

Book Review

Sten Berglund and Ulf Lindström, *The Scandinavian Party System(s)*, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1978. 203 pp.

The authors, who are political scientists at the University of Umeå in northern Sweden, have designed this book as 'a textbook and a research report all at once'. It is organized in a clear and simple manner, containing separate chapters on the internal, the electoral, and the parliamentary arenas of the parties. These chapters are bracketed between an introductory chapter deciding on a common model of the Scandinavian party system, and a final chapter in which recent transformations of the party systems are discussed and the model is revisited, concluding that 'On the Scandinavian arenas . . . the simple uni-dimensional model does best in terms of parsimony and generality'. To the authors, the party systems of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway are all variations of a left-right system with five parties: Communist/Left Socialist, Social Democratic/Labor, Radical Liberal, Agrarian/Center, and Conservative. Even within each chapter this division is upheld across the four countries in the spirit of true comparative research. To foreign students this simplicity has much to recommend itself as a bird's eye view. Native Scandinavians, however, will be attentive to the risk of pressuring the data for evidence on the functional equivalence of, say, the Danish Progressive Party, in the other three systems. In general the authors are aware that the real issue is not whether the four party systems are truly one-dimensional with 'sister' parties, but whether this simplified model is an abstraction by which certain departures and irregularities can be exposed and profitably studied. In view of the present instability in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, this underlying assumption is something of a gamble!

The dual character of textbook and research report is bound to create some problems. Because it is research, hypotheses are presented and tested. Because it is a textbook, these hypotheses cannot be expected to be known to the reader. Consequently names that one would not expect to find in literature on Scandinavian parties (such as Sartori, Lijphart, and Duverger) appear again and again, and one of the first figures one encounters is an illustration of the Italian party system!

In view of the basic hypothesis, that all four systems are approximately one-dimensional with five parties, it is curious that the authors underplay one of their strongest arguments, namely the class basis of the parties. The analysis of social class is confined to five pages, whereas regional variation is expanded into 28 pages including a number of maps on the political geography of the four countries.

A great value of the book is that it brings together parallel information on party history, political geography, distribution of votes and seats over time, and roll call behavior. This is done with seemingly great accuracy and it permits the reader to draw his own conclusions concerning the models of the party systems. The fairly extensive bibliography at the end of the book should facilitate a more detailed

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study of those aspects that are only lightly covered in the book, such as the effect of policy issues or generational change on the party system.

Finally it can be noted that the book reads easily; indeed, its style sometimes borders on the type of colloquial English that may be dangerous for foreigners.

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Errata: In the article by Palle Svensson in SPS 2:1 (1979), one sentence was deleted in the last paragraph on p. 65. The paragraph should read (with missing sentence in italics):

A few years later, the Socialist Peoples Party, in 1964, proposed lowering the voting age to 18 years. This initiative had no immediate result. The age suffrage qualification was discussed again in 1968–69. With a view to preserve Scandinavian uniformity, the bourgeois coalition government proposed the voting age should be lowered to 20 years. *Meanwhile, when the Social Democrats agreed to lower the voting age to 18 years* a majority emerged in the Folketing for this change in the voting age. In the following referendum, however, a large majority rejected the bill: the turnout was 63.6 per cent and 49.8 per cent of the eligible voters voted for rejection.