

SWEDEN: POLITICS SINCE 1964

The general election for the Second Chamber of the Swedish Parliament (the *Riksdag*) in September, 1964, did not lead to any remarkable changes of party positions.¹ The Social Democrats and Conservatives lost some ground, but there was no marked winner. Probably the most characteristic feature of the election was the appearance of two new party organizations: The Christian Democratic League and The Citizens' League. The latter only nominated candidates in Skåne (the southeast county of Sweden) and declared itself to be a merger of the non-socialist parties, not a new party. The Christian Democratic League, on the other hand, was a new political party, nominating candidates in 16 constituencies. The 1964 election had no effect on the government situation; the Social Democrats continued in government as they have since the break of the Social Democratic-Agrarian coalition in 1957.

Between the general election in 1964 and the local (municipal) elections in 1966, several attempts were made to unite the non-socialist parties to achieve a political alternative to the Social Democratic government. It is generally considered that the non-socialist parties have suffered from division and from polemics among the parties, which has emphasized differences between the parties instead of their common criticism of the socialist government. In many previous elections two of the non-socialist parties have criticized the third with the election resulting in a loss of votes for the criticized party. In 1956 the Centre Party was accused by the Conservatives and the Liberals of cooperating with the Social Democrats. In 1958 the Liberals were criticized by the Centre and Conservative parties for their position on the pensions question. And in 1960 the Conservatives were criticized by the two other parties for their attitude toward the social welfare program. In all these elections the Social Democrats were supposed to have gained votes because of the absence of a unified non-socialist opposition.

At the beginning of 1964 the three non-socialist parties in the county of Skåne decided to form a common political apparatus called the Citizens' League. The regional party organizations made this decision against the advice of the national party organizations and thus did not get any support from the national organizations. Instead, the most important support to the cooperating non-socialist parties in Skåne was given by the great newspapers in Malmö, the largest city of Skåne. Later, the national organizations initiated the nomination in Skåne of candidates of the original parties. The new political apparatus, thus, had to fight against both the Social Democrats and old non-socialist parties. The election, nevertheless, was successful for the new organization. The Citizens' League received 28 per cent of the votes in the cities of Skåne, while all the non-socialist parties lost a considerable number of their voters to the League. It is obvious that the League won most of its votes from the Conservatives, and that it was less attractive to former Centre voters. In any case, the election result of the Citizens' League showed that a majority of the bourgeois voters wanted a united front against the socialists. The national party organizations could not further neglect this experience.

During 1964-1966, several other organizations were formed in hopes of getting the national party organizations to establish closer contacts and cooperation. In June 1965, such an organization was established in Sweden's second largest city Gothenburg, where many well-known members of both the Conservative and the Liberal parties joined the new organization. This organization also had the purpose of establishing a joint non-socialist program for the local politics of Gothenburg. At the end of 1965, a national organization for non-socialist cooperation was created in Stockholm with

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representatives of the previously established organizations. At this time the majority of the non-socialist newspapers in Sweden seemed to favor party cooperation. In this situation, two of the non-socialist parties announced that they intended to cooperate in the election in September, 1966. It was the Centre and Liberal parties which had been negotiating for some time to achieve a joint election program, resulting in a common declaration in January, 1966. The two parties at the same time invited the Conservatives to join them and to accept the new "middle-way program." No regular negotiations were held with the Conservatives, but in the summer of 1966 it seemed that the three non-socialist parties were not going to attack each other during the election campaign. On the whole, the agreement was respected, although the Conservatives had a placard with the text: "Put your vote where it weighs most," which was regarded as directed against the two other non-socialist parties.

