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GREENLAND - A MINORITY IN DENMARK.

By Deputy to the Danish Folketing **KNUD HERTLING.**

It is hardly wrong to start by saying that the knowledge of those present of greenlandic matters are rather limited. Maybe some of them consider it curious that minority problems exist among the greenlandic population. Saying everything about the question I dare to say that we meet the minority problem of the greenlandic population from two sides.

We estimate that today 4000 Greenlanders are residing in Denmark. They are partly young people under instruction, and partly Greenlanders having residence - be they married with a Dane, or they have found permanent work in Denmark. This group is a typical example of a minority group in Denmark as such. Then there will be somebody saying that it is nonsense if we say that Greenland has a minority problem because in that area despite of all the greenlandic population constitutes a majority in comparison with other ethnical groups. (May I add for information that we have actually in Greenland 42.-43.000 Greenlanders against 6.-7.000 other residents). Not the less the population in Greenland is a minority group in the Danish State, as Greenland is an integral part of Denmark since the Danish Constitution was amended 1953.

Until this year Greenland was a danish colony. The colonisation started as 1721 a young very religious norwegian priest went to Greenland, hoping to find successors of nordic tribes having come to Greenland ca. 980. This young priest did not, however, find high and blond Nordics, but met a completely foreign people having a language which he did not understand. He decided to stay in the country, and this was the start of the danish colonisation of Greenland and the work of colonisation.

In Denmark we like to boast of having been a good state of colonisation. I am of the opinion that it was well-deserved when Denmark, in 1953, was mentioned as the best colony-State in the world by the United Nations in connection with the integration of Greenland with Denmark. When we know a little about the treatment of other States with colonies, and how they have treated the populations in their colonies, we as Greenlanders must feel happy that it was Denmark which took over Greenland as a colony. This does not, however, mean that everything has been well in Greenland - on the contrary we must say. The various colony States - Denmark included - have always followed the principle that colonies and their population should be exploited economically to the widest extent, and if the colonies did not give profit enough it was not estimated useful to yield too much in favour of the population in the colony.

I would like to give examples of this by saying a little about two domains, instruction and sanitary problems:

Very fastly after the start of the colonisation Denmark regarded it as one of its most important tasks to introduce instruction, which meant that already in the middle of the 18th century Greenland had a well established school-system enabling the passing of a teacher's examination at Godthaab. Most children were enabled to attend school from the age of 7 years and until the age of confirmation. But it is one thing that you have schools, but another thing how the quality of the instruction given to Greenlandic children was. This problem can be described as follows:

The instruction in children's schools started by the 7th year and ended when they were 14, including instruction in the Danish language, but this instruction was in many cases insufficient, so that most of the young Greenlanders were not able to speak Danish when they left school. If in the school a pupil were considered by the teacher to be a talented young man, he had the possibility of attending an after-school for two years. As this school system was most developed it was possible to receive 90 young men, and not until 1934 girls were enabled to attend this instruction. If during the stay at the after-school a pupil proved to be well talented, he was sent to the capital of Greenland, Godthaab, in order to attend a school called High School (which has nothing to do with the term Folk High School). If during the attendance the pupil proved to be more than well talented he had to attend two years more at the teacher's seminar, and he finished his education there by a teacher's examination, and such teachers were called catechets.

We have in Greenland been very happy for this education. Many great Greenlandic personalities were educated in this school, and this education has at least enabled them to influence spiritual life and politics, but the standard of this education is to capare with the fact that if there were 15-20 young men at the teacher's seminar, there were no more than one or two talented enough to take a supplementary education at a Danish teacher's seminar. They had to spent two or three years in Denmark in order to obtain the same level of education as a Danish teacher. This fact proves the low quality of the Greenlandic education during the period of colonisation.

As regards ~~the situation of healthiness/~~ ~~zzzzzzzz~~ problems the situation was even worse. So late as ca. 1950 the average life-age of women was ca. 38 years and of men ca. 35. Tuberculosis ravaged as a popular disease in Greenland and ca. 40 % of all deaths pro year were due to this disease. The death rate of children was tremendously high. Even if hospitals functioned in the greatest towns there was no preventive sanitary care. When people came to the hospitals they came there in order to die.

