



Women and the National Front/Le Front national et les femmes

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► To cite this version:

Nonna Mayer, Mariette Sineau. Women and the National Front/Le Front national et les femmes. [Research Report] CEVIPOF. 2002. hal-03458576

HAL Id: hal-03458576

<https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03458576>

Submitted on 30 Nov 2021

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III: France: The Front National

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Chapitre à paraître en 2002 dans le livre dirigé par **Helga Amsberger, Brigitte Halbmayr eds.**

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1. Introduction

Our study of the French Front National faced two difficulties. The first was the recent split of the party in two, the former FN faithful to its founder and president Jean-Marie Le Pen, and another FN launched by the ex-delegate-general of the party, Bruno Mégret (see Darmon and Rosso 1999, Ivaldi 1999, Camus 2000). Relations between the two men were never easy but their rivalry took a sharp turn during the summer of 1998, when Le Pen decided that if he were to be declared ineligible by a court decision, and could not run in the European elections, the list of the FN would be led by his wife Jany and not by the delegate-general. Mégret publicly protested and appealed to the party base, calling for an exceptional congress to settle the matter, which took place in Marignane (23-24 January 1999). Mégret rallied two thirds of the party federations and was elected president of the new Front national-Mouvement national (FNMN), while the historical FN went back to its former name Front national pour l'Unité française (FNUF). On May 11 though, through a court decision, Bruno Mégret lost the right to use the name „Front national“ and his party became the **MNR**: Mouvement national républicain.

Since then the two FN's have been involved in a fierce judicial battle in the courts, each claiming the exclusive right not only to use the name and the logo „FN“, but also its bank accounts, its real estate and the public funds it is entitled to as a political party. Presently, the winner is Jean-Marie Le Pen, since he was recognised as the only legitimate president of the FN by the court decision of 11 May 1999, and received the 41 million francs refund left over since the last elections, which were blocked because of the split. But their rivalry has clearly affected the electoral support of the extreme right. In November 1998, before the schism, a Le Pen list for the European elections drew 16 percent of the voting intentions, in the European elections of 13 June 1999, the Le Pen and Mégret lists put together drew 9 percent of the valid votes (Le Pen 5.7 percent and Mégret 3.3 percent), leaving the total score of the extreme right below its electoral level in the 1984 European elections (then 11.2 percent). And if FN and MNR together pass the threshold of 10 percent of the valid votes in the departmental elections of March 2001, the figure is far below the FN's score before the split (14 percent in the departmental elections of 1998). Meanwhile party members and officials are defecting, attendance to party meetings and demonstrations is dwindling, circulation of the extreme right press is declining. And for the coming presidential election of April-May 2002, Le Pen is credited with only 8 percent of the valid votes, and Mégret hardly 1 percent.

The second difficulty was to select the most appropriate material to study the ideology of the FN before the split. Paradoxically there is currently no official journal of the FN, apart from its internal information letters restricted to the inner circles of the party (*Militant*, the since 1985 *La Lettre de Le Pen*, now *Les Français d'abord*) and the review *Identité* launched to appeal to intellectual circles. In the past there were several attempts by the FN to create its own journal, successively *Front national*

(1973-1974), *Le National* (1974-1981) *RLP Hebdo* (1981-1984) and since May 1984 *National Hebdo*, first presented as „official journal of Jean-Marie Le Pen“ (1984-1987) then „official journal of the FN“ (1987-1988). But since 1988 it has dropped any reference to the FN. This allows its editorial board to follow its own line, closer to the preoccupations of its readers, and adopt a far more radical tone without compromising the FN (Camus 1996: 173 and Birenbaum 1992: 253-254). Since then the strategy of the FN has been to establish close links with a large range of „friendly“ press supporters, representing different and often antagonistic currents of the French extreme right. Therefore a complete overview of the FN's press should include at least five supports, *National Hebdo* (weekly) representing the national populist tendency, *Présent* (daily) representing the catholic fundamentalist networks, openly anti-Semitic, *Minute* born at the time of the Algerian war and open to a larger radical right-wing public, *Rivarol* which is clearly pro-European and most radical, and *Identité*, open to all the tendencies within the FN but taking more New Right positions. However, none of these newspapers is the FN's official voice. In order to unify the various currents it brings together, the party, under the supervision of Bruno Mégret and his friends of the New Right, has made a special effort to put forward an articulate set of ideas forming the common ideological core of its propaganda and to disseminate it among party members and the public. We therefore decided not to work on the press close to the FN but to concentrate on its programs and on the writings of its two leaders, Jean-Marie Le Pen and Bruno Mégret. We have also included the specific propaganda addressed at women by the women's circle of the FN, the CNFE

2. Presentation of the French Front National

2.1 History

The National Front was founded on 5 October 1972 by activists of the nationalist movement Ordre Nouveau (ex-Occident), attempting an electoral come-back of the French extreme right. Discredited by the support given by many of its members to the German Occupation and the regime of Vichy, splintered into small factions, it had until then failed in its attempts to achieve parliamentary representation. The angry shopkeepers' movement led by Pierre Poujade in the Fifties had its moment of glory, drawing as much as 11.6 percent of the votes in the parliamentary elections of 2 January 1956. But two years later it was swept away by the Algerian crisis and the return to office of General de Gaulle. The de-colonisation process briefly remobilised the extreme right on the defence of a „French Algeria“. But only 5.2 percent of the electorate voted „No“ in the referendum of 8 April 1962 on the Evian agreements, confirming the independence of Algeria. In the first round of the 1965 presidential elections the candidate of the „national right“, Jean-Louis Tixier-

Vignancour, failed to gain more than 9.2 percent of the votes. All extreme right-wing movements put together hardly drew more than 100,000 votes in the 1967 parliamentary elections and at the time of the 1968 student protests it was absorbed in the right-wing front against the „leftist“ peril.

The creation of the National Front, four years later, inspired by the electoral success of the Italian neo-fascist party, MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano), was explicitly meant to regenerate it¹. It started as mixed federation of all its components, including those nostalgic for Vichy and anti-Gaullists, Poujadists and neo-fascists, intellectuals and activists, under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen. Some of the first to join, the elderly, had collaborated directly with the Germans. André Dufraisse and Victor Barthelemy, who gave the party its first structure, came from the collaborationist PPF (Parti populaire français) of Jacques Doriot. Paul Malaguti, former regional councillor of the FN, now deceased, also came from the PPF and had been implicated in the massacre at the villa Montfleury in Cannes, in 1944. Pierre Bousquet of the „Militant“ group belonged to the Francist movement of Marcel Bucard and served in the Waffen SS. Leading intellectuals of the party such as Roland Gaucher, former director of *National Hebdo* and one of its editors François Brigneau, belonged to the RNP (Rassemblement national populaire), the collaborationist party of Marcel Déat. Others were former Poujadists (M. Bouyer, J. Tauran) and monarchists (G.P.Wagner, J.F.Chiappe). But the majority discovered activism at the time of the Algerian war, in the numerous nationalist organisations fighting, sometimes violently and illegally, against the independence of Algeria - comités Tixier-Vignancour, ARLP (Alliance républicaine pour les libertés et le progrès), the MJR (Mouvement pour la révolution), Jeune Nation, FEN, OAS-métro (Organisation Armée Secrète), etc. - or a little later, in the students anti-Communist movement at the end of the sixties (Occident/Ordre nouveau). Some of these groups were openly neo-nazi (the FANE of Mark Frederiksen) or negationists (the GNR led by François Duprat, editor of the *Cahiers européens*), others were mainly anti-Gaullists and their members had sometimes fought against the Germans with the Resistance.

Jean-Marie Le Pen was chosen as president of the new movement. Ex-paratrooper, former president of the nationalist students' association of Paris, the „Corpo“, elected deputy on the „Union et Fraternité française“ list led by Pierre Poujade in 1958 then on the list of the CNIP (Centre national des indépendants et paysans), campaign manager for the pro-Algérie française candidate Tixier-Vignancour, he had the ideal profile to unify such a disparate group: man of action, involved in all the battles of the extreme right, yet fairly politically respectable.

Gradually, the FN has absorbed practically all the tendencies of the extreme right, from the Catholic fundamentalists led by Bernard Antony to the solidarists led by

¹ Data on the formation of the FN and its members mostly comes from Camus 1996, Monzat 1992 and Konopnicki 1996

Jean-Pierre Stirbois and members from more radical groups such as Militant or Troisième Voie. Today only small groups remain outside its orbit, groups which have split from the FN such as l'Alliance populaire or Espace nouveau, Monarchists of the NAR (Nouvelle Action Royaliste) or of the RN (Restauration nationale), more violent groups such as student activists of the GUD (Groupe Union Défense), l'Oeuvre française of Pierre Sidos, skinheads gathered around Serge Ayoub, alias Batskin, or neo-nazis such as the PNFE (Parti nationaliste français et européen) of Jean-Claude Cornilleau, supporters of which have just been sentenced for the desecration of the Jewish cemetery of Carpentras. None of these groups aims at parliamentary representation. Many are connected with other neo-nazis or neo-fascist groups in Europe. Officially, because it is aiming at political respectability, the FN denies having any links with them. But individually there are many comings and goings back and forth, particularly among its more radical youth movement, the FNJ (Front national de la jeunesse) and the RE (Renouveau étudiant).

The Nouvelle Droite also stands apart. The movement, a right-wing counter-culture, appeared in 1968, around the GRECE and its reviews such as *Eléments* and *Nouvelle Ecole*. Its guru, Alain de Benoist, founder of the review *Krisis*, who believes more in cultural warfare than in electoral strategy, openly disagrees with a party he considers to be racist and xenophobic, parochially nationalist, Catholic and populist (Taguieff 1995, *Telos* 1994). But nonetheless, the Nouvelle Droite and its ideas have influenced many leaders of the National Front such as Bruno Mégret, Jean-Yves Le Gallou, Yvan Blot, Pierre Vial and Jean-Claude Bardet.

2.2 Ideas

The history of the French extreme-right goes back two centuries, with distinctive ideological traditions (Winock 1993). The first, born in reaction against the Revolution of 1789, is traditionalist, monarchist and Catholic. It failed to restore the Throne and the Altar but it was renewed at the turn of the XIXth century, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, with the launching of the Action française and the intellectual influence of its main thinker, Charles Maurras. At the same time a new nationalism - populist, anti-establishment and mass-based - was taking shape. Zeev Sternhell has labelled it the „revolutionary right“ and sees it as the fore-runner of fascism (Sternhell 1978). The anti-parliamentary movement led by General Boulanger (1886-1889), the nationalist leagues of the thirties, the PPF of the former communist Doriot, or more recently the Poujadist movement, can all be put in that group. Although the social, religious and economic values of the two traditions are radically opposed, they both are nationalist, authoritarian, xenophobic and anti-Semitic.

For the first time in the history of France, a political movement like the FN has succeeded in bringing together these two tendencies and mixing their ideas, as shown by its last „Program for government“ (1993). Structured around the defence of national identity, threatened by immigration and the internationalisation of trade, it continues

the nationalism glorified in the past by Barrès and Maurras. Like them, it wants to defend France against its internal enemies, (previously Jews, free-masons and protestants, now immigrants, mainly Arabs and Muslims) and external enemies (international finance, offshore trusts, the forces of cosmopolitanism). Although anti-Semitism never appears in the official writings of the party, it is latent in several comments of its leader about the „Jewish lobby“, the „gas chambers, a minor detail in the history of World War Two“, his pun about „Durafour-crématoire“ or the „double-nationality“ of a Jewish minister such as Lionel Stoleru. Like these authors, the FN defends the traditional values and institutions in which French identity (family, army, authority, Catholicism) is rooted.

But there is also a populist aspect in the ideology of the FN, more present since 1993 and its electoral progress among the working-classes. Abandoning the ultra-liberalism of its beginnings, it now displays more social preoccupations; pleading for minimum wages, a shorter working week, improvements in the civil servants' statute and defence of the social-security system. More than ever, the FN's doctrine deserves the label „national-populism“, coined by Pierre-André Taguieff (1984).

