

Day by Day Summary of the Election Campaign

Friday, 26 August

It was Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen's plan to introduce a bonus to people purchasing a house. This bonus has been criticized for artificially inflating house prices and therefore for being a bad way to instigate growth.

On Saturday 20 August the Social Democrats (S) somehow learned about the plan and decided to launch it themselves, despite Helle Thorning-Schmidt having said on Friday that she did not want to introduce measures to stimulate the housing market.

This led to a chaotic Saturday where Løkke Rasmussen and the Liberal Party (V) tried to do damage control. Quickly the Danish People's Party (DF) declared their opposition to the plan due to a lot of their voters not being house owners. Liberal Alliance (LA) is as a general rule opposed to state subsidies so they were opposed as well leaving V and the Conservative Party (K) alone with the plan on the blue wing.

On the red wing the situation was similar. S and the Socialist People's Party (SF) agreed on the idea while the Unity List (EL) represents the left wing and therefore does not believe in the state funding those with the means to buy a house – plus a lot of their voters rent their homes. The Social Liberal Party (R) is opposed with the argument that the plan is a shortsighted one which will probably not do much for the economy anyway.

Thus S-SF and VK were alone and they did not want to cooperate to get a majority for the plan. That is due to the two groups differing on growth initiatives other than the house purchase plan. This meant that Løkke Rasmussen had a growth plan he could not get a majority to support. On Friday 26 August he then called an election.

Critics have called the final stretch before the election chaotic due to the Prime Minister looking like a man who cannot muster support for his ideas. Others say that it makes him look like a man of action due to him taking the consequence of not being able to get support for his plan and not being willing to compromise. He therefore calls an election to let the people decide.

Prior to calling the election Løkke Rasmussen answered a question about whether DF would be part of a possible future government. He said no. This infuriated Pia Kjaersgaard. The fact that VKDF have conducted their own agenda without seeking wide compromises in parliament has troubled many voters – not least V and K voters so this was an obvious first step in V's election campaign.

Saturday, 27 August

On Saturday a story broke that the leaders of R and K, Margrethe Vestager and Lars Barfoed, met and decided to cooperate across the aisle following an election – regardless of who wins. This is a win-win situation. K has never been happy about the dominance of DF. This way they hope to regain some of their liberal voters who have not liked DF's social democratic tendencies as well as their restrictive immigration policy.

R, on the other hand, does not want EL to have too much impact on the financial policy so they seek to look more “blue” on financial policy. While this is also a publicity stunt to boost both parties' images, the fact that (the center party) R looks to get a good election means that the center of Danish politics will in fact be stronger and history clearly indicates that R has never been afraid of cooperating across the aisle. We also saw that in the spring with the early retirement agreement.

Whichever way we look at it, there is not much doubt that the upcoming election will most likely be a break with bloc politics.

All this, along with Løkke Rasmussen's earlier rejection of future government participation by DF, means that DF is very isolated in Danish politics until the election is over. There is currently nobody who wants to cooperate with them. This, however, is nothing new as DF's image only appeals to its voters while most other voters more or less resent them. But when DF could make Anders Fogh Rasmussen Prime Minister, he gladly accepted and so did Løkke Rasmussen when he took over.

Also on Saturday the Danish business world called for a quick agreement on the house purchase discount proposal. R did the same even though they do not agree with the proposal. The argument is that at the moment people looking to buy a house are waiting to see if they can get the discount. Thus they wait. This means that right now the housing market is frozen even more solid than before the proposal to offer a discount. It needs thawing now, says R and the business world – so maybe the proposal is not the best imaginable proposal but at least it would get sales going again, is the reasoning.

Sunday, 28 August

Not much news. During a panel discussion Løkke Rasmussen walked across the room to stand directly in front of Thorning-Schmidt in order to confront her with her statements. Experts consider it a wise move since it caught everyone, including Thorning-Schmidt, by surprise. They also agree that he walked away empty-handed since what he said was not as intense as his decision to walk over.

Monday, 29 August

At a press conference DF called for tighter immigration legislation. Their proposals include: temporary asylum centers in northern Africa, the Middle East and Pakistan and cancelling development aid to nations which reject signing repatriation agreements.

No parties support the proposals but Kjærsgaard says that she is used to other parties saying she cannot get through with her politics and she is also used to it happening anyway.

Critics believe Kjærsgaard is playing the immigrant card due to the election being more about the economy than about immigration – DF would prefer it the other way around. It is widely agreed upon that the last three elections were all decided by immigration policy.

Tuesday, 30 August

The Conservative Party (K) called for a “service check” of the Ministry of Integration to see whether it does its job properly. The argument is that there have been cases where people were not granted citizenship despite being rationally qualified for it. Cases like that is reason enough to look into it, says K’s Spokesperson on Integration, Naser Khader.

Khader later said that he wanted to get rid of the Ministry of Integration due to its tasks being better managed by the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Justice.

Party leader, Lars Barfoed, later said that K does not want to get rid of the Ministry. But some tasks would be better solved if they were move to the Ministry of Employment, said Barfoed.

But Barfoed maintained that the Ministry of Integration is still very necessary in order for the integration process to work properly. He agrees to a service check.

The Social Liberal Party (R) agrees with Khader that the Ministry should be shut down. It is evident, says Morten Østergaard, that the Ministry is not doing its job properly. He believes the reason is a bad work ethic and a culture of lack of respect for the law that has been allowed to grow. There have been too many cases about wrongful handling of cases. The Ministry has played out its role, he says, and adds that other ministries could take over the tasks, since “not all immigrants are the same.”

The Liberal Party (V), the Social Democrats (S) and the Danish People's Party (DF) all agree that the Ministry should not be shut down.

Danish People's Party Wants Liberal Government

Prominent members of (DF) announced that they will not be particularly interested in backing a VK government following K's recent scorning of them and statements that K are willing to cooperate with R on immigration policy.

