. P. 371.

<sup>3</sup> Idem. P. 379.

In order to protect the interests of the consumers, the *Bondeparti* proposed the use of the Trust law<sup>1</sup> with the addition of some special laws:

I trustlova og ei rekkje med serlover har vi grunnlag for all den priskontroll som trengst for å tryggja forbrukarane mot prismisbruk under normale tilhøve, og vi har lovheimel for den kontrollen som er naudsynleg med konkurranseavgrensande samskipnader.<sup>2</sup>

The additional laws should include laws on quality control to assure that consumers get the best products possible. With exceptional need of enabling acts, these should be limited to concrete situations and limited goals.

The best means to achieve the social levelling the party traditionally supported, Leirfall said, was not through direct state controls, but through indirect intervention approved by the Storting.

Det er [Stortinget] som skal 'fremme en rimelig fordeling av nasjonalinntekten' ved ein rettferdig skatte- og avgiftspolitik, ved sosiale trygder og ved at vilkåra blir lagde til rette på ein rettferdig måte for dei ymse næringene.<sup>3</sup>

The *Bondeparti* stuck to a Liberal speech in the economic and political issues around the enabling acts, and supported both private enterprise and Storting rule. This speech did not match the actual corporate tendencies in the party. However, if we are to take it literally, we can describe it as corporatism formulated under Liberal principles.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In another document from the *Bondeparti*: "[For en sunn konkurranse] er det ikke bare Statens byråkrati og dets prisfordyring en må være på vakt imot, men også de private trustdannelser. Det er uforsvarlig å ha en prislov som gir noen funksjonærer i et direktorat all makt til å bestemme over næringslivet og binde de positive krefter. Men en må også sikre seg mot for vidtgående private konkurransereguleringer, og derfor må vi ha en effektiv trustlov og trustkontroll". Oppland Bondeparti. Håndbok for Grendemenn. Gjøvik, Samholds Trykkeri, 1953. P. 16.

<sup>2</sup> St. forh. 1953. Tidende. P. 372.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem. P. 376.

<sup>4</sup> In an issue we cannot give more space in the main text, but we should mention, Halvor Bunkholt, another *Bondeparti* representative, pointed out what he considered the threat the enabling acts posed to the security of the individual before the law. The enabling acts were not usual laws, he maintained, but laws that just stayed behind the resolutions of the Price Directorate, investing these of authority. Cfr. The report of his speech in I kamp for frihet og folkestyre... "Prisloven. Store debatter." P. 406. The *Bondeparti* also joined the concern of the security of the individual before the law in its 1953 programme and established it as one element of the projected social arrangement, where a steady bigger production lied along with freedom of action and social security. Bondepartiets program Stortingvalget 1953.

#### **d) Reformulating corporatism. The *Kristelig Folkeparti*'s contribution**

On behalf of the *Kristelig Folkeparti*, representative Knut Toven repeated what its party had stated years before on the needs of regulations and restrictions not only during crisis but also in normal times. However, the question had been reformulated: How far should controls go in normal times? And to this respect, the situation at present in 1953, he said, was different from that of 1947.

He immediately added that the state should not compete with the individuals. Direct intervention in the private area should be interpreted as a necessary evil. Private initiative should get as much room for action as allowed by social concerns, and the state should guarantee the conditions for it.<sup>1</sup>

A solution to fulfill the public and individual needs was not detailed controls and enabling acts, but indirect macroeconomic controls:

Vi meiner videre at en ikke skal ha detaljreguleringer. I stedet bør en søke å oppnå de tilsiktede virkninger ved mer indirekte 'rammereguleringer'. Men reguleringene må utformes slik at de samtidig med å fremme de oppsatte mål, også gir en videst mulig ramme for det private initiativ...<sup>2</sup>

If anyway direct controls became necessary, they should be implemented through either special laws or direct decisions by the Storting, instead of through enabling acts. Here he follows the lines of the party programme of 1953:

Utstrakte fullmaktslover kan være tjenlige i særpregede og alvorlige krisesituasjoner, men må ellers så vidt mulig søkes unngått, og må framfor alt ikke undergrave de folkevalgte organers myndighetsområder. Finnes det nødvendig i en krisesituasjon med større inngrep i tilvante frihetsområder, å dette bare skje gjennom særlig og midlertidig lov for det enkelte tilfelle eller ved stortingsvedtak.<sup>3</sup>

The proposal of the *Kristelig Folkeparti* was to develop further the Trust law and preserve a modified temporary Price law:

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<sup>1</sup> "Statens oppgave må være å legge forholdene slik til rette at det fremelsker sjøloppholdelsesdriften hos mennesket og lysten og viljen til å utfolde sine evner i nyskapende arbeid". St. forh. 1953. Tidende. P. 380.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem. P. 383.

<sup>3</sup> Kristelig Folkeparti program ved stortingsvalget 12. oktober 1953.

Mitt parti mener at vi fortsatt bør ha en varig trustlov, men at prisloven bør gjøres midlertidig, altså to helt forskjellige lover. Når det gjelder trustloven, går vi inn for at den bør revideres med sikte på å kunne føre en mer effektiv kontroll med pris- og konkurranseregulerende tiltak.<sup>1</sup>

The party agreed with the appointment of the Price Council, so long as this instance was formed with representatives of the most important economic areas taking full advantage of their large expertise and representativity.<sup>2</sup> More influence should be given in cases where the Storting could not intervene directly. However, contrary to the previous developments in the administration, the Price Council should not turn into a state within the state, and should give reports to the Storting about all its relevant decisions.

Toven also advocated cooperation between the administration and the business community in order to achieve better production, a further acknowledgment of the corporate tendencies of the party, in accordance to the bourgeoisie opposition's stand.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the other bourgeoisie parties, the *Kristelig Folkeparti* did not place consumers' satisfaction as a priority: "Folkets velferd og trivsel avhenger nå en gang ikke bare en viss tilgang på varer og tjenester".<sup>4</sup> The party continued avoiding any connections with a conservative point of view but stating this time a clear opposition to the governmental proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> St. forh. 1953. Tidende. P. 383.

<sup>2</sup> "Skal et slikt råd, så langt som råd er, gi strengt saklig begrunnede tilrådninger og ta eventuelle avgjørelser i de saker som det får seg forelagt, må medlemmene hver på sitt spesielle felt representere den nødvendige fagkunnskap. De viktigste næringer bør derfor være representert i rådet, og disses organisasjoner bør ha forslagsrett. På denne måten vil en unngå at det ved sammensetningen blir tatt altfor meget politiske omsyn. Eventuelle forbrukerorganisasjoner bør også ha sin representant i Prisrådet". Ibidem. P. 384.

<sup>3</sup> He also showed a strong concern for the legal security of the individuals in administrative cases, and asked for those involved to be given the right to know the reasons for the decision taken, to express their views, and to complain in case the decision was negative for them.

<sup>4</sup> Idem. P. 383.

## Rhetoric and Pragmatism. Final Considerations on the Enabling Acts Debate

The bourgeoisie parties closed ranks in their support to a cooperation scheme between business and the central administration, which to the benefit of the first, the decision-making process was less dependent on fixed legislation; a corporatism that did not empower the Labourite rule. In order to push their interests forward, they made use of Liberal rhetoric as political capital and played the script of socialism versus capitalism, the polarisation behind which, as Perkin taught us, the struggle between public and private experts is hidden.

The case of Norway is quite peculiar regarding a Cold War stand. Norway was slow to adopt the American model and had shown admiration for the Soviet achievements.<sup>1</sup> The coming events, though, led to discard any possible resemblance to the Soviet system. The Cold War might not have been indifferent to the outcome of the enabling acts debate, but it would be surprising to know that there is evidence that the Labourite views in economic policies had been propelled by the capitalist-socialist dilemma.

The enabling acts debates took place in a context where there was consensus in broad terms on the economic and social guidelines.<sup>2</sup> The speech of the opposition can be misleading; Labour had shown no signs of socialistic drives and even seemed ready to concede and agree. The bourgeoisie parties did not ignore these facts;<sup>3</sup> in the same way, we can deduct that they were aware that delegation of power from the Storting to the administration was a necessary measure.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Lange. Op. Cit. "Blanke ark og fargestifter".

<sup>2</sup> "Om det er riktig at den organiserte kapitalisme er preget av et nært samvirke mellom politikere – Arbeiderpartiets eller andre-, embetsmenn, 'næringslivets menn' og organisasjonsfolk, betyr det ikke at alle motsetninger den imellom er fjernet. Alle 'herskende klasser' har alltid slåss innad (...). De politiske kamper i etterkrigstida –om *Libertas* i 1948-49, om pris- og rasjonaliseringslovene 1952-53, kanskje om 'deprivatisering' av bankene i 1974-1975—viser det selvfølgelig, at de forente eliter ikke er blitt én sjel i ett legeme". Bull. Op. Cit. P. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Iveland, Einar. "Venstre etter Stortingsvalget"... And Wikborg, Erling. "Skillelinjer i dagens...".

Trond Bergh asserts that detailed regulation in the post-war years was actually never so authoritarian as the bourgeoisie parties claimed. The enabling acts were not enforced as expected and created a problem for Labour, which was attacked by the Right for maintaining laws that granted the government extraordinary powers, and by the Left for not putting them into action. Cooperation, regulation, and Keynesian monetary and financial policies, added Bergh, were strategies used as extensively as direct regulations since the end of the war.<sup>1</sup>

Labour gave up the high ambitions of the Sjaastad committee and then settled down for a price law that avoided the direct intervention the business community opposed so fiercely. However, the permanent Price law that was approved provided the central administration with regulation resources even more extensive than those of the “Lex Brofoss”. It was possible to regulate prices and profits, as well as competition, on a permanent basis, and the fees collected could be used to level out differences in production and sales.<sup>2</sup> All in all, the government settled for cooperation and consensus. As Finance Minister Bratteli had stated during the debate, coinciding with the opposition’s point of view, a price law was regarded as no more than an instrument among others to achieve the economic goals ahead.<sup>3</sup> The price law would play a role in the background.