2.3 Voters and supporters

For ten years, the ideas of the FN had no impact and its electoral results were close to zero. Torn by internal dissension, in competition with its rival, the PFN (Parti des Forces nouvelles) and its leader Pascal Gauchon, it initially suffered failure after failure. In the 1979 European elections, the two organisations could not reach agreement for a joint list. In the 1981 presidential election, their leaders could not manage to find the 500 signatures of elected representatives necessary to run for the presidency. In the following parliamentary elections, National Front candidates drew less than 0.2 percent of the votes. The conclusion of a book on *L'extrême droite en France*, published in autumn 1983, was that the French extreme right was dead (Petitfils 1983: 123). Yet a few weeks later, a local by-election in the small town of Dreux marked its rebirth (Gaspard 1990). On 4 September 1983, the list, led by the National Front's secretary general Jean-Pierre Stirbois, made a good score of 16.7 percent in the first round. In order to defeat the left in the second round, a joint UDF/RPR/National Front list was formed, which won the election with more than 55 percent of the votes in the second round. The alliance with the moderate right, widely debated in the media, provided the National Front with the political legitimacy and the visibility it longed for. In the following weeks, other by-elections confirmed the electoral growth of the Le Pen party, in Aulnay-sous-Bois where it drew 9.3 percent of the vote and in the second district of Morbihan (12 percent). A year later, in the 1984 European elections, more than two million voters supported the list of the „Front d'opposition nationale pour l'Europe des patries“ (11.2 percent of the valid votes), sending ten deputies to the European parliament. In the parliamentary elections of 1986, as many as 35 National Front National deputies were elected to the

National Assembly. Although their number, owing to the changes in electoral law (see *infra*, Annexe 1, a brief presentation of the French electoral system) dropped to 1 in 1988 and zero in 1993, the scores of the FN have remained above 10 percent of the votes ever since, reaching the historical record of 15 percent and more than four million and a half voters in the last presidential election.

At local level the FN's progress was more difficult in a country with more than 36,000 *communes*, three quarters of which are tiny (less than 700 inhabitants). Yet in the 1992 regional elections 239 FN regional councillors were elected and in the first round of the 1995 municipal elections, although the FN made a total score of only 4.3 percent, it went up to 11.57 percent in towns of more than 30,000 inhabitants and in the second round conquered the town halls of Orange, Marignane and Toulon, a large city with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Then in a by-election in January 1997, Catherine Mégret, the wife of Bruno Mégret, became mayor of Vitrolles. Today the FN has more than one thousand elected local representatives.

In addition, the influence of Jean-Marie Le Pen goes way beyond his electorate. Whether or not they vote for him, between a quarter and a fifth of the French of voting age expressed agreement with his ideas, at least before the party split, this proportion being even higher on immigration issues, law and order and defence of traditional values (respectively 24, 29 and 30 percent in April 1998)². Even if only a minority of the population openly agrees with Le Pen's ideas, a majority of French voters actually shares them, agreeing that there are „too many immigrants“ or that in France, „one does not feel at home as one did before“ (59 percent and 44 percent in the 1997 post-electoral CEVIPOF survey). On a scale of ethnocentrism, just over half the French of voting age had a medium or high score in 1997, and one out of five a very high score (Mayer 1999:270).

2.4 Party structure and networks

The second factor benefiting the National Front is the internal political resources it has managed to mobilise; not only the charisma of its leader and his ability to use the media to his advantage, but also organisational resources. After the 1988 presidential election, it consolidated its electoral gains by turning its initial activist group into a structured organisation of nearly 50,000 members. Candidates are no longer recruited by small ads in the press, they are selected and groomed within party schools and display increasing professionalism. Beyond party members and voters, a social movement is in formation, a small counter-society sharing common values and symbols with the grassroots in all segments of the population (Birenbaum 1992: 220-

² Sofres/*Le Monde*/RTL, 21-24 April 1998, sample representative of the French population age 18 and over (N=1000). But since the split, the influence of the FN's ideas has sharply declined: in May 1999, only 11 percent of French voters said they agreed with Le Pen's ideas and 9 percent with Mégret's ideas (Sofres/*Le Monde*/RTL survey, 27-29 April 1999, N=1000)

286). A diversified press (*National Hebdo*, *Présent*, *Le Choc du Mois* now defunct, *Minute*) and a network of circles extend the party's influence. The oldest is its youth group, the Front National de la Jeunesse (1974) which is active in high schools and certain universities and at one point claimed up to 15,000 members (the real figure is closer to two or three thousand). Other organisations recruit among women (Cercle national des femmes d'Europe), veterans (Cercle national des combattants), businessmen and professionals (Entreprise Moderne et Libertés), farmers (Cercle national des agriculteurs) etc. The party's Scientific Council and the review *Identity* are designed to appeal to intellectuals. Fundamentalist networks, among them pro-life groups (SOS Tout Petits, Laissez les Vivre) are very active and are aimed at Catholics. They are connected with the NF via one of its leaders, Bernard Antony, who founded the Centres Charlier and the Comités Chrétienté-Solidarité (Goliath 1991, Camus and Monzat 1992). The pro-Saddam positions taken by Jean-Marie Le Pen during the Gulf War have drawn in members from more radical groups of the extreme right such as Troisième Voie or l'Oeuvre française, while the club Renaissance serves as a bridge with the moderate right. After the social movements of December 1995, the FN has also tried to promote its own unions, among the police, among prison guards and among bus and subway workers, as well as organisations designed to help the unemployed (such as Fraternité Française)(Soudais 1996).

2.5 Political opportunities

The National Front's rise also benefited from specific political opportunities. One of the key factors in its success was the election of a socialist President of the Republic and the nomination of four communist ministers in the government of Pierre Mauroy in 1981, after twenty three years of right-wing government. Firstly, the „socialist-communist“ victory radicalised some right-wing voters and then two years later, many former left-wing adherents were alienated by the change in the social and economic policies of the Left, considerably increasing the number of potential voters for the Le Penist party. The rapid turnover in office of right and left-wing governments, the „cohabitation“ between a socialist president and a RPR Prime Minister (1986-1988), the lingering recession and a succession of affairs and scandals, contributed to discrediting the political class as a whole and to a blurring of the left-right division, giving strength to Jean-Marie Le Pen's attacks against the mainstream parties, which he ironically nicknamed „The Gang of Four“ : The Communist Party (PC), the Socialist Party (PS), the Union for French Democracy (UDF) and The Rally of the Republic (RPR). More deeply perhaps, as suggested by Piero Ignazi, this vote was a reaction against post-materialist values and the permissiveness of the Sixties, a „silent counter-revolution“ (Ignazi 1992).

The FN also benefited from the direct help of its opponents several times. As we saw above, the electoral alliance proposed by the UDF and the RPR to the National Front in Dreux, because no victory over the Left would be possible without the votes of

National Front supporters, pulled it out of the electoral ghetto where it had been confined. This policy of alliances continued on a large scale in the 1986 regional elections. It lasted until after the electoral collapse of the Left in the 1992 regional elections, when the Right no longer needed the extreme-right to be victorious. It started anew in the 1998 regional elections, when the UDF presidents of four regions were elected with the support of National Front representatives. The Left also contributed to the development of the Le Penist party, using it to weaken the right. It was responsible for changing electoral law just before the 1986 parliamentary elections. Proportional representation, more favourable to small parties than the majority system, limited the losses of the Socialist Party but also enabled 35 National Front deputies to be elected to the National Assembly. It also divided the moderate right on the question of whether to make local alliances with FN candidates. Since 1988, the majority system has been restored but, on the left as well as on the right, the idea periodically reappears that it is not democratic to thus deprive a party of parliamentary representation and that the system should be reformed mixing the majority system and proportional representation, giving small parties at least minimum representation.

3. Women voters and women candidates

3.1 Women voters

Since the first electoral successes of the National Front, its low proportion of women voters has been a constant in French elections. In the nine general elections between 1984 and 1997, the National Front has repeatedly had a deficit of female voters. The number of women who vote for the party has varied between seven and thirteen percent, whereas it ranges between eleven and eighteen percent among male voters. The gender gap has varied over time from a minimum of one point in the parliamentary elections of 1993 to a maximum of seven points in the 1995 presidential election. Nevertheless, in a disturbing development for the future, the advance of the National Front in the last four parliamentary elections has included an increase in women voters, though the increase was three points compared to seven for men (Table 1). And the survey data after the European elections of June 1999 is, at first sight, even more startling. For the first time, it shows no difference between male and female support for the extreme right (Table 1). Closer examination, though, shows that between the 1994 and the 1999 elections, the proportion of women supporting the FN has remained stable, at the level of 9 percent (if one adds the scores of Le Pen and Mégret in 1999). In the specific context of these European elections, with a low level of turnout and a large number of competing lists (twenty) that favoured protest voting, it is the male voters who dropped the FN (8% compared with 12% in 1994), mostly in favour of the two other anti-European lists led by Charles Pasqua and Philippe de

Villiers on the one hand, and the hunters list (Chasse Pêche Nature et Traditions) on the other. Women voters remain as reluctant as before to support the extreme right.

Taking the National Front electorate as a whole, its masculine character can be measured in another manner. The last two general elections of 1995 and 1997 show that for every 100 National Front voters 60 are men and 40 are women (Table 2). The electoral base of the National Front is the opposite of that of the Green Party, which is mainly female. Hans-Georg Betz (Betz 1994: 143) has underscored the fact that in all European countries where there has been a concomitant growth of populist and ecological parties, the first have proved to be predominantly male in their composition while the latter are very female (Table 3).

Two hypotheses can explain the reticence of French women to vote for the extreme right. The first is that in refusing to vote for the National Front, they manifested their hostility towards an ideologically sexist party, one of whose explicit objectives is to perpetuate gender hierarchy. In effect, the National Front's program, characterised by an authoritarian paternalism (cf. *infra* V) offends the most elementary of feminist principles. Why would women vote for a party that is militantly against the rights won at the price of so many battles: the right to work, the right to interrupt an unwanted pregnancy? The anti-Lepenism of women can also be explained - and this is the second hypothesis supported by all the polls - by their refusal to accept violence (Mayer 1999: 117-132). They object to the physical aggression of the movement which is constantly ready to surface and frequently seen in numerous strong-arm operations. Women also refuse to join the verbal brutality of Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose speeches are peppered with „references to an aggressive virility“ (Perrineau 1997: 105) and whose rhetoric functions on the basis of „sexual metaphors“ (see *infra*, section V.2).

Table 1: The Front National vote by gender: 1984-1999 (%)

Elections	1984	1986	1988	1988	1989	1993	1994	1995	1997	1999	
	Eur.	Parl.	Pres.	Parl.	Eur.	Parl.	Eur.	Pres.	Parl.	Eur. FNMN	
Women	8	9	11	7	10	13	9	12	12	6	3
Men	14	11	18	12	14	14	12	19	18	5	3
Together	11	10	14.5	10	12	13	10.5	15.5	15	6	3
Gap W/M	- 6	- 2	- 6	- 5	- 4	- 1	- 3	- 7	- 6	1	0

Source: post-electoral Sofres surveys

Table 2: Composition by gender of the NF electorate (%)

	1984	1986	1988	1988	1989	1993	1994	1995	1997
	Eur.	Parl.	Pres.	Parl.	Eur.	Parl.	Eur.	Pres.	Parl.
Women	32	47	39	39	43	50	42	40	40
Men	68	53	61	61	57	50	58	60	60
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: post-electoral Sofres surveys.

Table 3: The gender basis of radical right wing populist and left libertarian parties (%)

	SWEDEN (1991)	ITALY (1992)	AUSTRIA (1990)	SWITZ. (1991)	FRANCE (1997)	GERMANY (1989)
	ND	LN	FPÖ	AP	FN	REP
Women	38	49	40	46	40	36
Men	62	51	60	54	60	64
	GREENS	GREENS	GREENS	GREENS	GREENS	GREENS
Women	69	-	58	54	59	53
Men	31	-	42	46	41	47

Source: Betz H-G, *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe* (1994: 143).

3.1.1 *The sociological reasons*³

Sociological analysis - based on a poll conducted between the two rounds of the 1997 parliamentary elections - helps us to understand the reasons for women voters rejection of the National Front (Tables 4 - 9). Women who vote least frequently for the Front belong to two groups with very different sociological profiles. The first group consists mostly of women who can be considered privileged and who are attuned to feminist and modernist values. 6 percent of women with a higher level of education vote for the National Front (compared with 17 percent of men), 3 percent of women professionals or high-level executives (men 13 percent), 9 percent of female students (against 15 percent) and 10 percent of women who condemn the masculine monopoly of politics (men 16 percent). In contrast, the second group of women whose support for the National Front is weakest is made up of women with traditional profiles: 65 years or older (6 percent vote for the National Front compared with 20 percent of male voters), practising Catholics (3 percent compared with 16 percent), retired women (6 percent compared with 22 percent) and widows (9 percent compared with 26 percent).

Hard core resistance to the National Front thus allies the extreme fringes of the women's vote. On the one hand it includes the most dynamic faction of the feminist electorate which, in differentiating itself from the National Front vote, signals its hostility to the patriarchal ideology of a party founded on the inferiority of women and the superiority of the „virile“ man who is called upon to affirm his domination over family, society and politics. On the other hand it includes traditional and Catholic women voters, who signal their rejection of violence and the radicalism of the National Front's discourse. Rejection of the patriarchal order from feminists, rejection of violence from traditionalists: it is the conjunction of these two opposites that constitute the strength of the feminine anti-Lepénism.

