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David Arter, Leeds Polytechnic

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SKL's candidates polled a very modest 3,358 votes in 1958 – less than an eighth of its Swedish counterpart, and only a quarter of that of the Norwegian Christian People's Party in Hordaland province in its inaugural year 1933. What, then, did the future hold for a party founded as a moral rearmament group in an essentially post-christian society? If this was largely in the lap of (the) God(s), what could be argued was that failure to gain a parliamentary foothold would have serious consequences for Finland's future wellbeing. As Psalm 127, cited in SKL's general election propaganda in 1979, insists, 'if the Lord does not protect the city, it is useless for the sentries to stand guard'.

The present article attempts to answer two basic questions. Firstly, how did SKL penetrate an already crowded party arena and mobilise support? The first section consequently identifies the main stages in *party-building*. Secondly, who are the party's core activists? Using interview and survey research undertaken in July 1979, the second part of the paper examines a number of structural characteristics of SKL's active members, particularly their religious alignment and former party affiliation, and proposes a series of *elite profiles*. Finally, there is a brief note on what were regarded as SKL's most important future priorites.

1. The Religious Constituency in Finland

On the face of it, SKL had a considerable vote potential to tap. After all, the party did not claim narrowly to represent a particular religious body but rather to speak for individual christians, regardless of denomination, and in 1979, a mere 4 per cent of the population rejected christianity altogether. Indeed, in Pesonen and Sänkiaho's study based on survey data obtained in 1975, it was found that formal membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church – to which 92 per cent of the nation belongs – was extremely high among supporters of all parties. Even in the extreme leftist Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), comprising mainly Communists, almost three quarters of its followers belonged to a religious organisation (Pesonen and Sänkiaho 1979). However, whilst the religious constituency is clearly large and SKL has attempted to target all shades of opinion within it, the party's success in winning the christian vote has been limited throughout by three important factors.

a) In the first place, the massive passivity of the majority of christians, which has served to minimize the salience of the religious perspective as an electoral factor. Thus none of those favouring SKDL in 1975 attended

church regularly, i.e. once, or nearly once a week, and only about 1 in 20 visited church once or twice a month. Religiosity was somewhat higher among nonsocialist voters, but only among the small number of Swedish People's Party supporters did the proportion of regular churchgoers reach double figures at 11 per cent (Pesonen and Sänkiaho 1979, p. 134).

b) Next, the solidarity of the historic alliance between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Political Right, which has denied SKL significant high church leadership. Officially, the former maintains a neutral political stance. In practice, however, the religious establishment has leant towards the Conservatives and to a degree Swedish People's Party (nowadays a centre grouping) and opposed SKL. Recently, for example, the Swedish-speaking bishop of Borgå publicly pronounced against SKL and the dangerous way he claimed it was trying to apply the Word of God in particular political situations.

c) Lastly, the traditional linkage between old pietism and agrarianism, which has significantly reduced the availability of the active religious constituency for recruitment by SKL. Thus, although being a monoreligious nation with high levels of formal membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Finland this century has been characterised by considerable pietistic pluralism and small but vigorous pockets of nonconformism (see Table 1). True, none of the four old pietist groups – the Prayer Movement, Revivalists, Evangelists, and Laestadians – which had

Table 1. The Extent of Regular Pietistic and Nonconformist Activity in Finland 1966–1971.

	Parishes Having Regular Activity (in percent)	
Old Pietists	1966	1971
Prayer Movement	2	3
Revivalism	21	20
Evangelicalism	42	39
Laestadianism	27	29
New Pietists		
National Bible Society	4	6
Domestic Missionary Soc.	6	4
People's Mission	–	17
Nonconformists		
Pentecostal Movement	43	44
Jehovah's Witnesses	20	33

Source: Sihvo 1973, p. 11.

emerged by 1900, wanted the separation of church and state, but all protested at the lack of spiritual leadership from the higher Lutheran clergy.[1] Indeed, their principal socio-historical importance may well have been that in challenging the cultural norms of the clerical 'estate' they functioned as *pre-political movements,* stimulating the farm proprietors forming the bulk of their membership to a heightened sense of group awareness (Suolinna 1975). Certainly with the advent of mass democracy in 1907, two old pietist groups, Revivalism and Laestadianism, both rooted in northern Finland, forged lasting links with the nascent peasant party. To this day, the dominant Laestadian view holds that the Kingdom of God is close to the Agrarian (from 1965 onwards) Centre Party.

