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Left Parties in Sweden. Theses

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Parties and Social Movements

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1. The “Swedish Model”

1.1. Basic Features

In late 1930s the concept of the “Swedish Model” was coined as the **prototype of a social democratic welfare state**. It represented an early and particularly fruitful adoption of Keynesian thought, linking it to traditional social democratic values in political practice. Until the late 1970s the Swedish welfare state, under the almost continuous rule of the Social Democratic Workers’ Party (SAP), claimed for itself the distinction of treading a “third path” between the capitalist and real socialist countries. The model also fulfilled an exemplary function in regard to developing countries. At the same time, it often stood in the forefront of criticism from conservatives, market liberals and right-wing forces in Europe.

The model was characterised by:

- an active labour market policy and low unemployment
- highly developed social partnerships, centralised collective bargaining agreements and a wage policy in solidarity, and highly developed corporatist structures on all levels of state bodies
- generally tax-financed social services which, in all cases of income loss, offered all population strata and all age groups a more or less equitable substitution on a high level (universality principle)
- a general socio-psychological consensus on such social democratic values as justice, social equality, security, solidarity and a political culture of conflict resolution through consensus and pragmatism.

1.2. Fundamental Conditions

For the development of this model there were fundamental conditions which to some extent remain in existence and which are currently of significance for parties situated to the left of social democracy.

Building on the foundation of an extremely favourable raw material basis (wood, iron ore, water power), industrialisation was ushered in during the last quarter of the 19th century. It effectively utilised the period’s level of technical progress and, from the beginning, oriented its highly specialised, intelligence-intensive state-of-the-art technologies and products on gaps in the world market. This has remained a consistent strategy of social democratic economic policy.

The labour movement was highly organised from the beginning, with approximately 40% of wage earners being members of the SAP. In the 1890s, with its 1.2 million members the party was larger than all the bourgeois parties put together. The degree of organisation in trade unions (land organisation – LO) was approximately 80%. The Social Democratic Party and the trade unions have traditionally worked closely together (e.g. collective membership of trade union groups in the SAP). In regard to voters and membership there developed a currently still effective interdependence which has contributed to the fact that, all things considered, the SAP can be seen as being further to the left than other social democratic parties.

The three traditional parties of the bourgeois camp (Conservatives, Liberals and the farmer/middle class Centre) and the Christian Democratic Party, which appeared during the 1980s, are traditionally at odds with one another. A stable leadership as a counterweight to the SAP has not developed (for more on the party system see the appendix).

Additional favourable conditions for the model were to be found in the country's democratic political traditions. Starting with the royal oaths as early as the mid-14th century, individual personal and civil rights were proclaimed for all Swedes and have remained a cornerstone of the constitution ever since. There were no long periods of serfdom. Practically no generation has remained without parliamentary experience. There were no destructive ethnic or religious struggles. Positive experiences with social reform, the prompt reaction to sharp social conflicts, and power constellations outside the country's borders as well have all favoured the political movements which led towards the welfare state.

It would appear to be decisive that Sweden abandoned its role as a great power in the early 19th century and has not participated in a war for the past 190 years. Its foreign policy was aimed at neutrality in the case of military conflicts and, particularly under Olaf Palme, to a contribution to non-military conflict resolution, disarmament and respect for human rights throughout the world. The social achievements of the nations of real socialism demonstrably played a positive role in the development of the Swedish model. Thanks to these external factors, the domestic welfare state policy was welcomed and promoted.

1.3. External Conditions

Even during the model's most successful periods, its promises of social equality, justice, solidarity and popular sovereignty were not achieved, particularly not in the working life of dependent employees or within the labour process itself. **The model always remained dependent on the external and internal exploitation conditions of capital, which it could only influence under the exigencies of profit maximisation.** These were some of the main reasons for the critique of the model and for the alternative policies which have emerged from the left: from trade unions and from Communists and Socialists.