The two examples mentioned are covering all problems. Bad dwellings, insufficient food, poor conditions of gaining etc., etc.

These were the conditions in the Colony of Greenland, as the Second World War started, and the connections with Denmark were broken. But these conditions were still existing at the end of the war and connections were reestablished. In Greenland the pleasure and enthusiasme of the liberation of Denmark was true, but also various wants of ameliorations in many fields were rased. During the war the Americans had given the impression that many things could be realized faster and more effectively, and such ameliorations were wanted by Greenlandic politicians.

When you do not know how to act you always establish a Committee. They also did that upon that time. A small Committee presented in the summer of 1946 a report but it proved soon that the new ameliorations proposed by the Government were not all satisfactory.

Under a strong impression of the necessity of something to be done as well as of necessary ameliorations the then Prime Minister, Hans HEDTOFT, went to Greenland in order to inform himself of the matters. (Greenland was at that time part of the Prime Minister's resort). Hans HEDTOFT was a warmhearted man, and what he experienced during his visit in Greenland, impressed him deeply, and immediately after his return he appointed a big Committee charged with the examination of all Greenlandic problems. This Committee finished its work in the summer of 1949, and I for me had the pleasure during its travel to Greenland in this pretty summer to be interpreter for the Committee. As for me, this travel led to the decision that I chose law as my study in order to be better enabled to work for Greenland. But for Greenland as an entity this Commission work finally led to the work of reconstruction of the Country. It is important to observe that all this happened at a time when Greenland was still a Danish colony. This means that the Danish Government was already at this time able to abandon one of the holy principle of colonisation saying that we should not invest too much in the colony.

This reconstruction of Greenland has been running since the beginning of 1950. Expressed in Danish crowns I can tell that the expenditure in favour of Greenland was 50 million crowns in 1950 and ca. 140 million crowns in 1960. Today the yearly expenditure according to law comprises some 700 million crowns.

This reconstruction has completely changed the small Greenlandic community. During the very short period the Danes were enabled to nearly completely extirpate tuberculosis. This disease has today no importance as cause of death. Today every young Greenlander is enabled to get the same education as everybody in Denmark. The ameliorations of living conditions have in general developed with the result that we after a very short period have been able to create a small industrial community, which means that a people having lived on basis of natural economy has now become a community with money economy.

There are today many people, especially from the younger generation of Greenland who like to say that this development has been much too rapid, that we have not given the Greenland population possibility to adapt to the new things, and that we have in this way made the population of Greenland to passive spectators of this entire development. Such opinions are not completely true and not completely false. The fact is that when we ask whether development has run too fast in certain directions, it is in many cases difficult to give a reply. Is it the development of the sanitary system which has run too fast? Or should we have left even more people to die of an absurd disease as tuberculosis? Should we have left much more children to death in a very young age? The reply must be: Naturally not.

Should we have left the level of education on the former level and thus not give the Greenlandic youth the same access to education which is open to Danish comrades? The reply must be: Naturally not.

Should we have left undone clearing hundreds of bad and unhealthy dwellings and waited to construct new well-equipped dwellings? The reply must be naturally not.

And we can continue putting questions within various fields, and the replies will as a rule be nearly the same - naturally not.

So it is not within these fields we are working too much, but when I say that such a question is not completely false, there is a special reason. We have namely been forced to state that a great deal of the Greenlandic population has been only spectators to this reconstruction and therefore failed to engage itself in all the new things which have been realized.

There are many reasons in this connection.

Firstly the pallers have possibly estimated the fitness of a man to adapt himself to new ideas a little too high, which means that this adaption has taken more time than foreseen.

Secondly it was wanted that the reconstruction of all these matters should become realized so rapidly that there were no well-educated Greenlanders able to tralize the planning and the practical carrying out of these tasks. It was necessary to transport workers from Denmark in order to carry out the want of a rapid reconstruction. This procedure is still running in the continued extension of Greenland, but everybody is now knowing the problem, and it is tried to take Greenlandic workers more into consideration, and they are now to a wide extent under education for this purpose.

