



INNOCENTI ESSAYS

No. 1

WORKING FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

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WORKING FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

The experience of the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children

Målfrid Grude Flekkøy

INTRODUCTION

The rights of children

The idea that children have rights of their own, rights which transcend the family setting, is an idea apparently simple, in reality complex. How can society fulfill a separate obligation towards those whose lack of years and means, whose innocence and vulnerability, have already defined them as legal dependents, to be primarily protected by parents and other agents of adult authority? Yet, in this century there has been a growing recognition that children's special needs and life circumstances, because of that very same innocence and vulnerability, require a special – an extra – response from society, in law and in practice.

The campaign to establish international recognition for the rights of children first found expression in the aftermath of World War I and the unprecedented suffering it inflicted upon non-combatants. In 1959, a Declaration of the Rights of the Child was unanimously passed by the United Nations General Assembly. On 20 November 1989, exactly 30 years later, the UN General Assembly adopted a «Convention on the Rights of the Child».

The Convention represents a turning point in the international movement on behalf of

children's rights. As each nation ratifies the Convention, many nations will find it expedient to put into place a mechanism whose specific task it is to act as watchdog for children's rights, and to monitor the situation of their children against the international criteria now laid down. These criteria provide a yardstick against which a country's performance on child-related issues can be measured and judged.

In 1981, the Norwegian Parliament (Storting) decided to deliver on society's obligations to the rights of Norwegian children in a way unique within the family of nations. An Act was passed setting up an independent Commissioner for Children – an «Ombudsman» for children – empowered to promote children's interests in any sphere of society where those interests were touched and where, otherwise, children's needs, children's rights and children's voices would not find a means of independent expression.

This pioneer effort, originally opposed by the more conservative political parties and greeted with skepticism by individuals and organisations, now offers eight years of practical experience, both in discovering what kind of issues are important to Norwegian

children and parents, and in acting as public advocate on these issues and others.

The Ombudsman for Children provides the first, and until 1988 the only, national statutory initiative specifically designed to give practical realisation to the promotion of children's rights. As other countries begin to take on board their new obligations under the new international Convention, many will be considering the structure and terms of reference for an appropriate national entity to monitor fulfillment of those obligations.

Once 20 countries have ratified the Convention, a United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child will be set up to monitor progress at the international level. This Committee can be expected, in due course, to call on ratifying States for reports on implementation of child-related policies and legislation at the national level.

Each government will take many considerations into account in deciding how to take best advantage of the Convention to further the rights of children. These will include the size of the country, its political system, the level of socio-economic development, the existing range and responsibilities of governmental and non-governmental organisations, historical and legal tradition, and – hopefully – the cultural and other expectations of the nation's parents **and children**. In this context, the Office of the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children provides a possible approach. Even where the specific design of this office may not be suitable, the experiences gained provide valuable insights into the scope of issues any such entity may expect to confront.

This presentation of the work of the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children, and of the context in which the office was established, has been prepared in order to share its very special insights and experience with other governmental bodies, national organisations and individuals endeavouring to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The author, Målfrid Grude Flekkøy, served as the first Ombudsman for Children during 1981-89.

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«Children have Rights!»

THE OFFICE OF THE NORWEGIAN OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN

The national context

There are a number of reasons for Norway's decision to institute the office of Ombudsman for Children. One important element is the recognition that children are politically powerless and therefore that they have no means of exerting influence over policy and legislative decisions which deeply affect them.

During the 20th century, social evolution in Norway has been accompanied by a considerable change in attitudes towards children and the period of childhood. Scientific study has brought new understanding and knowledge, which in turn has led to new ideas about child-rearing, education, and how to care for children with special problems. As in other societies, the use of coercion and punishment as methods of childhood guidance have declined, to be gradually replaced by educative and therapeutic approaches. Recognition has been gained for the idea that children's needs and capacities constantly change as they grow, and childhood has become properly respected as an important phase of life in its own right.

These changes of view have been reflected in legislation and public policy. Where the recognition of equal rights are concerned, Norwegian society has been in the vanguard. Women, for example, gained access to higher education in 1884 and the right to vote in 1913. During this century, social democratic principles have gradually gained widespread acceptance in Norway. The Labour Party formed its first Cabinet in 1935, and since World War II has been the country's largest party, although it is not now as large as it was. The conservative parties together are larger and Norway had a coalition Cabinet in 1981-1986 and again from September 1989. The social welfare system is well developed, so that there has been relatively little need for non-governmental organisations to lobby government on behalf of children or provide additional services to meet their needs.

The idea of Ombudsman offices has a well-established track record in Norwegian affairs. Because the concept of «ombudsman» developed exclusively in Scandinavia, the word has been adopted into the English language. Roughly translated, it means «ambassador» or «delegate»; the *official* English translation is «Commissioner». In French the term «Ombudsman for Children» is rendered by «Le Médiateur pour l'Enfance»; in German, «Kinder-beauftragte»; in Spanish, «el Defensor de la Infancia». These approximate translations reflect different socio-legal, political and administrative traditions, as well as different emphases in various national contexts.

The Ombudsman role is generally best described as that of a person or an office which deals with complaints from a specifically defined group of people, and which speaks on behalf of that group. There are four other Norwegian Ombudsman offices besides that for children, three of which operate in the public arena: Public Administration, Equal Status for Women, and Consumer Affairs. The fifth Ombudsman operates within the military services.

All four of the Ombudsman Offices accessible to the public were created to secure equal rights for groups considered weak in relation to a strong bureaucratic system. They were established by Acts of Parliament which define their scope and responsibilities. All enjoy considerable autonomy within the regular governmental apparatus. They are required not only to handle complaints and to tender criticism at any and every administrative level, but also to propose amendments of legislation, regulation, and procedure designed to improve the situation of their interest group. Most are responsible for specific provisions of Norwegian law. The Ombudsman Offices for Equal Status and for Consumer Affairs were established to defend – and handle complaints concerning – actual legislation in these two areas.

THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN'S ACT

§1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Act is to contribute to promoting the interests of children in society.

§2 COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN

The King shall appoint a Commissioner for Children for a period of four years. The King shall appoint a Panel which shall act as an advisory body to the Commissioner for Children.

§3 DUTIES OF THE COMMISSIONER

The duties of the Commissioner are to promote the interests of children vis a vis public and private authorities and to follow up the development of conditions under which children grow up.

In particular the Commissioner shall:

- a) on own initiative or as a hearing instance protect the interests of children in connection with planning and study reports in all fields,
- b) ensure that legislation relating to the protection of children's interests is observed,
- c) propose measures which can strengthen children's safety under the law,
- d) put forward proposals for measures which can solve or prevent conflicts between children and society,
- e) ensure that sufficient information is given to the public and private sectors concerning children's rights and measures required for children.