3.1.2 *Working women: an antidote against voting for Le Pen ?*

Electoral geography shows us that the Le Pen vote is strong in the departments where fewer women work (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Lorraine, Alsace, as well as the departments bordering on the Mediterranean); that is to say, where traditional values about gender roles prevail. Conversely, the areas where the Le Pen vote is weak correspond to departments where the number of working women is high (Soudais 1966: 88, Mayer 1997: 444). This fact has led some to conclude that the best antidote to voting for Le Pen is a large female working population. Yet, if one analyses the individual electoral behaviour of women, paradoxically, the women most inclined to support the NF are working women! 14 percent of gainfully employed women voted for the NF in the 1997 election but only 6 percent of retired women, 10 percent of unemployed

³ The following analysis is mostly drawn from Sineau 2000, „L'électrice paradoxale“

women and 9 percent of women students. The only exception to the rule was housewives who had worked in the past (22 percent) (Table 6). This can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, women who have never worked are to a high degree Catholic. The political effect of not working can be said to be counterbalanced by the effect of Catholicism, which is a powerful element of resistance to the National Front (see *infra*). On the other hand, women who formerly worked - less numerous among practising Catholics - have frequently been left behind economically. Having failed to re-integrate into the labour market, they are inclined to vote for the National Front out of social desperation.

Table 4: The FN vote by gender and age (%)

AGE	Men	Women	Gap
18-24 years	19	14	5
25-34 years	20	18	2
35-49 years	15	15	0
50-64 years	22	10	12
65 and over	20	6	18

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 5: The FN vote by gender and profession (%)

PROFESSION	Men	Women	Gap
Farmer	4	0	4
Shop-owner, craftsman, company manager	26	11	15
Executive, professional	13	3	10
Middle management	14	8	6
White-collar workers	25	14	11
Blue-collar workers	24	25	1

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 6: The FN vote by gender and type of activity (%)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Men	Women	Gap
Employed	17	14	3
Unemployed	24	10	14
Retired	22	6	16
Housewife (has worked)	-	22	-
Housewife (never worked)	-	13	-
Student	15	9	6

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 7: The FN vote by gender and education level (%)

EDUCATION LEVEL	Men	Women	Gap
Primary	21	13	8
Primary superior	22	18	4
Baccalaureate	13	6	7
Bac. + 2 years	12	4	8
University	17	6	11

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 8: The FN vote by gender and religion (%)

RELIGION	Men	Women	Gap
Regularly practising Catholic	16	3	13
Irregularly practising Catholic	15	11	4
Non-practising Catholic	21	16	5
No religion	18	16	2

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 9: The FN vote by gender and marital status (%)

MARITAL STATUS	Men	Women	Gap
Married	17	11	6
Cohabiting	19	22	3
Single	19	12	7
Divorced	29	15	14
Widowed	26	9	17

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

3.1.3 Catholicism as a moral rampart against the National Front vote

In a Catholic country such as France, one could have expected practising Catholics to support the FN, because this party contains a strong Catholic fundamentalist wing. However, this is not the case. In fact, fundamentalist Catholics are a very small extremist minority which has been repeatedly condemned by the official authorities of the Catholic Church and feared by the majority of its flock. The CEVIPOF 1997 survey shows that the religious integration of women has a decisive influence in their choosing not to vote for the National Front. The percentage of their vote for that party diminishes as their level of religious integration increases, dropping from 16 percent among the non-religious and non-practising Catholics to 11 percent among those who irregularly go to church and 3 percent among those who are regular church-goers (Table 8). In contrast, among men, the degree of integration into Catholicism has almost no effect on their voting behaviour. In order to understand why religious values reduce the National Front vote among some and not among others, it is necessary to refer to the asymmetry of the values instilled in both sexes by the Catholic Church. Men are taught virility, strength and authority. Women are taught obedience, gentleness and dedication to others. This explains why Catholic education has acted on the feminine conscience as a propagator of a humanist morality opposed to a party that openly ridicules those values.

3.1.4 Towards an increasing National Front audience among women?

The voting behaviour of French women contains a paradox. In effect, throughout the years women voters have continued to resist the attraction of a vote that is for men frequently an outlet against economic difficulties (a quarter of unemployed males voted for the National Front in 1997 compared with 10 percent of unemployed women), or problems of a personal nature (almost 30 percent of divorced men and more than a quarter of widowers voted for the National Front). Even though women

are more directly affected by the economic crisis⁴ and its resulting isolation, major causes of support for the National Front, they vote less frequently than men for Jean-Marie Le Pen's party. Is it nevertheless conceivable for the female electorate to be transformed and become privileged territory for the National Front (Jaffré 1998)? Two arguments point in this direction. On the one hand, there is an observable split among the different generations of women, a split that does not exist among men (Table 4). Among women of 50 and above, there is strong reticence against voting for the National Front, without doubt linked to strong religious beliefs. Only 10 percent of women between 50 and 64 and 6 percent who are 65 and over have chosen to vote for the National Front compared with 22 percent and 20 percent respectively of men in the same age groups. The gender gap is thus very real among older and elderly voters. In contrast, among those who are less than 50 years old, the vote for the National Front is more frequent and the disparity between men and women is small or even non-existent. Thus, in the 25 to 34 age bracket, 20 percent of men and 18 percent of women voted for a National Front candidate, while, among those between the ages of 35 and 49, 15 percent of both men and women voted for the National Front.

The evolution of the working class vote is the second element suggesting that the Lepenist movement has already cut into certain areas of the feminine vote and could appeal to others in the future. While in the 1995 presidential election women workers distinguished themselves from male workers by a higher reticence in voting for Jean-Marie Le Pen, a quarter of women workers (like 24 percent of male workers) voted for National Front candidates in the 1997 parliamentary elections (Table 5). It is as if the economic crisis resulted in weakening (through unstable jobs, under-employment and lower salaries) this category of working women with few qualifications and a low education level. These women responded to right-wing extremism in order to express their desperation in the face of seemingly insurmountable economic difficulties - a situation reflected in the fact that 82 percent of working class women are rather anxious about the future of their job (compared with 72 percent of working class men). The National Front vote among working class women is in this sense a vote of protest designed to draw attention to their undesirable position.

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Today more women go to university and the number of working women continues to increase, despite the crisis. Yet occupational inequalities between the sexes are still not a thing of the past. In 1998, the female unemployment rate was higher than that of men (13.5 percent compared to 9.8 percent), the gap persisting even for university graduates (unemployment rate of 8.5 percent among women, 5.4 percent among men). Women earn an average 20 to 27 percent less than men. (For a similar degree, professional experience and qualifications, men between 30 and 45 have on average a 13 percent higher salary than women.) Women also more frequently work part time (31.6 percent compared to 5.6 percent) and more often have unstable work contracts (fixed term or temporary contracts). Last but not least, they are under-represented in the upper reaches of the corporate hierarchy. See Margaret Maruani's book on *Travail et emploi des femmes*, Paris, La Découverte, 2000

Interviews among women National Front voters suggest that their principal motivations in voting for the party are not radically different from those of men - immigration, crime and unemployment (Lévy 1989) - even if some women also cite reasons of their own such as defence of the traditional family. The CEVIPOF 1997 survey also showed that ideological motivations for voting for the National Front are the same among voters of both sexes - authoritarianism, nationalism and racism.⁵ However, the paradox of the woman's vote for the National Front is that even when they are authoritarian, nationalist and racist, women are less likely than men to vote for the National Front, a party propounding those values. Among the nationalists (who define themselves as „French first“), only 20 percent of women vote National Front compared with 33 percent of men. On the other hand, it must be underlined that when they are National Front voters or sympathisers, women express an exaggerated adherence to the values of the party. For instance, 45 percent of women National Front voters and 55 percent of sympathisers define themselves as „French first“ compared with respectively 31 percent and 43 percent of men.

3.2 Women candidates and elected officials

When the National Front first began participating in elections, women candidates were not legion in the party. Today, the National Front presents more women candidates (especially in local elections), conscious that they are best placed to preach the party's word among women voters. In the French context, favourable to the feminisation of political life, the National Front has allowed itself be convinced that specific female qualities, or at least the qualities assigned to them by public opinion, can result in additional votes. It also knows that media coverage of certain elected women can soften the image of the party. „Persuaded of the moderating effect of femininity on politics,“ the extreme right party seems to think that „its ideas, as violent as they may be, are more acceptable when expressed by women “ (Venner 1999: 421).

3.2.1 Female National Front Members of the European Parliament

It was in 1984 that the National Front entered the European Parliament with ten elected members after receiving about 11 percent of the French vote. „Everything begins today,“ Jean-Marie Le Pen declared at the time. The victory was facilitated by proportional representation, a veritable „blessing“ for emerging political parties.

⁵ Sineau 2000. Also Mayer (1999: 125), showing that basically one finds the same hierarchy of social, educational and ideological factors explaining the vote for the FN whatever the sex, with just one difference. Among men, there is a specific anti-feminist motivation. The more they are in favour of a traditional vision of gender roles, and against women's emancipation, the more likely they are to vote for the FN. In contrast, women who vote for the FN are not motivated by a traditionalist vision of their role, once controlled by age, education and religion.

There were few women among the candidates put up by the National Front in 1984 (13 out of 81, or 16 percent). In its official literature the party did not forget to mention that the women candidates had children. Out of the 13 female candidates, nine were designated as „family women“, a laudatory title that came before their profession and their public office or political responsibilities. The National Front is the only party that presents the „maternal“ profile of its candidates in this manner, a demonstration of the importance that it accords the procreative function of women. Few in number, women candidates were poorly placed on the National Front's electoral lists (only one among the first ten listed candidates and three among the first 20), which explains why there was only one woman, Martine Lehideux, a member of the party's National Committee, among the 10 elected National Front candidates (ten percent). As a result, the National Front had fewer elected women than most other parties. On the left, the Socialist Party counted 30 percent of women among its elected officials (6 out of 21) while the Communist Party had 20 percent (2 out of 10). On the right, the Rally for the Republic (RPR) had 20 percent of women among those elected from its lists while the Union for French Democracy (UDF) had 21 percent. The average was 20.9 percent, or 17 elected women deputies out of a total of 81 French deputies elected to the European Parliament. After his success in that election, Jean-Marie Le Pen allied himself in Strasbourg (where the Parliament meets) with the five MEP's from the Italian Social Movement (MSI) and with the single deputy from the Greek National Political Union to create the „Group of the European Right“.⁶ Le Pen became the group's president. Of the 16 members, Ms. Lehideux was the only woman.

The 1989 European Parliamentary elections did not see any increase in the number of National Front women MEP's (Table 10). Ms. Lehideux remained the only woman representative of the National Front in the European Parliament. The place of women on the National Front's list of candidates even declined in comparison with previous elections - there were only two women among the first 20 listed candidates. Badly placed on the list, Marie-France Stirbois violently opposed Jean-Marie Le Pen on the issue and declined to stand for election. As for Ms. Lehideux, she was listed second just behind Le Pen himself. If the elections of 1994 saw the number of National Front European deputies increase by one, the number of women deputies remained at just one. This time it worked against Ms. Stirbois, number six on the list, who later took her revenge for 1989. She has now become a well-known woman in the National Front, accumulating numerous elected positions and political functions (then regional councillor of the Center Region, member of the departmental council of the Eure-et-Loir department, member of the municipal council of the city of Dreux and member of the National Front's political committee).

⁶

The 1994 elections marked the end of this Group of the European Right; National Front representatives now sit with the independents in the European Parliament

During the summer of 1998, Jean-Marie Le Pen supported the candidacy of his wife, Jany, to head the National Front's list for the June 1999 European elections. Le Pen expected to be declared ineligible by the Versailles Court of Appeals as part of an ongoing lawsuit. Saying that „the candidacy of a woman of foreign European origin... would send a strong signal to women of European origin,“ he believed his wife capable of „contributing to the election of 20 to 25 Members of the European Parliament“ (*Libération*, July 22 and September 17, 1998). Moreover, he presented his replacement by his wife as a tradition of the National Front. „It's true that in the National Front we have a culture of the couple, a family culture, and that in the history of our families it is the women who take the place of men when they are at war or are unable to be there.“ At first reluctant to become involved („I am a homemaker... without any political training.“), Jany quickly changed her mind and said she was „proud“ that in heading the National Front's list she „could contribute to redress the injustice against her husband“. ⁷ The feared scenario of Le Pen's exclusion by the court did not take place and the president of the National Front was able to head the list. Nevertheless, it was the announcement of Le Pen's wife's possible candidacy that precipitated the break with the National Front's former delegate-general Bruno Mégret.

As a consequence of the party split, two extreme right lists were competing at the 1999 European elections. The Le Pen list included only one woman in the first ten names, Marie-France Stirbois (sixth on the list). Martine Lehideux came twelfth, with no hope of being elected. The Mégret list did not contain more women. There was only one in the first ten. On purpose, the president of the MNR chose Marie-Caroline Le Pen (fourth on the list), the rebel elder daughter of the FN's leader, who lives with one of Mégret's close lieutenants, Philippe Olivier. The second woman on the list, in twelfth position, was Mireille d'Ornano. But Bruno Mégret's list, with less than 5 percent of the valid votes, had no deputies elected. And if Le Pen's list drew more than 5 percent of the votes, the five elected deputies are all men. There are no more women representing the French extreme right in the European Parliament.

