

## The quiet life of a revolution: Greenlandic Home Rule 1979-1992

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**Résumé:** Une révolution tranquille: l'évolution du Home Rule groenlandais de 1979 à 1992<sup>1</sup>.

En 1979, après une décennie de mobilisation politique, le Groenland devenait une région autonome au Royaume du Danemark. Dans l'histoire du Groenland, le Home Rule apparaît comme une véritable révolution qui suscita des attentes considérables parmi la population. Malgré d'inévitables difficultés, comme la crise économique de la fin des années '80, l'électorat juge plutôt favorablement les résultats obtenus par le nouveau régime politique. La modernisation du pays s'est poursuivie dans un cadre de gouverne que l'article décrit et analyse.

**Abstract:** The quiet life of a revolution: Greenlandic Home Rule 1979-1992<sup>1</sup>.

In 1979, after a decade of political mobilization, Greenland became an autonomous region within the Danish Realm. Home Rule can be described as a revolution in the history of Greenland, which raised high expectations in the population. Despite difficulties such as the economic crisis of the late eighties, the achievements of the new regime are impressive and are favorably evaluated by the electorate. Modernization of the country has continued in a new set-up of governance which is described and analyzed in this paper.

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### Introduction

The first of May 1979 marked the beginning of a new era in Greenland. On that date a slice of political power was cut off from the Danish government and handed over to the Greenlandic politicians. After more than two hundred years of colonial rule and an interlude of some twenty-five years as an "ordinary" Danish province (*amt*), Greenland became an autonomous region within the Danish Realm.

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1 Besides the references cited below this paper is based on observations made during nine years as a researcher and associate professor at University of Greenland, Nuuk (1983-). An invaluable source of knowledge has been the countless number of informal discussions I have had throughout this period with Greenlandic government officers, politicians, students, etc. These discussions have greatly enhanced my understanding of the vagaries of political power.

The inception of Home Rule came after a decade of political mobilization and ethnic radicalization so that when the first Home Rule government took office great expectations were attached to it by the public in Greenland. The Greenlandic politicians in charge had a lot to live up to and, as could be expected, not every hope was met. A survey of public attitudes conducted in 1989 showed, however, that the achievements of the first ten years of Home Rule were evaluated favorably by a majority of the electorate<sup>2</sup>. The drab realities of political life have obviously not worn away popular support for the political leadership.

But no government can afford to rest on its laurels. Since the late 1980s Greenland has experienced a downward economic trend and the Home Rule authorities' efforts to turn the tide have until now been in vain. An ambitious new industrial policy has been launched to reduce dependence on the fishing industry, but the outcome is still very uncertain. Furthermore, there is a growing popular discontent due to a number of cases where the new leaders have mismanaged their responsibilities. During the past years, the Greenlandic newspapers have carried numerous stories about politicians abusing public funds for personal gain. The political leaders in Greenland will henceforth face some tough challenges. They need to strengthen the country's economy as well as change their own image in the eyes of the people.

This article offers an analysis of Greenlandic Home Rule. What is the set-up of governance? What has been accomplished within this set-up? And what will be the main challenges in the years to come?

## The legal framework of Home Rule

The legal basis for Home Rule is the Greenland Home Rule Act (Act No. 577 of November 1978). One crucial prerequisite for the success of this Act has been the gradual participation of the Greenlandic population in the political decision-making process, which actually started more than 100 years ago. The first local councils with representatives from the Greenlandic population were established during the decade of 1860s. Two provincial councils were established in 1908 and the local councils were replaced by municipal councils. In connection with the decolonization which took place after World War II, the provincial councils merged into one council and the Greenlanders obtained two seats in the Danish Parliament. The provincial councils lacked legislative power, but the Danish government was quite sensitive to the different opinions expressed in the council. A substantial change of the administrative power structure occurred in 1975, when the responsibilities of the local administrations were transferred from the state to the municipal councils (Sørensen 1983).

The core of the Greenland Home Rule Act is the transfer of legislative and administrative powers in particular fields to the Home Rule authority. The Home Rule Act provides for the establishment of a legislative branch, the *Landsting*, with legislative power over certain agreed upon fields of responsibility within the territory of Greenland. Furthermore, the Act also provides for the set-up of a local government, the *Landsstyre*, which has the administrative authority over these fields. The Home Rule Act contains a

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2 20% thought that the Greenlandic politicians had done a good job, 51% that the politicians had done a fairly good job while 16% gave a negative evaluation of the politicians effort. 13% held no opinion on the question (Henrik Skydsbjerg, unpublished data).

list of fields of responsibility which may be transferred to the Home Rule authorities on request by the Greenlandic government. No exact timetable for the transfer of individual fields was laid down, but all the different fields of responsibility mentioned in the Act were subject to transfer during the period between May 1, 1979 and January 1, 1992 (table 1).

Fields of responsibility, not specifically mentioned in the Act, can be assumed after negotiations between the central Danish authorities and the Home Rule authorities. However, due to the Danish constitution, some fields of responsibility cannot be transferred to the Home Rule authorities. Matters affecting the foreign relations of the Realm are specifically reserved to the central Danish authorities, and the supremacy of international treaties over local powers is explicitly pronounced in the Home Rule Act. However, the Greenland authorities may comment on proposed treaties which would affect Greenland's interests, and within the commercial area Greenland may (with the approval of the central authorities) negotiate directly with foreign governments, participate in international negotiations, and demand that Danish diplomatic missions employ officers specifically to attend to Greenland's interests in countries of special commercial importance to Greenland. Areas involving defence policy and monetary policy are also reserved to the central Danish authorities.

The Home Rule Commission, which drafted the Home Rule Act, argued that the constitution does not allow for the transfer of power to the Home Rule authorities over areas such as the police and the judiciary. Moreover, the Home Rule authorities should not be permitted to lay down the rules of fundamental principles regarding the law of persons, inheritance law, family law and property law. However, on this point the correctness of the Commission's interpretation of the constitution has been questioned (Harhoff 1982).

One of the most controversial issues in relation to the establishment of the Home Rule Act has been the right of ownership to mineral resources of the underground. Contrary to all other fields, where the decision-making power is vested in either the Danish government or in the Home Rule authorities, decisions concerning preliminary study, prospecting and exploitation of mineral resources must be made jointly. Both parties are empowered with the right to veto any measures of fundamental nature in the area of natural resources. This should be viewed as an expression of a political compromise; the Greenlandic members of the Home Rule Commission wanted the ownership of the underground to be transferred to the people of Greenland, but this was not possible due to strong opposition from the Danish government (Foighel 1980).

When the Danish authorities draft new laws in fields already within the competence of the Home Rule authorities, the governing rule is that such laws are invalid in Greenland. Other laws, drafted by the Danish authorities, must be made available for comments by the Home Rule authorities before they can legally be enforced in Greenland. In practice, no new Danish law will be rendered valid in Greenland without the Home Rule authorities' affirmative consent thereto (Harhoff 1987).

A quantitative indication of the amount of competence transferred to the Home Rule authorities since 1979 is given in figures 1 and 2. The two variables used are: the number of laws, statutes, etc. promulgated, between 1975-1991, by either the Danish authorities or the Home Rule authorities and with validity in Greenland (figure 1), and the

## Table 1

Issues listed in the Greenland Home Rule Act which may be assumed by the Home Rule authorities ordered chronologically by the year of actual transfer

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### 1979

- Organization of Home Rule in Greenland.
- Organization of local government.

### 1980

- Direct and indirect taxes.
- Fishing in the territory, hunting, agriculture and reindeer breeding (partly — the rest was transferred in 1985).
- Labor market affairs.
- Education and cultural affairs, including vocational training (partly — the rest was transferred in 1981).
- Social welfare.
- The established Church and dissenting religious communities.

### 1981

- Preservation of wildlife.
- Country planning.
- Legislation governing trade and competition, including legislation on restaurant and hotel business, regulations concerning alcoholic beverages and regulations concerning closing hours of shops.