Results of the 1966 Local Elections

The local elections in September, 1966, resulted in a tremendous and unexpected defeat for Sweden's governing party, the Social Democrats. The party lost more than a tenth of its voters to the opposing parties compared with the general election in 1964. The total votes of the non-socialist parties reached 2,177,802 (49.5 %), while the two socialist parties got 2,141,896 votes (48.7 %). Even disregarding the Christian Democratic League, there was a majority for the non-socialist parties. In Sweden's two largest cities, Stockholm and Gothenburg, the majority of the city council turned from the socialists to the non-socialists. If the election had been a parliamentary election, the non-socialist parties would have gained a slight majority in the Lower House of the Riksdag. Immediately after the elections, some discussions were held about dissolving the Lower House to make it more representative of the changed public opinion. But the Social Democrats decided to stay in power with hopes of changing the opinion by the next parliamentary election in 1968. Naturally, the election result brought with it rising expectations within the non-socialist parties of getting control of the governing apparatus particularly since the Social Democrats usually have been more successful in local elections than in parliamentary elections while the non-socialist parties have fared better in parliamentary elections. The elections also revived the discussions of a new electoral system and of changing

Table 1. National distribution of party vote in the local elections on September 18th 1966 (in percent).

Party	1966*	Change since	
		Local elections in 1962	Parliamentary elections in 1964
Conservative	14.7 (16.5)	+ 1.0	+ 1.8
Centre	13.7 (14.9)	+ 1.8	+ 1.4
Liberal	16.7 (18.1)	+ 1.0	+ 0.6
Social Democratic	42.3 (42.3)	- 8.2	- 5.0
Communist	6.4 (6.4)	+ 2.6	+ 1.2
Christian League	1.8 (1.8)	+ 1.8	+ -0
Middle-way lists	1.7 (-)		
Citizens' League and other non-socialist lists	2.7 (-)		
Total	100.0 (100.0)		
Voting turnout	82.4	+ 1.4	- 1.5

*The votes for the Citizens' League, for Middle-way lists and for other common non-socialist candidates have been distributed among the non-socialist parties and the figures in parenthesis show that result; even the columns of the changes are based on those figures.

Table 2. Correlation between Social Democratic strength in 1964 and percentage increase of the non-socialist parties from 1964 to the local elections in 1966.

Social Democratic strength/increase of Middle-way parties*	+ 0.44
Social Democratic strength/increase of the Conservatives*	+ 0.32
Social Democratic strength/increase of the Liberal party**	+ 0.80
Social Democratic strength/increase of the Conservatives**	- 0.60
Social Democratic strength/increase of the Citizens' League***	+ 0.38

* Districts in Stockholm, ** Districts in Gothenburg (there were no Middle-way lists in Gothenburg), *** Districts in Malmö.

the *Riksdag* into a unicameral legislature (in the Upper House of the *Riksdag* the Social Democrats since long have a solid majority).

The decline of the Social Democratic vote was greater in urban districts than in rural districts, and one may assume that the defeat of the Social Democratic Party can be explained by losses of votes to the Communists and to the "Middle-way" parties and/or by an increased tendency of non-voting among previous Social Democrats. (There was a slight decrease in the voting turnout compared with 1964.) Therefore, we shall make a further investigation of the election result of the SDP.

If we start our inquiry with the voting turnout, we find a slight correlation between a decrease of voting turnout and Social Democratic strength. Comparing the 15 strongest Social Democratic districts in Gothenburg with the 15 weakest, we find that the election turnout decreased 3.7 per cent in the strong socialist districts against 1.7 per cent in the weak socialist district. For the whole country, however, the correlation between Social Democratic strength and decrease of turnout is only +0.2. Probably only a small part of the Social Democratic losses can be explained by the decreasing turnout. The correlation between the election result of the Middle-way parties and Social Democratic strength is +0.44. This seems to indicate that the cooperating "middle-way" parties have gained votes from the Social Democrats in direct ratio to the strength of the latter party. In Gothenburg the Liberal Party did better in strong socialist districts than in weak ones, +2.2 per cent compared with -2.9 per cent. From this we conclude that the Liberal Party has gained votes from the Socialists and lost votes to the Conservatives. Accordingly, there has not been a passing of voters directly from the Social Democrats to the Conservatives.

