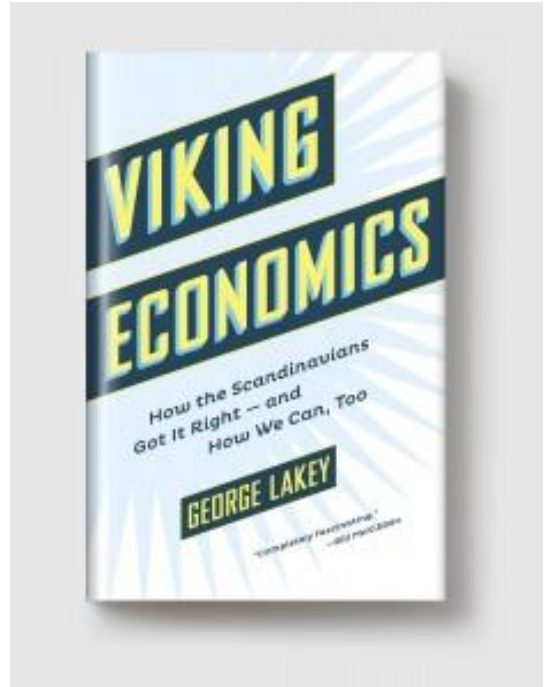


**Short Review of “Viking Economics:
How the Scandinavians Got It Right – and How We Can, Too”
by George Lakey (2016)**

“Outstanding Models for a New Political Economy”
By: Dick Burkhardt, General Assembly Committee Chair

This is a [very readable and down-to-earth book](#) that dispels a flood of myths. The Scandinavian countries – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland – have been economic, social, and political success stories for decades. Yet how they did this has been well hidden from the American public until now.

George Lakey is an activist Quaker who married a Norwegian gal. He says that only after the financial crash of 2008 did Americans start asking him about Scandinavia. Before that American exceptionalism held sway. Now escalating economic inequality has given rise to enormous disillusionment with the political establishment, on both the left and the right (Bernie & Trump).



Lakey shows how Scandinavian success came from persistent and strategic mass movements, especially by labor, not just ordinary politics. Now support for democratic socialism is strong across the political spectrum. A prime example of this persistent advocacy for equality is the Norwegian policy of full employment at a living wage. When you combine that with free higher education and universal health care, plus strong support for public transit and affordable housing, you have the recipe for extraordinary economic, social, and environmental success.

Of course, that means higher taxes, but the Scandinavians strongly support these taxes, knowing that their governments are serving 99% and not the 1%. On a final note, Lakey is amazed at the social sciences in Scandinavia – how they analyze and experiment, then actually implement, without the ideological baggage and gridlock so evident in the United States. This penchant for elegant and rational design extends to architecture, furniture, music - you name it.

Equally amazing is the sheer quantity of resources that such small countries have been able to devote to the common good. A key reason is the high labor productivity created by their universal social programs, even as people work many fewer hours than Americans.

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