### 1985

- Other matters relating to trade, including the state-run fishing and production; support and development of economic activities.

### 1986

- Supply of goods.
- Internal transport of passengers and goods.

### 1987

- Rent legislation, rent support and housing administration.

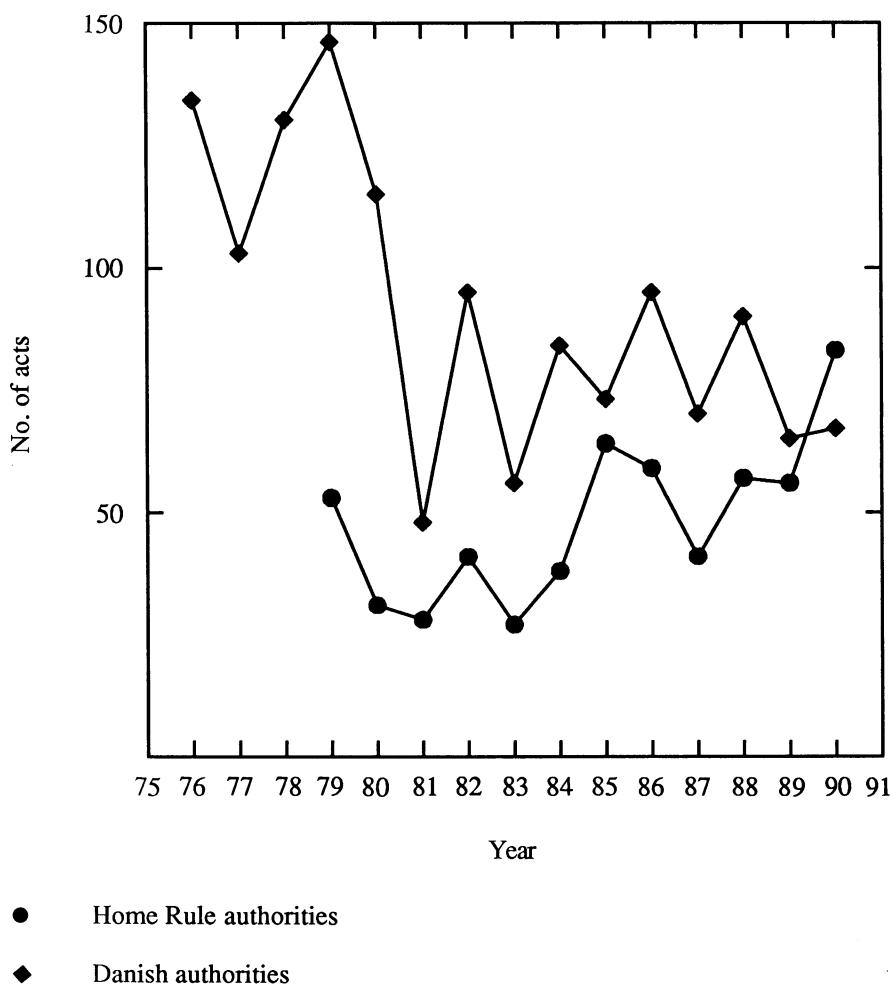
### 1989

- Protection of the environment.

### 1992

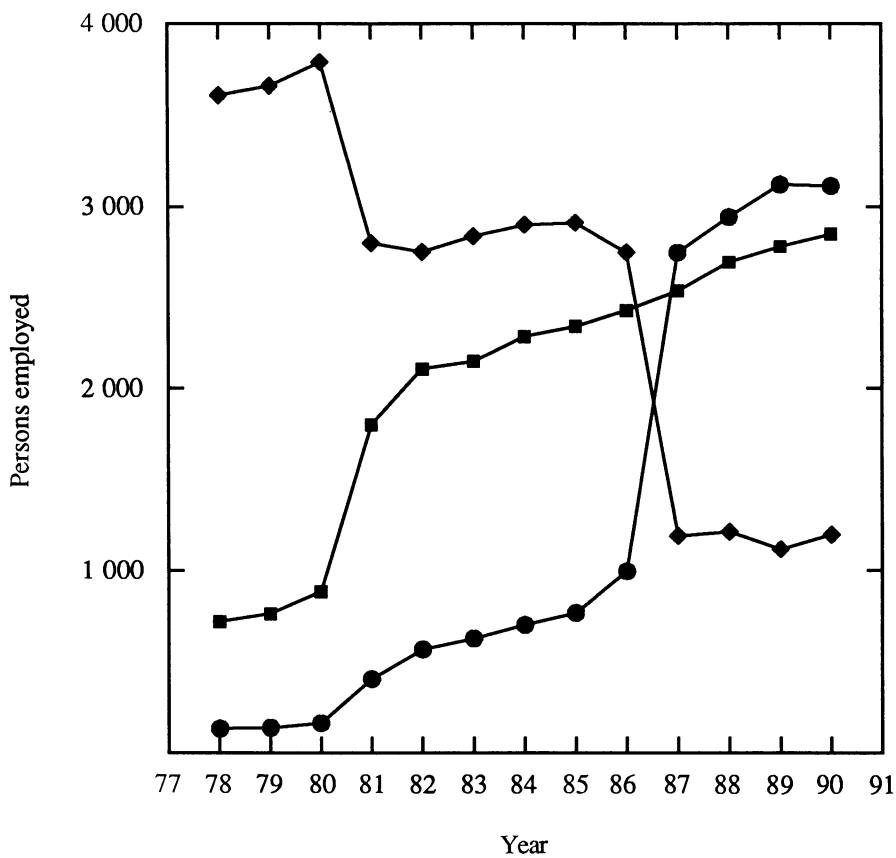
- Health services.

**Figure 1: Laws, statutes etc. promulgated by the Danish authorities and the Home Rule authorities respectively, 1976-1990.**



Source: Ministeriet for Grønland, 1976-1990 and Ministeriet for Grønland 1979-1990.

**Figure 2: Number of public employees in Greenland (Full-Time, monthly salaried) divided between state, provincial council/Home Rule and local government, 1978-1990.**



- Municipalities
- Prov. council / Home Rule
- ◆ State

Source: Ministeriet for Grønland, 1968-1987; Statsministeriet, 1988-1990 and Grønland statistiske Kontor, 1991.

number of public employees, divided between state, provincial council/Home Rule and local government employment in Greenland during the same period (figure 2).

As shown in figure 1, there has been a significant drop in the number of laws, statutes, etc. promulgated by the Danish authorities since the implementation of the Home Rule authorities. Legislation by the Home Rule authorities has increased proportionally. However, it was not until 1990 that the laws promulgated by the Home Rule authorities exceeded the number of laws enacted by the Danish authorities.

The development of the employment sector has been even more significant. In 1975, 81% of the publicly employed in Greenland worked for the Danish government. In 1990, this number had dropped to 18%. In 1992, when the Home Rule authorities assumed responsibility for the health care sector, the number continued to decrease, and is today at approximately 5%. The majority of the 300-350 persons employed by the state are working at the police department, the courts and within the prison services. The number of public employees working at the local government increased rapidly by the mid-1970s. This growth can be attributed to the take-over of the administrative responsibilities on the local level by the municipal councils. The provincial council's administrative sector was quite modest. During the first couple of years after the implementation of the Home Rule authorities, the employment number, within this sector, was also low. But a definite increase of personnel within the Home Rule authorities occurred during the mid-1980s, as a result of the takeover of the Royal Greenland Trade Department and the other state-owned corporations.

The two figures show that, within the legal framework of the Home Rule, a significant transfer of the legislative and administrative powers from the Danish authorities to the Home Rule authorities has been accomplished. In reality, these figures underestimate the influence of the Home Rule since all daily government functions are conducted by them. Until 1989, there was a Minister of Greenlandic Affairs in the Danish government. At that time, the transfer of tasks to the Home Rule authorities had reached such a high level that a decision to abolish the Ministry of Greenlandic Affairs was made. Instead, it was decided that the remaining tasks should be divided between other ministries. Today, there is only a small Greenlandic branch in the Prime Minister's department.

