

FINNISH WOMEN IN TOP-LEVEL POLITICS

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INTRODUCTION

This article¹ is based on my study of Finland's women cabinet ministers in 1926-1986 (Kuusipalo, 1989). I shall describe the institutional context of women's recruitment in the Finnish top-level politics and the personal experiences of former women cabinet ministers, based on the interviews made in 1986. My aim is to find reasons for when, how and why women got to the positions of top-level politics in Finland.

Finland's first woman cabinet minister, Miina Sillanpää, was appointed to office in 1926. The article starts with a short description of Miina Sillanpää's political career. It was not until 1948 when the second woman became member of our Government. Women's access to the top positions of politics was hinged to the development of social policy and the Welfare State. There are two peaks in women's participation in Finland's politics. The first occurred immediately after World War II, when the first steps of welfare policy were being taken. During the post-war period women's "representation" in Finland's Governments became almost regular, but still there were only one or two women in the Governments at the same time.

The second peak occurred in the early 1970s. This was a period, when the Finnish Welfare State was rapidly developing with the expanding (public) service sector. Women entered the numerous new jobs in health and social care and in education offered by the developing Welfare State. Women's contradictory position between home and paid labour resulted in the Scandinavian debate about sex-roles in the 1950s and 1960s, but it was not until the late 1960s when equality between sexes was taken into account seriously in the state politics. Strengthening demands for equality and institutionalization of equality politics had its effect also on the increasing representation of women in politics. However, the appearance of the so called corporative system closely connected to the Welfare State-model actually diminished women's real political influence, because women's access to strategic organs of corporative system was even more difficult than their access to elective bodies of politics.

The information on the experiences of the former women cabinet ministers is based mainly on the interviews of 14 former women ministers². In order to consider these exceptional women as *women*, I analysed their political career from the point of view of their own life-experiences. I was interested in the

life-stories of these women politicians as such, and I did not compare them with men's political careers.

The study makes distinction between *three generations* of women cabinet ministers on the basis of their recruitment and career profile. The first generation was appointed to office before the 1970s and the second one in the 1970s. The "youngest generation" includes four women cabinet ministers, who sat in the Government during 1980-1987. The experiences of these three generations are demonstrated by quotations of their interviews. The interviews will show how the women themselves answered to questions like: why was she to become a cabinet minister, what does she think about women's role in politics and particularly in high-level politics, and further, is there, and should there be differences between women and men politicians.

The first women cabinet ministers during the period from the 1926 until the beginning of the 1960s can be regarded as women's representatives in the Government. The situation changed in the 1970's during the period of equality politics, when women cabinet ministers became more "men's women" than their predecessors had been. However, women cabinet ministers of the 1980's seemed to be more aware of their sex, more conscious of the fact that being a woman, even in the top-level politics, makes a difference.

Most of the 27 women cabinet ministers appointed to office during 1926-1986 held the posts of the head of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and that of the Ministry of Education. So, women were care-takers also in top-level politics! However, Finnish women have actively taken part in local and parliamentary politics from the very beginning, and they have also, to some degree, had possibilities to control their "own" fields of politics in the Governments. But was it possible for only one or a few women, isolated in their own arenas, to solve questions of social, educational and cultural politics? In the last section I shall discuss women's representation in politics and women's possibilities to change the male-dominated, patriarchal political arena and culture.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE TOP-LEVEL POLITICS OF FINLAND

The first woman in the Government

The first female candidates for portfolios were usually nominated by labour parties in a period, when labour parties for the first time became parties in power. So was the case in Finland. In 1926 the Social Democratic Party of Finland formed a new Government. Two years earlier there had been a female member in the Danish Social Democratic Government (Nina Bang). This may have been one reason, why Prime Minister Väinö Tanner chose a woman to the office of the Assistant Minister of Social Affairs. Tanner and Sillanpää had known each other for a long time. Tanner wrote in his autobiography that Sillanpää's appointment had been his wife's suggestion (Tanner 1966, p. 80). The working

women's movement welcomed Sillanpää's portfolio as the recognition of women's - particularly working women's - political competence.

Miina Sillanpää belonged to the generation of Finnish women who at the turn of the century organized the first associations for working women's political activities. She was a founder member of one of the first women's craft unions in Finland (the union of domestic servants). She took part in the founding of the first umbrella organization for women in the labour movement in 1900. Sillanpää participated very actively in the Finnish Suffragette Movement and in 1906 she was elected to the Finland's first democratic Parliament and she was member of Parliament almost for 40 years. A poor crofter's daughter, a former maid and a woman politician, Miina Sillanpää, concentrated in her political work on three main areas: domestic politics, domestic servants' working conditions and the position of unmarried mothers and their children.

Her first speech in Parliament disclosed the miserable living conditions of unmarried mothers. The speech was attached to a previous initiative taken by a private member concerning the founding of special homes for unmarried women and their children. During the parliamentary proceedings an argument raised, which in that time was frequently used as a counter argument against the bills proposing improvements to the position of unmarried mothers. It was namely claimed, that working class women were immoral since birth, and to improve their living conditions should only increase immorality. Miina Sillanpää replied in her out-spoken way to this insult on working class women:

"Go and live with the masses and learn to know them, before you say, that lectures are of no avail. One ought to know the reasons which force women to live in such circumstances. The rich have money to travel abroad to conceal the pregnancy, poor women have to let it be seen in public. This is the difference." (From Miina Sillanpää's speech in Parliament. Quotation from Mäkikossa 1947, p. 180-181.)

As the Minister of Social Affairs Sillanpää presented seven governmental bills to Parliament regarding e.g. state aid for kindergartens, some amendments to the Act of children born out from wedlock and national preservation areas. Oma Mäkikossa (Miina Sillanpää's first biographer) wrote that one newspaper reported the occasion like this: "...they (initiatives) were trivial and did not raise anyone's interest, but the more interesting was Miina herself..." (Mäkikossa 1947, p. 259-260). Forty years afterwards Miina Sillanpää was portrayed in a book describing famous *men* in the Finnish labour movement in the following way: "Our backward social policy started to move when Miina Sillanpää was in the Government, and ever since it has continued to do so." (Vallinharju 1967, p. 297).

