‘A Mere Ribbon of Silk’?
The Abolition of the Norwegian Nobility 1814-1824

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Abstract
The Norwegian Constitution of May 1814 contained several radical provisions. Paragraphs 23 and 108 prohibited the king to create new nobility or bestow other hereditary privileges. While an overwhelming majority at the Constitutional Assembly voted to restrict aristocracy, existing noble families were allowed to retain some of their privileges. This article identifies these families and states what the privileges involved. In November 1814 Norway entered a forced union with Sweden. The remaining rights of the nobility and the institution itself caused dissent between parliament and the Swedish King. In 1816, 1818 and 1821 parliament voted to abolish aristocracy. On the first two occasions the King vetoed the bill, but he reluctantly sanctioned it in 1821. This was because the constitution had established a mechanism whereby parliament could override the royal veto. In return for the king’s sanction, parliament accepted the principle of compensation for lost noble rights and agreed to consider a proposal by the king to institute a new order of nobility without legal privileges. The latter was rejected in 1824 with reference to the constitution. The constitution was thus vital at every stage in abolishing the nobility.

Keywords
Norwegian Constitution, nobility, noble privileges, Norwegian Parliament, Carl Johan

To an even greater extent than Denmark and Sweden, Norway is known for its egalitarianism. As noted by Ulf Torgersen, the country has no social register, hardly any exclusive clubs, few private schools, no real rival to 'Epsom, Henley, or the Grand National' and there are no society pages in Norwegian newspapers (Torgersen 1974: 208, 209). Honorary orders survived the Constitutional Assembly at Eidsvoll, but in a 1912 vote there was a convincing majority against them in parliament. They only continued because a two-thirds majority was required to alter the constitution. This shows the importance of the Constitutional Assembly in shaping future conditions. Although it accepted non-hereditary honours, it was decidedly against the use of these in daily life. The most significant milestone in Norway's journey towards formal equality before the law, and a high measure of social equality too, was the founding fathers' decision to restrict aristocracy.

The 112 delegates to the Constitutional Assembly were scions of the Danish absolute monarchy. They met under terms of formal equality, one man one vote, but the nomenclature of the regime under which they had grown up continued to prevail. Elected by a free vote, the fifteen members of the vital constitutional committee, which actually drafted the constitution, contained two nobles, four knights, one other courtier, three clergymen, three civil servants, one other officer and one professor (Den Norske Rigs-Forsamlings Forhandlinger 1814:27). These were the men entrusted with setting the principles by which the new state would be governed. But since Norway had been the lesser of the two kingdoms in the Danish union, it had a lower density of men of rank. This was acknowledged by the constitutional committee, which did not wish to institute a social order of fine gradations in those days of revolution and enlightenment. On the question of honours, its draft, in paragraph 37 of the document, thus stated that while the king could confer titles, none of these could be hereditary, grant immunity to common duties or involve preferment to the offices of the state. No noble privileges could be granted in the future (Fortsættelse af Den Norske Rigsforsamlings 1814: 19). This formulation severely curtailed the institution of the nobility. With no possibility of new entrants, the old first estate of the realm was moribund.

This article will chart the debate at the Constitutional Assembly

relating to aristocracy. As we shall see, the issue proved too divisive for immediate resolution at Eidsvoll. Therefore we will follow it to the parliament (called *Storting*) which the founding fathers set up. In order to understand better what Norwegian aristocracy involved, we will detail what privileges the nobility held and estimate the number of families benefiting. Although there was a broad consensus that aristocracy should not be a feature of the new state, there were shades of opinion on what to do about already existing privileges. The whole issue led to a longer debate at Eidsvoll than on anything else, only surpassed by the exact terms under which military service should take place. Military service was a more pressing concern because Norway had been ceded by Denmark to Sweden in the Treaty of Kiel of January 1814. This was against the wishes of most Norwegians. That spring the likelihood of confrontation with Sweden was overwhelming, and did indeed come to pass in July and August. Once the Swedish forces had forced the Norwegian army to agree to an armistice, the egalitarianism of the founding fathers received a blow because the institution of aristocracy was much stronger in Sweden. The new union with Sweden might also embolden hitherto passive supporters of nobility. This was not in fact the outcome, but the abolition of the nobility caused great tension between parliament and the Swedish King. The Crown Prince Carl Johan succeeded his adopted father Carl XIII in 1818. Due to the latter's infirmity, Carl Johan was in charge after 1810, so that later we will simply refer to the 'king' (Glenthøj 2008: 154, 155).