Although, formally, the Kingdom of Denmark still is a unitary state, it has, in reality, developed into something more like a federal state consisting of Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Each constituent state has its own legislative and executive branch, while the Danish government continues to operate as a federal government. The North Atlantic constituent states have, due to their four seats (out of 179 seats) in the Danish parliament, some, although minor, influence on the decisions made by the central power. The Danish Parliament's delegation of power to the Faroe and the Greenland Home Rule authorities does not, according to constitutional law experts, allow the Danish Parliament to unilaterally rescind the Home Rule Act without violating the constitutional principles and international law.

Whether this "federal state" is a stable one, or whether it will move toward a much looser association of the three parts of the Danish Kingdom is something that will be discussed in the closing chapter.

## The Greenlandic parties

The Home Rule Act constitutes the formal framework within which the political life in Greenland has developed since 1979. The Greenlandic political parties have played a central role in completing the policy goals of this Act. Back in the 1950s and 1960s a few unsuccessful attempts were made to establish branches of Danish parties in Greenland. The creation of political parties in Greenland did not commence until the 1970s and 1980s, thus the Greenlandic party system is a fairly recent phenomenon<sup>3</sup>. The Siumut (*i.e.* Progress) party is not only the oldest of the remaining parties, it is also the first genuine party in Greenland.

The Siumut party was formed in 1977. The party was an offspring of the political movement which had, since 1969, been united under slogans such as: "The new policy", "Development in Greenland on Greenlandic terms" and "Greenlandization". The core of the movement was made up by young radical Greenlanders, who hoped to settle the score with the well-established Greenlandic elite who approved of the Danish development policy for Greenland and who had a strongly cooperative attitude towards the Danish government. The principal goal of the post-war generation of Greenlandic politicians was to gain equality for the Greenlandic population within the Danish Realm with respect to standard of living, political rights, etc. The criticism of this assimilationist policy was expressed in ethnical terms. The movement did not oppose modernization as such, but was against "Danification" of the Greenlandic society.

The movement drew its strength from the alliance between young intellectuals, who were inspired by the anti-imperialistic movement in the Western metropolises, and from the large groups of the Greenlandic population especially, the village people, who felt that their social and cultural identity was endangered by the extensive modernization program launched by the Danish government. Symbols of ethnicity borrowed from the traditional Greenlandic hunting culture were extensively used by the movement.

"The new policy" had its break-through in 1971 when two of the leading members of the movement, Jonathan Motzfeldt and Lars Emil Johansen, were elected to the Greenlandic provincial council and a third member, Moses Olsen, was elected as one of the two Greenlandic representatives to the Danish parliament. In 1972, Jonathan Motzfeldt put the question of Home Rule on the political agenda. This took place immediately after Denmark and Greenland, but not Faroe Islands, had entered the European Economic Community (EEC). A referendum held in Denmark and Greenland disclosed that a majority of the Danish population was in favor of EEC membership. This was not, however, the case in Greenland, where the "no" votes were predominant. The Faroe Islands' Home Rule authorities had informed the Danish government that it had no interest in becoming a member of the EEC. This was accepted by the Danish government. However, the Danish government refused to endorse the Greenlandic provincial council's request to hold a separate Greenlandic referendum on the issue of EEC membership. This refusal was based on the fact that Greenland was, constitutionally, a fully integrated part of the Danish Kingdom.

The question of EEC membership worked as a springboard for the Siumut movement's principal political concern, the Greenlanders' urge for self-determination. The EEC became a symbol of everything that the Siumut movement opposed. The EEC was

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3 For a thorough analysis of the development of the political system in Greenland see Dahl, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1988.



seen as a menace to the already insignificant influence the Greenlandic politicians had on issues concerning the exploitation of fishery and mineral resources. Furthermore, the EEC membership would expand the cultural influence from Europe as well as increase the movement of foreign capital and labor into Greenland. After the inception of Home Rule a second referendum on the issue of EEC membership was held in February 1982. The result of this referendum led to Greenland's withdrawal from the European Community, which was also supported and accepted by the Danish government. Despite this result, the main theme of the political debate continued, up until the final agreement had been signed in 1984, to center around the membership issue.

Another trademark for the Siumut movement during the 1970s was the fight against the offshore oil drilling off the West Coast of Greenland. A number of international oil companies had been issued concessions to an area of the continental shelf of Greenland. But after a few fruitless drilling attempts had been conducted in 1974-75, these concessions were immediately rescinded. This was yet another matter with symbolic dimensions: the fight against the multinational oil companies' activities in Greenland symbolized the fight against Western imperialism and the right of self-determination with regard to Greenland's natural resources (Davies *et al.* 1984). In 1975, when the Home Rule Commission began its work, Lars Emil Johansen, who was Siumut's representative on the commission, demanded that the Greenlandic population's ownership rights to Greenland's underground resources should be recognized. As mentioned above, this demand was not met in its entirety. Nevertheless, it played a significant part in the formation of the political consciousness, especially among the younger generation in Greenland and it also became an important political mobilization factor.

The leaders of the Siumut movement had, long before the party's creation in 1977, won a place among the Greenlandic political elite. These leaders were argumentative, energetic and intelligent politicians who distinguished themselves in the eyes of the Greenlandic population, and gained significant impact in the political debate not only in Greenland but in the Danish media as well.

The ideology of the party rested on moderate socialism coupled with nationalism. This ideology, in addition to the leaders' well-developed sense for the political game, made the Siumut party the number one party. In fact, at the *Landsting* election in 1979, the party secured no less than 13 seats out of 21 possible. Additionally, it occupied all positions of the Home Rule government and has been in power ever since. Jonathan Motzfeldt, was premier of the Home Rule government between 1979 and 1991 at which time he was replaced by Lars Emil Johansen. For many years the representative for the party in the Danish parliament worked closely with the Socialist Peoples' Party but has in recent years been linked to the Social Democratic group.

As soon as the Siumut party became a permanent party, others followed suit. In 1977 the Atassut (*i.e.* Mutual Connection) party was created as a loosely organized group of provincial council members. In 1981, the party became an actual constituent organization. The party originated as a reaction to the Siumut party's provocative style towards the Danish government. Thus, the party thought along the lines of the old political elite which favored a smoother relationship with Denmark. The party supported the idea of Home Rule, but wanted to avoid the autonomy movement becoming an actual separatist movement. Moreover, the Atassut party was a strong supporter of continued EEC membership and in favor of the exploitation of oil and mineral resources. Ideologically Atassut has always placed itself to the right of the Siumut party. Initially,

the representative for the party in the Danish parliament was affiliated with the Social Democratic group, but is today aligned with the liberal party, *Venstre*. Even though the Atassut party has, periodically, been the largest party in Greenland, it has never held a position in the Home Rule government.

In recent years, the Atassut party has experienced competition from the new center-conservative parties: Issittup Partii-a, which was established in 1986, and Akulliit Partiaat which was created in 1991. Both parties have achieved some representation in the Home Rule parliament, mainly at the expense of the Atassut party. All three parties want to promote the private sector and limit the scope of the public sector. However, Issitup Partii-a has a more nationalistic party line than the Atassut party and has, therefore, been able to appeal to the non-socialist voters, with feelings of nationalism.

From the very beginning, Siumut's political leaders have had a rather pragmatic style. They preferred compromise rather than political deadlock and intransigence. One case, which clearly reflects this attitude, is the question relating to the ownership of the underground resources, where the Siumut leadership was willing to settle for less than a 100 percent transfer. However, the left-wing members of the party disagreed with the rest of the party on this issue and as a consequence created the left-wing group, Inuit Ataqtigiit, in 1978. This group was later transformed into a regular party.

