



Vote brings shaky status quo

Narrow reelection of center-left coalition has analysts differing on future of Norwegian Arctic

Norway's parliamentary election isn't seen as having a huge effect on Svalbard, yet for many the vote was all about what happens in the Arctic.

If that seems like a contradiction, it's not much different than the analysts and politicians making contrasting predictions for what's essentially a status quo government.

Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg retained power and his center-left coalition, although the 86 seats won in the 169-seat Storting are one fewer than four years ago and just one more than number required for a majority.

Polls leading up to the Sept. 14 vote suggested conservatives led by the Progress Party might gain enough seats to result in a minority government. But Stoltenberg, who as head of the Labor Party became the first prime minister reelected in 16 years, didn't sound like a narrow victor, saying the results showed voter

confidence in his coalition, and he plans to "renew and intensify" its agenda.

That's not quite what *The Norway Post* found during its post-election reporting.

"Many political analysts believe the coalition faces several issues where the three parties will find it difficult to reach consensus, such as whether or not to drill for oil," the newspaper stated in one article.

None of the seats in Parliament represent Svalbard – those living here cast ballots for

See ELECTION, page 2

Showing CARE from far away

Global campaign to raise money for impoverished goes to extra lengths in Longyearbyen

Svalbard is about as far as you can get from the impoverished women who are the focus of a global aid program, but residents are again making extra efforts to bridge the distance with support.

Volunteers kicked off a series of events for the CARE 2009 campaign Saturday by selling waffles and drinks in front of Lompensenteret, accompanied for a time by the Polargospel children's choir. Much of mainland Norway saw youths collecting donations door-to-door during the day, but that's only one of the activities scheduled in Longyearbyen, said Anne Lise Klungseth Sandvik, chairwoman for the

See CARE, page 3



Rasmus Adamiak Husby, 2, left, and his sister, Mali, 4, eat waffles in the Longyearbyen town center Saturday made by volunteers with the CARE 2009 campaign as a fundraiser for women in impoverished countries. Other local events are scheduled leading up to an Oct. 18 telethon.

Where pink elephants, beer collide

Longyearbyen to celebrate first Oktoberfest with range of imported brew, brats and bands

One of the reasons Oktoberfest lasts until its namesake month is the weather remains warm enough in its land of origin to stimulate thirst. That probably won't be the case when Longyearbyen celebrates its first such bash beginning Thursday, but Odd A. Aspås hopes the novelty will compensate.

Aspås, an employee at the Radisson Polar

SAS hotel who originated and is directing the three-day event, is importing suds from the land of Bavaria to be sure. But, in the spirit of Svalbard, he is also aiming to give the festival a more international flavor.

"My vision of doing Oktoberfest is not just drinking German beer," he said. "I wanted to have a wide range of beers so people can try different things."

"Some of them are quite funny as well," he said. "We've got this beer, Delirium Christmas,

See OKTOBERFEST, page 4

Inside

Headlines from Svalbardposten

- New GPS map may lead users astray
- Russian trawler accused of dumping fish
- Longyearbyen woman wins (Arctic) top chef

Page 3

Weather forecast

Page 3

Events calendar

Page 4

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople
Vei 210 -2- 13
Longyearbyen, Svalbard
9170
Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.



The Lofoten Islands above the Arctic Circle are one of Norway's biggest political hotspots as leaders debate opening up the area to oil drilling. Some industry analysts remain optimistic despite the failure of conservative lawmakers to win enough seats to derail the existing center-left coalition in the Sept. 14 parliamentary election, but hurdles – including the United Nations possibly placing it on UNESCO's World Heritage Site list – remain.

Future of oil, Arctic unclear after vote

ELECTION, from page 1

their mainland district of residency – and a Google News search for "Stoltenberg," "election" and "Svalbard" turns up few results other than a meeting with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his visit at the beginning of the month.

The prime minister did say after the election Norway will press for a global climate pact later this year at negotiations in Copenhagen. A key issue, he said, is rich countries helping developing nations pay for reductions in greenhouse emissions.

"There will be no change...unless rich countries take the responsibility to pay for cuts in poorer countries," Stoltenberg said.

There has been a general agreement among Norwegian leaders Svalbard is an environmental showcase for the country and coal mining should continue as an economic foundation – something of a contrast in itself – but efforts to continue developing a more well-rounded society are needed.

But one of the dominant issues in this year's election was drilling for oil in the Arctic which, along with related issues such as climate change and commercial activity in northern areas, is far from consensus.

Norway has weathered the global economic crisis better than most countries and has set aside more than 2 trillion kroner of revenue from North Sea oil and gas production in a sovereign wealth fund. Siv Jensen, leader of the Progress Party, campaigned on an economic platform of spending more of the country's oil wealth to lower taxes and build infrastructure.

Analysts said the party's surge is due partially to a call for tougher immigration laws, but discontent with the center-left's use of oil revenue has been the main source of new conservative voters in recent years.

Yet some oil industry backers were claiming the return of the center-left coalition still

means progress.