DF member Ib Poulsen said about Barfoed: "We fired him once. Now it is time to fire him and the Conservative Party once and for all," referring to when DF caused Barfoed to step down as Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries in 2006 due to a lack of control with supermarkets' food quality.

Pia Kjærsgaard is not pleased with K but says she will wait and see what happens after an election.

Quid pro Quo

S and the Socialist People's Party (SF) launched a plan stating that everything has to be financed before changes are made. It is a *quid pro quo* plan meaning that for instance in order for cancer treatment to be improved, it is necessary that taxes are raised on tobacco and unhealthy food. In order for cheaper public transportation to be introduced, a majority behind a road pricing system for Copenhagen will have to exist.

R, however, disagrees. They say that there are priorities to what is financed. Thus they will spend the money based on how important the issue is. Possible road pricing revenue could for instance be spent on schools instead.

Wednesday, 31 August

Several K members said that they would prefer a VKR government to one based on DF support. MP Candidate Mette Abildgaard says an ideal government would be a VKR government without DF influence. She even believes that Margrethe Vestager should be offered the Prime Minister job if that could keep the blue in power. Ideally she would want LarsLøkke Rasmussen to stay in power, though.

Vestager says that she would politely turn down a possible offer. “We will get more influence with Helle Thorning-Schmidt as Prime Minister,” she says.

Løkke Rasmussen says that he is campaigning for a VK government

Polls in *Berlingske*

Do you believe DF has had too much power in recent years?

Yes, very much so: 45%
Yes, to some extent: 22%
Yes, to a small degree: 10%
No, not at all: 20%
Do not know: 4%

Which statement do you agree with?

| | |
|--|-----|
| The best solutions are reached when the red wing decides: | 16% |
| The best solutions are reached through compromises between the red and blue wings: | 58% |
| The best solutions are reached when the blue wing decides: | 22% |
| Do not know: | 5% |

If we get a new blue government, would you prefer immigration policy to be decided by VKDF or VKR?

| Voters from | VKDF | VKR | Do not know |
|-------------|------|-----|-------------|
| All: | 32 | 58 | 10 |
| EL: | 2 | 90 | 8 |
| SF: | 7 | 83 | 10 |
| S: | 22 | 64 | 14 |
| R: | 1 | 97 | 2 |
| K: | 24 | 68 | 8 |
| V: | 48 | 45 | 7 |
| DF: | 95 | 2 | 3 |
| LA: | 28 | 67 | 4 |

The Unity List Has Demands for a Possible S-SF(-R) Government

The Unity List (EL) presents demands for S-SF. Their support will, they say, not come free. EL is looking to have the best election result ever, and it is now up to them to seek influence.

If the polls hold up, EL will get more seats than both Liberal Alliance (LA) and K (currently they are looking at nine to ten seats). This is highly unusual for EL which has usually hovered around the barrier of two percent – they got 2.2 percent/four seats at the latest election in 2007. Since then they have got a front figure – not an actual leader – in Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen. They have not had that previously since they were founded by socialists and communists and thus do not believe in a hierarchical power structure.

Politiken's Mette Østergaard writes that the full value of their votes will not be cashed in. The reason is that when it comes to issues like the economy, which is obviously a core issue for EL, S, SF and R will rather go to K to get an alternative majority than to give socialist admissions to EL.

While R and EL agree more or less on immigration, they disagree on a lot of other issues. Thus, writes Østergaard, EL might try and employ DF's strategy under VK; get admissions that are highly symbolic while not really costly to SSFR, so that both sides can come out looking like winners.

Regardless, the main things that EL will ask for in return for supporting SSF(R) are: a stop to the tax stop on property taxes (here they agree with R), extend the period of time during which you can get unemployment benefits from two to four years and raise the number of quota refugees Denmark receives from 500 per year to 1,000.

A statistic shows that history is working against Løkke Rasmussen

1990: Poul Schlüter (K) led the polls at the time the election was announced and won

1994: Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (S) led the polls at the time the election was announced and won

1998: Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was behind in the polls when the election was announced and won

2001: Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was behind in the polls when the election was announced and lost

2005: Anders Fogh Rasmussen (V) led the polls at the time the election was announced and won

2007: Anders Fogh Rasmussen led the polls at the time the election was announced and won

2011: Lars Løkke Rasmussen was behind in the polls when the election was called

Since 1990 only Nyrup Rasmussen has won an election when being behind when announcing it.

Doctors Will Cost You, Dentists Will Be Cheaper

R and K agree that there should be an amount of user payment for going to the doctor. Currently that is covered by the public health insurance. On the other hand, dentist visits are not at all covered. R and K want people to pay a little to go to the doctor and pay less to go to the dentist.

R: Lift the Tax Stop on Property Taxes

During Anders Fogh Rasmussen's time as Prime Minister a tax stop was introduced. This means that for years property taxes have not been raised while the property prices have climbed resulting in a *de facto* tax cut for home owners.

R wants an end to the tax stop so that home owners pay a corresponding share of their income to what leasers pay. As with the proposed house purchase discount some have said that the frozen property tax helps people move into houses they would not be able to afford on market terms. This troubles some, as they fear an eventual situation like the subprime crisis in the US a few years ago.

S and SF reject the proposal stating that people would not be able to afford paying off their mortgages. R wants the lift of the property tax stop to start in four years.

Thursday, 1 September

Positive Growth

On Wednesday new numbers were released by Danmarks Statistik showing that the Danish growth rate is 0.1 percent for the first quarter of 2011 and 1 percent for the second quarter. Sources in the Liberal Party (V) call this a potential "game changer."

Several news media write, and it is generally perceived to be true, that the blue wing does better on financial issues, so this surprisingly strong growth rate – compared with the expectations – will likely prove beneficial to Lars Løkke Rasmussen since he can say that he has taken the necessary precautions to stabilize the economy.

