

## **Power Booklet**

### **A quick DIY on how to obtain real personal power**

**Women are working towards personal power now. When women get within reach of real power there is a tendency for this power to shift somewhere else. We shall find out just where!**

**There are innumerable traps on the road towards increased and fair power for women. This handbook identifies the traps and provides a guide on how we can avoid or eliminate them.**

## **Power is a fine thing!**

Let us begin by making something very clear – power is not ugly or shameful. That is as long as it is not abused. Power is something fine, important and useful to have for all of us who want to right wrongs and to achieve change.

Power must be handled with care and with a large portion of human insight and wisdom. We have all seen what can happen when men are allowed to manage positions of power in the banking, finance and business sectors.

Men just cannot manage it on their own! We have seen all too many examples of power users-examples they can look up to. This is the only way to stop the abuse of power.

Women must, therefore, shoulder responsibility for at least half the power in all decision-making bodies.

Power enables us to exercise influence and to effect change, at the same time as we must be prepared to accept responsibility for the decisions which we help to push through.

If you are a woman, if you are prepared to shoulder more power and responsibility then you should read on.

Otherwise you can lend this book to another woman for a short time.

Think carefully about the implications of having power. Start getting used to the thought that you are prepared to demonstrate clearly that you are able to have a position of power. Don't duck the issue of power. Go for it!

- I am prepared to become a member of an executive board.
- I am prepared to take on the responsibilities of chairperson.

## **Half the places to women, everywhere!**

Make a careful analysis of the power structure in your local municipal council or in your organization. Where are the most important decisions made? Is there a shortage of women in that body? The answer to that question is usually "Yes". Ensure that women candidates can be launched most successfully for those posts. Who is the most suitable? Draw up a list of merits and experience. Remember, no man is born to the position of member of the local council's

executive committee, to take one example. But both have equally good qualifications for the job.

**Act as follows:**

- Find out what the most important decision-making levels are.
- Check to find out if there is a lack of women's representation.
- Draw up a strategy for increasing the number of women in that body.
- Draw up a list of names and qualifications.

## **Learn the rules of the game!**

A lot can be lost if you do not know how decisions are made.

The procedural rules for opposing a motion are not easy to grasp unless you have gone to all the trouble of finding out just how different proposals can be presented. One good way of avoiding unpleasant surprises is to hold a preparatory session before important meetings. Make sure that you have a woman with plenty of experience of the many twists and turns in decision-making procedure along with you. She can explain what can be expected and what women can propose in the various steps of procedure.

Important decisions can be made in short sharp coup unless someone keeps a keen eye on procedure and ensures that the decision-making process follows another path. Procedural rules and formalities are not something women can afford ignore.

They are, moreover, not as complicated as they appear. Following a pattern for sewing a jacket is much more demanding.

It is vitally important to have power over how decisions are made. Otherwise all other good preparations can be in vain.

**Act as follows:**

- Arrange preparatory sessions and go through imaginable scenarios.
- Establish good contacts with women who have a lot of political experience and who can help you learn.
- Start up a study group on advanced procedural rules.

## **Get women to the top the lists!**

Lists with women (or men) in every second place are alright but the lists must have a woman at the top just as often as they have a man. A list with a man in first place will lead to a trojka with two men and one woman. This trojka is more often than not the presidium or executive committee, in other words the forum where questions are prepared, where the agenda is drawn up and where many decisions are made which are not put to the board or committee.

Another important reason for having women at the top is the risk that the first three or five or perhaps even the first name only will, in reality, stand a chance of election. If all the lists are always topped by a man we will never achieve a fair distribution of seats, no matter how much we alternate the names on the lists. Getting a woman at the top of at least half of all the lists is therefore necessary.

### **Act as follows:**

- Propose a ruling whereby two lists are drawn up, one headed by a man and the other headed by a woman.
- Demand that the central body of the party or organisation is made responsible for enduring that there is an equal number of lists headed by men and women.
- Launch the top women candidates in the local media with good photographs and names. This usually surprises everyone, since it is so unusual.
- Make sure that your leading women are known. Make sure that their presence is felt long before the election, by getting them into articles in the press, letters to the press, public statements etc. It is not at all difficult.

## **Volunteer as a member of the nominations committee!**

One of the most important posts is membership of the nominations committee. The nominations committee presents the executive with a list of suitable candidates for various posts. More women must be members of the nominations committee. Women in the nominations committee should draw up a common strategy for how women candidates should be launched, and which woman should be promoted. It is important that the ground is well prepared. Candidates should be contacted well before the nominations, and given time to prepare. Draw up a list of merits and experience. Present the list to the nominations

committee. Make sure that all the woman on the committee speak up and back the list. Women must support one another more in every possible situation.

