

Soria Moria konferansesenter  
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Med forbehold om endringer  
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State Secretary Eldrid Nordbø

OPENING ADDRESS

OECD - ILE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "WOMEN - LOCAL INITIATIVES  
- JOB CREATION"

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you to Norway. We appreciate having the opportunity to arrange this OECD seminar on "Women - Local Initiatives - Job Creation" in cooperation with the ILE Secretariat.

Norway is actively involved in international cooperation through a number of organizations, particularly the OECD. We consider this cooperation to be of great importance to increasing international understanding. There is a very great interdependence between the economies of the OECD countries. Norway therefore attaches importance to achieving a coordinated strategy within the OECD in order to promote economic growth and increased employment. Norway has participated in the OECD's ILE programme since 1983 and has found it very useful.

Norway's involvement in regional development is based on long traditions of local self-government. There is a strong political awareness at the local level, and the municipalities have a well-developed administrative system. A job creation programme was, therefore, naturally aimed at the local level. The ILE strategy was first launched in the most vulnerable parts of the country, which are in the less developed regions. It was there the need for new jobs was greatest.

Full employment in all parts of the country is one of the main goals of the Norwegian Government's policy. Work is the

basis for all welfare. It represents a source of creative and useful activity, personal development and social contact. Full employment is a question of creating the basis for a sufficient production of goods and services that can be sold. There are many unsolved problems and unmet needs in society. Thus there is no shortage of tasks to be done.

The goal of full employment requires an efficient and productive business sector. The aim of industrial policy has therefore been to contribute to economic growth through the modernization and rationalization of existing companies and the creation of more jobs. This requires a policy which can make new technology and research available to the companies, as well as stimulate the use of resources for new tasks and the establishment of new companies.

An overall industrial policy must consider manufacturing industry in conjunction with other industries. Private service industries account for nearly 40 per cent of total employment, and outside the public sector it is these industries which have the greatest potential for employment growth. Employment in the private service sector is expected to grow in such fields as hotels and restaurants, banking and insurance, business and computer-related services, and personal services.

An <sup>or</sup> important element in industrial policy is to stimulate local industrial development in both existing and new companies and in less developed regions. In this connection it is important to mobilize the creative abilities of managers and employees and the community at large. Norway's experience with this ILE strategy has been favourable, particularly in less developed regions where local industrial motivation is an important part of local policies.

Norway has a corporate structure in which small and medium-sized companies with fewer than 20 employees account for 80 per cent of all companies. The modernization and rationalization of industry and commerce will require a policy which encourages

small and medium-sized companies to restructure their operations and new companies to be established.

Full employment means that everyone has a genuine opportunity to find employment. Work for everyone is also one of the most important goals of the policy regarding equal opportunities. So far I have spoken about industrial policy in general terms. Initially, industrial policy does not distinguish between the sexes, but in practice it turns out that general policy instruments and support schemes have a tendency to benefit men to a greater extent than women.

For the Government, equal opportunities for men and women is a high-priority policy area. This is reflected in the composition of the Government, as 8 of 18 Cabinet Ministers are women. Moreover, more than 40 per cent of the state secretaries and ~~private~~ secretaries to the ministers are women. In 1981, the Congress of the Norwegian Labour Party adopted the principle of quotas by sex in its own organization. At the Party Congress in 1983, the principle was incorporated into the party's by-laws. There, it states that "both sexes are to be represented by at least 40 per cent in all elections and nominations". The party's women's movement was the driving force behind the implementation of the principle on sex quotas. Through hard work and active efforts by the women's movement quotas by sex have gained increasing support in the Labour Party, and are now an accepted means for achieving genuine equality of opportunity between men and women. Moreover, we can also note that quotas based on sex are constantly winning support in the rest of society.

It is important that women are represented in all ~~parts~~ <sup>aspects</sup> of community life. The participation of women in an increasing number of fields represents a valuable resource for the tasks we are to accomplish. The Government attaches considerable importance to integrating women <sup>into</sup> in the economy. Women must be given the opportunity to participate on the basis of their own qualifications and experience. To achieve this, the Government advocates

*individual*

the use of effective instruments such as various types of positive  
 - *discrimination* to benefit women.

Job opportunities for women are especially limited in the less developed regions where industry is not very diversified. This creates an undesirable, distorted distribution of the sexes in these areas. In particular, women in the age-group 20-39 are under-represented.

The primary goal of regional policy is to maintain the main features of the settlement pattern. In traditional regional policy, one male job in manufacturing added 4-5 people to the population. In the years ahead, women's stronger ties to the labour market will probably be of far greater significance to the development of the less developed regions than previously. Moreover, more of the jobs will have to emerge in the service industries.

Efforts will therefore be made to create jobs for women in the less-developed regions. The strategy is twofold. On the one hand, to create jobs which have traditionally employed women. And on the other hand, to increase women's opportunities to enter traditionally male-dominated occupations and industries.

In Norway, women accounted for only 14 per cent of the self-employed in 1980 (excluding agriculture). The Government's goal is therefore to reduce these disparities in the labour market. One measure will thus be build further on the positive experience provided by the "Women Entrepreneurship Scheme". The Government has advocated that systematic training opportunities be offered to women entrepreneurs in every county.

And this brings me to the subject of this seminar: "Women Entrepreneurs". We are gathered here to exchange experiences and to arrive at strategies for developing and increasing the number of women entrepreneurs. I wish you the best of luck with both the plenary debate and the workshop discussions. I believe that the seminar will provide new inspiration and ideas for the further work in this field.