Women's access to the Governments before the 1970's

World War II was also a period of transition in women's political history. During the war women took the main responsibility for farming and the production of industry as well as for the continuity of civil life and thus they were breaking the division of labour between sexes. At the end of World War II more than one half of the Finnish industrial labour force consisted of women. Women also kept their jobs after the war due to the rapid post-war industrialization of the country. (Haavio-Mannila 1986, p. 121). The proportion of Finnish women in wage work had settled already at the turn of the century and it did not radically increase after World War II. However, *married* women's wage work did increase at that time. This was due to the fact that unmarried women could no longer satisfy the growing need for labour force (Jallinoja 1984, p. 228).

Changes in Finnish political life, the growing influence of the left-wing and the legalization of the Communist Party of Finland, brought about keen competition for voters. Women's extensive participation in wage work and activity in organizations of citizens during World war II strengthened the position of women's own organizations and sections (inside political parties and trade unions). After the war women of the Agrarian Party founded a women's section to their party. This took place after a long struggle against the male leaders of the party, who had opposed the idea of separation. Women's sections were formed also in the new political parties: in the Finnish People's Democratic League (included Communist Party of Finland)³ and in the new liberal party (the Finnish People's Party). The number of women voters increased after the war-time and so did the proportion of women in the Finnish Parliament, as in many other western countries. Before World War II women had formed about 9.5 per cent of the representatives (which was, however, more than in any other Nordic country) until the year 1948, when the proportion of women MP's increased to 12 per cent.

Women's sections in the political parties had a central role in making women go to the polls. Simultaneously women's demands to have more women representatives in politics and in administration strengthened. For example, the women's section in the Social Democratic Party and the women's section in the Agrarian Party, as well as the umbrella organization of Finnish women's organizations insisted on having female members in the Finnish Government which had after the war become an even more crucial arena of political decision-making.

"When the new Government was formed after the 1943 presidential election... the Social Democratic women took up the question - continually kept alive by them - of women's appointment to the Government. After the negotiations with the Social Democratic parliamentary group and with the party's executive committee, they proposed Tyyne Leivo-Larsson for their candidate. The female members of the Social Democratic parliamentary group consulted women MP's of other political

parties and a mutual delegation chosen during these discussions visited President of the Republic and presented the women's proposal (Report on the Activities of the Socialdemocratic Union of Working Women⁴, p. 59). The delegation did not succeed in its task..." (Ruusala 1967, p. 8.)

Women's demands for more female representatives in the political and administrative bodies were justified by women's expertise, especially in the issues concerning social, cultural and educational policies, as well as by the demand for equality, which was particularly brought up by the Leftist women (Naisen työ 1980, p. 37). Also the position of married women in wage work was felt most important among the Social Democratic women. The women's section of the Agrarian Party paid attention to the position of women engaged in farming. For these reasons the posts as the Minister of Social Affairs and as the Minister of Education were most desirable and significant for women, as well as the post of the Assistant Minister of Agriculture, who in that time took care of agricultural education.

Women cabinet ministers appointed in the years 1948-1968, represented almost all existing political parties of Finland in that period: the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), the Agrarian Party, later renamed as the Centre Party (ML/Kesk), the Finnish People's Party, later the Liberal People's Party (KP/LKP) and the National Coalition Party (Kok).

In 1948 the second Finnish woman cabinet minister, Hertta Kuusinen, was appointed. She was one of the leading figures of the SKDL. However, she was a cabinet minister (without portfolio) only for two months, but later that year the executive body of the Social Democratic Party yielded to women's demands and Tyyne Leivo-Larsson was appointed Assistant Minister of Social Affairs. Leivo-Larsson had been active in trade union politics and in the previous year she had been chosen chairwoman of the women's section of the Social Democratic Party.

The fact that three women from the Left had received a portfolio gave force to the demands of the women of the Agrarian Party to have their representative appointed to office. In 1950 the chairwoman of the women's section of the Agrarian Party, Aino Luostarinen, congratulated Urho Kekkonen (Prime Minister of that time) on his birthday. On this occasion she made a speech, and for one thing she said:

"God has give you a keen wit... I also believe that you have used your intelligence to serve our country. We - the women of the Agrarian Party - thank you for that. However, I hope that you will rise to the occasion and rise so far, that you will recognize a Finnish farm woman to be good enough to hold a post in the Government." (According to Väänänen 1980, p. 194.)

Kekkonen obviously listened to the women: three years later, while he was Prime Minister, Vieno Simonen (the Agrarian Party) was appointed Minister of Social Affairs. A few days earlier she had been nominated chairperson of the Martta-Union, which at that time was one of the largest women's organizations in Finland. In 1986 Kerttu Saalasti, the chairwoman of the women's section of the Agrarian Party and the Minister of Education in the 1950s recalled:

"The fact that the Agrarian Party had never had a female minister in the Government had led to a situation where the working farm women and their living conditions had been left outside the legislation. This defect had aroused the female members of the Agrarian Party. In its first programme the new women's section of the Agrarian Party undertook the task to amend these defects..." (The letter from Kerttu Saalasti, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, p. 160.)

More positions - less power!

The development of the Finnish Welfare State, which started soon after World War II, was pushed back in the late 1950s by the strengthening Right. Since the mid 1960s the welfare policy was again rapidly expanding. The second wave of the women's movement appeared in the western countries in the late 1960s. Also in Finland something had to be done to the double burden which the increasing number of working mothers had to face. This was the main reason for an organisation called "Yhdistys 9" ("Association nine") to start demanding changes in the state policy.