The constraints these three aforementioned factors collectively impose on the unitary mobilisation of the religious vote can be illustrated by the fate befalling two earlier attempts at explicitly christian political activity – the Finnish Christian Workers' Party, founded in 1906 with its best support in the coastal areas of south-west Finland where the Prayer Movement was entrenched, and the christian party proposed after the Second World War, at a time when religious parties were springing up right across Europe. The Christian Workers' Party modelled itself on English and particularly German christian socialism and initially boasted large numbers of clergy in positions of leadership (Salokas 1916). It proved short-lived, however, gaining a maximum of 2.8 per cent of the valid poll in 1909 and ceasing its party political activities in 1922, shortly after its primary goal of prohibition had been achieved. In February 1946, the christian wing of the labour movement proposed the formation of a specifically religious party. It was to be an independent centre party, attracting support from all faithful persons, irrespective of previous political persuasion and with the re-introduction of prohibition (abandoned in 1932) as its main initial aim. Significantly, the party remained stillborn, though the idea did attract sympathetic correspondence in the religious press.

Overall, then, it was difficult to hold out much hope for SKL on the basis of earlier domestic experience of religious party organisation. Arguably the greatest fillip to the new party, in fact, came from the example of the Norwegian Christian People's Party, which by the mid-1950's had won over 10 per cent of the valid vote. Especially important in providing a spur was the book *Kristendom og politik* by the vice-chairman of the Norwegian party, Karl Marthinussen. With its programme virtually a verbatim translation of that of the Norwegian Christians, launching SKL was in many ways analogous to marketing a foreign product: an assumption of demand was made, but lacking access to significant financial resources,

the first problem seemed likely to be one of visibility, i.e. bringing the party to the attention of as wide a public as possible.

2. Stages in Party-Building

2.1 SKL's Electoral Initiation: 1958–1962

SKL's inception was heralded by almost total silence 'in high places'. The new party was not reported in the majority of national newspapers and there were no exhortations from either the political or religious establishment urging electors to avoid it. Doubtless the feeling was that when ignored, the whole thing would quietly go away. As it turned out, SKL's electoral baptism was by no means an unhappy one. Aided by electoral alliances with the People's (Liberal) and Conservative parties to avoid vote wastage, it increased its poll six-fold in 1962, although contesting the election in only half a dozen constituencies – all but one in southern Finland – with very limited propaganda. The fundamental message of the embryonic SKL stressed the paramount importance of injecting christian standards and influence back into the legislative process and the way this could be attained only through religious-specific action in the electoral arena. Politics, it was inferred, should be seen as a legitimate vehicle of christian action: only through effective political organisation could SKL's goal of 'christianizing' society hope to be achieved.

SKL's performance at parliamentary elections between 1958 and 1979 is set out in Table 2. Like the Rural Party founded a year later in 1959, the emergence of SKL heightened still further the traditional fragmentation in the nonsocialist camp; unlike the Rural Party, which was the work of dissident Agrarian, Veikko Vennamo, SKL was not a splinter party. Accordingly, its main strategy during this phase of electoral initiation was to try and woo prestigious figures away from the traditional parties.

Table 2. SKL's Performance at Parliamentary Elections 1958–1979.

Year	Poll	Constituencies Contested	Elected Delegates
1958	3,358	2	–
1962	18,570	6	–
1966	10,646	8	–
1970	28,462	12	1
1972	65,228	14	4
1975	90,656	14	9
1979	137,850	14	10

Contacts were established and there was sympathy from two prominent, albeit ageing Agrarians, Viljami Kalliokoski and Antti Kukkonen. They attended unofficial meetings of SKL's party executive and, without ever joining the party, boosted its morale at a critical juncture. Yet when SKL failed to achieve vote-catching defections, a number of its ten 'disciples' became disheartened and disagreement over electoral alliance policy led Olavi Päivänsalo, SKL's founding father, to return to the Conservative Party in 1962.

2.2 Growth of a Core Elite: 1964–1970

The delimitating events of this second stage of party-building were the achievement in 1964 of SKL's first local government seat in Helsinki and Raino Westerholm's election as SKL parliamentary delegate for the Kymi constituency of south-east Finland in 1970. It was not a phase marked by either a large or steady rise in SKL's poll: in the latter year, it obtained only 10,000 votes more than at the general elections of 1962, whilst in 1966 there was actually a sharp decline in the party's fortunes. The basic problem was that significant electoral progress depended on voter secessions from the ranks of the established parties together with the mobilisation of former abstainers, and neither occurred very readily.