The strong expansion of Greenland mentioned has also its critics in Denmark. Somebody asserts seriously that this expansion has been forced on the Greenlandic population only by the Danes. This assertion is completely groundless. As they already said in connection with the Committee reports in 1946 and 1949, the desire of the expansion was first of all presented by the Greenlanders, but it is another thing that we had possibly not dreamt of such an enormous effort, but this fact should not be a reproach to Denmark.

The Greenlandic politicians are actually discussing the planning of perspectives in Greenland for the next 15 years. I dare say that all responsible politicians agree to reduce the speed of this process of development, as we feel or even feel sure that the basis now created in all fields is so equitable that initiatives from Danish side need not be made more intensive., but we like to express it in the way that we would prefer to have better time in the next 10-15 years to find our own soul.

This opinion shows as such that we from our side admit that a strong technical development does not always make men more comfortable or happy in these new surroundings. So we must say that this very fast revolution in the Greenlandic community, the revolution from natural to money economy has created many human problems. Many serious social problems have been the consequence of this revolution.

As a consequence we have an alcoholic problem.

We have got a serious increase of youth criminality.

We have very serious school problems as regards adaption of children to the new school system.

We have until recent times had great problems as regards too many children born outside married life, and after this disengagement of the youth from thinking of former times as to ethics and morals we have got considerable problems when we think of venereal diseases.

I want here to comment on the most serious human consequences of the mentioned expansion of the Country.

The abuse of alcohol in Greenland has in spite of the human tragedies we have seen a rather ridiculous historical basis. During the colony time it was forbidden to buy alcohol and alcoholical drinks in all the Greenlandic population. Excepter were Danes living in Greenland as well as certain Greenlanders of high education having obtained status as Danes. The Greenlandic population has thus

experienced that it was a privilege to dispose of alcohol, this being something like a symbol of status for rich and well educated people, and therefore it was not so surprising that people to a certain extent went amuck as spirits were given free in connection with the incorporation of Greenland as an integral part of the Danish State. Now everybody should be fine, and if possible drink much. Compared with the population number the consumption of alcohol in Greenland has been nearly the highest in the world during the last 10 years, but we are happy now to see a considerable decrease of this consumption. This very great consumption has naturally created many human tragedies not only for those drinking themselves but also for the families and in consequence for the whole community. The worst crimes have been due to alcohol, and against 90 % of all smaller crimes committed for the sake of gain were due to the use of alcohol. Most deaths because of accidents in the nature and on the sea were due to alcohol. This development has made interference from public side necessary, partly by means of an intensified educational work.

The school problems present themselves first of all in many absences of the children. This question ought not to be so serious if not the whole question of education of children is a part of this problem. The school authorities have noticed that absences prevail in cases of children from poor families. When parents feel doubtful towards the exigencies which meet them in the new community in which the children, they are no more able to advise their children as regards the new community in which the children shall grow up. Moreover we have in the schools the very great problem coming from linguistical difficulties. Greenlandic and the Danish language are completely different. It needs not to be explained that most of the Greenlandic children attending school the first time can only speak Greenlandic. This first confrontation between children and school has given and continues to give shocks to many children because teacher and pupil can as a rule not speak the same language. As a matter of fact we have not many bilingual teachers in Greenlandic - speaking Greenlandic as well as Danish - and therefore we must find school teachers from the ordinary Danish primary schools. When many children are not able really to understand the instruction they rapidly lose interest for it, and therefore there are so many absences.

In the coming time we will in the administration as well as among politicians discuss new school structure for Greenland.

It is our natural desire that the school in Greenland and in Denmark should not differ too much, as a Greenlandic girl or boy during the school years necessarily enter into the Danish education system, that is when the pupil later^{on} shall have a higher education. But at the same time we state that it will not be clever to imitate the Danish school structure, as the cultural and social linguistic basis are so different. Therefore we must in the time to come try to find a school structure different from the Danish but not so different that the two structures can not collaborate. A.o. we shall try to find an educational method, a method of instruction in a foreign language making it possible to teach the Danish language rather fastly to the Greenlandic children. I know very well that all the questions of bilingualism is not unknown to this assembly, but our difficulty in Greenland is the great difference between Danish and Greenlandic.