It has been claimed, that Yhdistys 9 was some kind of an intermediate form between the "first" and the "second" wave of the women's movement in Finland. Ideologically it represented the ideas of the (Scandinavian) equality movements strenghtend in the 1960s using terms like sex-roles. The goal of Yhdistys 9 was equality not emancipation. In Denmark, for example, all women's sections of political parties were abolished in the name of equality in the late 1960s. Although this was also discussed in Finland, it was not carried out. This has been explained by the fact that the main channels and arenas for Finnish women's political activities would have been the women's sections of political parties. (Dahlerup and Gulli 1983, p. 52-53 and p. 57.) However, the significance and legitimation of the women's sections decreased in the 1970's with serious consequences to the recruitment of women cabinet ministers.

In 1966 a Committee was set up with a task to investigate women's position. The Committee was formed upon the initiative of the women's section of the Social Democratic Party. As a result of the Committee's work, equality politics became part of the state policy. The main responsibility for equality policy was given to the Council for Equality between Men and Women, which was founded in 1972.

In the 1970 parliamentary elections the proportion of women representatives increased to 21.5 per cent. The "quota" used in the Scandinavian countries after

World War II of having at least one female member in every Government was not perfectly filled in the Governments of Finland. It was not until 1968 when women became represented in every Finnish Government. During the 1970s the average number of women cabinet ministers had been two, and in the 1980s it was three, but in the Government formed in 1987 there were four women members. Women's *representation* in the Finnish Governments was established and consolidated during the last decades. The increased proportion of women cabinet ministers can partly be explained by the fact that since the 1970s there were regularly two posts available in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, as well as in the Ministry of Education. Those four have usually been *women's posts*.

During the last two decades, there have been some exceptions to the division of labour between sexes in the Finnish Governments: in the 1970s the first woman was named as the Assistant Minister of Finance (Margit Eskman, SDP) and another one as the Minister of Justice (Inkeri Anttila, LKP). In the 1980s women got only two "new" portfolios: in 1981 a woman was appointed the Minister of Trade and Industry (Pirkko Työläjärvi, SDP) and in 1984 Kaisa Raatikainen (SDP) was the first woman to become the Minister of Interior.

Anyhow, while women have been winning more and more power in elective political bodies, the significance of those bodies has at the same time been declining. This is due to the changes in political and administrative system incorporated to the phenomena called corporatism (or neo-corporatism). The corporative system has been determined by the growing influence of interest groups which have become crucial elements of ruling (e.g. Helander 1979, p. 5). The Government's power has actually been limited by its dependence on interests groups, which have strongly influenced in the decision-making of the Government (Myllymäki 1979, p. 225). Another crucial change in this context is the expansion of administrative system incorporated with the development of the Welfare State. In order to manage the welfare policy, public authorities have drawn upon the expertise of the interest groups, while becoming more and more dependent on them. Interest groups use their power mainly through the enlarging committee institution of a more and more permanent nature (Helander 1977, p. 71.)

According to Helga Hernes the corporative system is closely linked with the Nordic Welfare State (Hernes 1984, p. 30-33). Women's actual possibilities to influence in this kind of decision-making system are stated as follows: "The persons, who are involved in this expansive network of commissions and boards are largely the same as the members of the political and strategic elite constituted by civil servants, organizational leaders, experts and some politicians. More clearly than the elective representatives, the members of this "network" represent collective interests and alliances" (Hernes & Hänninen-Salmelin 1983, p. 172-174.) Women have increased their proportion in the elective bodies, but they have less influence in the corporative system, because they are absent or they are underrepresented in the corporative bodies of top-level

administration, economic organizations, university administration etc., which form the basis for corporative interest articulation. (ibid. p. 175.) However, women are supporters of the state policy, because women's living conditions are more directly affected by it, but also the State is dependent on women's (reproductive) work both in home and on the labour market.

This pessimistic description of the interdependence between women and the State ("public dependence/patriarchy") has been commented by e.g. Drude Dahlerup (1987). Dahlerup suggests, that because women's proportion in the political bodies has increased in the Welfare State period, and in Nordic parliaments, for example, women now form a "large minority", they could also have had possibilities to improve women's position.

Most of Finland's women cabinet ministers have been Ministers of Social Affairs and Health and Ministers of Education. Is this part of the "patriarchal strategy" to ensure that women are integrated with the Welfare State policy from top to toe? Have women themselves been creating a "reorganized patriarchy"? Have the women in top-level politics any possibilities to break these patriarchal power structures and change the "prepared" political decision-making, which leaves no room for alternatives. Is there any freedom of choice besides being a mere stamp? In the following pages the experiences of former women cabinet ministers will demonstrate the marginal role women seem to have also in top-level politics.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN TOP-LEVEL POLITICS

The three generations of women cabinet ministers

The interviews, which I made in 1986, were semi-structured with four main themes to discuss: 1) life-cycle/political career, 2) opinion about the background and causes of appointment, 3) the contents of political activities, and 4) experiences of woman's role in politics. The aim of the interviews was to find out what is left out of registers and rolls, what it really is to be a woman in politics taking into account women's familiar responsibilities, cultural identity, and social role etc. The analysis and interpretation of the interviews were made from the point of view of life history and everyday world. Thus the political career was taken under consideration in the context of the vertical continuance of the life story (life history and phases of life), and on the other hand, in the context of the horizontal continuance, the life arenas outside the political work. This was possible because the interviews included descriptions of childhood, home, family relations, marriage, child care, education, profession, etc. This kind of approach made it possible to try to break the dichotomy of private/public by taking into account the interaction with the different aspects of woman's life in the course of her political career.

In some previous studies concerning Finnish MP's, the political tradition of home has been described as an important factor in the political career (e.g.