The Norwegian Nobility

Before returning to the debate at Eidsvoll, a better perspective will be gained if something is said about what the noble privileges involved. How widely had such rights been granted? The first estate, i.e. the nobility, was a small class in Norway. Medieval noble families had either died out or been forced by penury into the third estate of the peasantry. Janusz Mallek notes that there were about twenty noble families in Norway in 1661, the year in which the Danish King, Frederik III, required their attendance in Christiania to swear fealty to him (Mallek 2001: 77). He had instituted the absolute monarchy the year

before, which ended elections to the kingship and reduced the power of the aristocracy. On 24 June 1661 the king codified the privileges of nobility, and the next month he made them known to the persons concerned.

There were 24 clauses in the document (Eriksen and Fladby 1984: 275-278). The most important were freedom from having their estates taxed except in the case of dire state need (clause 3), the right to judge and punish peasants on their land (clause 1), the right to make appointments to and administer benefices within their fiefdoms (clause 5), the right to be acknowledged the highest estate of the realm (clause 7), the right to be ransomed by the crown in the case of being captured in war (clause 11), the right to be judged by the highest court only (clause 13) and immunity from prison except for the gravest offences (clause 14). Further, nobles had the right never to have their estate confiscated but only transferred to its heir except for the crime of lese-majesty (clause 15), the right to be protected from violence and unfairness (clause 16) and the right to be involved in commerce (clause 20). The majority of the clauses were of greatest utility to the owners of land. In addition, the privileges gave favourable treatment in law and offered useful protection in a state which was not constitutional. Because clause 7 made elevation to the nobility the highest honour the king could bestow, a number of individuals had entered the first estate without owning land.

By 1814 the original Norwegian nobility was all but gone. Most of the aristocracy consisted of families which had been ennobled by the Danish King in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of these owned estates, but many did not. Conversely, landowners could own estates without being of the noble class. There were no more than two counties and one barony in the whole of the kingdom. The nobility was already a weaker class than in most European countries.

How many families benefited from the privileges in 1814? None were added between 1814 and 1821, the year for which Anne-Lise Seip offers the figure of 14 noble families (Seip 1997:68). She does not name them except for Wedel-Jarlsberg and Løvenskiold, the two most famous houses. Since the term ‘noble’ could apply to remaining members of the medieval families, Danish or Danish-appointed

families, descendants of high state officials who had been made nobles *en masse* by a law of 1711 and Norwegian branches of foreign noble families, no absolute figure is possible. But using two Danish calendars of nobility as well as some very old scholarship on the issue, a different figure is proposed here. We have included Danish noble families who owned an estate in Norway and had a local branch there, families whose main holdings were in Norway and who had patents of nobility and families who were clearly Norwegian with such patents. Because ownership of land was vital to the full functions of aristocracy, it will be distinguished between families who owned estates, or at least farms, in Norway and those whose status were largely honorific or had been lost due to the extinction of its noble line. Norwegian branches of Danish or foreign aristocratic families with no estate in Norway are not counted. At best they had only *personal* rights under the jurisdiction of the Norwegian state set up in 1814 (i.e. those privileges not relating to estates).