The Social Democrats (S) are not that positive though. Morten Bødskov says that Denmark still suffers from a high unemployment rate, a frozen housing market and an export sector that has slowed down significantly.

Meanwhile financial experts are worried that these numbers confuse the issue. The numbers are inherently uncertain and the actual growth will not be clear for years. We run the risk of getting short-term solutions if the politicians do not act with care. That might be very harmful for the economy, they say.

First Time Voters Vote for Villy

Berlingske writes that a survey concludes that first time voters are more leftist than the general public. There are 260,191 voters and the most popular party is Villy Søvndal's Socialist People's Party (DF).

Among the first time voters SF gets 29 percent of the vote. As a whole a 54 percent majority could be composed of S, SF and the Unity List (EL).

A related story reports that a survey concludes that if 16-year-olds were allowed to vote, it would result in voters who are more engaged politically. This debate comes up from time to time and is usually shot down again quickly.

K and R Agree on Education Initiatives

The Conservative Party (K) and the Social Liberal Party (R) agree on education initiatives: They want to reintroduce group exams. Those were dropped during Anders Fogh Rasmussen's first government under heavy protests from the universities. It was part of his plan to "end round circle pedagogic." It was controversial within the government then and evidently it still is. K and R hope and expect other parties will support a reintroduction.

Another proposal the two parties agree on is the proposal to loosen the green card system; if a foreign student comes to Denmark and earns a Master's degree or a Ph.D. degree, he or she should automatically be granted a green card.

It is in our best interest that students who study here and earn degrees also stay and work afterward. Knowledge is what we have to live off in the future so it makes no sense if educated people leave, says Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation (under which institutions of higher education file), Charlotte Sahl-Madsen from K.

***Jyllands-Posten* Asked: What Government Composition Do You Prefer?**

VK: 30.5%

V: 10.3%

SSF: 21.0%

SSFR: 23.4%

Villy Søvndal Talks about Differences between S and SF

For a long while now S and SF have chosen to focus on similarities rather than differences between their two parties. It is a strategy they adopted after the blue victory in 2007. They saw how Jens Stoltenberg in Norway had managed to unite the opposition and that way win the election and they decided to adopt that approach.

Since then traditionally leftist SF has blurred its profile on key issues. They have become hardliners on immigration for instance and in general they seem to have fused more onto S than S has fused on to SF.

Meanwhile EL has got a very charismatic and popular front figure in Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen and many leftist voters have chosen to hatch onto them instead of SF. Some – those who think EL is too leftist – have chosen to vote for R due to their different approach to immigration policy.

Immigration policy is a main reason for disputes on the “red” wing.

This has left SF with lack of a clear profile and a drop in voter support as a result. When asked what differentiates S and SF, Søvndal has usually answered “we would rather focus on what unites us, than what differentiates us.” That was also his answer as late as Tuesday when asked.

Yesterday in an interview published today in *Politiken* he decided to speak up and try to turn the ship around. He said that SF is the party to vote for if you want a party which prioritizes welfare, the environment and social rights.

The second best party in that regard, he says, is S.

Villy Søvndal as Minister for Foreign Affairs

The rumor that Søvndal will be Minister for Foreign Affairs in a future SSF or SSFR government has been floating around for a while. The reason is that often the party leader of the second-largest government party usually is Minister for Foreign Affairs.

There are some politicians and observers who say that it might not be a wise move for him. The empiric foundation is K which suffered severely from having a leader (Lene Espersen) who was rarely home when trouble struck.

An indication that he might be reconsidering the job is that he has declined debates with both Minister for Foreign Affairs Lene Espersen and Minister for Development Søren Pind.

While SF has stated that they want to raise development aid and therefore would be expected to argue their case to Pind, they have not presented a clear foreign political strategy and indeed Søvndal said he has not considered any of the issues he was asked about in *Politiken* – the EU budget and the NATO budget both to be decided next year.

He said he has no plans for any job. His main focus is, he says, the election.

Friday, 2 September

S-SF Foreign Policy?

After Villy Søvndal's refusal to answer any questions about foreign policy in an interview, focus has to some degree turned to the Socialist People's Party's (SF) and the Social Democrats' (S) foreign policy.

Traditionally S has always been closer to the blue wing on foreign policy than it has been to SF. SF has only been considered ready for a government in the time since the last election in 2007.

The further left you go, the more opposed to activist foreign policy the parties are. Thus SF would traditionally not be compatible with anyone except perhaps the Unity List (EL) to some extent.

However, both S and SF still keep their mouths shut when the talk turns to foreign policy, so as of now nobody knows anything about what a possible future SSF government's foreign policy will look like.

The 24-Year-Rule on Its Way Out?

The 24-Year-Rule in all its simplicity is a rule that says that a Danish citizen cannot marry a foreigner if one of the spouses-to-be is under the age of 24. The rule is overruled if you have lived for six months together in another EU country or if the spouse-to-be is an EU citizen.

It was created in an attempt to avoid forced marriage. Some have argued that it is primarily intended to keep Muslims out since that is where you see the majority of forced marriages in Denmark. The rule can be avoided by simply moving to Malmö in Sweden for six months and then moving back to Denmark, thus it is not a foolproof system and some parties argue that it is both discriminating and unnecessary bureaucracy.

There are currently three parties opposed to the 24-Year-Rule, Liberal Alliance (LA), the Social Liberal Party (R) and EL. SF used to be opposed to the rule but they accepted that it was not to be altered if their partnership with S was to work.

Yesterday Søvnal returned to the previous SF position of wanting to get rid of the 24-Year-Rule. He cannot argue for doing it now, but he will work to get rid of it starting with a possible second government term for SSF(R).