Oksanen 1973, p. 50). Typical for the background of women politicians was that they had had political homes or relatives in politics, which acting as examples helped the women overcome the obstacles set by the traditional woman's role as Currell and Vallance, for example, have shown in their studies on British women MP's (see Currell 1974, p. 164-166; Vallance 1979, p. 63 and Stacey & Price 1981, p. 157). The political tradition of home was stressed also by the Finnish women cabinet ministers. No doubt, their political career was often supported and promoted by fathers and husbands involved in politics and by their influential networks. Besides male relatives, the female models - mothers, grandmothers, aunts and teachers etc. - encouraged women cabinet ministers to enter politics.

The year 1972 was a "magical" year from the point of view of women cabinet ministers' family relations, because the women appointed to office before this year had been unmarried or at least childless (particularly this was true among the female ministers of the Social Democratic Party), but all women cabinet ministers appointed after 1972 were, or at least, had been, married (divorced) and most of them had children, some of them even had small children when entering the Government. However, particularly the women cabinet ministers of the Agrarian/Center Party had a lot of children already in the 1950's. Perhaps it was easier to arrange the child-care in the country side where female relatives often lived in the neighbourhood. Most of the unmarried and childless women cabinet ministers were from the Left parties. Working class women had to choose between children and political career, although there were some exceptions to this rule even before 1972. The typical solution was, however, that women politicians raised their children before they started their political career. But they did not complain. The contradictions between everyday life and political career, were mostly emphasized by the "youngest" women cabinet ministers (born in the 1940s).

Also the career profile differed between generations. The representatives of the first generation (appointed to office before the 1970s) were typically leading figures of the women's sections of their political parties. The role of women's sections and women's organizations was crucial in their political career and recruitment process. This did not hold later. Almost all members of the second generation (appointed to office in the 1970s) had participated in the work of the women's section, but other activities and competences became more important in their recruitment. Inside this generation there was to be found two types of career profile, which can be called 1) 'long-term organization career' and 2) 'expert career'. The latter resembles also the political career of women of the third generation, who were appointed to office in the 1980s.

The long-term organizational career was built upon long term professionalism in politics. The women cabinet ministers with this career profile had been interested in politics ever since their childhood, and their political career had already started in the political organizations for young people. They did not have university education and typically they did not have any profession. These

women politicians had earned their living by working in various tasks in political organizations or organizations of citizens.

The "experts" had a good education as well as a profession, which was typically in the fields of social or health care, culture or education. As politicians, "experts" were interested in the same issues they were dealing with in their jobs. One could say, that with these women politicians, professional and political careers were fruitfully integrated. Those women cabinet ministers, who entered the "male ministerial posts" come mostly from this group. Women cabinet ministers seemed to be proud of their expertise and some of them even remarked that most men cabinet ministers were not expected to be so educated and experienced in the field of their Ministry. This may also be due to women's lack of self-confidence as Eeva Kuuskoski-Vikatmaa (Minister of Social Affairs and Health in 1983-1987) pointed out in her interview:

"The fact that I was offered the post as the Minister of Social Affairs and Health had great impact on my own attitude towards the appointment because I was professionally experienced in this area, and when I was working in Parliament I had also dealt with issues of this field. I must confess that I was a bit afraid whether I could manage this job. When the time came to make the decision, I thought a great deal which post I might be able to accept... In that time I had my doubts whether I could accept the post of the Minister of Education - that was the other possibility - but absolutely I would not have accepted any other ministerial post (besides these two). I don't think men will hesitate like this. Perhaps this is some kind of crazy modesty that one is afraid to jump head long in to something new."

(The interview of Eeva Kuuskoski-Vikatmaa, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, 100.)

Why were they chosen?

"Why was it just you who was appointed to office?" The replies of the women cabinet ministers of the 1970s, were resembled some of the conventional criteria for the appointment: long-term organizational work, parliamentary experience, expert knowledge, as well as good education and proper profession. However there are also some unspoken rules, which had to be taken into account when choosing a candidate for a portfolio: a candidate ought to be a suitable person, representing the "proper" sex, the "proper" district or the "proper" fraction of the party etc. "Proper" sex was usually mentioned by the women cabinet ministers of the 1970s to be one of the reasons for their appointment to office. When equality politics became part of the official state politics, it was demanded that at least one woman should be included in political and administrative bodies to represent her sex, the *token woman*. *However women were not at the same starting line with men, because they were usually appointed to offices which seemed to be the only possible posts for women.*

"Yes, I would think that also the members of our parliamentary group (SKDL) thought that certain boards in Parliament and certain posts... were for women - I mean these few offices - and the others were for men..." (The interview of Anna-Liisa Korpinen, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, 91.)

In the 1970s education became a significant qualification criterion for politicians also in the Centre Party and Left parties. These parties had not previously regarded education as a crucial qualification requirement for politicians. Particularly this concerned women. Young women with university education got a chance to get in power, at least in principle.

"They thought in the Centre Party, that when the previous women cabinet ministers of our party had not had such a good education... now it was time to take into account women with academic degree." (The interview of Marjatta Väänänen, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, 93.)

A certain kind of generation gap in the Finnish political life was true also among the Social Democrats. In the beginning of the 1970s Margit Eskman, who was the Minister of Finance in 1972, was displaced from the ("women's") place in the executive board of the SDP by young Pirkko Työläjärv, who some years later (in 1975) got the portfolio of the Minister of Social Affairs and Health.

"From my personal viewpoint, I think that in the Social Democratic Party they wanted a new face into the political life... I happend to be the one. Besides, if we look at the parliamentary group and the executive body of the party at that time, I was perhaps the only one, who had education in economics and, a lot of experience of working life... Of course, the current need of that time, to take women especially into account, affected in the decision to appoint me to office... (The interview of Pirkko Työläjärv, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, 96.)

