

= 1994 Progress Party national convention =

The 1994 national convention of the Progress Party of Norway was held from 15 April to 17 April at the hotel Bolkesjø Turisthotell in Bolkesjø , Telemark . It was originally set up to be a normal convention with 157 delegates in a non @-@ election year , but because of mounting antagonism between a traditionalist and a libertarian faction , it became clear some months before the conventions that personal positions could be at stake . The party leader seat , held by Carl I. Hagen since 1978 , was up for re @-@ election . The deputy leaders Ellen Wibe and Hans J. Røsørde was not up for election until 1995 , but there were talks about forming a motion of no confidence against Wibe . The political disagreements roughly corresponded to a cleavage between two factions .

The traditionalist (also called populist) faction was represented by party leader Carl I. Hagen , Jan Simonsen , Fridtjof Frank Gundersen , Vidar Kleppe , Øystein Hedstrøm , Lodve Solholm and Eli Hagen . The libertarians of the party were first and foremost the deputy leader Ellen Wibe and four members of Parliament (by some called the " band of four ") , Ellen Christine Christiansen , Oscar D. Hillgaard , Roy N. Wetterstad and Stephen Bråthen . Buskerud county leader Geir Thoresen , Akershus county leader Per Aage Pleym Christensen and Youth of the Progress Party leader Lars Erik Grønntun were other prominent libertarians . Both during the preceding months and on the opening day , resolutions were passed which ensured full dominance for Carl I. Hagen and the policies of his faction . Wibe resigned as deputy leader , and Carl I. Hagen 's men (there were no women left in the leadership) also dominated the new central committee . The personal issues totally overshadowed the regular political debate , and as early as on 17 April the convention was famously dubbed as the " national convention at Dolkesjø " ? derived from *dolk* , the Norwegian word for dagger .

In April and May , the Progress Party lost several members , including former members of Parliament and four current members of Parliament . In July the Youth of the Progress Party dissolved itself in protest of the events ; however , a new , loyal organization immediately surfaced . Some of the withdrawn members joined the Conservative Party of Norway , others joined an entirely new organization (originally with the narrow intention to support the four parliamentarians) , the quasi @-@ political party Free Democrats .

= = Run @-@ up = =

= = = Before 1994 = = =

The 1993 national convention was harmonic . The newspaper *Verdens Gang* remarked that both " the libertarians and the populists cheered " after Carl I. Hagen 's speeches . Jan Simonsen stepped down as deputy leader , and Ellen Wibe succeeded him , being one of the very few women in the Progress Party 's leadership .

There were some tensions , however . Finn Thoresen left the party in November 1992 , and later formed New Future Coalition Party . More importantly , because of disagreements in 1992 and 1993 , pertaining to libertarianism in general and especially the European Union question , several libertarians that had entered the Progress Party in the 1980s ceased their activity in the party . MPs Tor Mikkelsen and Petter Bjørheim announced their intentions to leave politics after the end of their terms , as did Pål Atle Skjervengen . Jan Erik Fåne tried to win renomination , but the nomination meeting in Akershus put traditionalist Fridtjof Frank Gundersen on top of the ballot . Fåne was offered the second spot , but pulled out . Eight months later it turned out that holding the second spot on the ballot did indeed give a Parliament seat .

The issue of libertarianism became more pressing in the campaign for the Norwegian parliamentary election , 1993 , when Carl I. Hagen said to *Verdens Gang* that he did not support cutting the income tax . This was not in line with official party policy , and Hagen did not confer with the party , stating that " I had to take an independent initiative " . Ellen Wibe openly criticized the statement , so did former MP and tax spokesperson Steinar Maribo . The tax statement was later seen as the most

important factor contributing to the growing Hagen ? liberalist schism . In the election the Progress Party won ten seats , down from 22 in the 1989 election .

1 = Left the Progress Party as a result of the convention .

= = = 1994 = = =

The year 1994 started with annual conventions in each county , scheduled between 15 January and 6 April . These conventions elected delegates to the national convention . Tension had mounted between party leader Carl I. Hagen and other factions in the party . Parts of the central committee were skeptical to Hagen 's position and policies . In addition , the youth wing , Youth of the Progress Party , had experienced disagreements with the Hagen @-@ led Progress Party . The leader of the Youth of the Progress Party , Lars Erik Grønntun , had been on the verge of stepping down , but was persuaded around the end of 1993 to run for re @-@ election . Before the county conventions , Grønntun stated a desire for an extraordinary meeting between the party and its youth wing , where he wanted to " contribute to gathering the party and avoid any signs of a split " .

