

## 'PEACE WITH THE EARTH': WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN SWEDEN

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**Synopsis**—Women active in the contemporary Swedish environmental movement draw much of their inspiration from twentieth century feminist Elin Wägner (1882–1949) who in the 1930s saw connections between environmental issues, feminism, and patriarchal cultures of the past. Contemporary women writers, poets, and artists celebrate periods in which both women and nature seemed to be more powerful than they are today. Contemporary women are most active in environmental issues that involve the reproduction of the human species (such as nuclear issues) and their own reproductive labor as it affects themselves, the family, and the state (such as pesticides, food quality and distribution, and work environments). These issues are analysed as a 'politics of reproduction' that leads to conflicting strategies of equality politics, women's culture politics, and alternative 'green' politics. These conflicting strategies exemplify contradictions inherent in both the wider women's movement and the 'women and environment' movements throughout the world today.

'It is beginning to dawn on women that they must assume the responsibility for housekeeping nature.' These words that so succinctly state the connection between women and *oikos*, the Greek word for 'house' from which the science of ecology derives its meaning, were written not by a feminist of the 1980s, but in 1941 by the Swedish critic and reformer Elin Wägner (1882–1949) (Wägner, 1978: 238). The insights in her book, *Alarmclock* still ring out to women active in the global environmental movement today as they struggle to restore the partnership between humans and nature that is essential for the renewal and continuance of life on earth. In Sweden, as in the United States, the women's movement for care of the earth has been explored from both symbolic and political perspectives. Individual women active in the movement identify with a range of potential strategies and issues (Merchant, 1981, 1984).

### WOMEN AND NATURE

Wägner's alarm was intended to awaken women to the destruction of their heritage by the mechanization of production that used plants and animals as if they were machines, wasted resources,

and polluted the earth. Anticipating the argument of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) by more than twenty years, she saw that war and chemical pesticides were death producing technologies aimed at destroying all of life itself. 'Soldiers spray the largest "enemies" with bullets, agriculturalists spray the smallest "enemies" with their chemical solutions . . . Spray an enemy people's soldiers to death and an indispensable part of the human family has been subjected to a treatment the consequences of which no one can estimate. Spray the parasites of the grapevines and one destroys the life in the earth under them without which the grapevine cannot live.' (Wägner, 1978: 249, 236). To make 'peace with the earth' (as she entitled an essay of 1940), workers and soldiers alike must stop putting all their energy into machines that destroy the world and alter matter itself (Tamm and Wägner, 1940).

Women, she believed, must recapture their ancient tradition of caring for the land by bursting out of the confines of their homes and extending their housekeeping to the whole globe. 'In agreement with patriarchy's understanding and methods, the proper way to treat nature is with caution, housekeeping, and care.' The patriarchal heritage that influenced Elin Wägner derived from

the age of prehistory portrayed in Johann Bachofen's *Mother Right* (1861) and Robert Briffault's *The Mothers* (1927). In her book *A Thousand Years in Småland* (1939) she recounted the old religion of nature in southern Sweden where the giant woman Ana had fought the male God of Christianity (Wagner, 1939).

In 1933 Wagner met the dynamic and practical Flory Gate (b. 1904) and the two women began working together to rediscover the wisdom of matriarchy expressed in the traditions of peasant farm women (Fig. 1). Three years later they visited Vienna's 'Women's Organization for World Order,' a group that opposed the disorder brought about by men's system of monocultures in farming and forestry, advocating instead diversification modelled on the principles of nature. Here they came into contact with the Swiss farmer Mina Hofstetter who combined hoe cultivation with organic planting, using vegetable rather than animal fertilizers. To Wagner, the rough hewn farm woman, who in her long skirts and heavy boots spoke of her own health and the soil's health in one breath, became Mother Earth herself (Gate, 1984; Isaksson and Hjalmar, 1980).

With Elizabeth Tamm, Wagner wrote *Peace with the Earth* in 1940, arguing for cooperation with nature and its life-giving layer of soil. If humankind was to survive, they asserted, nature's health and self-regulation must come first. Reacting to the massive wind erosion in the Dust Bowl in the United States and water erosion from overgrazing and deforestation in Italy's Appennine mountains, they argued that modern technology had provided the means to disturb the equilibrium of nature. Human use of the topsoil must not interrupt the delicate balance of the humus layer's self-renewal. To achieve this, they proposed agricultural methods based on the use of varied compost, 'cover' cultivation, and shallow plowing (Tamm and Wagner, 1940; Gate, 1976, 1984).

