

## SWEDISH PARTY POLITICS: A CASE STUDY\*

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### BACKGROUND

The Social Democratic Party has dominated Sweden's political life ever since 1932. In 1951, the Social Democrats formed a coalition government with the Centre Party (previously called the Farmers' Party). When the supplementary pensions question became a dominant issue in Swedish politics in 1956, the parliamentary basis of the coalition had been weakened through the losses in the general elections of 1952 and 1956. In these elections the two non-socialist opposition parties, Conservatives and Liberals, had gained some seats in the *Riksdag* (the Swedish Parliament). In retrospect, however, the main political characteristic of the period was not the decline of the coalition but the decreasing

Table 1. Elections to the Lower Chamber of the Swedish Riksdag 1948–1960. Election results in per cent.

Party	(%)	Election year				
		1948	1952	1956	1958	1960
Conservative		12.3	14.4	17.1	19.5	16.5
Centre (Farmers')		12.4	10.7	9.4	12.7	13.6
Liberal		22.8	24.4	23.8	18.2	17.5
Social Democratic		46.1	46.1	44.6	46.2	47.8
Communist		6.3	4.3	5.0	3.4	4.5
Others		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

share of the votes cast for the socialist parties (Social Democrats and Communists). This decrease could be seen as a consequence of the changing social structure of Swedish society. The fact is that in the 1950's white-collar workers<sup>1</sup> had become more numerous, while the number of both enterprisers – particularly in agriculture – and manual workers had decreased (Table 2). At the same time the

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**Table 2. Occupational status of the Swedish population 1940–1960 in per cent.**

	(%)	1940	1950	1960
Enterprisers (incl. Farmers)		21.7	19.3	13.7
White-collar		20.1	27.2	35.0
Manual Workers		58.2	53.5	51.3
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

standard of living had risen rapidly within all groups. In view of this, it seemed quite likely that the changing social structure would give rise to a continued setback for the coalition parties also after the 1956 general election, and to a real shift of power. Such was the background of the political struggle over the pensions that took place between 1956 and 1960. This is an analysis of party behavior during that struggle.

### The Supplementary Pensions Question

In 1946 the Swedish *Riksdag* adopted a system of basic national pensions at an amount of 1000 kronor per year for everybody from 67 years of age upwards; in 1956 this basic pension amounted to 3360 kronor for a married couple. Since the middle of the 1940's, several proposals have been made to supplement the small basic pension with some kind of service pensions which would make the maintenance of the standard of living possible in old-age, and which would be related to individual income derived from employment during the active part of life. In 1955, after five years' work on this problem, a government commission presented a plan for an inflation-safe pensions scheme for all citizens – not only employees – which would guarantee an old-age pension of about 50 per cent of the mean annual income received during active life. The pensions were to be financed through fees set in proportion to individual earnings.

This plan was accepted only by the Federation of Labour – Sweden's central organization of trade unions – and it was severely criticized by other groups and by all parties except the Social Democrats. A delicate situation arose within the coalition when it became evident that the coalition parties took very different positions on this issue: the Social Democrats favored some kind of compulsory supplementary pensions for employees, while the Centre Party favored a higher basic pension with either voluntary supplementary pensions or none at all. Because of its agrarian orientation, the Centre Party was not very much interested in a pensions scheme intended primarily for employees.

Thus it became evident that the proposed plan could not be used without modification in the Bill which the Government intended to introduce in the *Riksdag*. A new commission had to be appointed, including representatives of both parties and interest groups; these members acted in close collaboration with their organizations.

The new commission worked under hard Government pressure and in a great hurry. The members could not agree on a unified proposal. Instead, three different proposals were presented in the commission report:

1. Compulsory supplementary pensions for all employees, financed by the employers and administered by Government authorities. This position was taken

by the representatives of the Social Democratic Party, the Federation of Labour and the Central Organization of Salaried Employees.

2. A government-administered supplementary pension of a maximum of 3000 kronor, which should be voluntary. This position was taken by the representative of the Centre Party.

