

## Electoral Trends in Denmark in the 1980's

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The article examines the 1984 election in a longer time perspective. As compared to the turbulent 1970's it appears that the class polarization in voting between the 'old' classes has been reestablished but that the new social cleavages in party choice are at the same time reinforced. It furthermore turns out that the consensus on the welfare state which was lost in the 1970's is now reestablished, that radical socialist sentiments are weakening, and that the political distrust of the 1970's is declining. In short, the elections of the 1980's signal a definitive break with the political climate of the 1970's. Opinion polls furthermore indicate that Denmark is heading towards a reestablishing of the 5-party system before 1973, but with differences in relative strength between the parties, and with a different, but still group-specific, social base.

### Introduction

Danish politics in the 1980's has frequently been described in terms of a 'wave to the right' or 'increased polarization'. And this description is indeed in keeping with the immediate impression from Danish party politics in the 1980's as well as from the elections of this period.

At the level of party politics, some significant political and ideological changes have taken place. As far as individual parties are concerned, it is noteworthy that the winning parties of the 1980's - the Conservatives and the Socialist People's (SF) - both were radicalized in the second half of the 1970's, as the moderate wings left the parties (or were de facto thrown out). And the four-party conservative-liberal coalition government which followed the Social Democratic minority governments 1975-82 (1978-79 in coalition with the Liberal Party) has pursued much more extreme policies than previous bourgeois governments. In particular, it effected severe cuts (at least by Danish standards) in welfare expenditures during its first two years in office. On the socialist side, the Social Democrats have also adopted more radical policies in a number of areas. Most significantly, it has broken with decades of consensus with the Conservative and Liberal parties on a number of foreign policy issues, in particular security policy. And the 1984 election was elicited when the Social Democrats voted against the Budget of the government - for the first time since 1929.

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in the 1984 election, and, despite losses in two successive elections, the socialist parties still obtained 46.6 per cent of the votes in 1984 – which was just around the postwar average (see Table 1). Nevertheless, considering its relatively ‘radical’ bourgeois policies, the victory of the four-party governing coalition is rather impressive: They increased their share of the vote from 36.4 per cent in 1981 to 42.8 per cent in 1984 – and the Conservative Party obtained 23.4 per cent, its largest share in this century.

On the socialist side, there is not only a decline in aggregate support but also a significant change in the distribution between the Social Democratic Party and the left-wing parties. The latter have pushed beyond the 15 per cent threshold whereas the Social Democrats approach the 30 per cent level from the opposite side.

The tendency of increasing support for the Conservatives and the left-wing parties has continued in the opinion polls since the 1984 election, whereas the Social Democratic curve as well as the curves for other center parties are steadily, although slowly, declining. Thus, the data could seem to indicate a continuous polarization – in which case Denmark would certainly be heading towards a new party system. One could imagine a wholly new period in Danish politics, characterized by a breakdown of the former relative consensus on the ‘Scandinavian (welfare) Model’.

However, the article contends that this is not the case. Rather than entering a period of competing radical policies (or what Marxists might call competing projects of ‘limited hegemony’, competing ‘one-nation projects’ or the like, cf. Jessop 1983, Esser & Hirsch 1984), Denmark seems to face a period of more widespread consensus than in the turbulent 1970’s. This contention is based upon the more general trends in the Danish electorate, hidden beneath the party political surface.

In the first section, the article examines the major social changes in party choice in the 1980’s in a long-term perspective, not least the support for the winning Conservative Party and the Socialist People’s Party (SF). In the second section, we elucidate the major underlying attitudinal changes in the electorate in order to evaluate the degree of movement to the right and the alleged increase in political polarization. In particular we focus upon whether the voters increasingly break with the Social Democratic welfare state model in favour of a socialist alternative to the left and a neoliberalist alternative to the right. Together, these analyses contribute to a more general picture of long-term political changes in Denmark. The third and final section seeks, tentatively, to draw the contours of what seems to be the likely future of the Danish party system in the second half of the 1980’s.

## Trends in Social Patterns of Voting

Although the long-term distribution between socialist and non-socialist voters has remained relatively stable, there are significant changes in the political affiliations of various social groups. We examine below the trends in class, age and gender differences with respect to support for the Conservatives, for bourgeois parties in general, and for the Social Democrats and left-wing parties.