3.2.2 *National Front women elected to the National Assembly*

Representation of the National Front in the National Assembly is not favoured by the electoral system (majority voting in two rounds for a single member, instead of a party list) in use in the Fifth Republic - denounced by Le Pen as, „A system put in place in order to exclude us“ (Soudais 1996: 11). The only parliamentary elections which took place under proportional representation, those of March 1986, showed

⁷ Interview with *Agir*, a National Front youth publication quoted by *Libération*, September 17, 1998. Jany Le Pen, born Jeanne-Marie Paschos, has never been an activist. Her only official role — more an honorary than truly political one — is as president of the *SOS Enfants d'Irak* association, founded by Jean-Michel Dubois, member of the National Front's political bureau

inversely that they favoured the National Front. Garnering almost ten percent of the votes (about 2.5 million), the party's entry into the National Assembly was widely noticed. With its 35 elected deputies, it was even able to form its own parliamentary group.

Of the 35 National Front deputies elected to the National Assembly for the first time, only one was a woman, or 2.8 percent of the group (Table 11). That score placed the National Front ahead of the Rally for the Republic (1.9 percent of women in its group) but far behind the other parties even though they hardly made any effort to place women candidates in constituencies where they could be easily elected. The left-wing parties had the highest proportion of women in the National Assembly. The Socialist Party had 9.8 percent of women in its group and the Communist Party 8.5 percent. Even though more than 20 percent of National Front candidates were women, they were candidates in the most difficult districts, those that were „given up for lost.“ The only woman from the extreme right elected to the National Assembly in the 1986 election was Yann Piat, who was elected in the third district of the Var department. She was named secretary of the National Front's parliamentary group. She was one of the party's so-called „historical members,“ those who joined before 1984, and she belonged to Jean-Marie Le Pen's family circle. Yann Piat presented herself as the „spiritual goddaughter“ of the National Front president, whom she had known since infancy. She was also eminent within the National Front, having climbed the various steps of the political ladder. First responsible for the National Front's section in Hyères-Toulon (1977 to 1983), she then became department secretary for the party in the Landes department before assuming the same post in the National Front's Var Federation in the autumn of 1985. She was also member of the party's political bureau.

In the parliamentary elections of 1988, the National Front again obtained almost ten percent of the vote. Nevertheless, the group of elected National Front members shrank considerably as a result of the change in the electoral system. „The number of National Front deputies has been reduced from 35 to one, thanks to the two-ballot majority voting system, and the extreme right wing party lost a good deal of its political visibility.“ (Perrineau 1997: 58). Ironically for a party that elevates virility to a cardinal virtue, its only seat in that election was won by a woman, Yann Piat, who was re-elected in her Var department with 54 percent of the vote. It is true that she resigned from the party shortly afterwards, a break that she described in her book *Seule, Tout en Haut à Droite*. She later joined the ranks of the Republican Party (one of the components of the UDF), remaining a member until her assassination in 1994 (Sineau 2001: 141-142).

In November 1989, two by-elections placed two women in the political forefront. „In Marseille and in Dreux the National Front candidates Marie-Claude Roussel and Marie-France Stirbois obtained respectively 33 and 42.5 percent of the vote. In the second ballot, the first was narrowly defeated (47.2 percent) while the second was

triumphantly elected with 61.3 percent of the vote (Perrineau 1997: 63). In this way, from 1989 until the end of the legislative period (1993), the only deputy from the National Front happened to be a woman, a new paradox for a resolutely masculine party. The election turned Marie-France Stirbois into the „National Front’s showcase“ and she played „on her image as a woman to gain maximum publicity“ (Durand 1996:147). She was also able to claim an impressive record of personal achievements. Having first been elected to the party’s Political Bureau at the beginning of 1990, she was re-elected regional councillor of the Center region in 1992 and headed the National Front’s regional group.

Following the 1993 parliamentary elections the National Front, which obtained 13 percent of the vote, did not have a single deputy in the National Assembly. Marie-France Stirbois lost her seat from the Eure-et-Loir department, and though Yann Piat was re-elected from the Var department, it was under the UDF-PR label. The 1997 parliamentary elections gave the National Front only one deputy despite obtaining 15 percent of the vote, its highest score ever in a parliamentary contest. The winner was Jean-Marie Le Chevallier, mayor of the southern port city of Toulon since 1995, who was elected from the first district in the Var department. His victory, however, was invalidated several months later on the grounds that he had violated election campaign laws, and he was declared ineligible to run for one year. As a result, Le Chevallier’s wife Cendrine aspired to succeed her husband in the by-elections that took place in 1998. In a contest against the Socialist Odette Casanova, Ms. Le Chevallier lost the seat won by her husband in June 1997 in the second ballot. As a result, today the National Front does not hold a single seat in the National Assembly.

The new ”Gender parity law” of 6 June 2000 (see Annexe 2) obliges political parties to present an equal proportion of women and men among their candidates, and those which will not comply with this rule shall be fined. This should incite the FN and the MNR to promote more female candidates for the 2001 parliamentary elections. Yet recent declarations of their leaders suggest that the two parties plan different strategies. While Carl Lang, secretary general of the FN, has announced (August 2001) that he intended to “enforce the law”, Jean-Yves Le Gallou, delegate-general of the MNR, was less affirmative, declaring that “the gender of the candidates is not the criterion” (*L’Express*, 16 August 2001). Like other right wing parties, the MNR may prefer to pay the fines than to promote women candidates.

3.2.3 National Front women elected to Regional Assemblies

As in the parliamentary elections of 1986, the National Front has profited from the electoral system that existed then for the election of the regional assemblies, that is,

proportional representation⁸. Since 1992, the National Front has established itself on all Regional Councils. The party confirmed its presence in the 1998 elections, with its score rising from 13.9 percent to 15.3 percent. In this last election the National Front made a real effort to place women in eligible positions on its lists. If the party played the feminisation card, it was due to the dynamics created by the Socialist Party in the 1997 parliamentary elections. The policy of quotas introduced with success by the Socialists had a contagious effect on other political groupings, including the National Front (Sineau 1998). Fearful of an electorate wishing to see the renewal of its elites, the National Front resolved to give women prominent positions on its lists. Of the 95 department lists presented by the National Front in metropolitan France, nine were headed by women (including Ms. Stirbois in Eure-et-Loir, Ms. Lehideux in Paris and Ms. Myriam Baeckeroot in the Yvelines department). The election doubled the proportion of National Front women candidates elected to the regional Councils, increasing from 8 percent in 1992 to 17 percent (Table 12). The 46 National Front candidates elected included Ms. Stirbois, Ms. Lehideux and Marie-Caroline Le Pen, the eldest daughter of the party leader, who was elected regional councillor for Ile de France (Paris metropolitan region), an assembly that includes 18 National Front officials headed by Ms. Lehideux.

3.2.4 National Front Women elected to Department Assemblies

The majority voting system for the election of the department General Councils represents the same handicap for the National Front that it does in parliamentary elections. This was proved by the 1985 elections. One year after its victory in the European elections, the National Front failed to establish itself in the departmental assemblies even though it presented a large number of candidates (exactly 1,521)(Birenbaum 1992:61). Although it received a non-negligible 8.8 percent of the vote, the National Front was able to claim only one elected official, in Marseille (a man). In later elections there were more women candidates for department elections. From 357 in 1992, their number rose to 377 in 1994 and then to 427 in 1998. In 1992, the National Front did not win a single seat. In 1994, three of its candidates were elected, including two women. Ms. Marie-France Stirbois was elected general councillor in Dreux (Eure-et-Loir) with more than 54 percent of the vote, while Eliane Guillet de la Brosse⁹ won in Toulon in the Var department. In 1998 the National Front, which received 13.9 percent of the votes, had three elected general councillors. But in the elections of 11 and 18 March 2001, the FN and the MNR lost all the four seats they had, even though their total score was a little higher **than in**

⁸ In order to weaken the local influence of the FN, the electoral rule has been changed by the law of 19 January 1999 (see annexe 1), which adopts a mix of proportional representation and majority rule.

⁹ Also town councillor of Toulon, she claims allegiance to the legitimist royalist branch within the National Front;

1994 in the same districts (10,8 percent -FN 7,1 percent + MNR 3 percent- instead of 9,8 percent).

3.2.5 *National Front women elected to Municipal Assemblies*

The role of wives was particularly visible, and at times emphasised, in municipal assemblies. In the south-eastern cities conquered by the National Front in 1995 (Toulon, Orange, Marignane) and in 1997 (Vitrolles), National Front couples exercised their functions together. The hierarchy of the sexes was generally respected: when the husband was mayor the wife was only a municipal councillor or at best a deputy-mayor. When the woman herself was elected mayor, it was only to substitute her husband because he had been declared ineligible to exercise his function as a result of fraud.

In Toulon (170,000 inhabitants), a city headed by J.-M. Le Chevallier, his wife, Cendrine, formed part of the municipal executive. She was the deputy for youth affairs and tried to „conquer minds“ through the „Youth of Toulon“, association founded just after the elections. In Orange (23,000 inhabitants), whose mayor was Jacques Bompard, his wife, Marie-Claude, appeared to have a strong influence over municipal affairs even though she was not an elected official.¹⁰ She was, in any case, perceived as the „real shadow of her husband in city hall“(Soudais 1996:54).

Finally in Vitrolles, Catherine Mégret was elected mayor in February 1997 in place of her husband (as a result of Bruno Mégret's having been condemned for spending more money than authorised for his campaign). Neither a party militant nor an elected official, she admitted having become a candidate „to represent Bruno“. „I am not a political woman, by which I mean that my primary ambition is not to exercise power.“ (Mégret C. 1997: 80). Journalists took pleasure in designating Bruno Mégret as the „consort mayor“ or as the „real-false“ mayor of Vitrolles in order to indicate that he was the head of that city through his wife, who was the incarnation of the „model of the figurehead woman“.

The case of Vitrolles clearly demonstrated that the wives of National Front leaders are in reality directed by their husbands and their party. But there are many other „examples of wives, daughters, sisters or secretaries of the National Front enrolled *in extremis* to make up the electoral lists“ (Servan-Schreiber 1997:5). In fact, in the *Guide du Responsable* published by the National Front at the time of the 1995 municipal elections, several pages are dedicated to „the use of family ties“. The book indicates many of the „tricks“ used to hide such ties, including the „systematic recourse of using a wife's maiden name“ (Soudais 1996:81). The role of women in politics as corrected by the National Front, a subordinate role dependent on the husband's career, was denounced on the left as well as the right by all feminists. „By playing the pale role of a stand-in, Catherine Mégret has first and foremost pro-

¹⁰

Marie-Claude Bompard ran in the 1997 parliamentary elections

foundly offended the dignity of all women politicians,” wrote Claude Servan-Schreiber. Simone Veil (RPR) as well as Elisabeth Guigou (PS) were not mistaken when during a television program they qualified the conditions of the election in Vitrolles as an „insult to all women“¹¹.

Table 10 : Women among the FN European deputies (1979-1999)

European Elections	Elected deputies	Women deputies	% of women
1979	0	0	0
1984	10	1	10
1989	10	1	10
1994	11	1	9.1
1999 FN	5	0	0
1999 MNR	0	0	0

Source: The French Home Office

Table11 : Women among FN candidates and deputies in the National Assembly (1986-1997)

Elections	Candidates			Deputies		
	Total number candidates	Women candidates	% women among candidates	Number of deputies elected	Number of women elected	% of women
1986	739	161	21.8	35	1	2.8
1988	549	63	11.5	1	1	100
1993	554	66	11.9	0	0	0
1997	555	67	12.1	1	0	0

Source: The French Home Office/ Gaspard, 1993 et 1997 (Metropolitan France)

Table 12 : Women among FN regional councillors (1992-1998)

Regional Elections	Number of regional councillors elected	Number of women elected	% women elected
1992	239	20	8
1998	275	46	17

Source: The French Home Office

¹¹ TV Program 7/7 March 9, 1997

In the Municipal elections of March 2001, the FN lost the town of Toulon, but kept the town of Orange, whose mayor Jacques Bompard was even reelected after the first round, while his wife, Marie-Claude Bompard, made a very good score in Bolène, with 46,9 percent of the valid votes in the second round. As for the MNR, it kept its two towns, with the victory of Daniel Simonpieri in Marignane and of Catherine Mégret in Vitrolles, beating her adversary by a mere 200 votes. However the elections did not bring about a feminisation of the municipal team, as it did in most large towns with the dynamic of the “fifty fifty” parity law. On a total of 11 deputy mayors, Catherine Mégret chose only three women (27 percent) (Sineau 2001: 263-276).