3. A voluntary pensions system administered by a private institution with a board chosen by employers and employees. Further rules about the pensions were to be laid down through collective bargaining between the Federation of Labour and the Employers' Association. This position was taken by the representatives of the Conservative and Liberal Parties and by the representative of the Employers' Association.

In an attempt to reach a solution of both the pensions problem and the parliamentary problem – caused by the disunity within the coalition government – the Government decided to submit the pensions question to a referendum, which in Sweden is only consultative and rarely resorted to. At the same time (in the Spring of 1957) all parties agreed on a successive increase of the basic pension. Thus only the supplementary pensions were now a controversial matter. The referendum was to deal with the three suggestions made in the commission report, and there was no possibility of rejecting all of them; nevertheless, as it was later pointed out, there was the opportunity of leaving the voting paper blank. The propaganda during the referendum campaign was not formally conducted by the parties but by special committees including both party and interest group representatives. A national non-partisan committee was also created for the purpose of transmitting unbiased information to the electorate. A frequent argument in the political propaganda against proposal No. 1, and particularly in favor of proposal No. 2, was that the increased basic pension was quite sufficient for the needs of the aged, and that the real purpose of the supplementary pensions scheme, with its large State funds, was not to improve old-age security but to increase State control over the capital market. In the propaganda, therefore, proposal No. 1, was often designated by the opponents as "purely socialistic".

None of the three proposals gained a clear majority at the referendum. Proposal No. 1 received 46 per cent of the votes, No. 2 15 per cent and No. 3 35 per cent. After the referendum, the coalition government resigned and was followed by a Social Democratic minority government (October 1957). During the winter of 1957/58 negotiations took place among the parties, but nothing resulted and the pensions question remained a central issue in the 1958 parliamentary session. The Social Democratic government introduced a Bill on compulsory supplementary pensions for both employees and employers, but the Bill was rejected in the directly elected Lower Chamber by a majority of six votes. On this occasion, the Conservative and Centre Parties held the same view, both being against all kinds of compulsory supplementary pensions, while the Liberal Party advocated some kind of legislation combined with a free choice in the matter of pension benefits.

In this situation the Government dissolved the Lower Chamber of the *Riksdag* and an extra-ordinary election took place in June 1958. The election resulted in

a serious setback to the Liberal Party, which lost about one third of its votes and one third of its seats in the Lower Chamber. Most of the former Liberal votes went to the Right – i.e. the Conservative and Centre Parties. It can also be shown statistically that many former Liberals abstained from voting in this election, which partly explains the decreased participation in the election.

In any case, the Liberal "compromise standpoint" was now unrealistic, and the choice in Parliament had to be made between the negative standpoint of the Right and the compulsory pensions scheme advocated by the Social Democratic Government. The Social Democrats had gained five seats in the 1958 election, but their percentage increase was exactly the same as the percentage decrease of the Communists. The latter had withdrawn their candidates in favor of the Social Democrats in eleven constituencies. In the new *Riksdag* the votes for and against a compulsory pensions system could be estimated at 115–115 in the Lower Chamber. In the Upper Chamber the Social Democrats had long had a solid majority.

In February 1959, when the Government introduced its Bill on compulsory supplementary pensions, the political situation was thus highly dramatic. However, one Liberal member declared that he did not intend to vote in favor of the Conservative motion, but only of the Liberal. Furthermore, he said he would abstain in the final vote if it becomes a question of either voting for the Government Bill or supporting the Conservative-Centre of view. Thus it happened that – after the Liberal motion had been rejected in a preliminary vote – the Government Bill was passed by 115 votes to 114, one member abstaining.

The Conservative and Centre Parties now made it clear that they did not accept this decision and that they intended to get the new Act abolished. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, decided to accept the new system, and in the 1960 general election the Liberals sided with the Social Democrats against the abolition of the Act. The Communists supported the Social Democratic standpoint, as they had always done during the struggle about supplementary pensions whenever an opportunity was offered.

The 1960 election resulted in a defeat for the Conservative Party, and on the whole the result changed the position of the non-Socialist parties for the worse. It was a success only for the Social Democrats, who had now turned the downward trend into an upward one and they were now near an absolute majority in the Lower Chamber of the *Riksdag*.