More significant was the fact that the outcome of the 1953 debate marked a highlight in corporate developments. Instead of an open, almost official and constitutional corporatism as Labour seemed to have planned in the beginning, more informal and hidden contacts and channels between the authorities and the organised interests came to being.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Bergh. *Op. Cit.* “En retrett”.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem.* And Lange. *Op. Cit.* ”Blanke ark og fargestifter”.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Bratelli’s contribution to the 1953 debate. *St. forh. 1953*. Tidende. P. 165.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Bergh. *Op. Cit.* “Økonomisk og industrielt demokrati—innflytelse og medansvar”.

The outcome of the debate has been widely discussed by Norwegian historians and we can barely go over some points in relation to our work. Francis Sejersted sees Liberal scruples raised by the bourgeoisie opposition operating within Labour, and electoral considerations, pushing the party to withdraw.<sup>1</sup> Lange has a more suggestive interpretation. He mentions several factors that influenced Labour's decision. Among them, the changing position on economic approaches within the Labour elite, the American influence and pressure, and the International commerce treaties. He points out that the advance in modernisation and rationalisation achieved in the first years of the post-war era had stopped because of the business communities' refusal to cooperate within the arrangement the enabling acts were creating. Labour decided to ease the tension and give up some of its drive for more public controls.<sup>2</sup> By yielding, Labour saved the corporate scheme it had built up. In few words, the withdrawal can be seen as a display of pragmatism.

Pragmatism, as well, is Trond Bergh's answer to this question. He regards Labour's drawback as product of tactical and political evaluations. The criticism by the opposition played a role only as it strengthened the dissension in the Labour elite, which doubted whether there was a real need for broad enabling acts. It was evident for the Labour leadership that cooperation with the business community was

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Sejersted. *Op. Cit.*

<sup>2</sup> "Regjering ønsket altså ikke å la det økonomiske samarbeidet gå på bekostning av offentlig styring, men å kombinere åpning mot større markeder med statlig styrt modernisering hjemme".

...  
 "Den politiske blokkeringen ble løst gjennom kompromisset om pris- og rasjonaliseringsloven. Regjeringen lot Wilhelm Thagaards gamle reguleringsmodell falle, men fikk gjennomslag for andre virkemidler. Løsningen innebar at produktivitetsproblemet kunne angripes langs en ny samarbeidslinje". Lange. *Op. Cit.* P. 160 and 165. Lange's assumption is supported by *Venstre's* threats and this Lindebrække's warning: "...vedtar regjeringspartiets flertall en varig og generell dirigeringslov som a priori forutsetter et konstant motsetningsforhold mellom næringslivet og staten, med fullmakter som på forhånd er formet for å slå ned på all tenkelig mangel på evne og vilje til samarbeid—uten at samarbeid har vært forsøkt". "Statsdirigering og...".

essential for best practical results and a rationalisation law and strain on a price law could destroy the atmosphere of cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Einar Lie agrees, in general terms, with the explanation of pragmatism, but he emphasizes that the changing outlook of the economic experts of Labour since the end of the 1940s helped scepticism about direct intervention grow. The regulation ways put forward in 1952 were regarded as out of date. The new production philosophy in the 1950s left the old Thagaard approach behind. Rationalisation directed by the state required strong public powers. The new approach: voluntary cooperation among all participants in the National economy. Labour did not want to break the cooperation atmosphere that allowed rationalisation in the previous years. Pragmatism in Labour, according to Lie, derives from a change of ideas within the Labour expert elite that had been taking place since the end of the forties.<sup>2</sup>

We find pragmatism a suitable explanation. Labour had to cope with electoral considerations and the responsibilities of consensus seeking acquired during the corporate handlings. We could also talk about pragmatism in relation to Labour and the constitutional concerns.

The party honoured the role of the Storting. It did not allow its opponents to play the constitutional and parliamentary card in the political race. The weight of the political tradition and the Liberal values could not be challenged without losing electoral strength, and the party did not take risks but took the initiative at the same time. However powerful political machinery Labour was, it was not only limited by the electoral odds but also conditioned by the Norwegian political traditions and institutions. We have mentioned the necessary cooperation at the top to keep the corporate setting going, the international obligations, the internal disagreements

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Bergh. Op. Cit. "Økonomisk og industrielt demokrati—innflytelse og medansvar".

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Lie. Op. Cit. "Striden om pris- og rasjonaliseringslovene".



concerning direct controls, and of course, the pressure from the political opposition. In spite of these circumstances, the Labourite elite could still try to push their way through and get the Price law approved in the Storting without concessions. However, it went for consensus. The party chose to rule the country paternalistically and to rely politically on the assurance of economic advance and security for the population.

Labour did not violate the foundations of the political institutions, and we can even say that it profited from them. Advancing parliamentary control of the administration created to enforce economic regulations did not threaten Labour's power; on the contrary, it came as a wise political move. The expert advice could have been very important, but the decision was political.

Here as elsewhere we face the question of Labour's will power. The party yielded, but did it concede or give up some political power? In particular, did it give away the power to reach the goals it had committed itself to? Was the Storting in a lesser "exile" after the enabling acts debate? To the best of our knowledge, the answer to these questions is no.

The bourgeoisie opposition betted on the enabling acts issue as the main electoral one in the 1953 election. It was a mistake. Labour did not lose its majority but confirmed it. The voters' main concern laid somewhere else. It was already evident that Norwegian politics tended to the centre and Labour did not intend to turn Norway into a socialistic country.<sup>1</sup> The slogan of "Democracy or Socialistic rule" made no significant difference. There were no fears of dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Iveland. "Venstre etter Stortingsvalget"... And Wikborg. "Skillelinjer..."

<sup>2</sup> "Proposisjonen til ny prislov ble feilvurdert, og motsetningene overdimensjonert". Larssen, Olav. "Etter Stortingsvalget"...

main 1953 electoral issue was that of well-being<sup>1</sup> and Norwegians voted for continuity, since there was no other visible alternative in the opposition. Oppositions' interests in looking for a way to convince the people they could administer the welfare state best began a bit too late.

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<sup>1</sup> "Den som følger med i debatten nå før valget, må få inntrykk av at politikk i dag utelukkende gjelder løsningen av økonomiske og materielle spørsmål, og alt annet er bisaker". Wikborg. "Skillelinjer...".

## CHAPTER V. TWO NON-PARTISANS POINTS OF VIEW. *FARMAND* AND *TEKNISK UKEBLAD*

### The Conservative Perspective. *Farmand*

Politics in Post-war Norway tended to the centre, in Labour as well as in the bourgeoisie parties. However, among the non-partisan political opposition, we find an exceptional case, a publication that kept openly at one extreme, namely, *Farmand*. *Norsk forretningsblad*.

In an analysis of speech, it is as important to find the rationale in the texts in question, as it is to perceive the slight differences of the language used. *Farmand* did not unveil any secrets about Norwegian politics. For the most part, it registered complaints common to all the political opposition with a few significant contributions of its own. What makes the magazine different is the language it uses; it is radical.

The bourgeoisie parties made strong statements in this period, as we have seen. At times, these were excessive and purely rhetorical. "Dictatorship", "Nazification", "Communism" were invariably shown as threats and not as consummated facts. In *Farmand* this subtle distinction is not taken away but it is blurred to the readers. And besides the strong vocabulary used, the context of *Farmand's* criticism is one of a crusade that was more than political. The editorial staff of the magazine, it is our impression, was away from the concrete political handlings, where negotiation marks the tone of the debate. Theirs gives the impression to be an intellectual and moral point of view in support of business not designed by businessmen neither by professional politicians.

It might be subtleties, but they matter much. Language is crucial. It is so for those who publish any magazine or newspaper. *Farmand* was a spokesman of

business interests. It had a clear line, a straightforward purpose and a self-given mission to defend the free-market rules and the Liberal outlook. The language in the magazine conveys this meaning in a very conscious fashion.

A Liberal weekly, it was put out of circulation by the occupying forces during the war and came back to life in May 1945. There was not a rupture between the new era and the pre-war times. *Farmand* seems to have followed the same clear line since at least the mid 1930's, when Ph. D. Trygve J.B. Hoff took over the editor's position.<sup>1</sup> In his introductory article, he described the magazine as "et organ for næringslivets frihet"; and so did the editorial staff as well in 1948.<sup>2</sup>

If we had through Thagaard's continuity as Price director the influence of a 1930's economic philosophy of direct controls over the post-war Norway, Hoff's editorial position embodied the continuity of thought in the weekly. However, *Farmand* updated its conservative points of view with reviews of the Liberal editorial production abroad,<sup>3</sup> but it preserved the analogy between Nazism, communism, and regulated economy, which equalised all approaches different from liberalism to paths towards dictatorship. And also the assumption that the relative freedom of the businessman and the right to property could be identified with the absolute freedom of the individual. On these lines, Hoff could come up with a sentence like this: "*Både i diktaturstatene og her hjemme går kampen mot næringslivets frihet hånd i hånd med kampen mot den personlige frihet og ytringsfriheten*"; and claimed about the

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Trygve Hoff. "Farmands program – næringslivet frihet. " "Utdrag av dr. Hoff's programartikkel i 'Farmand' 1. oktober 1935". *Farmand*. Nr. 7, 50-year special issue, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> "Til 'Farmand's lesere". *Farmand*. Nr. 37, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *Farmand* was aware of both the academical and philosophical developments abroad. We find many articles, both descriptive and critical, about the new sources in economic and social research, especially those on a re-born liberalism and the never-ending debate on the best economic approach to reconstruction and prosperity in Europe, as well as regular criticism against the Keynesian formulas. We read reports on the economic policies of different countries, particularly those of the U.S. and Scandinavia, and their practical results. There is a full report on the liberal conferences in Mont Pelerin and Wadham College; about this. Cfr. Trygve Hoff. "Levende liberalisme." *Farmand*. Nr. 17, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

Labour government: "Nazistenes og fascistenes bestemmelser følger nøyaktig de samme linjer..."<sup>1</sup>

The logics of *Farmand's* writers, allowing state control of the economic activities, as it happened in socialist economies, meant putting in the state's hands control over the cultural and intellectual life.<sup>2</sup>

Another main feature of *Farmand's* point of view that placed the weekly at an extreme hardly reached by other opposition groups, even away from the Hambro's *Høyre* it fancied, was the refusal to accept fully the welfare state and the concept of socialised property it brought about.