On 3 January , Hagen presented a ten @-@ point plan of action . It was to be sent to each county chapter , and supported or rejected at the county conventions . On 7 January , Ellen Wibe presented a competing plan of action together with Oscar Hillgaar , Ellen Christine Christiansen and Geir Thoresen . Wibe 's plan criticized the party 's organizational culture , communication and institutions . In an interview , Wibe said that the party was too similar to a " charismatic movement " , and that she wanted more power to the central board (Norwegian : sentralstyre) . Øystein Hedstrøm announced a possible motion of no confidence regarding Ellen Wibe 's position as deputy party leader , even though she was not really up for election until 1995 . Wibe replied that her intention was to gather the party .

= = = County conventions and national board meeting = = =

In the weekend from 4 to 6 February , county conventions were held in eleven counties , including Hagen 's native Oslo , and Buskerud , Finnmark , Telemark , Vest @-@ Agder , Hordaland , Nordland , Østfold , Troms , Nord @-@ Trøndelag and Møre og Romsdal . Hagen belonged to the Oslo chapter , but the leader of the chapter , Peter N. Myhre , stated beforehand that Hagen 's proposal would probably be rejected . It was speculated that rejections could come from the Buskerud and Finnmark 's conventions as well . On 7 February , Hagen confirmed his leadership candidacy for the electoral committee .

On 19 February , the party held a national board (Norwegian : landsstyre) meeting at Bolkesjø . Here , Hagen proposed to close the debate on " the party profile and choice of values " , a motion which gained support from 11 of the 24 board members . Ellen Wibe was among the minority , but conceded for the time being . That way , the question was put down before reaching the national convention .

By then , fifteen county conventions had signaled support for Hagen . After the last convention , it was clear that one @-@ third of the delegates had expressed support of Wibe . Before the national convention , Hagen stated in an interview that one " never can know what will happen during a Progress Party national convention " .

= = = Further preparations = = =

The next two months was a quiet period , and Øystein Hedstrøm stated that Wibe had taken a more responsible role , and thus there was no need for a motion of no confidence . News commentator Aslak Bonde remarked that the compromise reached by the factions was " unclear " and that antagonism could surface at the national convention . Wibe stated that her faction still intended to submit a resolution , a " constructive " proposal regarding tactical and organizational issues . Two days before the national convention , this resolution text had not been submitted to the county delegates . On the next day , the resolution text was commented in newspapers . Aftenposten

remarked that Wibe 's proposal was a " thorough criticism of Carl I. Hagen " , among others in that it called for " a renewal of the party " . It was signed by Oscar D. Hillgaard , Ellen Chr . Christiansen , Stephen Bråthen and Roy Wetterstad together with Wibe . Verdens Gang reported that Wibe would resign if not given a clear confidence as deputy leader . Wibe refuted this in Aftenposten on the next day ; the newspaper believed that no party split would occur .

Another question of contention was the Progress Party 's policy on Norwegian membership in the European Union . Reportedly , Carl I. Hagen wanted to postpone a decision on European Union policy from the national convention to a national board meeting in June . Others were not in favor of this . In an interview , Hagen stated that political parties should not agitate officially for one opinion or the other . He stated an indifference towards EU membership , and that if accessing the Union , Norway could always use a veto against EU policies when needed . Central board member Terje Sæbø submitted a competing resolution which opposed Norwegian membership .

= = Meeting = =

Carl I. Hagen held the opening speech of the convention . The speech was interrupted by extensive applause nineteen times . In it , he stated :

= = Resolutions and withdrawals = = =

One of the first questions which was voted over , was the EU issue . Hagen formally submitted a proposal that the factual aspects of this issue should not be debated , and this was passed with 113 against 44 votes .

The EU vote directly caused Ellen Wibe to step down as deputy party leader , stating that she did " not fully understand the new profile of the party " . If not stepping down , she would compromise " values and principles " that were essential in order to " live with [her] self as a human being " . The announcement followed a private meeting between Wibe , Hagen , Røsjorde and Grønntun . Allegedly , Tor Mikkelt Wara had advised her to resign . Ellen Christine Christiansen stepped down from her position in the central board , leaving Grønntun as the only clear libertarian . Grønntun stated that young party members would not tolerate to be " stepped on and hectored with [sic] " forever . More generally , the losing faction signaled a desire to continue promoting a liberal political profile , but in a less dramatic way .