In 1960 the new Pension Act came into force, the first pensions to be payable by January, 1963. After the 1960 election all parties accepted the system and made no attempt to have it abolished.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Interest Groups**

The main purpose of this article is to explain the behavior of the political parties in Sweden during the struggle over supplementary pensions. An important premise,

however, for the decisions of the parties is the demands and the standpoints of large organizations working as pressure groups and offering the parties essential information about the distribution of public opinion on a given issue. The interest groups showed unusual political activity in the pensions question. The analysis, therefore, starts with a clarification of the positions taken by these interest groups.

Trade unions in Sweden have fought for better pensions for their members for a long time. In the 1940's negotiations took place between the Federation of Labour (Swedish abbreviation LO) and the Swedish Employers' Association (abbrev. SAF) on three occasions, but these negotiations did not arrive at any results because of the decision for a basic national pension (of 1000 kronor), which was accepted almost unanimously by the *Riksdag* in 1946. Since about 1950, however, the Federation of Labour has acted as an important pressure group demanding an addition of supplementary pensions to the basic pension for employees; these pensions were to be graded according to income and were to be financed both by employers and employees. The first supplementary pensions motion was laid before the *Riksdag* by a trade unionist, and several spokesmen of the Federation of Labour shared in the preparatory work of the commissions.

In 1954 – the year before the government commission was ready to report – the Employers' Association presented another plan for workers' pensions. According to this plan the pensions system was to be organized through collective contracts, the fees would be paid entirely by the employers and funds would be created within the companies concerned; through this plan there would be no need at all for the State to be involved. The proposed system was discussed between the Federation of Labour and the Employers' Association, but it soon became evident that the Federation of Labour preferred a State-organized system, and there is some evidence that some kind of agreement had already been made in 1953 between the Federation of Labour and the Social Democratic Party on this point to the effect that the pensions question should be solved through legislation in the *Riksdag* and not through collective contracts between employers and employees. It was supposed that such a solution would be most profitable for all concerned – the government, the party and the trade union members. Thus, the initiative of the Employers' Association produced no results.

White-collar workers who have not joined the Federation of Labour usually have had individual contracts with their employers about pension insurance; thus they had little direct interest in the supplementary pensions question – supposing the new system would make no major change – and their organizations (abbreviated TCO and SACO) never made a choice between the main political alternatives. However, after the 1956 general election, which brought about the defeat of the government parties, the growing aggregate of white-collar workers became a key political group, as their party choice would determine much of the future political development in Sweden. Up till then they had mostly voted non-Socialist. As some kind of a differentiated pensions system seemed more agreeable to white-collar workers and their organizations than the basic pension (about 2100 kronor for everyone regardless of previous income, and financed entirely out of taxes), most of them were faced with having to make a difficult political choice. This seems to explain

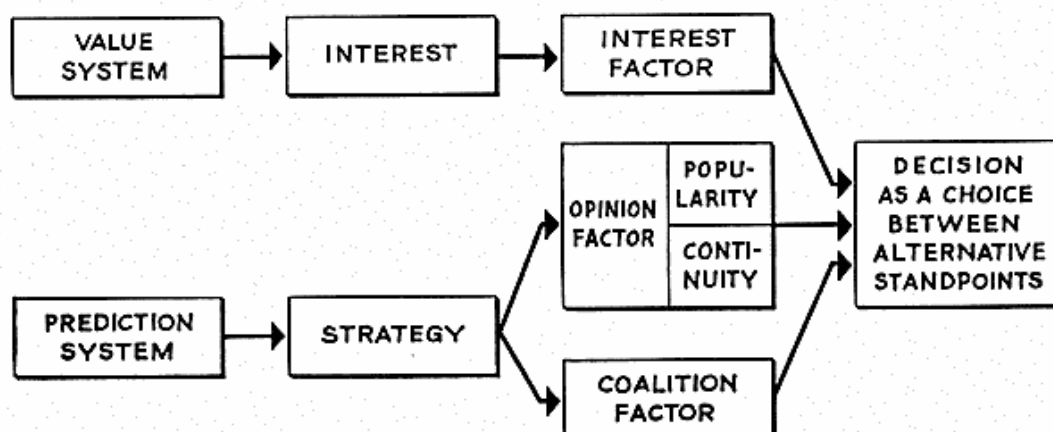
the irresolution of white-collar workers, which is reflected in the relatively more decreased participation of this group in the extra-ordinary parliamentary election of 1958 and in the reluctance of the organizations (TCO and SACO) to take up a definite attitude.