4. The work of the women in the party

Even though the weakness of women’s activism is not unique to the National Front, it is pronounced within the party. In fact, assuring the political promotion of women has never been the party’s first priority, a situation consistent with its doctrine (cf. *infra* V). The social order as conceived by the National Front is based on the difference of the sexes - the men direct and command, in public as well as in private life. The women must obey and submit themselves to their biological destiny, that is, to have babies and raise them. Such an ideology, sexist in the first sense of the word, is based upon perpetuating the order of the sexes and is accompanied by speeches filled with openly expressed anti-feminism. In a supreme paradox, it is at times women party members who are charged with diffusing this militant anti-feminism, with the men acting on it through physical or symbolic aggression against women. In this manner, in May 1997, Jean-Marie Le Pen personalised hate against Catherine Trautmann, symbol of the resistance against the National Front in Strasbourg, **by presenting a copy** of her „head“ on a platter to militants (Fabre 2001: 110-111). During the 1997 election campaign he molested a Socialist candidate, Annette Peulvast-Bergeal.

The number of women militants and leaders in the party is low, today as in the past, even though its president tries to deny it. „There are many women at our public meetings and there are many who are members of the National Front.“ (Venner 1999: 420). The few women who enjoy an important political role in the party frequently belong to the family clan, either daughters, wives, or „god-daughters“ of the leaders. The party is an illustration in politics of the principle of „family preference“, an aspect similar to the clannish functioning of a party withdrawn into itself and that in practising nepotism exhibits an idea of the state and of politics that one could classify as pre-democratic. This „family partisanship“ also reflects the subordinate and secondary political role allotted to women by National Front leaders. The promotion of women is frequently the result of the husband’s career (cf. *supra* III) (Fabre 2001: 108-109).

4.1 *Women among party militants and leaders*

The National Front, which before its split had between 40,000 and 50,000 members (compared with 2,500 in 1984), does not give any indication of the percentage of women among its members. Female membership of the National Front, frequently perceived as a paradox¹², is due to multiple motivations. These include believing one does not have a political alternative, respect of a family tradition, belief in a National Front discourse that explains the reasons for one's everyday problems, following in the path of a man (father, brother, or husband) and even admiration of Le Pen's charisma (Orfali 1997: 137-138).

Few at the base of the party, women members become even rarer as one goes up the party hierarchy. Since the creation of the National Front in 1972, women have always represented the smallest group among the national leadership in a party that practices „leader worship“ to a greater extent than others and has a pyramid, if not military, type of organisation in which „everything flows from the president“ (Soudais 1996: 201). Low representation of women in the party's leadership is therefore „desired“ by Le Pen. Elected by the party's congress, he nominates the members of the executive bureau as well as 20 members of the central committee that make up the body along with 100 elected representatives. In December 1998, before the party split into two factions, representation of women in the party's national organisations was as follows:

4.1.1 *In the executive bureau*

In the executive bureau, the party's power centre, there was one women out of six members, Ms. Lehideux, who is one of four party vice-presidents. A „founding“ member of the National Front (she joined the party when it was created in 1972), founder of the National Circle of European Women (cf. *infra*), she is one of Le Pen's acolytes. An important figure in the party, Ms. Lehideux accumulated responsibilities and elected offices, belonging to the party's political bureau and its central committee as well as heading the National Front group in the Ile-de-France regional council.

4.1.2 *In the political bureau*

In the political bureau there were three women out of a total of 44 members, or 6.8 percent. In addition to Ms. Lehideux, the other women were Ms. Myriam Baeckeroot, who served as regional councillor in the Ile-de-France and department secretary in the Essonne department. She was also the wife of Christian Baeckeroot, a member of the party's political bureau. The third woman was Marie-France Stirbois, who served as a European deputy, general councillor in the Eure-et-Loir department and as the National Front's spokeswoman on women's issues.

¹² „Intruders, women are more stigmatised, not only by the men but by their fellow women who consider them traitors: to the feminist cause, first of all, and to the feminine identity“ (Orfali 1997: 174)

Two of these three women were widows who succeeded their late husbands in the political bureau and who, to a certain extent, inherited their political weight in the party. Ms. Lehideux followed in the footsteps of her partner André Dufraisse (former member of the PPF, a pre-war fascist party and intimate friend of Jean-Marie Le Pen) who was a member of the political bureau until his death in 1994. Ms. Marie-France Stirbois also followed in the footsteps of her late husband, Jean-Pierre Stirbois, the party's former „strongman“ who died in an accident in November 1988.¹³ Even though entering political life through marriage is no longer common (it had been the case in the past, especially in 1945, see Sineau 1988), it remains a sort of „royal road“ in the National Front. The only two women who truly „count“ in the party owe their political recognition to their status as widows of party officials.

If one considers the evolution through time, one sees a small increase in the number of women at the top of the party. In 1986 the political bureau included only one woman, Yann Piat, among its 21 members, or 4.8 percent. Ten years later, in 1996, two women, Ms. Lehideux and Ms. Stirbois, sat in the 39-member political bureau, or 5.1 percent. It should be noted that this slight increase in the number of women members came about through an increase in the number of members that make up the political bureau, it being easier to give women a place if these are not taken away from men.

4.1.3 In the central committee

In the central committee there were 21 women out of 120 members, or 17 percent. At the time of the Strasbourg Congress in March 1997, only 16 percent of candidates to the central committee and 13 percent of those elected were women (13 women out of 100 members elected). It was precisely to increase the representation of women that Le Pen chose eight women out of the 20 members he appoints directly. „His feminism allowed him to name a number of loyal followers, including his daughter Marine, who was not elected by the Congress.“ (*Ras l'Front*, supplement to n°62, 1997). Marine, a lawyer by training, was also responsible for the National Front's legal department and is regional councillor in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

At middle management level the representation of women is as follows: 7 percent among regional and department secretaries and 10 percent among local party secretaries (section, township or district).¹⁴ It is not much when compared with the Socialist Party, the only group for which reliable statistics are available. In that party 23 percent of department secretaries and 19 percent of section secretaries are women.

¹³ Yet she has long been active on the extreme right. First an *Ordre Nouveau* militant in 1972 alongside her husband, she joined the National Front in 1977, as did her husband. Before his death, she ran for several elected offices: the parliamentary elections in 1978, 1981, 1986 and 1988 and the department elections in 1982. She was elected regional councillor in the Center region in March 1986. In 1989, in the municipal elections, she took over for her husband in Dreux (Durand 1996: 147)

¹⁴ Henri Rey, *Les Cahiers du CEVIPOF*, n° 25

On the other hand, women are more numerous among delegates to National Front congresses. According to available statistics, they represented 14 percent of the delegates in 1978 and 18 percent in 1990, including more than half who were non-working women (Ysmal 1991: 183). Finally, we know that women occupy 22 percent of positions in the different „circles“ close to the National Front and its president (European Women, Modern Enterprise and Liberties, Retirees and Pre-Retirees).

Since the split, the FN seems to follow a different line from the MNR, bringing in more women on the front stage. After the congress of Paris, in June 2001, the proportion of women in the FN's national leadership has increased. There are now five women out of 47 in the political bureau and 29 out of 120 in the central committee (respectively 12,2 and 24,2 percent). On the contrary, the MNR appears less feminised and its leadership resembles a „boys club“¹⁵. As a matter of fact, there are only 2 women out of the 28 members of the political bureau, and 20 women out of the 146 members of the central committee (respectively 7,1 and 13,7 percent).

4.2 The National Circle of European Women: a satellite association

In order to compensate for the weak representation of women in the party and to try and increase the National Front's constituency among women, an organisation organically linked to the party was created, the National Circle of European Women. Founded in 1985 by Ms. Lehideux (with the help of Ariane Biot and Denise Kohler) it is one of the satellites that gravitate towards the National Front, each **in charge** with targeting a particular group, in keeping with the so-called „water lily policy“ developed by Jean-Marie Le Pen.¹⁶ Today the CNFE claims 3,000 members in Europe and 1,000 in France, of which 60 percent have a National Front membership card.

The official objective of this „feminine“ circle is to “defend the French family, women and fundamental values of our society” (see its program on the FN's website, listed in the bibliography). Specifically, it aims at being a platform permitting women to express themselves on women's problems. In an interview with *National-Hebdo* on February 22, 1985, Mr. Le Pen confessed, „Though women are full citizens, it is true that there are certain problems that are specific to them, and it is normal that they be able to express their point of view within a structure that will be part of the National Front while maintaining its distinctiveness (Laroche 1997: 154). In reality, this association is above-all intended to „make a broad sweep“ and win votes

¹⁵ In her detailed examination of the FN's structures and members, before and after the split, Valérie Lafont draws the same conclusion (PhD dissertation forthcoming, see bibliography)

¹⁶ „We create circles as the need arises to make our positions known among all of the nation's social categories and to allow them to express themselves,“ Le Pen explains. „This is the water-lily policy.“ Press conference to launch the Var Committee in Defence of the Army, in Toulon, March 15, 1996 (In Soudais 1996: 211)

(or members) for the National Front among women, up to then reluctant to adopt the party's ideals (cf. *supra* III). In fact, the CNFE attempts to rally to the National Front's cause the „housewives“ that, to quote from a Circle bulletin in 1994, „have the misfortune not to correspond to the cultural profile of the new family model.“ That is, all those women who do not feel modern and liberated. It is among women ignored by the feminist movement that the CNFE is attempting to create „an immense reservoir of voters, militants and candidates on the lists of the National Front for local elections (*Ras l'Front* 1998: 36). Even though taking care of the household and having children are the essential functions allotted to women, the CNEF recognises that women's militancy can go as far as becoming politically involved. Such involvement is „regarded as the extension of the private commitment in the service of the family“ (Laroche 1997:61).

The CNEF draws its support from department delegations and from sympathisers „who are frequently also Catholic activists or members of *Laissez-les Vivre* (Let Them Live) (Laroche 1997:154). These militants, who willingly participate in anti-abortion campaigns, claim the label „feminists of the right“ or „feminists in favour of life“(Venner 1999: 422). In order to disseminate its ideas, the Circle publishes a quarterly bulletin, *Le Bulletin du CNFE*. The Circle also tries to penetrate the network of voluntary associations (charities and school parents' groups) as well as to infiltrate local political life. „In the cities where the National Front has elected municipal councillors, whenever they can, CNFE militants take posts in nursery schools, grammar schools, and social action groups“ (Laroche 1997: 162). Even though it is difficult to measure the real influence of the CNFE, certain signs indicate that its influence is weak. In the Congress it held from April 7 to 9 in Lyon, three quarters of the Congress' commissions were presided over by men (Camus 1996: 113).

The CNFE's program puts this association unquestionably on the extreme right of the political spectrum (cf. *infra* V). Everything shows that the Circle has no doctrinal independence vis-a-vis the National Front (Laroche 1997). Its president, Ms. Lehideux, far from adhering to the slogan „neither left nor right“ claimed for a time by Jean-Marie Le Pen, has stated her position, „defining herself as a woman of the right with regard to values such as the family, law and order and security,“ as she said in an interview given to *Libération*, February 19, 1996. Could she deny her ideological attachments when one knows that she is very much in favour of making abortion illegal¹⁷ and that she belongs to the Special Committee of the National Union for a Christian Europe (UNEC), a Catholic fundamentalist movement that organises pilgrimages to Auschwitz in order to „stop the genocide of abortion“? (Camus 1996: 112).

¹⁷ When she was European deputy, she constantly filed bills aiming to limit or ban legal termination of pregnancy (Laroche 1997: 157)

4.3 What role for women in the National Front ?

The National Front, loyal to a patriarchal ideology, kept women on the extreme fringes of the party for a long time. Accepting them only in small doses, it has also limited them to minor functions. While the National Front admits that women have a role to play for the good of the party, they must nevertheless respect two unwavering principles: the hierarchy between the sexes and the division of labour between them. Two principles to which the National Front leaders remain attached even more than men from other political parties.

On the one hand, the primacy of men supposes that women remain particularly subordinate to the orders of the party and submissive to their leaders, particularly the party's president. The few women who have tried to prove their independence have paid for it by being excluded or having to resign. Among those who were excluded for insubordination was Yann Piat, who has already been cited, but also Germaine Burgaz, a former National Front vice-president (Soudais 1996: 205).

On the other hand, the division of labour according to sex supposes that women be assigned two types of tasks - work among women and social work - to the exclusion of the political work that is reserved for men. Work among other women is not only reserved for CNFE activists, it is also a task of all women representing the National Front. In this manner Ms. Lehideux made use of the platform of the European Parliament to diffuse the National Front ideas on the family and the fight against abortion. One of the aspects of the work with other women is also to propagate anti-feminism, a task that the party reserves for its women members. Ms. Lehideux has been predisposed against feminism for a long time. Marie-France Stirbois has taken over that role. „Liberate women from feminism“ was the theme of a speech she gave during the National Front's summer university in Toulon in August 1998. She prefers „femininity“ to feminism, which she defines „as the quality of what is feminine, that is, an intelligence that is never divested of a common sense close to reality“. As to the political equality between men and women, Marie-France Stirbois disapproves of it as an official in „a party that claims selection and competition“ and considers that it „humiliates women“ (*Le Monde*, 28 August 1998).