Table 1. Danish Elections 1950-1984. Percentages

	1950's*	1960	1964	1966	1968	1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1984
Communists and Left Socialists**	4.1	1.1	1.2	0.8	3.0	3.0	5.1	6.3	6.4	6.0	4.0	3.5
Socialist People's Party (SF)	-	6.1	5.8	10.9	6.1	9.1	6.0	5.0	3.9	5.9	11.3	11.5
Left Wing, total	4.1	7.2	7.0	11.7	9.1	12.1	11.1	11.3	10.3	11.9	15.3	15.0
Social Democrats	40.0	42.1	41.9	38.2	34.2	37.3	25.6	29.9	37.0	38.3	32.9	31.6
Socialist bloc, total	44.1	49.3	48.9	49.9	43.3	49.4	36.7	41.2	47.3	50.2	48.2	46.6
Radical Liberals	8.1	5.8	5.3	7.3	15.0	14.4	11.2	7.1	3.6	5.4	5.1	5.5
Minor Non Socialist Parties***	6.4	2.6	2.4	3.2	2.2	1.9	2.9	1.8	4.2	2.6	1.4	1.5
Centre Democrats	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.8	2.2	6.4	3.2	8.3	4.6
Christian People's Party	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	4.0	5.3	3.4	2.6	2.3	2.7
Liberals ('Venstre')	23.0	21.1	20.8	19.3	18.6	15.6	12.3	23.3	12.0	12.5	11.3	12.1
Conservative People's Party	17.2	17.9	20.1	18.7	20.4	16.7	9.2	5.5	8.5	12.5	14.5	23.4
Independent Party/Progress Party****	1.2	3.3	2.5	1.6	0.5	-	15.9	13.6	14.6	11.0	8.9	3.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistical Yearbook

\* Simple average: the two elections of 1953 only count as one election

\*\* Includes some very small left wing parties in 1979, 1981 and 1984

\*\*\* Includes Single-Tax (Georgist) party ('Retsforbundet'), Liberal Centre Party (1966 and 1968), as well as a number of very small parties

\*\*\*\* From 1973 the Progress Party

### *Social Class*

Table 2 reports the party choice of various occupational groups in the elections of 1964, 1971, 1975, 1979 and 1984. The 1964 and 1971 results serve as indicators of the 'classical' voting patterns, whereas the 1975 and 1979 data represent two elections of the post-1973 party system, the first with an extremely low and the second with an extremely high support for socialist parties.

Table 2. Party Choice by Occupation.\* Percentages

		Left Wing	Social demo.	Socia- list bloc	Centre Parties	Con- serv.	Libe- rals	Progr. Party**	(N)
<i>Workers</i>	1964	13	65	78	4	7	9	2	3635
	1971	17	55	72	13	7	8	-	394
	1975	16	47	63	10	1	11	15	3014
	1979	13	54	67	9	4	7	13	415
	1984	17	47	64	10	15	6	5	686
<i>Lower-Level Non-Manual Employees</i>	1964	8	47	55	10	24	10	1	969
	1971	13	32	45	22	23	10	-	232
	1975	14	28	42	19	6	21	12	2354
	1979	16	38	54	16	14	10	6	364
	1984	23	27	50	15	24	10	1	768
<i>Higher-Level Non-Manual Employees</i>	1964	6	24	30	9	42	14	5	1698
	1971	16	14	30	21	34	15	-	125
	1975	8	16	24	23	11	29	13	1108
	1979	15	29	44	20	23	7	6	166
	1984	14	18	32	21	35	9	3	411
<i>Farmers</i>	1964	0	5	5	13	7	71	4	1379
	1971	0	6	6	24	5	65	-	75
	1975	0	2	2	20	2	63	13	1006
	1979	0	4	4	15	7	55	19	90
	1984	1	0	1	18	13	62	6	114
<i>Other Self-Employed</i>	1964	4	22	26	8	44	19	3	1211
	1971	2	12	14	25	45	16	-	77
	1975	3	9	12	16	10	32	30	1023
	1979	0	17	17	10	30	12	31	133
	1984	3	9	12	15	48	15	10	180

\* Respondent's own occupation. Housewives and supporting wives are classified according to their husband's occupations. Pensioners are excluded. Higher-level non-manual employees are defined somewhat more narrowly in the 1970's and 1980' than in the 1960's.

\*\* 1964: Independent Party.

Sources: 1964 and 1975: Gallup polls.  
1971 and 1979: Election Surveys.  
1984: Election survey merged with 1985 survey.

For the *Conservative Party*, the main supporters in 1984 were the same as in previous elections: Self-employed outside agriculture (among whom the Conservatives received 48 per cent of the votes), followed by higher-level non-manual wage earners (35 per cent) and lower-level non-manuals (24 per cent). But while these figures are approximately identical with the results of 1964 and 1971, the Conservative Party has doubled its support among farmers and manual workers. This means that the social base of the Conservative Party has been significantly broadened. In 1971 only 18 per cent of the actively employed Conservative voters were workers. In 1984 the corresponding figure was 21 per cent. But meanwhile the proportion of workers in the electorate (again according to our sample data) had dropped from 44 to 34 per cent. The proportion of workers among the actively employed conservative voters is now equivalent to the proportion among Left Socialists, whereas the proportion among Liberal Party ('Venstre') voters has declined from 23 to 15. In sum, the full official name of the Conservative Party - 'The Conservative People's Party' - matches the realities better in 1984 than in the elections of the 1960's and 1970's.