The two counties mentioned above were called Laurvig and Jarlsberg. Laurvig was the fiefdom of the counts of Danneskiold-Laurvig, a house which became extinct in 1783 (Castenskiold 1872:24). In 1814 Laurvig was owned by the Danish crown, and consequently without an associated noble family. The County of Jarlsberg was the fiefdom of the Wedel family. It had taken the name Wedel-Jarlsberg when its head, Gustav Wilhelm Wedel, was granted the Jarlsberg territory in 1684 (Kongelige Danske Andet Binds Fjerde Hefte 1787: 344). The family motto is *recte faciendo nihil timeas* (Do right and you need not fear) (Vogt 2014: 330). By tradition, the heir in this family took the title 'count' and the second son the title 'baron'. A branch of the family descended from one such baron, Frederik Wilhelm Wedel-Jarlsberg of Neuenfelde and Ravnstrup, a Danish supreme court justice, designated all its male members 'baron' and all its female members 'baroness' (Wedel-Jarlsberg 1932:17-18). These were 'courtesy titles', not indicating possession of a barony.[1] The Counties of Laurvig and Jarlsberg were located on the western bank of the Oslo Fjord (today known as Vestfold).

The Barony of Rosendal was in Western Norway by the Hardanger mountain chain and in proximity to Bergen (in today's Hordaland). As

recently as 1811, it had been granted by the Danish King to Major Christian Heinrich von Hoff, who took the title Hoff-Rosencrone upon his ennoblement. He lawfully succeeded Marcus Gerhard Greve of Rosencrone, whose family became extinct upon his death on 5 December 1811 (Castenskiold 1872:43). The new nobleman was a Dane, but since his fiefdom lay in Norway he should be considered a Norwegian baron. The two families Wedel-Jarlsberg and Hoff-Rosencrone were the only ones who could legitimately use Norwegian titles. The families noted below could not, but were nevertheless of the nobility. In identifying them, ownership of a country house has been deemed a more important qualification than marriages with people of the same station.

The Løvenskiold family was native Norwegian. It owned numerous farms and Fossum Iron Works in Eastern Norway (in today's Telemark) and had been ennobled in 1739. In addition, a Danish member of the family, Severin von Løvenskiold, had been created a *friherre* (another word for baron) in 1773 (Kongelige Danske Første Bind Fjerde Hefte 1787: 338, 339). The Norwegian branch of the family produced another Severin Løvenskiold, who was a courtier and a delegate to the Constitutional Assembly at Eidsvoll. This Løvenskiold was married to a Danish noblewoman (Eidsvoldsmænd 1888: 46).

Like the Løvenskiolds, the Anker family was destined to play a major role in Norwegian history. Its motto *gloria ex utile* (honour from the useful) reflected its origin as industrialists (Cappelen 1969:52). Carsten Anker provided the venue for the Constitutional Assembly, Eidsvoll Manor, and Peder Anker was a delegate to it. Carsten and Bernd Anker (then spelt Ancher), both members of the council of the state, and their brothers were ennobled on 14 January 1778 (Kongelig Danske Første Bind Første Hefte 1787: 11). Other families of landowning nobles bore the names Ahrenfeldt, Galting (Galtung), Huitfeldt, Kaas, Knagenhielm, Sundt, Treschow and Werenskiold.[2] Lastly, families who were nobles more in terms of rank than in reality or whose noble line might be extinct were: Adelaer (Adeler), Berg, Bielke, Bille, Falsen, Gyldenkranz, Kløcker, Krabbe, Lillienschiold, Munthe af Morgenstierne, Roepstorff, Rosenkrantz, Sommerhielm, Tordenskiold, Ulricsdal (also known as Vagel), Wibe (Vibe) and Wleugel.

This casuistry yields 12 undoubted noble families and up to 17 more of less certain status.[3] The Falsen, Kløcker, Munthe af Morgenstierne, Roepstorff Sommerhielm and Tordenskiold families on the second list remained nobles, and were affected by the events described here. It has also been advanced that three additional families were nobles in virtue of their service to the state (*rangadel*). They might qualify by the law of 11 February 1717, without separate patents of nobility being granted (Huitfeldt-Kaas 1886: 155-156). These were the Motzfeldts, Rosings and Sibberns. Captain Peter Motzfeldt, the country district judge Frederik Motzfeldt, Captain Frederik Sibbern and Major Valentin Sibbern were delegates at Eidsvoll and did not claim noble status. The last-mentioned wrote about the debate on the nobility with no consciousness that it affected him in any way (Birkeland 1871:240-243). It does not make sense to include these as nobles, though the Sibbern family owned an entailed estate and were clearly of the gentry (Birkeland 1871:208).

