

Abstract

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This dissertation analyzes the strategy used by women with conservative sympathies for breaking into the male political culture. The economic, social and political changes which characterized Swedish society during the first decades of the twentieth century gave women the opportunity to demand political rights. The right-wing women, however, had a poorer starting point than did those on the left. The former had no home in a political party; thus their situation was interesting. *Allmänna valmansförbundet* (AVF), established in 1904, was an exclusively male organization. Female membership had not been discussed, nor had their demand for suffrage been heeded.

From 1902 onwards right-wing women participated in the expanding female suffrage movement, for example, one of its founders, the historian Lydia Wahlström. It was first in 1913, when Arvid Lindman became AVF's chairman, that this group was opened for women. That did not mean that they received equality with men in party work. The right-wing women, however, did not feel they could wait. Many had practical and organizational skills that they were prepared to use in politics. By means of solidarity within the female conservative organization they wanted to promote their interests. Their aim was not to build up a women's party, but rather an independent organization based on a conservative ideology. Starting in 1911 their ideas began to develop and resulted four years later in a nation-wide organization, Swedish National Conservative Women's Association (*Sveriges Moderata Kvinnoförbund* – SMKf).

AVF's leadership became uneasy and started a counteraction. With the introduction of female suffrage, women's role in the electorate became an important factor. AVF decided that a *Central Kvinnoråd* (CK – Central Women's Council) should gather all conservative women within the framework of the party. SMKf was not convinced that this would be advantageous to women. They retained their status and remained outside AVF. The latter recruited leading persons to CK from SMKf, which created temporary problems for both sides. For 17 years two conservative women's groups worked on the political scene. They cooperated in certain national questions, for example, defense, and also during elections in conjunction with AVF. Otherwise they created their own profiles in different areas. CK had the advantage that their second vice president Bertha Wellin became a member of parliament. The capitulation of SMKf around the beginning of 1937 may be set in relation to the changed situation of the right. Generally speaking, these women's organizations developed within the parties and the general political framework.

Key words: female suffrage, *Allmänna valmansförbundet*, women's organizations, special organizations, nomination problems, female parliamentary pioneers, Central Women's Council, Swedish Women's Citizen Association, Swedish National Conservative Women's Organization, conservative women.

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