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Exploring the Basis of Declining Party Membership in Denmark: A Scandinavian Comparison*

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Short-term changes in party membership figures have hypothetically been attributed to a connection between electoral success and membership effort. In the long-term, however, mass party organizations may be doomed to outlive themselves, since elections can be won by utilizing modern mass media techniques. Both assertions could more easily be falsified than confirmed in my study of Scandinavian party membership. After World War II, party membership in Scandinavia has steadily been increasing, except in Denmark where membership has continuously shrunk. Findings show that most rank-and-file party members are superfluous in electoral campaigns. But the main function of party members is no longer campaigning. Instead, they are holding seats in a multitude of municipal councils, boards, and committees. This change is made possible mainly by two factors: public party subsidies and the politicization of municipal elections. The causal link between these two factors is, however, not mechanical. Instead it depends on how many public subsidies are offered, the platforms of parties, and the number of seats needed in running the municipalities. In Denmark, public subsidies are unheard of and expensive public elections are held at least annually. Also, the number of supplied seats are few. Thus, if costs are high and rewards are few, then a membership decline is probable.

Introduction

During the period from World War II until 1971, the Danish multi-party system was characterized on the average by approximately six parties in parliament. Compared to other Scandinavian countries the Danish party system was slightly less fragmented than the Finnish one and only a little more fragmented than the system in Norway and Sweden. However, the number of parties in parliament increased from 5 in 1971 to 11 in the election of 1973. This election has often been described as an exception. Still, party fragmentation seems to be a lasting phenomenon because the average number of parties in parliament from 1975 to 1984 exceeds ten. Although many of the parties in parliament are small, they can no longer be ignored by the larger, older parties, especially when the Social Democratic party has lost its long-standing position as clearly the most dominant party in parliament. Now the party system in Denmark is the most fragmented in Scandinavia (Sundberg 1986).

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Introduction

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This change in the Danish party system was in its early stages considered a chance happening. Later, it has instead been explained as a result of many structural changes in society, implying that the traditional party divisions no longer reflect social cleavages as accurately as before (Tonsgaard 1984, 101-104). New cleavages are emerging alongside the weakening conflicts inherited from the previous class society. These traditional conflicts arose between workers and capital interests, and between farmers and urban interests. Although most workers support the Social Democrats, a majority of the upper class voters support the Conservatives, and most farmers vote for Liberal candidates, class barriers are considerably less visible than before. In addition, a rapidly growing middle class that is politically homeless and socially unhomogenous is more influential than ever before. The middle-class votes, because of weak political ties, are spread over all parties, resulting in a decline in class voting (Andersen 1984, 105-131).

Because of this development, all parties, new and old, are forced to be more adaptive to changes in the electorate. Party competition in elections has always been tough, but now the outcome is more uncertain than ever, and therefore more emphasis must be put upon electoral campaigns. Traditionally, Scandinavian parties have been characterized as typical interest parties fullfilling the functions of both an interest organization and an electoral machine. The Danish experience displays, however, the most visible example in Scandinavia of an ongoing change of division in party organization. To function as an interest organisation becomes more difficult when the party is undermined by the decline of class voting. The changing cleavage structure also encourages parties to strengthen their competition for volatile votes.

Parties and Party Membership

Following World War II the increasing electoral and organizational uncertainty has raised new and more serious challenges than ever before to parties. But party organizations seldom seek oblivion when they have accomplished their task or found their goal unattainable. They tend to persist rather than to dissolve even when they are facing new and uncalculable problems. According to James Wilson, persistence includes not only survival, but members producing and sustaining a cooperative effort as well (Wilson 1973, 30-31).

Much of the membership attachment is determined by the organizational build-up, its political aims, and the electoral success of the party. Referring to the latter and most visible objective, Per Selle and Lars Svåsand have hypothesized that increasing electoral instability will diminish individual party membership (Selle & Svåsand 1983, 225-228). If this suggestion is correct, then parties are facing new kinds of problems. More precisely, party

Table 1. Party Membership Figures in Post World War Scandinavia (in thousands).

	Denmark				
	1948	1961	1971	1981	Diff. 1948-81
Social Democrats	306	253	185	106	-200
Liberals	198	189	129	95	-103
Conservatives	79	114	110	45	- 34
Others	67	39	30	58	- 9
	672	595	454	304	- 368
	Finland				
	1950	1960	1970	1980	Diff. 1950-80
Social Democrats	67	43	65	100	+ 33
Center Party	143	253	288	305	+162
Conservatives	73	78	81	77	+ 4
Others	133	171	193	219	+ 86
	416	545	623	701	+285
	Norway				
	1948	1957	1971	1982	Diff. 1957-82
Social Democrats	203	154	158	165	+ 11
Center Party	?	64	63	51	+ 13
Conservatives	32	96	105	177	+ 81
Othes	?	63	52	89	+ 26
	?	377	378	482	+105
	Sweden				
	1948	1962	1970	1982	Diff. 1948-82
Social Democrats	635	836	907	1205	+570
Center Party	145	178	182	133	- 12
Conservatives	115	199	129	130	+ 15
Others	137	133	125	89	- 48
	1032	1346	1328	1557	+525

Source: Denmark, Pedersen 1981: 71, Worre 1982: 31; Finland, Rantala 1982: 92; Norway, Svåsand 1983: 17-53, Valen and Katz 1967: 70; Sweden, Back and Berglund 1978: 94, Birgersson and Westerståhl 1982: 57, Bäck 1984: 81. 1) Data from 1967, 2) includes data from Venstre by 1972, 3) includes data from Kristen demokratisk samling by 1978.

members are the most loyal voters in elections. In times of electoral setbacks, party members comprise an important vote reserve that grows in significance the greater the number of members. Thus, declining party membership may well be an independent variable in determining electoral instability. However, my aim is not to explain electoral instability, but rather changes in the size of party membership.