In spite of the Conservative success among workers in the 1984 election, it is not 'ordinary wage earners' (workers and lower-level non-manuals) who have moved most dramatically to the right in the 1980's. The Conservative success in these groups was achieved primarily at the expense of other bourgeois parties. And as compared to the 1979 election, the rightward move in the 1980's is socially concentrated to higher-level non-manual employees and self-employed.

In the longer time perspective - that is, as compared to the 1960's - there is, however, a very significant socialist decline among workers. The socialist bloc has never been able to regain its successive losses among workers in the elections of 1968 and 1973. But in this longer time perspective, the move to the right among self-employed is equally dramatic. In other words, there is a parallel long-term movement to the right along this traditional conflict dimension.

This latter description is valid also for higher-level non-manual employees in the private sector. Unfortunately, we only have data concerning public vs. private employment from 1971 onwards. But in 1971 there was no difference in voting patterns at all between publicly and privately employed non-manuals (see Table 3). Even in the 1973 landslide election there was almost no difference between public and private employees in support for socialist parties.

Nothing indicates that public employees were oriented more to the left than were their counterparts within the private sector in the 1960's. Educational and gender variations would rather seem to suggest the opposite. This means that the class polarization within the private sector in 1984 is at least as strong as in the 1960's, but there is a roughly parallel move to the right among all groups in the private sector.<sup>1</sup> The publicly employed non-manuals, on the other hand, have moved quite noticeably to the left since the mid-1970's. And it is significant that even the Conservative Party has not been able to reach its former strength among higher-level public employees in the 1984 election. This traditional Conservative

Table 3. Party Choice among Non-manual Employees, by Sector and Level.  
Percentages

		Left Wing	Social demo.	Socia- list bloc	Centre Parties	Con- serv.	Libe- rals	Progr. Party**	(N)
<i>Private Sector</i>	1971	14	26	40	19	28	13	-	194
	1973	9	19	28	31	12	7	22	515
	1975	9	21	30	19	9	25	17	1975
	1979	8	35	43	18	23	9	7	245
	1984	14	20	34	18	36	10	2	490
<i>Public Sector</i>	1971	13	26	39	25	25	11	-	163
	1973	16	17	33	37	12	12	6	358
	1975	17	28	45	22	6	21	6	1477
	1979	21	36	57	18	12	9	4	283
	1984	25	26	51	16	23	9	1	630
<i>Private Sector, Lower-Level</i>	1971	11	33	44	20	24	12	-	127
	1973	10	24	34	30	8	6	22	338
	1975	11	26	37	19	7	21	16	1293
	1979	9	39	48	18	19	9	6	165
	1984	20	24	44	16	28	11	1	294
<i>Public Sector, Lower-Level</i>	1971	14	31	45	26	21	8	-	105
	1973	17	21	38	38	6	13	5	210
	1975	18	30	48	20	5	20	7	1060
	1979	21	37	58	15	10	11	6	198
	1984	26	28	54	14	22	9	1	426
<i>Private Sector, Higher-Level</i>	1971	20	12	32	19	35	14	-	67
	1973	8	9	17	33	19	10	21	177
	1975	4	14	18	20	13	33	16	683
	1979	7	25	32	18	30	10	10	80
	1984	5	13	18	22	46	10	4	196
<i>Public Sector, Higher-Level</i>	1971	11	16	27	24	32	17	-	58
	1973	15	11	26	36	20	12	6	148
	1975	14	21	35	27	9	23	6	417
	1979	23	32	55	23	16	4	2	86
	1984	21	22	43	21	25	9	2	203

Source: As Table 2; 1973 data based on 1974 Survey.

stronghold seems lost for good.

The tendency of increasing political differences between public and private employees seems to continue. Since the 1984 election, the bourgeois government has lost popularity especially among unskilled workers and public employees –

and in the autumn 1985, 60 per cent of the publicly employed non-manual employees declared that they would vote for socialist parties (evenly distributed between Social Democrats and the left-wing parties). Among their counterparts within the private sector, the corresponding figure was only 36 per cent. Thus, in the 1980's, the public/private split among non-manual employees has become more significant than the traditional difference in party choice between manual and non-manual employees. But the class polarization within the private sector is as strong as ever.

### *Generations*

It is a common experience that young voters, having weaker party loyalties, tend to follow the 'election winds' much more than the older age groups, and Denmark is no exception to this rule. The tendency was evident in the socialist victories in 1971, 1977 and 1979, and it is equally evident with respect to the Conservative success in 1984. But although from 1979 to 1984 the Conservative Party experienced its most significant improvement among the younger voters, it did not recruit its voters disproportionately among the young (see Table 4), as it in fact did in 1964 (when the 'election wind' was much weaker).

Thus there is not much sign of a 'rightward move' among young voters, even as measured by the support for the Conservatives. Furthermore, it appears that the Conservative success among the young was obtained mainly at the expense of other bourgeois parties. Taken together, the advance of the bourgeois parties from 1979 to 1984 is not disproportionate among the young, even though the changing election wind should make for such an advance.