Flory Gate, who took up farming in 1944, set out to build on older farming methods that had been successful for centuries. Although farming intrudes on nature, she believed it could be done carefully by having many crops and fields. Using a seven field rotation system and natural rather than artificial manures to protect the soil's bacteria, she cultivated oats, potatoes, beets, peas, and rye. With the wool from the farm's sheep, she and Elin Wagner wove clothing and blankets. They milked their cows by hand, rather than with milking machines, seived and separated the cream, and made butter and cheese. Now at the age of 80, Flory Gate has given up farming, but retains her conviction that nature must be healed. Although women, nature and the soil have all suffered from degradation, women can use the science of ecology to liberate both themselves and the land (Gate, 1984).

The connection between war and herbicides that Wagner has criticized has been injected with new meaning by one of Sweden's most outspoken contemporary critics—political writer, novelist, and winner of the 1980 Nordic Council's Prize in Literature, Sara Lidman. The product of a matrifocal farming tradition in northern Sweden where women's power in the home was absolute, Lidman has returned to her roots to write a series of five epic novels in the region's dialect that portray successive changes in human relationships to the land. In an area of long dark winters, where 'cold is like a burning knife, death is always very close.' Here survival depends on the strength of human fiber. Women provided the family with food and clothing from cows, pigs, and sheep, and in the winters men took teams of horses upcountry to cut lumber for charcoal, firewood, homes, and barns and a surplus for tax payments. Impact on the forest was relatively low and it grew back rapidly (Lidman, 1984).

Today Lidman complains, the lumber companies treat the forest as something to be erased from the earth. Large areas are stripped bald (*kalhygge*) and then declared euphemistically to be 'young' again (*föryngringsyta*). Fast growing Canadian pines (*Pinus contorta*) are introduced and treated with fertilizers while other species are kept down with herbicides. As in Vietnam, where during the war years she reported on the effects of defoliation, chemicals such as 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D (recently outlawed) have produced a higher than average incidence of cancer among local workers (Lidman, 1984).

Her collection of newspaper articles spanning the decade from 1970 to 1980, entitled *Each Leaf is an Eye* captures the perception of the Vietnamese people that herbicides are poisons thrown in the eyes of their grandmothers. The Vietnamese view that nature is animate, expressed in the saying 'Each step I walk on this ground, I walk in the intestines of my ancestors,' bears similarities to Lidman's own ancestors' belief in *Vittran*, the female force in nature that must be propitiated, lest she retaliate by inflicting cows, horses, and humans with sickness (Lidman, 1980: 76, 80, 83, 94; Berglund, 1984).

Elin Wagner's critique of the mechanistic treatment of the environment and her matriarchal perspective on nature have been extended by another of Sweden's women writers, Uppsala poet, artist and philosopher Elisabet Hermodsson (b. 1927) who has explored the connections between woman and nature in her paintings and poems. As a philosophy student during the 1950s, Hermodsson was an early critic of the positivist school of thinking that then dominated Swedish universities. The positivists attempted to remove value judgements from science by admitting as truth only two kinds of statements, those based on mathematics and on



Fig. 1. Flory Gate and Elin Wägner: 'Daughters of Mother Earth.' From Isaksson, Ulla and Erik Hjalmar Linder, 1980. *Elin Wägner: Dotter av Moderjord, 1922-1949*, p. 273. Bonniers, Stockholm.



Fig. 2. Tree, Reminiscent of Nerthus, Bronze-age Goddess of Northern Europe, with Earth and Moon Goddesses, from Witchpower Exhibition, Gothenburg, fall 1983. Photo by Monica England, Gothenburg.



Fig. 3. 'For Life—For Peace.' Women's peace rally in Umeå, Sweden, organized by 'Women for Peace,' in 1983. Photo by Inger Harnesk, Umeå.



experiment; language like nature was constructed from atom-like elements that when added together produced a sum. This way of thinking, she argued, separated ethics from science and made research vulnerable to exploitation. In modern society, science had taken the place of patriarchal religion (Hermodsson, 1984).

As an artist and poet, she wanted to open the water-tight compartments between science, religion, and art to new ways of seeking knowledge about reality. She saw values imbedded in both scientific descriptions and in artistic creations. Concern for the earth as a mother could lead to the reassertion of spiritual connections to nature. For example, in a poem of multileveled meanings, written while on the island of Crete, the locale of Bachofen's matriarchal age, she saw her own intimate relationship to the earth and to women of the past (Möbeck, 1982: 3-5; Freij, 1984: 6-7).

and my roots  
burst ever deeper  
from the heat  
down in the earth of iron chippings  
and red clay

(Hermodsson, 1980: 93; trans., Iverson, 1983: 172).