The social work carried out by the party's female activists is no less important than their work among other women. It is carried out, as has been pointed out, by municipal officials. These are helped by the militants of Fraternité Française (French Fraternity), a charitable organisation created by the National Front. This association grew significantly thanks to Bruno Mégret (Durand 1996: 206). To deal with the new poor and to increase its base of support, the National Front's former general delegate wanted to make this body into a model of „French“ social aid. Directed by a woman (Mireille d'Ornano, regional councillor of the Provence-Côte-d'Azur), it functions

essentially through female goodwill.¹⁸ Who better than women could organise collections for the nation's destitute, give social advice, set up food distribution and medical care, and organise summer camps for children? Relieving poverty, but only that of the French, while at the same time bettering the National Front's image, is the dual function reserved for the party's women militants.

5. What program for women?

5.1 Methodology

Many studies of extreme right-wing ideology are impressionistic, based on quotations taken from different types of data (leaders speeches and writings, party platforms and press) and produced by different organisations (the FN, its circles, other extreme right wing movements) at different times. Therefore we decided to limit ourselves to the FN as the clearly dominant party at all levels - organisation, ideology, electoral support - on the extreme right-wing of French politics. We have systematically taken the time dimension into account, following the evolution of the party's positions since 1973, and we have given priority to one type of data, the electoral programs of the FN, because of its voter-oriented strategy and because of the considerable importance the party has attached to their elaboration, as a unifying ideological tool inside the party as well as a digest of its essential public positions.

Five programs are studied here. With the exception of the very first FN program for the parliamentary elections of 1973, *Défendre les Français*¹⁹, they belong to the period of the electoral take-off of the party. *Pour la France* (1985), published after the first large-scale success of the FN in the 1984 European elections, is presented as a synthesis of previous writings of the party and of its president, edited by Jean-Marie Le Pen, Bruno Gollnisch (political bureau member, in charge of the party's propaganda) and Jean-Yves Le Gallou (central committee member and New Right). *300 mesures pour la renaissance de la France* (1993) is the most detailed program ever published by the party, twice as long (more than 400 pages) as the former, coordinated by Bruno Mégret, delegate-general and in charge of propaganda and communication since 1988. *Le contrat pour la France avec les Français* (1995) and *Le grand changement. Et si on essayait le FN ?* (1997) are much shorter pieces (some sixty pages each), signed by Le Pen, on the occasion of the 1995 presidential election and the anticipated 1997 parliamentary elections. Each program is referred to below by the letter „P“ followed by the year of its publication.

We completed this analysis with two types of data. The first type of data we included, because of the longstanding rivalry between Le Pen and Mégret, consists

¹⁸ „To welcome Vitrolles' inhabitants (...) Josette Clément, a *Fraternité Française* activist and now deputy in charge of social affairs, does everything she can. She listens, gives advice, undertakes administrative procedures for others“ (Mégret C., 1997: 86)

¹⁹ Unfortunately not available but presented at length in Algazy 1989

mainly of books by the two leaders since 1984. For Le Pen : *La France est de retour* (1985), *Les Français d'abord* (1984) and *Le Pen sans bandeau*, a book written par Jean Marcilly (1984) based on interviews with the FN's leader. And for Mégret: *La flamme. Les voies de la renaissance* (1990) ; *L'alternative nationale. Les priorités du Front national* (1996), *La troisième voie. Pour un nouvel ordre économique et social* (1997). The second is the propaganda of the party specifically addressed to women, by the means of its group, Cercle national des femmes d'Europe. For this we used several studies already existing on the CNFE (Venner, Lesselier 1997, and particularly Laroche 1997), an interview with its president Martine Lehideux in *Présent* (n°3309, 6 April 1995) and a special issue of its journal, *The Bulletin du CNFE*.

5.2 Women in the FN's program

5.2.1 The „invisible“ women

A primary feature of all the FN's programs is that women as such are invisible and never treated as a specific issue. One will find no entry for „women“ or „equal rights“ or „equality“. When they refer to women, it is under the heading „Family“, "Welcoming life and family preference" (P1985), "Family, for family preference" (P1993), "Family preference" (P1995), "Promoting the family" (P1997). Women are only seen as wives and mothers, confined to their roles of child-bearers and housewives. And even as such, the space devoted to family matters, compared to issues like immigration or security, is very limited. Out of the 426 pages of the *300 measures*, the chapter "Family" is restricted to 14 pages, that is to say 3.3 percent of the total space, the smallest of the 18 chapters forming the program with the single exception of "Overseas" (13 pages)²⁰.

The second common feature of these programs is the remarkable continuity of their stands on women/family issues. From 1973 to 1997, they are based upon the same core ideas and values. Their common obsession is the decadence of the French nation, faced with a rapidly declining birth rate on the one hand and a growing population of non-European immigrants on the other, seen as gradually outnumbering the French and dissolving France's identity. As early as 1973 the FN waged war against „wild immigration“, claiming, „There are actually more than 3 million foreigners in France, more than half from North Africa. Out of 800,000 annual births, 200,000 are from foreign fathers and mothers. These figures announce the danger“ (Algazy 1989: 118). While the 1993 program describes immigrants' birth rates as „twice or two and a half times“ higher than the French (P1993 : 53) and imagines „on the other side of the Mediterranean, 110 to 130 million Maghrebins“²¹ waiting to flow in for survival.

²⁰ In the 1985 programme the proportion is 7.5% (15 /200 pages), in the 1995 programme 8% (5/63), in the 1997 programme less than 5% (3/62)

²¹ The Maghreb consists of the three former colonies of France in North Africa, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco

Against this threat, the major stand of the FN has always been to stop immigration, send home illegal immigrants and reserve jobs, social benefits and allowances to French nationals - a policy which has gradually come to be referred to, under the influence of New Right ideologists, as „national preference“. The topic has been abundantly studied (Taguieff 1996) and we will not develop it here except its aspects directly related to women. However, a less studied facet of the FN's program is its population and family policy, the two tightly linked together since 1973. The main explanation the FN offers for what they see as a „birth collapse“ or „demographic winter“, condemning France to demographic and cultural decay, is the crisis of the family brought about by the rise of individualism and the sexual liberation movement of the 60's, the signs of it being the rising number of couples living together without being married, divorces and children born out of wedlock, and the growing proportion of women who work and do not want to have children or do not have time to bring them up properly. These tendencies are seen as strongly encouraged by the French state, criticised for reducing family allowances and benefits, legalising abortion and encouraging family planning. The solutions advocated by the FN, since 1973, consist of going in the opposite direction, rehabilitating the family which is presented as „the basic cell of society“ and launching an active anti-abortion and pro-life policy (summed up in Table 13).

5.2.2 *Family policy*

The FN's family policy advocates giving specific advantages to families and especially to families with many children. An idea that appears as early as in the 1973 program is „family based voting“ or „total universal franchise“, introduced by the Vichy government to give more electoral weight to families with children - parents should have as many extra votes as they have children below voting age. The other main measure advocated as soon as 1973 is a „maternal income“ or minimum monthly wage paid to mothers who want to stay at home and take care of their children. They see two advantages - for by bringing women back home not only can they devote themselves to their children but also, it is explicitly mentioned, they liberate jobs for unemployed men (estimated figure - 500,000!). Since the 1993 program the possibility is also offered to fathers, the maternal income becoming the „parental“ income. There are many more measures of the same nature, such as the creation of an official statute for stay-at-home mothers, giving them pension rights and social security, more flexibility for working mothers (part-time jobs, work sharing etc), measures promoting marriage such as tax inducements for married couples as opposed to cohabitants, housing facilities for large families such as special loans for buying an apartment, giving better family allowances with no income limitations etc. The last type of measure seen as early as 1973 has to do with the protection of family and youth and the strict control of sexuality (repression of pornography, control of sex education in schools, censorship of films and advertising etc.).

5.2.3 *The pro-life policy*

The pro-life policy consists above all of fighting abortion. As early as its first 1973 program, the FN took a stand against the „legalisation of abortion“. Around that time the creation of the MLF (Women's liberation movement), the publication in the *Nouvel Observateur* (5 April 1971) of a manifesto signed by 343 women who declared they had had an abortion and the introduction of several bills in Parliament defending the right of women to choose an abortion had put the issue at the centre of the political debate. The law legalising abortion, prepared by the Minister of Public Health, Simone Veil, was introduced on 17 January 1975 and amended in 1979, payment for abortion by Social Security was enacted on 31 December 1982. Until now, the FN has been opposed to these measures referred to as „anti-French genocide“ and has demanded the repeal of both laws. At the time it led an insulting and violently anti-Semitic campaign against Simone Veil, nicknamed „The abortionist“ and „Giscard's 'tricoteuse'“, the name given to the French women who sat knitting by the guillotine at the time of the Revolution watching the heads fall. But it is also an implicit reference to the knitting needle, an expedient that was often used to start an abortion. A woman, a Jew and a liberal, she was the ideal scapegoat for the FN's hatred.

On the other hand the FN programs are in favour of all measures encouraging birth and child-rearing, such as making adoption formalities easier, allowing women who do not want to keep their child to have it adopted before the birth, fighting against sterility etc.

5.2.4 *The „national preference“*

The common feature of both family and population policies is of course discrimination between foreigners and French nationals. It is marriage between the French and the birth of French babies which is encouraged; family allowances and social benefits are reserved, explicitly or implicitly, for French nationals or Europeans, and the reuniting of migrant families is encouraged but ... outside France, in their country of origin.

5.2.5 *The program's evolution*

There are differences from one program to another and the 1993 program stands particularly apart. Influenced by Mégret and his team of the New Right (Le Gallou, Blot) it refined the arguments and expressed them in a „soft“ and „politically correct“ way, intended not to shock the general public. For instance, the 1985 program openly presents the Vichy laws and their Family Code as a model for family policies today (P1985, p.127). It disputes the existence of specific „rights of the child“ and „rights of woman“ as opposed to family rights, and openly attacks the „feminist lobby“ which inspired „a whole legislation encouraging the development of a salaried female workforce and imposing a devalued image of the mother devoted full-time to her children, without seeing that if she works in a menial job she does not necessarily

find the same satisfaction as if she is a lawyer and that wage-earning and maternity are not easily compatible with young children“ (*ibidem* p.128). Family is described as „a natural and organic“ community, built on a „natural“ division of roles between men and women: „In recent years, official ideology, complacently supported by the media, has systematically tried to devalue motherhood and abolish all differentiation between the functions of men and women. This utopian attitude leads to the negation of the biological and cultural reality which gives women a particular responsibility in procreation and the education of children“ (*ibid* p.134). It openly criticises collectivist public child-care structures such as day nurseries, nursery schools etc, quoting professor François Jacob, for whom the mother’s presence is a must for the child’s development and „as attentive and efficient as creche staff may be, nobody can replace parents in their relationship with their child“ (*ibid.* p.128-129). It also explicitly deprives foreigners of all social benefits and allowances, these are reserved for „French nationals“ (*ibid.*p.138).

The 1993 program „revised“ by Mégret and his team is more subtle. It never refers to Vichy, it does not openly reject feminism, it introduces the notion of „parental income“ giving each parent the right to stay at home and take care of the children. Family policy is presented in general terms, without outlining the fact, except for family allowances and housing loans, that it is essentially meant for French nationals, because such a position is unconstitutional. However, the basic lines of inspiration are the same in all programs, as can be seen in the table summing up measures advocated from 1973 to 1997 (Table 13). If there are differences, they lie in the number and degree of precision in the measures advocated - the 1993 program being by far the most developed - in the order in which they appear and essentially in the wording and presentation.

The limited space devoted to the topic of women/family does not mean that it is not important, on the contrary. Because the FN’s vision of the world, from 1973 to 1997, is dominated by the fear of immigration, demographic imbalance, loss of identity and decadence, the family as the focus for the reproduction of French children and French identity, and particularly women as wives and mothers, plays a strategic part. They are an essential instrument of the family and population policy advocated by the party. They echo the slogan proposed by Marie-France Stirbois and Michel de Rostolan at the 8th Congress of the FN in March 1990: "Let us make French babies with French women." That suggests all at once that the place of women is at home, that their main function is to reproduce, that they have the duty to preserve the purity of the French race and transmit to children, the French of tomorrow, a genuine French identity. But as already underlined by many authors (Lesselier, Venner 1997), the topic does not need to be developed at length because it goes without saying, it is obvious in a vision of the world that sees in the difference in roles ascribed to men and women not a social and historical construct but a fact of "nature".

