

Editorial Note

This issue of *Scandinavian Political Studies* is devoted to a series of articles on the significance of 'green politics', primarily in the Scandinavian countries. The emergence of a new dimension in the party systems has constituted a profound challenge to the established parties. Indeed, as Stein Rokkan argued in his classic 'freezing theory', by the 1920s the structure of the Scandinavian party systems seemed for a very long period of time to embrace the key cleavage in these countries, i.e. the one between capital and labour. Rokkan's theory was that the Scandinavian party systems 'froze' around 1920 and that there were no indications that the established pattern was likely to change significantly.

However, with the advent of environmentalism this pattern was challenged. 'Green politics', including not just attention to problems in the physical environment, but also to the disadvantages generated by rapid economic growth at large, the problems of centralism and large scales were all different facets of a political cleavage across the capital-labour dimension. With issues like the nuclear power issue in Sweden and the issue of EEC membership in Denmark and Norway this cleavage rapidly became highly salient, in Sweden by the late 1970s and in Denmark and Norway earlier in the same decade.

Needless to say, it is impossible to predict the long-term effects of 'green politics' on the party systems in either Scandinavia or the rest of Western Europe. So far, however, their record is impressive as it has broken up the oligopoly of the established parties in the respective parliaments. This could be seen as an indication of substantial political leverage.

The articles published in this issue offer analyses of different aspects of this 'new' type of politics and policies. First, Jørgen Goul Andersen discusses the political specificity of environmentalism and the new politics. Following that Jürgen Hofrichter and Karlheinz Reif discuss the salience of the environmental issue in an article based on Eurobarometer data covering the EC countries. The remaining part of this issue of SPS is devoted to analyses of the political role of environmentalism in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland in articles presented by Bernt Aardal, Martin Bennulf and Sören Holmberg, Jørgen Goul Andersen respectively Liisa Uusitalo.

The editors acknowledge their gratitude to the authors for their willingness to co-operate and readiness to adapt their material to this SPS issue on 'Green Politics in Western Europe'.

RL & JP