

# Abstracts

*Jens Peter Christensen*

## **Political-Administrative Scandals and the Responsibility of Top-Bureaucrats**

Through the last decade there has been a large number of political-administrative scandals, involving Danish ministers and toplevel-bureaucrats. The article analyses the background and content of these scandals and describes to which extent toplevel-bureaucrats have been held responsible and accountable for mismanagement and unlawful administration.

*Peter Munk Christiansen*

## **Accountability and New Public Management**

New Public Management reforms of the Danish public sector has changed formal competences between the political, the administrative, and the managerial levels. The core welfare state services are produced in units governed by framework budgets and with significant degrees of managerial freedom. Since the monopoly status of institutions has not been changed and the information asymmetry between political sponsor and agent is not significantly reduced, it is still a problem to hold institutions accountable for their production. In some areas traditional state enterprises have been replaced by publicly held companies. In order to hold these companies responsible, it is a core condition that they operate under market conditions. If this condition is met, responsibility is measured by the ability to survive under market conditions.

*Johannes Due*

## **Civil servants' political counselling**

The ideal of the Danish governmental administration is recruitment of professional civil servants without any formal ties to the political parties or ministers in power. Public opinion has often

expressed doubts whether the top civil servants could and would perform „neutrally and objectively“ performance. This myth about the administration's excessive political influence has been kept alive from many different sides and draws distorted picture of the actual „distribution“ of power between civil servants and politicians. Regardless of this, civil servants are expected to control a number of different functions, for instance as participants in purely political negotiations, as political councillors and as buffers in relationship to the press. Often the focus is on the interrelations between top civil servants and ministers, but the interaction with members of the parliament is relevant too. The current development concerning a rather largescale extension of technical support to members of parliament is initiated without properly adjusting the rules of the game between parliament and the governmental administration.

*Adam Wolf*

## **Serving the Minister**

The conceptual and practical nature of „Serving the Minister“ has been discussed intensely in recent years. A confrontation between the functional perspective of official white papers on the organizational structure of Danish ministries and the „anthropological“ understanding of the interaction between ministers and civil servants leads to the introduction of a sociological approach inspired by the „Theory of Communicative Action“. The sociological approach opens a different view on how the minister should be served - and by whom. It is suggested that the „spoils system“ of the United States could be seen as a means of mobility between the political system, the bureaucracy, and the civil society - a mobility strongly needed in Denmark.

*Torbjörn Larsson*

### **Administrative theory and practice in Sweden**

There is no ministerial rule in Sweden. Instead, all government decisions are taken by the Cabinet as a whole. What is more, the government is not allowed to decide how laws should be applied by authorities in individual cases. The implementation of decisions is thus entrusted to agencies or other authorities, not to ministries.

This may look like a model for limiting the influence of ministries, but is, in effect, a way to offer politicians the same influence as they have in countries with ministerial rule. But, in contrast to a system with ministerial rule, if things really go wrong in Sweden, ministers are usually not to blame. It is rather the Directors-General, the Heads of agencies, who have to leave their offices, and not the ministers. But in the same way as countries with ministerial rule change in the direction of „hiving off“ even larger parts from the ministries, Sweden is beginning to interpret

its own administrative system the same way as the rest of the world.

*Søren Hviid Pedersen*

### **From liberalism to natural law**

There is a tendency within contemporary liberalism towards a traditional concept of what constitutes political philosophy. The reaction to John Rawl's political liberalism within the liberal tradition, especially the perfectionist liberalism, can be interpreted as a movement towards a natural law theory, underlying perfectionism and a comprehensive moral doctrine. This shift of emphasis has consequences for a liberal strategy in the modern world. Liberals should not be afraid of using education and force to confront non-liberal moral and ethical theories and discourses. Liberalism is a vision of the good life on par with any other contemporary non-liberal visions.