1.4. The Conservative Offensive

Starting in the second half of the 1970s, under the guidance of the extremely well-resourced Swedish employers' association (SAF) and the conservative Moderate Gathering Party (M), and with a clear reference to the policies of Reagan and Thatcher, a massive neo-liberal intellectual, cultural, socio-psychological and political offensive was launched against the Social Democratic model as the "dominant economic-political paradigm". In the course of this offensive, financial difficulties and bureaucratic elements in the administration of the public social security systems were exploited. These same forces introduced aggressive campaigns in order to gradually alter the previous structure of the bourgeois-parliamentary system in such a way that in the future there would be fewer possibilities to intervene in market mechanisms in this way. At the same time, the employers' association withdrew its representation in the corporative power structures on all levels. In its place there emerged a more direct and selective influence of the most powerful companies and monopoly groups on both the state decision-making process and regular lobbying. Centralised collective bargaining agreements were increasingly replaced by industry-centred and company-specific agreements. The so-called flexibilisation of the labour market and pressure on the unemployed were increased. The position and influence of the trade unions was weakened.

1.5. The Erosion of the Swedish Model

In the 1980s there began the practical-political erosion of the previous model with the deregulation of the credit system and the foreign currency market, with extensive privatisation and market-oriented labour forms in the administrations, including the social service field, with the commitment of the Social Democratic finance minister to "less government" and the

ultimate favouring of anti-inflationary policies and budget consolidation at the expense of the goal of full employment.

A new wave began in the early 1990s with the economic crisis, an unemployment rate of almost 9%, a tax reform in favour of the wealthiest, and “crisis packages” entailing considerable cuts in the social net of wage employees and the unemployed. The number of welfare recipients doubled. The number of state employees declined by approximately a third, which was particularly noticeable in the social service sector. In bourgeois-governed communities this sector became increasingly a sphere of capitalist investment.

This development went hand in hand with *the decreasing political activity of those most affected: the unemployed, single mothers etc.* A feeling of social coldness, general powerlessness and exclusion from society began to spread, as an extensive “Democracy Study” from 1997 to 2000 shows. At least in the leadership elite of the Social Democratic Party the previously collective notion of democracy in solidarity has been more strongly formalised and individualised. Instead of seeing equality as “equality in results”, they now speak of “equality of opportunity” etc.

1. 6. The Accession to the E.U.

This “**system change**” went hand in hand with the country’s admission to the European Union in 1995. Sweden is continually moving closer to EU military co-operation and NATO and is integrated in the corresponding armaments projects. The country’s neutrality policy has been abandoned.

The hegemony of traditional social democratic values and policies was largely lost under Social Democratic governments, even though neo-liberalism has not entirely asserted itself. The foundations of the welfare state continue at a bare minimum in a society which has been pushed towards the right.

Starting around 1997, owing to the favourable economic development, the dismantling of the welfare state was stopped. Nevertheless, the SAP lost nearly 9% of its voters during the election of September 1998. And the Left Party (V) appeared as a distinct force left of Social Democracy with 12% of the vote

(see appendix).

1.7. The Governing Coalition

From 1998 to 2002, the SAP ruled with a minority cabinet supported by the Left Party and the Environmental Party The Greens (Mp). In this constellation the Social Democratic Party increasingly sought to return to its traditional values and models, including the very close co-operation with the trade unions. The economic boom was utilised in order to alleviate the social cuts of the 1990s.

In addition, it had become clear that the majority of Swedes wish to retain the tax-financed welfare state and do not want to follow the rigorous tax reduction and privatisation course which is particularly being pursued by the Conservative Gathering Party.

A strengthened SAP managed to emerge from the election of September 2002 as the governing party. At the same time, under these conditions no distinct power vacuum remained in which the Left Party could have gained new influence.

Although the left-wing Socialists, with an 8.6% share, fell far short of their electoral target of 20%, their goal of preventing a bourgeois government in Sweden was achieved.

The Social Democratic minority government will now be continued in contractual co-operation with the Left Party and the Environmental Party The Greens. *The Social Democratic Party has declared that it has no long-term strategy for left-wing co-operation with the two supporting parties. The SAP works together with the bourgeois parties in changing majorities in regard to foreign, European and security policy.*

Although right-wing populist and/or anti-foreign parties managed to enter local parliaments in the concurrent provincial and local elections (altogether 57 representatives in 23 bodies), Sweden bucked a European-wide trend toward (neo-) liberal and right-wing populist governing power.

2. The Left Party

2. 1. The Background

The current position of the **Left Party** (until 1967 the Communist Party, thereafter Left Party Communists, and starting in 1990 Left Party – see party data in appendix) naturally has its roots in the special characteristics of the Swedish Model and also in the fact that since the mid-1960s the party has freed itself from its real socialist models and has taken an independent path. A number of party members who did not want to take this path formed the Labour Party Communists (APK) in 1977, which reconstituted itself as Sweden's Communist Party (SKP) in 1995. In its current programme of 2000, the Left Party defends the Swedish welfare model and desires to develop it further.