Thus there remains very significant political differences between age groups in the 1984 elections. The elections of the 1980's indicate with increasing clarity that we are facing generational differences. In 1964, there was almost no age variation at all in party choice, and the distribution between socialists and non-socialists was exactly the same in all age groups. But since then, the postwar generations have entered the electorate, and they have progressively leaned to the left. In the elections of 1979 and 1984, the difference in socialist support between the 20-29 year olds and the 40-49 year olds amounted to around 20 percentage points. And in 1984 it was evident that the radicalism of the post-war generations had left its mark on the age group of 30-39 years old. What is perhaps most significant in this respect is that the sole beneficiaries of the radicalism of the post-war generations have been the left-wing parties, whereas the support for the Social Democrats has even declined. Among voters of the post-war generations, the left-wing parties now stand stronger than the Social Democrats.<sup>2</sup>

This movement to the left (and left wing) is particularly evident among the better-educated of the post-war generations. Until 1968, this group constituted a bourgeois stronghold. But by 1979, the support for the Social Democrats and the left-



Table 4. Party Choice, by Age. Percentages

		Left Wing	Social demo.	Socia- list bloc	Centre Parties	Con- serv.	Libe- rals	Progr. Party	(N)
20-29 Years	1964	10	39	49	6	24	17	4	1633
	1971	22	39	61	18	12	9	-	235
	1975	27	22	49	15	2	18	16	2107
	1979	33	32	65	10	6	6	13	289
	1984	33	26	59	10	24	5	2	285
30-39 Years	1964	9	40	49	7	21	19	4	2145
	1971	15	34	49	16	20	15	-	240
	1975	13	25	38	17	6	24	15	2294
	1979	13	39	52	15	15	8	10	352
	1984	26	27	53	13	20	9	5	333
40-49 Years	1964	9	41	50	9	19	20	2	2427
	1971	11	32	43	21	20	16	-	221
	1975	9	31	40	15	6	24	15	1998
	1979	6	36	42	15	15	15	13	286
	1984	8	30	38	16	29	13	4	268
50 Years +	1964	5	44	49	8	19	23	1	5024
	1971	6	41	47	18	16	19	-	463
	1975	5	35	40	17	7	25	11	4765
	1979	4	43	47	14	13	17	9	674
	1984	4	37	41	16	24	16	3	686

Source: As Table 3; 1984 data based exclusively on election survey.

wing parties had tripled in the youngest age group, and in 1984 the impact of the changing attitudes of intellectuals of the post-war generations left a clear mark on the party choice among the 30-39 years old (see Table 5). In the older age groups, however, bourgeois party choice continues to predominate.

### *Gender*

Even though the socialist bloc has not lost its stronghold among the younger generations, there is one important modification: The surveys of the 1980's reveal a certain move to the right among young men. This implies that a quite significant gender gap has emerged in the post-war generations, in particular among the 20-29 year olds (see Table 6). This emerging gender gap is clearly a new phenomenon of the 1980's in Danish politics. At least since 1964, there has been no systematic difference between men and women as regards the distribution between the socialist and non-socialist bloc. The only stable gender difference was women's greater propensity to vote for the Social Democrats rather than for left-wing parties. But this pattern has clearly changed in the 1980's with the left-wing

Table 5. Party Choice among Higher-Educated, by Age. Percentages

		Left Wing	Social Democrats	Socia- list Bloc	Non-socia- list Parties	(N)
1966	20 - 29 Years	18	6	24	76	243
	30 - 39 Years	14	8	22	78	133
	40 Years +	5	4	9	91	303
1979	20 - 29 Years	54	18	72	28	88
	30 - 39 Years	27	26	53	47	48
	40 Years +	7	22	29	71	52
1984	20 - 29 Years	48	12	60	40	82
	30 - 39 Years	42	16	58	42	68
	40 Years +	10	11	21	79	63

Source: 1966: Gallup polls; 1979 and 1984: Election surveys.

parties obtaining some two percentage points and the socialist bloc some three to four percentage points larger share of the vote among women as compared with men. As mentioned, this gender gap seems generation-specific. In this connection it is interesting to note that the traditional pattern remains largely intact for the generations over 40.<sup>3</sup> It can be added that the radicalization among young women seem to have continued after the 1984 election. In a survey conducted in the autumn 1985, 46 per cent of all women below 30 years declared that they would vote for a left-wing party.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, the elections of the 1980's have significantly aggravated the social cleavages in party choice. Some of the classical social differences in voting patterns have been restored whereas some of the long-term changes which began emerging in the early 1970's have been further confirmed. The only new cleavage of the 1980's is the gender gap in the post-war generations, in particular among the 20-29 year olds.