Some 50 chairmen of SF groups around Denmark answered the following question for *Berlingske*

SF should keep the 24-year-rule for the whole first term in government

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Totally agree: | 20.4 |
| Agree overall: | 20.4 |
| Overall disagree: | 28.6 |
| Totally Disagree: | 24.4 |
| Do not know: | 6.1 |

SF should insist on a plan to loosen the 24-year-rule and the attachment requirements which will be valid after the first term

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Totally agree: | 44.4 |
| Agree overall: | 33.3 |
| Overall disagree: | 7.4 |
| Totally Disagree: | 3.7 |
| Do not know: | 1.1 |

More Calls for Loosening the Immigration Policy

Prominent SF members Kamal Qureshi and Trine Pertou Mach agree that the years you have to live in Denmark to be eligible for citizenship should be cut in half.

If this comes to pass, it would take four to five years to be eligible for citizenship rather than the current nine years.

There Is No Plan

A few days ago Chairman of the major union 3F, Poul Erik Skov Christensen, said that the major unions (3F, FOA and LO) had a plan for how they will find the controversial 12 minutes that SSF says everyone has to work more per day in order to finance keeping the early retirement system.

Skov Christensen said that he would not discuss the plan in the media but the unions had a plan ready for how a future SSF government would make it work.

Today Chairman in LO says that there is no such plan. His union has, he says, already prepared a series of proposals to make up the extra labor and those proposals are public.

LO's plan does not talk directly about working 12 minutes more per day, rather it sees a way of getting more people to work more as being possibly done through upgrading part-time jobs to fulltime jobs.

Early Retirement I

According to political commentator at *Jyllands-Posten*, Christine Cordsen, the 12 minutes have already become irrelevant. There is a majority in favor of the early retirement agreement. For that agreement to be overturned a majority of S, SF and EL would have to exist – and it will not.

S and SF have tried to make this an election about early retirement saying that if the Danes want to keep it, they will vote in a majority consisting of S, SF and EL. That way they will not lose face when they have to accept it and still have to cooperate with R. This way it would be a case of “the voters have spoken.”

If the early retirement reform is adopted, there is no need to find the 15 billion DKK to finance it through the famous 12 minutes, says Cordsen.

Early Retirement II

But it might not be that easy. R did not agree to the border agreement in the spring but DF did and it was their payment for agreeing to the early retirement agreement which many of their voters do not like at all.

R has vowed to get rid of the border agreement since it was agreed upon, if R can possibly do it. SSF has been more wary of touching it. With the recent friendship between the Conservative Party (K) and R, however, it looks as if it might – might – be possible to get rid of the border agreement.

If that happens, says DF, they will not adopt the early retirement agreement. So the early retirement agreement is not as solid as it once looked.

Singer Sues K

In the eighties when American pop stars recorded “We Are the World” for Africa, a Danish singer, Nanna Lüders, was inspired and wrote a Danish pop classic, “Afrika,” which was recorded with participation from all the big names in Danish pop music.

Last year K used “Afrika” at a national meeting. They replaced “Afrika” with “konservativ” in the lyrics. When Lüders, heard about it she wanted compensation from K for having used her song without permission.

Nothing came of it initially but now she is suing after not having been able to reach a settlement. K takes it easy as they say it was a private event for only invited guests. Thus different rules apply. We will see when a verdict is reached.

Saturday, 3 September

Danish Blood

Spokesperson on Foreign Policy for the Danish People's Party (DF), Søren Espersen, in an interview with the Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang* said that he would like for only people with "Danish blood" to be granted citizenship in Denmark. That, he said, includes his own wife who is British. Children of such a couple would be able to become citizens.

All parties contacted by *Information* were appalled and mentioned that it sounded a lot like racial hygiene rhetoric from the twentieth century.

SF Wants to Get Rid of the 24-Year-Rule, Or?

On Friday Leader of the Socialist People's Party (SF), Villy Søvndal, said that he would like to get rid of the 24-Year-Rule but that he could not do so in the first term of a possible "red" government due to the Social Democrats (S) and SF having agreed not to touch it.

Then later on Friday he said that he was actually not opposed to the rule. Nobody from S or SF has said so but it is believed that S pressured SF to file in and withdraw the opposition to the rule in order to once again look unified with S.

The Liberal Party (V) is also dissatisfied with SF and their opposition to the rule which they deem a success having prevented "numerous forced marriages" which they say is just another term for "legalized rape."

Within SF there are also voices who wish Søvndal had maintained his opposition – for instance Trine Pertou Mach. The Social Liberal Party (R) is still very much opposed to the rule.