Wherever the Conservatives and the "Middle-way" parties had a common candidate list - e.g. the Citizens' League in Skåne, we would expect that the correlation between non-socialist gains and Social Democratic losses would be smaller than in other districts and also that there would be a lower correlation between Conservative increase and Social Democratic strength in districts where the "Middle-way" parties had joint lists and did not cooperate with the Conservatives. Table 2 shows our hypotheses, on the whole, verified.

To summarize, the 1966 local elections were sensational because of the low share of votes cast for the Social Democratic Party. The party has not gained such a low share since the local elections of 1934. The three bourgeois parties cooperated better than ever, and this seems to have brought a real change in the political situation in Sweden. The Christian Democratic League had exactly the same percentage in 1966 as 1964, but this result is equivalent to a decrease since the League in 1966 participated in all constituencies while in 1964 it nominated candidates in only about one-half of the constituencies.

The Strike of Teachers

Shortly after the elections in 1966, a unique labor conflict became the central political issue in Sweden. The Swedish Confederation of University Graduates an-

nounced intention to proclaim a strike in some secondary schools and in some departments of the universities. The strike notice was the result of a new negotiation system for public employees which came into force January 1, 1966, and which meant that public employees should have the same right of negotiations and strike actions as employees in private enterprise. This new negotiation apparatus was intended to refer to all public employees, even top civil servants. A separate administrative board was established to deal with the negotiations on behalf of the State, and it was assumed that the Board should be able to act independently of the government.

After more than six months of negotiations, a general agreement was reached in July, 1966, between the administrative Board and Sweden's four labor market organizations with public employees. The agreement stated there should be separate negotiations for teachers who belonged to two of the central organizations, The Swedish Confederation of Professionals (SACO) and The Swedish Central Organization of Salaried Employees (TCO). In mid-August a preliminary agreement was reached on the teachers' salaries which called for an increase of about 25 per cent. This was considerably more than other groups had achieved in the 1966 negotiations. A few days after the agreement, the government discussed the economic situation and the effects of the increasing salaries. Probably as a result of these government deliberations, the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs decided to increase the educational duties of the teachers at the same time as the increased salaries were to go into effect. When the teachers' organizations refused to accept these new organizational prerequisites, the administrative Board withdrew its offer of increased salaries. Then one of the central organizations (SACO) published its strike notice. In this situation, the government appointed a conciliation commission which presented a proposal for a settlement with no changes of educational duties and smaller salary increases. The proposal was accepted by the State Board but rejected by the teachers' organization, and on October 20 the teachers' strike went into effect. It was followed by a three-day general strike of publicly employed professionals October 24. The strike was intended to include only a smaller part of the schools of the country, but the State Board proclaimed a total lockout of all teachers belonging to SACO. Consequently, all higher education ceased from October 20 to November 6, when the strike ended, and a settlement reached based mainly on the same conditions as those proposed by the conciliation commission although some smaller groups of teachers still achieved large salary increases.

To a large extent, the open conflict was caused by misunderstandings on both sides, particularly by the belief that the Board could make important decisions on its own disregarding the economic policy of the government. On this point the situation was clarified at the end of the conflict when several ministers declared their full responsibility for the actions of the Board. After this declaration, it became obvious to the teachers' organizations that they could not force the Board to return to its initial offer in August. The newly-established Salary Delegation of the Riksdag did not play an important role in the conflict. It did not hold any meetings during the period when the board at the request of the government changed its attitude to the proposed large teacher salary increases, and it did not make any statements of its own concerning the conflict. Obviously, the new negotiation apparatus is not perfect. If the system is left unchanged, it can be assumed that in the future many conflicts concerning public employees will appear, even in essential sectors of public activity. However, there has already been some discussion about changing the new negotiation system, i.e. moving the main responsibility from the Board to the government.

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