One of the most important questions in the coming Greenland policy will be how to give work to all young people wanting work. Since the end of the 50th we have had an enormous increase of the Greenlandic population. In 1950 the population in Greenland was 23 600, and in 1968 we were more than 38 000. Caused by the educational difficulties I just mentioned a very great part of the youth will apply for occupation in the industry, but it is to regret that during the last years we had a decrease in the fish industry production caused by climatical changes. The fish which came to our coasts in the

1920th are now retiring from the coast region and wandering to the great banks situated in the middle of the David Straits. If we will not be able to enlarge the Greenlandic fleet of trawlers within short time, and be able to teach the Greenlandic fishermen in this direction, we will meet a very difficult situation, the more because the commercial situation in Greenland is so one-sided as it is because it only bases on fish-industry. We do today the possible in order to find other commercial possibilities for the Greenlandic population, comprising tourist industry and mines. But therefore these new branches have possibly been developed to a standard able to occupy many people, we must be prepared to send Greenlandic workers to other countries and before all to Denmark. This serious situation makes necessary a narrow collaboration between the Greenlandic and the Danish school, or, said by other words, it will be necessary to enable the Greenlandic workers to be employed without too great difficulties in the Danish labour market and therefore ~~shoold~~ in the two regions should not be too different. It is not desirable that Greenlandic workers should be treated as foreign workers on the Danish labour market.

Until now I have ^{/not/} mentioned a so important and emotional problem as the salary-difference between Greenlanders and Danes. This problem has since 1964 embittered minds of many Greenlanders, as they caused by the rule of "criterion of birth-place" have been excluded from obtaining the same salary for the same work when they return to Greenland. It will, however, be to great a task here to explain this entire salary problem, it may also be interesting and unjust. It would take many hours of your time if this problem should be explained in all its details, but if somebody would like to ask questions regarding this problem, I am as a matter of course at your disposal.

As regards the administrative system in Greenland I can briefly say that the Ministry for Greenland, headed by the Minister for Greenland, is the superior authority. This Ministry has its seat in København, and in connection with the administrative department as such there are various directorates such as the Royal Greenlandic Commerce, the Technical Organisation for Greenland, the Geological Research Office for Greenland a.o. In the region of Greenland the State is represented by the Governor of Greenland, being the superior representative of the State, and he has all State authorities in Greenland in charge.

Greenland is politically divided in 17 communes, and the members of the communal assemblies are elected in the same way as usual in other democratic countries be free and secret elections.

All these communes are represented in a council called the Country Council for Greenland, having its members elected directly with at least one representative for each commune. Thus Greenland has not a system of indirect representation.

All members of the communal councils and of the Regional Council of Greenland are elected in one-man-constituencies by majority. Moreover Greenland is represented in the Danish Parliament (Folketing) by two Deputies. This according to the Danish Constitution, and considering the population number of Greenland we must admit that it is over-covered in the Danish Folketing.

All Greenlandic politicians are elected as persons, as political parties in Greenland have not yet been established. The first party, the "Inuit"-party was founded in 1964 first of all as a reaction against the "criterion of place of birth". This party has, however, no political influence today, and by the way the party has become a party of employers. I for me am actually preparing the foundation of a new party in Greenland, the "Sukaaq"-party. The first party section was founded in february 1970 and until now we have 6 sections. We want to found party sections in all communes, and until this work is finished, the party will continue to be under foundations.

It is my hope to finish this work in 1971-72.

I could continue explaining various problems created not only because of the status as a minority within the Danish State, but also because of the distance between Denmark and Greenland and the many special problems in that country. We are happy to see that the Greenlandic population consider during the recent years evermore themselves different, having their own identity, being a minority in the State, and this is a.o. a thing which my party is wanting to work for and promote.

Knud HERTLING, M.F.