The Commissioner may act on own initiative or at the request of other people. The Commissioner for Children himself decides whether an application offers sufficient grounds for action.

§4 ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONS AND DUTY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ETC.

The Commissioner shall have free ac-

cess to all public and private institutions for children.

Government authorities and public and private institutions for children shall, notwithstanding the pledge of secrecy, give the Commissioner the information needed to carry out the duties of the Commissioner pursuant to this Act. Information which is needed for the accomplishment of the Commissioner's tasks pursuant to §3, second paragraph, litra b, may also, notwithstanding the pledge of secrecy, be demanded from others. When information can be demanded pursuant to this item, it may also be required that records and documents be produced.

The rules laid down in subsection 1, §204 and §§205-209 of the Civil Disputes Act are correspondingly applicable to the Commissioner's right to demand information. Disputes as to the application of these rules may be brought before the District and City Courts, which decide the question by a court ruling.

§5 STATEMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner has the right to make statements concerning conditions included in his working sphere. The Commissioner himself decides to whom these statements shall be directed.

§6 INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMMISSIONER AND THE PANEL

The King lays down general instructions for the organization and procedures of the Commissioner and the Panel. Beyond this the Commissioner and the Panel carry out their functions independently.

§7 ENTRY INTO FORCE, ETC.

This Act is applicable to Svalbard. The Act shall enter into force from the date prescribed by the King.

Norway is a small country with only 4 million inhabitants. This means that a modestly scaled national body, as are all the Ombudsman Offices, can carry wide-ranging responsibilities and still function effectively. The Ombudsman Office for the Equal Status of Women was created in 1978 in response to International Women's Year. In the late 1970s, the reasoning which had led to the creation of this Office was fresh in Norwegian minds, and at the time of the International Year of the Child in 1979, it seemed appropriate to create a similar body for the protection of children.

There were, however, some who argued against the Office. Reservations were principally confined to three areas: first, that the Ombudsman would threaten parental authority; second, that the existence of an Ombudsman might provide an excuse for other organisations and services for children to renege on their own responsibilities; third, that funds thus allocated would be better spent on strengthening existing children's services.

The Act of Parliament creating the Ombudsman Office for Children duly passed into law in March 1981. It was sponsored by the Labour Party Cabinet and passed by the «left-of-centre» political parties. The parties voting for the bill actually lost their composite majority in September 1981, two weeks after the Act went into effect.

Powers and responsibilities of the Ombudsman for Children

Unlike the Ombudsman Offices for Equal Status of Women and Consumer Affairs, the Ombudsman for Children is not responsible for any single law or sets of laws. Its purpose is to «promote the interests of children vis a vis public and private authorities, and to follow up the development of conditions under which children grow up» (Act of the Commissioner for Children §3). The only prohibition is on handling individual conflicts within the family and cases which have already been brought to court.

The provisions of the Act included an all-important clause which conferred on the Ombudsman free access to public and private institutions for children, and the right to information, records and documents, even where such information, written or verbal, normally falls under the pledge of confidentiality taken by government and other institutional servants.

In the role of «watchdog», the Ombudsman for Children must keep an eye on all areas of society, signal any development that may prove harmful to children's interests, and propose changes designed to improve their condition. In particular, the Ombudsman must be alert to the consequences and implications for children of any part of Norwegian legislation and regulations. The full range of duties and responsibilities of the Ombudsman were laid down in a set of Instructions issued in September 1981 (see page 6).

The Office wields no decision-making power, nor does it have the right to revoke the decisions of other authorities. Advocacy via the spread of information and documented case presentations are therefore its principal weapons. The Office seeks to increase public knowledge and change the opinions and attitudes of others in such a way as to improve the situation of children.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND THE ADVISORY PANEL

Laid down by Royal Decree of 11 September 1981 pursuant to §6 of Act no 5 of 6 March 1981 relating to the Commissioner for Children.

§1 DUTIES

In accordance with these instructions the Commissioner for Children shall carry out the duties of the Office according to the Act relating to the Commissioner for Children. The Commissioner in pursuing his duties shall work to ensure that the needs, rights and interests of children are given the necessary consideration in all areas of society. The Commissioner does not have the authority to decide cases or set aside decisions in the administration. The term «children» shall here be understood to mean persons up to the age of majority.

The Commissioner should ensure that the public is informed about his work.

§2 HOW CASES ARE TAKEN UP

The Commissioner takes up cases on his own initiative or at the request of other people. Anyone may apply to the Commissioner. The Commissioner shall ensure that the verbal applications are put into writing.

A person applying to the Commissioner should, insofar as possible, explain the grounds for the application and submit whatever information and documents are available in the case.

If an application concerns a specific child and the application does not come from the child himself, the Commissioner shall not deal with the case without the permission of the relevant child.

When the child's age so indicates, the permission of the guardian shall also be obtained. If general considerations so indicate, the Commissioner may deal with the case even though permission as mentioned above has not been obtained.

§3 REJECTION

The Commissioner shall reject applications concerning concrete, individual conflicts between a child and its guardians, between

the guardians mutually concerning the exercise of parental responsibility and similar matters. The Commissioner shall in such cases give the reason for the rejection and offer information about any existing instances established for the purpose of handling conflicts of this nature.

A rejection by the Commissioner cannot be appealed.

§4 REFERRALS

Applications relating to conditions which in the main concern questions relating to the application of the law or the handling of the case are to be referred by the Commissioner to the Storting's Ombudsman for Public Administration when this is relevant.

If an application concerns a situation which may be brought before an administrative agency, the person applying to the Commissioner for Children may be advised to take the matter up with the relevant body. The Commissioner himself may also send the matter to this body.

If an application concerns a situation which can be referred to the Public Prosecution Authority or a special supervisory body, after a more detailed investigation of the circumstances of the case, the Commissioner may send the case to the relevant authority if the conditions pursuant to subsection 6 of §13 b of the Public Administration Act obtain.

§5 SHELIVING OF CASES

If the Commissioner finds that the application has been made for a situation which does not offer grounds for criticism or for any follow-up procedure, the case may be shelved. The Commissioner may also shelve a case if the situation which the application concerns has been remedied or has ceased to exist.

At any stage in the proceedings, the Commissioner may also shelve a case for reasons connected with work. However, the Commissioner should try to deal with a representative selection of cases.

Anyone who has applied to the Commissioner shall be informed of the shelving of the case and the reasons for this.