Tabulating party membership is always ambiguous and frustrating. Membership figures, if available, are grounded on different criteria concerning registration and activity (Sundberg 1985). Still, official membership figures can retain useful information, keeping in mind that all parties tend to inflate their membership figures. In Table 1, available membership data are given

for Scandinavian countries from 1948 until 1982, comparing the three parties representing traditional cleavages in society. They are: the Social Democrates, Liberal/Center, and Conservative parties.

Though the membership figures are ambiguous, the tabulated results are distinct: in Denmark party membership is strongly on the decline and in the rest of Scandinavia steadily increasing. In 1948 membership figures were more than twice as large as in 1981. The backlash is strongest for the Social Democrats, but losses are considerable for the Liberals and Conservatives as well. The figures for the other parties are less reliable. Their organizations are generally small, and the calculation of the number of parties is shifting from one point of measurement to another. Until 1971 the membership of the 'Other' parties was in decline. But during the years of backlash the winning new parties managed to increase their organizational strength and membership.

The membership development for the three old and established parties is much more favorable in the rest of Scandinavia. Their membership size has been increasing rather than decreasing. To be accurate, figures for the Social Demoratic party in Sweden and also to a lesser extent in Norway differ because their membership is composed of both individually and collectively affiliated members. All other parties have individually affiliated members only. To be sure, party membership development must also be related to changes in valid votes given in parliamentary elections. Here, the closest point to election time is chosen (Table 2).

Party membership increase in Finland, Norway, and Sweden is proportional to the total valid vote increase in elections. No dramatic changes can be observed, only smooth adjustments. This finding is definitely not valid for Denmark. The combination of membership decrease and valid vote increase in elections has resulted in a considerable loss of membership support, to as

Table 2. Party Membership as a Percentage of Valid Votes in Post World War Scandinavia. In percent.

Year of Election	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
1947	32			
1948				27
1951		23		
1957			21	
1960	24			32
1062		24		
1970		24		27
1971	16			
1973			18	
1979		24		
1981	10		20	
1982				28

Source: Official Electoral Statistics.

much as one third less than in the beginning of the period. Electoral instability cannot in this case explain the membership decline. If it did so, then membership decline would also be a fact in Norway, since electoral volatility during the period following World War II has been as high in Norway as in Denmark (Sundberg 1986). How then can the declining party membership in Denmark be explained? In order to answer this question the failing Danish parties can be compared to the the more successful ones in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. We must also have information as to why parties in the three latter countries have succeeded in maintaining their membership.

Explanations of Party Membership Attendance

Becoming a party member is not a choice determined solely by individual decision. Parties can also actively decide on what grounds members are selected from all applicants. Usually, however, the barriers for becoming a party member are low, and parties are generally active in recruiting new members. Communist parties deviate from this pattern by adopting strong demands for ideological purity and political activity. Quality of members and their ideological purity have traditionally been more appreciated than quantity of members. The new parties in parliament have fewer members but represent different causes from the Communist parties. Their weak organizations can partly be explained by the fact that they are new; an expansion can be expected. However, although expansion might well be their long term aim, new parties are in the first place more occupied by winning votes in elections than by building up a comprehensive membership network (Sundberg 1986).

In retrospect, the old established parties that represent the traditional cleavages in society are well organized and pillarized through their attachment to the big interest organizations and producers' organizations (Damgaard 1982, 22-27). From the very beginning the Social Democratic party was most active in organizing its adherents in order to improve its access to power. The enlarged franchise made it possible for the Social Democrats to compete with their adverseries on a more equal basis. When the Social Democrats gained electoral success, then the two other party fronts, Liberals and Conservatives in the first place, besides the other non-socialist parties, had to be more alert. Gradually this new situation required the non-socialist parties to organize their adherents in order to maintain and defend their interests against the competing Social Democrats.

According to the above arguments, party organizations are created and party supporters are organized in order to get power or to defend and maintain power that is sought by the party's participation in elections. The implication of this is that electoral success is at least partly the result of organizational build-up. This might well be a fact in the early stages of