Many of the social reforms which were initiated starting in the mid-1930s, following the Second World War and in the 1950s and 1960s had originally been demanded by the Communists. They struggled at the workplaces of wage earners and in parliamentary assemblies for better wages and decent working conditions. After the Comintern Congress of 1935 they viewed the struggle against fascism as one of their chief tasks and sought co-operation with all democratic forces. In the 1950s and during the Cold War they took the lead in the struggle against atomic weapons and for disarmament. Although the Communists were combated by the leadership of the SAP and the trade unions, often with extremely undemocratic methods, they remained firmly anchored in the trade unions, tenants' associations, solidarity organisations and on the local level.

Despite fluctuations, the Left Party has had its greatest relatively stable *voter potential* in the trade unions, particularly among union-organised women (in Sweden 5% more women than men are organised in the unions' national organisation) and among the unemployed, as well as among non-European immigrants. In 2002 the party demonstrated progress among young people and first-time voters. In 2002 it lost votes to the Social Democratic Party, particularly among male trade unionists.

2.2. The Program

The currently valid party programme of 2000 states: "Politics in Sweden is still dominated by the conflict between capital and labour." And: "Our political work is based on an analysis of the prevailing power relations, of a class and gender perspective." (För en solidarisk Värld, pp. 31 f) In its programme and in nearly twenty current political action programmes or platforms for individual political areas, it explains how, as a socialist party and "part of the international and Swedish labour movement", it seeks to help build a world where more people have opportunities to take greater responsibility for their daily life situation in all areas, at the workplace just as much as in political bodies etc. The goal is a socialist society as the realisation "of an economically and politically democratic system." Its realisation

“demands the abolition of capitalism, the equal distribution of societal resources along with a democratic control of the economy and power over the means of production.” (ibid., p. 3)

A further cornerstone of its policy is aimed at the overcoming of the suppression of women in society. The *overcoming of patriarchal power structures* is an immanent component in the struggle for an equal, just and democratic society.

The third strategic line is *commitment to ecologically sustainable development*. Production and consumption patterns must be reorganised on the basis of political decisions.

And the fourth cornerstone is the *struggle for international solidarity*, for a world in which the “upper classes” do not rule and suppress the lower. Foreign developmental aid must be raised to 1% of the GNP.

In its programme the party speaks out against an EU membership for the country, but at the same time it is increasingly following a strategy of trying to democratise the EU from within. It is against the admission of its country to the Euro currency zone.

2. 3. The Understanding of the Struggle for Socialism

The *struggle for socialism should be waged throughout the entire society*: in working life, in residential areas, at home and in society for an equitable share of labour and power between men and women. It should be waged against the throwaway society by aware citizens in their capacity as consumers etc.

The party views the daily political struggle and constructive, results-oriented involvement in elected representative bodies as an inescapable part of its “long-term struggle for a socialist Sweden and a world in solidarity.” It is oriented on permanent co-operation with other segments of the labour movement and with women’s, environmental and solidarity movements. It emphasises that in the preceding successful decade of its work it has adopted much of the knowledge and experience of these movements.

It is in the mobilisation and organisation of public opinion that the party sees the party’s decisive task and ability to push politics to the left. “A well-developed extra-parliamentary struggle is a basic condition for success in parliamentary work.” (ibid., p. 32) Thus the party is clearly aiming its electoral campaign at those persons who need its commitment. It also conducts it for the sake of the political activation of its voters and sympathisers for the period after the election.

2. 4. The Preparation for a New Program

A programme commission is currently preparing a **draft of a new party programme** which is to be approved in 2004. The conflicts surrounding this programme and within the commission itself reflect the divergent attitudes toward the party’s strategy. They are closely linked to the question of government participation.

There are positions stating that a new basic programme would obstruct other tasks or contradict daily policy. Demands are being raised to eliminate the statement that capitalism must be overcome. Increasingly, opinions are emerging that it is time to discuss power and property questions, economic democracy and political democracy, the function of and treatment of state property etc. The party’s work within the framework of the programme debate is being continued in this area with further analyses, discussions, reports and conferences. A pragmatic co-operation with the Social Democrats and strategic debates on the future appear to be possible at the same time. There are concerns in regard to a growing emphasis on the relationship of the equality question to the class question, whereby it is assumed that the suppression of women in society is not derived from the class question and

that solving the latter will not mean solving the former, as the labour movement long assumed.