The result is a step closer to opening offshore areas in Lofoten and Vesteraalen, thought to hold much of Norway's biggest remaining oil and gas reserves, said Per Terje Vold, chief of the country's oil industry association, in a statement the day after the election. Management plans for the areas – currently off limits to oil exploration – are due to be reviewed in the coming months.

"Oil and gas operations off Lofoten and Vesteraalen will be highly significant for further development of our welfare state and creating new economic progress in the region," Vold said. "We have taken particular note of the fact that voters in northern Norway have not supported calls for permanent conservation of these waters."

He said revenue from Norway's oil and gas industry has helped the country buffer itself against the financial crisis, but "it is crucial that we get the plan in place in 2010 so the country can still benefit from the revenues the oil industry creates."

Optimism is also being voiced by Jim Jubak, an investment columnist for *MoneyShow*, advising readers after the election to buy shares of Statoil Hydro ("Norway's oil champion").

"The government is still a coalition with a fragile majority, so no one expects quick movement on the contentious issue of drilling in this area, one of the most pristine in Norway," he wrote. "But with Norway's management plan for the area ... the odds are that Norway will get more aggressive in exploiting the potential reserves in the waters of the Arctic continental shelf."

But strong opposition continues to be voiced by fishing and environmental interests, and the decision may not be entirely in the hands of Norwegian politicians.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Ultra-low emission ATVs



Members of the Longyearbyen Hundeklubb prepare to take youths on a cart ride during an open house at the group's kennels Sept. 19. Sébastien Barrault, a group member, said youths have asked about seeing the dogs, so the kennels were open for them to be petted, run through obstacle courses and driven for short road trips. He expects snowsledding to resume around November. The group's Web site (in English) is at www.cluster.irfu.se/rico/LHK.

Local donations among Norway's highest

CARE, from page 1

local campaign.

"For most of mainland Norway it's just people knocking on doors and asking for money," she said. "We are doing a little bit more."

CARE is an international humanitarian organization focusing on global poverty, with an emphasis on helping women become productive with education, health care, sanitation and food. The organization also delivers emergency aid to survivors of war and natural disasters. The telethon by the Norwegian office will air on NRK1.

Door-to-door collecting of donations by youths in Longyearbyen is scheduled this Saturday afternoon, Sandvik said. She estimates they will start at about 3 p.m., which would be at the conclusion of an open house at the Longyearbyen fire station starting at noon. Food and drinks are being sold at that event to help raise funds.

Sandvik said she believes collections average about 20 kroner per student in Norway, but the local sums are considerably better.

"Last year in Svalbard every pupil gathered 500 kroner," she said. "That is really high."

Total contributions from all CARE activities in Longyearbyen last year exceeded 1 million kroner, or 614 kroner per resident, among the highest in Norway, according to the NRK news agency. Sandvik said it was an unusually strong effort and doesn't think the same average will be reached this year.

Other activities include a homemade bread sale from 1-3 p.m. Oct. 3 at Svalbardbutikken, and an ongoing sale of raffle tickets at the store and other locations. Sandvik said the range of events is part of the reason for the high local donations.

"People can buy waffles and go to concerts and be entertained," she said. "That makes it easier for people to give."

There will also be a flea market Oct. 10-11, with organizers seeking donations of items. Free pickup of large items such as furniture is being offered Oct. 8-9.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

New GPS map of Svalbard may lead some off course

A new digital map of Svalbard by Geoin-sight apparently leads users of some GPS units astray, according to the Norwegian Polar Institute, which submitted data for the map. Officials with the institute said they are not responsible for the maps themselves, which don't provide correct locations on all Garmin devices. Among the problems are slow updates when trying to view larger areas on the Garmin 276C, the most common portable unit for snowmobiles in Svalbard, and ill-defined displays of land and sea on the 525 model commonly used on boats. A Garmin retailer said he does not believe the company will address the issue because of the small size of the Svalbard market.

Russian trawler suspected of illegal fish dumping

The Russian trawler *Melkart* appears have illegally dumped fish in protected waters on the west side of Spitsbergen, according to the Norwegian Coast Guard after filming the incident. A helicopter filmed the dumping Sept. 17 and Coast Guard officials boarded the vessel and escorted it to Longyearbyen. "The dumping of fish is a very serious form of environmental crime that the Coast Guard has a large focus on," the agency said in a prepared statement. Prosecutors in Tromsø will investigate the case.

Spitsbergen Hotel worker is (Arctic) top chef winner

Anne-Berit Mydland Simonsen, 23, a cook at the Spitsbergen Hotel, defeated seven other chefs from northern Norway to win the Arctic Cook competition Sept. 16 in Tromsø. "I was a couple minutes behind schedule, I did not have enough salt in the food, but I made no big mistakes," she said about the three-course menu she was required to make, including a raw shrimp starter, cox and ox tails for the main course, and an apple-crowberry dessert.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Cloudy with an evening flurry. ENE winds at 14 km/h. High -3C (-1C wind chill), low 2C (-3C wind chill).

Thursday

Rain, then snow. SSE winds at 11 km/h. High 3C (-2C wind chill), low -1C (-3C wind chill).