This said, a number of factors did contribute to a growth in SKL's following, particularly the number of card-carrying party members, between 1964 and 1970. Perhaps the most important of these was the secularized and radicalized social climate widely associated with the advent of a centre-left Popular Front government in 1966, for this fuelled a sense of outrage in active christian circles. Talk of a crisis in the Evangelical Lutheran Church prompted its leaders to investigate ways in which 'a more living faith' might be created; significantly, the main new pietist organisation, the People's Mission, dated back to 1967;[2] and in schools, many teachers became disaffected with the prevalent attitudes of the so-called New Left and turned to SKL to defend the status of religious instruction on the curriculum. Strict party discipline, too, was seen to be stifling the christian voice both in the government and the main opposition party, the Conservatives, and added to the mood of protest. To be sure, the People's Party founded a specifically christian wing in Helsinki in March 1965 with a view to exploiting disquiet among the religious constituency. But it proved short-lived and its deputy-chairman later joined SKL.

The recruitment of SKL support was also facilitated by realignments occurring at the centre of the political spectrum during this second phase

of party-building. In particular, the Agrarian Party's adoption of the designation Centre Party in 1965 was seen by some of its traditional farming elements as a negation of the party's rural past and a betrayal of its rank and file. A small number of disgruntled Agrarians consequently switched to SKL, as they did from the People's Party when it became the Liberal People's Party the following year.

At the same time, the targetting of potentially sympathetic opinion leaders took place at all levels and, encouraged by SKL's leadership, a network of personal contacts was developed. The offer of parliamentary candidacies lured several active members into the party, whilst local politics was an important training ground for future SKL leaders. Raino Westerholm, the present party chairman, has related how he had never belonged to a political party before agreeing (at the third approach from SKL) to become a local government candidate in 1964 (Westerholm 1978). Even then, he made it a condition of his standing that he put up as an independent christian and it was not until 1968 that he became an SKL councillor.

All in all, SKL's relatively modest vote increase during this second period of party-building concealed a significant growth in the core of party activists. Probably as many as 18 per cent of those presently active in the party joined SKL at this time, as Table 3 illustrates. Moreover, assisted by the absence of an electoral threshold and hence the possibility of forming tactical alliances, SKL achieved a parliamentary breakthrough in 1970, returning a single delegate, Westerholm, with 1.1 per cent of the valid poll. Its success was greeted with considerable curiosity and some sympathy but was dwarfed by the (by Finnish standards) flabbergasting triumph of

Table 3. Growth in SKL Membership 1967–1977.

Year	Membership
1967	580
1968	2,100
1969	2,600
1970	3,376
1971	7,674
1972	9,840
1973	10,600
1974	10,408
1975	13,981
1976	16,330
1977	17,239

populism, which in the form of Vennamo's Rural Party won 18 seats with a little under 10 per cent of the vote.

2.3 Parliamentary Increase: 1970–1977

There was a plainly incrementalist logic to much of the growth in SKL's vote which occurred in the wake of its initial parliamentary breakthrough in 1970. The mechanics of expansion can be delineated in four interdependent stages. 1) Westerholm's success brought SKL to the notice of a wider public, enabling the party to realise more of its prospective voter constituency, and at the same time profit from an upturn in membership. In the two-year period between Westerholm's election and the general elections of January 1972 – called prematurely by President Kekkonen following disagreements between the governing Centre and Social Democratic parties – SKL's parliamentary poll more than doubled and membership almost trebled. 2) Consolidation in the party's membership and organisational network allowed SKL for the first time in 1972 to contest general elections on a national basis, i.e. in all 14 mainland constituencies, and so further its parliamentary representation. It put up 73 candidates (48 in 1970) and elected four delegates. 3) Increased parliamentary representation rendered SKL eligible for a greater share of the state subventions handed out to political parties – from 1967 onwards – on the basis of the number of elected delegates, as well as for public support for its mouthpiece, *Kristityn Vastuu*, which started publication on a regular basis from 1975 onwards. 4) Finally, SKL's enhanced visibility led to a number of defections from the established parties. Esko Almgren, for example, currently party secretary, joined SKL in 1976 having been a Conservative candidate at the general elections the previous year.

At least some growth during this third phase of party-building must also be attributed to SKL's record as a moderate and constructive opposition party projecting a distinctly *christian social* identity. Thus in December 1976, with the centre minority coalition under Martti Miettunen in difficulties, SKL agreed with the main opposition party, the Conservatives, to help the government get the budget through parliament, whilst making a condition of doing so, a 22 per cent increase in family allowances together with the commencement of a trial period for the proposed 'mother's wage'. Throughout this period, SKL presented itself to the electorate as the advocate and custodian of a morally sound and economically secure way of life. Its electoral manifesto in 1972, for example, demanded:

a) The removal of 'middle beer' from grocers and supermarkets together with a reduction in its alcoholic content,

b) A ban on the public advertising of alcohol and tobacco (achieved in 1977),
c) Better care facilities for alcoholics,
d) A reform in the abortion law so as to protect the unborn child,
e) Guarantees of long-term full employment,
f) Stricter controls on the pollution of air and water
g) Stricter censorship of radio, television and films.