Immediately after Wibe 's announcement , Jan Simonsen entered the chair and spoke strongly in favor of Hagen . Fridtjof Frank Gundersen applauded the end of " women 's bickering " in the party leadership . Hagen 's main resolution proposal , titled En fremtid med rot i fortiden , was passed with 94 against 50 votes . He also received support for prioritizing anti @-@ immigration higher in the following period . In his closing speech , Hagen stated that " disloyal " behavior would be considered as " active withdrawal " from the party . From the rostrum , the " band of four " was even asked to withdraw by several delegates , including Bjørn Andreassen , Gustav Hareide and Frøydis Lange . Andreassen exclaimed that " we don 't want you " , while Lange asked the band of four to form a new party called the Anarchist Party .

The central board held an extraordinary meeting on 17 April , during a pre @-@ scheduled break in the convention . The central board of the Youth of the Progress Party also met , and agreed to support the " band of four " . Their decision was not final until an extraordinary national board meeting could be held . It was speculated that members of the youth wing could leave the Progress Party en masse .

= = New deputy leader = = =

After Wibe 's resignation , Jan Simonsen was mentioned as an , albeit unlikely , candidate to succeed Wibe . Vidar Kleppe was also mentioned , while traditionalist John Alvheim was regarded by newspapers as a more likely candidate . On Saturday 16 April , it became clear that the vote stood between the Peter N. Myhre and Lodve Solholm . Myhre was the candidate put forward by the

electoral committee , and had support among the libertarians , who did not field their own candidate . On 17 April , Solholm won the vote with 90 against 58 ; 8 ballots were blank . Carl I. Hagen was re-elected with 113 against 0 votes , and with 44 blank ballots . One libertarian , former MP Terje Nyberget , who described the convention as a " genocide " , was elected to the national board .

= = Aftermath = =

Political scientist Frank Aarebrot summed up the convention turmoil in the following way :

= = = Band of four defect = = =

Already on the second day of the convention it was speculated that the " band of four " , four libertarian @-@ leaning members of Parliament , considered leaving the party . The four were Oscar D. Hillgaard , Roy Wetterstad , Ellen Christine Christiansen and Stephen Bråthen . The alternative to leaving the party was to mark themselves as dissenting party members . On the third day , news surfaced that the four had talked together . In the news program Dagsrevyen on 17 April , the band of four stated a desire to follow the 1993 party platform and not later resolutions . They were met by a demand from Carl I. Hagen that they continue on the " terms laid down by the national convention or find something else to do " . He later added that if the band of four left the parliamentary group , they should " scam " . To sum up , he said that the libertarians , which were known to be a minority , had gained too much influence , and was set back by the national convention . Øystein Hedstrøm demanded that the four leave the party . Because of the fierce personal antagonism at the convention , it was dubbed as the " national convention at Dolkesjø " ? derived from *dolk* , the Norwegian word for dagger .

Wibe encouraged people to stay in the Progress Party , although her active participation was over . Wetterstad stated in an interview that withdrawing his party membership was out of question , whereas Hillgaard was described as the least conciliatory . Hillgaard publicly lamented the " Moscow processes " of the 1994 national convention , and also the views on women and the " extreme xenophobia " which he felt was conveyed by the party program . The Progress Party county leader in Akershus , Per Aage Pleym Christensen , also reconsidered his position , leaving on 4 May .

Oscar Hillgaard left the party on 22 April . The other three libertarian parliamentarians postponed their decision , attending meetings with county leaders on 17 and 22 April . A leading figure in these talks was Henning Holstad from Oslo . Hagen replied that such talks had no grounds in the Progress Party by @-@ laws . The meeting on 22 April went well for the three parliamentarians , but on 30 April the central committee met , and Øystein Hedstrøm put forward a proposal for a " loyalty declaration " to Hagen and the policies agreed to on the national convention . The proposal of a written declaration was not passed , but the central committee decided to demand loyalty . It also removed Lars Erik Grønntun from the executive board (Norwegian : arbeidsutvalg) .

The three parliamentarians finally left the party on 3 May . It was speculated that the deputy representatives for Bråthen and Wetterstad , Per Aage Pleym Christensen in Akershus and Geir Thoresen in Buskerud , would follow . Wetterstad drew the lines to Hagen 's own withdrawal from the Anders Lange Party to form the short @-@ lived Reform Party . Coincidentally , Hagen celebrated his 50th birthday on 6 May .