The traditional class polarization in voting has been reinstated as far as the classes of the private sector are concerned. But all classes of the private sector (as well as pensioners and publicly employed workers) have moved to the right, as compared to the 1960's. Publicly employed non-manuals, on the other hand, have moved significantly to the left. In the most recent elections the cleavage in voting between publicly and privately employed non-manuals is more significant than is the aggregate difference between manual and non-manual employees. Finally, the elections of the 1980's indicate that the age variations in party choice

Table 6. Party Choice by Gender and Age, 1984. Percentages

	(a) Left-Wing Parties			(b) Socialist Bloc		
	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference
20 - 29 Years	29	36	7	53	64	11
30 - 39 Years	26	27	1	51	56	5
40 Years +	6	4	-2	40	40	0

Source: Election survey.

that have been apparent since the late 1960's express generational differences between the post- and pre-war generations.

This draws a new picture of the politically relevant social cleavage structure in Danish society. The traditional class conflict has not disappeared or even weakened but has been supplemented by new conflicts, class as well as non-class. Perhaps one could speak of the working class as the 'old progressive social force', and of public employees and the post-war generations (and within these generations particularly the better-educated and women) as 'new progressive social forces' that have emerged during the last 20 years.

Whether this cleavage structure is an enduring phenomenon remains to be seen. To a large degree, it is determined not only by economic factors and economically derived social factors, it also depends upon the political strategies of the political parties. One lesson of the present situation is that successful political parties to the left have to build upon a certain coalition of forces, and the long-term decline of the Social Democrats can to a great extent be attributed to their failure to do just that. It is significant that the Social Democratic Party has not profited at all from the radicalization of the groups mentioned above. Even during its short-term success of 1977 and 1979, the party did not do well in competition with the left-wing parties to attract the voter groups referred to above as 'new social forces'. Rather, it attracted votes from the privately employed non-manuals and the self-employed. Furthermore, the Social Democrats were unable even in these elections to regain their losses among the 'marginal' groups within the working class - first generation workers, small-firm workers, workers outside the urban areas, and home-owners.

The left-wing parties, and in particular the Socialist People's Party, have built upon such a coalition. In the 1960's the social composition of the Socialist People's Party's electorate was almost the same as that of the Social Democrats, but this changed rapidly in the 1970's. The change happened at the expense of voters from the prewar generations, and in 1977 and 1979 the 'density' of the left-wing electorate was, furthermore, 'dislocated' to the higher-level non-manual employees. In the 1980's, however, the 'density' in the coalition is again to be found among workers and lower-level non-manuals.

## Ideological Changes

The next question is whether the aggravated social and party-political cleavages are coupled with a more general ideological polarization, and whether the party-political movement to the right reflects a corresponding ideological change in the general population.

As judged by the answers to the four comparable left-wing items in the Danish election surveys from 1971 onwards, the voters have moved significantly to the right in the 1980's (see Table 6). It is interesting to note that this change is even more pronounced than the party-political change. This would seem to correspond nicely with the voter's support for the more radically bourgeois political course of the present government.

Table 7. Left-Right Attitude of the Electorate. Average Proportion Giving 'Leftist' Answers on 4 Items. Percentages

	1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1984
Average Proportion	55	62	53	61	60	41	42

Source: Borre 1984, p. 160. The four items are marked with an \* in Table 8. Based on election surveys.

It is also interesting to note that according to the indicators in Table 7, the bourgeois landslide election of 1973 was not rooted in a general ideological move toward the right. Although the support for socialist parties dropped to a level of little more than one-third in that election, the voters actually expressed more 'leftist' attitudes in 1973 than in any other survey. This finding might at first glance cast doubt on the validity of the questions concerned or perhaps of attitudinal questions in general. However, the ambiguity can be explained. To do so, we have to look at the individual attitude questions in the election surveys (see Table 8).

It turns out that the attitudinal changes are very different from one area to another. Responses to three questions concerning *state control with economic life* – a central aspect of the left-wing dimension – exhibit less variation over time than do responses to the other questions. Nevertheless, the message comes through that the voters are less in favour of state control with economic life in the 1980's than they were in the 1970's. This is particularly significant with respect to state control of investments and the socialization of big companies. In fact, these items point to a return to the ideological climate of the 1960's where the basic features of capitalism were not questioned. In other words, even though there is a significant increase in support for left-wing parties in the 1980's, there are fewer genuine socialists in the electorate than in the mid-1970's.

However, even if these responses may indicate a restoration of confidence in the dynamics of private enterprise, we are not facing a return to the uncritical growth philosophy of the 1960's. On the item 'The economic growth should be secured by industrial expansion, even to the detriment of the environment', the net majority of disagreement has increased from 4 percentage points in 1981 to 32 percentage points in 1984 and 38 percentage points in 1985. Thus, the larger confidence in private enterprise is coupled with growing environmental concerns.

The movement to the right in the 1980's is much more pronounced when it comes to *issues of economic equality*, another important aspect of the left-right dimension. And these attitudinal changes are responsible for the largest share of the rightward trend reported in Table 7. The indicators are largely parallel and show a sharply declining support for the demands for equality taking place from the mid-1970's until 1984. Unfortunately, we only have one indicator from 1985: The item concerning reduction of income differentials. However, this item suggests not only a reversal of the trend of the previous decade but even a return to the opinion climate of the 1960's.