Yet, in truth, SKL still operated at the margins of politics, directing itself at economically marginal groups like housewives, war veterans, and the elderly. Things changed appreciably in 1978, however, for SKL threw its hat into the ring of 'high politics' and was, accordingly, to experience life on the dark side of the President.

2.4 Full-fledged Political Party 1978–1980

SKL's emergence as a fully-fledged political party from being primarily a moral rearmament group came with the decision taken in principle by its executive committee in January 1977, and subsequently confirmed by an overwhelming majority at its annual conference that year, to run a candidate against Kekkonen for the Presidency in 1978. This set the hares running in all directions. After all, in conditions described as 'some international instability' in 1973, a six-party front involving Communists, Social Democrats, centre groups and Conservatives had combined to rush through an Enabling Act (opposed by SKL) giving parliament powers to extend the President's term of office by a further four years, and the same month as SKL's decision to enter the Presidential race, a Conservative bank director proposed again dispensing with popular elections. SKL's intentions prompted the six-party alliance, rebuilt on a Social Democratic initiative in 1976, to approach Kekkonen who, in February 1977, agreed to stand for a fifth term of office though only on condition regular elections were held. By proposing an alternative to the ageing President, however, at a time when there was discussion of shelving normal procedures, SKL had safeguarded the citizens' legal right to participate in the election of their Head of State. More than that, SKL opposed a notion of christian and democratic leadership to the functional hegemony of the ruling centre-left parties backed by, and now in turn backing, Kekkonen. Its campaign was particularly critical of Kekkonen's role in coalition-building and the claim that governments needed to enjoy the confidence of the President rather than parliament.

Confronted by a pro-Kekkonen alliance with 153 of the 200 seats in the

legislature, SKL's task was, of course, completely hopeless and the result a foregone conclusion. This is not to say SKL's candidacy was either an act of self-sacrifice on the altar of constitutionalism or a blindly redemptive gesture undertaken in the cause of libertarian democracy – though there were those who conceived of proceedings in such highly altruistic terms. Rather, its decision to oppose Kekkonen involved a number of well-grounded tactical considerations. In the first place, there was a good deal less than wholehearted support for the President in the Conservative Party and doubts about him too among some of the older generation Social Democrats. SKL thus stood to be the beneficiary of protest seepage from within the electoral cartel supporting Kekkonen. Furthermore, whilst it was expected that SKL would face wholesale malignment during the campaign, it felt it had the opportunity of earning general respect, so gaining for itself a durable place on the political spectrum. Within its ranks there was a belief that 1978 would go down as the year which determined the future of the party – whether it would consolidate its growth throughout the 1970's or whether its support would gradually dwindle as many predicted. In fact, following an impressive campaign by Westerholm, SKL won 8.8 per cent of the valid poll, tantalizingly close to the 10 per cent level achieved by the Norwegian Christian People's Party some twenty years after its foundation.

Yet by entering Westerholm as a contender for the chief executive office at the Presidential elections of 1978, SKL unwittingly depressed the main sciatic nerve of the Finnish body politic – its relations with the Soviet Union and, by extension, Kekkonen's continuing ability to maintain a balance of mutual interest. SKL, of course, strenously denied that Kekkonen's foreign policy competence was being called into question and pointed out that support for the so-called Paasikivi-Kekkonen line of firm but fraternal Fenno-Soviet relations was explicitly laid down at the beginning of its presidential manifesto. But simply putting up a candidate of its own was interpreted and exploited as evidence of SKL's dissatisfaction with the handling of foreign affairs and, so as to underline the point, much was made of Westerholm's concern to get international guarantees of security for Israel's borders, and the way this ran contrary to the Soviet Union's policy of support for the PLO. At once, SKL became a hawk – a 'dangerous political phenomenon'; its increase in support was gained at the expense of being ostracised by the President, who dismissed the party as a band of 'aggressive extreme right-wing reactionaries' (Rautkallio and Häikiö 1978, p. 113). However, although SKL, polling 4.8 per cent of the valid vote at the general elections in March 1979, lost ground compared

with its Presidential performance, its vote was up 1.5 per cent compared with 1975 and SKL is the only party to have gained ground at each of the four parliamentary elections in the 1970's.