Once faced with the situation after liberation, the conservative stand of the magazine consisted also in opposing any economic control understood as unnecessary –and the editors saw many—in a revolutionary environment in which controls were political instruments.<sup>3</sup> The magazine supported rationalisation,<sup>4</sup> production councils,<sup>5</sup> and the emergency measures in the economy, but it attacked public regulation as guideline as well as compulsory equalisation in society.<sup>6</sup> The common goal, according to *Farmand*, was increased production and higher living standards, under the condition of intellectual and religious freedom, free choice of good and services, and of trade and workplace. *Farmand* came up surprisingly early with the statement that consumers' interests were to be given priority.<sup>7</sup> All these were

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<sup>1</sup> Trygve Hoff. "Farmands program..." My underlining.

<sup>2</sup> "I de socialistiske samfunn hvor staten fullstendig dirigerer det økonomiske liv, dirigerer de også fullstendig det åndelige liv. Individets rettigheter er det bare en illusjon. Denne utvikling er ingen tilfeldighet. Den har både politiske og psykologiske årsaker". *Farmand*. "Valgresultatet". Editorial, nr. 45, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

<sup>3</sup> "Efter min mening har *Farmand* en stor oppgave ved å virke som kritisk organ og regulator i en eller kanskje litt for reguleringsvennlig tid", wrote a new member of the editorial staff in his presentation to the readers in 1945. Varvin, Kåre. "Den aktuelle situasjon og Farmands program". *Farmand*. Nr. 26, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. "Oppstilling av mål". *Farmand*. Editorial, nr. 33, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. "Produksjonsråd". *Farmand*. Nr. 54, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. "Oppstilling av mål"...

<sup>7</sup> "For å nevne en selvfølgelig forutsetning, må det være et produksjonsapparat som skaffer oss *nyttige* varer, varer som er efterspurt. Og det må være et apparat som skaffer oss *billige* varer. Det må være et

mainly tasks for the productive circles of society, namely, the entrepreneurs; in particular, the small ones.<sup>1</sup> The role of the state should limit to support them, since it was to serve the members of society and not the other way around.<sup>2</sup>

The socialisation of the means of production *Farmand* saw taking place in Norway could only mean corruption, bureaucratisation, centralisation of the economy, and also low-quality products and bad service for the consumers.<sup>3</sup>

These are some of the recurrent topics in the magazine we find throughout this period. We could follow how they developed and write a compendium of conservative thought, but here we should circumscribe to *Farmand's* elaboration on the one-party rule and the role of the Storting.

### **Party Dictatorship. Post-War Norway According to *Farmand***

There are several key principles in *Farmand's* argumentation in these years. In this particular case, the most important of them is that planned economy and parliamentarism were irreconcilable. This corresponded with the general idea that economic regulations, or the growth of the state, could not be developed under democratic control and upholding individual freedom at the same time. Security and freedom, concepts that in the language of social reformists went hand in hand, were for *Farmand* mutually excluding.<sup>4</sup>

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økonomisk utbygd produksjonsapparat.” *Farmand* claimed that it took sides with the consumers in this and other cases. *Idem*.

<sup>1</sup> The references to the entrepreneurial kind in the pages of *Farmand* lead us to think that they praised mostly the small and medium enterprises; the individual in a strict meaning. Perhaps we should link this point of view with the “economic democracy” *Høyre* advocated in the first post-war years. In 1949, *Farmand* wrote about economic democracy as mainly the consumers’ right of choice instead of workers’ participation in managerial decisions or coordination in the National economy; and not levelling in income either. The party and the magazine seem to have taken the same direction. *Cfr.* “Økonomisk demokrati”. *Farmand*. Nr. 14, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> *Cfr. Idem*.

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr.* “Monopoltrusler”. *Farmand*. Editorial, nr. 43, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

<sup>4</sup> In a debate between Ragnar Frisch and Thomas Schlytter in 1946, the former, a Labourite expert, tried to reconcile the two big concerns of the time with the statement that all economic regulations should be carried out under democratic control, so individual freedom could be upheld; whereas the latter, a usual contributor to

*Farmand* argued that under the Labourite rule, the "dictatorship of the majority", the Storting was no longer the arena of political negotiation and free debate but one of pure power struggle. The Labourite party machine disrupted the established rules of parliamentary negotiation and party organisation. Labour representatives were not elected because of their popularity or their public trust, but on the basis of their "parti-indrekretsens velsignelse".<sup>1</sup> *Farmand* reported often that in the Storting's sessions Labour proved to be a highly disciplined unity that allowed small room for dissent and free expression within its ranks.<sup>2</sup> Its representatives voted as a single man and this made its initiatives unstoppable.<sup>3</sup> Labour's way, continued *Farmand*, prevailed automatically in spite of the objections of the bourgeoisie opposition, whose proposals and criticisms were reduced to nothing. Labour managed, it added, to avoid any kind of investigation about the performance of its key members, as well as serious debate about its policies.

*Farmand* would come up with a stronger remark on the dealings in the Storting. The already scandalous "unanimous decisions",<sup>4</sup> it claimed, were fixed beforehand. What took place before the public eye was not relevant.<sup>5</sup> The real power game took place in the inner circles of the ruling party.

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*Farmand*, argued that, in practice, economic regulation and democratic control were incompatible. Thomas Schlytter. "Professor Frisch og demokratisk reguleringskontroll". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 3, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1946. In that same year, *Farmand* stated that "Frihet og sikkerhet er for dagens sosiale reformatorer blitt synonyme begreper, mens de i virkeligheten er motsetninger. De kan trives ved siden av hverandre, men når de gjør det er det resultatet av et kompromiss". "Ilden som aldri dør." Editorial. Nr. 47, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1946.

<sup>1</sup> "Det nye storting". *Farmand*. Nr. 34, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. "Subsidier, stabilisering og –Sola" [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nr. 47, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1947. *Farmand* wrote about certain disapproval within Labour that did not make it to the surface during voting in the Storting.

<sup>3</sup> "Det var beklagelig at votering ble et spørsmål om partipolitisk innpisking, men vi tror at debatten som helhet allikevel har gjort meget stor nytte. Voteringen var resultatet av rent majoritetsdiktatur, man på tvers av partilinjer kom det allikevel frem en mengde anker mot visse av de linjer som gjenreisningsarbeidet har vært drevet etter". *Farmand*. "Stortingskronikk". Nr. 10, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. *Farmand*. "Sommerens siste stortingskronikk". Nr. 26, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950.

<sup>5</sup> "...under den såkalte 'lille finansdebatt' (...) . Man kan trygt si at debatten munnet ut i ingenting; alt som ble sagt og besluttet var bestemt på forhånd. Det er da man kan si: hvorfor snakker man i det hele tatt? "Budget og bevilgninger er faktisk bestemt lenge før de kommer til Stortinget". *Ibidem*.

The level of parliamentary debate itself had been lowered, according to the magazine. Questions of principles were rarely discussed as propaganda tended to occupy their place. Debates in the Storting were described often as disappointing and no longer objective.<sup>1</sup> Labour, as a rule, put more emphasis on deluding the opposition than on convincing it.<sup>2</sup>

Labour, proceeded *Farmand*, had also managed to take over the work of the Storting committees. Theoretically, it was through them that the consultation and negotiation among the different political forces took place. Labour nullified such process with the formation of committees where it could be sure it would enjoy the majority it needed to keep its advances unchallenged.<sup>3</sup>

In the same manner, established *Farmand*, the legislative control over the decisions reached in the departments and councils granted by the Labour rule was, at best, inadequate, if not illusory. The claims of the economic planners that the Price Directorate had been placed under the supervision of Parliament were misleading; in practice, it did not go beyond a "meaningless control afterwards".<sup>4</sup> Those affected by an administrative decision were only granted a limited appealing opportunity that, in fact, left them defenceless before those decisions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Stortingskronikk". *Farmand*. Nr. 15, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. "Subsidier, stabilisering og -Sola" [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nr. 47, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> "Farmand' har gang på gang satt fingeren på at offentlige komiteer sammensettes slik at man på forhånd vet, at flertallsinnstillingen vil være overensstemmende med Arbeiderpartiets synspunkt. Vi har ikke nok kjennskap til politisk praksis til at vi tør si om dette er anstendig eller ikke, men det må iallfall være tillatt å fastslå at en flertallsinnstilling under slike forhold har meget liten saklig vekt". *Farmand*. "Ensidige komiteer". Nr. 50, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1947. When discussing about the probable designation of a new committee to revise Lex Thaggard: "kommisjonen vil vel -som sist med Thagaard-kommisjonen—bli sammensatt på en slik måte at arbeiderpartiene kan være på den flertallsinnstilling de ønsker". "Stortinget svekker sig selv". Editorial. Nr. 26, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> "Siden planøkonomene stadig peker på at den folkevalgte lovgivende myndighet vil ha kontroll over Prisdirektoratets virksomhet, er det en verdifull påvisning, at dette i praksis bare vil arte sig som *betydningsløs efterkontroll*." "Næringsorganisasjonene protester." *Farmand*. Nr. 6, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

<sup>5</sup> "I spesielt viktige og prinsipielle saker kan naturligvis en interpellasjon i Stortinget tenkes, men det er tvilsomt med det partisystem vi har, om dette vil føre frem f. eks. overfor en partifelle og en regjering med et sterkt flertall i Stortinget. Under alle omstendigheter ville en slik fremgangsmåte ta lang tid, og næringslivet kan ikke vente på denslags langsiktige avgjørelser." Thomas Schlytter. "Professor Frisch og demokratisk reguleringskontroll". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 3, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1946.