The shelving of the case by the Commissioner cannot be appealed.

§6 RULES FOR DEALING WITH CASES

Chapters I-III of the Public Administration Act and the Freedom of Information Act are applicable to the activity of the Commissioner. Before making his statement the Commissioner shall ensure that the case is clarified as far as possible. The Commissioner determines what steps should be taken to clarify the circumstances in the case.

Also when this does not follow from other rules the Commissioner shall preserve secrecy about the source of information he has used when the source has expressly requested this.

§7 THE COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT ON THE CASE

The Commissioner shall personally adopt a standpoint on all cases which have been taken up for discussion and have not been shelved pursuant to §5 of the Instructions. As a basic rule the opinion of the Commissioner shall be formulated as a written statement, giving the grounds for this.

The Commissioner himself decides to whom the statement shall be directed. The statement can also be directed to the press and the broadcasting corporation or others to the extent which the Commissioner finds expedient. The Commissioner shall not express an opinion on the position in regard to the law when the Storting's Ombudsman for Public Administration has made a statement or when the situation has either been decided by the courts or has been brought before the courts for a decision. Even so, the Commissioner may criticize the factual and legal situation which has been revealed by the Ombudsman for Public Administration's statement or by the decision of the courts.

§8 ANNUAL REPORT

Each year by 1 April the Commissioner shall submit a report to the Ministry about his activities in the preceding calendar year. The report shall be available to the public.

§9 PERSONNEL AND FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Commissioner is appointed by the Council of State for a period of four years. No one can be Commissioner for more than a total of eight years.

The Commissioner has a secretariat available to him to assist with his work. The staff of the secretariat are employed according to rules laid down by the Ministry.

The Commissioner's Head of Division is the permanent deputy for the Commissioner. The Commissioner and his Executive Officers should have varied professional backgrounds. The rules for the administration of the finances in the Ministries and the rules for the organization and work procedures of the Ministries shall be applicable insofar as possible.

§10 THE ADVISORY PANEL FOR THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN

In connection with the office of the Commissioner a Panel has been established. The Panel is appointed by the Council of State for a period of four years. It consists of six members with personal proxies as well as the Commissioner himself as the head of the Panel.

The Ministry is empowered to make additional appointments if a member or a proxy resigns during the period.

The Panel shall function as an advisory, consultative body for the Commissioner for Children and shall assist the Commissioner in his work by discussing questions concerning the activity of the Commissioner. Both the Commissioner and the rest of the Panel members may take up questions they believe should be discussed. The Commissioner may submit questions on the solution of individual cases also to individual members of the Panel.

The Panel shall not have any externally oriented function, nor any decision-making powers in relation to the Commissioner.

The Panel should meet at regular intervals at least four times a year. If at least two members of the Panel so demand, the Panel shall be summoned to an extraordinary meeting. The summons to the Panel meetings are given by the Commissioner with at least two weeks notice. The agenda and documents in the case shall be sent out at least one week before the meeting.

The Ministry is entitled to take part in the meetings of the Panel.

The Commissioner may permit other people to participate in the meetings.

Minutes shall be kept of the meetings of the Panel.

Composition of the Ombudsman Office

Staff: The Office was set up with a total staff of four including the Ombudsman: one staff member for each one million Norwegian citizens or each 250,000 Norwegian children. The first Commissioner was a psychologist and preschool teacher; other staff have included a sociologist and a jurist.

Advisory Panel: This Panel functions as an advisory, consultative body for the Ombudsman. The Panel has no decision-making power nor any independent function. Its six

members are drawn from various professions, political parties, and cross a wide age-range (though no children are included); there are also six deputy members.

Budget: The budget for fiscal year 1982 was \$175,000, or \$0.15 per Norwegian child. For 1988 the budget was \$268,460, or \$0.24 per child; and the proposal for 1990 was for a total budget of \$490,000, or \$0.45 per child.



TODAY'S NORWEGIAN CHILD

A profile of 'Per' and 'Kari',* the statistically average child

The family: Today's statistically average Norwegian under 18-year-old belongs to a group comprising one quarter of the Norwegian population, and to one of barely 50 per cent of households with children. He or she – a notional 'Per' or 'Kari' – has either an elder or a younger sibling but rarely both: families of three children are increasingly uncommon.

The parents of 'Per' and 'Kari' are probably married, at least if he or she is the elder child and over two years of age. By the time the child has reached the age of 17, the chances are one in four that the parents will have separated.

'Per' and 'Kari' have two aunts or uncles, who with their spouses provide three or four cousins. By contrast, these children's grandparents had 14 aunts and uncles, 28

including spouses, and 65 to 70 cousins; the contemporary family network has shrunk considerably.

If their parents do separate, the chances are high that whether they live with their father or mother, 'Per' and 'Kari' will soon be members of a «complete» family again. Remarriage rates are rising, providing offspring with stepmothers and – fathers, step-aunts and -uncles, step-grandparents, and step-brothers and – sisters as well as half-brothers and -sisters. A new type of extended family network is taking shape.

Child care and employment: The mothers of 'Per' and 'Kari', if employed, can stay at home with full pay until the new child reaches the age of 26 weeks. Their fathers could have taken her place, but pay is based

* all names used are fictitious.



on the mother's salary so the family is likely to lose money if the father takes over at home.

After the 26 weeks are up the mother can have another year of unpaid leave if the parents can afford it. But the mother usually goes back to work, quite often in a part-time capacity.

By the time the child reaches the age of six, she may well be back in full-time employment.

By the time 'Per' and 'Kari' are two years old, their fathers work much more overtime than men with no children or with older children.

School and pre-school years: The chances of the small child going to nursery school are very slim, only one in 10 at the age of two, one in two at the age of six.

Regular school starts at age seven. If both parents are working full-time, the youngster will need private day care in addition since school hours are only two to three hours per day during the first two years.

During the pre-school years, 'Per' and 'Kari' will spend 22 days per year suffering from common childhood diseases; once school begins, the toll will be 15 days per year. Each parent is entitled to 10 days a year at home with a sick child. A single parent can stay with a sick child 20 days, but only until the child is 10 years old. The number of days does not depend on the number of children, and since siblings are rarely ill at the same time, one may occasionally suffer from lack of care.

The child outside school: Very few children die from disease in Norway, but far too many die in accidents, and consequently parents worry if children play outside. They also worry if 'Per' and 'Kari' are home alone. Playmates are hard to find when all families are so small, and the dangers caused by poor planning in their housing area often force children to stay inside for safety.