There is no reason to doubt the validity of these data. A report from the Danish Social Research Institute (Henriksen 1985), based upon a survey from 1981, has demonstrated that there is a deep-reaching consensus in Danish society favouring the ideal of equality. At the same time, however, most people feel that there should be room for some differences, morally justified by, for instance, responsibility, initiative, risk-taking etc. As income differentials in Denmark were in fact reduced as a consequence of the incomes policy from the mid-1970's (Egmosen 1985) until the early 1980's, it is tempting to interpret the attitudinal changes as an expression of relatively constant ideals in changing surroundings. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the increase in inequality in the very latest years seems to have provoked a marked counter-reaction.

But the most dramatic change is found in voter *attitudes towards the welfare state* – an aspect of the left-right dimension that is wholly uncovered by the items in Table 8. There is no doubt that the 1973 landslide election, when the socialist bloc received only 36.4 per cent of the votes and the Progress Party entered the parliament supported by 15.9 per cent of the electorate, must be explained with reference to the changing attitudes towards the welfare state. As mentioned earlier, the voters were more to the left than ever in 1973 on all other issues. In 1969 there was close to a consensus in favour of preserving and/or expanding social reforms, but in 1974 a majority rejected this view in favour of the view that 'We have gone too far with social reforms in this country. People should to a larger extent manage without social welfare and public contributions.' However, this 'welfare backlash' was a short-lived phenomenon. Public opinion had changed considerably already by 1979, and by the mid-1980's the consensus registered in 1960's has been reestablished. A similar trend – although at another level – is found in responses to the statement that 'Too many get social welfare payments without really needing it' and 'The politicians are too lavish with the taxpayers' money'.

Table 8. Opinion Climate among the Electorate 1969-1985. Balances of Opinion in Favour of 'Left' Attitudes. Percentage Points

	1969	1971	1973	1974	1975	1977	1979	1981	1984	1985
<i>1. State Control with Economic Life</i>										
* 1.1. State Control with Investments	.	29	40	.	16	35	40	-3	18	.
1.2. Less State Control with Economic Life (-)	-9	.	.	-12	.	.	-10	.	-23	-22
1.3. Partial Socialization	-64	.	.	-42	.	.	-52	.	-57	-57
<i>2. Equality</i>										
* 2.1. Strive for Total Equality	.	19	15	.	9	11	10	-14	-21	.
2.2. Increased Income Equality	39	.	.	32	.	.	19	.	1	36
* 2.3. Increased Taxation of Higher Incomes	.	13	49	.	-22	-21	-26	-32	-29	.
<i>3. Nato</i>										
* 3.1 Denmark Out of Nato	.	-19	-24	.	-22	-21	-26	-32	-29	.
<i>4. Welfare State Payments &amp; Services</i>										
4.1. Social Reforms Gone Too Far (-)	44	.	.	-8	.	.	25	.	39	49
4.2. Too many Get Welfare Payments (-)	.	.	-81	.	-49	-43	-44	.	.	.
4.3 Politicians Too Lavish (-)	.	-67	-85	.	-63	-60	-60	.	.	-28

Question marked with an \* are included in the computations in Table 7. (-) indicates that the sign of the balance of opinion is reversed. The precise wordings of the questions are presented in Appendix. Source: Election surveys, and 1969, 1974 and 1985 surveys.

When the voters supported the conservative-liberal coalition government in 1984, it was clearly not because they saw its policies in the social area as desirable. In the election survey of 1984, a net majority of 21 percentage points agreed that 'the cuts in social welfare have gone too far'. It is interesting to look at the party political distribution of these attitudes (cf. Table 9). The data show in 1984 that not even among the Progress Party's voters did a majority declare themselves in favour of further social cuts. And the opposition to further social cuts is almost monolithic among Radical Liberals – the supporting party of the government – and leftwards. Voters of the socialist bloc are almost as likely to agree that social welfare cuts have gone too far, while the Radical Liberals are divided in two camps on that question. The interesting fact, however, is that voters of the governing parties, in particular Conservative voters, are also divided. A majority disagree on the item, but for instance among Conservatives 36 per cent agreed as against 46 per cent who disagreed.

Table 9. Welfare State Attitudes by Party Choice. 1984. Balances of Opinion

Party Choice	1. Social Reforms	2. Cuts in Social Spendings	(N)
	Gone Too Far (-)	Gone Too Far	
Left Socialists (VS)	83	88	42
Socialist People's Party (SF)	73	58	103
Social Democrats	74	59	263
Radical Liberals	72	12	49
Christian People's Party (KrF)	10	-3	29
Centre Democrats	5	-17	41
Conservative People's Party	11	-10	180
Liberal Party (Venstre)	0	-38	113
Progress Party	0	-59	17

Source: Election survey.

In short, the supporters of the conservative-liberal coalition government are by no means characterized by radical anti-welfare state sentiments. Most significantly, the Conservative voters are very moderate in this respect.