*Farmand* claimed in 1949 that the Labourite regime tried to monopolise the appointments in the administration to secure the system. This, which not represented open corruption, was a practice with negative consequences that took place in all departments and work areas in the administration. The party loyalty had substituted the requirement of expertise in these positions.<sup>1</sup>

According to *Farmand*, Norway suffered a “party dictatorship”. Real parliamentarism was gone, as the division of power had been sacrificed.<sup>2</sup> The Labourite Storting group had the legislative power in its hands, and at the same time, it obeyed the government. Particularly, the Primer Minister. The inner corruption of the system due to the over concentration of power affected the role of the Supreme Court as well. The Judicial power was not up to defending the rights of citizens to freedom, security and property any more. The judges were party people and just too concerned with the wishes of the majority.<sup>3</sup>

The weekly also complained about the secrecy in which certain affairs were handled in the government. Mainly, secrecy in the state cabinet and in the everyday dealings between the party and the *Landsorganisasjon*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. ”Nepotisme”. *Farmand*. Nr. 7, February 12th, 1949. Also Cfr. ”Ny direktor i Statistikk Sentralbyrå”. Nr. 18, April 30th, 1949. This article goes around the appointment of Jakob Bjerve to the mentioned department over Erling Pettersen, whom the magazine considered best for the position and excluded because of his lack of Labourite allegiance.

<sup>2</sup> ”...fem og åtti-mannsgruppen forkaster ethvert tenkelig forslag fra opposisjonen [I Stortinget], hvor gode og fornuftige de enn kan være i seg selv. Det vi nå har, er derfor et rent partidiktatur, og det er en situasjon som selvfølgelig har såre lite med virkelig parlamentarisme å gjøre”. ”Festningen som ikke overgir seg”. [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nr. 16, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> ”Når makten konsentreres så sterkt på én hand som tilfellet er i dag, er den enkeltes rett til ’frihet, sikkerhet og eiendom’, sterkt truet. Domstolene alene kan ikke opprettholde forsvaret av disse goder. Dommerne er selv mennesker og partifolk, de må ta hensyn til folkemeningen selv om den er forbigående. Vi har i dag endog eksempler på at dommerne fordømmes, hvis ikke dømmer som flertallet vil.” ”Er Grunnloven død?”. *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 19-20, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> ”Det var en meget interessant tale som Landsorganisasjonens sekretær Gunnar Braathen holdt i Bergen søndag. Man må beundre sekretæren for hans oppriktighet. Han innrømmet at ’der eksisterer et daglig og intimt samarbeid mellom Landsorganisasjonens leder og Regjeringen’. Senere fremgikk det at dette intime samarbeide ikke alltid foregikk åpent, idet han fortalte at ’Landsorganisasjonen måtte tre fram, ikke offisielt, men i korridorene.” ”For høie lønninger?”. *Farmand*. Nr. 42, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

The magazine insisted that Labour formed a government from the Union movement. It was a symbiotic relation; the economic support from LO<sup>1</sup> and a centralised leadership were the built-in advantages of Labour over the rest of the political parties and one important reason of the political imbalance in the nation.<sup>2</sup> In return, LO reached complete power over the Norwegian economy.<sup>3</sup> And the alliance had an objective, Labour and LO conspired together to institute socialism in Norway.<sup>4</sup>

Outside the institutionalised political arena, in the struggle to win the public opinion, the socialist front monopolised power too. *Farmand* considered that the Labour and Communist parties had been carrying out an impressive propaganda campaign in the industry, in the press and in the streets, to promote socialisation<sup>5</sup> and to disable and intimidate the political opposition.<sup>6</sup>

In 1952, *Farmand* accused the ruling party of trying to monopolise the propaganda in the press, adding that the modern media had created a new arena for politics, political debate and propaganda. These were also moving to a great extent to the radio and films; and here as well Labour ruled, unchallenged by any opposition

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<sup>1</sup> "...betaler medlemmene av landsorganisasjonen en fast kontingent pr. måned, respektive 10 og 5 øre for helt –og halvbetalende medlemmer, til Det Norske Arbeiderpartis presse – og opplysningsvirksomhet"

"Reservasjonsretten til tross, --viser det seg altså at de lønnstakere som er organisert i den politiske fagbevegelse, så vel direkte som indirekte støtter partiet". "Landsorganisasjonen og de 'gule'." *Farmand*. Nr. 44, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950. Also *Cfr.* "Organisasjon-tvang?" Editorial. Nr. 51, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> "Ingen politisk interessert kan unngå å se de åpenbare fordeler som systemet gir en strengt sentralisert partiledelse, og unngå å forstå at det parti som kan gjøre regning med fagforeningenes økonomiske støtte har en betydelig fordel overfor alle andre partier, som i den politiske renslighets navn betakker seg for noen form for kollektiv støtte utenfra." "Valglov og demokratiske garantier" [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nr. 28, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1953. Also, *Cfr.* "Den store maktfaktor". Nr. 27, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr.* "Organisasjons-tvang?" *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 51, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr.* "Stortingskronikk". *Farmand*. Nr. 42, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Where *Farmand* reported that Gerhardsen and Brofoss stated outside the Storting arena that Labour was a socialist party and its program the socialisation of Norway.

<sup>5</sup> "Fra socialistisk og kommunistisk hold drives for tiden en imponerende propaganda. Kvantitativt og kvalitativt. På alle fronter og i alle former. Særlig driver Arbeiderpartiet propaganda for prisregulering, planøkonomi og kollektivism. De få ganger i måneden vi lytter til radio, drives det propaganda både i foredrag og kommentarer, ja endog i hørespill. Enten det nu er med hensikt eller ikke." "Synet på propaganda". *Farmand*. Nr. 22, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1947.

<sup>6</sup> "Vi vil ikke –må ikke–la oss intimidere av regjeringspartiets og regjeringspressens beskyldninger for å motarbeide gjenreisningen." "Det politiske demokrati i fare." *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 39, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

and conquered the popular vote.<sup>1</sup> Radio, films and television gave the government new advantages and opportunities to hold power as no other regimes before.<sup>2</sup>

When *Arbeiderbladet* and *Dagbladet* denounced *Libertas* in 1948, *Farmand* criticised these newspapers for contributing in this way to the constant persecution of business interests. *Farmand* took on the side of *Libertas* under the assumption that it represented a legitimate defence of those business interests before the Labour propaganda, and compelled the sponsors and beneficiaries of such enterprise to admit their participation openly and guiltlessly. They argued that "...forretningsfolk ikke gjort annet enn hva Arbeiderpartiet har gjort i årevis"<sup>3</sup> using the taxpayers' money.<sup>4</sup> Besides: "Det er på tide det private næringsliv får noen som kan nøytralisere foredragsflommen fra Regjeringens medlemmer og profesjonelle talerør".<sup>5</sup>

*Farmand* criticised the *Fellesprogram* as being used as a means for the Labour Party to get the opposition to obey. *Farmand* also argued that the bourgeoisie opposition suffered from defeatism, and that was why it did not try to recover power. It also pointed out that such political climate rested on the wrong assumption, explicit in public and private conversations, that Labour was the only political organisation capable of achieving the goals of social and industrial peace.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "I gamle dager hadde en regjering i et parlamentarisk styrt land så å si bare en valplass. Det var parlamentssalen, Stortingssalen. Der måtte den finne og der måtte den vinne hel folket, men der måtte den også krysse klinger med skarpe opposisjonsførere hvis ord ble hørt og lest like godt ut over landet som noe regjeringsmedlems. Her var det duell og kamp.

"I dag er det annerledes. Teknikken, samfunnsutviklingen og samfunnsvanene har gjort at regjeringen har kunnet skaffe seg en valplass utenfor Stortingssalen der ingen opposisjonsfører får slippe til, men der regjeringens egne medlemmer uten anstrengelse og uten å tenke på annet enn å belegge sine ord og sine ansiktsuttrykk noenlunde vel kan skaffe seg hele folket som stumme tilhøre". "Demokratisk overbalanse". [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nr. 26, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*. And it added: "Og når systemet og mulighetene også utenfor Stortingssalen utnyttes på den oksvikse måte, lurt, seigt og tungt, da tar systemet overbalanse."

<sup>3</sup> "Ikke du –bare jeg." *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 43, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. "More statsbetalt propaganda." *Farmand*. Nr. 49, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948.

<sup>5</sup> "Ikke du –bare jeg." *Farmand*. Nr. 43, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1948.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. "Den politiske opposisjons plikter." *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 43, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1948.

Political cooperation, *Farmand* elaborated further in 1951, meant that the opposition should shut its mouth and stay still.<sup>1</sup> Even worse: cooperation with Labour was suicidal.<sup>2</sup>

### **An Irreversible Turn. *Farmand* and the Enabling Acts**

It is not difficult to guess that the position of the weekly regarding the enabling acts left no place for concessions. The weekly has hundreds of contributions on the topic, but we will just mention a few aspects of that long argumentation.

By approving enabling acts, the Storting betrayed itself. *Farmand* asked rhetorically: "*hvor mange slike fullmakter Stortinget kan gi, og på hvilke områder, uten at det mister den kontroll som Grunnloven og et demokratisk styre forutsetter.*"<sup>3</sup> And warned about the effects the enabling acts would have in the context of an over-expanding public sector: the Storting would be unable to fulfill its role as before.

Not only did the Storting lose its legislative and taxatives capacities with the enabling act on price control, several areas regulated by laws would be organised by bureaucratic instances through rules instead of laws. Delegation of power meant in practice bureaucratic rule.<sup>4</sup>

*Farmand* claimed that a price law undermined the principles of democratic life, in particular the right of property and the defence of individual rights before the state power. These considerations, stated *Farmand*, would have pushed the conscientious

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Fiskenæringen under diktaturet". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 4, January 27th, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> "Samarbeid (...) er selvmord". "LO regjerer vårt land". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 35, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> "Fullmaktstyre – rettstat". *Farmand*. Nr. 11, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1953. In italics in the original.

<sup>4</sup> "Stortinget var lovgiver nr. 1. Idag er forholdet et annet. Et dominerende trekk ved vårt lovgivningsarbeid er den overhåndstagende delegering av lovgivningsmyndigheten til statsrådet (dvs. til flertallet i Regjeringen), departementene, direktoratene, kommunestyre, fylkemenn eller politiet. De nevnte institusjoners regulerende bestemmelser kaller seg ikke loven, men vedtekter, regler og forskrifter, men for samfunnsmedlemmene har de lovs kraft.

