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However, Warwick has written an important book which challenges many principal premises in both rational-choice and structuralist positions in historical sociology and political science.

*Oddbjørn Knutsen, Institute of Applied Research, Oslo*

Michele Micheletti: *The Swedish Farmers' Movement and Government Agricultural Policy*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990, 215 pp.

Agricultural policy-making as a subject has fascinated political scientists for many decades. The clear-cut profile of well-organized interests, the dynamic force of rapid change and modernization in farming, and the way the state has been influenced by agricultural interests in the policy-making process can explain this attraction.

The traditionally national importance of domestic food production has resulted in a blurring of the difference between private and public interests. This collective aspect of private production also explains why the farming community has enjoyed high levels of state subsidies and regulated borders preventing the importing of cheap food.

A large amount of literature has already emerged to explain the political success of the farmers. Most contributions have stressed the influence of effective farm interest organizations and the importance of the farm vote. The approach of the book by Michele Micheletti is mainly historic and corporatist, trying to make use of pressure group theory in the context of an adaptive leadership and political symbolism. It analyses the role of the Swedish farmers' organizations in detail from the start up until today. The relationship between farm organization and government is described fully. Fewer pages are devoted to party political aspects of farm influence.

The first part of the book is called 'Every Nation's Heartland'. It is argued that use of 'the rural myth' by the farm unions is an important part of their strategy to rally sympathy and support among the general public and politicians. This argument is considered in historical, organizational and political contexts.

The tensions between safeguarding the 'backbone of the nation' and how to adapt to internal and external demands for lower prices and more efficient production, have possibly made agriculture the most organized, regulated and state-protected of any sector. This 'exceptionalism' has led to the paradox that the more agriculture has declined, the more powerful it has become.

In a changing world what is at first glance an advantageous position of close connection to the state and preferential treatment has turned out to be a problem: the sector is extremely vulnerable to shifts in state agricultural policy.

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The ambition of the author is to analyse how the Federation of Swedish Farmers (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund) (LRF) 'has represented its members in the light of the many changes that have affected its strategy, tactics and position' (p. 2). In Sweden, agriculture until today has enjoyed a large degree of protection by internal market monopoly and import duties. But it has also to a larger extent than, for example, Norwegian agriculture been exposed to the consumers' demand for lower prices and pressure from low price imports from the world market. A whole chapter is devoted to discussing how farmers are adjusting to change brought about by marketing, production surplus and environmental issues. The author does not, however, take into due consideration the enormous rate at which the small-holders have been rationalized away in order to produce cheaper food, and the consequences of this on the organizational processes of the LRF. One question is how it was possible for the farm leaders to balance between the internal pressure from small farmers and the external pressure from the consumers' interest. The perspective of the author is the consensus-making capacity of the LRF leadership. This harmony approach, however, could have been supplemented by stressing some of the contrasts that resulted from the transformation of the LRF.

In several other countries the smaller marginal farmers and the large farmers formed separate unions. In Sweden the small farmer has never been given the opportunity to establish an influential union. The absence of a small farmer union probably biased the representation of the farming interest towards the state in favour of the larger farmers.

The cooperative movement became involved in regulating the market. The farmers' unions, on the other hand, had the responsibility of promoting farming interests in relation to the government and the policy-making process. This organizational division between market-regulating and subsidies-seeking functions found in other countries was not so marked in Sweden. The Swedish National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives historically and up until today was the most important and considered by the government to be the most representative of farming interests.

The author maintains that decision-making in Swedish agriculture has been on a 'low policy track', characterized by minimizing political costs and favouring technical solutions to political problems. This consensual process is to be found in clientelistic policy-making structures where participants in the decision-making process are isolated and segmented. The intriguing fact is that since the beginning of the 1960s the closed corporate agricultural system in Sweden has been opened to include representatives from the consumers' and wage-earners' organizations. The hypothesis would therefore predict conflictual processes because of antagonistic participation. But the conflicts did not appear, or were relatively modest until today, according to the author.

Two questions have arisen in the Swedish case: How was it possible to integrate the farming interest without causing major internal conflicts among different kinds of farmers, and why has the external level of conflict been so low in the policy-making process despite the concessions which the farmers had to make by rationalizing the farm structure and compromising with the consumers?