There are other hazards indoors. Increasing numbers of children can switch on television programmes from all over the world. Is 'Per', for example, watching porn shows from Japan, broadcast at midnight there, but received in the early afternoon in Norway?

'Per' and 'Kari' will go to school at least

until they are 16 years old, probably until the age of 19. Vocational training may preoccupy the final three years. They are likely to live with their parents until they are well over 20 years old since they will not be able to afford a place of their own until they are well established in a job. Their chances of not finding employment are increasing, but are still less than 10 per cent.

Privileged children: 'Per' and 'Kari' are certainly privileged children compared to most others in the world. But they and their parents do have problems, many of which are shared with children in other industrialised societies. Some are created by developments in society over which parents – and much less their children – have little if any control.

Many of these problems could be solved or ameliorated if those in positions of authority were prepared to acknowledge the consequences of societal change for Norway's children. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children seeks to make knowledge of these consequences widespread in Norway, along with information about how they can be addressed.

THE OMBUDSMAN AT WORK

The Ombudsman's caseload

Cases handled by the Ombudsman's Office have risen over an eight-year period, from 763 cases in 1982 to 961 in 1988 (see tables 1 and 2.)

Cases may initiate from the Office itself, or come about as a result of a complaint brought to the Ombudsman by a member of the public. During the course of a year over 2,000 requests for help are brought to the Office, many of which can be met by the straightforward provision of information. Others are identical and can be pooled, such as the case resulting from complaints by 45 individual children on one single day about a cutback on children's TV viewing time because a sporting event over-ran. (The follow-up from the Ombudsman resulted in a general rule according to which children's TV has priority in such situations). Other cases may be turned down or referred elsewhere.

When cases raise issues of general concern, either as individual cases or combined with others, they are given more comprehensive handling. This may lead to state-

ments being addressed to local or national administration, or to proposals for modification of existing legislation or regulations. The complexity of issues raised has increased over time, both within a given subject area – such as children and videos, where the range of inquiries has grown to cover a very wide area – and in the type of issues raised.

Who brings cases to the Ombudsman?

During the first eight years, 80-90 per cent of all complaints came from adults: private individuals (mostly parents), professionals, civil servants, representatives of organisations, and politicians (see table 2).

Complaints from children are often signed by a group whose size is unknown: «All the kids on Mountain Street» or «The 2nd grade of such-and-such school». Children telephoning the Office are often anonymous, as is the group whispering or giggling in the

TABLE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS, REQUESTS ETC.

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1. Case-related		1289	1321	1402	1315	1345	1674
2. Children's rights, situation information		106	131	94	148	151	192
3. Lectures and other public information		263	269	167	195	252	240
4. Information about Ombudsman office/duties		131	131	158	188	182	187
5. Administration budget, staff		64	158	83	67	92	165
6. Others		71	62	61	58	103	83
Total	1641	1924	2072	1965	1971	2125	2641
Breakdown for 1982 is not presented because groups 1 and 2 were then combined (1210) as were groups 5 and 6 (84).							

TABLE 2. FROM WHOM DID CASES COME?

Totals and percentage of annual number of cases.

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988	
	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%
Children	103	12.4	94	11.5	71	9.0	79	9.0	78	9.0	65	7.0
Individual adults	449	54.1	518	63.2	498	62.0	523	61.0	554	63.0	634	66.0
Professionals	60	7.2	38	4.6	26	3.0	22	3.0	34	4.0	73	7.0
Institutions } Schools }	18	2.2	14	1.7	17	2.0	27	3.0	61	7.0	17	2.0
Municipal or county authorities }	29	3.5	19	2.4	36	5.0	42	5.0	42	5.0	20	2.0
National authorities } Ministries, etc. }	38	4.6	26	3.1	31	4.0	37	4.0	31	4.0	47	5.0
Organisations	81	9.8	53	6.5	59	7.0	68	8.0	18	2.0	55	6.0
Others *	8	0.9	9	1.1	11	1.0	7	1.0	5	1.0	5	0.5
Office initiative	44	5.3	49	6.0	49	6.0	50	6.0	54	6.0	45	5.0
Total	830	100	820	100	798	99	855	99	877	101	951	100

* Research, business, mass-media.

background. This makes it difficult to estimate the number of children who have actually been in contact.

The complaints and requests from children themselves are in some respects more important than the complaints from adults. They provide «inside» information, illustrating what it is really like to be a child in Norway. Many of their complaints are different from and more wide-ranging than those presented by adults who do not share their perspective, nor recognise all the situations which might create problems for a child. They also demonstrate how aware children are and how clearly they can formulate their concerns.

Children are also effective in following up: given a place to go with their complaint and some minimal support and information, even young children can and will do a lot on their own behalf. Children also call back to report on their results, which adults rarely bother to do.

Most children contacting the Office are in the 7 to 15 age bracket. Girls outnumber boys by two to one. Very few complaints are received from preschool children, or from other children concerning pre-school children. Yet calls from 3-4 years olds do occur, such as that from a four-year-old who was concerned about her lack of employment since she was too young to go to school and

there was no local kindergarten. (The Office found her a job, visiting an elderly lady neighbour who needed daily contact with people and some milk now and then).

The cases themselves

The cases handled by the Ombudsman fall into six main categories, each comprising roughly one main sector of legislation and existing services. (This is why leisure-time *public* facilities are grouped with pre-schools, even though other leisure-time facilities are included in other categories). The predominant problem areas are associated with the family, with school, and with urban and rural planning.

Actions taken by the Ombudsman fall into three categories: provision of information, so as to facilitate the complainant's efforts to seek a platform or redress; a public statement designed to draw attention to a particular state of affairs or to feed into a policy initiative; a proposal for change in regulations or in legislation.

On many occasions where statements and proposals are concerned, the Ombudsman's Office has not been the only source of suggestions coming forward from public bodies, parliamentary or governmental committees, and in these cases the Ombudsman may support other initiatives or throw

TABLE 3. CASES DISTRIBUTED ACCORDING TO PROBLEM AREAS.

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1. Children in institutions, child welfare, abuse	166	144	153	163	174	196	257
2. Child care, public leisure facilities	65	63	69	70	55	59	78
3. School problems	102	137	136	128	129	130	127
4. Culture and consumer questions	104	88	88	86	79	71	95
5. Family circumstances	194	253	238	242	279	276	294
6. Physical conditions, urban and rural planning	95	118	117	98	112	113	72
7. Miscellaneous	37	27	19	11	27	32	38
Total number of cases	763	830	820	798	855	877	961

The number of cases does not correspond with the number of case-related requests and complaints because very similar requests filed at approximately the same time could be pooled into a single case. Or the Office could raise issues (establishing a case) on its own initiative, without any prior complaint.

its weight behind a particular course rather than seek to steer the course itself.