A comparison of the MNR's and FN's programs for the local elections of March 2001, both available on their websites (*supra* section VI.7) show that their positions today are basically the same. As before, they only mention women in the section devoted to "Family" in the FN's program and to "Families first" for the MNR (MNR 2000: 129-135). Their claims have not changed: boost the French demography, discourage abortion, encourage marriage and adoption, bring women back home with higher family allowances, maternal (FN) or parental (MNR) incomes, give extra votes to large families (FN). The only real difference

Table 13. Family and population policies in the National Front Programs (1973-1997)

FAMILY	1973	1985	1993	1995	1997
Family				Family „ pillar of the nation “ should be in-scribed in the Constitution	
Family vote	Family based voting (extra vote per child)		„Total universal franchise“: parents should vote for their children under 18		
Maternal income	Complementary allocation to mothers of children under 2 years old willing to give up a salaried job	Maternal income 5 000F per month as a priority to mothers of 3 children	Maternal or parental income equal to legal minimum wage, 3 years for first two children, 18 months for the 3rd	Maternal or parental income of 6 000 F equal to legal minimum wage, 3 years for 1 st two children, 18 months for the 3 rd	Maternal or parental income equal to legal minimum wage gives right to pension and social security
Marriage		Tax inducements, simplification of legacies and matrimonial rules favouring married couples	Laws favouring married couples	Tax inducement for married couples and deduction for child care allowances	
Housing		Special loans for family housing after 3rd child, stock options for large families	Special family loans for buying house	Family housing loan facilities	Family housing loans for married couples, payment facilities if many children
Family allowance			Reassessment of family allowances for French families only	Reassessment of family allowances and child-rearing allowances	Reassessment of family allowances
Stay-at-home mothers		Give a statute to stay-at-home mothers, right to vote in Social security elections	Give a statute to stay-at-home mothers : personal social security, pension, training	Give a statute to stay-at-home mothers : personal social security, pension, training	Right for stay-at-home mothers to vote in social security elections

Working mothers		Develop part time jobs, work sharing and flexibility allowing women to reconcile work and motherhood	Work flexibility for mothers, easy access to civil service jobs, tax inducements to re-employ them	Give work flexibility to mothers and training facilities Longer maternity leave	
Education			Free choice of school and school cheque	Free choice of school and school cheque	
Moral order	Against 'sex education' in school referred to as 'pornophilia'		Defend youth against violence and pornography Increased measures against child abuse, control on media programs, more rights to family associations	Defend families and children: Control of media; press, advertising, more rights to family associations Increased measures against violence against children	

PRO-LIFE					
Abortion	Fight against 'free legal abortion'	Repeal the 1975 Veil law and the payment of abortion costs by Social security	Repeal the 1975 Veil law and the payment of abortion costs by Social security	Protect the life of the unborn „innocent“ child	Discourage abortion
Contraception		No public funds for family planning			
Information		Combat sterility and inform about sexually-transmitted diseases			
Adoption			Facilitate pre and post birth adoption and procedures of adoption for abandoned French children	Facilitate pre and post birth adoption and procedures of adoption for French children	Facilitate pre and post birth adoption
Social benefits		Birth allowances - No income limits		Pre-birth allocations	

in line with the reactions of the MNR's leaders at the time the law was discussed (supra, section III.)“ is that, contrary to the FN, its program takes stand explicitly against “parity policies” in general. In a paragraph called “No to parity, yes to free choice”(MNR 2000:135), they refuse any law “imposing quotas”, considering that if men and women are equal, they are “different and complementary”, and that one should not “force nature” to oblige women to hold the same occupations. If the program insists, more than the FN's, on their right to work, the need of day care centres, part time jobs and training facilities, above all it enhances and glorifies the role of women as “mothers” and housewives.

5.3 Women in the writings of Le Pen and Mégret

The writings of the two FN leaders give as little space to women as the programs. In Le Pen's *French first* there are some 7 pages out of 245, mostly under the headings „Man and woman“ and „Feminism and femininity“. In *Le Pen without mask* there is an 11 page chapter called „Man is born from woman“ (out of 241). In *France is back* there are 6 pages out of 301 about „Families and the social sector“. While in Mégret's *The flame* there is a small passage on „Cheers for women!“ (2 pages out of 313) encouraging them to bear children and take care of their home and children, „the noblest task“(p. 278). In *The Third way* one finds 4.5 pages out of 383 mostly under the headings „Baby krach“, „The disintegrated family“, „Parental income“ and „Family preference“. And in *The National Alternative* there is a 12 page chapter (out of 259) on „Pro-life preference“.

The general argumentation is the same in their writings as in the party's programs, not surprisingly as first Le Pen then Mégret and his team have forged these programs, but the ideological basis is detailed more openly, and at greater length. Both Mégret's and le Pen's ideas find their inspiration in the French nationalist tradition, in the line of thinkers such as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras, that developed against the Enlightenment philosophy and the heritage of the French Revolution, updated with references to socio-biology and anthropology and authors such as Konrad Lorenz, Georges Dumézil, etc. For both, the individual does not exist outside of the „natural“ and organic communities in which he is rooted, the nation, the land, and the family. The family is the „vital elementary cell“ which enables the biological and cultural reproduction of the French nation. In this regard, women have no rights as such. They are reproducers. And their „liberation“ is seen as disrupting the natural order and a threat to the very existence of the nation. As Le Pen puts it in *For France* 1985, the double action of the socialist government and of „the so-called feminist lobby“ is bringing about „the dissolution of family and more generally of all natural and organic community (...).“ In recent years, the focus was never on the family but on „the woman“ and „child“ (p.128). Mégret says exactly the same thing, „The socialist defence of the rights of men plays the individual against the communities to which he belongs. There again, the right balance between men and the groups they

belong to is broken (...). The right of women, socialist style, is set against the rights of families. It is the same with the alleged „rights of the child“ that the ready-made ideological trend presently tries to establish as a new counterweight to the family.“ (*The Flame* p. 32)

5.3.1 The „Catholic“ approach of Le Pen

However, there are clear differences between the two men's positions, more obvious than in the programs. Le Pen's approach is more traditional and essentially grounded in religion. He defines himself as a Catholic (*France is back* p. 157), he is „proud to be a Christian“ as well as „proud to be French“ because he considers Catholicism as „the best religion, the one that upholds, in my opinion, the revealed truth“ (*ibid.* p.158). This is mere opportunism, for he is no true believer. He never was a church-goer, did not marry religiously, divorced his first wife and when he was a student and was prosecuted for disorderly behaviour, completely drunk, in a church in Aix-les-Bains (*Le Canard Enchaîné* 1992: 76). But in the mid 80's he sensed his Catholic pose could attract traditionalist right-wing voters and started making frequent references to Christianity, requested an audience with the Pope etc. In particular he systematically presents the Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc as the ideals of womanhood” (Laroche 1997). He considers that the cult of Mary, the symbol of grace and motherhood, has done a lot to generate respect for women. He likes to evoke the influence it had on the Code of Chivalry, presented as a model for harmonious relations between men and women, as opposed to the „class struggle“ between the sexes, which he sees as „confrontational “ and „revolutionary“ and which he accuses feminists of promoting. To their claims he opposes the example of Joan of Arc, a young shepherdess who fought in the name of God and delivered France from the English occupation: „We must not forget that we had, four hundred years before the feminist claims of Mrs Gisèle Halimi (NDLR :the founder of the pro-choice movement Choisir), a seventeen year-old victorious general who was a young girl, a simple little peasant from Lorraine.“ (*French first* p.196 and *Le Pen without mask* p.174) However, a common feature of these two women is their virginity, an implicit negation of the sexuality of women.

Another example of this traditional and subordinate view of women is given by Le Pen's stands about women going to work as in *Le Pen without mask* (In Marcilhy 1984) where he questions the need for it: „I often ask myself: ‘Is it necessary for a woman to learn a profession? Is it responsible to turn her away? Liberate woman! When you set the bee free, you get the bumble-bee!’“ (p.171). For him woman is above all the „the child bearer and the heart companion of man“, only after this, the human being suited to be integrated in the workforce of big modern industries“ (*ibid.* p.167). „One has artificially turned women away from their natural function by offering them an illusory integration into the working world presented by pernicious ideologists as a token of dignity and liberation... Deflected from their intrinsic social role, millions of women have found themselves pushed into a less and less open sec-

tor, contributing to the development of unemployment and - but is it really by chance? - serving against their will to create a new proletariat, easily to exploit - and manipulate - by political organisations whose aim is to destroy national harmony by constantly arousing totally artificial confrontations" (*ibid.* p.169-170). In the same way, he is firmly against public child care structures, which he denigrates as symbols of collectivism and "a sign of the rampant turn to socialism of our country" (*France is back* p. 212), incapable of giving children the love and affection of a mother (*For France* p. 129) and seen as responsible for the split of the family cell, unemployment and opening the way to all social deviations (drugs, delinquency etc.).

5.3.2 The „sexual politics“ of Le Pen

There is, however, a paradox, for this admirer of the Virgin Mary constantly refers to sex in a provocative and often licentious manner, in a way no other politician would allow himself to speak in public. His deliberate use of sexual metaphors, as shown by Pierre Jouve and Ali Magoudi and Maryse Lallemand, serves two purposes. It helps mobilisation against immigrants - male immigrants, for female immigrants are never referred to (Lesselier 1997: 61) - presented as a sexual threat to the French nation. Statements such as, „Tomorrow immigrants will settle in your home, eat your soup and sleep with your wife, your daughter or your son.“ „The Islamic world is beating at the borders of Europe and slowly penetrating it,“ or France is, „a brothel for six million immigrants,“(quoted from Lallemand 1997: 77) arouse **aggressivity** amongst his male audience and frighten the female audience, making both more receptive to the FN's xenophobic and authoritarian positions.

On the other hand, the combination of these evocations with the celebration of Christian purity and virginity also serves a purpose. It helps keep under control the sexual impulses his speeches liberate. „Licentiousness is thus counterbalanced by antithetical evocations, desexualised feminine symbols which contradict the initial provocation of Jean- Marie Le Pen. He is a pyromaniac fireman. He excites the other sexually and presents himself as the exclusive protector of prudish values. Sexual references in his speeches are only there to exorcise sexuality in real life, to label it as dangerous.“(Jouve, Magoudi 1988: 73). The moral order is safe.

5.3.3 The „New Right“ approach of Mégret

Mégret's writings, in contrast are neither religious nor licentious. He makes no reference to his Catholic affiliation. If he talks about religion, it is as the cultural and historical matrix of France, corresponding to a inner „need of man for sacredness“ (*National alternative* p. 42-44). He makes no mystic references to the Virgin Mary or Joan of Arc. And his presentation of relations between the sexes is less traditionalist than Le Pen's. He and his friends come from the Club de l'Horloge, a think-tank of the French New Right, which dressed the same old ideas in modern clothes. They launched the concept of „national preference“ to legitimise their anti-immigrant stands, they reformulated racist theories, founded on supposed genetic inequalities

between races, into a more covert racism based on cultural differences and incompatibilities: races are not unequal, they are equally respectable, but they are different and should not mix etc. (Taguieff 1987). The same goes for gender relations. The New Right tries to appeal to women by celebrating their difference, waging war against the „universalism“ of feminism, a position that certain feminists can agree with (Lesselier 1999). Megret's argumentation is very similar to the one expressed in the New Right review, *Elements* (n°94, February 1999). Along this line, he is careful not to downgrade female work, he just considers it as equivalent to the work of stay-at-home mothers. - And he does not reserve it for women, he is the one who thought of turning the „maternal income“ into „parental income“ open to both parents who stay home to take care of the children: „Every time the FN brings forward this proposal - the parental income - it is accused of wanting to send women back home to the kitchen sink. Well, this is obviously not our goal which is, on the contrary, to offer mothers a new freedom. There is no question of stopping nor even dissuading those who want to work from doing so (...). But on the other hand if work can be a noble activity, the education of children is another one that can be equally enriching. Besides, who could argue that an assembly line job or a painstaking task in front of a computer screen, as useful as they may be, enrich the life of a woman more than her role as a mother? Let's add, for the attention of our detractors, that if this measure is primarily meant for women, it is not exclusively aimed at them because the parental income will also be available to fathers.“ (*New alternative*, p. 108).

5.4 CNFE positions (*National Circle of European Women*)

5.4.1 A traditionalist view of women and society

The women's circle of the FN is tightly linked to Catholic fundamentalist and pro-life circles and militates in favour of a traditionalist and moralistic vision of woman and family, closer to Le Pen's than Megret's line. Created in 1985, it presents itself as a circle of reflection and influence „so that women become aware of the family, social, educational, cultural and political problems they are faced with every day and to remind them that the revival of France and Europe will not take place without them.“ (quoted by Laroche 1997: 153). Its president, Martine Lehideux, is a practising Catholic, member of the pro-life movement "Let them Live", fighting against free abortion, and of the UNEC (Union of Christian European Nations). She launched the circle as „a reaction to May 68“ and to feminist values, which she found „destructive of our family values“ and representing „a certain ugliness, all at once moral and physical“²². On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the circle's foundation, a special issue of the CNFE Bulletin (No. 32, March-June 1990) devoted to the circle's Congress of Nantes (9-11 March 1990) confirms its links with leading fundamentalist networks: it advertises for the pilgrimages organised by Christianity-

²²

Interview of Martine Lehideux, *Présent*, 6 April 1995

Solidarity and Catholic Renewal and for the French Friendship and Christianity Symposium, for Radio-Courtoisie, a fundamentalist radio station and for AGRIF (General alliance against racism and for the respect of French and Christian Identity). The defence of a moral order is its main centre of interest, as shown by its selection of news („Echoes“), relative to abortion, the abortion pill, films and TV programs judged indecent, marriage between homosexuals etc. A summary of the Congress's work faithfully reflects the content of the FN programs, putting forward „family preference“ through measures such as maternal income, family-based voting, work flexibility, repeal of the Veil law, housing facilities and tax inducements for families etc. It just puts more emphasis on the education of children (school cheque and free choice of school, control of school books, civic education) and the „protection of youth“ against the four main dangers in their eyes: Marxism, drugs, pornography and AIDS.