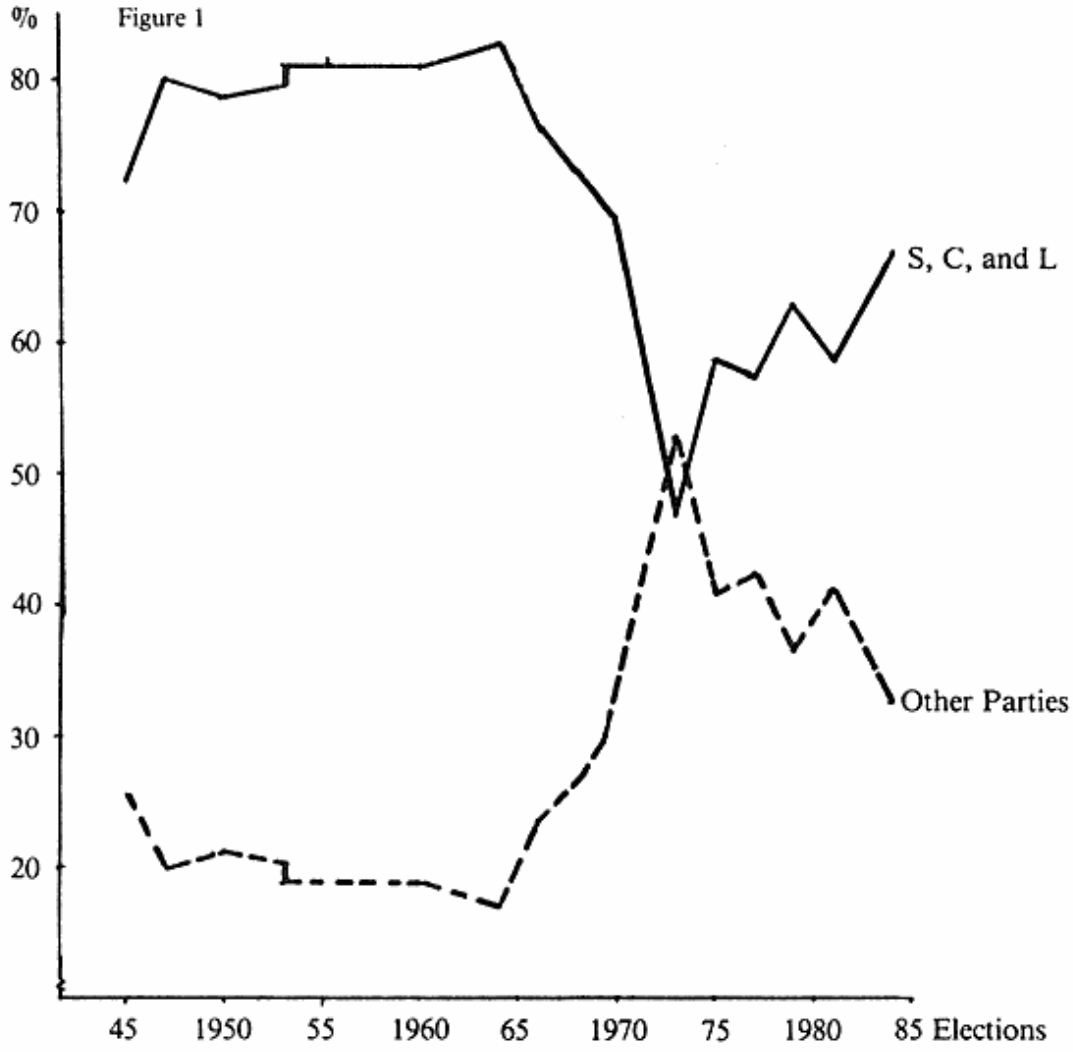

Figure 1. The Joint Success of the Social Democratic Party, Liberal Party, and Conservative Party Compared to the Success of Other Parties in Post-World War II Elections in Denmark.

electoral party competition. In contrast, most recent studies show that electoral decline is followed by organizational improvement; which implies that organizational efforts are closely linked to negative experiences (Selle & Svåsand 1983, 223-224). Specifically, are similar trends also visible in Denmark?

In Fig. 1, the sum of the share of votes given to the Social Democratic party, Liberal party, and Conservative party is compared to the share of votes for other parties.

The success of the three electoral front parties in Fig. 1 remained at

approximately 80 per cent until the election of 1964. The decline started in the election of 1966 and culminated in 1973 when the joint share sank to 47 per cent. Since then the parties have partially recovered their electoral strength. In 1984, however, the joint vote share is below the figures from 1964 and before. More interesting, the supposed congruence between electoral outcome and rising party membership efforts seems totally non-existent in Post World War II Denmark. Whether electoral gains are declining or increasing, membership figures have continuously been shrinking. Of course the comparison is rough and small scale deviations are possible, especially concerning the new parties. But the mainstream tendency is obvious.

More precisely, according to a survey study conducted in Denmark, party members are older in age, young newcomers are few, and membership is increasing unstable. On the other hand, the voters' view of party membership is not negative and many, including the young, could consider becoming party members (Kristensen 1980, 31-58). This does not imply that people have become more apolitical. Most of them still vote (80-90 per cent) and an overwhelming majority of the economically active population (79 per cent) belongs to interest organizations (Andersen, Buksti & Eliassen 1980, 210-214). Furthermore, approximately 36 per cent of the Danish population is or has been involved in some grass-roots movement or action. The participants are most often young, well educated people who have found an alternative channel for influencing decision-makers (Andersen 1980, 102-133). However, the most active in these movements and projects also tend to be active in utilizing the traditional political channels of influence, i.e., they vote, are active in party organizations, are affiliated to interest organizations, and make use of direct political communication and information (Gundelach & Togeby 1984, 269-287; Olsen & Saetren 1980).

All in all, the discussion indicates that the traditional linkages between voters and decision-makers are still functioning despite the occurrence of new forms of political participation. Similar tendencies in new participants are clearly visible in the rest of Scandinavia as well (Gidlund 1978; Olsen & Saetren 1980; Pesonen & Sänkiaho 1979). But, as already mentioned, the membership decline has not hit parties in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Therefore, the party membership decline in Denmark can hardly be explained by the new and alternative ways of participation. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that the membership decline clearly preceded the modern grass roots movements and actions. If this proposal must be rejected as well, one thing is sure by contrast: the long lasting adversity of the old party organizations has increased pessimism among the remaining party adherents. The hopeless situation has been illustrated by Gøsta Esping-Andersen concerning the Danish Social Democratic party:

Yet, organizational decay began to cause alarm as, simultaneously, the party's electoral performance slipped. Steps were taken to reinvigorate party organization in the late 1960s, but to no avail. In Denmark, the party organization is dying, both figuratively and literally. Today, party clubs cater primally to old-age pensioners (bingo games and coffee), and once the old-generation members die, so will the clubs. This means that party organizations will cease to function as a meaningful tool for electoral mobilization and organizational preparation into the new-generation electorate (Esping-Andersen 1985, 118).

