

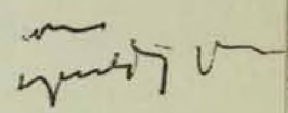
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## THE EMANCIPATION OF MAN

Address by Mr. Olof Palme, Swedish Prime Minister, at the  
Women's National Democratic Club, Washington, D.C.

## The Emancipation of Man

In your language man can mean two things - human being and adult male. What I wish to say today is therefore embodied in the title I have given my address - "The Emancipation of Man". We have talked long enough about the emancipation of women, of the problem of woman's role in society. But in order that women shall be emancipated from their antiquated role the men must also be emancipated. Thus, it is the human beings we shall emancipate. 

In the long-term programme of the party I represent, the Social-Democratic Party of Sweden, we say that the aim over the long run must be that men and women should be given the same rights, obligations and work assignments in society. This fundamental idea is today embraced by almost all political parties in Sweden.

For our part we mean that the emancipation of men and women would imply considerable advantages from all points of view.

The men should have a larger share in the various aspects of family life, for example, better contact with the children. The women should become economically more independent, get to



know fellow-workers and to have contacts with environments outside the home. The greatest gain of increased equality between the sexes would be, of course, that nobody should be forced into a predetermined role on account of sex, but should be given better possibilities to develop his or her personal talents. The development of the children would also be positively affected by more contacts with both sexes. Equality also provides prerequisite conditions for better economic security in the family as a result of the double income. If the family is not wholly dependent on only one person's income one can more easily manage temporary reductions in income owing to illness, unemployment, studies, etc. Not to say what increased equality means for security in connection with divorce or death. The independence of husband and wife can be protected and the strain on one or the other spouse can cease.

It was not until the 1960's that this way of thinking became more commonly accepted in Sweden after a long and intensive debate. It is still in a strident contrast to the factual conditions. I shall first give a short account of the debate and then give a few examples of the practical measures we are taking to make reality move closer to the ideal.

The views of the role of the woman and the man inside the family has gradually changed. Before the industrialization, in the agrarian society, the family was to a larger extent than now a working community in which both parents had contact with the children. As a result of the industrialization the men began to work far away from



home and the most important tasks for a woman began to be regarded as care and upbringing of the children. The discrepancy between different groups was, of course, considerable and there were many women who were forced into productive activity for economic reasons, although the community had not arranged for any child care, although maybe they had hard household chores to attend to and the conditions in the working life were difficult. But the ideal was that the woman should remain at home and take care of the children. The distance between the world of the men and the women increased. The men were principally looked upon as family supporters. Their relationship to the children was impaired. The women got an increasingly dominating role in the upbringing of the children.

During the twentieth century the women in Sweden were given voting rights. They were given the same educational possibilities as men. The standard of living was raised, dwellings became better, household work became easier by means of mechanical aids, more easily handled material, more finished products. School meals were introduced in all schools. Child allowances and other social benefits eased the situation of the families with children. At the same time instruction on family planning resulted in most families planning the size of their family. The average living age was raised. The modern labour market policy, which aims at maintaining full employment, was introduced.



These factors contributed to changing the views on the role of the women. Childbearing and taking care of children took up an increasingly shorter period of the life of most women. After that they had many years ahead when they often experienced that they were no longer fully employed. Most of the functions which the individual household had to carry out earlier now take place outside the home. One therefore began to talk about the woman's double role, as mother and as gainfully employed. It should be possible for the women to have a new life-style. First education and work, then childcare in the home while the children were small, then a return to gainful occupation. In order to facilitate this life-style demands were raised on, amongst other things, improved service in the dwelling areas, and adult education for the women who wished to return to the labour market after having been at home.

But towards the end of the 1950's a public discussion on a large scale began in Sweden. There was a feeling that the development was going too slowly. The women had obtained practically all formal rights, but they were still considerably underrepresented in politics and the women on the labour market had as a rule low wages and subordinate positions. The women had turned to and had been in demand by a limited sector of the labour market, principally lower positions in retail trade, offices, care and service. Women trying to realize the double-role system often found themselves having double works at home and on the labour market.