= = = Youth wing defects = = =

With four of ten having resigned from the parliamentary group , the Youth of the Progress Party was the next institution to experience turmoil . In May Verdens Gang announced that a forthcoming extraordinary national convention , spearheaded by Lars Erik Grønntun , would cut its ties with the Progress Party . The county leader in Oslo , Kim M. Høistad , formally proposed such a move . A straight @-@ forward dissolution of the Youth of the Progress Party would , however , most likely be followed by an immediate resurrection of the youth wing by Hagen @-@ loyal members . Høistad 's proposal was quickly co @-@ signed by the Akershus branch , through its leader Trine Beate

Samuelsen , and the Buskerud branch through its leader Per Magne Pedersen . The county chapters in Telemark , Aust @-@ Agder , Vest @-@ Agder , Oppland and Rogaland also voiced support . Hordaland had considered it . National deputy Ole Tom Nomeland was reluctant to comment , but at the national convention he called Ellen Wibe " one of the finest people in Norwegian politics " . He was threatened with exclusion in June , ahead of the convention .

Two days before the national convention , the central committee convened and supported a dissolution of the Youth of the Progress Party . Lars Erik Grønntun even announced plans to cooperate more with the Norwegian Young Conservatives and the Young Liberals of Norway . Young Conservatives leader André Støylen was not negative .

The national convention agreed on dissolving the Youth of the Progress Party , with 63 against 21 votes . Hagen @-@ loyal members summoned the Progress Party national board , which overruled the decision , allowing the remaining members to continue with Ulf Leirstein as leader .

= = = Other defections = = =

Already before the national convention , the entire local party chapter in Osterøy was disestablished , but mainly due to the European Union controversy . The party had one representative in Osterøy municipal council at the time . One day after the national convention , delegate Kristian Eidesvik announced his withdrawal from the party , though he would sit through his tenure as member of Hordaland county council , which lasted until 1995 . Eidesvik was a former member of the central board , and also a former deputy member of Parliament . The same day former MP and youth wing leader Pål Atle Skjervengen withdrew , commenting that the libertarians " are asked by the party leadership to go to hell " . Skjervengen had been criticized by Carl I. Hagen from the rostrum at the national convention . Many years down the road Skjervengen joined the Conservative Party . Harald Eide Ellingsen , member of Stavanger city council , also left .

In Røyken municipal council , three of five representatives left the party , and a fourth , former MP Steinar Maribo , considered doing the same . As did Odd Magnar Brubæk , and former deputy MP Paal Bjørnstad . Terje Nyberget withdrew from the central committee in early May . The leader in the chapters in Finnmark and Nordkapp , Bjørn Magne Solvik , withdrew on 13 May . He cited a lack of liberalism , especially with regards to gay rights and immigration , as the reason . He was the only Progress Party member of a municipal council in Finnmark . Maribo withdrew some time in May . In late May , party secretary Hans Andreas Limi had counted 270 withdrawals , but also 76 new members . Municipal and county council member Liv Skrede left after the youth wing 's national convention in July , so did Tor Mikkjel Wara , Ellen Wibe , Jan Erik Fåne and Petter Bjørheim . Hordaland county council member Lene C. Møgster Løtvedt left and joined the Conservative Party in October .

= = = New party = = =

Already during the national convention , the Youth of the Progress Party agreed to form an informal " thinking group " for disenfranchised members . Pål Atle Skjervengen was early in declaring an interest in forming a new , libertarian party . Those who resigned from the parliamentary group initially declared a lack of motivation to form a new party , and they also rejected the possibility of joining another party . They would instead vote according to the 1993 party program . Either way , in a parliamentary context they were known as independents for the remainder of their term . They did discuss the possibility of forming a " support group " which would help the four parliamentarians with practical issues . Odd Magnar Brubæk contributed advice on an informal basis from time to time . With some time passed since the Bolkesjø convention , it was decided to hold a formal conference to form a support group in mid @-@ June . Organizations in Akershus and Buskerud already existed , under the names of Fridemokratene Akershus and Buskerud Liberale Forum .

At the conference , the name Free Democrats (Norwegian : Fridemokratene) was adopted , and the band of four were chosen as leaders . Two hundred people joined , and it had four county leaders ; Per Aage Pleyrn Christensen for Akershus , Geir Thoresen for Buskerud , the former city

council secretary Roy Venge Tollefsen in Oslo and Thor Simonsen in Østfold . Wibe , on the other hand , left politics , as did Lars Erik Grønntun . The board members of Aust @-@ Agder Youth of the Progress Party joined the Free Democrats in August . Ellen Christine Christiansen stated that " time will tell whether we become a political party " . The issue was discussed again at a national convention in September 1994 . The Vestfold chapter wanted to field in the Norwegian parliamentary election , 1997 with Oscar Hillgaar on the ballot , but this did not happen .