Honours in the Constitution

Prior to the assembly at Eidsvoll, a number of draft constitutions had been written by interested parties. It is striking how all those written by named Norwegians contained restrictions on aristocracy, whereas the two draft constitutions written by Danes, Count Holstein-Holsteinborg and Professor J.F.W. Schegel, included no such provisions (Riksforsamlingens Forhandlinger III 1916: 109, 155). Nevertheless, there was a variety of views on what the state should do to limit nobility in the future.

The issue first came up at Eidsvoll on 16 April when the constitutional committee's 10th principle, that no noble privileges should be granted in the future, was agreed without division (Riksforsamlingens Forhandlinger I 1914: 22). The debate relating to aristocracy and other honours took place on 7 May 1814. Everything in paragraph 37 of the constitutional draft was subject to unanimity among the delegates. Nobody wished the king to award honours which were either hereditary or gave preferment in the law or state employment. Although there were delegates by the names of Falsen, Løvenskiold, Treschow and Wedel-

Jarlsberg, these did not take an active part in the debate. Count Herman Wedel-Jarlsberg deliberately chose not to intervene (Vogt 2014: 180). Christian Magnus Falsen, a district court judge and very influential member of the constitutional committee, renounced his nobility for himself and his descendants at the end of the debate. He had already scratched the aristocratic 'de' prefix before his name (Bolstad 2014: 175-176). There was an obvious tendency towards egalitarianism in the air, which would have made it very difficult to defend privilege, even if the nobles present continued to harbour aristocratic notions.

Nevertheless, just as there had been with earlier constitutional drafts, there were nuances of opinion among the delegates. The most egalitarian position was that of the officer Jens Schow Fabricius, who proposed that the loss of noble privileges should occur 'with the first generation' (Riksforsamlingens Forhandlinger I 1914: 191). The mining superintendent Poul Steenstrup also wished to end aristocracy relatively soon. He suggested an amendment to the constitutional draft that hereditary privileges should neither be bestowed upon nor inherited by anyone (Fortsættelse af Den Norske Rigsforsamlings 1814: 20). Others suggested that heirs already born or of age should be allowed to inherit. The only delegates who defended nobility were the iron-works owner Jacob Aall and the clergyman Nicolai Wergeland (himself a parvenu). They argued that the number of nobles was so small as not to cause any tension and that it was inhumane to rob anyone of their legally acquired rights, whether directly in the first generation or indirectly in future generations (Fortsættelse af Den Norske Rigsforsamlings 1814: 28; Wergeland 1830: 75).

The debate about nobility and titles, which may have gone on for as long as four hours, gave delegates the chance to fulminate about the unfairness of these. Almost all who spoke had something uncomplimentary to say about the hereditary principle and there was scepticism also about other honours. This manifested itself in a successful amendment to make the king declare exactly why someone had been found worthy to receive an honour. Another amendment was carried which limited the use of titles to those stating one's occupation. The clergyman Hans Jacob Grøgaard distinguished between 'Den Ære, som beroer paa fornuftige og gode Menneskers indvortes Agtelse; og

den som beroer paa et tomt Navn, paa Gang og Sæde, paa et stykke Silkebaand' (Fure 2013: 181) (The honour arising from sensible and decent people's mutual regard, and that which arises from an empty name, on tradition and customs, on a mere ribbon of silk). But despite the near unanimity on the question of titles, it proved impossible to reach full agreement.

The assembly resolved by 93 votes to 19 to make amendments to the constitutional draft, by 98 to 9 that no titles other than one's occupation might be used, unanimously that the king must not confer rank or titles and by 81 to 23 that he could nevertheless grant membership of honorary orders (Fortsættelse af Den Norske Rigsforsamlings 1814: 44, 45). Currently existing noble privileges proved to be too thorny an issue to be decided outright. In the final vote the choice was between only allowing the privileges to be transmitted to descendants who were already born or to leave the matter to the first parliament summoned. By 62 votes to 46 it was decided that the first parliament would resolve the question.