A young woman wrote an essay which was entitled "The Conditional Emancipation of Woman", in which she drew attention to the absurdity that woman had been permitted to compete with man on the labour market on the condition that she maintained her traditional functions inside the family. Why should a woman have two roles and the man only one? she asked. Is not the role of the father as important as the role of the mother? Should not the household work and the care of the children be shared by the parents whilst the society simultaneously makes greater efforts for the children? These views were provocative challenges to many people. Their arguments were based on their own situation which seldom tallied with this idea. They experienced themselves as being attacked instead of seeing the whole as a problem for the society. A problem which demanded reflection, toilsome work and long-term planning. They ridiculed the very idea. Ridicule is probably the weapon which has been most commonly used in the resistance against equality between the sexes. It was a very emotional debate. But during the 1960's a number of books were published, which gave an account of inquiries made and contained facts which gradually made the discussion change its character. It became more matter-of-fact and less emotional.

An important part was played by a book, which is now also translated in large parts into English, namely Dahlstrom "The Changing Roles of Men and Women". Sociologists, psychologists, social scientists and economists examined the problem critically from different aspects,



for example, just the condition that the role of the woman could not be changed if that of the man was not also changed. They showed how tradition and the expectations of the environment teach the children from the beginning that boys and girls should behave differently and have different characteristics. The so-called "sex-roles", i.e., the culturally conditioned expectations on an individual on account of sex, act as a sort of uniform which represses the individuality of the child. For example, in Sweden it is usual that parents give mechanical toys to boys and dolls only to girls. This guidance is later on reflected in the sex-determined choice of profession. The female reserve of talents is needed in the technology training but almost only boys are to be found in this field of instruction. Both children and adults - which are being taken care of - should benefit from being in an environment with both female and male nurses. But few boys are attracted by the nursing profession. Women and men are at an early stage directed towards different spheres of interest, different worlds. The same education and the same role for men and women should not only achieve real equality between the sexes but also increase the communications between men and women and give them more in common.

It is not only the traditional female role which has disadvantages. The sociologists recalled that, according to statistics, the men have a higher criminal record, more stress and illnesses due to strenuous work, higher suicide rates and, as a rule, they die at an earlier age than women. In the school it is the boys who have the



greatest adaption problems. The men who are divorced and living alone have greater difficulties to manage than the divorced women. The interpretation was that the social pressure on the man to assert himself, fight his way in life, to be aggressive and not to show any feelings create contact difficulties and adaption difficulties.

Sociologists considered that one should not speak of the "problem of woman's role in society" but of the "sex-role problem" in order to emphasize that the problem also concerns the traditionally male role. This designation has now become generally accepted.

The greatest disadvantage with the male sex-role is that the man has too small a share in the upbringing of the children. The ability to show affection and to establish contact with children has not been encouraged in the man. Already from the beginning both boys and girls have a need of having good contacts with adults of both sexes. Studies made reveal a common trait in the picture of children and youths with different kinds of behavioural disturbances. It is that they have a poor or no contact with the father or any other grown-up male person.

The sociologists and psychologists drew particular attention to the identification problem of the boys. Already at the age of three the child has need of identifying himself or herself with somebody of the same sex. This process is easier for the girls because they have constant contact with women. It is more difficult for the boys. In the modern society they grow up practically wholly in a female world. At home they



are as a rule taken care of by the mother. During the early school years their teachers consist entirely of female teachers: There is a risk that the boys by means of TV, comic strips and other massmedia create a false and exaggerated picture of what it means to be a man. The men are tough and hard-boiled wild-west heroes, agents, supermen, soldiers. The boys compensate their lack of contact with kind and everyday men by looking upon massmedia men as their ideal. It should be possible to counteract these problems. The men should already from the beginning have just as much contact with their children as the women. And we should have both men and women as child nurses, kindergarten teachers and infant school teachers.

Earlier we had a rather intense discussion in Sweden on whether mothers of small children should work outside the home or not. As a result of the new view the problem will be instead if the parents of infants should be employed. One solution is that parents work part-time and take turns at looking after the child. Many young families with flexible working hours, for example, under-graduates, now practice this arrangement in Sweden. But the psychologists seem to agree that it is not injurious if the child is taken care of by somebody else during part of the day. Nota bene if it is given good care and the parents have regular contact with the child.