But the changes in the climate of opinion do not stop here. While the response pattern discerned above might simply reflect support for status quo or for the standards of the early 1980's, the data reported in Table 10 indicate a growing demand for genuine expansion of public services in a number of areas. The first message of Table 10 is that the public expenditure preferences of the population do not seem 'conservative' or 'neo-liberalist'. The preferred areas for spending cuts are defence, traffic investments, and culture. The second message is that people have become significantly more inclined to favour higher spending, in particular for social purposes.

Table 10. Attitudes towards Various Expenditure Areas. Percentages. 1979 and 1985

		Public Expenditures Are ...				Total
		Too Large	Appropriate	Too Small	Don't Know	
Old-Age Pension	1979	0	37	57	6	100
	1985	1	27	65	7	100
Health Services	1979	7	53	35	5	100
	1985	2	30	63	5	100
Day-Care Institutions	1979	17	34	37	12	100
	1985	10	40	34	16	100
Unemployment Benefits	1979*	49	37	7	7	100
	1985	12	44	29	15	100
Education	1979	10	51	32	7	100
	1985	2	43	46	9	100
The Police	1979	3	43	40	14	100
	1985	3	40	47	10	100
Environment Protection	1979	6	36	43	15	100
	1985	3	26	60	11	100
Motor Roads	1979	38	43	8	11	100
	1985	22	54	8	16	100
Culture	1979	41	37	11	11	100
	1985	27	46	15	12	100
Defence	1979	48	39	4	9	100
	1985	42	41	6	11	100

Sources: 1979b survey and 1985 survey. As the 1979b survey includes only the 18-70 year olds, the 1979 data are weighted to achieve comparability (60-70 year olds are weighted by a factor 1.8).

\* Different wording of question in 1979.

This picture is supported by commercial opinion polls as well as by surveys from the Danish Social Research Institute (Bertelsen & Linde 1985, Plovsing et al. 1983). And when the interviewees in the election surveys are asked to pick items for spending cuts from a prepared list, the preferred areas are again defence, traffic investments, and culture. Schools, hospitals, homes for the sick and elderly, financial aid to students, and pensions are mentioned very seldomly. Finally, the issues of taxes and public expenditures have clearly lost saliency among the voters already from the 1977 election. In 1973 around one-half of the respondents spontaneously mentioned taxation and public expenditures among the three most important problems the politicians should 'do something about' (Glans 1984), but in 1979 and 1984 these issues were hardly mentioned at all.



Not surprisingly, all analyses reveal a clear variation between age groups in welfare state attitudes. In particular the post-war generations have always been favourable towards the welfare state. They are even more favourable than the older generations when it comes to such issues as old age pension (Goul Andersen 1982). It seems that to the post-war generations, the social welfare payments and services are perceived almost as self-evident human rights.

To complete the discussion of attitudinal changes, it should also be mentioned that the *political distrust* of the early 1970's has declined considerably (Nielsen 1983, Borre 1984, Goul Andersen 1984). All indicators except responses to an item concerning confidence that the politicians 'make the right decisions for the country' show a clear decline in distrust which has now reached a level significantly below that of 1971. In short, this aspect of political change, so celebrated in the media, also seems to have been a short-lived wave, perhaps an epiphenomenon produced by the radical changes in the climate of public opinion as well as in the political affiliations of social groups in the 1970's.

## Emerging Trends

The 1970's was a very turbulent period in Danish politics, characterized by numerous centrifugal forces, breakdown of consensus, widespread distrust, and the emergence of new social cleavages. It now seems possible to assess whether the changes of the 1970's were enduring features of Danish politics and whether we are facing a qualitative different period from the mid-1980's.

With respect to the social variations in voting, the elections of the 1980's largely confirm the enduring character of the main new trends of the 1970's: The 'radicalism'/'progressivism' of public employees and the post-war generations, and among these in particular women and the better-educated. But at the same time the elections of the 1980's indicate a restoration of political polarization between the 'old' classes, that is, the social classes within the private sector.

The ideological climate of the mid-1980's reveals both continuities and change. Most significantly, the consensus regarding the welfare state that broke down in the early 1970's seems to be solidly reestablished in the mid-1980's, and the political distrust of the 1970's is modified considerably. In addition, the more radical socialist sentiments which achieved some popularity in the mid-1970's seem again to be declining. But there are also some important new features in the present political climate, among which a growing concern for the environment is perhaps the most significant.

These attitudinal trends in the 1980's certainly do not indicate increasing polarization, nor even a move toward the right. Rather, one might envisage a sort of new consensus that incorporates the main features of the consensus model of the 1960's - economic growth and the welfare state - and a greater awareness of the social costs of production.

This interpretation implies that the results of the 1984 election should not be taken at face value. The increasing support for the Conservatives certainly does not reflect more extremist bourgeois sentiments in the electorate. As it turned out, the Conservative voters were particularly moderate in their attitudes towards the welfare state.