Since the commonly known causes discussed here do not give a satisfactory explanation, I am forced to find some other rationale. So far, the most feasible way of exploring the determinants is to compare what those Scandinavian parties have that the Danish parties lack. In fact, what is the most striking difference?

Great Costs - Few Inducements

One of the best explanations of why people come together, act, and organize themselves is the opportunity to receive inducements. The participants are assumed to be directed by self-interest; the actor makes rational calculations on the costs and benefits of being organized and gaining personal rewards. Mancur Olson's theory of collective action is perhaps the most quoted book on that domain in political science (Olson 1965). Although Olson's theory deals with groups and organizatons, it is based on economic causes of behavior. For this reason, Olson's theory has been criticized as being too simple, since economists deal only with one value, viz. money. According to James Wilson, a person's value-system is more comprehensive than merely monetary values; values also include honor, power, fame or compassion (Wilson 1973, 19-29).

Though Olson's collective action theory is restricted to the solely material value of money, his model has proved to be very useful in a context larger than economics. My conception is that this approach could also be fruitful in searching for the causes why Danish parties fail to maintain their membership. My conception is based on Olson's assertion that individual interests and group interests usually are in conflict. Clearly, the self-interested and rational individual applies for membership and acts in concert in order to maximize his own welfare. According to Olson, however, he will not voluntarily perform any act advancing common benefits or specific group interests unless some particular incentive is offered to him individually. Organizations, in contrast, by definition work for some collective benefit that by its very nature will generate gain for all group members. Therefore, all group members have a common interest in obtaining the collective benefit, but they have no common interest in paying the costs needed to provide that collective good (Olson 1965, 1-22).

One fruitful way to apply Olson's theory to the problem in this study is to learn what inducements party members in Finland, Norway, and Sweden receive that their Danish colleagues lack. However, a comparison of that kind is not free from problems. The incentives offered may well depend on parties' size and power. Also, party members are hierarchically organized and the reward pattern may be similarly organized. To be sure, inducements are unevenly shared by party members in all Scandinavian countries. Hence, instead of starting the exploration by seeking individual inducement differences, it is much easier to find the element that clearly distinguishes Danish parties from the others: a total lack of public subsidies for the party.

Governmental party subsidies were first introduced in Sweden (1965) and then soon afterwards in Finland (1967) and Norway (1970) (Gidlund 1983, 185-199; Rantala 1982, 41-48; Svåsand 1985, 19-21). First, the public subsidies were exclusively state financed and centralized but later on – except in Finland – the public subsidies were decentralized; local party associations were financed by county council and municipal council governments. Nevertheless, it is very complicated to determine a reliable figure for the amount of the public subsidy share in the total party finances. It is easier to get correct information about the direct amount of public subsidies, but it is more complicated to determine total party finances from all local associations, branches, and other organized party activities. In addition, the share of public subsidies differs because of favoritism toward the old, established parties at the expense of the new ones. Taking into consideration these shortcomings, the estimated direct public subsidy share of party finances in Sweden varies among different levels in the party hierarchies from 60 to 90 per cent (Gidlund & Gidlund 1981, 158-162). In Finland the average direct public subsidies to parliamentary parties in 1977 were estimated to be 85 per cent (Karvonen & Berglund 1980, 99). Corresponding figures from Norway are not available but the subsidies to parties in 1983 amounted to 63,170,000 NKR, county council and municipal council subsidies excluded (Svåsand 1985, 19-21). The considerable indirect public support to party newspapers, party-owned schools, vacation centers, etc. is not included, so that the actual public support markedly exceeds the figures here presented.

At present, membership fees and non-public financing account for a very minor part of party expenditures in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. This means that the role of party members has dramatically changed. Previously, party activity was much more concerned with the collection of money to finance the growing costs of electoral campaigns. The socialist party's activities were financed by membership fees and trade union allowances, whereas the non-socialist parties were more dependent on their active members' capacity for collecting financial contributions from wealthy supporters. Economic pressure increased along with greater party competi-

tion for the increasingly volatile voters. Electoral campaigns could not continue to be handled exclusively by cheap but outmoded membership activities such as door-to-door canvassing, hand-to-hand distribution of party propaganda, public mass rallies, and other membership-intensive practices. Parties were forced to extend and improve their campaigning by adopting the most effective methods of marketing. Modern marketing, however, is expensive and can be successfully accomplished only by skilled professionals.

The introduction of public party subsidies in Finland, Norway, and Sweden is closely correlated with the change in campaign methods and the ensuing increase in party expenditures. The changing campaign style lowered mass-membership activity, and the public subsidies diminished members' economic responsibility to the party organization. Supposing that the inducements for party members had remained unchanged, and the public subsidy law had not come into effect - the situation would then have been very problematic for the parties.

In Denmark this hypothesis is true reality. The shortage of resources of Danish parties compared with other Scandinavian parties is striking. This disadvantage of the Danish Social Democratic Party has been illustrated by Nils Elvander. According to his figures, the Danish Social Democratic Party's budget is much smaller than the corresponding budget in Sweden and even smaller than that in Norway. And the differences are crucial during election years when parties are facing increasing economic pressures. The shortage of money also has an impact on personal resources. In Norway, the number of workers employed by the Social Democratic Party was more than three times greater in 1975/1976, though membership was slightly below that of the Danish Social Democratic Party. The disadvantage in resources also negatively affects the number of Danish campaign workers employed (Elvander 1980, 181-183).

Presupposing that the Danish parties want to maintain their membership, then the only reasonable option would be to prevent an increase in party expenditures. However, the developments following World War II in Denmark indicate that parties have behaved in the opposite manner. Instead of restricting the expensive campaigns to parliamentary elections, the Danish parties have expanded their activity to embrace contests in other elections as well.