Pondering that 'the universe was once born as woman,' she writes of God as a woman and of the wisdom that men, trapped in the patriarchal age of Saint John, can learn from women (Hermodsson, 1980: 93-101, 112; Iverson, 1983).

Another critic of the positivist view of nature is Eva Moberg, a contemporary writer and columnist for Sweden's major newspaper (*Dagens Nyheter*). She writes of the need for a symbolic understanding of reality as part of a dynamic development not limited by the static view that produced positivism. She defends the study of ancient traditions as a search for a step forwards, not backwards. But in the search for a new paradigm, the new physics has been overemphasized. The insights now coming from mythology, archeology, and anthropology, she believes, are far more explosive (Moberg, 1984).

To Moberg, peace and environmental issues are women's questions and are integral to the goals of women's liberation. The struggle for a more peaceful society in a cooperative balance with nature is a struggle between the sexes directed towards eliminating the female monopoly on nurturance and love and the male monopoly on aggression and dominance. Because men's domination of technology and industrial production has led the world to the brink of disaster, women's experiences of nurturing are needed to reevaluate and reformulate society's goals. A vision of a life-giving future must stem from changes in the male psyche (Moberg, 1983).

Extending the woman-nature connection from

written language to art, a group of women in Gothenburg prepared an art exhibition in the fall of 1983 featuring a tree trunk found in the forest in the shape of a woman with legs, arms, and breasts reminiscent of the ancient mother goddesses preserved in the sculpture of stone age Europe (Fig. 2). The catalogue for the exhibition was entitled 'Witchpower,' symbolizing the knowledge of nature and women's healing powers that were systematically obliterated in the witch hunts of the Renaissance. The parallel between the witch hunts and contemporary threats to future generations is exemplified by the possibility of nuclear war. The Gothenburg women expressed solidarity with the women's peace action at Greenham Common in England set up to protest the installation of cruise missiles by the United States. To these women, the peace camps make visible the connections between the death producing missiles and the alternative of life without violence (Andréen *et al.*, 1983).

Common to the writings of these Swedish women is a reaction to the technological conquest of nature in modern industrial society. Their approach stresses the need for a reunification with nature that derives from a vision of balance between human needs and respect for the earth. Like the American radical feminists Susan Griffin in *Woman and Nature* (1978), Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), and Carol Christ in 'Why Women Need the Goddess' (1982), they emphasize an experiential immersion in the symbols, language, and rituals of women connection to agriculture, the ancient deities of nature, and the procreation of life. These symbolic connections 'empower' women to unified actions to preserve the earth from which all life flows. But more broadly these women seek to reassert values necessary to the whole of today's society, to support nature's own 'right' to exist free of human intervention, and to initiate change at the ideological or symbolic level of society. These goals are common to both the Nordic and American women's movements.

### THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

In her book *Alarmclock*, Elin Wägner had explicitly stated the connection between women's liberation and the liberation of the earth. 'Men's struggle for dominance over nature has been fought side by side with their struggle for domination over women. The victory over domination must be a double victory if it is to be complete.' (Wägner, 1978: 248). To many Swedish women this expression of the political rather than the spiritual dimension of Elin Wägner's thought was uppermost. Changing the symbolic structures within Western culture, however important, would not change the power

structures of society that produced the domination of women and nature. The struggle to change society must thus be waged on both the ideological and the material levels.

In 1979 a heated debate in Sweden's largest morning newspaper over the political implications of Wagner's book took place. To some women her ideas represented a naive form of matriarchal spiritualism that glorified women's oppression in the family and could never be the basis for political action. To others, who distanced themselves from the spiritual elements of her thought, the concept of women's work in the family generated a politics of liberation and suggested alternatives for social change and an ecologically balanced society.<sup>1</sup>

The debate reflected a shift in the politics of the radical wing of the women's movement around 1977 away from a strategy of infiltration of women into the male-dominated spheres of production and the state towards a new politics grounded in the concept of 'women's culture.' Based on women's common potential for child-bearing and the realities of their common household work in contemporary Swedish society, 'women's culture' attempted to offer a ground for a unification of women that cut across class lines. In Sweden today, women usually carry the major burden of childcare and housework even when both partners in a marriage work full-time. (Seventy-five per cent of all Swedish women are in paid employment and half of these hold full-time jobs.) (Swedish Institute, 1981; Berner, 1983-4) According to Louise Walden (1981), 'women's culture,' based on women's shared experiences of nurturance as well as oppression, has 'created a system of values at odds with that prevailing in society.' These values intersect with those of the environmental movement to create a rationale for social change.

### THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION

In developing strategies for change that will lead to an environmentally healthy future, women have been politicized by and most active in issues that affect reproduction and that proceed from women's role in the maintenance of everyday life. By taking seriously the 'round stomach's conception of the world' says Eva-Lena Neiman (1982: 7), 'women can inject the environmental movement with new blood and new working methods' based on

'women's experience of birth, care, and nurturing of children, plants, and animals.'

Such strategies and actions fit a theory of the 'politics of reproduction' through which the implications of women's engagement with environmental issues can be better understood. The 'politics of reproduction' is a taxonomy of potential political issues that has its theoretical basis in the societal division of labor between the sexes. This generates different, and often opposing, sets of political interests. Thus while economic growth is characteristic of men's community of interests, environmental balance is a characteristic of women's community of interests (Peterson, 1984).

Women's political actions can be located along an ideological axis ranging from acceptance of women's roles as nurturant social mother and of existing social relations to strategies designed to change the distribution of patriarchal and capitalist power. As a theoretical tool, the 'politics of reproduction' consists of four categories that help to characterize women's political and environmental interests and to explain the context for their environmental actions.

#### 1. *Biological (intergenerational) reproduction*

Biological reproduction involves the intergenerational reproduction of the species. Women's shared experiences of, and potential for, childbirth unify them in their concern for the quality of life for future generations and for the survival of humankind. Here two concerns are paramount: ecological and nuclear issues (Tornqvist, 1982).

The ecological issues of industrial and agricultural pollution have motivated more women than men. In a protest in the northern coastal town of Sundsvall against air pollution from an aluminium factory, women were far more concerned about the problem than men. According to a poll taken by the National Institute of Environmental Medicine, 59 per cent of the female respondents were concerned with the potential health risks as opposed to 36 per cent of the men. The protest was successful in forcing the company to adhere to the legally allowed levels for discharge and stopped a planned expansion in the area (Berglund, 1980; *Mil.*, 1980: 12-15).

A national referendum on nuclear power, held in 1980, involved thousands of workers, mostly women, in a campaign that resulted in a compromise allowing the construction of no more than 12 reactors all of which must be shut down in 25 years. Analysis of the voting patterns reveals that 43 per cent of Swedish women in contrast to 21 per cent of Swedish men opposed the use of nuclear power (Peterson, 1981; on American women, see Nelkin, 1981).

Since the referendum, protest actions have focused on the location of nuclear disposal sites.

<sup>1</sup> Those arguing for the political praxis of Wagner's *Vackarklocka* were: Bergom-Larsson (1979a, 1979b), Wechsellmann (1979), Witt-Brattstrom (1979) and Hermodsson (1979). Arguing against the political praxis of Wagner's book were Backberger (1979) and Sandberg (1979).



Birgitta Ohlsson organized a group of women and men in central Sweden called 'Save the Voxna Region' that successfully challenged government sponsored test drilling for nuclear waste disposal. Arguing that the community's water and air would be endangered by the proposed burial method, the citizens first patrolled the region and then blocked traffic to the site. Their actions aroused a massive objection to locating the site in the area and the plan was dropped. 'One thinks of children and grandchildren and the earth and all kinds of other things and one must begin to struggle . . .', said Ohlsson (Anon., 1982: 21, quotation; *Alt.*, 1983: 3-8; *Mil.*, 1980: 36).

Women's concern about life-threatening nuclear technology is now focused on the possibility of global nuclear war (Fig. 3). Women's engagement with the issue of peace has reached unprecedented proportions in Sweden where it is now so strong as to form a common denominator for the women's movement. Of 58 women's organizations reflecting the breadth of the women's movement in Sweden, who were asked to specify the issues to which they had given most priority in 1983, *all* stated peace (Peterson, 1985). One such organization, the 'Women's Culture Association,' formed in 1977, initiated the formation in 1979 of the organizations of 'Women Against Nuclear Power' and 'Women's Struggle for Peace' that opposed the spread of nuclear technology and the arms race. As Ulla Torpe (1978: 24) of the Swedish Women's Leftist Association put it, 'Military violence and violence against nature both have their basis in the same type of violence, in other words, technological violence.' The struggle for peace, she asserts, must be accompanied by the struggle for nature and the preservation of the environment.

## 2. Family (intragenerational) reproduction

Women's function as reproducers of the future labor force through unpaid labor in the home gives rise to a set of interests involving the environmental conditions for the production of food, clothing and shelter for the family.

