

Introduction

First let me shortly introduce myself. My name is Inga Dóra Gudmundsdóttir Markussen, journalist and editor on Arnanut, Greenland's first and only magazine mostly for women, which the name Arnanut also refers to namely »For women«. The first issue came out last year in September and comes out each season. Beside my work and studies I've been political active for many years, been in several boards and latest as second deputy mayor in the capital of Greenland, Nuuk from 1997 to 2001.

Here you see a draft of Arnanut's front page, the »Woman of the Year 2004« chosen amongst over 150 women nominated to the title. A young woman, 24 years old, totally unknown to the public until the 3rd of December when the winter issue will be published. She was chosen by a panel of four women, because she has achieved something special, which is taking a big responsibility on her shoulder despite her young age. She is still raising her brother and two sisters after their mothers' death since she was 19 and in the same time she has also had two children and the third will be born this month. She took a big decision that says; the family comes first. Therefore she has put her education in the high school on hold, to take care of her children and sister. Raising children and putting one self in second place characterizes much the women in Greenland and that leads me to what I'm here for namely to tell about; women's status in Greenlandic society.

Greenland in general

Before I focus on the women I shortly want to say a few things about Greenland. In the beginning of this year there were 56.854 inhabitants on this huge island which is divided in 18 municipalities. The majority were men or 30.334 and the number of women was 26.519. The reason to the difference between the number of genders is that a large amount of men born outside Greenland is counted in the statistics. In Greenland we still import many workers from especially Denmark. Since we became a county under Denmark and the Danish constitution in 1953 the number of imported labour in the education system, and administration was very high. The number has been dropping since implementation of the Home Rule Governing 25 years ago, but we still have a long way to go before we can be self supplied with well educated labour even though more and more takes higher education. The coalition in the government plans to make a referendum in year 2006 on whether they want to go one step further from Home Rule to Self Government.

Womens history

Under the colonization from 1721 to 1953 the women where their hunters' wife. She took care of the catch the hunter brought back from his trip from the kayak or dogsledge. She sew all the clothing, brought up the children and spent most of her time in the hut. From 1953 when the men began to fish from the boats she went to work in the factory, took care of the household, some went to household schools, all while the husbands still where on the sea. More and more imported labour came and built houses, and soon many small communities where emptied. Inhabitants moved to the bigger communities. In the 1960's she became more and more interested to go to school, wanted to educate her self, but the opportunities weren't many yet. In the 1970's some women went on the barricades with the men, both fighting for Home Rule, which became a reality in 1979. After that she got more opportunities to take education, since more schools and higher educational institutions where established. They weren't many how run for politics in that decade, even though we had a parliament. It was first in the 80's she became more and more political active, and a few where elected in the municipality councils, and later on were few women elected into the Home Rule parliament.

Women and politics

Today there are nine women represented in the parliament out of 31 seats. Even though the amount of women participating in the decision making in the parliament has been growing the goal was equal numbers of genders seams far away. In the last election in 2002 a new party, Arnat partiat, the womens' party did not achieve do get a seat in the parliament even though they where predicted to get one representative. The latest polls published last month showed that the womens' party would not get seat in the parliament. The voter seams rather want to vote for women in the larger parties. A report on gender equality from 1999 where 1119 men and women where asked about their view on women in politics showed that 83 % of the women think that the political work would be better if there where more women in politics. 68 % of the men thought the same. Women are a little better represented in some municipality councils. Actually, for the first time in the history women in the capital Nuuk were in the majority with nine seats of 17 in the period 1997-2001.

Last year the equality council held a course called«Women in politics», which was well taken by the 10 women how participated. The goal is to increase womens' participation in politics. Next year there will be held election to the municipalities and it will be exiting to follow whether more women run for candidacy.

Women and education

In the period from 1998 to 2003 more and more women take an education. In that period 1370 women completed while only 947 men completed an education.