The Inuit Ataqtigiit party rejected the Home Rule Act because it did not recognize the Greenlandic populations' ownership rights to the underground resources. The party ran, unsuccessfully, for the election to the Home Rule parliament in 1979. But the party has, however, since 1983 been represented in the *Landsting*. And at the last election, the party received approximately 20% of the votes and is today the third largest party in Greenland. Early on, the party proclaimed to be a Marxist-Leninist party and used anti-imperialistic and anti-capitalistic slogans. Furthermore, it emphasized, more than any other party, Greenlandic ethnicity. The party has, since it was established, moved closer to the center and may today be characterized as being a left-wing social democratic party with a strong twist of nationalism. The Inuit Ataqtigiit party has during three terms worked as a coalition partner with the Siumut party in the Home Rule government and a considerable alignment of the two parties' political positions has occurred in recent years. Rumors have it that in 1992, the two parties were negotiating the possibility of uniting.

The leadership of the Inuit Ataqtigiit party has, since its inception, been dominated by the outstanding political personality, Aqqaluk Lynge. It is, partly, due to his leadership abilities that the party has been able to afford such a pragmatic turn without losing the radicals' vote in Greenland.

A significant characteristic of the party system in Greenland is that the establishment of the system occurred in conjunction with the changes of Greenland's constitutional position. During the first couple of years, the fundamental dimension of conflict within the party system centered around the parties' different attitudes to the question of Greenland's future relationship with Denmark. In light of this conflict, it is quite understandable that the attempt made by the labor movement to form a labor party, the Sulisartut Partiaat, did not succeed. The clash between the workers and the management was completely overshadowed by the issue of ethnicity and the party was, a few years later, absorbed by the Siumut party. Although, the dominating party of the labor movement is the Siumut party, the Inuit Ataqtigiit party also has a significant influence on the movement.

It is important to note that the conflicting interest regarding Greenland's future relationship with Denmark was, primarily, not a matter between Denmark and Greenland but, rather, an internal conflict of interest within the Greenlandic population. This conflict is closely linked to the feelings of ethnical and cultural identity. Although, this search for national identity started already in the beginning of this century (Thuesen 1988), it did not reach political dimensions until the 1960s. What kind of political nation should Greenland develop into? Atassut's answer was that Greenland should be a political nation with close ties to Denmark, but at the same time, have a special Greenlandic identity. The Siumut party strived for a political nation with a looser connection to Denmark but with closer ties to the rest of the Inuit world. Inuit Ataqatigiit wanted Greenland to be an Inuit nation which, when possible, should cut all ties to Denmark and enter into a close cooperation with the other Inuit nations.

A political survey, conducted in 1984, illustrates these different attitudes. The question posed to the voters was, whether Greenland should prioritize the cooperation with the Nordic countries over the Inuit population or vice versa or if the cooperation should be put on par (table 2). Regardless of party affiliation, only a few voters believed that the cooperation with the Nordic countries should be of primary concern. Hence, this result lends itself to the interpretation that, even among the part of the population in favor of a close link to Denmark, there is no desire of an exclusive Nordic identity. However, there is an excess of voters who believe that the cooperation with other Inuit nations should be on the top. The majority of the voters within the Inuit Ataqatigiit argues that the Inuit cooperation ought to be prioritized.

The respondents were also asked to whom they felt a greater closeness — the Greenlandic population or the Danish population, or if they felt an equal attachment to both groups. The distribution of answers follows, with some modifications, the same pattern as the previous question. By and large, no one among the Greenlandic electorate feels a greater attachment to the Danes. The majority of all the persons asked answered that they are more linked to the Greenlanders. But the number of people who feel attached to both population groups increases significantly from the left to the right side of the political spectrum.

Even though none of the Greenlandic parties has questioned the legitimacy of a Greenlandic nation, the fight over Greenland's association with Denmark has, nevertheless, been an issue which has greatly divided the Greenlandic population. The demarcation has been especially between the Atassut wing and the Siumut-Inuit Ataqatigiit wing. The national "identity conflict" has, for a while, separated society into two irreconcilable camps. The fight has divided many a family and village in two hostile groups (Dahl 1985).

Since the Home Rule authorities assumed responsibility for many different areas the society, the identity conflict has to some extent been pushed aside to leave room for more pragmatic political solutions. This blur of the dividing line in Greenlandic politics has also paved the way for the re-alignment of the electorate. Table 3 shows the party affiliation at the past five *Landsting* elections. Today, there are five parties in the Home Rule parliament, as opposed to only three in 1979.

As already mentioned, the Siumut party has managed to stay in power ever since the inception of Home Rule. It was, however, only between 1979 and 1983, that the party reached absolute majority in the *Landsting*. During 1983-1984, the Siumut

**Table 2**

**Greenlandic voters' attitudes regarding external and internal association (only persons born in Greenland are included)**

	Atassut N=361	Siumut N=441	Inuit Ataqatigiit N=140
<b>Cooperation with other Inuit peoples and peoples in other Nordic countries</b>			
	%	%	%
Cooperation with the Nordic countries should be prioritized	9	9	4
Cooperation with the Inuit population should be prioritized	14	27	52
Cooperation in both directions should be prioritized	49	38	26
Don't know/unanswered	28	27	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Association to Greenlanders and to Danes in Greenland</b>			
	%	%	%
Feel more closely connected to the Danish population	0	0	1
Feel more closely connected to the Greenlandic population	60	77	89
Feel equally close to both groups	37	20	9
Don't know/unanswered	3	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Finn Breinholt Larsen & Per Langgard, unpublished data.

**Table 3**

**Distribution of votes at the Landsting elections 1979-1991**

	1979 %	1983 %	1984 %	1987 %	1991 %
Siumut	46.1	42.3	44.1	39.8	37.3
Atassut	41.7	46.6	43.8	40.1	30.1
Inuit Ataqatigiit	4.4	10.6	12.1	15.3	19.4
Sulisartut Partiiat	5.6	--	--	--	--
Issitup Partiiat	--	--	--	4.4	2.8
Akulliit Partiiat	--	--	--	--	9.5
Independent candidates	2.2	0.5	--	0.4	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Grønland, 1990 (including figures for the 1991 election).

party formed a minority government which was later overthrown by the Inuit Ataqatigiit and the Atassut parties. In replacement, a majority government, including both Siumut and the Inuit Ataqatigiit parties, was established. This coalition was, however, dismantled under dramatic circumstances in 1987 only to be re-created after the *Landsting* election. This time, cooperation lasted until 1989, when the Inuit Ataqatigiit once again were forced out of the government. The Siumut party, with the political support of the Atassut party, continued to rule as a minority government. After the election in 1991, the coalition between the Siumut and the Inuit Ataqatigiit was reinstated. Moreover, the Siumut politicians hold the majority of the mayoral positions in Greenland's 18 municipalities.

Compared to most post-colonial societies, the political system in Greenland shows a high degree of stability and democracy. This, however, does not mean that Greenland has managed to avoid political power struggles and political scandals. Immediately after the *Landsting* election in 1987, a faction, consisting of prominent members of the Siumut party tried, under Lars Emil Johansen's leadership, to remove Jonathan Motzfeldt from his position as head of government. The fact that the group decided to strike at a time when Motzfeldt was away from Nuuk added a flavor of *coup d'état* to the whole episode. However, the attempt to jockey Jonathan Motzfeldt out of his post failed, and Motzfeldt continued to be in charge of both the government and the party (Larsen 1988).

At the Siumut's party convention in 1990, Lars Emil Johansen once again, challenged Jonathan Motzfeldt by running for the party chairmanship, this time, successfully. In 1991, on the night before the election to the Home Rule Parliament, Lars

Emil Johansen, rather unexpectedly declared that he would run for the position as Premier of the Greenland Home Rule government. The Siumut faction, led by Lars Emil Johansen, had strengthened its position during this election and a few weeks later, after intense lobbying activities, he became the head of government.