The effects of pesticides on the quality of food initiated a nationwide protest by women. Merit Paulsson of Ytter Malung in central Sweden and a group of women invited members of the executive branch of the Swedish government to taste preserves made from raspberries sprayed with herbicides by the forest industry. The officials, who were filmed on national television, refused. Taking their preserves to spokesmen for all of Sweden's political parties, the women raised massive public opinion against the herbicides. As a result, a law was passed in 1979 prohibiting the use of herbicides in all forests (although local authorities may make exceptions) [*V. E.*, 1982: 16-19; 1977(2)].

Swedish women have been instrumental in organizing neighborhood associations to make the home environment more 'living' and to improve the quality of life in badly planned apartment complexes. The associations, now so common that they form a social movement, attempt to make the neighborhood environment greener and more suitable for children. Thus cement has been torn up and replaced with flowers, grass, and vegetable gardens, and social activities for adults and children have been promoted [Paulson, 1984; *Mil.*, 1977(6): 6-11; *V. M.*, 1978(2)].

While these actions strive to make food and homes healthier and safer in existing Swedish society, other actions have as their objective the ultimate transformation of society. The Swedish Women's Leftist Association devoted a double issue of its journal *Vi Mänskor* [1980, (5/6)] to the question of a future based on self-supporting local societies. Such alternatives must be built on women's 'lost' knowledge of agricultural production and their common experience of nurture.

Exemplifying such a vision of the future, a group of forty women from Ekerö, outside Stockholm, who met through the women's movement organized Tant Grön (Auntie Green), a biodynamic food cooperative that meets the needs of its members. For these women, the cooperative is 'one step on the path towards an ecologically balanced society.' We must begin to build our own alternative systems alongside the larger system in the struggle against helplessness, they assert [*V. M.*, 1980 (5): 33].<sup>2</sup>

## 3. The welfare state: intragenerational reproduction in the public sector

In Sweden's welfare state some of women's traditional reproductive functions of childcare and healthcare have been transferred to the state which in turn has employed women to carry them out. As one of Europe's most sex segregated labor markets, jobs for Swedish women are mostly found in healthcare, social work education and service, e.g. cleaning and clerical. Here women are

<sup>2</sup> In a related example, Birgit Ward started Food Front in Stockholm in 1974 giving rise to a movement that now encompasses forty stores throughout Sweden. The stores buy and sell fruits, vegetables, preserves, and other biodynamic products grown and processed without the use of chemicals and are run on a collective basis (*Mil.*, 1980 (8)). Women have also initiated a movement to produce and preserve organically grown food and to promote solidarity with the Third World through conscientious purchase of foodstuffs. Malin Dahlgren started MUDI-MUMS (MUDI: Food without animal industries, MUMS: Food not from multi-national companies (*Mil.*, 1979 (2))).

challenging the quality of the work environment offered by the state (Bernier, 1984).

For example, the rapid introduction of video-display terminals into offices has raised concern over their effects on health. In Gothenburg, by an agreement with the county government, female hospital and clerical worker are assigned other work during periods of pregnancy. The Swedish government has asked its Workers Protection Committee (Arbetskyddsstyrelsen) to conduct an investigation on the effects of video-display terminals on pregnancy. (Trade unions representing workers in private industries are also discussing the problem: some unions have asked for a daily schedule of two hour rotations on and off VDT's in order to reduce the effects of muscular and eye strain.) (Mörtberg, 1984; *Int. Bus. Week*, 1984: 75, 78).<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. *The liberation of women as reproduction workers*

While the first three categories of the 'politics of reproduction' articulate a political struggle directed towards the interests of 'others,' the fourth category directs the struggle towards the self-interests of women as reproduction workers. Here we find the equality politics of the traditional branches of the women's movement as well as the politics of women's liberation.

In the environmental professions, equality politics focusses on bringing women into male-dominated fields in the environmental sciences such as ecology, forestry, entomology and plant pathology. For ecologists such as Ingrid Stjernquist of Lund, who studies agroecosystems from the perspective of natural ecology, and Sif Johansson, an animal ecologist in Stockholm who entered the field because of concern over the environment, scientific ecology is a means for reversing the devaluation of both women and nature (Stjernquist, 1984; Johansson, 1984).

The liberatory direction attempts to provide alternative ways of organizing production and reproduction, technology and nature as models for both women's liberation and an ecologically balanced society. By restructuring production on the basis of the needs of reproduction, alternatives are sought to ecologically-abusive and women-oppressive private industries.

Putting this theory into practice is Algots North, Sweden's first large-scale worker-owned women's company based on a philosophy of production for

use and need, not for consumerism and profit. Production is collectively organized in groups and the products are distributed through the women's movement and the environmental movement. Seamstresses produce sensible, functional work clothes, leisure clothes, and 'basic' clothes of high quality. By interviewing workers and patients about their needs, the women are designing new types of garments (*Mil.*, 1978: 16-18).