Whether the Presidential elections of 1978 will prove to have been the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning for SKL, only time will tell. A few general observations might, however, be made at this half-way point.

1) 1978 marked the effective end of SKL's chances of participating in government in the lifetime of the present President. Its plight was summed up by a delegate at SKL's annual party conference in 1979: 'Kekkonen', she claimed, 'is determined to keep us in an "offside position" '.

2) The longer the absence of an alternation of power – the centre-left has been in office for 14 years – the more the political backlash is likely to favour SKL. This is particularly likely to be the case so long as elements in the Conservative Party believe their party is kow-towing to Kekkonen with a view to an early rehabilitation in government and whilst right-wing rural Centrists, disaffected with their party's long association with the left, continue to strain the political alliance between agrarianism and old pietism.

3) The longer the political establishment eschews, or pays insufficient lip-service to christian ideals, the more distinctive and attractive SKL's approach is likely to appear. It is significant that before the last election SKL, doubtless aiming at moderate left-wing voters, widened the focus of its appeal beyond personal christians to include all those subscribing to broad christian values. Its voters, in short, were not required to be enthusiastic, in the strict sense, to support the christian party.

4) Finally, with Westerholm's retirement from politics expected before too long, the satisfactory resolution of the succession problem will prove crucial to SKL's prospects in the 1980's. Whatever happens, SKL will continue to confront the political leadership of the nation with the thesis that, in the words of Solzhenitsyn's letter to the Soviet leadership in September 1973, 'Christianity today is the only living force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing (not only) of Russian (but also Finnish) society' (Solzhenitsyn 1974, p. 56).

3. The Genealogy of SKL Active Members

The second part of this present paper concentrates on a number of central questions about SKL's active members. Are the core elements in its policy elite mainly men or women; young or elderly; middle or working

class; high-church, low-church or nonconformist; formerly socialist or nonsocialist voters? In short, who precisely are the sentries of the Lord in the party arena – the political christians with a capital 'C' – and what are the main lines of genealogy?

Answers are sought on the basis of interview and survey research and, in particular, a questionnaire which was sent on 25–26 July, 1979 to every fifth name on the official register of participants at the SKL party conference two months earlier. The sample comprised 148 persons covering SKL's sixteen constituency organisations together with its Youth, Women's, and Swedish-language sections. 110 replies were received, making a response rate of almost 75 per cent.

It should be noted that though the SKL member-vote ratio at 1:7 is the highest of any Finnish party, the present findings relate only to SKL's *active members* and are not necessarily representative in a microcosmic sense either of the party membership as a whole, or, even less, its total electoral constituency. A comparable survey of SKL's rank and file voters would clearly point out leader-led variations and similarities. Indeed, with Pesonen and Sänkiaho's study of almost 1,300 electors in 1975 showing only 14 SKL voters – thus denying their evidence statistical validity – further research is obviously needed.

3.1 The Demography of SKL's Elites

Men outnumbered women by a margin of 3:2 in the overall survey sample, though almost 44 per cent of actual respondents were women. This seemed *prima facie* on the low side, for official statistics put the proportion of female members at 60 per cent of the whole. Men, however, are doubtless more readily available to attend party conferences and generally more likely to play an active leadership role. Indeed, there is tentative confirmation of this hypothesis in the fact that only 23 per cent of SKL's parliamentary candidates in March 1979 were women, just two of whom found their way into the party's ten-member parliamentary group.

Data on the marital status and age of active members do not support the widespread notion of SKL as a party of elderly spinsters. Typical in the propagation of this view was a report in the avowedly neutral, though in practice Conservative-inclined daily, *Uusi Suomi,* which claimed that at an SKL meeting during the 1979 general election campaign, only a quarter of the audience comprised men, whilst four fifths of those in attendance were over retirement age. As Table 4 shows, just over three quarters of respondents in the present sample were married and over half were mar-

Table 4. Marital Status of SKL's Active Members.

Married Men	52%
Married Women	24%
Unmarried Women	15%
Unmarried Men	3%
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	6%
	100%
n = 110	

ried men. Single women, either unmarried, divorced, separated or widowed represented only a little over 1:5 of the total.