**Act as follows:**

- Let it be known that you are interested in sitting on the nominations committee.
- Make sure that more women join the committee.
- Draw up a joint plan of action for all the women on the committee, aimed at getting more women elected and agreeing on which women to nominate.

## **Take over the chair!**

The job of the chair is to steer the decision-making, to make some decisions on his/her own, to decide on the agenda etc. The chairperson has important powers. Half of those powers belong to women. Ensure that the election of the chair is well prepared.

Draw up a list of all the women who are suitable chairpersons. Invite all of them to a meeting where you discuss the plan of action. Ensure that all the people on the list are informed as to what chairmanship entails, and how their candidatures will be launched. Many people worry about being chairperson. They imagine it will be difficult and time-consuming.

Appoint a mentor, a woman chairperson with experience. Her job is to encourage, teach and support the new chairwomen. She will feel proud of acting as their mentor!

Enrol the support of a good woman journalist in launching the new women chairpersons. Journalists know how to launch candidates in the most effective fashion. Women must get used to being seen and also get themselves a stronger profile. It must be made clear what they intend to use positions of power to achieve.

Short, regular training sessions in speaking in public, appearing in the media, and the art of writing good articles are things we all need. Back to women journalists again! Get a course going. Not only chairpersons-to-be but also lots of other women will come along if they receive a personal invitation.

**Act as follows:**

- Draw up a list of suitable candidates for chairs and specify their merits.
- Arrange a training program in speech-making, writing and media strategy.
- Appoint a chairperson-mentor.
- Launch your candidates in a state-of-the-art fashion.

## **Launch women candidates!**

Make a careful and considered choice of candidates you wish to promote. The choice should be realistic. The probability of success must be reasonably Certain. Launch her in good time before the meeting at which the new members or the new chairperson will be elected to the executive. Draw up a list of her merits and experience. Contact women who will attend the meeting and argue in favour of your candidate. Make sure that there will be mostly women attending the meeting. (Not all that difficult in view of the few who attend meetings.)

Launch your candidate in the local press, thus ensuring that the self-appointed male candidate finds it difficult to be elected or even re-elected. Make sure that your candidate gets an article published in the local newspaper a day or so before the election. Give your candidates strong support. Make them visible. Write letters to the press about them. Talk positively about them.

Demand that party organisations name their candidates to standing committees and chairs before the elections take place. This ensures that the voters get a clear picture of all the positions to be filled and that in itself should lead to more women getting in. Women have a lot to gain from being visible to the voters before the election. Arrange for training programs for would-be committee or board members. Everyone must know what a position on a committee entails. Over the past few years we have seen several examples of people joining boards and committees with no appreciation of the seriousness or responsibility of their position. We women without the golden handshakes- must obviously shoulder our responsibility.

**Act as follows:**

- Establish good contacts with women journalists.
- Draw up a list of all the candidates you can think of and their merits
- Make sure that you have good photographs of your candidates for the media launch.
- Arrange for the press conferences at which you can present your candidates.

**Take over within the parties!**

More and more parties realise that their lists of candidates must have men and women in alternate order. What none of the parties fully understand, is that this is not enough in order to establish an image of credibility for the party.

A party which alternates its lists but continues to be led by men, to use the language of men, to exclude the example of women, and which fails to focus on political issues of interest and importance for women, will never win credibility in the eyes of women. It is not enough with a good stage decor.

Political parties must be consistent in achieving a distribution of power in all the areas of power, both formal and informal. This requires more than the setting-up of strategic planning groups or campaign committees led by men and including a few women to give some measure of balance to the work and discussions in the group.

An uneven gender profile among full-time party officials and political secretaries, people who work backstage and hold considerable informal power, is a decided disadvantage.

It is mainly men who look after the PR, propaganda and information work of the political parties. Men shape the images of politicians, political parties and decide which parts of the parties' programs should be communicated to the public. This is one centre of power which women must take over.

With female PR assistants, the images of our parties and our politicians would be very different. And much more fun as well!

- If men are in the majority, refuse to accept the appointment of one more man.
- Demand a list of suitable women candidates for a job. Get out and find the women who haven't yet found their way to you.

## **Master the five methods of dominance – on your five fingertips!**

There are a number of methods used by men – consciously and unconsciously – to ensure dominance by men over female culture. Professor Berit Ås, from Norway, has divided these methods into five main groups:

1. Making women invisible
2. Making women ridiculous or belittling women

3. Withholding information
4. Double punishment of women
5. Burdening women with guilt and shame

You must grasp what these methods entail and learn to see when these methods of dominance are used towards you or against other women. Learn each method's specific number and use one or more fingers to indicate to your colleagues which method is being applied at the meeting you are attending. The following brief descriptions of these five methods of dominance give you some idea of how to identify them.