#### WOMEN AS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

As activists in Sweden's major environmental organizations, women have worked jointly with men to achieve environmental balance. Yet many of the activities undertaken by women through these organizations have focussed on goals congruent with the foregoing 'reproduction politics.'

The Swedish chapter of the international organization Friends of the Earth (Jordens Vänner) was formed in 1971 by a group of four women (Erika Daléus, Birgitta McAllister, Ingrid Bengtsson and Kerstin Frejdling) and two men (Lennart Daléus and Robert McAllister). More women than men serve on the ten member board (6-4) and the ratio seems to be increasing. Women's concerns are taken seriously by Ingvar Nilsson, FOE's chair. According to Erika Daléus of FOE (1984), over the years men have come and gone back to their careers, but the women have remained. 'The work is so important to us, we can't leave,' she says. Women in FOE organized ecology projects that support organic farming and that teach children a global philosophy of Sweden's role in world food and clothing production and consumption (Wrenfelt, 1984).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Swedish chapter of FOE joined David Brower, founder of FOE in the U.S., Amory Lovins of the British chapter, and other to organize the 1972 alternative Stockholm conference on the environment. They then turned their attention to the issue of nuclear power, first lobbying and writing letters to government ministers and members of parliament and later joining other groups in the 1980 campaign to ban power plants in Sweden. Since then the focus of environmental action has shifted to local issues such as community energy conservation, local and home environments, and food quality (Daléus, 1984). Birgitta Wrenfelt, a political science teacher at People's High School in Stockholm who has worked with FOE for the past ten years, has organized ecology projects such as 'Food and Power' and 'Clothing and Power.' Pamphlets produced by her adult students for children aged 7-13 teach an organic global philosophy that relates Sweden as a consumer country to third world production. Her work articulates the philosophical and political basis for organic farming and she is presently engaged along with others in raising money to support an organic farm in Brazil. At the basis of her personal philosophy is the belief that women have a closer relationship to life than men and more easily express their feelings for life's fragility (Wrenfelt, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> In another example, women in Karlskoga formed an action group to save a maternity hospital scheduled for shutdown. To avoid being sent to the regional hospital in Örebro, they circulated and submitted a petition containing 14,000 signatures. Their unsuccessful protest was directed in general toward the centralization trend in Sweden [*V. E.* 1982 (14): 13-15].

Women are also active in the Swedish chapter of Future in Our Hands (Framtiden i Våra Händer). Half of the twelve person board of directors is female and women constitute slightly more than half of the local contact persons. Women dominate the editorial board of the organization's magazine *New Lifestyle* that reflects its philosophy of a just distribution of world resources. Future in Our Hands collects donations in support of women's ecology movements in the third world, thereby expressing support for ecological balance outside Swedish borders [*N. L.*, 1983(3)(4), 1984(1)].<sup>5</sup>

In the coalition of environmental organizations known as Miljöförbundet, the goal has been to have women comprise at least half of the board. But this has been difficult to achieve as many women are reluctant to take on the time-consuming posts. A women's group has recently been formed to discuss the role and problems women have experienced working with men in the environmental movement (Deurell, 1984).

In the oldest environmental group, the Swedish Conservation Association (SNF, or Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen), founded in 1909 as a professional conservation organization, membership has grown from some 3000 in its early years to its current high of 80,000 as more amateurs, including many women, become active members. But because its regional boards, which set policy, arrange debates on environmental issues, and organize field excursions are composed of professionals, women are not well represented in the formal organizational structure. Girls and women have played active roles in SNF's youth organization and youth magazine (Ödman et al., 1982; Neiman-Tirén, 1984; Olsson, G., 1984).<sup>6</sup>

Within the formal political structure women's environmental concerns and activism have found expression primarily through the Center and Environmental parties. The Swedish parliamentary system is characterized by a stable conglomerate of

five parties arranged within two blocs: the non-socialist or 'bourgeois' bloc consisting of the Moderate Party (Moderata Samlingspartiet), the Center Party (Centerpartiet) and the Liberal Party (Folkpartiet), and the socialist bloc consisting of the Social Democrats (Socialdemokratiska Arbetarepartiet), who won the the most seats in the 1982 and 1985 elections, and the Left Party Communists (Vänsterpartiet Kommunisterna). The Environmental Party—the Greens—is the newest contender for parliamentary representation. (Somewhat more than one-quarter of the 349 members of the present parliament are women.) (Swedish Institute, 1983).