"Et annet og iøynefallende trekk er dette; mens de forholdsvis fåtallige bestemmelser som blir utferdiget av Stortinget er et produkt av et lovgiverkollegiums arbeid, er de langt flere regulerende bestemmelser fra de øvrige offentlige organer enkeltmannslovgivning". "Fullmaktsloven og norsk rettsvitenskap". *Farmand*. Nr 31, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1953.

group within the ranks of Labour to object to the proposal of a rationalization law in 1952.<sup>1</sup>

The editors of *Farmand* glamorised the model of free enterprise, where monopolies and cartels were fought. Free enterprise, with its supposed rewards to the best individuals, was the ultimate source of prosperity.<sup>2</sup> The state had an obligation to secure that competition was not limited.<sup>3</sup>

The weekly tried to convince its readers that capital, division of labour, specialisation and technical ability, all key elements of a rational enterprise, had been underestimated in the name of equalisation and redistribution.<sup>4</sup> The business entrepreneurs<sup>5</sup> and the management had been directly undermined; and consumers had to suffer the results. Equalisation attacked wealth producers and rewarded badly merit and productivity. *Farmand* finally stated that liberalism and redistribution were incompatible.<sup>6</sup>

Economic controls were all negative; even regulation of the market by the private sector or an agreement of mixed economy was counterproductive. When criticising the new majority proposal for a permanent price law in 1952, *Farmand* wrote that:

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<sup>1</sup> On the debate after the speech from the throne (*Trontaledebatten*) in 1953 wrote *Farmand*: "Der var mengder av selvfølgeligheter og tro vesentlige innrømmelser, som klart viser at partiet i noen grad er blitt skremt av sine egne retningslinjer. Det vil ikke bli fremmet forslag om en generell rasjonaliseringslov, og trelastrasjoneringen vil bli opphevet." (underlined by *Farmand*.) "Valget 1953: forpostkamper i Stortinget" [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nr 7, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1953. Also *Cfr.* "Uønsket verdensrekord". Editorial, Nr. 9, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> This is stated in many articles of *Farmand*. The magazine also published ads of companies that shared its point of view. On this issue of helping the poor by punishing the rich, as they saw it, there is a very large speech in an ad by Anth. B. Nielsen & Co. Limited A/S, "Kan vi leve av å barbere hverandre?" *Farmand*. Nr. 15-16, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1949. On the defence of the consumers *Farmand* claimed to carry out, the criticism against the enabling acts, and the expansion of government they brought about, see: "Et centralt spørsmål". Nr. 7, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1949; "Fra forbrukerfronten". Editorial. Nr. 32, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1952, and "Det er folket det gjelder". Editorial. Nr. 50, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Cfr.* "Kampens moral". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 37, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr.* "Økonomisk demokrati". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 14, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1949.

<sup>5</sup> *Farmand* called these "idéiverne, initiativtagerne, risikotagerne og arbeidsskaperne", "promotorene", "sparerne". "Norge undergraves". *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 6, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1950.

<sup>6</sup> *Cfr.* "Demokrati eller sosialisme?" *Farmand*. Nr. 38, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

Det det dreier seg om er ikke noen statsdirigering, men utelukkende et intimt samarbeide med næringslivet for å systematisere alle de konkurransebegrensende overenskomster som næringslivet elsker. Det gjelder ikke fritt næringsliv kontra dirigert, men bare om det er staten eller de private som skal foreta reguleringene.<sup>1</sup>

The editors of *Farmand* had noticed a change in the concept of property taking place in the Western world. This turn towards the socialisation of property was revolutionary and unacceptable. And the implementation of a permanent price law would make it irreversible in Norway.<sup>2</sup>

### **Welfare State and the Rule of the Law**

The interventionist state, wrote the editors in 1949, had been incorrectly characterized as welfare state, a positive term, but a term that *Farmand* sometimes typed with quotation marks. There was nothing in between socialism and capitalism, according to *Farmand*. It was the road to socialism. And one could hardly see communism differentiated from socialism in these pages. Being this the situation, the welfare state meant lower living standards for all.<sup>3</sup> In 1951, *Farmand* added that the welfare state, with its limitless hunger of administrative and judicial positions, was the best ground for realist law scholars, those who were behind the enabling acts.<sup>4</sup>

In 1953, *Farmand* went over the term “Samfunnsmessig” and described it as the concept that the power holders use to defend their socioeconomic points of view.

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<sup>1</sup> ”Operasjon ’Høsttåke’.” *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr 40, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> A permanent price law ”gir begrepet ’eiendomsrett’ et nytt og hittil ikke akseptert innhold.” ”Uten skam.” *Farmand*. Editorial. Nr. 13, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> In one illustration taken from an American publication, in this case by George Peck, there is a lift out of whose doors come out two individuals, each trying to get a worker to get on. “Going down”, at whose door stands the political planner, “Lefty”, is the welfare state, whilst the way up belongs to the “Opportunity state”, where a common citizen, “most of us”, awaits. *Farmand*. Nr. 37, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1950. *Farmand* printed a good deal of illustrations from foreign publications, especially American. Through them, *Farmand* could express even better its opinions in the black and white it fancied. They are very interesting and show a dimension of *Farmand* worth studying but large enough to be avoided here.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. ”Lovene og velferdsstaten”. *Farmand*. Nr. 49, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1951. In this same article one can find a criticism of the realist point of view in legal theory, which meant for the magazine the theory in which law is a reflection of power relations.

They did not see a clear definition of the term, but they connected it to the “niveleringspolitikken for å heve levestandarden” which the government practiced at the expense of increasing production and productivity.<sup>1</sup>

Another interesting term is “Folkestyre”. In 1953, under the uproar caused by the attempt of Labour to make further inroads in the bank system --attempt justified as the expansion of the “folkestyre”--, *Farmand* wrote that they understood this concept as it was implied in the constitution, namely that “Folket utøver den lovgivende makt ved Stortinget...” and “Dens motstykke blir her en forvaltningsstat med all mulig frihet for forvaltningen (departementer, direktorater osv) i sitt skjønn ved avgjørelser av individuelle tilfelle”.<sup>2</sup> Let us see in more detail what this “Forvaltningsstat” was all about.

Eight years of criticism against the Labourite rule brought about the use of many different terms to describe and denounce the Labourite ways. The analogies and dichotomies *Farmand* was so keen to use were refined with the adoption of terms from the “law theory” jargon. “Democracy” versus “Bureaucratic rule”, “Liberalism” versus “Socialism”, and so on, were now formulated in the opposition “Rettsstat” (state governed by law) versus “Forvaltningsstat” (“state ruled by the bureaucracy” or “police state”) or “Fullmaktstyre” (“administration by enabling acts”). That is to say: “Forbinder man med en rettsstat en stat hvor statens oppgave er å skape og anvende rettsregler, finner denne stat som sitt motstykke en forvaltningsstat som har som første oppgave å forestå alminnelig kulturpleie (politi, skole, kirke og medisinalvesen osv.).” And: “Rettstaten blir da i samsvar med det liberalistiske system og forvaltningsstatens fremste oppgave skulle da bli å begrense

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Bernt Egelund. ”Hva er samfunnsmessig?” *Farmand*. Nr. 16, April 18th, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> ”Rettsstat – Forvaltningsstat – Folkestyre”. *Farmand*. Nr. 35, August 29th, 1953.

friheten og regulere eiendomsretten med --, som det har vært påstått – ‘samfunnets interesse for øyet’.”<sup>1</sup> The term “forvaltningsstat”, of course, fit Post-war Norway best.<sup>2</sup>

This theory incorporated the legal issue aroused by the intervention of legal experts in the proposals on permanent price and rationalisation laws. *Farmand* quoted the advocate Jens Christian Mellbye in his statement that the Stortinget would be reduced to a “lesesirkel” in a “Fullmaktstyre”.<sup>3</sup> The new categorization established that:

Fullmaktstyre er et styre hvor det konstitusjonelle øverste organ –i vårt land Stortinget—gjennem fullmakter overdrar en del av sin forvaltningsmakt heller sin lovgivende myndighet til andre statlige organer som departementer eller direktorater. I enkelte tilfeller kan det også gi en utvidet fullmakt til utenforstående institusjoner som f. eks. bøndernes samvirke-organisasjoner.<sup>4</sup>

This theory had the advantage of building up a model in which the delegation of power to the administration did not represent a recourse of the parliamentary rule but an alien procedure that led to its disintegration. The Conservative viewpoint had found expert consent.

### **The Bourgeoisie Parties and *Farmand***

*Farmand* had an irregular relation with the bourgeoisie opposition. The magazine supported *Høyre* in most cases but stuck to its principles and criticised the party when it seemed to leave behind any Liberal foundation. But if there was a party with affinities with the weekly, it was certainly *Høyre*. In the several reports of the sessions in the Storting, *Venstre* was scorned for its dubitative stand before Labour, while the *Bondeparti* and the *Kristelig Folkeparti* had a minor role in the eyes of the editors. A

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<sup>1</sup> ”Rettsstat – Forvaltningsstat – Folkestyre”...

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*. Sejersted inherits the logics implicit in this theory. In my interpretation of his model of corporate pluralism, this opposition of terms is included in a dialectics, liberalism versus realism, where the synthesis was precisely the solution of the main issue (“demokratisk kontroll av forvaltningen”) in the enabling acts debate. Sejersted. *Op. Cit.* P. 117. This coincidental similarity at the distance with an *Høyre* sympathizer as Sejersted speaks indirectly about the ideological links of the party and the weekly.



similar treatment was given to the spokesmen of the business community. *Farmand* supported them as long as they kept in line with the magazine. The weekly repeatedly criticised the bourgeoisie parties for their lack of cohesion and determination, and their willingness to negotiate what *Farmand* regarded as non-negotiable.