1. Children whose family setting is abnormal

This category of case includes children who are in some kind of institutional care such as hospitals, or are receiving assistance from child or social welfare systems, in foster homes or in their own homes. Nationally, 1.1 per cent of all children are recipients of some kind of child welfare aid.

The Ombudsman was closely concerned with the child welfare system, and with con-

ditions in children's wards and hospitals. The application of the Penal Code to children also became a major concern. Norway does not have a juvenile court, nor special prisons for young people. Every year, around 30 youngsters aged 14-15 years old are tried by adult courts and imprisoned in adult prisons.

The majority of young law-breakers become clients of the child welfare system or the health services (adolescent psychiatry), but until the end of 1989, Norway was the only country in Scandinavia allowing fourteen-year-olds in prison. The age-limit was finally raised to 15, going into effect 1 January 1990.

Emil (14) was in prison. Denied freedom, he had not been legally denied other rights. But his right to education was being violated since he did not have a teacher, and his visitation rights in relation to his parents were much weaker than those of children of divorced parents. He was allowed one half-hour visit per week from either his parents or a friend.

Grete (16) was pregnant. She wanted to care for her baby and continue her schooling. But she did not want to move to a new foster home in a different town, as decided by the child welfare service. Her present foster home was unable to care for her and her baby. She also felt (correctly) that her opinion was being disregarded, in spite of her age and reasonable objections.

This category also includes all the children who complained to the Ombudsman Office of abuse (with or without good reason). These children are automatically defined as having an abnormal family setting since abuse is itself defined as abnormal. Those who complain are helped to contact the child welfare system.

Action: Abuse within the family is a problem of family conflict, so the Ombudsman is not allowed to intervene, but the Office is able to advise and promote contact between the child and the local child welfare service or other helpers. Abuse cases were also used to illustrate the need for clear legislation which would make the parental use of physical punishment illegal. (Corporal punishment was banned in schools in 1936.)

An amendment to legislation to bring this into force was backed by the Ombudsman. The new legal provision also prohibits «mental abuse and any kind of treatment which endangers the physical or psychological development of the child». The Ombudsman also proposed stronger parental education, in schools, on TV and through campaigns, to help them understand that relinquishing the use of «the rod» did not mean lack of discipline or loss of parental authority, but simply meant doing to children only what was allowed towards adults.

In addition, the Ombudsman supported proposals to strengthen the possibilities for early discovery of abuse and better access to treatment for parents as well as children.

2. Child care

School starts at the age of seven. Only 30 per cent of children under school age go to nursery school, ranging from 4 per cent of the under-ones to 64 per cent of the six-year-olds. Only 15 per cent of the total child pre-school population has day care for six hours per day or more.

Complaints to the Ombudsman mostly concerned the scarcity of nursery schools and kindergartens. Coupled with the high incidence of working parents (60-70 per cent of all mothers work), this shortage of pre-school facilities causes serious problems, both to children and their parents.

Kari (4) was very hard of hearing. Her speech therapist recommended nursery-school, with the therapist there to help 3 mornings a week.

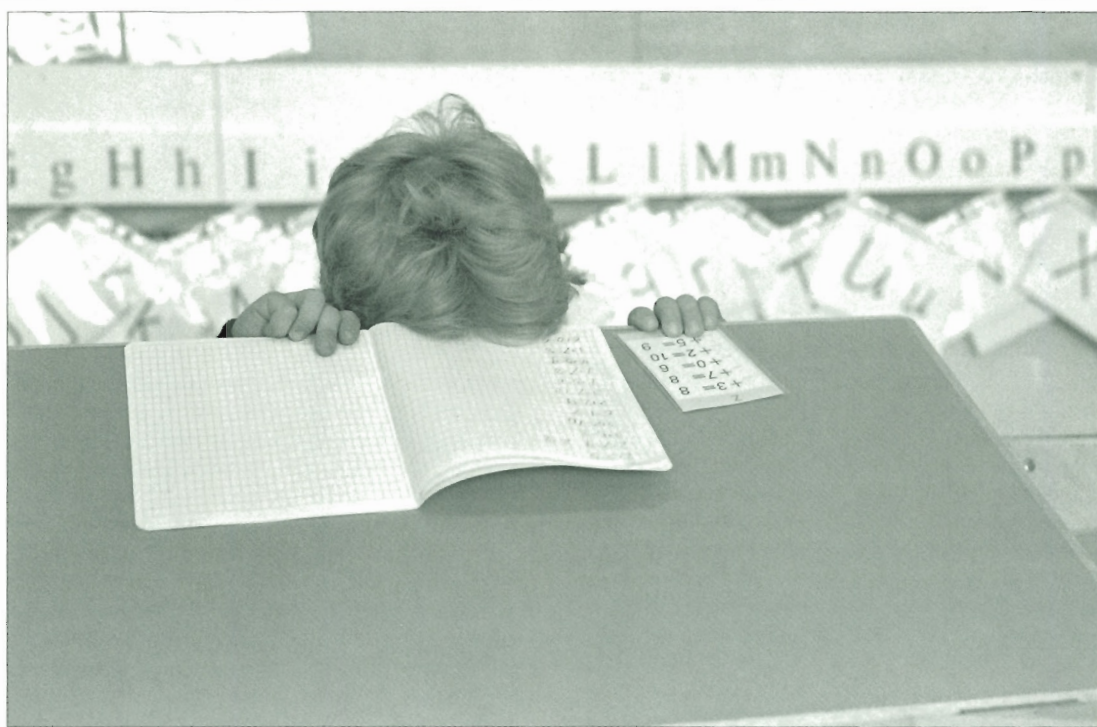
The local authorities, in spite of the priority given to handicapped children by law, denied the application, stating that it would be too expensive. They would let Kari go to nursery-school, but were not prepared to pay for more than a totally untrained helper for 2 hours twice a week.

Action: The actions of the Ombudsman aimed at increasing the number of pre-schools without reducing the quality. The municipalities are obligated to present development plans for preschools, but the obligation does not include following up their plans. The Ombudsman proposed rulings to put pressure on the municipalities in this respect, and insisted that pre-schools should be included in private as well as public plans for housing.

Peter (3) had a malignant tumour in his stomach. His doctors recommended nursery-school, partly to relieve his mother of all-day care and concern. The application was turned down by the local authorities because «except for the lump in his stomach, Peter's mother says that Peter is a perfectly normal child».