The "youngest generation" entered a political career during the 1970s and the 1980s, when the role of women's sections in the recruitment process became less important. On the other hand, education and vocation became even more important than before. It was amazing how similar the life stories of the four youngest women cabinet ministers were. They were all born in the 1940s and they were young university students in the late 1960s, in the period of cultural and political radicalism along with the student movement. Even though all four admitted having had a political home, they did not become involved in politics untill their early adulthood, in their student days. All of them had done a university degree, one of them even a doctoral degree. Furthermore, they all had expert knowledge of the issues concerning the fields of health, social care or education. These were the main areas of interest they were later dealing in the Government.

Kaarina Suonio was a psychologist, Vappu Taipale a psychiatrist, Eeva Kuuskoski-Vikatmaa a physician and Pirjo Ala-Kapee an adult educator. When these women were evaluating the reasons for their appointment, they did not, however, stress neither their education nor their professional career. The question seemed to be that they were - besides that they were good educated experts - also the most suitable women for the "women's posts"...

"I assume, that it was quite obviously a question of finding a new woman minister for the party. We (the Centre Party) had five possible posts in the Government, and it was from the very start obvious, that they were nominating only one woman candidate. No requests were made that women should get more than one portfolio. The executive board of the party and the parliamentary group nominate candidates for offices. In these discussions an idea was brought up that we should appoint new types of women, and younger ones, to office..." (The interview of Eeva Kuuskoski-Vikatmaa, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, 100.)

In 1986 Pirjo Ala-Kapee was appointed the Minister of Education after a long public discussion influenced by the new-formed Norwegian Government with its eight women cabinet ministers. The problem was that Ala-Kapee was entering an office, traditionally regarded as women's post, while it was complained that her rival candidate, a man, had not had "equal" opportunities to get the post. Here is a comment from a newspaper:

"Ala-Kapee was not exactly the type the leading men of the party had thought her to be. Something young, fresh and sparkling, but altogether harmonious, was looming up in their fancy. They were looking for a "doll" to be used as a bait in the election. What they were expecting for the new Minister of Education was decorativeness. The period was too short for real achievements." (Helsingin Sanomat, May 16th, 1986.)

Vappu Taipale was one of those exceptional women cabinet ministers, who was not an MP when appointed to office. She had not been active in public politics and was not a politician in a "proper" sense, although she was member of the Social Democratic Party. Taipale criticised bitterly the nature of political power:

"One day in May, when I was with great enthusiasm negotiating on the possibilities of cooperation in the mental health care.... one phonecall confused my whole life as an university teacher. As an ordinary member of the party and as a mother of four children, as well as an university teacher, planning, at the moment, new activities, my first impression was that I had become an object of power. July the first, 1982, I started my work as the Minister of Social Affairs and Health with no personal experience neither from the field of administration nor politics." (Taipale 1983, p. 20.)

In 1984 Taipale was appointed the Director General of the National Board of Social Welfare. In the newspaper "Helsingin Sanomat" she was evaluated like this: "After the Social Democratic Party had exploited her image as a "non-politician" and a "softy", she was made the Director General" (Vuoristo, Helsingin Sanomat, November 23th, 1986).

"Yes, it was a conscious calculation. It was a proper period of time after Jacob Söderman (the Minister of Social Affairs and Health, who was replaced by Taipale) was appointed Governor. So, the time was suitable before the parliamentary elections, nothing dramatic could be perceived to happen in such a short period... if you calculate, it was just the right moment for a woman with university degree and a mother of several children... I had a feeling that it could have been just anyone, who had the same attributes." (The interview of Vappu Taipale, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, 99.)

What did the women cabinet ministers think about woman's role in politics?

Politics has historically been the arena of men. Political culture is masculine, in its norms, values and working methods. Whether a woman politician is qualified and competent for the Government, for example, is nowadays more than before evaluated by men's criteria, men's values and norms. What kind of *women* politicians did the women cabinet ministers regard themselves?

The first generation saw themselves primarily as *representatives of women*. They had not experienced discrimination because of their sex, although they told some stories about male members of their parties who had tried to prevent women candidates' election to Parliament. Particularly, the oldest women cabinet ministers of the Agrarian/Centre Party seemed to approve of the traditional division of labour between sexes: women should do their job as "societal mothers" also in politics, as care-takers and educators of the new generation. Similar views were expressed by the Social Democratic women in the 1940s and 1950s. However, at the same time new ideas and demands were brought up in the women's section of the Social Democratic Party. The women, who later formed an opposition inside the women's section, criticised the "old women's section" for concentrating merely on women's issues, social policy etc., and insisted that women should be just as "proper" politicians as men are. (Ruusala 1967, p. 12-13.)

It has been claimed that the improvement in the position of women was followed by the *illusion of equality*: women and men are thought to have the same capabilities and opportunities as citizens. The differences between sexes are explained by 'cultural delay'. The differences are supposed to disappear, when women will on a larger scale enter the arenas of men, breaking the division of labour between sexes in home, working life, as well as in politics. This illusion of "natural development" was brought up particularly, in the

opinions of the second generation of the women cabinet ministers: equality in politics will be accomplished, when barriers to women's participation have vanished, when more women have become involved in the male fields of politics, and when women have learned the rules of the male games of politics. In other words, when women become similar political actors as men.

The women cabinet ministers appointed in office in the 1940s and 1950s were mainly candidates of the women's sections of their representative party or other women's organizations. The male bodies of political parties chose the most suitable candidate.

"Formerly women's movement was more significant for women than nowadays and the women's sections of political parties and women's organizations were the most important supporters of women representatives... Today, women are not so dependent on women's organizations. On the contrary, quite a lot of women politicians are members of workers' associations... and have dealt with issues which have not been in women's care before. Formerly women felt social and cultural policies very close to themselves. Now they can act in every field... say, in the late 1970s the situation changed. Now it is only natural that there must be women... It is easy to name young well-educated women experienced in organizational activities to the posts." (The interview of Meeri Kalavainen, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, p. 168.)