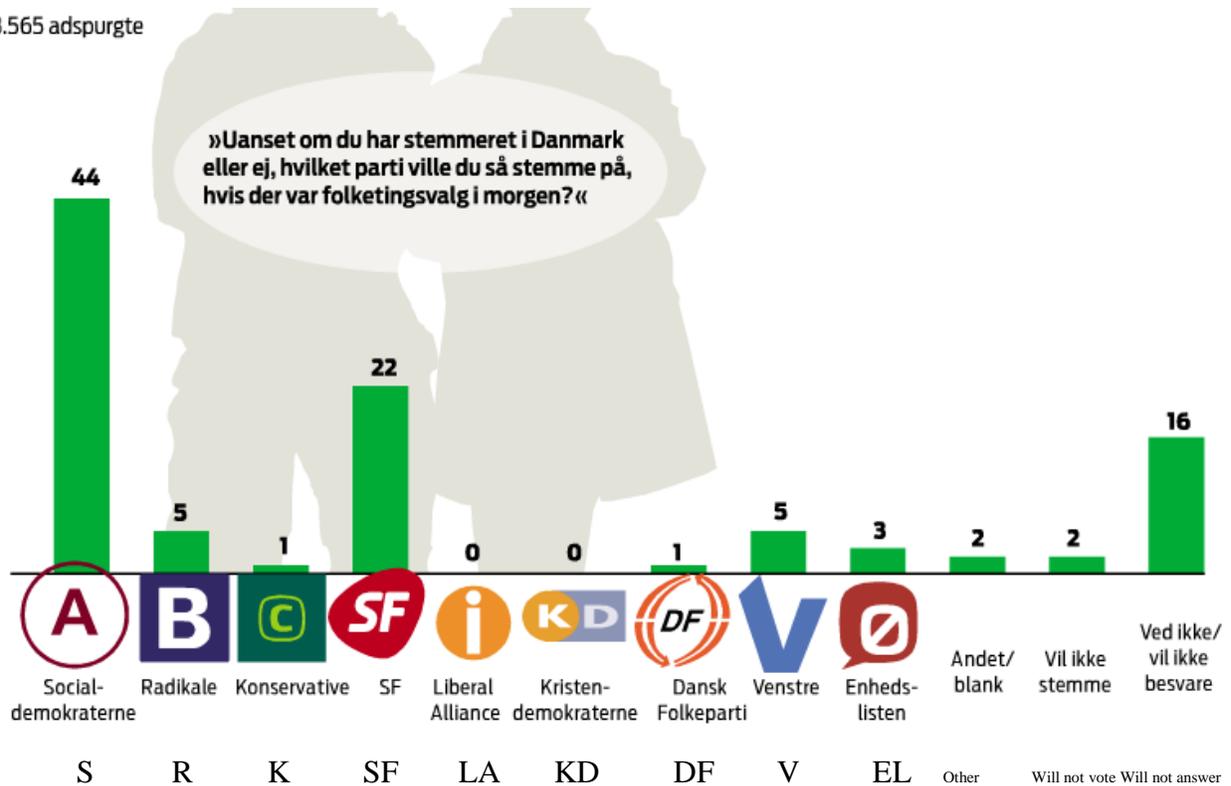
Pia Christmas-Møller Not Running for Parliament Anyway

Pia Christmas-Møller, former MP for the Conservative Party (K) and now independent MP, had announced her return to K and that she would run for a seat in parliament. However a mishap stemming from a wrong reading of the party rules meant that she could not run for a seat. To do so she would have had to be approved by the central party committee and there was no time for that.

Three out of Four Immigrants Vote to the Left

3,565 immigrants were asked: Regardless of whether you have the right to vote in Denmark or not, which party would you vote for if the election was Tomorrow?

3,565 adspurgte



Sunday, 4 September

R and K's new alliance have them agreeing on for instance that doctor's visits could cost a little money and dentists should cost less than is currently the case. The rest of the "red" wing disagrees strongly on this issue. It therefore seems that S's proposal that it should cost money to stay away from a doctor's appointment is an attempt to meet R halfway.

Immigration Policy Back at Center Stage in the Election

So writes *Jyllands-Posten* and it is hard to disagree with SF talking loudly about the 24-Year-Rule revealing a division in the red wing. Immigration policy has been a center theme for the past three elections in 2001, 2005 and 2007 – all of which were won by the blue wing.

Jyllands-Posten asks: Do you think that:

| | |
|--|-------|
| There is need for further tightening immigration policy: | 16.7% |
| There is need for loosening immigration policy: | 25.1% |
| The immigration policy is just right: | 50.5% |
| Do not know: | 7.7% |

Meanwhile R has proposals to loosen immigration policy. As a whole this goes against all other parties apart from the Unity List (EL) and Liberal Alliance (LA).

Here are R's proposals and how they are received by the rest of the red wing:

Family Reunification

- R: Wants to get rid of the points system, attachment requirements and 24-Year-Rule. You should be able to get in on equal terms with EU citizens
- S: Disagree. Wants to keep attachment requirements and 24-Year-Rule and introduce a red points system
- SF: Disagree wants red points system and to keep the 24-Year Rule for the first term
- EL: Agree. Also wants to get rid of requirements that you have to have a home and that you can provide for you incoming spouse

Forced Marriage

- R: Police need to have better opportunity to issue restraining orders for people who are under suspicion of honor crimes. Also stronger international cooperation
- S: Agree
- SF: Agree
- EL: Agree

Asylum

- R: Turned own asylum seekers should be allowed to get an education and work permit in Denmark. You should stay no longer than six months in an asylum center. Decisions should be able to be taken to court
- S: Agree. Except not certain regarding trying the decisions in court
- SF: Agree
- EL: Agree

Integration

- R: Start Help, 225 Hour Rule and ceiling over access to benefits are gotten rid off. Danish education from day one. Five years' worth of Danish lessons
- S: Agree on getting rid of so-called poverty benefits. Open to changes on Danish classes
- SF: Same as S
- EL: Agree

Recruiting

- R: Green card rules eased, points demands lowered and the criteria “assimilation ability” is removed. A Danish education gives the right to a green card. Wants to get rid of limitations stating that schools can only teach in Danish.
- S: Open to loosening the rules
- SF: Open to negotiations making it easier to come to Denmark to work
- EL: Agree

Citizenship

- R: Double citizenship possible. People with right to unemployment benefits cannot lose their residence permit. Persons with problems learning should be granted residence permit anyway regardless of employment situation. Citizenship should be decided by language skills and time of stay in Denmark
- S: Open to loosening the rules. Want international schools with up to 40 percent non-Danes
- SF: Open to negotiations
- EL: Agree, but says citizenship should only depend of time lived in Denmark

Administration

- R: The Ministry of Integration is shut down and its jobs are distributed to other ministries
- S: Disagree
- SF: Disagree. But is willing to discuss distribution of assignments between ministries
- EL: Agree

Monday, 5 September

Danish Blood Again

Søren Espersen was very upset with *Information*'s stories on Saturday referencing his view that "Danish blood" should be a factor in deciding citizenship. *Information* responded in its editorial that it had a chance to listen to the recorded interview and therefore quoted him correctly.

Should Espersen wish to defend himself it would be from "himself and the darkness that surrounds him," writes *Information*, and concludes that perhaps it would be fitting if he feels like distancing himself from statements like that.