In 1949, *Farmand* was too eager to predict the beginning of the end of the Labourite rule in the Storting, and saw in many a debate an incipient vote of distrust to the government.<sup>1</sup> A year later, 1950, it even affirmed that the majority was in retreat,<sup>2</sup> but found disappointing the lack of clear and frontal conflict between what it claimed should be a joined bourgeoisie front and the majority in the Storting. The majority remained and *Farmand* would not have it any better for the rest of this period.

### **An Experts' Perspective. *Teknisk Ukeblad***

It is important for this work to record the viewpoint of one professional association. *Teknisk Ukeblad* was the spokesman of *Den norske ingeniørforening* and *Den politekniske forening*.

Engineers have been traditionally an expert group with high reputation in society. That is why we chose *Teknisk Ukeblad* over other expert groups' publications. We should point out, though, that engineers were not as influential as social economists were in post-war Norway, but we reckon their opinion was still of certain value in politics. On one side, we read that engineers did not occupy, in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Regjeringen på defensiven" [Stortingskronikk]. *Farmand*. Nrs. 15-16, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1949; and "Stortingskronikk". Nr. 19, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1949. In this last article, representative Lyng's proposal to reduce the amount of money granted for price and rationalization controls was interpreted as a motion for vote of no confidence.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. The comments on the Finance debate of 1950 in "Stortingskronikk". *Farmand*. Nr. 12, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1950.

opinion of the weekly, a position in the public or private administration equal to their education and role in society;<sup>1</sup> and there were some who claimed that the expertise they possessed should be used more widely in politics.<sup>2</sup> On the other, we run across a reference on how a governmental Decentralisation Committee in 1946 consulted a group of associations, in which the *Ingeniørforening* was included, on how to make the public administration more flexible and efficient.<sup>3</sup> Another lets us know that the Commerce Department asked his association, among others, for a proposal for an appointment in some branch councils in 1947. Among these representatives of the state and private administration were engineers who belonged to the Norwegian Engineers' Association.<sup>4</sup> The Association's expert opinion was not decisive, but it was taken into account.

*Teknisk Ukeblad* provided us with a non-partisan approach to the issues Norwegian industry faced in the post-war era. When it comes to questions that are also political, the weekly made it a point to show the positions on both sides, but managed to keep a line of its own. If we are to define this line, it was support to cooperation and coordination between public and private interests in order to achieve a more rational approach to higher production. An experts' solution that turned out not to be really apolitical.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Ingeniører og administrasjon". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Utgitt av den norske ingeniørforening og den politekniske forening. Nr. 41, 93<sup>rd</sup> year, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1946. And "Staten og ingeniørene". Editorial. Nr. 45, 93<sup>rd</sup> year, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Torgensen, N.M. "Flere ingeniører i politikken?" *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 47, 99<sup>th</sup> year, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. "Desentralisering av den offentlige forvaltning". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 22, 93<sup>rd</sup> year, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

<sup>4</sup> "I statsråd den 12. september er opprettet tre bransjeråd for henholdsvis papir-, cellulose- og tremasseindustrien, sagbruk og høvlerier og tekstilindustrien.

"Handelsdepartementet har anmodet N.I.F., NITO og Norges Arbeidslederforbund om å framsette forslag til den ene funksjonærrepresentant med varamann.

...  
"Både blant Statens og bedriftsledelsens representanter er det flere ingeniører M.N.I.F."  
"Bransjerådene". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 39, 94<sup>th</sup> year, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

The weekly promoted industrial expansion on the side of the private initiative, but its position was quite different from *Høyre's* or *Farmand's*, and closer to *Venstre's*. *Teknisk Ukeblad* saw planning and regulation as correct rational strategies, as well as cooperation in the economy as a whole, and between administration and labour inside the firms.

As to reconstruction tasks, the magazine did not feel uncomfortable with governmental lead, a comprehensive planning, and the new instruments the administration required to fulfill its duties. It praised both the importance of the contribution of economic organisations and individuals under the regulatory role of the state. There was no conflict between state and private business in principle. The state could enhance private industry while intervening when proper. And private enterprises had, or should have, a commitment to social well-being.<sup>1</sup>

On these same lines, for example, the magazine acknowledged the work of the *Studieselskapet for norsk industri*, an organ that intended to be a channel of expert advice and proposals of industrial cooperation and coordination at private and public levels—a true expression of professional ideals.<sup>2</sup> In the same way as this organisation, the magazine preached a private-run corporatism.

A debate between Thomas Schlytter, a usual *Farmand* contributor, and J. Bache Wiig, a well-known member of the Norwegian Engineers' Association and writer of *Teknisk Ukeblad*, helps us understand the distance between these two publications around economic policies. The debate was ignited after a Bache Wiig's article in which he stated that state partial or total ownership of certain firms did not represent any danger to the National economy. As long as a firm was run in a

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<sup>1</sup> "Vi må igjen forlange av bedrifter, forretninger og enkeltpersoner at de ikke arbeider for høye fortjenester alene, men også ut fra faglig ære og av hensyn til vårt samfunn". Løken, Hallvard. "Gjenreisningen". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 34, 93<sup>rd</sup> year, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Eger, C.W. "Studieselskapet for norsk industri". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 15, 93<sup>rd</sup> year, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

profitable and socially oriented fashion, it did not matter where the ownership lay.<sup>1</sup> Schlytter answered in a letter that, on the contrary, growing state ownership of firms was indeed part of a socialisation process; a class-oriented measure that, “experience” from the socialist world showed, could only lead to shrinking production, politically-biased decisions in economic planning, lower standards of living, and so on.<sup>2</sup> It was, in other words, irrational.<sup>3</sup> Bache-Wiig, on the contrary, thought of it as a pragmatic approach when the private initiative, in a little country as Norway, was not able to contribute with the necessary capital. Administrative capacity, in his view, was not necessarily different whether the state or private interests ruled a firm.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Best Corporatism. Teknisk Ukeblad and the Enabling Acts Debate**

We can see that the stand of the magazine, a balanced interpretation of the state role in the economy, would be reformulated due to the ongoing political debate. The enabling acts debate pushed the weekly, as it had done to the political opposition in general, to assume a more Liberal position regarding a mixed economy.

In general, *Teknisk Ukeblad* focused more on the economic consequences of the enabling acts than on the constitutional issue. In 1947, when the Lex Brofoss was discussed in parliament, the magazine reported a lecture by the secretary of the *Norges Industriforbund*, Bachke.<sup>5</sup> The lecturer argued that the Lex Brofoss would institute an imbalance among the three state powers, as well as a state-directed planned economy. The entrepreneurial spirit and industry’s effectiveness were at risk,

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Professor Bache-Wiig. “Norsk industri og dens framtid”. *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 43, 94<sup>th</sup> year, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Schlytter, Thomas. ”Socialisering. Åpent brev til direktør, professor J. Bache-Wiig”. *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 23, 95<sup>th</sup> year, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> There had already been a criticism against Schlytter’s points of view on economic and social problems in a review of his book called *Frihet eller Tvangsøkonomi*. Cfr. *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 36, 92<sup>nd</sup> year, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Schlytter, Thomas. ”Socialisering...” Answer by Bache-Wiig in the same article.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. ”Lex Thagaard”. *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 38, 94<sup>th</sup> year, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

since the state might not be so good at coordinating the economy as businessmen themselves.

Bachke used the same arguments as the bourgeoisie parties when warning against the threat of parliamentary rule. This enabling act was anti-constitutional, he said, and had no clear limits to its power. If the law were applied in strict terms, it would disrupt parliamentary order by stealing from the Storting its righteous prerogatives as lawmaker and as the organ in charge of establishing taxes. It would also leave citizens unprotected by the courts in case of administrative abuse.

Bache-Wiig took also on the matter in the pages of the weekly that same year. He acknowledged that the Price Directorate had done a great job so far, but thought unnecessary, in order to control prices, to intervene in the industry's right to decide on its own how to run business.<sup>1</sup> And went on with stronger statements:

Prislovens bestemmelser, som de gjelder i dag, eller som de vil gjelde om den endelige lov kommer til å inneholde liknende bestemmelser, betyr at den institusjon som skal stille med disse saker, forutsetningsvis Prisdirektoratet ved dets sjef, får en myndighet over næringslivet som bare kan karakteriseres som diktatur. M.h.t. næringsvirksomhet lever vi da ikke lenger i et fritt, folkestyrt land.

...  
Myndighetene kan gripe inn, lamme bedriften, overta den selv eller overlate den til andre hvis det passer myndighetene å gjøre det.  
Begrepet frihet under ansvar eksisterer ikke.<sup>2</sup>

We have read such statements before. The conclusion Professor Bache-Wiig came up with here was that such an enabling act did not promote but hampered cooperation between the authorities and those affected by the law, namely, the business community.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Bache-Wiig. "Norsk industri og dens framtid". Teknisk Ukeblad. Nr. 48, 94<sup>th</sup> year, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

He would repeat this argument in 1952, when he criticised the proposal for a permanent Price law. The authorities could not count on cooperation from the private initiative if a permanent law, in the terms put forward, was approved.<sup>1</sup>

We find again the rationalisation in which regulation was accepted as long as it did not become “tvangsdirigering”; that is to say, as long as prices and production conditions were not fixed by the central administration alone but in close cooperation with the business elite. Otherwise, claimed Bache-Wiig, the economic developments would lead “erfaringsmessig” to dictatorship.<sup>2</sup>

In relation to the direction the country was taking in the economy, set by the enabling acts, the magazine commented or transcribed articles from American publications usually in a very welcoming fashion. In them, a more Liberal outlook to economics than the one followed in Norway was advertised. The amazing American progress was attributed in these articles to a freer business community supported by the state. The direct intervention in the private initiative and the over-taxation of profits were shown as opposed to the American approach:

Den amerikanske industris sterke ekspansjon fram til dens nåværende stilling skyldes i første rekke den finansielle politikk den har fulgt. Den har i lange tider sørget for at en stor del av overskuddet føres til bedriftene for finansiering av utvidelser og modernisering, for på den måte å gi muligheter for stadig større produksjon.<sup>3</sup>