The Politicization of Elections

Most electoral studies deal exclusively with voting behavior in parliamentary or presidential elections. In Scandinavia, however, public elections are also held at the county council level (except in Finland), and at the municipal council level, and referendums have been undertaken several times. Denmark

also takes part in the European parliamentary elections. An intense concentration on one type of election is of course understandable so long as the voters and their political behavior are the research object. However, when party organization is the object of study, and especially party membership, then all types of elections contested have a great impact on party activity, membership size, and party expenses. In an electoral study, an election and its outcome constitute a dependent variable. Here, by contrast, public elections of all types constitute independent variables in explaining party membership trends.

Before starting a discussion on the impact of elections on party-membership decline, the Post World War II politicization process must briefly be considered. According to Stein Rokkan the process of politicization can be conceptualized as a four-step change. These are: (1) the formal integration of citizens previously ineligible to vote in parliamentary elections; (2) the mobilization of enfranchised citizens in electoral contests; (3) their activation to participate directly in public life; (4) and the breakdown of the traditional systems of local rule through the entry of nationally organized parties into municipal elections (Rokkan 1970, 244).

The first three steps of change in Rokkan's list are irrelevant to my discussion, lacking close connection with my framing question. Nevertheless, these three steps are necessary elements for the politicization of municipal elections. Party competition in parliamentary elections was politicized from the very beginning. Also, county council elections have been totally politicized in Denmark during the period following World War II. Although municipal council and county council elections are held concurrently, they still differ in degree of politicization. According to tabulations made by Karl-Henrik Bentzon, the elected party representatives in Danish municipal councils averaged approximately 60 per cent from the early 1920s to 1966. Then, in the election of 1970, the share exceeded 80 per cent, and now is close to 90 per cent (Bentzon 1981a, 142-147). Paradoxically, the Danish parties have managed extensively to enlarge their activity by politicizing municipal elections, though this process coincided with the membership flight of thousands.

In the rest of Scandinavia the process of politicization has much in common with the Danish experience, i.e., the municipal elections have been totally politicized (Hjellum 1967; Back 1973, 103-121; Strömberg & Westerståhl 1983, 286-294; Oksanen & Pesonen 1985, 14-17). By this enlargement process, parties have considerably strengthened their influence and control down to the lowest level of public decision-making. However, more interesting in relation to my framing question: do the parties offer any new incentives to their members by this politicization process?

According to Leon Epstein's arguments, patronage is the most important

incentive for the rank-and-file party member. This reward is typical of the American system but is not well fitted to a Scandinavian context. More applicable in Scandinavia but less probable in Epstein's terms is the expected reward of a subsequent candidacy leading to elected government office (Epstein 1967, 101-122). In contrast to Epstein, Joseph Schlesinger strongly emphasizes that party members with ambitions for government office have the most personal stake in the party organization. Their payoffs, substantial and personal, are worth the costs of organization, and therefore they are the entrepreneurs of the party (Schlesinger 1984, 369-400). Achieving a government office can of course bring material rewards. More tempting, however, would be the prominence of power and honor or just the advance in one's political career. In this paper government office is conceptualized as an attained seat ranging from a municipal council board up to an office in the European Parliament. The difference is great between elected offices and so are the rewards. Still, they may be in some proportion to the elected's rank and activity in the party organizations. Finally, then, what is the total number of elected seats in public elections?

In order to determine the correct number of seats available for party members, the fourth step in Rokkan's politicization process must necessarily be fulfilled. In retrospect, the Danish municipal election of 1970 was the turning point towards total politicization. By that year the more than 1100 Danish municipalities were amalgamated into 277 greater units. And by 1974 the number was finally reduced to the present total of 275 municipalities (Thomsen 1984, 228-289). In Sweden, as well, the early 1970s were years of considerable municipal amalgamation. In 1950 the number of municipalities amounted to 2498; in 1969 the number had dropped to 848; and in 1974 only 278 municipalities remained (Gustafsson 1984, 31-32; Wallin, Bäck, & Tabor 1981, 18.) The amalgamation process has been less prominent in Norway and Finland. In Norway the number of municipalities has dropped from 744 in 1950 to 454 in 1977 (Larsen & Offerdal 1979, 17-25). In Finland the number of municipalities was an almost constant 547 from 1950 to the middle 1960s (Pystynen 1965, 62). The amalgamation process began in the late 1960s and culminated in the early 1970s. Now in 1986 the number is 461. As far as elected party offices are concerned, therefore, the period from 1970 onwards seems to be the best choice for any comparison between the Scandinavian countries (Table 3).

Although four different types of elections are regularly conducted in Denmark, the number of elected seats is less than half of those in the rest of Scandinavia. More precisely, elected seats in relation to the electorate give a ratio 1.9 times lower in Sweden than in Denmark, followed by 2.5 in Finland and 3.5 in Norway. Thus those elected in Denmark represent a much larger electorate than do their colleagues in the rest of Scandinavia. The sum of

Table 3. The Distribution of Elected Offices in Scandinavia since 1970: An Average.

	Denmark 1970–81	Finland 1970–83	Norway 1971–83	Sweden 1970–82
European Parliament	16	–	–	–
Presidential Electors	–	300	–	–
National Parliament	175	200	155	349
County Council	369	–	1100	1630
Municipal Council	4735	12,236	13,629	14,335
Total N:	5294	12,736	14,884	16,314
Electorate N:	3,555,048	3,386,136	2,823,320	5,890,934
Electorate/Elected:	672	266	190	361

Source: Official Electoral Statistics.

elected offices in Scandinavia is almost entirely due to the great number of municipal council seats, amounting to between 88 to 96 per cent of the total. However, the number of municipal council seats in Denmark was approximately twice as large before the comprehensive municipal amalgamation in 1970. Though Sweden has experienced a similar process, the reduction of inducements, i.e., seats, was never so dramatic as in Denmark.