Friday

Cloudy, then sun. SSE winds at 9 km/h. High 0C (-2C wind chill), low -3C (-7C wind chill).

Saturday

Cloudy, some snow. ENE winds at 17 km/h. High -1C (-6C wind chill), low -4C (-10C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -2C (-8C), -3C (-8C); Monday, a few clouds, -2C (-7C), -7C (-11C); Tuesday, cloudy with some snow, -5C (-11C), -6C (-13C); Wednesday, cloudy with some snow, -3C (-8C), -6C (-11C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Johan Olai Svidal, above left, takes a break while performing a New Year's gig at Barentz Pub. He is returning as part of the Olai & Co. band performing during Longyearbyen's inaugural Oktoberfest from Thursday through Saturday. At right, Odd A. Aspås, the festival's director, displays some of the more unusual bottles of beer he imported for the event in a tent outside the Radisson Polar SAS hotel.



Oktoberfest imports brews, band

OKTOBERFEST from page 1

with the pink elephant on the bottle."

That beer, imported from Belgium, packs a walloping 10 percent alcohol by volume and is described in a listing of the festival's brews as having "magnificent aromas with touch of apples, honey, light malt and hops. Very good and well-balanced bitterness in the aftertaste. Contains yeast residue."

Similar details are provided for the nearly 40 other brews on the list, ranging from the familiar (to locals) Mack range made in Tromsø to Twisted Thistle from Belhaven, Scotland, to Neuschwansteiner from Munich ("among other things used by Disney"). Nothing from the United States which, according to a poll by The Titanic Survey, is the overwhelming choice for making the world's worst (23 percent of about 1,600 voters, with China second at 5.2 percent).

Aspås he hopes he bought enough for people to try a bottle of each variety, ranging from common and alcohol-free to exotic and intoxicating.

The beer tent in the hotel's parking lot is open at 1 p.m. daily, serving brats and other food as well, with music beginning at 9 p.m. There will also be a formal opening of the festival at 6 p.m. Thursday and a lecture about beer at 3 p.m. Saturday by Odd-Harald "Goffy" Pedersen, "one of Tromsø's uncrowned kings of beer" and longtime head of the Ølhallen pub, which is also the world's northernmost brewery.

Aspås said he got the idea to start a local Oktoberfest shortly after coming from Tromsø to work at the Radisson last year.

"I came up here last August," he said. "Several of our guests asked why there was not

a beer festival in Svalbard."

It was too late to organize one that year, Aspås said, but he started planning this year's in February.

"Since we're at the end of the world it's a bit of a logistical challenge to get everything," he said.

Besides the beer - no small task - those arrangements meant finding a suitable 10- by 15-meter tent, outfits for the bar staff, sound and lighting help, and some music.

Traditional Bavarian tunes will be performed the first two nights by Olai & Co., who accepted the invitation after band member Johan Olai Svidal played a separate gig at Barentz Pub during its most recent New Year's celebration.

"They moved their own Oktoberfest one week so they can come and do ours," Aspås said.

The Saturday night concert will be performed by the Longyearbyen blues/rock band Howlin' Huskies.

Aspås said one of the first things he did was contact the Svalbard governor's office to ensure there weren't any concerns about bringing a festival centered largely around alcohol to town.

"The only thing the governor said was no later than 12 o' clock (at night) so we don't disturb people around us," he said.

Tickets, on sale locally for the past three weeks, are limited to 200 per day. Aspås said space was still available each day as of Monday. Admission to events after 8 p.m. is limited to those 18 and older. Barentz Pub will also be expanding its menu with beer-cooked food.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Sept. 22

7 p.m.: Local government board meeting. Mediateket.

Sept. 24-26

Inaugural Oktoberfest celebration featuring beer from Norwegian and foreign brewers. Events include bands and lectures about the history of beer.

Sept. 25

1 p.m.: Kirsti Blom and Åshild Ønvik Pedersen sign their book "Svalbard Ptarmigan." Svalbard Museum. There is also a reading for children at 2 p.m. Sept. 26 at the Longyearbyen Library.

Sept. 26

Noon-3 p.m.: CARE 2009 open day at the Longyearbyen fire station. Food and drinks will be sold.

Sept. 27

11 a.m.: Polargospel concert and communion, Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Public Enemies," U.S. drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Oct. 1

2 p.m.: Meeting of the culture and leisure board. Næringsbygget 1, "Tundra" room.

Oct. 2

9 a.m.: Meeting of the board of growth and enterprise. Næringsbygget 1, "Tundra" room.

Oct. 3

1-3 p.m.: CARE 2009 sale of homemade bread. Svalbardbutikken.

Oct. 4

11 a.m.: Baptism liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Short Latvian/Swedish children's films, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Snarveien," Norwegian thriller, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Oct. 6

8 p.m.: Lecture by expedition leader Rolf Stange, Svalbard Museum.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Full climate coverage from U.N. summit*
- *Norway may further 2020 CO2 cuts*
- *August seas warmest in 120 years*
- *Contraception called vital climate tool*