The relative closeness of this vote reflected that delaying the issue could either water down the assembly's egalitarianism or hasten the removal of the privileges. Due to the overwhelming opposition to the institution of nobility, it was safe to assume that the first parliament would share this attitude. But there were extraneous factors to consider too, particularly that Norway might not be able to maintain its independence. If it came under Sweden, as had been decided in the Treaty of Kiel, that country's belief in aristocracy might affect the Norwegian decision.

The ultimate results were paragraphs 23 and 108 of the constitution agreed at Eidsvoll on 17 May 1814. The first stated, beyond what is given above, that 'Ordenen frietager Ingen for Statsborgernes fælles Pligter og Byrder, ej heller medfører den fortrinlig Adgang til Statens Embeder […] Ingen personlige eller blandede arvelige Forrettigheder tilstaaes Nogen for Eftertiden' (Fure 2013: 379) (Membership of orders gives no exemption from common civil duties or burdens, nor grants privileged access to state employment. […] No hereditary privileges may be conferred on anyone in the future). The second ruled out new nobility or a *de facto* hereditary aristocracy: 'Ingen Grevskaber,

Baronier, Stamhuse og Fideicommisser maae for Eftertiden oprettes' (Fure 2013: 388) (No counties, baronies, noble houses or entailed estates may be created in the future). Both survived revision in November 1814, when parliament met to agree the terms whereby Norway would enter the union with Sweden. One of many reasons why Norway was so unwilling to enter that union was the perception that Sweden's nobility was much too powerful. Count Wedel-Jarlsberg, who supported the Swedish union, argued against this notion in the November parliament. He said that the Swedish aristocracy had been reduced as a power through the changes of 1800 and 1809; in the latter year a constitution had been made (Nielsen 1901: 296).

Parliament Deliberates on the Issue

The union from the beginning caused a number of power struggles between the Norwegian parliament and the Swedish-Norwegian King. The abolition of the nobility was an early point of contention. In the first regular parliament of 1815, Christian Magnus Falsen reminded the representatives of the issues that had been left over from the Constitutional Assembly and the November parliament, and proposed that these should be the subject of new laws.[4] This was agreed by the other representatives, who entrusted *Odelstinget* (the lower chamber) with working out bills. There the peasant representative Ole Bjørnsen returned to the question of the nobility in September 1815. He succeeded in putting it forward for legal deliberation. In March 1816 a parliamentary committee considered whether the nobles should be allowed to transmit their privileges to their descendants in whole or in part, whether it was really necessary for the nobles to sacrifice their status and, if so, whether compensation should be offered.

By comparing the official privileges of the nobility to the constitution, the committee found that some of these had already been abolished. According to paragraph 108 of the original constitution, no noble in possession of an estate was allowed to make it entailed. Nor could they create new dominions from their subsidiary land. Since the king alone could appoint officials, nobody could be born to a particular vocation. Therefore nobles could no longer make appointments on their land, and

the right of nobles to administer justice on their estates was abolished as conflicting with the ordinary laws laid down in the constitution. Lastly, nobles had lost their immunity to arrest if they went bankrupt. It was judged to be against the spirit of the constitution if nobles freely could transmit their remaining privileges to their descendants. With the abolition of the absolute monarchy, all citizens were born free and equal. There could therefore be no question of currently unborn descendants meriting compensation for privileges which they had never held. Those descendants born before the promulgation of this law would keep their remaining privileges for their lifetimes, and were consequently not liable to compensation either. On the question of nobles' freedom from taxes, the committee felt that it conflicted with equality before the law. However, since nobody should be deprived of legally conferred rights, freedom from taxation should be held for life. This right was not acquired upon birth but upon inheriting the properties concerned, and could therefore not be transmitted even to descendants already born.