2. 5. The Cooperation with the Social Democrats

The strategy of *how co-operation with the SAP all the way to a government coalition* is to be constructed has long been the subject of controversial discussion in the Left Party. The desire to prevent a bourgeois government represents a common position held by all.

On the one hand, the Social Democratic minister president has repeatedly exerted pressure on the Left Party, stating that it should distance itself from communist currents and class struggle relicts if it wants to govern. A coalition is also unthinkable because of the country's "credibility in matters of security policy." In addition, he says, the Left Party demands excessive state expenditures.

On the other hand, surveys conducted in late 2001 showed that approximately 60% of Social Democrats/sympathisers are in favour of the Left Party's participation in the government. Among the Swedish population as a whole, 44% were for it, 42% against. Among the voters of bourgeois parties an overwhelming majority spoke out against it.

While the party's chairperson, Gudrun Schyman, who is one of the country's most popular political personalities, already wanted to make government participation an electoral goal at the 1998 party convention, the majority rejected this proposal. Instead, it set up a catalogue of demands for a government toleration. The point was not to avoid joining a government under any circumstances. However, party members demanded that the SAP change its current policies. At the party convention in May 2000 the majority eliminated a passage from the party executive's motion referring to government participation. At the end of May 2001 a third of the expanded party executive and a number of Riksdag members sharply criticised the co-operation with the government of Göran Persson. Within two days the party's negotiators had transformed their strict "no" to the government's draft budget into approval without changing anything in the spirit of the Left Party's demands.

The demand was made to fundamentally revise the position on government participation at the next party convention.

However, the party convention which was held in January 2002 was less concerned with "whether" but rather with "when" and "how." This time, a catalogue of demands for government participation was rejected by the majority.

3. The Greens

3.1. The Background

The possibilities and limitations of the Left Party's political effectiveness are also influenced by the position of the Environmental Party The Greens. Conversely, this party has increased its influence on society's development in conjunction with the Left Party. It is the smallest of the parties represented in the Riksdag and just barely broke through the 4% barrier in the last election (see appendix). The Environmental Party emerged from the anti-nuclear power movement and was only founded in 1981. It does not classify itself on a right-left scale, but is usually attributed to the "socialist block" of the Social Democratic and Leftist Parties. In a number of questions of the labour movement, such as labour law, protection against unlawful dismissal etc., it takes more or less bourgeois positions. After this year's election it attempted to work together with a bourgeois centre government because G. Persson refused to give it ministerial positions. In the longer term the party considers a red-green co-operation, even within a government, as a possibility. However, among the party rank and file there is

resistance against the government's course since many fear that the party's character as an alternative movement and "anti-party" could be "compromised away".

3.2. The Program

The Environmental Party's programme states: "Human beings are first and foremost biological, social and intellectual beings, not economic ones. In order to regain our human dignity, the economy must be subordinated to ecological, democratic, social and cultural goals. We must not abandon decisions on our future to either political and bureaucratic elites, nor to self-guided economic forces whose only goal lies in earning interest.

"We want democracy to be conquered back and developed. This is best served through increased participation". (Ett grönt Sverige, abridged version, p. 2)

3.3. Attitude toward the E.U. and Globalisation

Based on its fundamental democratic, emancipatory positions, the Environmental Party demands that Sweden withdraw from the EU and not join the Euro zone. Contrary to the government's plans, the plebiscite on the Euro should not take place until 2006 because by then the effects in the already participating countries would become visible.

The country's neutrality policy should be readopted and developed further. Neutral countries, it states, are needed more than ever for humanitarian and conflict-preventing efforts. The Greens are committed to total military disarmament and demand that Sweden halt its weapons exports.

The party demands limits on the movements of international capital, calls for the Tobin tax, the subordination of world trade to ecological and social regulations, and a halt to the import of goods which are manufactured under environmentally detrimental or socially unacceptable circumstances.

The wealthy countries must alter their policies in such a way that they consume fewer of the earth's resources, so that the poor countries will have more room for their own development. Foreign development aid should be increased, starting at 1% of Sweden's GNP.

Proceeding from a fundamental social principle of solidarity both at home and abroad, the better-situated members of society should contribute more to the common good than has previously been the case. Child and senior care, schools and the health care system should "essentially be publicly financed in solidarity" and should not be a "business idea" guided by profit interests.