Another Immigration Policy Dispute Takes the Stage

The blue wing's points system is, as documented earlier, very controversial. The system dictates that a spouse would have to "earn" a certain number of points in order to be family reunified with the spouse living in Denmark. The system is accused of being discriminating due to Westerners naturally having a better chance of living up to the criteria.

R and EL are opposed to all points systems. S and SF, however, constructed their own points system. Some commentators said they did so in order to not seem soft on immigration. Some SF members were opposed to the "red" system as well.

The problem for a future red government then is that they do not have a majority in favor of their system. Thus they have the option of either keeping the blue system or not having one at all. Given that dilemma, S prefers the blue system while SF prefers none at all.

At this point many observers are very puzzled by the course of events on the red wing. It has lost three elections in a row to a great extent due to immigration policy. Also the S-SF alliance was set up in order for the red wing to seem unified so that no one could point to the red wing disagreeing on key issues.

Now that alliance seems less secure. Commentators deem it an own goal by SF that they caused a split as well as brought immigration policy up by starting to talk about the controversial 24-Year-Rule. From a tactical standpoint, it does seem like a less than wise decision at this point.

Tuesday, 6 September

There will not be a points system for family reunification. That is the latest word on the issue. It seems S caved in due to heavy opposition from SF, R and EL. While SF is largely to thank for this turn of events, it is speculated that R will reap the reward because it has been so strongly opposed all the time and now it seems R will have its (and EL's) way.

Red Foreign Policy

S, SF and R launched a joint foreign policy on Monday. A main point is that it wants to swiftly condemn all nations violating human rights. This point will be hard to live up to once the real world enters after an election, say several professors with expertise in international politics. While the idea is noble and admirable, it is just not likely that a future government will spend their time criticizing an important export market like for instance China, they say.

Another point also meets criticism, from inside the parties too: All three parties have for years criticized the current government along with DF for cutting development aid. It is currently at 0.8 percent of the GDP and these three parties have vowed to take it up to one percent of the GDP. This is still part of the plan, but there is no date included and this is the controversial point.

The financial crisis makes it impossible to do it right now, they say. *Information* says that that statement is nonsense; if they want to do it, they can do it. It is a matter of prioritizing.

A possible red government's foreign political strategy might also clash with the US and other international partners since it has said it supports a Palestinian state. Since the presentation it has been reformulated to "if other EU nations also do so."

The current opposition parties have also called for an independent investigation of alleged prison flights through Danish airspace over Greenland carrying POW's destined for torture. In their foreign policy strategy, however, there was no mention of such an investigation. Søvndal said the investigation was no longer a top priority.

Later, though S, SF and R all agreed that they do indeed want the investigation. This caused Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lene Espersen to say: "At this point you do not dare believe that what they say one day is still valid the next." By this she also referred to the different opinions on the 24-Year-Rule.

Further Disagreement on the Red Wing

S has previously proposed, and SF agrees, that students who earn a master's degree in Denmark and then leave to work for more than five years abroad have to pay back their student benefits (SU) for the duration of their master's degree (two years typically and in that event around 140,000 DKK).

R and EL strongly disagree. R says that it is narrow-minded to keep people from going abroad to get additional experience and knowledge. They once again focus on the Danish future having to be based on knowledge rather than production.

Wednesday, 7 September

Villy Søvndal, leader of the Socialist People's Party (SF), continues with his controversial statements. Yesterday he called for possible future cooperation with the Danish People's Party (DF) on certain welfare issues – not on immigration.

While the Social Liberal (R) cooperation with the Conservative Party (K) has been welcomed by the voters due to its center-seeking ambitions, it is very unlikely this proposal will have the same results for SF. SF has always despised DF, and SF often uses DF's influence over the past ten years as an inherently bad thing in debates.

Several politicians have opposed the move. R's Zenia Stampe writes that it is a huge mistake to initiate such a cooperation with DF since it would send a signal that DF is a center party, and they are not, she writes.

From SF Kristen Touborg and Trine Pertou Mach both strongly oppose Søvndal's move and urge him not to initiate any cooperation. Lesser known candidates Charlie Stjerneklar and Annika Smith are likewise strong opponents of the idea. The later has the slogan "Fuck DF" on her election posters.

The "red" voters are also opposed to the idea:

Dead Even between Red and Blue Wings

The closest poll in a long while was released yesterday. It has the blue wing getting 87 seats in parliament and the red wing getting 88 (excluding the North Atlantic seats).

Former leader for K, editor in chief and current political commentator, Hans Engell, says that Søvndal, is to blame. He has caused uncertainty about immigration policy and the unity of the left wing. That causes voters to question the red wing. Plus, says Engell, traditionally swing voters vote blue.

R Does No Longer Want to Criminalize Prostitution

In 2002 Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats (S) called for making the purchase of sexual favors illegal. Since then, the rest of her party as well as the Unity List (EL) and R have supported the idea.

However, now that R's Spokesperson on Gender Equality, Lone Dybkjær does not run for another term in parliament, Manu Sareen has taken over and he does not support criminalizing it. He is in favor of helping those prostitutes who want out but he does not support criminalizing the customers.

Liberal Alliance Candidate Supports Bigamy

MP Candidate for Liberal Alliance, Joachim B. Olsen, says he supports multiple wives. If all parties in such a union are fine with it, then he does not want to interfere with that. He emphasizes that it is not an official strategy but his own views.

Olsen has previously made controversial statements such as the idea to take away all subsidies from public transportation and introduce a maximum tax of 20 percent. Some consider him a loose cannon.

Ban on Bans

Members of the Liberal Party (V) Karsten Lauritzen, Mads Rørbye, Ellen Trane Nørby, Sophie Løhde and Michael Aastrup Jensen all agree that they want a ban on bans. What they mean by that is that they want fewer rules introduced. The proposal is a response to rules that the red wing wants to introduce – road pricing, higher taxes on fat food and tobacco and so on.