The Farmers' organizations, finally, had no particular interest in supplementary pensions mainly intended for employees; a higher basic pension meant a great deal more to the farmers. Consequently, the most important of their organizations (abbreviated RLF) rejected all kinds of legislation for supplementary pensions. It was fully satisfied with the increased basic pension.

## Political Parties

### Form of Explanation

In order to make the analysis of the decisions made by the parties more systematic it seemed to us necessary to use some kind of previously defined explanatory factors. The definition and application of such explanatory factors may be regarded as a preliminary stage of the work for explanatory models. The needs and functions of such models have been stated by several contemporary political scientists.<sup>2</sup> An outline for a model of the behavior of governing parties, both in one-party governments and in coalitions, has been drawn by Anthony Downs. Although his model does not wholly fit Sweden's multiparty system, with its mainly socioeconomic character, it has been a useful starting point when we tried to find an adequate form of explanation. In this work we found it a fundamental complication that the motives of party behavior seem to be quite different whether or not the matter of decision is regarded by the parties as an element in the relationship between party and electorate. Therefore, only those party decisions which were made with a view to its effects on the electorate will be the object of analysis here. From this fundamental distinction, and on the assumption that the goal of the parties is to obtain control of the governing apparatus, the relationship between the factors and a complete explanatory model can be illustrated in the following way.



The behavior of the parties would thus be explained as determined by their evaluations and their prediction systems. The explanatory factors, then, function as the criteria out of which the parties choose their standpoints among available alternatives. The factors can be briefly defined as follows:

*Interest*, which is defined as the determining factor motivating the realization of the demands of the parties' *major groups*. These major groups form the hard core of the parties and in regard to the socioeconomic character of the Swedish multiparty system, the major groups are defined in socioeconomic terms: employers and white-collar workers form the major group of the Conservative and Liberal Parties, farmers the major group of the Centre Party and workers the major group of the Social Democratic Party. The demands of the major groups are usually articulated by the interest organizations concerned – for instance the Federation of Labour. If there are no such interest groups, or if they have not committed themselves to a specific standpoint, the parties have to make an estimate of the most probable future position of their major groups.

**Table 3. Major groups of the parties. Percentage of voters in occupational classes. Data derived from a national survey of 1960.**

Occupational status	(%)	Party affiliation			
		Conservative	Centre	Liberal	Social Democratic
Enterprisers (excl. farmers)	25	12	22	3	
Farmers	15	57	4	2	
White-collar	50	10	48	21	
Manual Workers	10	21	26	74	
Total	100	100	100	100	

2. *Strategy*, which is defined as the determining factor motivating standpoints that maximize the probability of attaining or preserving control of the governing apparatus. This can be achieved either by gains in a duly constituted election or by the formation of a coalition that constitutes an absolute majority in the *Riksdag*. Strategy thus consists of two elements: the *opinion factor* and the *coalition factor*. The coalition factor influences the decisions of the parties by making them take into consideration the positions of existent and/or possible coalition partners. The opinion factor, finally, can be divided into two elements: *popularity* and *continuity*, the latter term meaning that the statements of a party must be consistent with its previous actions and with its other statements at the time. Otherwise the party may be regarded as unreliable and irresponsible by the electorate. As an isolated variable, the continuity element is always a motive against changes in position. Furthermore, the continuity element means that the parties must preserve their inner unity in order to avoid the risk of being regarded as unreliable by the electorate.