3.4. Major Social Aims

In the Greens' middle-range policy, the concept of **quality of life in connection with gainful employment** and improved opportunities for the individual to design his or her own life plays an important role.

The social security systems should be liberated from their strict linkage to wage labour and basic social security for everyone should gradually be introduced, independent of the previous contribution systems. Everyone should have a right to work, but they prefer to speak about a sensible support system for everyone than about full employment. Labour should be divided sensibly, but "wage labour should not be the central factor in life and in the structures of society, systems and norms should not be developed in a one-sided adaptation to the role of human beings as wage recipients. We want people to be able to develop self-confidence and a feeling of self-value on a considerably broader basis". In the future the needs and the rights of

children to more time for care and love etc. must be fulfilled by 2006 at the latest. This should be achieved through improvements in conditions for parents, a humanisation of the labour world, the end of wage discrimination for women and through a reduction in working hours by means of a 35-hour week.

3.5. Economic Regulation

The strategy of the Environmental Party The Greens in regard to economic and environmental policy proceeds from the assumption **that economic growth cannot be a political goal since it is only a measure of the economy's size but not of its quality**. They argue in favour of a "circulatory economy" in which the limitations of resources and the survival needs of future generations play a central role. Political decisions must determine the framework in which the market decides on production and consumption. Economic regulatory measures should be utilised in such a way that that which promotes sustainability in the long run will become worthwhile and inexpensive for companies and individuals. However, that which is contrary to this principle, or that which is downright dangerous, should be forbidden. In this sense, taxation policy should be increasingly applied as an economic regulatory means for the purpose of sustainable development.¹

4. Practical Politics

4. 1. The Cooperation of the Left Party with Social Democratic Governments

Problems of a co-operation of the Left Party with Social Democratic governments (in whatever form it might take) have been placed on the agenda of practical politics as a result of the growing acceptance and the increased influence of the Left Party in the past decade on the one hand, and, following the heavy electoral losses in 1998, by a partial shift of the Social Democrats to more traditional Social Democratic positions on the other.

From 1998 to 2002, the Left Party worked together with the Environmental Party on the basis of a written agreement with the Social Democratic minority government in the areas of the economy, employment, just distribution, equality and the environment. A co-operation in questions of EU policy, joining the Euro zone, foreign and security policy was ruled out from the beginning because of fundamental differences.

In a detailed report of the Left Party on this co-operation, a thorough explanation has been presented on how it managed to contribute to influencing government policy towards the left. Tax revenue from local communities and also state contributions to them were increased, which directly benefited social policy. Open unemployment was reduced from 6.5% to under 4%. In tax policy, the worst cuts to the detriment of wage earners could be eased. Thanks to an amended equality law, more will be done to consistently implement greater wage equity for women. Foreign development aid was increased and should amount to 1% of the GNP in 2004.

Particular problem areas were assessed in the budget process itself and in delayed information through the finance ministry, as well as in certain forms of co-operation. This had a negative effect on both the possibilities of exercising influence as well as on the Left Party's inner-party democratic process. (www.vansterpartiet.se/viriksdag/6898.cs)

¹ In questions of environmental, foreign, security and foreign development aid policy the positions of the Left Party and the Environmental Party are in general agreement.

The Left Party's 2002 electoral programme estimates that a new left majority would have to realise considerably more radical policies than before.

4. 2. The Influence of the Green Party

In their success in co-operation with the Social Democratic government, the Environmental Party The Greens point to taxation changes and increased budget items for environmental protection, increases in foreign development aid and experiments with a free year for wage earners if unemployed persons are hired, a lowering of the VAT for books and stronger measures against various kinds of social discrimination. They claim that an active debate has been conducted on questions regarding the future.

Measured by the number of mandates in the Riskdag, the party has achieved a great deal in debates and in the decision-making process. Of course, they also state that they had hoped for more. (Miljöpartiet de Gröna – Tre år av grönt samarbete med rött – klara gröna framgångar! www.mp.se)

4.3. The New Situation after the Elections of September 2002

After the election of September 2002, the Left Party and the Environmental Party are once again working together with a Social Democratic minority government. In their agreement "121 points for a more secure, just and green Sweden" of 4 October 2002 they declare: "We want to work together in a distinct policy for a green, equal Folkhem in which sustainable growth, full employment and secure welfare are driven forward by technical development, modern reorganisation and increasingly smaller social gaps". (Hundratjugoen punkter för ett tryggare, rättvisare och grönare Sverige, 4 oktober 2002, www.regeringen.se)

The "Folkhem", a specifically Swedish term for the welfare state model developed beginning in the 1930s, is still being kept on as a tradition, above all in a socio-psychological sense, under the worsening general conditions.