The power struggle between the two leaders of the Siumut party was not only a matter of personal differences. Lars Emil Johansen represents a faction of the Siumut party who wants to dissociate itself from that type of abuse of office that has been brought to light through several public scandals during the recent years, and which also has diminished the people's confidence in politicians. Motzfeldt's excessive alcohol consumption and the irrational decisions that sometimes were made as a result thereof also contributed to his downfall. The *Landsting* election in 1991 was provoked by the news media's and the opposition's criticism of the Home Rule authorities' abuse of their expense account. The remaining politician in the formerly criticized group of the Home Rule government, forced out of the government in 1992, was due to a second incident of mismanagement, which this time concerned the pilot program for farming of sea trout.

This, at times, rather turbulent political life has rubbed off on the bureaucracy. Lay-offs of government officials and managers of publicly owned companies have been seen as a recurrent theme.

## **Achievements and challenges ahead**

In the following, I will shortly discuss some of the issues which have been in the limelight since the commencement of the Home Rule, and which will continue to be a challenge for the Greenlandic politicians in the years to come.

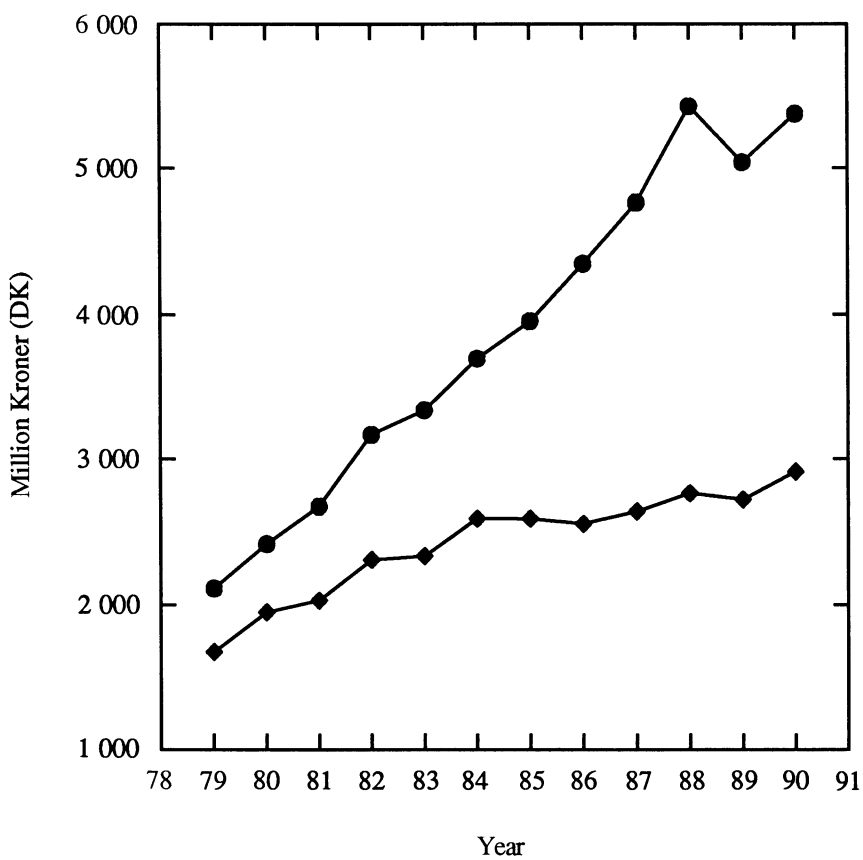
### ***The economy***

One of the most important consequences of the Home Rule has been the transfer of the responsibility of the economy onto the Greenlandic politicians, which has greatly strengthened their potential capacity to influence societal development. But this also meant that Greenland's economic dependency on Denmark was made more visible. With almost every area of responsibility that had been transferred to the Home Rule followed a yearly block grant. Without these block grants the standard of living in Greenland would have gone down dramatically.

Figure 3, indicates the share of public spending in Greenland, between 1979 and 1990, which has been financed by the Danish government, both directly and through block grants.

The Danish government paid in 1979 almost 80% of public spending in Greenland. The share has since then been considerably reduced. This cut is a consequence of the fact that governmental spending in fixed prices has been fairly constant over the entire period, while total public spending has increased significantly. The additional spending has been financed through a radical increase of taxes. The Danish government is still financing more than 50% of public spending in Greenland and this share is unlikely to decrease in the near future.

**Figure 3: The overall public spending in Greenland 1979-90 and the Danish share thereof.**



- Total public expenditures
- ◆ Hereof paid by the state

Source: Ministeriet for Grønland, 1979 ff.

The national purse experienced a serious liquidity crisis in 1987 due to poor budgetary management. As a result, stricter spending policies were implemented, which in turn has slowed down enterprising activities and led to an increase in unemployment and bankruptcy. In addition, a number of municipalities have had problems controlling the economy which has resulted in a worsening of the economic crisis. To this must be added the failing revenues from fishery as well as the closing of the lead-zinc-mine in Maarmorilik in 1990. Real wages have decreased in almost every occupational field since the beginning of 1980s, and this trend can be expected to continue in the years ahead.

Greenland's continued economic dependency on Denmark pushes the dream of an independent Greenland far into the future and thus contributes to stabilizing the constitutional arrangement laid down in the Home Rule Act. The Danish government's spending in Greenland amounts to 2.9 billion Danish kroner (approximately 580 million Canadian \$) yearly, thereof is 2.7 billion Danish kroner spent on block grants. The overall subsidy from the Danish government totals 52 000 Danish kroner (approximately 14 000 Canadian \$) per capita in Greenland.

### *Industrial policy*

The desire for greater economic and political freedom has, since the inception of the Home Rule, made the industrial policy one of the most important questions for the Greenlandic Home Rule authorities.

The majority of the Greenlandic trade and industry was, before 1979, owned by the Danish state. When the Home Rule authorities assumed the responsibility for these, previously state run enterprises, it also took over a tradition of public planning in areas of production and commerce. Initially, the moderate socialist Home Rule government was confident that the industrial development would boost through the use of central planning. The main priority was given to the fishing industry. Attempts to make the Greenlandic fishing industry more efficient and modern were made through extensive public investments. This, however, ended in a number of disastrous miscalculations regarding both trawlers and fishing plants. This catastrophe caused the Home Rule authorities to realize that a change of the economic policy was necessary. Since, the end of the 1980s, a great effort has been made to run the publicly owned enterprises as commercial companies.

Royal Greenland, the production and export business, owned by the Home Rule authorities has been converted into a publicly-owned corporation. After a record high deficit in 1987, the management has succeeded in reducing the overhead costs and thereby, managed to restore profitability. From receiving millions every year in subsidy, the enterprise today shows a surplus even though this surplus is still far from satisfactory (Royal Greenland 1992). Further improvements have been prevented due to the falling prices of shrimp which is Royal Greenland's chief exporting product. The cod fishery has also been subject to miscalculation, during the last years, due to demise of the fishing stock. An actual privatization of the Royal Greenland is not yet on the agenda, since that may result in layoffs and closing down of factories, on a scale which would be politically unacceptable.

Besides public fishing there has been for years, a lucrative private shrimp fishery carried out in Greenland. A too large trawler fleet and falling prices on the world market



have, however, caused the private fishing enterprise to experience great economic difficulties during the last couple of years. The Home Rule authorities have taken some initiatives to reduce the surplus capacity by promoting enterprise mergers and thereby improve the profitability of the private trawler fleet (Fiskeristrukturudvalget 1989).

The Home Rule authorities' industrial policy has, from the beginning, focused on the utilization of the living resources. The Home Rule authorities hoped to create a sound economy by taking necessary steps to develop and modernize the fishing industry, as well as improve the marketing and processing of these products. Since the economic backlash at the end of the 1980s, it has been quite obvious that Greenland needed to put greater emphasis on other occupational sectors, and thereby create a more differentiated business structure in order to survive economically. The fishing stock in the Arctic waters is, basically, unstable and vulnerable. The quantity of cod fish, along the Greenlandic coast, is fluctuating (today, they are almost extinct), and there have been, during the last years, indications that point to depletion of the shrimp stock. This situation, combined with the heavy fluctuation market price for these products, makes it very risky to base the economic development strategy exclusively on fishery resources.