The Center Party is the traditional voice for environmental issues in parliament and its party program stresses ecology: 'Our work builds upon an ecological holistic view of man's role on earth.' (*ibid.*: 2). Support for its environmental proposals is traditionally sought across bloc boundaries. On matters concerning the environment, the Center Party and the Left Party Communists are political allies. The Social Democratic Party, intimately tied to the labor movement in Sweden usually aligns itself with the Moderate and Liberal Parties on environmental issues as its policy of full employment often conflicts with environmental concerns.

Birgitta Lindblom Hambraeus, a representative of the Center Party since 1971 has introduced a wide range of motions in Parliament that would promote an ecologically balanced society. An advocate of philosopher Martin Buber's I-thou environmental ethic, Hambraeus believes that personal relations are the basis for moral decisions. Accordingly, in international relations and trade, she argues, Sweden should demand the same moral standards for preventing environmental destruction as it does internally. Her continuing concern for energy as an issue caused her to question the benevolence of nuclear power by initiating a 1973 motion in parliament concerning the environmental and security risks of nuclear development, and she became a central figure in parliament in the debates that led up to the nuclear referendum of 1980. She is now proposing legislation that would help resolve energy problems without destroying nature (Hambraeus, 1973; 1984; Hambraeus and Granstedt, 1983/4).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> One of Future in Our Hands' actions, initiated in Sweden by Inger Holmlund and Anna Horn, supports women's tree planting and protection movements in Kenya and India—the 'Green Belt Movement' in Kenya and the 'Tree Hugging Movement' in the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh (*N. L.*, 1983 (3, 4); 1984 (1)).

<sup>6</sup> Gunilla Olsson, a plant ecologist in Lund, who has been active in SNF since her teenage years in its field biology youth group, served on the regional board in Gothenburg from 1974 to 1976. Eva-Lena Neiman-Tirén (quoted above) is a writer and activist who has worked with SNF in Stockholm. She has been the vice-chair of SNF's youth organization, editor of its youth magazine *Young Biologists*, and author of numerous articles on nature and the environment for young people (Neiman-Tirén, 1984; Olsson, G. 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Birgitta Hambraeus graduated from Vassar College, where she studied community problems, in 1953. In her close-knit village of Orsa in central Sweden, where she was politically active during the 1960s, farmer's wives had been looking for a woman to represent them in the Center Party (traditionally the Farmer's Party) which then had only one woman in parliament. A major factor in her decision to run was the destruction of the environment. Soon after her election she became a member of the parliamentary

Inspired by West Germany's Green Party, Sweden formed its newest political force, the Environmental Party—the Greens (Miljöpartiet de gröna)—in 1981. In the fall 1985 elections, with its support coming mainly from women, it captured 1.7 per cent of the national vote but failed to acquire the minimum 4 per cent for representation in parliament. But it won 258 local offices in 150 of the 272 counties; 51 per cent of these are held by women. The party's constitution requires that a minimum of 40 per cent of each sex be represented on each of its three central committees, thereby guaranteeing women a power base. Yet, according to Margareta Gisselberg of Umea (1982), the party has experienced difficulty in finding women who feel they have sufficient political experience to assume these central leadership positions (*Alt.*, 1981(9); Capra and Spretnak, 1984).

The party's platform reflects many of the goals of the women's movement. It works to attain a balance with nature through self-sufficient agriculture without the use of chemicals, abolition of nuclear power, development of new energy sources, decentralization of living and working environments, reduction of dependence on automobiles through increased public transit, and the manufacture of products that satisfy basic human needs (Miljöpartiet-politisk Program, 1981).<sup>\*</sup>

To achieve these goals the party has set up 29 issue-oriented committees. Women are most active on those concerned with peace, housing, schools, children, medical care, agriculture, and culture. Men are dominant on those that deal with the economy, energy, science, labor and international issues. The other committees have a more even division of representation. The party is working toward paid positions for at least one man and one

woman on its main political committee. As the party representing the goals of the alternative movement, it began publishing its magazine, *Alternativet* in September 1981. In realizing its objectives, the party is dependent on the work and support of local *ad hoc* groups dealing with the environment, alternatives and women's issues (Gisselberg, 1984).

While women are active in party politics, they are much less visible among the government's administrators and bureaucrats who implement policy and who are employed in such agencies as the Ministry of Agriculture that supervises the National Environment Protection Board and the National Franchise Board for Environment Protection. Although the Ministry of Energy is in the hands of Birgitta Dahl, she has not been as receptive as some would wish to concerns over long-term health hazards associated with nuclear power (Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, 1976; Olsson, T., 1984).