The opinions of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) were reported to illustrate the efficacy of a freer economy in the context of cooperation:

ASCE's 100-års jubileum skal bl.a. tjene til å gi folk forståelsen av at nasjonal fremgang er et resultat av samarbeidet mellom—og de forenede anstrengelser fra—ingeniøren, ledelsen, kapitalinnskyterne og de faglærte arbeidere, i en

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Bache-Wiig. "Industriens rasjonalisering". Teknisk Ukeblad. Nr. 43, 99<sup>th</sup> year, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> "Det er ikke priskontrollen som næringslivets menn i første rekke angriper, selv om denne i og for seg er problematisk, men det at man tar avstand fra er den ting at priser og produksjonsvilkår skal fastsettes av myndighetene. Det er på dette punkt tvangsdirigering setter inn, og det er her vanskelighetene vil melde seg." Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> "Industri og velferdsstat". Teknisk Ukeblad. Nr. 13, 98<sup>th</sup> year, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1951.

atmosfær av fri konkurranse hvor utsiktene til fortjeneste kombinert med risikoen for tap gir sunne forhold med like sjanser for alle.<sup>1</sup>

The Norwegian Engineers' Association showed publicly its concerns around the negative effects of detailed price control and exacerbated state intervention on the industrial life of the country in an official statement on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1953, to the Finance committee of the Storting on the proposal on a permanent price law. The position –or opposition—of the association was stated clearly. Once more, the constitutional issue occupies a secondary place:

Vi finner det derfor høyst betenkelig at Den Norske Ingeniørforening og liknende yrkeorganisasjoner skal stilles i en særstilling som ville bli etter prislovutkastet. Vår frihet til å velge virkemidler i vårt arbeid vil bli sterkere begrenset, og særlig vil bestemmelsene i §§ 40-42 bety et inngrep i foreningsfriheten sterk i strid med hevdvunnen rettsoppfatning. Bestemmelsene er etter vår oppfatning også i strid med Norges internasjonale forpliktelser.

...

Vi vil peke på at en detaljert regulering med sin mangfoldighet av bestemmelser slik som vi har hatt den under den midlertidige prislov, stiller betydelige krav til industriens ledelse for at den til enhver tid kan være å jour med de gjeldende forskrifter.

...

Den detaljerte prisregulering gjør det videre vanskelig å finne rom for den økonomiske risiko som følger med anvendelsen av nye tekniske metoder og innretninger.<sup>2</sup>

These arguments fit in a pattern we have run across before in this work; they were intended to empower business interests before the central administration.

Some weeks before the Price Law debate took place in the Odelsting, *Teknisk Ukeblad* transcribed the main contributions stated in a debate on the issue arranged by *Den Politekniske Forening* in January that year with the participation of government and opposition spokesmen. The main contributors on the side of the government were Deputy under the Secretary of State (*ekspedisjonssjef*) Eivind

<sup>1</sup> Holst, E. "Til kamp mot superstaten". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 32, 99<sup>th</sup> year, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1952. A report on C.S. Proctor, president of the ASCE, in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the association.

<sup>2</sup> "N.I.F. og prisloven". *Teknisk Ukeblad*. Nr. 6, 100<sup>th</sup> year, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1953.

Erichsen and Deputy head (*sjefinspektor*) Øystein Gjelsvik. On the side of the opposition, professor Erling Petersen and director Aars-Nicolaysen.<sup>1</sup>

One must ponder that the reasons a periodical has to transcribe an article from another publication, debate, or interview, is to express or revolve the periodical's own point of view. This is the main motivation in the selection process. In this particular case, the debate itself had been a product of initiative of one of the two associations involved in the weekly, and it certainly served the purpose of showing impartiality and objectivity and at the same time supporting the associations' stand on the issue.

It is clear in this debate that there was an agreement on two points between the governmental and opposition experts. First, a Price law should only be an instrument, in pursuit of National economic goals like full employment and increasing production. The main tools should be the right financial policies, that is to say, indirect controls. Conflict between the central administration and business would have negative repercussions for both sides. Macroeconomic controls would enhance cooperation and coordination in the National economy.

Secondly, delegation of power by the Storting should be accompanied by an enlarged control capacity of the Storting over the administrative organs in question. Experts on the opposition pointed out the unclear limits of the extraordinary powers granted to the administration and the lack of protection for individuals against unfair administrative decisions. The experts on the governmental side replied by emphasizing the additional control power enjoyed by the Storting according to the draft put forward by Torp's government.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Behovet for ny prislov". Teknisk Ukeblad. Nr. 14, 100<sup>th</sup> year, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1953.



Let us start with the governmental side. Erichsen responded to the opposition's concerns about the negative effects of detailed controls in the economy by arguing that these were already being dismantled. The governmental proposal on a price law implied that they would be lifted even further. A price law was still necessary, he argued, for the sake of democracy. The disagreements among different trades, social groups, country areas, and so on, regarding price setting were in such manner solved through the intervention of a public authority. In this way, the increasing power of economic and professional organisations was properly channelled to the benefit of the society:

...det spørsmål vi står overfor ikke er spørsmålet om et regulert eller uregulert næringsliv. Spørsmålet er hva slags regulering vi skal ha, private ukontrollerte reguleringer eller private reguleringer under offentlige oppsyn kombinert med ulike former for offentlige reguleringer.<sup>1</sup>

Gjelvik supported this statement and added that the government proposal intended, in fact, to put the authority of these organisations under Storting's control:

...regjering hvert år skal forelegges Stortinget en melding om de retningslinjer regjeringen akter å følge ved gjennomførelsen av prisreguleringspolitikken i det kommende år. Derved blir Stortinget, som jo er folkets representanter etter grunnloven, satt i stand til å bedømme hvert enkelt av de retningslinjer som regjeringen og de underordnede organer vil benytte ved gjennomførelsen av denne lov.<sup>2</sup>

Erichsen pointed out macroeconomic controls were now considered more important than direct intervention in the private firms:

Penge- og finanspolitikken vil alltid måtte bli helt sentral i enhver fornuftig økonomisk politikk, og de økonomiske problemer bør så langt mulig løses ved bruk av penge- og finanspolitiske virkemidler. Dette hevdes også i Regjeringens prislovproposisjon.

...

...vi trenger supplerende hjelpemidler i tillegg til penge- og finanspolitiske.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

On the side of the opposition, following the speech of the bourgeoisie parties, the experts tried to prove that a price law was unnecessary and counterproductive, and therefore a renovated Trust law should then be implemented instead.

Erling Petersen went over a list of arguments we are well informed with. He doubted that state price control was better than other types of price setting to achieve economic goals, and also that a price law would be practiced in a moderate way. It would institute arbitrariness and destroy the rule of law. A Trust law would serve consumers best.<sup>1</sup>

Edvard Løchen, on the other hand, stated that the proposal of a new Price law would give authorities a plenipotentiary power to rule over the economy replacing the rule of laws approved by the Storting. This development would make it impossible for a private person or firm to settle in court a negative administrative decision.<sup>2</sup>

This last debate confirms the position of the weekly, in which the concerns on the delegation of power from the Storting to the central administration are present but fall in a context where they are subsidiaries to the economic issue. What mattered was the search for the best agreement by which cooperation and coordination between the administration and business helped the economy achieve better results. In the belief that industry men and their experts should enjoy a larger role in the decision-making process.

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<sup>1</sup> Idem.

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our narration ended in 1953. By this date, Labour had replaced its previous corporate ambitions and had settled for an informal arrangement that assured cooperation with the business community, while indirect state regulation of business placed price controls in the background. The productivity approach finally substituted the Thagaard economic philosophy among the Labour leadership. Socialism could still be the goal, but the means became higher production and a mixed economy.

Delegation of power away from the Storting to the central administration was compensated with a respective power of supervision over the bureaucratic organs involved. A surge of criticism from within Labour pushed for an acceptable solution to the problem of constitutionality and increasing state intervention in the economy. Parliamentary concerns prevailed at the end.

The bourgeoisie opposition had used constitutional and economic issues to oppose Labourite rule. Their demands went in broad terms on the same direction as the developments taking place. One could think of the last developments as answering to a certain extent some of the demands put forward by the opposition. If they did, however, it seems that this was not a main motivation behind them.

Labour managed to outplay its opponents by making their rhetoric arsenal obsolete and proving to be a lawful, responsible ruler. The 1953 parliamentary election, coming after the constitutional debate was over, represented a big disappointment for the bourgeoisie parties.

The end of this story sends us back to the inquiry on the actual role of the Storting in the post-war era, which is our main concern. To give a solution to our problem, we made use of indirect sources in an exercise of historiography and History of Ideas. We went over the main theories on the subject and we questioned

the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie opposition. We left in the background the actual handlings, facts and numbers; but we got answers. Let us recount what the opposition sources recorded.

During the eight years we wrote about, the bourgeoisie opposition centred its speech on the role of the Storting under the Labourite majority rule. They did not profit from it as much as they had foreseen, and finally, the constitutional debate got exhausted as an electoral issue.

The political opposition in the post-war era departed from the general opinion that the role of the Storting should be redefined. The Labourite take-over provoked a reaction in a different direction. In the eyes of the opposition, parliamentarism seemed to have allowed that a party with a majority in parliament could monopolise power, thus breaking the logics of the same parliamentarian rule. Then, parliamentarism should fade away for the constitutional order to prevail. During this period, the recourses to referendums and dissolution of parliament were not put forward as means to enhance govern ability, but represented an attempt to put brakes on the initiatives placed forward by the Labour party.

Following the accounts of the opposition, Labour kept the Storting under exile or captivity. The Storting had been disempowered in order to strengthen an administration also under Labourite control and to build up an alternate and unconstitutional power. Here the opposition sources give us a description of the Labour party as an electoral machine with a strict inner discipline and in which the Storting group followed the directives of the party elite.

The bourgeoisie opposition advertised itself as the defender of the Storting. The bourgeoisie parties and others made an effort to connect the economic and political issues of the times; that is to say, the issue of economic and political freedom

with the one on the parliamentary rule and constitutionality of the corporate developments. In this quest, they made use of the Liberal principles at hand and developed them.