To combat this problem, the Home Rule government launched a new industrial policy in 1989. The purpose of this new policy was to stimulate mineral resource development, and to promote the development of other areas of the industrial sector, as well as to encourage tourism to the island (Råstofforvaltningen 1990). The economic conditions, for the extraction of raw materials, have been made more favorable in order to increase the prospecting activities, and thus enhance the chances for commercial discoveries, which in turn would entice foreign corporations to Greenland. An assessment of the effects of this policy is still premature. No extraction of either minerals or oil in Greenland takes place today. Furthermore, the previous years of prospecting activities have not resulted in the discovery of commercial deposits.

There is, however, no doubt that Greenland, with its breathtaking sceneries, has great potentials for "exotic" tourism. The goal is to raise the yearly number of tourists, from the now, 5-7 000 to 35 000 within the next 10-15 years (Landstinget 1990). The infra-structure and the hotel capacity have, during the last couple of years, expanded and the Home Rule authorities support the development of private tourist operation, for example by granting subsidies to advertising campaigns.

In addition, the Home Rule authorities have granted money to the establishment of import substituting enterprises (*i.e.* soap production, plastic production), as well as to the development of "non-traditional" export enterprises such as the production of Santa Claus products.

The Home Rule authorities' initiatives, under the new industrial policy, cannot hide the fact that it is difficult to run commercial business operations in Greenland, due to geographical conditions, the distance to the export markets and the population's relatively low educational level, etc. This makes it particularly arduous to attract foreign investors. It should also be remembered that the Greenlandic people lack the tradition of business skills. Therefore, it is apparent that the dominating business in Greenland will, for many years, continue to be the fishing industry.

## *Greenlandization*

Greenlandization has been one of the most common words used in the political debate in Greenland, both before and after the inception of the Home Rule. The word "Greenlandization" implies both that the Greenlandic population should replace the Danish guest workers in all areas possible, and that the Greenlandic culture and mentality should influence the societal development of Greenland.

One of the first laws passed by the Greenland Home Rule parliament was a law about the regulation of employment and recruitment in Greenland (Act No. 1 of March 1980). This law gives permanent Greenlandic residents preference for jobs within the categories of unskilled labor, office personnel, seamen and sea officers and skilled craftsmen. The objective of the law was to prevent excessive import of Danish workers (Danes with a permanent residence in Greenland are not affected by the law). It has been a political desire to guarantee that other types of occupations within the public institutions should, to the extent possible, be filled by Greenlanders. Two thirds of all wage earners are employed within the public sector, and the public employers have, therefore, had a great opportunity to affect the employment policy more directly. The share of local Greenlandic workers, (monthly salaried full-time employees) within the public sector has risen from 56% in 1978 to 71% in 1990 (figure 4). Figures for the hourly employed are not available, but the number is, without any doubt, higher within this area.

It is, of course, difficult to document the extent to which Greenlandic culture and mentality have influenced societal development after the inception of the Home Rule. All the members of the *Landsting* and the Home Rule government are Native Greenlanders. 17 out of the 18 mayors are also Native Greenlanders and there are only very few members of the local councils who are not Native. The participation of Danes in the political life in Greenland is nearly invisible, even though, the Danish vote constitutes approximately 20% of the electorate. On the other hand, the Danes still occupy the majority of the leading positions within the public administrations and thus play an important role in the political decision-making process. Since 1979 a large number of Danish civil servants have been transferred from Danish government agencies to the Home Rule administration as the Home Rule assumed responsibility in their respective spheres. This constitutes an important reason why Home Rule in many ways has seemed to imitate the practices of the former colonial masters. The Greenlandic elite, too, has often been accused of having been influenced by the "Danish mentality" (Hansen 1992). However, due to a high turnover rate among Danish employees in Greenland the 'old guard' has to a great extent been replaced by a new staff. This has paved the way for non-conventional solutions in many fields. Whether these should be characterized as 'Greenlandic' or not is therefore very much a matter of opinion.

Another aspect of Greenlandization is the effort to strengthen the Greenlandic language. The Home Rule Act states: "The Greenlandic language is the primary language. The Danish language shall be taught thoroughly". The Danish language has, in reality, been the dominating language in the schools in Greenland (Larsen 1992a). In 1980, only 40% of the teachers on the teaching staff in the elementary schools were able to teach in the Greenlandic language, as opposed to 60% in 1990 (Grønland 1990). Starting in 1994, the integration of Greenlandic and Danish school children will take place, which means that, after this date, the Danish pupils will receive part of their education in Greenlandic. Danish continues to be the leading language in the higher educational institutions, but the

communication language in the Home Rule parliament is Greenlandic with simultaneous translation into Danish. The Greenlandic language is spoken in two thirds of all the talk shows on the radio (2500 hours/year out of 3800 hours/year), while TV programs are dominated by the Danish language closely followed by the English-speaking programs with Danish subtitles. The production of TV programs, produced in Greenlandic has a high political priority with the goal to fill 10% of the broadcasting time with Greenlandic programs (*ibid.*).

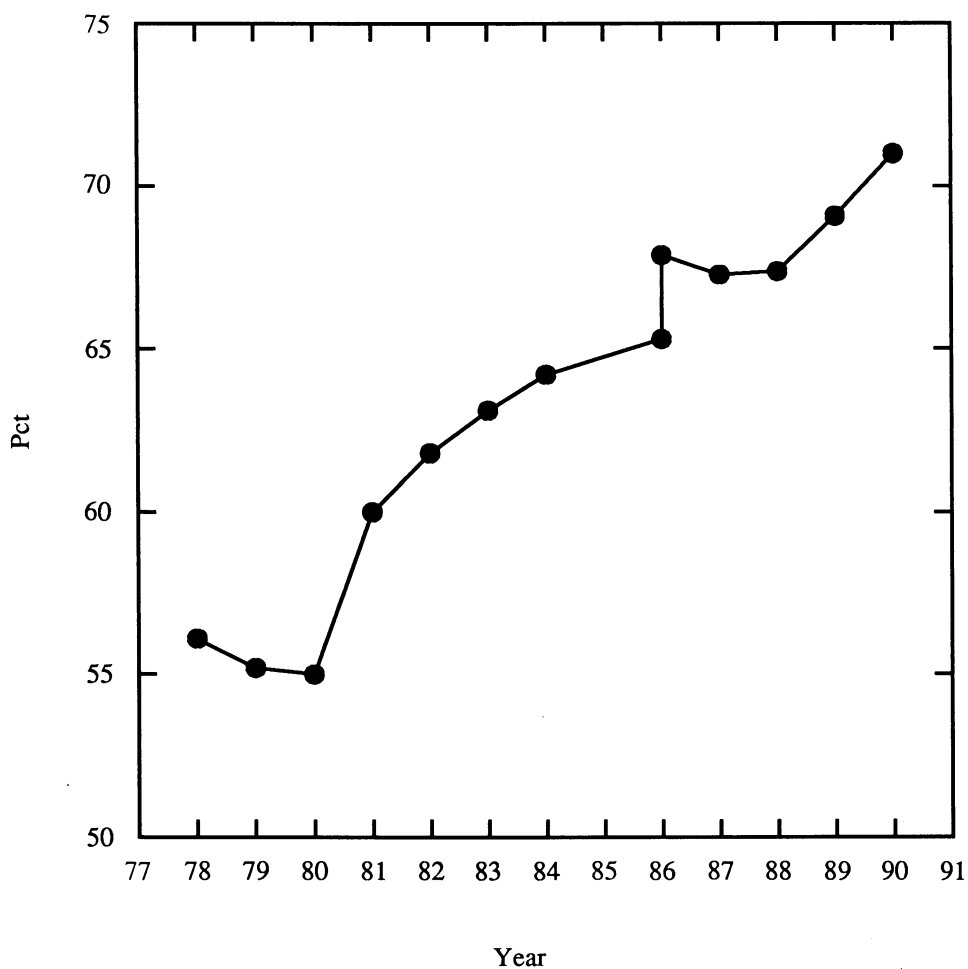
### ***Regional development***

Traditionally, the Greenlandic population has been spread out along the vast coastline of Greenland. Through the Danish modernizing program, the Danish Government tried to move the population to certain parts of the country, mainly to the towns and the larger villages in the central and southern parts of West Greenland. As a consequence, the population figure decreased in the villages during the 1960s and 1970s, and quite many villages were completely deserted. This concentration policy created a lot of anguish among a large portion of the Greenlandic population. It has, therefore, been an important objective for the Greenlandic political parties to restore the living conditions in the villages and the outer districts.