The author explains this peaceful transformation of Swedish agriculture by the way crisis and conflicts have been solved. 'Style of leadership' and 'the Swedish political culture' are proposed as explanations. This is in accordance with mainstream contributions about the Swedish case as the main reasons for low conflict and flexible solutions.

How peaceful in fact was this change? It is true that the negotiations between farmers and consumers were mostly unanimous. There are, however, also important

examples of breakdowns in the negotiations. But the overall impression from the corporate channel depicts peaceful outcomes. They had more to lose than to gain economically and politically in a confrontation with the consumer and wage-earner interests.

The Swedish system of negotiations between countervailing powers, with the state in the role of a kind of referee, in many ways checkmated the farmers even before the negotiations had begun. A confrontation with the consumers and wage-earners about food prices would mean opposing the powerful trade union movement. The outcome of such a struggle would be more than predictable.

Here I will make a comparison with Norway. Because of another kind of political organization in agriculture the farmers' union in Norway could adopt a much more offensive position. Here the farmers are negotiating with the state alone. The strategy has been to put maximum pressure on the state and avoid antagonizing the organized consumers. In Norway there has been a special relationship between farmers and the Social Democrats. Because the farmers could establish a majority in the parliament a conflict with the government often turned out in favour of the farmers.

The author stresses the importance of the corporate channel in Sweden. It is important, but according to other research, has not been the only political arena. The agricultural agreements in the last resort had to be approved by parliament. A declining farm population during the post-war period did weaken the farm vote in parliament, but the reduction of farm representatives did not restrict the opportunity for the farmers' cause to be voiced in the parliamentary debates. In contrast to Norway, the debates about the agricultural agreements on prices and subsidies were often conflictual in the Swedish parliament. Conflicts compromised away in the corporatist arena often found an outlet in parliament.

It is surprising that the book does not comment more deeply upon such processes in the parliament. The antagonism in parliament puts the process of leadership and adaption into perspective and raises new questions: how was it possible for the leaders of the LRF to sign agreements with the consumers' organization, while the agreements were opposed by farm representatives in parliament? How was it possible for the LRF leadership to enforce the agreements among its members and also be re-elected?

One answer indicated by the author is the ability of the leadership to produce ideology acceptable to the consumers as well as the farmers. Market competition, effectiveness and low prices sounded reasonable to the large farmers and consumers, but why did the small marginal farmers not protest? In most other countries small-holders' unions were founded to promote the interests of small farmers. Why this did not happen in Sweden is probably connected with the kind of leadership and organization. An interesting research task would be to compare how the fate of the Swedish and Norwegian small-holders might be related to different kinds of leadership ideologies in the farm unions.

In Sweden the politics of compromise had its price: marginal farms were sacrificed on the altar of structural change. On the other hand, the acceptance of these costs has turned out to be a national strength in a period of internationalization. During the last decade deregulation in agriculture and more international competition are factors which have challenged the leadership of the LRF to adapt to new circumstances. The new situation has put the LRF leadership in a more difficult position. Even large Swedish farmers are small on an international scale. When the government wants to remove the last protective measures the leadership cannot compromise any more.

On the other hand, how is it possible to protest when there are no militant traditions in the organization? Probably the author is right in concluding that a new period has begun with 'the death of agricultural exceptionalism' in Sweden.

The book provides a useful account of the role of corporatism and flexible leadership in the LRF. Of special interest is the focus on 'peasant romanticism' and the use of political symbols, idealizing farming as a way of life, as a strategy for promoting the farm interest. The leadership became specialists in integrating conceptions of group interest with vague but generally shared values of the public interest. This is obvious in several campaigns of the LRF appealing to collective notions in the fields of environmental and regional policies, as well as their emphasis on securing the supply of food in a national emergency.

The leadership of farmers' union had to strike a balance between flexibility towards change and protest against change. This book emphasizes the adaptiveness of Swedish agriculture. The episodes of protest, external and internal, are probably not so easy to come to grips with. But the picture would have been more complete if the book had given more focus to the less consensual aspects of the agricultural policy-making process.

The conclusion drawn by the author, referring to Katzenstein's study of small states' flexibility and adaptiveness in policy-making as a consequence of corporate arrangements, may find some support in the Swedish agricultural case: corporatist structures may result in coordination and flexibility. In the Norwegian case, however, the outcome was the opposite: a powerful agricultural sector and non-flexibility in agricultural policy-making.

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