We have to evaluate the truth in such statements. All in all, there was a consensus on the broad goals and means in the political scenario of post-war Norway. Politics from all sides tended to the centre. This consensus was limited by a disagreement in the economic area, namely, in the administrative strategies to run the mixed economy and to exercise state intervention. The political opposition—diverse as it was and seldom working together on an issue—coincided in rallying for limits to direct state intervention. It intended to enhance the ability of the private interests to negotiate and give them freedom to decide on their own regarding management ways and use of profits. It rallied against a socialistic planned economy.

The rhetoric of the opposition, when at its best, showed a dispute between democracy and threats of dictatorship, on one side, and between capitalism and socialism, on the other. In other words, the opposition focused its propaganda on a conflict between irreconcilable views of society.

At times, the Norwegian Right recurred to the conspiracy theories elaborated abroad, particularly in America. It used and abused an analogy between Labourite rule and the path to socialism, but it also took advantage of the criticism to the corporate scheme as a whole.

The toughest critics interpreted the lack of a deep conflict in American politics in the 1950s as a conspiracy of the elites. This conspiracy of the elites was materialised in the corporate axis. Politics in Congress were, according to these views, a diversion from the real power game. The voters were bought with material prosperity while political principles faded in the political argumentations. We read

similar assumptions in *Farmand*, and also in *Høyre's* propaganda, and even in some cases in *Venstre's*. However, accusations of this kind served as backing to one of concentration of power in the hands of Labour. The conspiracy, as they saw it, took place in *Folkets Hus*.

The criticism to the One-party rule and to the Labourite economic planning resulted in a conclusion that we find all over the bourgeoisie propaganda: Corporatism excluded Liberal democracy. The political opposition in Norway used this argument against the corporatism instituted by Labour but the formulation was made general. Corporatism was depicted by its critics as bringing up a threat to public control over vital decisions at National level. It was an ideological statement.

The bourgeoisie opposition demanded that, as the parliamentary tradition marked, consensus on the main economic and political issues be attained, exclusively through the work of the Storting committees and not by the central administration. The bourgeoisie parties saw in this approach a strategy to improve their influence in the political decisions due to the traditional plural composition of the committees.

The realistic demand behind the speech, we reckon, was a corporate arrangement in which the business community was consulted and was allowed enough freedom to run their enterprises themselves at the same time that they enjoyed the benefits of cooperation and coordination of the National economy, and of state support.

As mentioned before, the bourgeoisie parties tried to make this issue a crucial one in the elections, but failed. The concerns of the voters, we read in some analyses by opposition writers after the defeat in the 1953 Storting election, were oriented

towards welfare initiatives and the warnings of dictatorship were of no appeal.<sup>1</sup> Some analysts even stated that there was no clear alternative on the opposition side.<sup>2</sup> The bourgeoisie parties should, in the opinion of one of them,<sup>3</sup> make it a point that they could administer the welfare state better to make electoral inroads. This perception might have been true.

Recording the points of view of the opposition was not enough to solve our main problem. We had to go back to the theories we departed from. We confirmed our suspicion that they did not exclude each other and we could use them to give form to an answer of our own.

Rokkan and Seip provided us with a contemporary view of the parliamentary issue; Nordby gave us a valuable background to set the issue in a historical perspective. Rokkan and Nordby showed us two ways of interpreting the system; Seip made us aware of the actual political handlings and rightly inserted the problem in the context of political struggle. The following conclusions are our interpretation of these three theories in the light of the first-hand information recorded in this work.

If we think of the political scenario as a system, or to put it in less functionalistic terms, when we talk about the rules, the routines, and the rituals, the Storting preserved its centrality in politics in post-war Norway. The Storting continued providing the formal guidelines to follow in National politics and economics. And although its jurisdiction was reduced, where most detailed administrative handlings given to the central administration to mind and, above all, corporate arrangements providing a consensus source parallel to that Storting committees represented, its supremacy was not challenged.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Larssen, Olav. "Etter Stortingsvalget"...

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Kandahl, Torolv. "Et høyre-syn på valget". In: *Samtiden*, 1953; Oftedal. "Stortingsvalg og...", and Larssen. *Op. Cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Larssen. *Op. Cit.*

The corporate organs, in our opinion, did not overlap or replace the legislative work in the Storting. We could say that they worked along side of the Storting, without a constitutional mandate and, in principle, under the supervision of the Storting. We could well see in this process a response to the needs of a more efficient administration and the necessary empowerment of the executive branch Nordby wrote about. The absolute rule of the Storting had had meaning before as an instrument of the National opposition to a foreign power. However, that meaning was no longer operative and the Storting rule needed a counterbalance.

However, this rationalisation makes abstraction of the actual political struggle of the times and the concrete results and orientations involved. It is true, to a certain extent, but we have to complement it and to complicate it in order to understand it better.

Our opinion in this point is that Labour respected in general terms the authority with which the tradition had invested the Storting. We cannot say with precision to what extent due to agreement with tradition or to the pressures of the political struggle. Labour underwent the legislative procedures to delegate authority from the Storting to the new administrative organs and yielded demands of clear parliamentary supervision of the works by the administration.

However, the Storting and the corporate organs served as instruments of the One-party rule. As long as Labour held its majority in parliament, it managed to keep the legislative branch on its side, as it needed to proceed with its policies. The party did not challenge the central role of the Storting in politics, but the Storting became a mechanism in the One-party rule. Not only, in practice, would the Storting not come up with a vote of no confidence to the government to bring it down in case of misdoing, a condition of parliamentary rule, but it also helped the party get its



policies sanctioned. It was in this sense, we believe, that Jens Arup Seip wrote about the Storting in exile.

A Storting under Labourite majority would not oppose militantly but rather support an administration serving the same boss, but this “inner-corruption” of the system did not constitute a structural feature of it. It would be wrong to describe the Storting in this era as a recording machine. There were accounts about the parliamentary debates being increasingly less substantial and dramatic and in the end always being channelled towards what was convenient to Labour. We do not know how accurate this picture was. It seems logical that a majority party resulted in less heated arguments, but that does not necessarily mean lack of disagreement or of negotiations within parliament that could indeed influence the decision-making process.

Besides, the majority was not taken for granted. It had to be renewed every electoral period, and although a take-over by the opposition was rather improbable, the claim by the bourgeoisie parties that Labour somehow had made it impossible were exaggerated. Electoral needs played a role in Labour’s shaping of corporatism in the post-war era. Again, no matter how powerful the interests that backed Labour were, the party needed electoral victories to keep the Storting under control and so to assure approval to its corporate inroads. The One-party rule in Norway might have implied a ruling party powerful enough to overrun the opposition, but it did not grant Labour control over the ballots, so it had to adapt, sometimes yield, and always take the initiative, to win the electoral battles. This one-party rule was not a dictatorship.

Organised interests did not relegate party politics and continued supporting its electoral champions. Administrative concerns did not substitute politics, as corporatism did not annul the Storting.

It was the Labourite elite that ruled Norway during these years. We can agree with Nordby's conclusions in I politikkens sentrum... that the Storting did not lose its centrality in politics, and that delegation of power was not an alien but necessary feature of parliamentary rule. However, we have to point out that the Storting, in practice, lost relative power before the ruling party. The negotiating table, at least in the period we study, certainly empowered the organised interests by enabling them to hold direct contact with the authorities, but this negotiating table was a means and not the power centre.<sup>1</sup>

Seip made a good point when he baptised this era a "One-party rule", in particular, on the light of the political system prevalent in the pre-war period. The internal disagreements in the party and the unavoidable negotiations with other National political and economic interests do not refute the interpretation that Labour monopolised political power. At least not in the case of the enabling acts debate.

Helge Pharo<sup>2</sup> maintains that Seip's theory is wrong since, first, the Storting was still the arena where many important decisions were reached; and, secondly, because the party was divided in several issues. Here, the picture of a powerless Storting and a strict party discipline vanishes. These arguments he proves in the case of Norwegian Foreign policy in the post-war era, in our opinion, do not necessarily mean that Labour had a lesser grasp on political power. Labour monopolised power but ruled over a democratic society. This fact set certain conditions to the power game.

Corporatism as a general scheme of consultation and negotiation survived the One-party rule in Norway and remained in broad terms a structural feature of

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<sup>1</sup> This assumption, that puts Rokkan's theory upside down, was developed by Nordby in his Korporatisme på norsk.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Eriksen, Knut Einar and Pharo, Helge Øystein. Kald krig og internasjonalisering 1949-1965. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1997. (Norsk utenrikspolitikk historie, 5). "Innledning. Nye rammer og utfordringer".

Norwegian politics. But in those broad terms, corporatism is an abstraction. The extent and form of those arrangements depended a lot on the power holders and on the power relations.

Although corporatism has complicated our view of democracy, we cannot accept the assumption that the first necessarily opposes the latter. There are some examples of corporatism within party dictatorships, but that does not create a rule. We cannot enunciate a general law, but only learn from a particular case.

In the contemporary Norwegian democracy, organised interests like employers' associations, Trade Unions, professional, agricultural and fishing associations, and others, are consulted and represented in the organs where administrative decisions are made. This is one unquestionable feature of this democracy. People with equal interests should unite to make their political influence as effective as possible. How much the non-organised individuals lose in this context and how much a rule of oligarchies is preserved or extended in such scheme is still an issue in development.

Democracy has for our contemporaries a meaning that exceeds universal suffrage and parliamentary representation. Economic democracy complements it. Although the implications of the term can have different interpretations, as to the period we study, the opposition seemed to agree on relative equalisation between regions in the country, between city and countryside, and indirect—and limited—economic redistribution. Universal social security was also taken for granted in the speech on democracy. Freedom from need was ultimately placed next to the Liberal freedoms in the speech of the bourgeoisie opposition without exception. And the goals implied the means for a democracy of the professional society.

Corporatism was the main of those means. We have made some remarks on the corporate ideology and the will power from the experts who developed it. We should leave to these the task of glamorising or scorning it; to tell us how democratic it is or how many obscure corners it creates in politics. Ours is only to understand.