The opinion factor motivates the standpoint that is supposed to maximize the net vote increase of the party with regard to both these elements. Obviously, it is a fundamental problem here to state what information has been available to the parties at different times. The parties obtain their information about public opinion from various sources: from national surveys, from the discussions in newspapers and other publications (periodicals, magazines), from contacts with local party



organizations, and from election results. Changes in position are usually caused by new information — about public opinion (election results) or about the possibilities of forming or maintaining a majority coalition. It should be added that uncertainty influences long-range alternatives to a particularly great extent. Consequently, short-range possibilities — of gaining votes or forming a coalition — are given much greater importance by the parties in their calculations.

We shall now try to apply these terms in an explanation of the decisions made by the parties during the political struggle over supplementary pensions from the time when this issue was regarded as an element in the relationship between the parties and the electorate. Although it was discussed in the *Riksdag* and investigated by government commissions earlier, the time when the parties began to concern themselves with the supplementary pensions question was not until around the turn of 1955/1956.

Obviously, when using the opinion factor as an explanatory factor it is necessary to find out what estimates of public opinion the parties made at different times during the pensions struggle. In order to facilitate this analysis of the party estimates of public opinion, we have made a systematic analysis of their propaganda during the referendum campaign of 1957 and during the election campaign of 1958. The main source of these content analyses has been newspaper editorials, but radio and television programs and political pamphlets have also been analysed. An example of this kind of content analysis is given in Table 4. The most useful result illustrated there is that the Conservative and Liberal Parties gave different degrees of space to proposal No. 3, the proposal advocated by the non-Socialist opposition parties during the referendum campaign of 1957. The Liberals paid much more attention to their own standpoint than did the Conservatives. From this observation we have drawn the inference that the Conservatives — in contrast to the Liberals — did not suppose that their standpoint in the pensions question would give them any net vote increase. Instead, the Conservatives' decision to accept proposal No. 3 must be explained as determined by the coalition factor.

**Table 4. A content analysis of the propaganda during the referendum campaign of 1957. Main content of pensions editorials in per cent.**

Main content	Party press				
	(%)	Conservative	Centre	Liberal	Social Democratic
Pensions proposal					
No. 1		37	5	17	25
No. 2		5	26	9	2
No. 3		9	13	14	19
Comparisons between two proposals		7	15	9	12
Unspecified		42	41	51	42
Total		100	100	100	100

Table 4 also illustrates the scant attention paid by the coalition parties to their press to proposal No. 2. This is also due to a propaganda situation caused by the coalition factor.

## The Parties' Decisions

The *Conservative Party's* first move in the pensions struggle was a demand for a higher basic pension. The demand was combined with an explicit criticism of the government commission's proposal for supplementary pensions. This move cannot be explained as being in the interest of the Conservative Party: a higher basic pension was by no means more desirable to the party's major group — employers and white-collar workers — than some kind of supplementary pensions related to individual earnings. But the basic national pensions had long been very popular among all social classes and there had been no major disagreements among the parties about the basic pension. This first Conservative standpoint is thus to be explained as determined by the party's strategy, foremost by the opinion factor.

At the end of 1956, the Conservative Party agreed to proposal No. 3 of the second government commission and held this position at the referendum. As we have mentioned, this standpoint cannot be explained as determined by the opinion factor (Table 4). Instead it was determined by the coalition factor, as it seemed to be the only way of unifying the non-Socialist parties on the pensions question; at this time even the Centre Party was expected to accept proposal No. 3 and nobody guessed that the representative of the Centre Party in the commission would construct his own solution.

In 1958 the Party showed at first readiness to reach a compromise should the Centre Party also do so. However, when efforts to unify the non-Socialist parties proved unsuccessful, the coalition factor lost its relevance and the Conservative Party returned to its previous position: no supplementary pensions whatever through the State. After the setback for the Liberals and the gains for the Right-wing parties in the extra-ordinary election, a more negative attitude seemed to be relatively popular and there were no longer any reasons for a compromise, as advocated by the Liberals, which would constitute the basis for a non-Socialist government.