In conclusion, contemporary parties in Denmark have relatively few elected offices as incentives to offer their members compared to parties in the rest of Scandinavia. Moreover, in 1966 a total of 36,219 candidates competed in the Danish municipal elections. Those elected totalled 10,005, implying that every 3.6 candidates were rewarded with a seat. Now when parties have almost totally captured the role of candidate-nomination, what is the chance of becoming elected? In Table 4 one election only is displayed, but this is highly representative for our purposes. Due to the electoral laws for list voting in Sweden, the number of candidates is not available in the official statistics. Concerning the election of 1979, however, an accurate number of candidates is adopted from a computer-run presented in a special investigation (Walling, Bäck & Tabor 1981, 103-118).

When the number of elected officials is small, then, the need for candidates is proportional. But by the politicization of municipal elections the candidates have even less chance to be rewarded with an elected seat than do their non-political predecessors. However, compared to candidates in the rest of Scandinavia the probability of being elected is not less in Denmark. According to the table, the Norwegian parties nominate at least four times more candidates than do their Danish counterparts. Proportionally the elected are few, even fewer than the corresponding rate in Denmark. How then is it possible for parties in Norway as well as for parties in Finland and Sweden to mobilize so many more candidates with the expectation of having even smaller chances of rewards?

Table 4. Candidates and Those Elected in Contemporary Municipal Elections in Scandinavia.

	Denmark 1981	Finland 1980	Norway 1983	Sweden 1979
Candidates	23,789	66,776	102,339	56,426
Elected	4769	12,777	13,806	13,368
Candidates/Elected	5	5	7.4	4.2

Source: Official Electoral Statistics.

The concept of reward is here restricted to elected seats. Generally the elected also have deputies chosen from the most successful non-elected candidates. No statistical information is available about the number of deputies in Denmark and Finland. In Sweden the deputies amount to a total approximately that of the total number elected, whereas in Norway the deputies exceed the total of election winners (Kommunalt förtroendevalda 1983, 7-8; NOS B 450). In Denmark the party-rewards are mainly restricted to the elected and their deputies holding offices in the municipal councils only. Party-governance in the rest of Scandinavia, by contrast, is more extended and scattered among different boards and committees. By this arrangement, municipal governance needs a larger number of party members running communal affairs (Bentzon 1981; Gustafsson 1984; Larsen & Offerdal 1979; Hannus 1982).

Statistics on municipal government are best maintained in Sweden. According to the figures available from 1980, the municipality boards had 32,485 representatives. The deputies in the councils and boards added up to 37,240. Including the municipal council officials, the total seats amounted to 83,093 (Kommunalt förtroendevalda 1983, 6-25). Thus, the total number of representatives exceeded the number of candidates from the election of 1979 by 26,667. All seats are distributed among candidates according to the relative strength of parties in the elected municipal councils. Though a single representative can occupy more than one seat, the candidates were not enough to fill the seats. More party members must therefore be recruited from among those that failed to be nominated for election.

In sum, the chance of Danish party members being rewarded with elected seats is rather unlikely. Party members must first qualify for candidacy, but only a small minority of them get the chance. And of those selected only a minority are rewarded by an elected office. As shown above, roughly speaking all candidates in Sweden are rewarded with at least one seat. Since the supply of Swedish seats is greater than the number of candidates, party members not nominated may also be rewarded. This characteristic is even more pronounced in Finland and Norway. By their moderate municipal amalgamations the Finnish and Norwegian communes are smaller than the corresponding ones in Denmark and Sweden. More important, small munici-

palities have proportionallly more representatives. According to my calculations more than 20 per cent of the electorate in Finnish municipalities with less than 2,000 inhabitants occupy at least one governmental seat. In large municipalities the share is much smaller. The total proportion of governmental seats in all types of municipalities slightly exceeds 9 per cent. According to a Gallup poll from 1984, some 13 per cent of the Finnish respondents identified themselves as party members, implying that all interested and active members are rewarded with some governmental office. Preliminary estimates in Norway display tendencies similar to my findings from Finland.

The Changing Mass Party Profile

The shortage of rewards for Danish party members will, according to Leon Epstein's general reasoning concerning political parties in Western Europe, enlarge the gap between the organizational incentives of the leaders and of the rank-and-file members. Following Epstein, party leaders, candidates, prospective candidates, and a few of their peers in the hierarchy have a strong incentive to gain office. Most members, however, cannot share this incentive. Therefore, Epstein concludes that rank-and-file party-member recruitment must be based on entirely different incentives (Epstein 1967, 103). What these incentives ought to be, on the other hand, is very vaguely understood and difficult to propose. Nor can my own findings give any sure assertions on this point. But being a party member, as already shown, is much less well rewarded in Denmark than in other Scandinavian countries. All the possible remaining incentives are therefore very sensitive to changes and easily weighted by cost adjustments, i.e. increasing membership fees and campaign charges.

Turning back to the expensive electoral campaigns, it would of course be appropriate for the parties to minimize the number of elections or to concentrate them in a few occasions only. For the Danish parties the latter alternative could be an expedient in reducing the campaign costs for all different types of elections. In Table 5 all the different elections and referendums following World War II (see Table 3) are tabulated and compared.