The second generation, appointed in office in the 1970's, in the "Decade of Equality", regarded the growing representation of women in politics as a victory. At that time women were entering the male fields of working life and politics. But they were often *tokens*, perhaps without other women's support. It is obviously difficult to be a *woman* in male-dominated work places and political bodies, when you are the only woman or you are in the minority position. It seems to be that since the 1970s the male-dominated bodies of political parties took increasingly over the task of nominating female candidates for portfolios, while the women's sections of political parties and women's organizations were no longer so important channels for women's political activities as they were before. It is paradoxical that the increased impact of the male-dominated bodies had in the women's recruitment process, was partly a consequence of equality politics:

"The "theme years" have often been criticized, but I have to say that they - the UN's International Women's Decade, for example... - have always improved the position of the target group. For a long time now it has been some kind of a moral duty - and after the Act of Equality it is even a legal duty - to include women in the decision-making process. In practice, this means that women ought to be included even at the preparatory stage and when bringing together decision-making bodies. And in this sense it has helped active women. No doubt, there is still too few women in

these bodies. Usually the case is that men think, "we have to get one or two women here and there", and they ponder, "who do we actually have here..." and so we are drawn into these bodies - as a matter of fact - quite easily. In these bodies, besides representing yourself, you are also representing the inevitable, your sex. I would think that the fact that I am a woman, has helped me a lot in politics..." (The interview of Kaarina Suonio, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, p. 172.)

The third "generation" was certainly grateful for the achievements of equality politics, e.g. for the demands, that women ought to be represented in the decision-making bodies. But the fact, that one woman was considered sufficient to represent her sex was regarded as a problem. No doubt equality politics have helped active women, but tokenism does not ensure that women's issues are taken into account in the political decision-making. Vappu Taipale said that it was curious to be called a "girl", "girl-minister". Even when Minister, she was treated as something smaller and weaker than the others (the interview of Vappu Taipale, in Dahlerup 1985, p. 166). She was not taken seriously.

The changes in the administrative and political system of the 1970s and 1980s have gnawed the authoritativeness of democratic bodies. The ideological identification of political parties has decreased their trustworthiness. The new social movements have questioned the agenda building and working forms of traditional politics. Political parties have been forced to test and rectify their strategies because of the growing criticism against the "traditional politics". Mass media plays nowadays an important role in a political career and creating an imago has become significant to politicians and their parties. The arrival of the feminist movement in Finland in the late 1970s may have had effects also on the routine politics. Taipale was the first woman minister, who regarded herself as a feminist.

One feminist viewpoint about the relations between sexes stresses those valuable and necessary attributes and ways of behaviour, which have developed historically in women's social practices closely linked with human and social reproduction. Of course, from this viewpoint too, women should expand their fields of activity and control, but as an extra demand, the relations between fields of activities, which traditionally have been divided between women and men, should be changed so that the area of reproduction would be the 'determinant' of societal life (Saarinen 1984, p. 278). Women's standpoint of politics and power was pondered also by our first "feminist minister":

We have too long been in a situation where a woman is kept hostage. This is true in so many fields of our society. You are then dreadfully alone and easily subjected to praising, or you hear people talk about that "awful woman" who cannot do what she thinks and wishes. Of course, if we had more women and if they were more trained in this game of politics and in the exercise of power, it would be better for us. But I think, that the real problem lies in the fact that women have never really exercised

power, in a sense that they could have been able to experience responsibility, to work according to the strategies of women. Thus I believe, that there should be much more women in politics and besides, they should have a conscious striving for some new, personal way of thinking and society, not in men's terms nor in a way men act and work - and this is really difficult. Even though I regard myself as a proper feminist, how often have I been in a situation where I must really strain every nerve to find the logic I should follow." (The interview of Vappu Taipale, 1986. Quotation from Kuusipalo 1989, p. 173.)

CONCLUSIONS

Women's representation in top-level politics

What is the different logic or rationality women should bring into politics? The conception of women's different values or rationality is often accounted for the division of labour between sexes where women's work is reduced to the so called private sphere. For example, Carole Pateman has criticised the unhistorical interpretation of the public/private dichotomy. The interpreters have forgotten the origin of the dichotomy as an ideological and political means of "liberal patriarchy". (Pateman 1987). The selfevidence of the dichotomy has led the (liberal) feminists to think that women's position would improve, if women on a large scale entered the public sphere. This automatic change has been justified by the argument that women's proportion in decision-making bodies has increased through the development of modern society which includes a growing number of women in paid labour. Some feminists think, that despite of women's growing participation in public life, women's actual influence in society has even declined as "modernization" and technocratisation advances. (Keränen 1987, p. 22-23.)

However, there are reasons why women's representation in political bodies should be increased. One argument is that women bring up women's issues. Why should women have their own issues, and further, do these issues articulate women's interests? Women's interests have most often been determined by the division of labour between sexes or from the point of view of women's culture. Abby Peterson, for example, has made a three-dimensional model of political cleavages, which represent social groups with opposing interests reflecting the societal division of labour: the left-right, the urban-rural and gender-sex dimensions. The latter represents the opposition expressed in political arena between men and the interests of production and women and the interests of re-production. Women's motives for political activity are based on women's shared experiences of re-productive work (in home and on labour market) and oppression. These common experiences of reproductive work and oppression determine also women's culture. (Peterson, 1987, p. 5-8.)

But are the so called "reproductive interests" always merely women's interests? Do all women have the same interests? Anna Jonasdottir has tried to solve the problem by analysing the concept of interest. She distinguishes the content/result aspect and formal aspect of the concept giving the preference to the latter, which simply means 'to be present'. According to Jonasdottir, women's representation in political system can be guaranteed only if *women as women*, as gendered persons, 'are present' and have positions in the "factory" of politics. (Jonasdottir, 1988a, p. 40-41.) Actually sex is the only capacity that is common to *all* women. Indeed, what is still wrong with women is that they are women! (Jonasdottir, 1988b, 319.) This may be a useful argument to justify women's representation in political bodies. Another question is whether this kind of (western) representative democratic political system can actually ever be representative? This is even more crucial, when we think about the corporative features of the Nordic political systems.