The new role of the man implies that he must reduce his contributions in the working life - and maybe also in politics - during the period when he has small children. This is what the women always had to do alone earlier.



From a national economy point of view we could manage this loss in production if we can instead stimulate the women to make increased contributions there.

We therefore look upon the emancipation of the man as important for the development of our children and for equality between the sexes. Both men and women are working towards this end. The result has been programmes, drawn up in the different parties, in which it is demanded that men and women should have the same roles. The big trade union organisations have prepared their own programmes which will make it possible for men to share the child care with the women. The trade union organisations and the organisation of the employers also have a joint collaboration body which works for equality between the sexes in accordance with this principle. The same views are to be found in the report on the status of women in Sweden which the Swedish Government submitted to the United Nations in 1968. These views, which first appeared to be shocking and were ridiculed, have now been officially accepted. The public opinion is nowadays so well informed that if a politician today should declare that the woman ought to have a different role than the man and that it is natural that she devotes more time to the children he would be regarded to be of the Stone Age. The supporters of the emancipation of man have, in other words, won the battle and the ridicule is now directed the other way. In theory that is. In reality the resistance is still hard. In practical life you find the injustices and one-eyed sex-role-thinking.



But when we are trying to accomplish the ideas of equality between the sexes this is done by means of efforts both in the trade union and the political field. We have not got any special Government body dealing with this problem but regard it as an aspect which is included in the reform work in all fields - in taxation policy, social policy, etc. Let me give one example:

An important reform proposal has been approved by the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament) this spring and will enter into force on January 1, 1971. It is an important taxation reform which implies a redistribution of the tax burden between higher and lower income earners. But it also implies a change over from joint taxation to individual taxation and to a single table giving the rates of national income tax. Hitherto we have had double tables, one which hits unmarried persons rather heavily and one which is less severe for married persons. The married man had double privileges compared with his unmarried colleague. For one thing he was taxed at lower rates and <sup>secondly he</sup> was able to make a tax reduction for his wife. The principle behind the new proposal is that all people shall be regarded as economically independent individuals and that society shall adopt a neutral attitude to the form of cohabitation which people choose. The support of the society shall be given where there is a need, to children, to the aged, to the sick and to the handicapped, etc.

Now, one cannot carry out such a radical reform without transitional regulations. We have a large group of families where the woman has



no possibility to enter into gainful employment even if she wanted to. She can be too old to receive training, maybe she is living in a place where there are no job opportunities, etc. For this reason a tax support for these families will remain during a transitional period. But it will be given in the form of a reduction of the final tax instead of as earlier of *on which you pay tax* the income. ~~In this way we have eliminated that~~ Reduction on basis of the progressive taxation will be of greater value to those who have a high income than to those who have low incomes. *That effect we have now eliminated.*

The intensity of gainful occupation among married women in Sweden is not particularly high compared with other industrialized countries but it is now increasing rapidly. If one defines employment as at least part-time work, 26 % of the married women worked in 1960. In 1965 this share had risen to 33 %. It is estimated that in 1970 43 % of the married women will be employed. The differences between various parts of the country is considerable. In some localities more than half the married women are working.

Married women, who have been at home and wish to return to the labour market, have the right to receive training and a special allowance. The authority which is responsible for the labour market policy has the duty of activating hidden manpower resources, and this is done, amongst other things, by means of information about job opportunities for women.



We regard female unemployment to be an equally serious problem as male unemployment. The labour market policy shall also contribute to the firms discarding the unrational recruiting according to sex and give the same work to men and women.

In 1960 the Swedish Employers' Confederation and the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions agreed that the special female wages would be abolished by 1965 at the latest. But although the women in most fields now have the same wages for the same work they have nevertheless lower wages than the men, because women and men have not the same work and the work carried out by the women is more poorly paid.

Among the employees in industry the women have on an average 80 % of the wages of the men. This nevertheless implies an improvement. Ten years ago they only had 70 %.