An important factor was the «new» need for pre-school experience. This has been created by the diminishing possibilities for social learning in what have become tiny Norwegian families. Major statements from the Ombudsman strongly opposed proposals from both the Labour and the Conservative coalition cabinets to increase the number of children per adult, or reduce the space needed for each child. The statements were circulated to all municipalities. Many elected to stick to the old regulations and keep up the standards of existing pre-schools.

The Ombudsman also supported the successful proposal to increase paid maternity leave from 22 weeks to 26 weeks.



3. School problems

School is compulsory from age seven to age sixteen. The issues which children complain about rarely concern the curriculum, but are most often about teaching and relationships with teachers. Children often complain of unfairness by or conflicts with teachers. (Teachers complain to the Teachers' Union).

The complaints of the children reveal their lack of rights within the school system. In some cases there is little or no reason for having different rules for children and adults. Children also complain about school transportation (that it is non-existent, crowded, uncomfortable or dangerous); and about closure of schools or classes.

Action: On the basis of the complaints received, the Ombudsman asked for a review of children's rights under the School Act. One result was a cooperative statement by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, forbidding the use of the Labour legislation to expel pupils. (See Ole's case).

Inger's class (4th grade) was sent outdoors for fire drill without wearing warm coats in a temperature of minus 20 degrees centigrade. When the rest of the school went inside, Inger's class was not permitted to return, partly to punish them for a misdemeanour, partly to force the individual culprit to confess.

Ole (aged 8) was unruly. He threw a chair against the wall and was expelled. According to the «Protection of employees» Act, work can be stopped if there is a threat to the employees' health or life. So by defining Ole as a threat to the life of his teacher, he had to be removed before work could be resumed. It was obvious that Ole's aggressive behaviour had to be stopped. He needed help. But using the labour legislation to expel him would not resolve either his or his teacher's problems.

Also, the Ombudsman for Public Administration, at the request of his colleague the Ombudsman for Children, reviewed «Eric's» case and determined that being a minor does not justify adult neglect of fair procedures.

Eric (12) had a behaviour problem. A decision was made to transfer him to a different class if he did not improve within 3 months. The following day his teacher threatened to resign and would not enter the classroom as long as Eric, who was not misbehaving, was still there. Rules for handling such disciplinary problems require, among other measures, that the parents are warned of intended actions, given an opportunity to participate in the discussions, and, finally, are warned before decisions are carried out. In Eric's case, neither these nor other rules of procedure were respected.

The Ombudsman also supported proposals for longer school hours, but pointed out that plans for incorporating activities such as Scouts or football practice (to expand hours in school without increase of charged expenses) might be unrealistic: adults are not available in regular working hours to serve as leaders.

Some children protested when the Ombudsman pointed out the problems arising from the fact that children have eight to nine weeks of summer vacation, whereas their parents have only three. They did not welcome any response which appeared to suggest less vacation; but they did agree that longer school-days would enable them to spend less time alone at home.

4. Cultural and consumer questions

This area mainly concerns the impact of mass media, and problems with toys or other play facilities. In this context the home is defined as a product used by children, and home accident prevention falls into this category.

Typical complaints from children included demands for *more* children's TV – more cartoons, more special programmes, more

nature films. Their parents asked for *less*, less violence, fewer adult programmes broadcast at times when children were watching, a later hour for newscasts. Parents also complained that children were frightened by videos; they wanted restrictions on availability and better age-grading.

Children complained of dangerous toys and sports equipment. They also complained if their youth-clubs were closed or hours reduced because of local service economies.

Action: The Ombudsman initiated, or contributed to, a very wide range of activities concerning the protection of children from the negative effects of TV and videos, but except in leading to widespread public discussion and an increased awareness by parents of the possible threats, these actions were largely unsuccessful.

The complexity of activities grew over time to include the development of a wide-ranging set of proposals encompassing age-limits (on videos as well as on the right to acquire them); rules for distribution; statements on three major reports with legislative proposals to Parliament (including restrictive measures if advertisements are to be allowed in future); research surveys on the impact of video and TV on children of different ages; lectures all over the country promoting local surveys into video viewing by young people.

Lars (8) wanted war and violence-related toys forbidden by law. He said it was silly that children had video games teaching them to kill other people. **Peter (13)** told of video games which invited the player to engage in all kinds of sexual behaviour. **Anne (15)** reported a fight where a friend had used «a toy knife, like Rambo's» to strike down a peer, and had gone into mental shock when he realised that the friend would not get up and leave the scene, as he would have on TV.

However, these activities bore little fruit. For example, the Norwegian Broadcasting Company did not respond positively to the idea of moving the main newscast to a later hour; nor was it willing to inform parents of

age-limits for films; nor produce parent-education programmes. Parliament has not been willing to age-grade videos nor establish an age-limit for acquiring videos. Parliament has not yet established a new TV channel with advertisements but has accepted the possibility.

However, pornography involving children has been outlawed, and the Norwegian Press Association has strengthened the rules concerning the use of pictures and «sob» stories about children.

To prevent accidents in the home, the Ombudsman put forward a set of rules connected with the Building Law. These were adopted in 1989, providing a higher degree of safety at least in new houses. The rules cover matters such as distances between bannister-rods and stair-treads, and the use of break-proof glass in doors. Although a step in the right direction the rules still lack the necessary safeguards for bathrooms and kitchens.

Measures involving the safety of toys and sports equipment were supported by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman supported restrictions on war- and violence-related toys not so much because of the physical harm they might cause but because of the attitudes engendered by encouraging children to use aggressive means of solving conflicts.

5. Family circumstances

This category includes problems following divorce, conflicts with neighbours, family fin-

Arne (11) wanted to live with his father not his mother after his parents' divorce. It was decided, however, that he would live with his mother as a way of ensuring that he would see both parents. After a couple of years, his mother moved to a different part of the country and Arne, who still wanted to live with his father, had to run away from his mother just to be able to see him. Bjørn (9) wanted regular contact with his father. This was a right he did not have because the parents had not lived together after Bjørn was born. But Bjørn had the same need to know his father as other children have, and felt it was unfair that he was denied rights other children had.

ances, housing, and labour and includes the largest number of cases.

The divorce rate is 20 per cent in Norway and cohabitation with a new partner and remarriage is on the increase. The number of requests from children (and adults) concerning the consequences of divorce was the largest group of requests altogether (see table 2). However, the Ombudsman is only empowered to give legal information to children, and advice about where to go for help; all requests for intervention in a family's affairs are automatically turned down.

Berit (13) wanted visitation rights with her step-father after her mother divorced him. They had been married for 12 years, and although he had not adopted her, Berit considered him to be her father. She felt it was unfair that - because visitation rights are tied to legal parentage - she would have no right to see «father».