Grouping respondents into age cohorts on the basis of the question – When did you first use your right to vote? – it can be seen from Table 5 that well over one third of SKL's active members were early middle-aged (34–45 years) coming of voting age during Kekkonen's first two terms as President; approximately 1:6 were middle middle-aged (46–54) voting first during Paasikivi's decade as Head of State and the same proportion young voters (22–23), the first political generation of 18-year old electors. There were relatively few late middle-aged and elderly and only one first voter – hardly surprising, perhaps, in light of the focus on those in leadership roles. It cannot be doubted that a substantial number of those persons under 33 years who are active in the party were attracted to SKL through the influence of the international Charismatic Movement and its best-known Finnish leader, the Pentecostal pastor Ylivainio.

In sum, the demographic evidence points to a proportion of elderly spinsters – at or over retirement age – of no more than about 4 per cent of

Table 5. The Age Structure of SKL's Active Members

First Voted	Political Generation	Age in 1979	No.	% in sample
Pre-1939	Pre-war electorate	64+	11	10
1945	War veterans	55–63	6	5
1946–1955	Paasikivi	46–54	17	16
1956–1966	First Kekkonen	34–45	41	37
1968–1975	Second Kekkonen	22–33	16	15
1978–1979	First voters	18–22	1	1
Others	–	–	18	16
			110	100%

respondents. Even so, with a body of single people numbering nearly 25 per cent of respondents, the survey findings hold out some support for Milton Yinger's speculation that 'it may be the lonely more than the hungry who are attracted to sectarian movements' (Yinger, 1970, p. 254): clearly a tack for future investigation.

3.2 The Class Structure of SKL's Active Members

The socio-economic background of SKL's policy elite was examined using the 9-class schema employed in Pesonen and Sänkiaho's recent survey of citizens and democracy (Pesonen and Sänkiaho 1979). Particular attention was paid to the extent of blue-collar involvement in leadership roles, partly because of SKL's claim to be a catchall party in line with its christian social identity; partly because of its stress on inter-party democracy and, by inference, the undesirability of a Michels-style bureaucracy of officials; and not least because the fragmentary evidence available suggested a significant blue-collar element. Raino Westerholm, for example, has recalled a Gallup poll in connection with the 1972 general election which revealed that 41 per cent of SKL's *support* came from the working class, whilst in 1976 the former party secretary claimed that 35 per cent of party *members* were blue-collar workers (always a boast in the non-socialist camp).

The class structure of SKL's active membership is set out in Table 6. It can be seen that an overwhelming preponderance of SKL's active members consists of white-collar personnel. Fractionally over 60 per cent of the economically active respondents were employed in Classes 1 and 2, professional, managerial, and middle level white-collar posts, whilst no less than 23 per cent were schoolteachers – nearly 5 per cent more than the combined total of all the blue-collar workers. Analysis of SKL's parliamentary candidates at the 1979 general elections using the same 9-point scale confirmed the socially top-heavy nature of SKL's leadership. Just under three quarters of its parliamentary candidates came from Classes 1 and 2 and less than 10 per cent were blue-collar workers. In mitigation, though, it is worth noting that even on the Left, the number of blue-collar parliamentary candidates has fallen. Thus at the 1979 general elections, the Social Democratic Party's candidates contained only 14 per cent from manual occupations (Arter 1980).

3.3 The Religious Allegiance of SKL's Active Members

The religious allegiance of SKL's active members was analysed on the

Table 6. The Class Structure of SKL's active membership

Class	Description	Number	%
1	Professional/Managerial	36	33
2	Middle level white collar	17	15
3	Clerical grades	8	7
4	Entrepreneurs	0	0
5	Skilled workers	15	14
6	Unskilled/Semi-skilled	5	4.5
7	Farmers	5	4.5
8	Students	2	2
9	Others	22	20
		n = 110	100

basis of three questions: a) Do you belong to the Evangelical Lutheran or Greek Orthodox Church? (the two official State churches) b) Do you attend church regularly? (admittedly a rather subjective appraisal was called for) c) Do you belong to a low church or nonconformist group[3] e.g. the People's Mission, Laestadius Movement, or Free Church?

All the active members returning the postal questionnaire adhered to a religious body: 88 per cent belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, whilst 12 per cent were members of nonconformist organisations. 67 per cent of respondents went to church regularly, over six times the number in the Swedish People's Party which scored highest on religiosity in Pesonen and Sänkiaho's study. Nonetheless, it is perhaps a rather lower percentage than one might have expected from active members of a specifically religious party. Indeed, although there were only 14 SKL voters in Pesonen and Sänkiaho's survey (and thus no separate party breakdown attempted) less than half described themselves as very religious and only two went to church every week.[4]

Of the vast majority of SKL members belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, over half (55 per cent) identified with a low church pietist organisation, and the bulk of these (74 per cent) aligned with new pietism (see Table 7). The much smaller number of persons adhering to the four old pietist groups was doubtless to be expected in light of the long-standing political alliance between old pietism and agrarianism. Interestingly, the large number of respondents belonging to the People's Mission bears out the findings of earlier research which revealed that no less than 90 per cent of those new pietists admitting to a party political preference in 1971 favoured SKL (Kauppinen 1973, p. 65).