A study carried out by the Swedish Central Organisation of Salaried Employees revealed that the full-time working members which in 1966 had a net income below 3,600 dollars consisted of 85 % women and 15 % men. In the public sector and in banks and insurance companies the same wages have been introduced for the same type of work. In other fields an equalization of the wages to men and women have been recommended. Both the workers and the salaried employees' trade unions regard the female wages as part of the low-income problem in general. They pursue a trade union policy which aims at reducing the wage discrepancies between the different wage earners. The Government has appointed a special commission which is surveying the occurrence, reasons and effects of low salaries.



In the field of social policy we are working for gradually introducing the principle that the same social benefits should be paid irrespective of sex and civil status. The man who chooses to share the care of children with his wife should not be discriminated in the social insurance system.

In urban planning we are endeavouring to design dwelling areas with expanded service in different forms to facilitate the household work. We want to have good collective communications in order to reduce travelling time and make it easier for both husband and wife to have gainful employment.

The most important form of service is the nursery school, where the children can be while their parents are working. We therefore plan strong expansion of nursery schools during the 1970's. The goal is that all children shall be able to go to an integrated school. Some of the children maybe only stay for three hours, others for a longer period dependent on whether the parents are working, studying or prefer to be at home. We have become more and more conscious of how important the first few years of the children's life is for their emotional and intellectual development later in life. The nursery school can compensate those children who do not get as much cultural stimulus at home as they should have.

We should also like working hours to be shorter for parents with small children. We are now heading for a general reduction of the working hours. The 40-hour week is soon generally carried into effect and the development points towards a



further reduction. If the reduction in working hours is taken out in the way of shorter daily working hours and not in a prolonged vacation over the weekends it will be easier for both men and women to combine work with the role of parents.

The old generation in Sweden may consider it correct to plan a society with equality between the sexes. But any drastic changes in their personal behaviour cannot be counted upon. Sex-role attitudes are founded early and are in general too emotional to be changed by means of rational argumentation. As far as the young generation is concerned one can, however, hope to soften up the tradition that some feelings, characteristics, interests, behaviours and working assignments are only suitable for men and others only for women. Educational policy is an important instrument to contribute to a more liberal attitude.

Boys and girls in Sweden now receive the same education and are instructed together in all subjects except in physical training. This implies that both boys and girls have compulsory training of textile handicraft and also in wood and metal handicraft. They have also compulsory training in domestic science and child care. One of the aims of the school is to contribute towards equality between the sexes in the family, on the labor market and in the rest of the community. This aim is emphasized in the training and advanced training of teachers. Study guidance and occupational orientation shall contribute towards a more liberal choice of profession irrespective of sex.

But even if the school treats boys and girls alike and have the same expectations



of them they are nevertheless influenced by the environment, parents, massmedia, the behaviour of men and women outside the school, etc., to regard their roles as being different. It is then up to the school to make the pupils conscious that they are subjected to such an influence and that it is necessary to break an established cultural pattern if one wants to achieve equality between the sexes. The pupils shall be stimulated to critically question and discuss the conditions which exist in the society and arrive at a personal opinion which is based on knowledge of reasons and effects of the present sex-roles.

My review of some of the practical measures we have taken and plan to take to enable men and women to have the same roles has been sketchy. The problems are connected with other political problems on which I cannot enter into detail now. The work towards equality between the sexes must be achieved jointly by men and women and not in a struggle against each other. It should be carried out within the framework of strong political and trade union organisations because it necessitates changing the society. Also in Sweden there are small, but loud-voiced, groups which maintain that reforms are meaningless and that revolution is the first prerequisite condition for equality between the sexes. This is a romantic attitude. We are working against a pressure of thousand years old traditions. It necessitates everyday stubbornness, toughness, patience, in order to change attitudes and to accomplish reforms which gradually change the conditions in a peaceful manner. It is in this way we have changed and are changing the Swedish society in many fields. Maybe one can become a pessimist when one observes the big gap between utopia and reality as far as the roles of men and women are concerned. But already the strong swing which has occurred in public opinion in Sweden during the 1960's arouses hopes that the emancipation of men and women shall be possible.