Many children were concerned about their right to use their own money, to make their own decisions about clothes and friends. There were also complaints about neighbours who forbade games outside their houses or applied rules about such games unfairly.

Action: In relation to problems arising out of family break-down, the Ombudsman did propose changes in divorce procedures to improve the consideration of children's rights. Instead of the formal mediation now practised, the Ombudsman suggested counselling on the arrangements planned for the children, as is now being tried in at least one county. It was also proposed that children should be able to have their own spokesman in court since Norway does not have a family court system. Counselling to help solve problems arising after the divorce was also recommended.

Marit (9) phoned to tell us that she was dreading her 10th birthday. She was sick in bed and had realised that when she was 10, her mother could not longer stay home from work to care for her when Marit was ill.

Among other proposals for legal amendment, the Ombudsman has supported or suggested measures such as parental rights for paid leave of absence while children are quite small or when children are sick, as well as stronger measures to help the economy of families with young children.

6. Physical conditions, urban and rural planning

Norway has an accident rate twice as high as that of Sweden. Accidents are the most important single cause of deaths of children under 14. At least one in seven children is seriously hurt each year. Four-fifths of the accidents occur in or near the home, in part due to poor planning for the combination of traffic and children, and also to inadequate safety measures in both the home and the street.

Gunnar complained when a road was built across the playground of his school. Torild complained when a bus route was changed to cross the playground. Berte and her friends complained when «the bumps and zebra stripes» were removed from their school-crossing following a campaign by bus drivers.

Marit warned us of plans to have a playground built in a landslide area; Paul of another planned for a swamp; Anne of a nursery school planned in the buffer-zone between a housing development area and a garbage plant. All of these areas were described in the local planning documents as «unfit for human habitation», but they were obviously suitable for children.

Children complained when play areas, whether designated as such or not, were threatened or destroyed. Parents complained of accident risks because of poor planning for children in general.

Action: One of the major achievements of the Ombudsman was the proposal and subsequent adoption by Parliament of changes in the Building and Planning Act, making it compulsory for all local Building Boards to

Regulations for a housing project sent to the Ombudsman by a group of children.

1. Children are not allowed to scribble on walls.
2. Children are not allowed to make noise in the corridors.
3. Children are not allowed to play in the building except in their own apartments.
4. Children are not allowed to hang around outside other apartments.
5. Children are forbidden to play outside entrances to the building other than their own.
6. Children who leave belongings outside will have those belongings placed in the garbage containers.
7. Children must not use tricycles or bicycles on the walkways.
8. Children must not step on the grass or flower-beds. There were no corresponding rules for adults.

appoint a special representative for children's interests. This representative is responsible for over-seeing every plan, from tiny changes of previously approved plans to municipal development programmes, while taking children's needs and interests into consideration. County authorities may turn down any plan where this element is missing. National guidelines for planning for children were also adopted.

EXPERIENCES OF THE FIRST OMBUDSMAN

How is the Office of Ombudsman perceived?

The Office of Ombudsman for Children has only been established for eight years, which is not a long time set against the lengthy period of the legislative process. To change attitudes and opinions in the population at large and among decision-makers takes even longer. Bearing in mind that the Office of Ombudsman had to overcome initial skepticism about its value and potential effectiveness, the first aim was to establish for the Office a permanent status and a public image.

A public opinion poll carried out in November 1989 showed that 74 per cent of a random population sample (all over 15 years of age) knew about the Office; 83 per cent of these felt that the Office was useful and that it should continue. Only 2 per cent felt that its continued existence was not justified.

Considering that the majority in Parliament and in the Council of State during 1981 to 1986 was composed of the parties that had voted against the Office in March 1981, it was not to be expected that the political response to the Ombudsman's initiatives during this time would be met with warm support. When a Labour Cabinet took over in 1986, the Office was well established.

The new Cabinet proposed and Parliament (with a conservative majority) accepted a 25 per cent increase in the Ombudsman's budget for 1989, and a new increase of 50 per cent was proposed for 1990. This was at a time when the majority of budgets were being cut. The proposal also involved an expansion of the staff to five or six people.

The 1989 opinion poll showed little contrast between the views of people belonging to different political parties. The highest percentage opposed to the Office were among members of the most conservative party; but even in this case the proportion was only 10 per cent whereas 65 per cent felt that the Office is useful. Eighty to ninety per cent of voters for parties opposed to the Office of

Ombudsman in 1981 now support it. There is no doubt that the Ombudsman for Children is considered permanent.

The achievements of the Ombudsman

The achievements of an office like the Ombudsman's cannot easily be measured quantitatively. Changes in governmental or social service response to problems stem from a number of factors and have to be viewed in relation to prevailing conditions within a given society.

For example, the increase from 22 to 26 weeks of paid maternity leave after the birth of a child would seem very insignificant indeed to the Swedes, who can stay at home with pay for 18 months; but in the United States, where few parents have any such legal rights at all, they would definitely appear striking.

There is no doubt that the Ombudsman has been of help in many individual cases. Children who asked for help often called back to report. Political bodies do not inform the Ombudsman of the outcome of a case nor of the use made of information or advice. Newspaper clippings do provide an indication of the impact of the Ombudsman's interventions, and the number specifically mentioning the Office has doubled since 1982. A striking change has been that of focus. Instead of being requested for information about the Office, most reporters now require responses with information about policy, advice, or data about children and children's issues. The feed-back on the impact of material provided to municipalities, counties and other similar groups is, however, minimal. With a total staff of four people, the Office has not had the capacity to investigate or follow up cases. (Since 1989 some follow-up has been carried out by people outside the Office.)

On the national level it is easier to gauge the Ombudsman's impact. Legislative amendments are reported in the mass media, even if their progress is slow. The Ombudsman is now frequently invited to give opinions in committee hearings, before poli-



tical groups, or to individual Members of Parliament, reflecting a strong increase in the stature and professional regard in which the Office is held. Votes on the budget are also important indications of the change of attitude on the highest level.

To judge the exact import of the Ombudsman's role in any single change is, of course, a subjective exercise. The Ombudsman works in many cases closely with non-governmental organisations, and their influence can sometimes be equally or more significant. The key areas in which the Ombudsman's role has been influential in emphasising the special interests of children, as detailed above, are in relation to videos; urban and rural planning; accident-prevention in the home; the rights of the child in school; the rights of children and divorce.