As shown in table 4, a continued decline of the population figure in the villages has come to a halt. Since 1980, both the number of villages and the number of village dwellers has been unchanged. Since the inauguration of Home Rule, electricity and water plants have been built in many villages. Moreover, helicopter platforms have been established in many of the villages which cannot be reached by boat during the winter period. The Home Rule authorities are funding air routes to these sparsely populated destinations, and thereby improving food supply and the services. In 1985, an ambitious modernization program for the villages was approved by the Home Rule parliament. Today, as part of this program, small industrial plants for fish and meat preparation are being built in several small villages. The purpose for building these plants is to create greater income opportunities for hunters and fishermen as well as to establish additional work places, especially, for the female population.

The economic crisis Greenland is facing has led to a much more critical assessment of the public investment projects, thereby handicapping the small communities' position in the competition for public funding. The good faith intentions to modernize the village communities are thus, in conflict with the Home Rule authorities' more important endeavors to rationalize the Greenlandic society. This is, however, a sensitive political issue since the improvement of the villages' conditions has been one of the Home Rule authorities' fundamental political goals. Only one party, the Akulliit Partiiat, has openly approved of the dismantling of villages with poor development potentials. Jonathan Motzfeldt of the Siumut party has approached this delicate matter by stating that, if one chooses to remain in a village, she or he also has to accept a lower standard of living than is found in the towns. The problems surrounding the villages have also been less visible in the administration of the Home Rule authorities since the close-down in

Figure 4: The share of full-time, monthly salaried Greenlanders within the public sector, 1978-1990.



Source: Ministeriet for Grønland, 1968-1987; Statsministeriet, 1988-1990 and Grønlands statistiske Kontor, 1991.

1990 of the special department for village and outer district affairs (established in 1979), and the subsequent distribution of tasks between several different departments.

Recently a report prepared by officials of the Home Rule authorities' administration instigated a stormy debate because it seemed on many issues to follow the denounced Danish developmental policy. The report stated that future business operations ought to be located in towns where electricity and water could be produced at a cheaper rate. This, actually, corresponds to the real development, since 80% of the total population growth during the last 10 years has been concentrated to the four principal towns in West Greenland (Nuuk, Sisimiut, Ilulissat and Qaqortoq). The tendency to higher population density on the regional level has not been broken by the Home Rule authorities and will most likely continue in the future.

Parallel to the population density in the larger towns, a differentiation of lifestyle as well as of the material conditions of living has taken place. While people in the small communities earn a living through a mixture of subsistence and wage work (Larsen 1987), the support of most families in the larger towns consist of wage work. Urbanization has created a rather skewed income distribution. A new middle class has emerged, whose life conditions are radically different from those of the fishermen and hunters. The clash of interests between these two groups will manifest itself with increasing force in the years to come as public funds grow more and more scarce.

**Table 4**

**Towns, villages and sheep-farming places in Greenland, 1960-1991**

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1991
Towns	17	17	17	17	17
Villages	110	83	67	68	70
Sheep-farming places	23	40	33	38	38
% of rural population in Greenland	39%	25%	20%	18%	18%

Source: Grønland, 1990 (including population figures for 1991).

### *International relations*

As previously mentioned, the Home Rule authorities has no competence to unilaterally enter into an agreement with foreign governments. Nevertheless, the Greenlandic politicians have managed to influence the various international relations in which Greenland is involved. An illustration of this Greenlandic influence can be seen in its withdrawal from the European Economic Community. The Home Rule authorities, through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), have strengthened Greenland's relations to the rest of the Inuit world. Hans Pavia Rosing, the Siumut party's present member to the Danish parliament, was the first president of the ICC. The ICC's main significance

for Greenland has centered on cultural matters. The Home Rule authorities are also participating in the work of the Nordic Council of ministers, both at the minister level as well as at the level of civil servants. The Greenland Home Rule parliament has two representatives in the Danish delegation to the Nordic Council. During the 1980s, direct air routes from Greenland to Arctic Canada (Iqaluit) and to Iceland have been established. This has made the dealings with the neighboring countries to the East and to the West much easier.

Greenland's most important foreign policy interest centers around the fishing industry. Greenland has representatives on the Danish delegation to the multilateral organizations which regulate the fishing operations in the North Atlantic Ocean (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Organization and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization) as well as in the International Whaling Commission. Greenland is also a member of the newly founded North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission. Furthermore, Greenland participates, to a great extent, in a bilateral fishing cooperation together with other fishing nations.

In conjunction with Greenland's withdrawal from the EEC in 1985, it gained recognition as being one of the overseas countries and territories (OLT-status), which was connected to the European Community. The agreement with the European Community allows Greenland to sell its fish products free of duty to countries within the Community, and in return, the EEC receives some fishing rights in the Greenlandic fishing zone. According to the present fishing agreement, which spans over a 5 year period, starting January 1, 1990, the EEC pays approximately 270 million Danish kroner (approximately 54 million Canadian \$) per year to the Home Rule authorities for the privilege to catch a fixed amount of fish (Gennemførelsesprotokol 1989). This amount is to be paid even if the right is not utilized. Since the Greenlandic fishermen, according to the agreement, have priority to fish within the total allowable catch (TAC), determined by the fishery biologists, the agreement has in actuality not afforded the EEC fishermen with a whole lot of fish. This fishing agreement has therefore been especially favorable to Greenland, and it will, without doubt, require some rather crafty negotiation skills to achieve a similar agreement in 1995.

The renewal of the fishing agreement with the Common Market is bound to breathe new life into the debate on Greenland's association to the EEC. By then, the majority of the European countries will have joined the EEC, or will at least be close to joining. At the same time, political and economic cooperation will have expanded considerably. This can make it rather complicated for Greenland if she chooses not to participate, which, on the other hand, will present the "Europeans" in the Greenlandic parties with valuable reasons for a closer affiliation with the European Community.

### *Social problems*

The core of the Scandinavian social welfare model is based on the public's responsibility to secure for all its citizens a minimal amount of material welfare. By copying the Danish welfare state model onto the Greenlandic society, the Danish politicians tried in the 1960s and 1970s to put the Greenlandic population on equal footing with the Danes living in Denmark. Schools, housing, and hospitals were built and the social services system and educational system were expanded. The Home Rule

authorities have assumed responsibility for the distribution of the various welfare benefits and have also made efforts to further development once started by the Danish authorities. Unfortunately, there continues to be shortcomings within numerous areas.

The idea of introducing a public unemployment insurance was abandoned in 1987, because it was found to be way too expensive. Unemployment has been on the rise since the beginning of the 1980s and is especially high among the unskilled workers. The unemployed can only receive ordinary social benefits which, for families hit by unemployment, have resulted in a significant decline in income, hence, a lower standard of living.

In addition, it has been impossible to reduce the shortage of housing despite an extensive building plan both before and after the inception of the Home Rule. The waiting lists for an apartment located in a publicly owned apartment complex, which in many instances is the only one affordable, are extremely long. Delays can go up to several years, which has caused many to live together in apartments already too crowded.