## **Making women invisible**

This wordless method of dominance is used when people (for "people" red men) do not listen to what you have to say, when they start looking through their papers, talking to one another, or excuse themselves and visit the lavatory. We women often raise issues, which are different from those raised by men because we live under different conditions. Men fail to recognise women's description of the situation and choose not to listen or get involved. There are innumerable examples of women who have had to listen to the question "Are you sitting here all on your own, girls?"

Being made invisible is a devastating method of dominance. A person who is not seen or listened to feels diminished and unimportant and may well choose not to continue their involvement in working for change.

### **Act as follows:**

- Make it clear that you are aware of the method being used, and that you refuse to accept it.
- Demand attention and demand that all others listen! One good way of doing this, is to pause till all the shuffling of papers and murmuring has stopped.
- If they do not understand you, use the same technique on a man the next time round. Be very clear about what you are doing in order to make your point with the others.



- Train your voice. A distinct clear voice is not easily ignored.

## **Making Women ridiculous/Belittling women**

This particular technique is well known because of its refinement in being funny at the expense of women. The whole point of the exercise is to denigrate women and the efforts of women. This particular method of dominance contains a wide range of demeaning statements about amusing little blondes and hysterical old wives. Further examples are unnecessary.

Act as follows:

- Make it very clear that you refuse to accept such treatment.
- Answer in the same way. Never laugh along with the macho jokes. Especially not when the jokes is attach expense of another woman. Be responsible for one another.
- Stare whit a look of sheer amazement in your eyes at the perpetrator of the demeaning joke. Do everything to create an embarrassing silence. Turn to another woman and ask pointedly “What on earth I he trying to say?”

## **3. Withholding information**

By withholding information, people can be very effectively kept in the dark This happens to women quit often. I the sauna room or changing rooms the boys make deals, consciously or unconsciously. What happens at the following meeting – when the women are present – is that decisions are quickly ratified. The women aren’t given a chance to discuss what the boys have already decided on in a smaller group. The boys never can understand why the women must always nag and lengthen the meetings, why the women just can not manage to be that little bit more “decision/potent”.

Act as follows:

- Demand extensive background information to the decision-making.

- Demand that important issues that require more preparatory study be postponed till the next meeting.
- Ensure that you get the information you need by other means, such as your own contact net.

## **4. Double punishment!**

No matter how hard you try, things often go wrong! This, in a nutshell, is the method of dominance known as double punishment. Women often suffer from a bad conscience about everything. They should almost always be somewhere else. At work, with the kid or with their husbands. The stress of this is insufferable. Worst of all is the feeling of not being good enough. Women are accused, often indirectly, by those surrounding them, of failing to be worthwhile mums especially when they get involved in their jobs or in politics. At the same time, they have to put up with criticism for a lack of involvement when they choose to put their home lives or families first. When they choose both they face dissatisfaction on all sides.

Women want nothing better than to be able to combine family life with working life and they have every right to say “No” both in the home and at work! Men, unlike women, seldom face this sort of double punishment. They find it more that often a matter of course that they can say “Yes” and “No” in the home! This situation is both unacceptable and unfair. Women must have the same rights as men to a decent working life and family life.

### **Act as follows:**

- Choose your husband with extreme care.
- Choose your boss with extreme care.
- Demand of your boss that he/she accepts a No – or a Yes – without the usual punishment in the form of no promotion.
- Draw up “an agreement” with your husband or partner giving you the right to work politically.

## **5. Burdening with guilt and shame**

This particular method of dominance is the most confusing of them all. Women who are the victims of humiliating treatment or abuse of some kind develop a sense of guilt for what has happened.

It is often said that “she” only has herself to blame for herself or her behavior. “She” more or less asked for it!

This sort of judgement often leads to women believing that the critics are right. It’s probably all my own fault. I have only myself to blame. This sort of thinking leads many women to blame themselves for what has happened regardless of whether it can be justified or not. In this case it is important to analyse the situation and form a realistic opinion of what has in fact happened. Above all realise that there is no reason to feel guilty.

**Act as follows:**

- Contact a close friend and analyze the situation together.
- Get your friends to defend you.
- In other cases make sure you defend other women who are victimized.
- Get rid of your guilt feelings by trying to form a clear picture of the underlying pattern.
- Get back at the person who put the blame on you. Show them what actually happened.

**Keep this power handbook available in your handbag. Make sure you read it often. Slowly, but surely, you will discover that power is something fine, fun and very useful.**

**You will also quickly and effectively learn to expose those barriers and forces, which block your path towards greater power over your own life.**

**Good Luck!**

