

Visions on Welfare and Existence:

- How the faroese people may thrive and flourish

In an autonomous yet vulnerable micro-society such as that of the Faroe Islands – located in a rough environment in the North Atlantic Ocean – welfare and existence are closely interlinked, for the individual, the family as well as society as a whole. As we intend to stay on these islands, to develop and grow in numbers, the most important criterion is that the welfare system is as progressed as in the most advanced countries in our part of the world.

BY HANS PAULA STRØM

Minister of Health and Social Affairs



The Faroese welfare state has great challenges ahead. Globalisation offers possibilities but also strains the economic sphere whilst growing demands from citizens and the labour market create outcomes of apt and flexible welfare services of high standards.

This is why Føroya Landsstýri - the Faroese Government - has implemented a long-term strategy process of the title 'Vision 2015'. In this vision-plan which amongst others touches subject areas such as diversity of industry, research, innovation and globalisation, the very foundation is the development of the Faroese

welfare society. This is why we for the first time with Vision 2015 have made strategic comprehensive plans for welfare of all the most important welfare-political frameworks in order to reach a main objective: to ensure an excellent society for all citizens.

Dual Strategies for Welfare

The vision of welfare originates in a political ambition and it aims for a social system which both:

- promotes equality, well-being and reliance; and which
- at the same times generates innovation, cooperation and growth.

From a liberalistic market philosophy these two dimensions may seem antagonistic to one another. Yet, this is exactly what our welfare project attempts – namely to create an atmosphere in which social, industrial and economic spheres come together in an expanding dialectic synthesis. This is how we will achieve to be amongst the most advanced nations.

We see great ideals in the Nordic welfare model:

- with structures and finance of universal welfare services based on solidarity principles,
- with active, family-friendly, flexible labour market policies,
- with extensive public and private investments in education, research and innovation,
- with social capital, trust and abilities to combine forces between citizens, organisations, institutions, corporations and political systems – and

- with the highest fertility rate in Europe creating well-being and continuing availability on the labour market. Thus the foundation for a social economic balance between generations is strengthened.

Solely based on these principles, we ought to be capable of overcoming the challenges from global economic competition, the tendencies to increased social marginalisation as well as changes in ideological positions on welfare.

Solidarity is the Foundation

We want the Faroe Islands to be equally good for everyone, i.e.

- That the Faroese people must thrive, develop and flourish,
- That all citizens with no regard to social or personal situation are ensured all necessary conditions for good opportunities in a well organised welfare state,
- That responsibility between the citizen and the authority as well as solidarity is highly valued,
- That rights and access to necessary public health services for the citizens are ensured,
- That we set demands to constant qualitative, structural and financial development of our welfare system.

Therefore we plan strategically for our welfare in the future.

Inclusive and active citizenship

In health policy an intensive effort for public health is highly prioritized on the political agenda. We focus on physical activity, nutrition, smoking and substance abuse. Additionally we are

working on public healthcare structures of excellent standards where the primary and secondary healthcare networks – amongst others with new pioneering IT systems – are integrated coherently into the process of treatment.

Welfare of children and adolescents is another distinctive feature of our concerns. The principle of sector responsibility and cooperation amongst all authorities in question has to be adapted and improved. Another aim for this subject matter is that the working life of families with children should be adjusted to their specific needs and abilities.

Welfare of the functional disabled is the best unit of measurement for our means to create the 'good' society, that prompts inclusion of citizens – whilst it hinders social exclusion. The essential concerns regarding this are opportunities and options for rehabilitation, unimpeded access to buildings and means of communication, accommodation alternatives, educational, labour and income possibilities. And as far as possible, the physically and mentally disabled ought to be financially self-sufficient and take part in the role of active citizenship.

Solidarity between generations ensures welfare of the elderly. With public pension structures we ensure a financial income basis for the life of the elderly, which we can build upon with trade-union and private pension funds. The public structures regarding care for the elderly suffices necessary support in every-day-life; for those who live at home and those that are so weak that they require daily assistance on residential homes.

The legal framework in regards to welfare of the elderly will be carried out in a new law that ensures the elderly citizens' rights and options.

The Welfare System Strengthens the Availability of Competition.

Our objective is to incorporate at a society:

- without significant inequalities between citizens in regard to education, employment, income, residence and other basic social rights,
- where citizens can take part and function individually and collectively side by side,
- where all citizens are able to work and participate according to ability,
- which gives all citizens the opportunity to use their capacity to lead a satisfactory life.

Compared to all parameters of competition, the Nordic countries are immensely successful. They are amongst the richest countries in the world with a first-class social environment – whilst being aptly competitive, safe and incorrupt. Internationally, the Nordic region are winning countries - with high salaries and taxation. And it is the Nordic welfare system which enables such apt and competent competition. On the Faroe Islands we work purposely to become a part of this Nordic welfare success, implementing societal, competitive competence and industrial and social as well as economic welfare for all.

Føroya Banki welcomes Mr. Clinton and Mr. Blix

BY JANUS PETERSEN

CEO of Føroya Banki

Today the Faroe Islands receive a special visitor from the United States. Never before has such a historically significant person visited the islands. Bill Clinton was the forty-second President of the United States, serving from 1993 to 2001. Having reached the highest political peaks in the world's most powerful country truly tells it all. It takes courage to reach this far. It takes competence. And not least: it takes humility.

Bill Clinton writes in his memoir that despite having been

the President of the world's most powerful country for 8 years he nevertheless always felt like a servant. The Presidency was merely a loan and his foremost goal was to achieve the best possible results for as many people as possible, while he was so fortunate to have the opportunity. This is the attitude that characterizes a great leader.

The distance between the reddish brown house of Tinganes in Tórshavn and the White House in Washington is immense. Thousands of kilometers divide the United States from the Faroe Islands. But this did not deter the Norse a thousand years ago. In fragile wooden boats they set sail from the Northern seas across

the Atlantic and settled in the American mainland.

The Nordic settlers did not stay for long on the American mainland. But archaeological studies have proven that they discovered America a long time before Columbus. In this way the Nordic peoples and Americans have quite a few things in common. Our ties are in reality a thousand years old. They broke and remained broken for a long time. But today they are reestablished.

Mr. President!

On behalf of Føroya Banki, one of the leading banks in the



country, I wish to welcome you to the Faroe Islands. Your visit transcends mental barriers. It shows the surrounding world and ourselves that the Faroe Islands and the Faroese business community are becoming

independent parts of globalization. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Hans Blix from our sister nation Sweden.

Your experience and knowledge is our learning and inspiration.