Despite the geographical conditions, the public service support has, within many other sectors, reached a high standard. An example is the health service sector. Greenland has been able to introduce a look-alike version of the Danish welfare state. But, like many other affluent countries, the expansion of public benefits has not necessarily increased the quality of living, neither has it reduced social problems.

The social malaise in Greenland could be characterized by the following: alcohol abuse, violence, sexual crimes, suicide, accidents, absenteeism. The various mischiefs are often connected to, and enhanced by, alcohol consumption. Alcohol policy is one of the most controversial subjects amongst the population in Greenland. The attitudes of the various Greenlandic governments towards the use of alcohol have, except from a short period of liquor rationing (1982-83), been liberal. The attitudes have been that the drinking habits and the alcohol consumption could only change through the influence of consumer campaigns but not by restricting the sale of liquor.

The effect of this alcohol policy has until today been insignificant. However, there has been a decline of the average alcohol consumption per capita during the last years, but this is more likely caused by a general drop in the economy than by alcohol policy. The number of alcohol related crimes, accidents and suicides is still frighteningly high. Greenland has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and the murder rate is 20 times higher than that of Denmark. The explanation for these depressing numbers is the way of drinking, associated with a number of cultural and social factors (Larsen 1992b). The pattern is well known from other countries in the fourth world which have undergone the same rapid change from being a traditional country to becoming a modern society.

Generally, one must hold that the Home Rule authorities have not yet been able to tackle the social problems which cause the quality of life to deteriorate. This, however, does not mean that nothing is being done to combat these problems. In 1986, the Danish state did in cooperation with the Home Rule authorities, establish a prevention council (Paarisa) which, *inter alia*, has run educational campaigns against AIDS, alcohol and sniffing. Additionally, most municipalities have employed a prevention counselor, with the function of implementing educational programs at the schools and in the neighborhoods. The members of the present Home Rule government have tried to become role models for other citizens by publicly speaking about their own battles with alcohol and how they have managed to overcome these problems.

## ***Education***

The most frustrating problem for the Greenlandic population as a consequence of the Danish modernization program in Greenland has been the high number of Danish guest workers, which increased the total share of Danes in Greenland from 2% of the population in 1945 to almost 20% in 1975 (in 1991 the population in Greenland totaled 55,500 persons including 8,800 persons born outside Greenland). The creation and the operation of a modern society required educational qualifications, which the Greenlandic people lacked and could not acquire in a short period of time. The Greenlanders were therefore pushed to the side line and could, as bystanders, only watch what was happening to their country. This, of course, created feelings of powerlessness and resentment. Adding insult to injury, the authorities enacted a law which legitimized wage discrimination. All of this laid the foundation for ethnical radicalization during the 1970s.

Long before the creation of Home Rule, the Danish Government had made great attempts to educate young Greenlanders both practically and theoretically. These efforts were continued by the Home Rule authorities when they assumed control for the educational sector in 1980. Today, the Greenlandic educational system is so extensive that most education with relevance for the Greenlandic society can be carried out in Greenland.

Initially, the goal was to educate as many young Greenlanders as possible so that the Greenlandic work force could replace the Danes. Unfortunately the quality of the education has in general proved to be below par. The urge to quickly accomplish Greenlandization is thus conflicting with the desire to achieve economic growth in the long run. Today, inefficiency of the educational system is the foremost constraint on the growth of the Greenlandic society. As opposed to the geographical and climatic conditions, the educational factor is one that can be influenced and resolved by taking the right measures. A high educational level may, to some extent compensate for the lack of rich natural resources and thus, form a basis for economic development. The Greenlandic authorities are facing a tremendous challenge in their effort to raise the level of the educational system, beginning at the elementary school level.

## **Conclusion**

It is no exaggeration to describe the inception of the Home Rule as a revolution. The Home Rule implied a radical change of the distribution of powers. Equally important was the change of the mental state of the Greenlanders which happened concurrently. From having been an ethnic minority on the outskirts of Denmark, the Greenlanders became a self-governing nation within a *de facto* federal government. This has created a new consciousness and pride amongst the Greenlandic population and it has been the driving force behind the many reforms society has undergone since the origin of the Home Rule.

The results achieved by the Home Rule authorities must be described as impressive. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Greenlandic politicians' main criticism of the Danish Government was directed towards the Danish modernization policy in Greenland. The politicians argued that the implementation of the program was happening much too fast. In light of this criticism, it is both ironic and interesting to note that the speed has not slowed down since the Home Rule authorities took over. The Home Rule authorities have fiercely gone on with the Danish modernization project. The major difference however is



that, now, responsibility lies in the hands of the Greenlandic politicians. The distance between the governing and the governed has decreased culturally as well as geographically. This has contributed to a much higher degree of legitimacy of the political regime.

The continuation of the Danish Government's modernization project can be attributed to the fact that the Greenlandic politicians are under a lot of pressure to make improvements in almost all areas of society. The Danish developmental policy instilled in the Greenlandic population the hope that the living standard should reach a level comparable to that of Denmark. This provoked an authentic revolution of rising expectations. Denmark had for many years functioned as a role model for the Greenlanders in their quest to achieve the same standard in sectors such as health care delivery and social services. The ethnic consciousness and the partial independence from Denmark made the comparisons with Danish conditions less relevant. Instead, the expression "to elevate the standards to the international level" has been more commonly used during the last years. Behind this somewhat vague expression, lies the ambition that Greenland, technically and economically, shall reach the same level as the richest countries in the Western hemisphere.

Given the numerous constraints affecting Greenland's development — such as low educational level, remoteness and fluctuation of natural resources, distance to export markets, short supply of capital — , one has to ask if the level of ambition is not set too high. It is also characteristic that the optimism which helped to influence the developmental changes in the beginning of the Home Rule was seriously undermined in 1987 when the country's economic situation drastically deteriorated. However, it is very difficult to adjust the populations' expectations downward. It should be remembered that the standard of living on the social and geographical outskirts of the Greenlandic society continues to be low. It is, therefore, quite possible that distribution conflicts will be intensified in the years ahead: the distribution between rich and poor, between towns and villages, and between central and peripheral municipalities.

Consequently, political life will, to a large degree, focus on Greenland's internal situation. The framework for political life, the Home Rule Act, will most likely not be put on the agenda. A significant standpoint on this issue came in 1991, when Hans Pavia Rosing, the parliament representative for the Siumut party, declared to the Danish public that Greenland within the next 10-20 years was seeking a much more relaxed association with Denmark. This statement was quickly refuted by the premier of the Home Rule government, Lars Emil Johansen. The Greenlandic General Executive did not want to create any uneasiness regarding the issues of Greenland's affiliation with Denmark. In a recent interview, Lars Emil Johansen described the relationship to Denmark as such: "During the years I was a member of the Danish Parliament (1973-1979), everything looked differently. Not a single one of us expected that it would all happen so quickly. We have, in every area, exceeded the expectations that were proposed in the report by the Home Rule commission. Today, 90% of all our affairs are regulated by the Greenlandic authorities. But we are still facing tensions. I was, before the inception of the Home Rule, very critical because all decisions concerning the society of Greenland were made 4000 km away. However cooperation has worked nicely. The Danish parliament exhibits a considerable amount of fairness which we would like to return. One should not discard all the good things that have been reached throughout centuries. If the Danish Government would interfere and hinder our political regulation of society, it would then be a completely different matter. But this is not the case at all. It is not just a matter of

the three billion Danish kroner which we receive from the Danish State each year. No, this is much more deeply rooted. We have several hundred years of co-existence, family ties, friendship, and human relationships. Even if Greenland and the Faroe Islands were economically independent, we would still have significant issues that needed to be coordinated. Even if Greenland was more independent than it is today, I still do not think that it would warrant a demand for complete independence. Maybe, one day I may entertain the possibility of a "federal state", consisting of Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland...but this pushes us far into the next century" (Buchardt 1992).

Everything points in the direction that the Greenlandic revolution will, for many more years, continue its quiet life within the framework of the Home Rule Act.

(Translated by Eva Jacobsen)

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