Reacting to these findings, the proponent, Bjørnsen, proposed that the noble privileges should only be transmitted to the descendants who were already of age. By large majorities and sometimes with unanimity, the lower chamber voted in favour of the committee's recommendations. The only exception was the most difficult question of transmitting the privileges, which was only passed by a simple majority. Later in March 1816 the upper chamber *Lagtinget* approved the lower chamber's bill, except for freedom from taxation remaining in place for existing nobles. It was deemed to cease at once, along with the other privileges considered by the lower house. By 23 April 1816 the lower chamber had adopted the modification made in the upper, and the bill could thus be sent to the government for sanction.

The king refused to sanction the bill. He wished to make Norway more like Sweden, where the nobility was a vital estate of the realm. Abolishing hereditary privileges is distasteful to any monarch, and even the Constitutional Assembly's choice of king, the Danish Prince Christian Frederik, had been sceptical about this policy. However, by the constitution the monarch's veto was only suspensive and could be overridden by passing the same bill for the third time. Parliament met

no more than every third year.[5] The next opportunity to raise the issue thus came in 1818.

In March 1818 the district court judge Anders Rambech proposed that the previous parliament's decision should be upheld.[6] Two committees, the first *ad hoc* and the second the revision committee, were entrusted with looking into the matter. On 13 May the lower chamber noted that support for upholding parliament's previous decision had come from both committees. The revision committee had decided to forego some improvements in the cause of keeping the bill exactly as before. Based on the committees' reports, a unanimous decision was made to uphold the bill and send it on to the upper chamber. Here the bill passed unchanged by eleven votes to five and, effective 27 July 1818, it was again sent to the government for sanction.

In the first instance, the king had simply vetoed the bill. Now after its second passing, he was under pressure to make concessions. If he vetoed it again, he had used up his constitutional rights to have influence on the issue. The next parliament might insist on reaffirming the bill and it would then become law irrespective of his wishes. Therefore the king appended some observations to his decision not to sanction the bill as it stood. He claimed not to be averse to restricting or abolishing the privileges nobles held with regard to their estates, such as appointing civil and clerical officials, administering justice on their land and freedom from taxation. In return, parliament should suggest suitable compensation for the loss of these rights.

However, since the question was primarily a symbolic one of equality before the law, this was not a tempting offer. Parliament had already decided that *all* privileges should be phased out and, on logical grounds, that compensation should not be offered. It held the advantage and could simply reaffirm the two previous bills, which the king could no longer veto. The instinct of the parliamentarians was to defend the constitution and its spirit against the king, who had never supported the constitution wholeheartedly.

On 9 March 1821 Christian Magnus Falsen, who had technically begun the whole process in 1815, spoke in the lower chamber about the need to reaffirm the bill on the nobility which had been passed twice.[7] The king was now definitely on the wrong foot and needed

new tactics to avoid a defeat on this issue. On 30 March he wrote to the parliamentarians that there was a risk of war with the monarchical powers of Europe if they insisted on abolishing the nobility (Nielsen 1873: 142). If, on the other hand, they waited until a future parliament, he would sanction such a bill then. The king's thinking was probably to link the issue of removing noble privileges to the appointment of a new hereditary nobility without special rights. This required more time as the constitution would have to be changed (Koht 1950: 280).

The threat of invasion had some effect. Falsen actually spoke and voted in favour of a postponement during the lower chamber's deliberation on the bill on 26 April. The news that Austria had invaded the Kingdom of Naples reached Christiania in early April and added credence to the king's contention. A parliamentary committee had also recommended adjournment of the issue on 14 April (Mestad 2008: 36). However, the lower chamber voted 35 to 21 against adjournment and on 9 May the upper chamber very narrowly (10-8) also defeated such a motion. Both then affirmed the original bill. Nobles, and their descendants born before the law would take effect, were allowed to keep their remaining privileges for life.

The king's reaction was twofold. On 16 May he ordered a military camp of 6000 Swedish and Norwegian soldiers to be set up on the outskirts of Christiania (Steen 1954: 171). On 2 June he wrote to parliament that it should determine a scheme of compensation for nobles being deprived of their rights and proposed that he should be allowed to institute a new hereditary nobility without such privileges. A session of the entire parliament decided on 24 July that it accepted the principle of compensation, but asked the king to work out the details. Instituting a new nobility required a change to the constitution, meaning that the proposal could not be considered until the next parliament in 1824.