Here, as well as in the previous cases, Denmark deviates from the rest of Scandinavia. The total number of elections is considerably higher, and the frequency of polls held tends to increase at the end of the period. Also, all seven referendums except one in Denmark were held in the 1960s and 1970s. In Sweden, by contrast, all polls - referendums excluded - are concentrated into one occasion every third year. County council elections were introduced in 1975 in Norway, and are held jointly with municipal

Table 5. The Number of Public Elections and Referendums in Scandinavia during the Period Following World War II.

	Denmark 1945-85	Finland 1945-85	Norway 1945-85	Sweden 1944-85
	N	N	N	N
All polls totalled	48	30	26	35
Polling occasions	37	30	23	23
Polls/Year	0.8	1.3	1.5	1.2
Polling occasions/Year	1.1	1.3	1.7	1.8

elections. In Finland, all elections are held at a different point of time. County council and municipal council elections in Denmark have been joint occasions during the entire period following World War II. Still, the number of polling occasions in Denmark is clearly the highest, and the average interval between the occasions is 1.1. years. On the average, then, approximately every year in Denmark is a year of election or referendum. No other country in Scandinavia can display a similar frequency.

In retrospect, who is rewarded and who loses by these annual pollings? The system of public party financing in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, accompanied by the great supply of government seats, diminishes all clear-cut divergence between the rewarded and unrewarded. In Denmark, on the other hand, where the campaigning relies exclusively on non-public finances, the pressure for being successful in the annual polls is great. In reference to Epstein there is no doubt that it is the party leaders and the candidates who are the most active and motivated campaigners. A personal success in elections will reward each with a seat, and electoral success for the whole party strengthens its qualifications for prolonged financial support. Finally, in this situation the multitude of elections is making the Danish parties into electoral machines pressed to transfer every invested crown to electoral success. But what is left to the rank-and-file member?

In essence, since 1973, parties competing in elections have the same cost-free access to Danish radio and television broadcasting. This reform in Denmark has resulted in the growth of television as the most important channel of propaganda for campaigning parties. Also the voters overhelmingly prefer television to following party campaigns. Radio and newspapers are still important channels - the latter especially for the well educated - but these are far outdistanced by popular television broadcasting. Even more interesting is that personal contacts have almost totally disappeared as a functioning link between parties and voters (Siune 1984, 138-142). This finding is not exclusively Danish; similar patterns are clearly visible in the rest of Scandinavia as well (Sainsbury 1983, 242-249). My argument is that a large membership can ensure continuity in elections. But by channeling

party propaganda away from personal contacts into impersonal television broadcasting, electoral success can be accomplished, frankly speaking, without any rank-and-file members at all. In fact, this was exactly what happened when the new parties made a succesful breakthrough in the turmoil election of 1973.

The big losers in this process of change are the rank-and-file members. Each one must feel a real mission for achieving party goals without receiving rewards. Thus previous party obligations for rank-and-file party members have now been altered. The same is true for party members in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, where the most important current duties are performed by those rewarded by receiving governmental offices. Others hold seats in their party organization hierarchies or just participate in social activities arranged by the party and financed by common taxpayers. Career-making is of course possible in Danish party hierarchies as well, but the supply of positions is generally smaller in the shrinking party organizations. Still, the old parties in Denmark and especially the Social Democratic party are characterized by bureaucracy and a tendency to be unwieldy (Buksti 1984). This characteristic is often a hindrance for a newly recruited party member, preventing him from being nominated for elections. Even a well-educated and talented member of the Social Democratic party in Denmark must advance along a long and slow path in the party hierarchy before becoming nominated. In the rest of Scandinavia the barrier is much lower, not determined by the degree of party bureaucracy but by the great demand for candidates.

Paradoxically, the Danish party system can also offer the best opportunity for an unaffiliated voter to make a quick political career. Presuming that the voter is rational, he will join one of the new, successful parties. Their party organization is weak and the membership is small. Therefore contemporary new parties always try to make an electoral breakthrough in parliamentary elections first. Then, if the outcome is successful, new parties have better chances of winning in municipal elections as well. In contrast to parliamentary elections, municipal elections cannot be won by parties lacking a nationwide party organization, which nominates candidates, since every municipality is a constituency.

Hence, when the new Progress party for the first time contested an election (the parliamentary election of 1973) their organization was so weak and their members so few that they even had to advertise in newspapers to recruit candidates (Larsen 1977). In this case, a rational and active voter could become both a party member and a candidate in a parliamentary election on the same day! A seat in parliament was attainable as well, since the Progress party was the great winner in that election. Nowhere else in Scandinavia have new parties been so successful as in Denmark. In Finland,

Norway, and Sweden a supporter may also be quickly nominated and elected, even in an old and established party. The chances to be rewarded are high, as has already been discussed. But conversely, except in the Danish case, this is valid almost exclusively in municipal elections - not in parliamentary elections.

The reward system in Denmark supports a development of declining mass membership. Similar tendencies in the rest of Scandinavia have effectively been prevented by a large supply of rewards financed by the tax-payers. What are the consequences, then, of a deteriorating mass membership? The question is very comprehensive, and the data here presented fall short of allowing a discussion of this problem. However, the issue is of such importance that it can hardly be disregarded once it has appeared. Briefly, then, in the beginning of this paper it was emphasized that Scandinavian parties have traditionally filled the function of interest organization and electoral machine. Nothing has yet been said about the former function.

In more general terms, as stated by Leon Epstein, the socialist mass party was organized long before the working class had full access to the vote. A build-up of mass membership is, according to Epstein, an organizational necessity for any movement seeking to effect drastic change in a economic order by democratic means (Epstein 1967, 130-166). Universal suffrage and winning elections were only means of changing the society towards socialism. Without the aim of changing society mass membership would have been superflous, as for the early cadre parties. By the contagion from the left, Epstein asserts, parties on the right have adopted the organizational formula of socialist parties. Though their intention was not to change the economic order in society, but to act as in defense of clearly expressed economical and territorial interests, patterns of this contagion were maintained most strongly by the agrarian and conservative parties in Scandinavia (Elklit 1984, 21-38.)