The Left Party estimates that large portions of its electoral manifesto and further developed forms of co-operation are included in the agreement. Thus it is possible to increase the party's influence and impact on policy. The Greens had been particularly concerned with a strengthening of the railroads, reductions in the military budget and a reexamination of co-operative forms after two years.

4.4. The New Agreement on Cooperation

Among other things, this **agreement on co-operation** includes:

- achieving an 80% rate of employment by 2004
- prioritising the permanent financing of the public sector
- changing the taxation system for increasingly ecological behaviour
- a separate, very concrete socio-political reform programme until 2004 provided that the economic conditions are conducive
- if no tax reductions are possible, then wage earners and small businesses will be given priority
- reducing defence expenditures
- establishing a national plan of action for the elimination of gender-discriminating wage differences

- solving Sweden's serious environmental problems within this generation
- an active contribution to sustainable global development
- the establishment of a national centre for the promotion of products and services in the field of environmental technology and for exports in this area
- further improvements for parental leave, both in regard to length and financial support
- more teachers and additional personnel for schools and preschools
- the improvement of the situation of poor children in Sweden
- the improvement of the care and nursing situation; hospitals must no longer be handed over to profit-oriented private companies
- the humanisation of the entire world of work with a strong input from the workers themselves, the reduction of stress, workplace hassles, psychological wear and tear and early invalidity
- a 50% reduction of sick days by 2008 (ibid.)

4.5. New Fields and Forms of Cooperation

Foreign, defence, security and EU policy continue to be excluded from the co-operation to the extent that they do not touch on budget-relevant questions or questions of the agreed on areas

The forms of co-operation have been expanded. Monthly consultations among the leaders of the three participating parties are to take place. The supporting parties each receive a co-ordination bureau in the finance ministry, to which study resources are accessible. The Environmental Party The Greens are to send political experts to the environmental, economic and agricultural ministries, and the Left Party is to send the corresponding representatives to the finance ministry and additional departments in the areas of co-operation.

Joint working groups will be appointed for, among other things, strategic questions, administration and state owned companies. Finally, after two years a joint working group should evaluate the forms of co-operation, put forward recommendations for change and present them to the party chairpersons for discussion. Then a decision can be made on whether to continue the co-operation in the fixed forms, to begin coalition negotiations, or else to terminate the co-operation.

4.6. The Political Orientation of the Left Party

In the Left Party's practical work, employment and labour market policy, as well as policies to humanise gainful employment, are given great attention. This focus is based on the assumption that the labour market reflects power relations within society and that a reduction in unemployment is particularly important for individual unemployed persons, currently employed persons and for social power relations in general.

The party views its focal points in the reduction of unemployment, in reducing the great regional differences in the country, in reducing high part-time employment, and in improving the situation of older and poorly educated persons, as well as that of immigrants.

In parliamentary work, for example, concrete suggestions are being put forward in regard to presenting consequence analyses on the effects of political decisions on employment and living situations in the country's various regions. The government is to examine conditions

for promoting regional employment development and increasingly self-determined lifestyles through the stimulation and support of local and regional producers' funds.

Many initiatives, concrete realisation and finance recommendations have been put forward for the *gradual reduction of weekly working hours to 35 hours* by law (along with the respective concretising agreements with labour market organisations). Like the reduction of overtime and greater influence by the employees in the arrangement of working times, shorter working hours with no loss of pay and an increased employment effect are possible through increases in productivity and should be financed by a reduction of workers' contributions, i.e. by the state budget. The reduction of overtime work should be stimulated by a progressive employers' contribution in relation to the volume of overtime hours worked within the respective company. In the long term, the suggested measures will also bring about a series of positive economic effects. The Left Party could not assert its recommendation in the negotiations with the government in late 2000, but it is still holding on to a 6-hour work day without a loss in pay.