Table 7. The High Church – Low Church – Nonconformist Alignment of SKL's Active Members

Old Pietism		New Pietism		Evangelical Lutheran Non-Pietist	Nonconformism	
Evangelicalism	6	People's Mission	26	–	Pentecostal	7
Revivalism	3	National Bible Society	3	–	Free Church	2
Laestadius (Old Wing)	2	Other New Pietists	10	–	Salvation Army	1
Laestadius (New)	2				Baptist	1
Prayer Movement	1				Others	2
	14		39	44		13
			n = 110			

Despite its pronounced low church and nonconformist connections, SKL has remained very much a lay movement. Only 9 per cent of its parliamentary candidates in 1979 had an overtly religious identity, i.e. as priests, theological students, missionary workers etc., and there are just two persons with a theological training in the party's 10-member parliamentary group.

3.4 The Party Political Background of SKL's Active Members

As Table 8 demonstrates, precisely half the respondents in the present sample replied in the negative to the question: were you a supporter or member of another party before joining SKL? This is an undoubtedly high figure, particularly in light of the age structure of active members, and conceals three broad sub-types: those who backed individual christian candidates rather than a party and were thus 'floating voters'; first voters who backed SKL from the moment of personal enfranchisement; and, above all, those abstainers and weak identifiers for whom the term 'supporters' of another party clearly implied too much commitment.

Exactly half the sample, however, did support another party before joining SKL. Of these, almost 80 per cent were erstwhile supporters of the 'old' nonsocialist parties; 1:10 had been a 'protest voter' in the Rural Party's ranks; and 12 per cent had earlier backed the Broad Left. In the last context, it is important to note that SKL sees itself closer to the Left in social policy matters, a fact which would explain why in a Gallup Poll

Table 8. The Party Political Background of SKL's Active Members

No Previous Allegiance	Previous Party Allegiance	
%		2
50	Conservatives	44
	Agrarian-Centre	29
	Rural-Party	9
	Social Democrats	10
	Liberals	4
	Swedish People's	2
	People's Dem. League	2
		100
n = 55	n = 55	

conducted by *Helsingin Sanomat* in December 1978, 10 per cent of SKL voters wanted a move towards a more socialist society. Cross-tabulating the data on religious and former party affiliation revealed a positive correlation between new pietism and previous leftist voting.

Not perhaps surprisingly, there were few in the sample who had been members of another political party. Even so, a retired man from central Finland, a long-term member of the Social Democrats, described the way he left the SDP over what he saw as its determination to remove religious instruction from schools. In a similar vein, a senior executive and former Conservative Party member tore up his membership card because, pressurized by the Youth Movement, he felt the Conservatives had forsaken their holy trinity of family, religion, and fatherland. Above all, most respondents, whether former party members or simply supporters, would have concurred with the view of a professor from Lempäälä, who noted that he joined SKL precisely because it appeared an '*anti-party*' – a wholesome antidote to the disciplinarian and authoritarian manner of the established party groups.

3.5 Profiles of SKL's Active Members

1. The typical active member of SKL is a middle class married man between 35 and 50 years old – a finding which takes on significance only really when compared with the stereotyped view of the enthusiastic SKL supporter as an elderly spinster.

2. The typical active member of SKL is a regular churchgoer, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and has more than an even chance of pietist associations, particularly in the direction of new pietism. The extent of recruitment from the People's Mission was notable as was the

size of nonconformist support which considerably exceeded its strength in the country as a whole.

3. The typical active member of SKL had little interest in politics and only a weak party commitment, usually to one of the 'old' nonsocialist parties, before joining SKL. Most activists voted for the first time at, or about, the time SKL came into being in the late 1950's, although evidence on the timing of their membership of the party points to the vast majority being 'considerably delayed aligners'. Several experienced a personal conversion to Christ (frequently the exact date was recalled) and began to see SKL as their natural party; others ultimately came to the belief that the existing party system had turned its back on christian values. In all cases, membership of SKL afforded a heightened sense of individual competence as well as 'politicizing' recruits to a far greater degree than in other parties.

4. The Way Ahead for SKL?

Replying to the question – what do you think are the party's most important future priorities – a majority of respondents emphasised the need for SKL to remain at all times a truly christian party embodying and observing the values prescribed in the Bible. The party was likened to a prophet in a hostile land of secularism and materialism, the majority of its active members stressing the primacy of religious over political objectives.