In this article I have described the recruitment process of women politicians in top-level-politics and some points of women cabinet ministers' role in the male-dominated political arena. As we have seen, the changes in women's access to top-level politics, during the six decades women have been represented in Finnish Governments have not been radical. Actually, if we think about the mechanisms of the corporative system, women's possibilities to influence in political decision-making have got worse in the 1970's and 1980's, while their "representation" in Finland's Governments has to some degree increased. To be able to have real influence women should be in positions where it is possible to influence on the conditions of political decision-making, not only to ready-prepared alternatives. Women's representation in Parliament and in the Governments is not enough. The way to achieve influence is to be present "everywhere", in the grass-roots politics, in elective and corporative bodies, in different levels of administration etc. Another question is whether the women chosen by men are proper representatives of women?

Women's standpoint to the exercise of power

"At first I tried to behave like a man: in those days it did not seem to be a masculine way but a neutral one... I even began to dress like a man. I wanted to look stern-faced and objective, a little like a report of a committee. They accepted and trusted me, and took me seriously, ... but something was missing. Why did they not respect women, why did they not encourage women to enter politics. After I got more experience and selfconfidence, I noticed something that I had not realized before, only felt it in my heart. The persons they wanted in politics were of a particular type; you had to cut off something of yourself, if you wanted to be generally approved of." (Alppi 1988, p. 112-113.)

The quotation above is from the autobiographical book of a Finnish woman politician, Ulla-Leena Alppi. She left Parliament after getting tired of politics,

because there was not enough room for human emotions and ideals. Today, more and more women politicians are criticizing the masculine values of politics: politics are regarded as men's game; to be able to gamble you have to be hard and effective, a quick-witted speaker etc. The "men in power" have these attributes and capacities. They are acting after the logic of power, the right of the strongest (Hassi 1988, p. 59). Of course, this is also part of the public criticism against politics emerged since the late 1970s, but interesting in women politician's criticism is that it more often finds its basis on the feminist studies on politics.

Political actors have been and are mostly men. Even in practice it has been more difficult for women to participate in politics because of their responsibility for the family (child care, domestic work), but even social and historical relationship to politics has been different for women and men. The origin of demarcation lines and conflicts in politics were born and developed in social practices of men (i.e. in production and on the labour market)(see Hernes 1984, p. 28). Helga Hernes has argued that women's areas/issues became objects of political decision-making before women themselves were part of the decision-making apparatus (ibid., p. 38.). However, in Finland (and in many other countries, too) women were able to recruit in the top-level politics, especially during periods, when many areas concerning human and social reproduction were incorporated as part of the public policy. But this did not happen automatically. You can say that women fought for the important positions in the decision-making apparatus to be able to control their own living conditions.

On the other hand, women's access to the Government, for example, can be seen as part of the patriarchal power strategy. Women have been allowed to get power, but even in top-level politics, they have been pushed to their "own sectors" and isolated there. One could also doubt, that women cabinet ministers have been the "hostages" of the Government in order to ensure women's contribution to the working out of some kind of "general" policy; a policy that has been planned and formulated almost without women, because they have always constituted a minority in the most crucial decision-making bodies of the corporative and elective political system.

What possibilities women have to influence, while forming a minority group in the decision-making bodies? Drude Dahlerup has studied the minority position of women in politics with the help of the concept called *critical mass*. The term implies that the size of the minority is significant. Dahlerup states after Moss Kanter's perception that when a group consists of 15 to 40 per cent of the minority, it will influence on the culture of the whole group and the alliances inside the minority will become possible. Tokens are no more tokens, but a minority. Dahlerup writes that a "critical mass" which makes the crucial changes is possible, when the minority reaches a certain size, e.g. 30 per cent. (Dahlerup 1988, p. 275 and p. 280.)

If we are looking at the political bodies of the Nordic countries, women have formed the crucial 30 per cent of the members in communal councils and parliaments for a quite long time. According to Dahlerup, the size of these minority positions of women has affected the Nordic politics. Resting on empirical studies, she states six areas for which an increase in the proportion of the minority might lead to changes, for example: the reaction to women as politicians, the performance and efficiency of women politicians, political discourse and culture, changes in policy and women's power (empowerment). (Dahlerup 1988.)

Although the changes in the political system of Nordic countries can hardly be explained merely by the growth of women's political representation, without taking into account the general social development, certain changes may be connected with the move from a small to a large minority. Dahlerup states e.g. following consequences: the stereotyping of women politicians has diminished, even though not vanished (the more women politicians there are, the more different types of women politicians there will be) and the appearance of a new kind of women politicians as "feminist Minister" etc. (ibid. p. 295.) Nevertheless, our "feminist Minister" was called a "girl Minister"!

In the field of the political discourse women politicians have brought up questions concerning women's position and equality politics and making them part of the political discourse (ibid. p. 296). Women politicians could also have influenced in the way women's issues have been discussed and in what kind of preference they should have in the political decision-making. Similarly, we could think that the more women in politics, the easier for them it would be to bring up women's issues. I would like to look at some points of Dahlerup's arguments to see if they fit in the top-level politics of Finland.

Miina Sillanpää was alone in the Government (as women very often did until the late 1970's), which was not easy in that time, but on the other hand, she was not alone. She was supported by a large and active women's organization, women's section of the SDP, and besides, by many influential women from other parties. Sillanpää also brought up many (working) women's issues of the time to the sessions of the Government. She was very angry of the way men treated her in politics; if she succeeded, she was called a "man" and if not, she was a Woman. But the point here is that she did not *want* to be like a man, on the contrary, she wished to succeed *as a woman*.