Nevertheless, we do seem to face a new period in Danish politics. The most interesting aspect of the changes in electoral strength of the parties in recent years is the progressive elimination of 'extremist' parties: Since 1979, the Communist Party has not been represented in parliament, and the Progress Party, which was the second-largest party in 1977, has passed below the 2 per cent threshold for parliamentary representation in several opinion polls since the autumn 1985. Furthermore, the Left Socialist Party is presently (spring 1986) in a process of dissolution which will probably bring an end to parliamentary representation also of that party.

This means that the Danish party system of the latter half of the 1980's is coming very close to the party system of the 1960's with five major parties: The Conservatives, the Liberal Party, the Radical Liberals, the Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party. The only changes are the significant shifts in electoral strength among these parties, as well as the continued existence of two minor centre parties (Centre Democrats and the Christian People's Party). These two parties together are able, however, to mobilize only some six per cent of the voters. In view of the ideological trends it seems paradoxical that it is the two parties – the Conservatives and the Socialist People's Party – which moved significantly to the right and to the left, respectively, in the mid-1970's that in recent years have experienced a dramatic increase in electoral support. But the success of these parties has probably been achieved because of a renewed move towards the centre in the 1980's.

#### NOTES

1. The only exception is lower-level non-manual employees, or more precisely, *female* lower-level non-manuals, as the men within this group have also participated in the rightward move in the 1980's. Taking into consideration the class location of these women, which is very much close to that of the working class, this hardly indicates a weakening of class polarization. Rather, one could perhaps speak of increasing class consciousness among these wage earners.
2. Table 4 excludes the 18–19 year olds, for the simple reason that there are too few in our samples. However, attitudinal data from the 1979 and 1984 surveys confirm a significant move to the right among the 15–19 year olds, who resemble the rightist generation of the 40–49 year olds. However, this 'teenage conservatism' seems largely to be a life-cycle phenomenon. At least the (attitudinally) very conservative 15–19 year olds in the 1979 survey changed their attitudes dramatically during the following four years and came out as the most leftist group (20–24 year olds) in the 1984 survey. In short, the 'teen-age conservatism' would seem explainable by parental influence. However, there is a certain change: In 1974 the 15–19 year olds were (attitudinally) more to the left than any other age group, and according to a survey conducted in the autumn 1985 it does

seem that those who voted for the first time in 1984 have remained somewhat more to the right as compared to the older age cohorts in the post-war generation. On the other hand, the 'teen-age conservatism' seems to vanish in the 1985 survey.

3. The samples are relatively small but the tendency is confirmed by a number of other surveys, commercial opinion polls as well as voter studies.

## APPENDIX

### *The Surveys*

1971, 1973 (attitudes only), 1975 (attitudes only), 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1984: Election surveys, directed by O. Borre, University of Aarhus. The 1971 and 1973 data were collected by the Danish Social Research Institute, the rest by Gallup.

1964, 1966 and 1975 (voting only): Gallup Polls.

1969 and 1974: Surveys conducted by I. Glans, University of Aarhus. Data collected by Gallup. 1969 survey includes only respondents with reported party preference.

1979b: Survey of political participation and attitudes towards the political system conducted by a research group headed by E. Damgaard, University of Aarhus. Data collected by the Danish Social Research Institute.

The occupational classification of the Danish Gallup Institute is used in all tables. The 1971 data are made comparable by recoding from the original interview schedules. Note that the borderline between lower- and higher-level non-manual employees is drawn differently in the 1960's and in the 1970's, where the higher-level group is defined more narrowly.

### *The Wording of the Questions in Table 8*

- 1.1. 'The State has insufficient control over private investments.'
- 1.2. 'Now a question about state control over economic life.  
A says: Businessmen and industrialists should be allowed to manage their own affairs to a larger degree.  
B says: The state should control and coordinate economic life. At any rate, state control should not be weaker than it is in Denmark today.'
- 1.3. 'Then a question about the position of banks and large industrial concerns in our country.  
A says: The parliament should legislate state take-over of banks and large industrial concerns.  
B says: The banks and large industrial concerns should remain privately owned.'
- 2.1. 'In politics, one should strive to ensure equal economic conditions for everyone, regardless of education and occupation.'
- 2.2. 'Then a question about income and living standards.  
A says: Inequalities in income and living standards still are too large in our country. Therefore people with low incomes should have a more rapid improvement in living standards than those with larger incomes.  
B says: Equalization of incomes has gone far enough. The remaining differences in incomes should largely be maintained.'
- 2.2. 'High incomes should be taxed more heavily than they are today.'
- 3.1. 'We should leave NATO as soon as possible.'
- 4.1. 'First a question about government spending on social programmes.  
A says: We have gone too far with social reforms in this country. People should to a larger extent manage without social welfare and public contributions.  
B says: The social reforms already adopted in our country should be preserved at at least the present level.'
- 4.3. 'The Politicians are too lavish with the taxpayers' money.'

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