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion reveals that women in the Swedish environmental movement have been most motivated by issues stemming from their identification with reproduction and motherhood. At the symbolic level, they have been inspired by cultural and historical alternatives in which women seem to have had more powerful positions in the home and production and in which nature was a freer and more powerful force, less subdued and bound by the warp of science and technology. At the political level, they have been most active in environmental issues that negatively affect the reproduction of the species and their own reproductive labor.

These actions in defense of nature must be evaluated in the context of the ultimate goals of the women's and environmental movements. The connections made so visible by the research contain an inherent contradiction. The type of modern westernized society experienced and named by women today as capitalist-patriarchy is the result of a historical separation between two spheres of life. Women are identified with the home, reproduction and nature, men with public life, production and culture. That women so consciously and dramatically have come to the defense of nature by joining the environmental movement would seem to reinforce their historical identification with nature and to work against their hopes for liberation. Similarly, the feminist movement's emphasis on women's role in the family and on women's common culture would seem to simply cement their oppression in the private sphere (Ortner, 1974; King, 1983; Stacey, 1983; Barrett and McIntosh, 1982).

The problem posed by these inherent contradictions is not only endemic to the history of feminism.

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committee on energy where she took a stand to save a waterfall in a national park from conversion to a hydroelectric dam. When newspaper headlines announced, 'woman saves waterfall,' her reputation as a defender of the environment was established (Hambraeus, 1984). She is also on the board of Future in Our Hands (N. L., 1983 (3)).

<sup>\*</sup> Socially, the Environmental Party strives for a meaningful life for all people, equal division of responsibility between women and men, paid work for all people, outlawing of the abuse of women, construction of women's houses and collective houses, decentralization of health-care facilities, and recognition of the cultural identities of social groups while working toward breaking down the isolation experienced by minority women. Economically, it works toward the breakdown of centralized power in the hands of multi-national corporations and monopolies, and the substitution of self-sufficiency in food, clothing, and energy, worker's participatory democracy, and the values of ecology and conservation (Miljöpartiet-politisk program, 1981).

Table 1. A typology of women's political ideologies in Sweden

	Equality goals	'Women's culture' politics	Organizational strategies
A political strategy based on sexual politics and politicization of personal relationships	(1) A faction within the 'Frederika Bremer Assn'*	(2) Isolated women active within the peace and environmental movements	men and women
	(3) Factions within the 'women's liberation' movement	(4) Factions within the 'women's liberation' and the women's peace movements	only women
A political strategy based on a rejection of sexual politics	(5) A faction within the Fredrika Bremer Assn	(6) Most women engaged within the peace and environmental movements	men and women
	(6) The party political women's auxiliaries	(8) A faction within 'Women for Peace.' and the 'National Association of Housewives'	only women

\* The 'Frederika Bremer Association' is the major non-socialist women's (men are included) organization devoted to equality between the sexes.

but sympathetic of a deep and critical division in strategies within the women's movement today. Should women, recognizing the realities of a sex-segregated society, use women's values as the basis for change? Or should they reject this historically constructed separation altogether and push for total equality? (Table 1.)

Strategies that would liberate both women and nature offer promise as well as problems. Equality politics advocates the liberation of women by injecting culture with new values as women become equals with men in the production process. Through infiltration it is hoped that the goals of production can be changed in directions less destructive to nature. But what will be the practical basis for such social changes? How will changes actually be brought about by women's infiltration into male-dominated centers of power?

Women's-culture politics uses the values and needs of reproduction as the basis for an alternative to the double oppression of women and nature. This strategy would reduce the work time spent in production and would bring men into the sphere of reproduction through increasing their participation in nurturing and household work. As men learn and absorb these values, nature will also be nurtured. But how can men be convinced to use their increased time for care of the home and family rather than for leisure?

Alternative 'green' politics supports the revolutionary potential of small scale alternatives in work and private life that have both environmental balance and reproductive needs as goals. Although this approach must also confront entrenched power

structures, it incorporates the values of the first two strategies. Through experimentation with alternative modes such as producing and distributing organic food on a collective basis, developing new energy sources that have minimal environmental impact, conservation and recycling of energy and wastes, decentralized and communal living arrangements, neighborhood healthcare facilities, and worker-owned production systems oriented towards human needs rather than consumerism, models for the future can be constructed within the larger society.

As Elin Wagner put it in *Peace with the Earth*: 'Against the ideals of the day—mechanization, specialization, and speed—we consciously put up the ideals we think will be tomorrow's—self-activity, diversity, and patience.' A new way of life thus germinates in the womb of the old (Tamm and Wagner, 1940).

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