After the final decision in the *Riksdag* in 1959, the Conservative party leader declared that his party wished to abolish the new act. This position can also be explained as determined by the opinion factor; it was not until after the 1960 general election that it became evident to the Conservatives that all non-Socialist parties had lost votes due to their positions on the supplementary pensions question, and it was not until then that the Party accepted the compulsory pensions system. By then even the party's major group had adapted itself to the new system through an agreement between the Employers' Association and the Central Organization of Salaried Employees about coordination between the new State system and existent private pensions schemes. Consequently, they did not at that point want the Pensions Act to be abolished.

The coalition factor — the willingness to accept pensions standpoints that were supposed to facilitate the unification of the non-Socialist parties — determined most of the Conservative Party's decisions in the pensions question. The remain-

ing decisions were jointly determined by the coalition factor and the opinion factor.

The *Centre Party*, too, had long since adopted a positive attitude toward the basic national pension scheme, which was at the same time the most profitable to the party's major group – farmers and other small businessmen. The party was very active in competing for the old-age pensioners' votes and carried on propaganda for a higher basic pension during all election campaigns since the end of the Second World War. When the Centre Party took up the demand for a higher basic pension as its first suggestion in 1956, its attitude can thus be explained as determined by both the interest factor and the opinion factor (including the continuity element). The Centre Party, accordingly, had a stronger motivation for its attitude than the Conservative Party.

Only on one occasion did the Centre Party accept a suggestion of some kind of supplementary pensions – in the second government commission, where the representative of the Centre Party was the only sponsor of proposal No. 2. This position is explained as determined entirely by the coalition factor. The party's parliamentary situation – as a partner in the government – prevented it from adopting the same position as the opposition parties, and its interest prevented it from adopting the same position as the Social Democrats. In the referendum campaign the party's propaganda was almost entirely concentrated on proposal No. 2, which was neglected by the other parties. (Table 4)

In the referendum 15 per cent of the votes went to proposal No. 2 (compared with 9 per cent for the Centre Party in the 1956 parliamentary election), which encouraged the party to retain its viewpoint even after the party had left the Government. The coalition factor was thus replaced by the opinion factor as an explanation of a separate Centre standpoint, in the propaganda presented as "an individually voluntary scheme".

After the election defeat of the Liberal Party in June 1958, there were no longer any motives for the compromise agreement advocated by the Liberals. So the coalition factor had now lost its relevance also for the Centre Party, and from this time on the Centre Party – as the Conservatives – was opposed to any type of supplementary pensions established through legislation and administered through government authorities. At the beginning and end of the political history of supplementary pensions, both the Conservative and the Centre Party thus adopted the same – mainly negative – attitude.

The *Liberal Party* was the leading opposition party against the Centre-Social Democratic government in the 1950's. During this period, the party had a positive attitude toward social welfare policies, presented as "social liberalism". This constitutes the basic dilemma for the Liberal Party in the pensions question: the party wanted to unify the three non-Socialist parties in such a way that a "bourgeois" government could be formed; at the same time, it wished to bring about some kind of supplementary pensions. This was an unresolvable dilemma since the Right-wing parties, which were to form the new government together with the Liberals, had on the whole a negative attitude toward supplementary pensions.

In the government commission and at the referendum the Liberals succeeded in getting the Conservatives to join them in an attempt to bring about a voluntary supplementary pensions system, to be realized mainly through collective contracts. After the referendum, the Liberal Party also tried to get the Centre Party to accept some kind of legislation for a supplementary pensions system that would be acceptable to all employees. These efforts are, of course, to be explained as determined by the coalition factor – the necessity of unifying the non-Socialist parties in order to avoid differences of opinion about the supplementary pensions in a future coalition government. The opinion factor has relevance for the explanation as to the extent that this new Liberal standpoint was supposed to increase the total vote for the non-Socialist parties. The interest of the Liberal Party, on the other hand, is extremely difficult to pin down, as the party forms a very wide socioeconomic association: industrial workers, white-collar workers and both small and large businessmen. The defining of the party's major group is thus particularly difficult, and the interest factor does not usually motivate any specific standpoint among available standpoints.