In addition there is clear public recognition of the role of the Ombudsman in achieving the following measures:

- Legislation prohibiting physical punishment, and physical and psychological treatment threatening the physical or psychological development of children. This prohibition includes parents, but provides for treatment rather than penalty unless the parental behaviour is so harsh that the case must be tried according to the Penal Code;
- New regulations concerning the rights of hospitalised children, giving the child the right to have parents with him/her at all times and the right to pre-school, grade-school, or special education while in hospital;
- Raising the age at which young people can be tried and sentenced by adult courts and imprisoned in adult prisons;
- Building regulations for safe housing and accident prevention in the home;
- Regulations for child safety in automobiles;
- National guidelines for taking the needs of children into consideration in all urban and rural planning;
- Legislative recognition of children's right to know both their parents, regardless of marital status or whether the parents actually lived together at all after the child was born.

The past eight years have seen general reductions in national and local budgets

coupled with a great increase in the population of people over 60 years old. In spite of these trends, concern for children has not decreased. There is no doubt that children are on the Norwegian public agenda, and that the Ombudsman for Children, originating with political ambivalence and public ignorance, is now established as a valuable and trustworthy advocate for the younger generation.

Lessons learned from experience

The Ombudsman for Children Act and the Instructions are the basis for the work of the Ombudsman Office. Certain features of the Act and the Instructions characterise the differences between this Office and other mechanisms for child advocacy.

The key components of the Act and the Instructions in terms of their importance in enabling the Office to carry out its functions are as follows:

- **Official status:** Since the Office was established by Act of the Storting (Parliament), the Ombudsman has official status and is permanent until Parliament revokes the Act regardless of shifting political majorities. By establishing the Office, the Storting gave official recognition to the need for child advocacy.
- **Independence from Parliamentary instruction:** In spite of the fact that Parliament established the Office and provides its annual budget, Parliament cannot instruct the Ombudsman. Nor can any other body or individual decide what the Ombudsman can do or how the Ombudsman shall carry out the responsibilities outlined in the Act.

The Ombudsman has by legislative consent an obligation to criticise any group, organisation or person, with the exception of parents in their role as parents, who disregards or downgrades the interests of children regardless of other considerations. This means that the Ombudsman can raise issues that others, because of prior political loyalties to party positions, are not in a position to raise. The «corporal punishment» rule could not have been raised by members of the

Conservative cabinet or the Ministries under its administration. Nor could child welfare workers have done so since proposals from them would have had to go through the appropriate Ministry channels.

Since the Ombudsman is free to handle any case or problem in any way, he or she can alert a member of Cabinet, Members of Parliament, top-level officials, or members of the public by issuing opinions and statements to the mass media irrespective of political consent. In one case, demands for better physical conditions for the pupils in a school had been circulated through ten local and national agencies before reaching the Ombudsman, who sent the problem to a Cabinet member. It was passed back and forth between various Ministries until the Ombudsman intervened again, requesting a Member of Parliament to address the problem by asking a parliamentary question.

In other cases opinions on confidential proposals (e.g. from a Ministry) could be reformulated and presented to the press without mention of the proposal, in an effort to sound out opinion and to project an alternative point of view.

- **Release from confidentiality:** The right to relieve others of their oath of confidentiality, combined with the Ombudsman's right to protect sources of information, has made a vital contribution to the effectiveness of the Ombudsman's activities.
- **Not a court of appeal:** The absolute rule against handling individual cases of family conflict means that the Ombudsman cannot serve as a court of appeal for other institutions – primarily the courts – dealing with family conflict. The prohibition does not however prevent the Ombudsman from dealing with the general issues involved. These include the procedures for divorce, the child's right to have a spokesman in court, the need for pre-divorce counselling, the child's right to have access to both parents, and other post-divorce issues, as outlined above.
- **Supremacy of children's interests:** Finally, and most important, the Office has

– and must have – the interests of the child and no other interest as the origin, focus, and goal of all its work. The Ombudsman is not suspected of serving any other purpose, particularly since the Office is legislatively and financially independent. The Office has no obligation to balance the interests of children against other interests, such as those of the elderly, or to argue the merits of budgetary expenditures on different social interests.

Some personal observations

During the early years of the new Office, the Ombudsman developed certain informal guidelines based on experience to facilitate smooth and effective handling of cases. The following principles emerged:

- The need to be realistic: ideal solutions may be unobtainable, and will not sway public opinion if obviously unrealistic. The statements of the Office must be based on factual knowledge, not hearsay, feelings or private opinions.
- The need to avoid party political identification: the Office quickly realised the pitfall of voicing opinions clearly identifiable with a particular party. Any statement given could be met with approval by one party or another, but the total picture could not be identified as «belonging» to any single party. Particularly in cases where there is no clear empirical evidence to show what is in the best interests of children, the Ombudsman must be careful to present opinions which are based on sound professional reasoning. Any other course of action would rapidly weaken the influence of the Office. The need to avoid political party identification did not mean that the Office could not give opinions on politically sensitive issues. An example of one such issue was whether or not donors in artificial fertilisation programmes should remain anonymous. The Ombudsman's opinion – that the names of donors should be «frozen» until experience could show how many children would later want this information and research could show the importance to a child of the availability of this knowledge – was not agreed by any

political party.

The Ombudsman also avoided giving an opinion on whether nursery schools and kindergartens should be in the private or public sector, a question of heated political debate; the statement that all children need peer group experience before the age of seven is a statement of need, without political overtones.

- The need to reinforce the interests of parents: while the interests of children are the Ombudsman's starting point, the interests of parents are in many contexts inseparable from the interests of children. One of the arguments against es-

tablishing the Office of Ombudsman was the fear that it would invade the responsibilities of parents. The Office has set out to prove the opposite: that improving the situation of parents to enable them to function more effectively as parents is bound to benefit their children.

Changes in society create problems for families. In today's world not all the needs of children can be met at home, nor can parents on their own meet all these needs. Parents with children and full-time jobs are poorly represented in local and national decision-making. Parents as well as children need spokesmen on their behalf.



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Biographical note

Born in Oslo, Norway 1936. Preschool Teachers' College in Denmark 1957-59. University degree in clinical and developmental psychology, Oslo 1967. Post-graduate training in child and family therapy in Norway and USA. Licenced as specialist of clinical psychology, 1973. Worked in institutions for child and adolescent psychiatry, for the mentally retarded, and as preschool psychologist, 1968-1981. Municipal-level politician, 1972-1985. Secretary-General for OMEP, (Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Préscolaire) 1964-1969, for IACAPAP (International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions) 1986-1989. Norwegian Ombudsman for Children, 1981-1989. Currently Senior Fellow, UNICEF, International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy, engaged to write an analytical evaluation of the Norwegian Ombudsman experience.

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