So did the women cabinet ministers of the Agrarian/Center Party, but it was a different kind of attitude from Miina Sillanpää's. In the interview of one "farm women-cabinet minister", one could even notice a kind of joy in being a soft woman in rough politics, to bring motherly love to harsh political debates. Although this was not typical for all women cabinet ministers of the Agrarian/Center Party, most of them seemed to think that women should do their own business in politics in the same way as men take care of their "own" issues. However, this kind of "complementary- thinking" was quite usual to all members of the first generation of women cabinet ministers.

Although there were even in the 1950's women cabinet ministers who thought that women are, and should also be (at least in politics), hard as men and should participate in decision-making concerning every field of politics, this kind of "equality-thinking" became typical only in the 1970's. It was in this decade, when women's sections lost their attractiveness and usefulness as recruitment channels for women politicians. Although you could never manage to get in top-level politics without men's support, the women cabinet ministers became more "men's women" in the 1970's onwards which could not have been possible before. It is obvious, that career in male-dominated organizations has effects on the attitudes of what kind of politicians women should be.

Finland's women cabinet ministers came mostly from the Social Democratic Party and the Centre Party, which until these days have mainly represented the agrarian people. Ideological differences between these two parties prevented the co-operation between women cabinet ministers from these two main coalition parties of Finland. But I wonder, whether all ideological obstacles really were party ideological? Many significant, (usually social policy) issues concerning women's lives (particularly), have often been brought to political arena as some kind of corner stones of party ideology, e.g. the question of child care.

The issue has over two decades been the subject of public debate between the Left and Right parties, the former side demanding more communal day-care centers, and the latter state support (or even wages) for house-mothers, who take care of their children at home. Although this contradiction reflects also urban-rural dimension of politics (farm women need not necessarily go to work outside home as their urban sisters in Finland often must), it is amazing, that this crucial question for every woman was brought into the political arena so that women were put to fight against each other.

In the 1970's and 1980's there were usually two female ministers of Social Affairs and Health, one from the Right and one from the Left, which were in the opposite sides of the policy concerning child care. The issue was a long-standing bone of contention between, particularly, the Centre Party and the Social Democrats, but because it was a matter concerning mainly women and the main negotiators were usually women, the problem seemed not to be comparable with other political issues. According to the interviews, the women cabinet ministers were quite irritated of the way this political dilemma was presented in mass media: two women quarreling with each other! They mentioned that newspapers did not show pictures of quarrelling men, when men ministers of these two parties were negotiating on the subjects of contention between these parties. However, the impossibility to form alliances because of these "ideological" contradictions, which there, of course, really were, did not naturally concern those women cabinet ministers, who represented the same political party, and some kind of alliances were mentioned in the interviews.

Something changed in the late 1970's and in the 1980's. Now the party women from the Left and the Right are actively searching alternatives for

masculine politics. Even the "old" women's sections of parties have become more radical in their demands, though you can still hear proposals that women's sections should be abolished. Women politicians from different political parties have started to co-operate with each other in certain political issues in local level. But I do not think, that women's increasing representation in political bodies is the only reason for this. I would suppose, that because there has not been a strong feminist movement in Finland, the feminist ideas have to some degree fruited our political culture from within.

However, women and women politicians have supported the state politics, which has backed up the patriarchal system of gender and thus implanted women's activities in the areas of human and social reproduction. But there are also signs that women have tried to change the traditional political questioning and agenda building most often in social movements. The traditional party politics has had its hindrances and barriers for women's participation - as obvious, because women are still underrepresented in the political bodies. Perhaps this is one reason, why political activities outside the formal political arena have been easier and more attractive for women (see e.g. Peterson 1987). Women's activity in the grass root politics can also be a reaction to the incapability or unwillingness of the formal political system to articulate women's political demands, or the rejection of prevalent political culture to confess the gender-sex dimension of political cleavages.

In Finland women's participation and contribution to political decision-making have been closely connected to the development of the Welfare State. The content of women's policy has typically been to take care of others, "politics of love". An interesting object of study could be to explore the content of women's politics and the appearance of women's issues while taking into account women's activities in different levels: at grass root politics, in civil society and state politics.

I conclude with a list of questions concerning women's politics, which need further examination: *Which* of the women's issues (concerning e.g. women's living conditions, women's possibilities, women's alternatives, women's positions in society) were demanded to be resolved in the political system and by which group of women/other groups of society, and why? How did working class women's political demands *differ* from the ones of upper class women? What about differences between rural and urban women? *How* were the issues brought to the political arena and by *whom* (women's organizations/sections, women politicians, political parties, other organization, social movements etc.)? *What* kind of political discussions there were concerning these issues? Did the results of political decision-making correspond to the "original" demands? How have women's issues changed during the time? What effects have the changes in political culture had on the political decision-making of women's issues?

NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of the previously published article in Finnish, "Naisena politiikan huippupaikoille?" in "Sosiologia", The Journal of Westermarck Society, Vol 26, 1989, No.2, 89-103.

2. During the period of 1926-1986 there had been 27 women cabinet ministers, of which 20 women were alive in 1986. From the 18 interviews 14 were used in the study and two of the interviewees preferred to reply on paper.

3. The Communist Party has a dominant role in the Finnish People's Democratic League, but it includes also socialist organizations as independent member organizations. The Finnish People's Democratic League is an organization, which participates in municipal and parliamentary elections. So the candidates of the League can either be members of the Communist Party (which they mostly are) or belong to some of the League's member organizations.

4. The Union was the women's section of the Social Democratic Party of Finland founded in 1900. In the 1950s it changed its name to the "Social Democratic Union of Women" and finally in 1959 it split and the new women's section of the Social Democratic Party was called the "Central Federation of Social Democratic Women".

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