Jyllands-Posten says that a survey concludes that there have been 177 bans introduced during the last “red” government from 1993 to 2001 while the current government has introduced 175 bans.

Thus there is no need to believe another blue government would introduce fewer rules than another red government.

Thursday, 8 September

Airplane Taxes

The alliance between the Social Democrats (S) and the Socialist People's Party (SF) has proposed a tax on domestic airplane travel. At the moment the proposal means a 75 DKK tax for each trip. This means that people who live in Jutland but who work in Copenhagen will be forced to accept a significant transportation price increase.

The blue wing is opposed and so are several S members. Per Husted, Bjarne Lausten and Orla Hav all from northern Jutland argue that they and many other people would be forced to pay extra to keep their jobs in Copenhagen – that is: be forced to pay more for public transportation.

Meanwhile people living in Copenhagen will get cheaper public transportation with a red government. It is unfair, say the S members, and serves to further marginalize the so-called “outskirts Denmark.”

It also turns out that in Ireland and the Netherlands it has resulted in less travel and an overall reduced state income on air travel.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt in Alleged Tax Speculation Case

Helle Thorning-Schmidt has previously been accused of tax fraud when her husband according to some documents stayed a certain amount of time in Denmark (he works abroad) and according to other documents stayed a different amount of time in Denmark. There was speculation that the flawed information was due to tax speculation. She was acquitted.

Earlier this year it surfaced that she had leased a car with German MOMS (20% rather than the Danish rate of 25%) but Danish taxes. That results in a small saving. She said she was not aware of it at the time and that she just went for the best deal. It was not illegal at the time, but S profiles had spoken out against it due to it meaning less MOMS revenue for Denmark.

The current case has to do with Thorning-Schmidt using her husband's tax deductible thus granting her twice the deductible amount due to her husband working abroad and thus not having a Danish income. It is not illegal but, say commentators, looks like speculation. Skat (the tax and customs authorities) has not pressed charged and they cannot and will not.

The total amount she has deducted on her husband's behalf is guessed to be between 100,000 and 200,000 DKK. Skat does not want her to pay it back.

The bigger questions are, agree most papers:

Who leaked the documents illegally?

Why do they surface immediately before the election?

Does this make her look less credible as a potential Prime Minister?

The leak has been reported to the police by Skat, so the first question is being investigated. The answer to the second is, according to *B.T* who broke the story, "a coincidence."

The last question is harder to answer but commentators are arguing both scenarios.

S and SF want to Reduce Citizenship Requirements

S-SF wants the required language level to obtain citizenship to be Danish 2 rather than Danish 3. The argument is that it is hard enough to get a residence permit, so citizenship should be made easier to get. The Social Liberal Party (R) agrees.

In a related story the number of immigrants without citizenship is said to be 272,639 people. That number is thrice what it was in 1990.

Friday, 9 September

Conservative Party Wants Tax Cuts

Leader of the Conservative Party (K), Lars Barfoed, wants to lower the maximum tax. The income tax percentage rises with the size of your salary. Thus he basically wants a tax cut for those who make the most money.

While the government partner the Liberal Party (V) is somewhat skeptical saying that tax cuts will only be a relevant topic once the financial crisis is under control, key members of the K constituency say that they would rather K stay out of a future government than give up on the call for tax cuts.

Denmark's Reputation Has Suffered

The business world says that Denmark's reputation has suffered due to the Danish People's Party's (DF) influence over the past ten years. CEO of Topsil, Keld Lindegaard Andersen, says that abroad Denmark is considered "a small, closed, semi-fascist society."

Not surprisingly Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen disagrees. He says that if it was not for DF supporting VK initiatives on financial policy, then Denmark, including the business world, would be much worse off. Lindegaard Andersen counters the argument and says that what DF has got in return on immigration policy has not been worth it.

R Wants 10,000 More Student Seats

R wants 10,000 more youths to get educations per year – included in that ambition is a specific call for more university degrees due to Denmark having to invest in knowledge in the future.

Minister for Science and Innovation (under which the universities file), Charlotte Sahl-Madsen, is positive and so is S's Spokesperson on Education, Christine Antorini.

Dansk Industri (Danish Industry) and Dansk Erhverv (Danish Business) are both very thrilled with the proposal. Dansk Erhverv specifically notes the call for more people getting university degrees.

Søren Pind and Lykke Friis Want More Consequences for Imams

Minister for Integration and Development, Søren Pind, and Minister for Gender Equality, Lykke Friis, present an idea that would mean imams would be required under the law to report to the authorities if they know of child abuse and similar offenses. Pind and Friis want imams to be under the same requirements as Christian priests.

However, they are like all other public employees already required to report criminal offenses to the authorities, so Professor of Criminal Justice, Jørn Vestergaard, calls the proposal "utterly pointless." He adds that the increased reporting obligation which priests have specifically pertains to *non-violent* offenses.

Presented with that information, Pind sent a written comment to *Politiken* in which he alters the initial idea: "Social control over young people is far from always illegal but it can have fatal consequences and ruin young people's lives." He continues and says that since imams are in such close contact with children and young people, they should also be required to follow the increased obligation to report.

Saturday, 10 September

Liberal Part Wants Tax Cuts

In addition to the Conservative Party (K) several parliament candidates for the Liberal Party (V) also call for tax cuts for incomes above a certain level. The candidates are Ellen Thrane Nørby, Michael Aastrup Jensen, Jacob Jensen and current Minister for the Environment, Karen Ellemann.

Danish People's Party Wants to Cooperate with the Social Democrats

In full-page ads in national newspapers the Danish People's Party (DF) approaches the Social Democrats (S). DF wants to cooperate on social politics and health care. DF mainly calls for an end to the so-called SATS funds.

The SATS funds are an amount set aside every year by the state for initiatives of various sorts. It makes obtaining funding somewhat easier in some aspects but in other aspects it is more problematic because the SATS funds are time-limited.