5.4.2 *The dilemma of the CNFE*

However, detailed analysis of the proceedings of the Congress's commissions, on education, teaching and training, health, women's work and the media, reveals the contradictions of the Circle obviously torn between its traditional stands and the necessity to take into account the changing aspirations of today's women. This is especially evident in the commission about work (also Laroche 1997, Venner 1997). They admit, reluctantly, it is legitimate for women to work. So does their president, Martine Lehideux, in her interview for *Présent*: „I am nevertheless a modern woman and I know that today most young women and young girls who have been to school can work (...). When one has studied, when one has degrees, one wants to show the country, to show men, that we are capable of doing a job, of doing it well.“ She and the CNFE support the claim for the respect of the principle, „Equal pay for equal work“ (*Ibidem* and *Bulletin du CNFE*: 14). And although first opposed to the idea of collective structures for child care, the CNFE now asks for more creches and nurseries (Laroche 1997: 159). They encourage women to step outside the home and participate in associations and political life, to be present in parents' associations and charity organisations, to run in elections, to play their part in society not only at home. In her interview in the journal *Présent* Martine Lehideux says exactly the same, quoting the Greek Pericles: „A woman who does not take part in politics deserves to be seen not as a peaceful citizen but as a useless citizen.“

Nevertheless, in spite of these few concessions to modernity, it is obvious that in the CNFE's eyes family should come first, and it is definitely more in favour of part-time jobs and work flexibility. The conclusion of the „Work of women“ commission in the 1990 CNFE Congress makes a very clear distinction between: „a) The permanent state of life suggested by the expression „mother of a family“ which corresponds or should correspond to a natural and human vocation of woman complementary to man's, the base of all life in society,“ and „b) Having a job, which is a „contingent function“ and anyway temporary in human life. It is not an absolute, but a

help to the family cell, unless it happens to be a real vocation demanding the total involvement of the person“. The „modernisation “ of the CNFE has its limits.

6. Conclusion

If the National Front is, as Le Pen puts it, „unloved“ by the French extreme right, is it not, above all, because women are „unloved“ by his party? Today, women, as voters, are gradually asserting their autonomy. How can they give any credibility to a party which deliberately ignores them as citizens and as individuals, considering them only as part of communities such as the couple, the family or the nation, which they are supposed to obey by getting married, having children and bringing them up? Wives and mothers, French women also are working women, faced with specific problems in a context of economic restructuring: unemployment, insecurity, underpayment, lack of child care structures etc. So far the FN has never paid any attention to all these problems.

At a time when all parties are making an effort to promote parity between men and women, and trying to mobilise female voters, the leaders of the two rival extreme right-wing parties realise, a little late, that they have made a strategic error. Before the 1999 European elections for instance, both, in haste, held a women's convention, which they had never done before. Le Pen, in his provocative way, denounced the „women's invasion“ of the workplace and celebrated the „almost godly role“ they have in „transmitting life“, regretting the present „confusion of roles“²³. Whereas Mégret's speech was as usual more „politically correct“ it was, on the whole, as basically anti-feminist as Le Pen's (*Libération* 19 April 1999). Wishing that women should „keep their place“ as mothers and home-makers instead of acting as if they were men, denouncing the very idea of women's quotas, he had nothing more to propose than the development of part-times jobs and the creation of a parental income. It was therefore most unlikely they would convince women, considering how they had addressed them until then. The scores of Mégret and Le Pen on June 13 confirm, not surprisingly, that neither the FN nor the MNR have succeeded in winning support among French women (Tables 1 and 2). And parallel to the explicit anti-parity line followed by the MNR asserted since its programme of Poitiers (*supra* section V), and implemented in its selection of candidates for the 2001 local elections (mostly male, see *supra* section III), it seems to indeed attract less women than the FN. A pool of surveys conducted in 2000-2001 among supporters of both parties shows that the proportion of women is much higher among FN's sympathisers (48 percent) than among MNR's sympathisers (37 percent)²⁴.

²³ FN's convention on 29 May, *Le Monde*, 1 June 1999

²⁴ Study realised by Jérôme Fourquet, pooling 26 surveys conducted by CSA for *Le Figaro* on national samples representative of the French population in age to vote, and isolating a sub-sample of 605 people saying they feel close to the FN or to the MNR. Data available on the website of *Le Figaro* at the time of the local elections, March 2001.

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7.8 The FN and MNR websites

<http://www.m-n-r.com/>

<http://www.front-national.com/>

8. Annexes

Annexe 1: The French Electoral System

Elections	Constituency	Elected Representatives	Electoral system	Period	Last election
SUPRA NATIONAL:					
European	France	MEP's (Members of the European Parliament)	Lists, proportional representation	5 years	1999
NATIONAL:					
Presidential	France	President	Single member, majority rule, 2 rounds	5 years*	1995
Parliamentary	Parliamentary constituencies	National Assembly deputies	Single member, majority rule, 2 rounds	5 years	1997
LOCAL:					
Regional**	Departments in each region	Regional councillors	Lists, two rounds, mix of proportional representation and majority rule	6 years	1998
Departmental	Cantons of each department	General councillors	Single member, majority rule, 2 rounds	6 years (1/2 renewed every 3 years)	2001
Municipal	Municipality	Municipal councillors	Lists, majority rule, 2 rounds in small towns (popul. under 3, 500)/ 3, 500 and above: mix of proportional representation and majority rule	6 years	2001

*The length has been reduced to 5 years by the referendum of 20 September 2000 ** The electoral rule for regional elections was changed by the law of 19 January 1999

Annexe 2. The Gender Parity Law of 6 June 2000

Elections concerned

Municipal elections in large towns (3, 500 inhabitants and over)

Regional elections and elections to the Assembly of Corsica

Senatorial elections (in large departments - 70 percent of the seats - which elect at least 3 senators)

Elections to the National Assembly

European Elections

Not concerned

Municipal elections in small towns (less than 3, 500 inhabitants)

Departmental elections

Senatorial elections in small departments (1 or 2 senators)

Requirements

- Elections with proportional representation: political parties must present as many women as men candidates, if not their list will not be registered. If there is just one round (senatorial, European elections), each list, from top to bottom, must alternate one man/one woman or *vice versa*. If there are two rounds (regional elections, including to the Assembly of Corsica, and municipal elections which mix proportional representation and majority rule) gender parity must be respected for each block of six candidates.

- Elections to the National Assembly (single member, majority rule, two rounds, see Annexe 1) : parties are not obliged to present as many women as men but will be fined if they don't.

Annexe 3: Parliamentary elections in Metropolitan France (1988-1997)

5 June 1988 (1 st round)	Number of votes	% of valid votes
Extreme Left	88 204	0,4
Communists	2 680 194	11,2
Socialists	8 381 827	34,9
Left Radical	279 230	1,2
Presidential Majority	351 257	1, 5
Ecologists	86 257	0,3
Regionalists	17 765	0,1
Rally for the Republic	4 614 137	19,2
Union for French Democracy	4 502 712	18,8
Other Right Parties	608 695	2,5
National Front	2 353 466	9,8
Other Extreme Right Parties	31 015	0,1

In Parodi, Jean-Luc (ed.): *Institutions et vie politique*. Paris, La Documentation française, 1997, p.168

Annexe 3 (Continued) : Parliamentary elections in Metropolitan France

21 March 1993 (1 st round)	Number of votes	% of valid votes
Extreme Left	432 838	1,7
Communists	2 273 520	9,1
Socialists	4 396 109	17,8
Left Radical	248 597	0,9
Presidential Majority	376 036	1,5
Generation Ecology	920 492	3,7
The Greens	1 023 202	4,1
Regionalists	68 958	0,3
Others Left Parties	948 601	3,8
Rally for the Republic	5 037 382	20,2
Union for French Democracy	4 812 306	19,4
Other Right Parties	1 115 457	4,5
National Front	3 150 764	12,7
Other Extreme Right Parties	68 364	0,3

In Parodi, Jean-Luc (ed.): *Institutions et vie politique*. Paris, La Documentation française, 1997, p.168

Annexe 3 (Continued) : Parliamentary elections in Metropolitan France

25 May 1997 (1 st round)	Number of votes	% of valid votes
Extreme Left	550 106	2,22
Communists	2 441 375	9,86
Socialists and Left Radical	6 357 206	25,66
Movement of Citizens	266 167	1,07
Other Left Parties	490 124	1,98
The Greens	907 725	3,66
Generation Ecology	431 989	1,74
Other Ecologists	243 726	0,99
Rally for the Republic	4 084 506	16,49
Union for French Democracy	3 685 015	14,88
Independent Right	708 941	2,86
Other Right Parties	385 960	1,56
Extreme Right	38 896	0,16
National Front	3 775 382	15,24
Others	280 379	1,14
Union for 4 days a week	122 552	0,49

In Parodi Jean-Luc (ed.)/ *Institutions et vie politique*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1997, p. 168

Annexe 4: Vote in the 1997 Parliamentary elections by gender and by age, profession, activity, education, religion, marital status

Table1: Vote by gender and age (%)

AGE	PC	PS	Ecolo- gists	UDF- RPR	FN
18-24 years: Men	12	22	7	33	19
Women	9	34	11	29	14
25-34 years: Men	9	32	8	25	20
Women	11	27	12	24	18
35-49 years: Men	12	35	9	23	15
Women	9	27	12	27	15
50-64 years: Men	13	26	3	31	22
Women	7	25	5	45	10
65 and more: Men	7	21	3	43	20
Women	9	26	5	51	6

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 2: Vote by gender and profession (%)

PROFESSION	PC	PS	Ecolo- gists	UDF- RPR	FN
Farmer: Men	2	28	0	56	4
Women	7	17	0	74	0
Shopowner, craftsman, manager: Men	5	17	1	44	26
Women	9	20	8	44	11
Executive, professional: Men	6	29	6	39	13
Women	5	27	16	39	3
Middle level manage- ment : Men	15	32	6	27	14
Women	9	24	10	44	8
White-collar workers: Men	8	30	9	24	25
Women	9	31	8	29	14
Blue-collar workers: Men	16	30	6	19	24
Women	11	27	6	29	25

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 3: Vote by gender and type of activity (%)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	PC	PS	Ecolo- gists	UDF- RPR	FN
Employed: Men	12	32	8	25	17
Women	8	28	13	29	14
Unemployed: Men	11	33	9	17	24
Women	5	37	10	19	10
Retired: Men	9	23	3	39	22
Women	8	26	6	51	6
Housewife (has worked):	15	21	2	33	22
Housewife (never worked):	5	23	4	45	13
Student: Men	10	23	10	38	15
Women	11	33	9	33	9

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 4: Vote by gender and educational level (%)

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	PC	PS	Ecolo- gists	UDF- RPR	FN
Primary: Men	12	27	3	31	21
Women	10	27	6	39	13
Primary superior:					
Men	12	29	7	26	22
Women	8	27	8	33	18
Baccalaureate: Men	12	30	7	32	13
Women	10	32	10	34	6
Bac + 2 years: Men	8	33	12	30	12
Women	7	23	10	47	4
University: Men	6	26	6	37	17
Women	8	27	15	31	6

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 5: Vote by gender and religion (%)

RELIGION	PC	PS	Ecolo- gists	UDF- RPR	FN
Regularly practicing Catholic:					
Men	2	11	6	55	16
Women	2	17	6	65	3
Irregularly practicing Catholic:					
Men	4	25	4	45	15
Women	5	22	7	45	11
Non practicing Catholic:					
Men	10	29	7	28	21
Women	9	31	8	32	16
No religion:					
Men	21	35	7	14	18
Women	18	34	14	10	16

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010

Table 6 : Vote by gender and marital status (%)

MARITAL STATUS	PC	PS	Ecolo- gists	UDF- RPR	FN
Married: Men	10	29	5	32	17
Women	8	28	8	38	11
Cohabitant: Men	16	36	9	18	19
Women	10	27	12	21	22
Bachelor: Men	10	26	8	31	19
Women	8	29	13	31	12
Divorced: Men	16	26	6	15	29
Women	10	30	15	28	15
Widow: Men	8	25	4	32	26
Women	10	23	1	51	9

Source: Sofres/*Libération*/CEVIPOF survey, 26-31 May 1997, N = 3 010