However, according to Epstein's argument, mass membership is a temporary necessity only. For non-socialist parties, the already discussed new technique of channeling propaganda to the voters makes mass membership unnecessary. And in Denmark this tendency is supported by the combination of high costs and a shortage of rewards for rank-and-file party members. The same tendency is now reaching the Social Democratic party as well. Following Epstein, by contrast, the main cause for mass-membership decline in socialist parties is that they become more similar to the other non-socialist parties rather than remaining social movements against the existing order (Epstein 1967, 130-166).

Regarding the contemporary Scandinavian Social Democratic parties, however, their connection to the trade unions is a surer determinant of party membership development than the diffuse incentive of mobilizing for a socialist take-over. According to Nils Elvander, Social Democratic parties in

Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were from the very beginning based on the trade union 'Landsorganisationen' (LO). The parties embraced a Marxist ideology and adopted a reformist strategy (Elvander 1980, 23-49). In those days class mobilization played the central role in the pursuit of party goals. Very soon, however, the Social Democrats began a struggle for democracy and parliamentarism in unison with partries of the middle (Lafferty 1971, 113-174). This cooperation led to new views and new aims of getting political power and influence. Their strategy of getting power had to be changed to fit the rules of parliamentary party competition. The Social Democrats had to gain electoral influence. As a party entirely of workers this aim usually falls short if the party does not seek support from members of other classes (Przeworski 1980, 27-58). Gradually, then, according to Gøsta Esping-Andersen, the Social Democrats moved from a 'working-class party' to a 'people's party' and its platform addressed the 'national interest' rather than the 'proletarian cause' (Esping-Andersen 1985, 7-9).

In contrast, the labor unions have maintained a much purer class profile than have their political classmates. Connection ties are still very strong between the Social Democratic party and LOs in Norway and Sweden, and the collectively affiliated LO members compose the base for their membership growth (Elvander 1980, 162-218). If cooperation rather than tension has characterized the relation between the LO and party in Norway and Sweden, then tension has been much more prominent in Denmark. According to Elvander, the Danish LO is more decentralized and divided than the union in Norway and Sweden. Also, the relation between the Social Democratic party and LO in Denmark has passed many crises and the threat of a lasting rift has repeatedly been impending (Elvander 1980, 171-174).

Nevertheless, a basic fellowship concerning ideology and interest still persists in Denmark. Organizationally this is visible in the official LO representation in party congresses, in the important annual party meetings, and in the leading party council (Buksti & Auken 1985, 13-14). Also, a significant part of the shrinking number of Social Democratic party members are LO members. Unfortunately for the Social Democratic party the LO members are not collectively affiliated. In contrast to party membership numbers, LO membership has steadily been increasing, amounting in 1980 to as many as 1.25 million (Esping-Andersen 1985, 57-64). Furthermore, Buksti has found that individual material incentives compose the strongest motive for becoming a LO member. This tendency seems to be most prominent for the passive rank-and-file members (Buksti 1984, 69-77). Ironically for the Social Democrats, the purer classmate LO has managed to expand by offering rewards that the party increasingly lacks.

Finally, these tendencies underpin a development in the Social Democratic party from a powerful interest party towards a demassified type of electoral

machine, whereas the LO, in contrast, has strengthened its mass membership profile and politicial power. In fact, Hans Jørgen Nielsen has found from Danish surveys that respondents score the LO highest (72 per cent) when ranking organizations according to their influence on politicians (Nielsen 1985, 65-84). Though a majority of LO members still vote for the Social Democrats, a growing proportion are now voting for other parties (Nielsen 1982, 43-65). No wonder that tensions have emerged between the LO and the Social Democratic party when the bases for interest allocation and the power of pursuing them have been diverging. In contrast to the parties in Norway and Sweden, the Danish Social Democratic party has by this development hastened its membership decline and contributed to its diminishing power.

Conclusions

Party-membership decline is a common phenomenon in contemporary Western democracies. The explanation has usually followed such general hypotheses as connections between electoral success and membership effort, as well as changing campaign styles and demassification. These hypotheses have proved to be appropriate, as far as smooth changes in membership are concerned. But when party membership decline is considerable and drastic, as in the Danish case, then the hypotheses fall short. They also prove to be incomplete predictors in determining party membership increase in Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

It is difficult to say, according to the findings in this paper, whether the ensuing increase of politicized seats offered to party members on municipality councils, boards, and committees was planned or not by parties. But the expansion ensured for the first time that rank-and-file party members would gain full access to politics by becoming decision-makers. Additionally, the party politicization of seats created a reward system that effectively has prevented a membership decline. But the system would not have been that successful without a joint introduction of public subsidies of campaign costs in the politicized elections. The causal link between public party subsidies and the rewards of party membership is, however, not mechanical. Maintenance of party membership depends on how many subsidies are offered, the platform of parties, and the seats needed in running the municipalities.

Also in Denmark parties followed a similar pattern in the politicization of elections down to the lowest level. In contrast, however, they failed to get their increasing party costs financed by public subsidies and so they failed to create a reward system for their rank-and-file members. This implies that the function of party membership in Denmark has not changed in the same direction as in the rest of Scandinavia. In fact, the main function of Danish

party members is still electoral campaigning, and not office holding, as is the case in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Also, the hypotheses above ignore a change in party membership function, and therefore they cannot be confirmed in this study.

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