Thus SKL was to do the will of God on earth, rigidly avoiding ensnarement in the world of political opportunism. Its parliamentary delegates were to act in accordance with their consciences, unfettered by party discipline, whilst individual members were to act as envoys who, by expressing the love of Christ in thought and deed, would be able to lead by example. Throughout, it was inferred that politics for SKL was merely a means to the attainment of moral goals, i.e. the creation of a superior order, rather than as in the case of the other parties, becoming an end in itself – a power game to be played out between and for narrow sectional interests. Logically, of course, SKL's concern to create a morally sound society involved nothing less than the reform of politics itself, at least in the sense of attracting more committed christians into public life. But the barebones of achieving this through electoral alliances, campaign slogans etc., were given singularly low priority by active members. The way ahead, in fact, was aptly summed up by a retired farmer: 'Jesus Christ must come first,' he insisted, 'SKL a poor second'.

A good deal of importance in the questionnaire was attached to SKL

lending much-needed 'moral backbone' to Finnish society by safeguarding the main agencies of christian socialisation. Many replies insisted, for example, that the status of marriage be guaranteed by withholding legal rights from unmarried couples; the family, it was urged, should become more of a religious institution with the so-called 'mother's wage' affording mothers the option of staying at home; the position of religious instruction in schools was also to be protected and pornography in the media opposed to the hilt. True, Olavi Ronkainen's personal vendetta against the purveyors of 'porn' has transformed him into a figure of some ridicule in the popular press, whilst prompting the view in more serious circles that SKL should concentrate on the *real* issues of human oppression and degradation. Nonetheless, the bulk of active members plainly support their party's anti-pornography campaign: there were even dire allusions to the fall of the Roman Empire and the fear expressed that wholesale licentiousness could well presage a similar collapse in Finland.

Only a handful of SKL's active members set targets for the party in the electoral and parliamentary arenas. These included the acquisition of 10 per cent of the popular vote and 20 seats in the *Eduskunta*; the recruitment of more working class christians; incursions into the old pietist vote in Lapland (the party's main electoral blindspot); and SKL's ultimate incorporation into government. The need to dispense with electoral alliances so avoiding further association with the extreme right was referred to, as was the importance of broadening the party's elite base to include more high church aligners, not least to scotch the charge that SKL is basically a free church party. In the latter connection, there are undoubtedly strains between the various religious groups within the party which will need ironing out before a new chairman is elected. There are also latent differences over questions of principle. Thus whilst many SKL members want more public spending, particularly in the social policy sphere, others want a decentralised neo-Jeffersonian society of small industrialists and farmers in which the spirit of healthy capitalism would presumably be nourished by the religious ethic. The way ahead clearly cannot lie in a satisfactory synthesis of such fundamentally diverse viewpoints but rather a tacit recognition of the absence of a single christian image of the World. With this in mind, SKL will doubtless continue to assert a christian value–orientation always remembering the cautionary words of a writer at the time of the proposed christian party in 1946: 'the more christians attempt to reform this World', he stated, 'the more the flame of faith flickers and ultimately dies'. Obviously SKL will need to be worldly in an otherworldly worldliness!

NOTES

1 Old pietism comprises: the *Prayer Movement*, emerging around 1750 and traditionally the most localised of the old pietist groups, being concentrated on only a few parishes in the south-west; *Revivalism*, which took root in central northern and north-western Finland at the turn of this century and has remained more or less stationary ever since; *Evangelicalism*, which was formed by a dissident Revivalist faction and entrenched itself in the towns of central and southern Finland; and the *Laestadians*, both old and new wings, which have been particularly strong in Lapland. The old wing of the Laestadius movement is the only one of the aforementioned to show significant evidence of recent growth.

2 New pietism is basically a post-Second World War phenomenon with a proportionately much larger urban membership than old pietism. It has three main branches: the *National Bible Society*, which is closest to the high church; the *Domestic Missionary Society;* and the *People's Mission* (kansanlähetys). The latter is modelled on the German *Volksmission*, i.e. it is not a conventional missionary society but rather organised along parish lines.

3 The nonconformist religious organisations boast a membership of about 2% of the population and this has remained fairly static over the last fifteen years. In descending order of size, the main groups are the *Pentecostal Movement, Jehovah's Witnesses, Finnish Free Church, Adventists, Mormons, Methodists,* and *Baptists.*

4 Professor Pertti Pesonen kindly granted me access to the raw data.

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