The king sanctioned the bill on 1 August 1821. Parliament's concessions allowed this without a loss of face and he hoped the proposed new nobility, owing its allegiance to him, would strengthen his influence within his second kingdom. He argued that having a hereditary nobility without special rights would bring Norway into line with other European countries (Kaartvedt 1964: 249, 265). If this could

be effected, the crisis would in fact have been turned to his advantage.

What in fact had happened was that parliament had triumphed over any remaining defenders of aristocracy. At its next session in 1824, it unanimously rejected the king's proposal for a new nobility.[8] Between February and July 1824 a large number of petitions were received from nobles who claimed compensation. In the first of these a Major Krefting demanded to be reimbursed for the loss he had suffered as the owner of Næs, a farm designated as a noble estate. This was sent on to the Norwegian government. In quick succession the following nobles claimed compensation: Governor Count Trampe, the member of the state council and district court judge Morgenstierne, the customs official Bergh, Lieutenant Knagenhielm, Captain of the cavalry Tordenskiold, Colonel K.A. Roepstorph, the war commissioner and customs official de Kløcker, Captain Rosenørn-Grüner, the merchant Morten Anker and Major P.B. Anker, F.J. Cold, Governor de Schouboe, the courtier Erich Anker, the government minister Severin Løvenskiold and his family, Baron Hoff-Rosencrone, the reverend Hans Gyldenpalm, the royal accountant Hagbarth de Falsen, the government minister Count Wedel-Jarlsberg and his family, Lieutenant A.N. Anker and his family, Captain H.H.C. Brombsen and the district court judge and squire A.N. Hauch. Most enclosed their original certificates of nobility or suitably attested copies. All were deemed to have proved their nobility, except F.J. Cold and Captain Brombsen. The actual reimbursement was the task of the king and his government. They did not take any steps in the matter and no compensation ever reached the nobles (Nielsen 1873: 300).

The list of claimants shows that most nobles were untitled and enjoyed state employment. Additional families are included on the list not mentioned in our earlier survey. Some were Danish without holdings in Norway and others are not mentioned in the sources available to us. The total abolition of nobility was not effective until about eight decades after the passing of the law, since descendants born before 1 August 1821 held on to their status.

Conclusion

The constitution was vital in securing the final outcome. In their

struggle with the king over the issue, parliamentarians fought their corner with ammunition given to them at Eidsvoll. Their actual power derived from the ability to override the royal veto and the king's reluctant acceptance of the constitution. Parliament thus succeeded in resolving this unfinished issue from the Constitutional Assembly after seven years. The law against the continuance of an aristocratic caste was a product of Norwegian egalitarianism. Through codifying such attitudes at Eidsvoll, the founding fathers bequeathed a *social* legacy to the nation, in addition to the obvious political one.

Endnotes

[1] In Norwegian terms none of these individuals was a *lensbaron*, the ruler of a barony.

[2] I am using Huitfeldt-Kaas (1886:145-160) as well as the Danish calendars.

[3] There may be others in both categories.

[4] The information about the issue's treatment in parliament is from Stortingsforhandlinger 1815, Stortinget 24 July, p. 269; Stortingsforhandlinger 1816, Odelstinget 26 March, pp. 215-227; Lagtinget 30 March, p. 272 and 20 April, p. 466. These may be consulted at www.stortinget.no.

[5] The 1815 session had continued into 1816 due to the high volume of business required of it.

[6] Stortingsforhandlinger 1818, Odelstinget 13 May, pp. 293-298; Lagtinget 21 May, p. 428; Stortinget 2 July, pp. 626-627.

[7] Stortingsforhandlinger 1821, Odelstinget 9 March, p. 270; Stortinget 24 July, pp. 137-139.

[8] Stortingsforhandlinger 1824, Stortinget, 18 February, p. 132; 22 May, p. 137 and 28 July, pp. 487-490.

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