DF's main proposal is that the psychiatric treatment is removed from the SATS funds to the finance bill. That way the psychiatric wards do not have to waste time applying for funds every year but would be sure to get it.

A, K and the Socialist People's Party (SF) all reject cooperation. S and SF point to the fact that DF helped create the system they are opposed to.

Social Liberals Want to Get Rid of Symbolic Politics

The Social Liberal Party (R) wants to get rid of symbolic politics. It does, they say, not solve real issues. Examples of this is the fact that unemployed people have to log on to the official job database, JobNet, once week. It has to do with the state wanting to signal that unemployed people are expected to work hard to find a job. R says that that is the goal for all unemployed persons and that logging on to a website has little effect in that process.

R also wants to abolish the so-called knife law which means that you can only carry a knife under certain circumstances. It is, says R, a useless symbol. Those who want to carry knives with bad intent will do so whether it is legal or not. The law has caused people fishing to get arrested. S voted in favor of the proposal. Now R hopes S will vote to get it overturned.

R also wants to get rid of border control and the ban on judges wearing headscarves.

Sunday, 11 September

Social Liberals Present More Demands

R presents seven demands for the financial policy of a possible future SSFR government. Among them is an acceptance of the early retirement agreement which R agreed to in the spring and S and SF oppose. Commentators say that this should be possible to overcome, since S and SF need the revenue for their financial policy to balance and expect to get it. They have just not made it clear to the voters.

R wants to get rid of the tax stop in order to allow the property taxes to follow the prices on the housing market rather than give home owners a *de facto* tax cut every year. In addition to that they want the income tax lowered and thus agree more or less with V, K and Liberal Alliance (LA) on this.

R also wants the tax system modernized since there is too much bureaucracy and special rules for it to be efficient.

The expected revenue from the tax system overhaul will be spent on more social initiatives.

Unity List Parliament Candidate Slaps Social Democratic Ditto

At a voter meeting on Zealand MP candidate for the Unity List (EL), Ole Krarup, slapped MP candidate for S, Thomas Horn, on the cheek. Apparently Krarup was angry during the meeting which caused Horn to say that if he did not want to be there, why did he not just go home. Krarup responded with a slap in the face.

After Krarup and his daughter in separate phone calls apologized to Horn, he decided not to report the incident to the police. Krarup's family says that he is still suffering psychologically from a traffic accident six years ago. EL has withdrawn his candidacy.

Monday, 12 September

Danish People's Party Wants More Money for Retired People

Other than immigration policy, DF's trademark topic during elections is the elderly. This year is no exception as DF calls for an increase in the annual check for the elderly of 4,100 DKK in addition to the current amount of 10,900 DKK.

DF plans to finance the increase with a cut in development aid. Emergency aid organizations strongly advise against the proposal. And indeed so do Danish politicians: S-SF say they want the millionaires to pay. They propose a six percent tax increase for incomes of more than one million DKK per year – the so-called millionaire's tax. That tax will among other things be used to finance an even bigger raise in the check for the elderly, namely 5,000 DKK.

S-SF says that they would rather let the millionaires pay to help the elderly than have the starving children of Africa do it. K is ready to negotiate the idea but does not support a cut in development aid and wants tax cuts rather than a tax raise for those earning high incomes.

Stateless Persons Back to Palestine

DF says that if Palestine is recognized by the UN later this month, stateless persons from the Palestinian territory living in Denmark will have to go back to then-recognized Palestine.

S-SF who both support official recognition of Palestine says that even if the UN does decide to acknowledge Palestine, Israel still rules. Therefore there will be no change in the situation for the formerly stateless people.

Liberal Party Warns against Social Liberals

Acknowledging that many of R's current supporters are coming over from V and K, V now campaigns with ads warning against R in order to get the swing voters back on their side.

The argument is that since R is possibly to become part of a government with S, SF and EL, they will be dependent on socialists and former communists and everything from unions all the way to the far left will impact the politics. Therefore, says V, it is better to vote for V since they are dependent on other liberals.

A Small EU-related Note

R says that the EU takes up way too little space in the discussions. It is, they say, severely lacking ambition to set aside only 250 million DKK for the chairmanship beginning 1 January. R wants another 100 million DKK. Other parties cannot figure out what a reasonable amount is.

Tuesday, 13 September

Jyllands-Posten writes that if EL gets the amount of seats, it is currently looking at (13 according to the latest poll as opposed to four seats in parliament now), it will open the gates to the far left. The reason is that SUF (Socialistisk Ungdomsfront/Socialist Youth Front), which is EL's youth organization, has shown active support for particularly FARC and PFLP. Some candidates still say that they consider these organizations' work "a legitimate fight for freedom."

The leaders of EL say that they do not interfere with candidates' personal convictions and that their candidates are voted for in order to get EL politics through.

Majority Does Not Want Tax Raises

Jyllands-Posten asks "Would you personally be willing to pay more in taxes and fees in order to get money for other expenses?"

Yes: 34.8%

No: 51.2%

Do not know: 4.9%

EU Experts Reject Plan to Have Students Pay Back Education Benefits

As reported earlier S and SF want students who leave Denmark shortly after completion of their master's degree in order to work abroad for more than five years to pay back their education benefits for the duration of the master's degree (up to around 170,000 DKK in total).

When S's Spokesperson on Education, Christine Antorini, and SF's ditto, Jonas Dahl, were asked how the system would be implemented the answers were very different and very vague. It will all be negotiated after an election, they both agreed.

However, Danish EU experts agree that the demand that students pay back their benefits when leaving Denmark to work in another EU country most likely goes against the free movement principle and will therefore not be possible to implement.

EU Discussion at *Politiken* Results in No News

Just to inform: There was an EU debate yesterday at *Politiken*. Several politicians participated. R's Sofie Carsten Nielsen once again argued that the budget for Denmark's chairmanship is lacking ambition. That in essence makes up *Politiken's* resume of its own panel discussion.