In 2003 53,5 % of the students were women, and of 57,1 % of those who got higher education were women. When you look at the statistics more women choose the »soft« professions, like teacher, in the social sectors, and civics education.

Even though women are well educated they are not as visible in the top of the society, and in influential jobs.

Women in the labour market

When I look over the labour market I see women almost in majority when it comes to work for the authorities. Nurses, social workers, sitting in the administrations, in the shops, in the journalist business. All places where they almost are a majority. But when I look at the top – in the top jobs especially in the authorities I can't see so many. Even though they are well educated. Actually I can count them on two hands. When I mean top I mean directors. Why is that women aren't represented at top level? There are two parameters I look as very important. The one is the political system's view on qualifications, where a liberal view is more common. It doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman, if only you have the qualifications. The other parameter is that the political system often prefer labour from Denmark even though many of them leave the country after 2 years' employment. The question we in Greenland have to ask ourselves is why is it that even though women are well educated that we don't prefer them in the top jobs? What values is the political and administrative system based on when it comes to gaining more balance in this system.

Women and equality legislation

It was first in 1998 Greenland got a Equality Council. And in the spring 2003 it got its first legislation on equal opportunities between the genders. In the big picture this law says it loud and clear that there shall not be gender discrimination. It also points that the authorities and private company with more than 10 employees shall report to the gender quota the ministry of commerce what personal politics initiatives on what they do to promote gender equality.

The Home Rule own or partially own 18 companies and therefore appoint members to the boards. It's very visible that the authorities and therefore politicians prefer men over women. But seeing the list of board members are the employees of those companies better to

choose women in those professions. Something to think about since the women have the employees trust.

The premier of Greenland, Hans Enoksen announced in an interview that the politicians do not look upon whether a possible members to be appointed are men or women, but only look on qualifications. The Equality Council chairwoman, Agathe Fontain reacted to his announcement that even though the parliament had asked for more balance in the representation in boards between the genders, that the government did not follow the legislation. She took an initiative where the Council found 72 women who where well qualified and stood ready if there should be needed for them in the companies own by the Home Rule. Whether the premier and his ministers will look at this list next time they will appoint members in the boards. And there by following their own legislation.

Nationality more important

Women in Greenland have still a long way to go before the genders are equally represented in the influential jobs and top politics. Many women are well qualified to take responsibility but one have to consider whether they have the ambitions and the time. They are what so ever like in many other countries the one beside having a job, also have the most responsibility in the home. Taking care of the household, and raising the children. The task for every women and man is to give their son or a daughter more care so they can have more self-esteem and self-confidence and thereby also the tools so they will be able to have an education. When the society is short on well-educated people they turn focus more on the qualifications and nationality then on which gender they are in the hiring situation. The matter in those situations is rather whether you are Greenlandic, meaning speaking the language and knowing the society. That's a very important parameter to think about when it comes to equality between the genders in Greenland and that's a restrain when it comes the subject "gender equality". But with more focus and debate and not less a women movement the issue can be conduct in the society. It has do be done very soon because the labour market is not equal. More and more women are well educated but their efforts are still not appreciated both by the official Greenland and in some homes.

Last remarks

The biggest issue for me to appoint in the field of gender equality is that every person - female or male - is needed in Greenland. Education seems to be the keyword because we are facing a big task becoming more independent. Since it mostly is the mother taking the most responsibility upbringing the children she has to focus on her

role. The man in Greenland is lacking behind concerning education but also many men have huge problems (violence, suicide, battering, alcohol, etc.) She has to be more conscious about that so her children; daughters and sons become stronger as human beings so they can be able to face the tasks for a better future and better attitudes towards each others, and take equal part in household and raising their children. The woman in Greenland holds the future in her hand and can form it better if she is conscious of that. I'm a little sorry to say that, but the truth is many men cannot fulfil that role yet. They are mostly busy thinking of the economics, building airports, discussing quotas and other things happening outside their homes. Very generally speaking but newer the less true.