When the efforts to unify the non-Socialist parties proved unsuccessful, the Liberals decided to fight alone for their compromise solution. This decision cannot be explained in any other way than as determined by the opinion factor: a position that realized to some extent everybody's demands was at this moment considered profitable to the party. But the compromise solution proved unsuccessful in the general election as well: the party lost 20 seats in the Lower Chamber.

The Liberal Party nevertheless stood by their compromise solution; this can only be explained as determined by the continuity element of the opinion factor. Another change of position – the third one in less than a year – would have seemed even more dangerous for the party for risking a loss of votes than standing by an unpopular viewpoint. From the election of 1958 onwards, this rigidity of decision can also explain the Liberal Party's inability to influence the final decision in spite of its key position in Parliament. The continuity element prevented the party from adopting an entirely new standpoint and there were now no other alternatives than the negative Right-wing position and the position of the Social Democratic government.

On the other hand, after the final decision in May 1959, the Liberals immediately gave up their resistance to compulsory supplementary pensions and opposed the Conservative demand for the abolition of the new Pensions Act. This eliminated a troublesome political situation for the Liberal Party and can be explained in terms of all the factors except the continuity element, which alone must not make a party retain an unpopular point of view. Besides, at this time all interest groups forming part of the Liberal Party's major group had adapted themselves to the new pensions situation.

An overwhelming majority of the *Social Democrats* are manual workers. From estimates based on national surveys we know that about 70 per cent of the manual workers vote Social Democrat<sup>3</sup>. From time to time the party also enjoys strong middle-class support, and there has been bitter rivalry between the Liberals and

the Social Democrats for the white-collar workers' votes. The 1956 election brought about a setback for the Social Democrats and they considered it necessary to increase the middle-class Social Democratic vote in order to prevent a continuing setback.

It was a fundamental problem for the Social Democrats to find a position in the pensions question that could be motivated both by the party's interest and by its strategy. The demand of the manual workers – presented by the Federation of Labour – seemed incompatible with the interest of the other government party. Thus, the Social Democrats' attempt to introduce supplementary pensions increased the danger of their losing control of the governing apparatus, and it became necessary for the party either to make a compromise with the Centre Party or to take up a position sufficiently popular among all employees to improve the standing of the Social Democratic Party in the next general election. At first the party accepted the generally approved demand of the Conservative and the Centre Parties for a higher basic pension, and it was only after the referendum that the party made its final choice in this connection. The Government's considerations and estimates of public opinion made it present a pensions proposal that was supposed to be popular among all «wage-earners»<sup>4</sup>. The pattern for these pensions was the superannuation system applied to civil servants. At the same time the coalition government changed into a Social Democratic minority government. Only the opinion factor can be used as an explanation of this choice and of the Party's decision to retain it in the 1958 and 1960 general elections. Although the referendum was no success for proposal No. 1 and the 1958 election only gave the Social Democrats a slight vote increase, the party considered its standpoint in the pensions question profitable in the long run. In the 1960 general election, the Social Democratic Party could see the results of the estimates made three years earlier of the opinions on compulsory supplementary pensions – particularly among «wage-earners»: the Party gained three seats in Parliament while its most outspoken opponent – the Conservatives – lost six.

**Table 5. Group references in the pensions propaganda. Group references in per cent of all references in newspaper editorials during the campaigns of 1957 and 1958.**

Reference to	(%)	Party press			
		Conservative	Centre	Liberal	Social Democratic
Manual Workers	1	3	9	11	
White-collar	17	7	9	24	
«Wage-earners»	17	14	10	35	
Farmers	5	3	4	2	
Businessmen	27	50	22	13	
Women	14	7	26	6	
Other references	19	16	20	9	
Total	100	100	100	100	

The Social Democratic Party's earlier activities, for instance, the decision to hold a referendum on the three proposals, are explained as determined by both the opinion factor and the coalition factor. On the other hand, from around the turn of 1957/1958, the coalition factor gradually lost relevance and the opinion factor forced the party not to accept any compromises and to protract the struggle

about supplementary pensions as long as possible. So at last the Party had found a position both motivated by its interest and dictated by its strategy. The supplementary pensions system demanded by the Federation of Labour was realized and the Social Democrats' control of the governing apparatus was guaranteed for another four-years term.

### CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS

Every decision of every political party has now been explained as determined by one or several of the explanatory factors. The application of the factors has shown that the political conflict over supplementary pensions was no unavoidable interest conflict. On the contrary, the pensions conflict was first and foremost dictated by the consideration of strategic factors. For the non-Socialist parties the coalition factor has been found to have had particular importance due to the fact that the Centre Party had entered into a coalition with the Social Democrats already in 1951 and that there were great difficulties involved in the unification of the three parties around a common point of view in the pensions question.

New factual elements were initiated into the supplementary pensions system during the political struggle waged over it. The category of pension beneficiaries was widened, the pensions were made inflation-proof and were to be constantly adjusted to the standard of living, and the pension amount was individually differentiated according to the fifteen highest income years. The Social Democrats and the non-Socialist parties made different estimates as to how these new elements of the pensions system would be regarded by the electorate as a whole, and as to which pension policy would be most popular among employees with a relatively high standard of living. These different estimates of public opinion can to some extent be explained as determined by the parties' different basic perspectives toward social welfare policy<sup>5</sup>.

The Conservative and Centre Parties advocated a social welfare policy that would guarantee a basic minimum of subsistence security, while the Liberals and the Social Democrats to some extent accepted social welfare policy the purpose of which was to guarantee a security for the standard of living as well. The plans for a supplementary pensions scheme contained some elements reflecting an entirely new attitude in social welfare policy, foremost the graduation of pension benefits according to income and the computation of pensions according to the fifteen highest income years. These principles were obviously a divergence from earlier social welfare policies, as advocated, for instance, in the British Beveridge Plan, and they could be supposed to be a central theme in the political debate. These new elements are not, however, very much discussed, which is partly explained by the fact that they do not seem to be in accordance with the parties' interests. Graded pension benefits could not be more desirable to the Social Democrats' major group than to those of the Conservatives or the Liberals. Only the Centre Party's perspective on social welfare policy corresponded to the demands of its major group. The infrequent discussion about these new elements of the pensions system was also, of course, caused by the fact that the parties

did not at first regard them as essential to the formation of public opinion in the pensions question.

Different perspectives have given rise to different calculations of opinion on social welfare policy in an affluent society, and the policies dictated by these perspectives explain to a large extent why the Social Democrats were successful and the non-Socialist parties unsuccessful in the struggle to control the governing apparatus through the supplementary pensions question. Not until 1960 did the non-Socialist parties become aware of the basic change of opinion on social welfare policy, reflected in the elections of 1958 and 1960, and the profound political effects which this had on the political life and premises of party activity in Sweden. Around a standpoint, which is supposed to be most profitable to most voters, general consensus arises. Then consensus in the electorate brings about consensus among the parties. Thus while conflict is occasioned by both the opinion factor and the coalition factor, consensus arises from the opinion factor alone.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this article the term *white-collar workers* is used for all employees who are not members of the Federation of Labour (the central trade union organization). Instead, most of them have joined the Central Organization of Salaried Employees. This definition means that the term white-collar workers also includes employed professionals. Cf. table 2.

<sup>2</sup> Among others, Karl W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government* (1963), David Easton, *The Political System* (1953), William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (1962) and Vernon Van Dyke, *Political Science. A Philosophical Analysis* (1960).

<sup>3</sup> See table 3 and an article in this issue by B. Särilvik.

<sup>4</sup> The term *wage-earner* (Swedish 'löntagare') refers in this usage not only to salaried employees but also to workers paid for by the hour. The term was a frequent theme in the Social Democratic propaganda 1957-1960. Cf. Table 5.

<sup>5</sup> The term *perspective* is here used in a broad sense. Cf. the definition of perspective given by Lasswell-Kaplan, *Power and Society* p. 25.



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