Facing the EU-conforming changes in the government's labour market policy, the Left Party has positioned itself *against increased extra-contractual employment, the incrimination of and coercive measures towards the unemployed, and the worsening of their financial situation*. It is committed to ensuring that unemployment funds shall again amount to 90% of wage income and that the insurance conditions for temporarily employed persons, many of them women, young people and immigrants, be improved.

The party continually undertakes initiatives to *reduce the wage discrimination of women and other forms of bias in the world of work*. Here, the change of the equal rights law in 2001, the requirement to justify unfounded wage differences in the private economy and the establishment of a 3-year deadline to eliminate gender-discriminating differences have all represented conditions for change. Generally speaking, the party wants to break open the still gender-segregated labour market in order to make progress in equality policy as a whole.

In general, the Left Party sees its employment and labour market policy as part of its overall social approach and, for example, demands that economic policy not be oriented too much on export but rather more strongly on the promotion of small and middle-range businesses and on the domestic market. Thus, among other things, suggestions have been made for a more demand-stimulating taxation and distribution policy and for tax reductions in the service sector.

With concrete initiatives and alternative suggestions, in 1996 the left-wing socialists committed themselves to reversing the rapid deterioration of the legal protection for wage earners and in bringing about improvements.

In practical political work they also point to the fact that unemployment, insecurity and precipitously worsening labour conditions can only be seriously combated through a democratisation of economic power and the struggle against unproductive capital both in Sweden and within an international framework. Concrete recommendations are also being made in regard to this question. All in all, the influence of the trade unions must increase on all levels in order to move ahead in these political areas.

4.7. The Political Orientation of the Greens

The Environmental Party The Greens clearly represent the grassroots elements of a movement and the remnants of an anti-party outlook. They pursue *very concrete demands for the loosening up and democratic renewal of the political system*.

Democracy cannot function without openness and the control of the economic and political authorities by the average person. That is why the Swedish principle of public administration must be defended and expanded, rather than weakened and restricted.

The *active and passive voting age should be generally lowered to 16 years*. In all state investigatory bodies and politically assembled committees and administrations, women and men should be represented in equal proportion by law. Political working forms should be changed in such a way that more people can participate without sacrificing family life and other values. New rules should prevent the *stockpiling of political offices and life-long professional politicking*. Political offices should be given up after three terms at the latest. The protection for old parties via the 4% clause should be abolished. Direct democracy should receive an entirely new status on all levels. From the local to the central level, *decision-making plebiscites should be possible when at least 5% of the respective citizens demand it*. Every change in the constitution should be decided through an obligatory decision-making plebiscite.

All persons living in Sweden, independent of where they were born, should have equal rights and responsibilities. Naturalisation should be possible after three years of residency within the country.

Finally, the Greens assume that “the best conditions for real democracy” lie in widely scattered and responsible property. That is why they want to stimulate companies based on co-operative and direct producer property in a more socially functioning economy.

Appendix

General information on the country

- Area	450,000 square km (fifth largest country in Europe)
- Inhabitants	8.9 million, including 18% first and second generation immigrants
- Inhabitants per square km	approx. 20
- Structure municipalities	Centralised state, 21 provinces, 289 municipalities
- Member of EU	since 1995, not a member of EURO Zone
- GNP	3.8% - 2.1% growth since 1999
- Taxation rate	Approx. 51 % since 2000
- Public expenditures	Approx. 58% of GNP since 1999
- Share of private economic sector	85 % and rising
- Export share in GNP	approx. 40 %
- Employed population	4.3 million
- Employment rate	76 %
- Women aged 16 – 64	70 %
- Men	73 %

Open unemployment in % of labour force as a whole 3,9 %

Persons employed in labour market programmes in % of labour force 3,1 %

Electoral system

Proportional electoral system with equalisation mandates, 4% allocation clause or 12% voting share in a province in order to evade allocation clause, in provincial parliaments: 3 % allocation clause, combined personal election since 1998

Voting rights

Active and passive: on all levels at age 18; voting rights in provincial and local elections for foreigners following three years of registered residency

Results of Swedish Riksdag elections since 1968 (in percentage and the figure of mandates)

Year	M	Fp	C	SAP	V	MP	Kd	Others	Nyd	Turnout
1968	12.9 32	14.3 34	15.7 39	50.1 125	3.0 3			4.0 0		
1970	11.5 44	16.2 58	19.9 71	45.3 163	4.8 17			2.3 0		88.3 %
1973	14.3 51	9.4 34	25.1 90	43.6 156	5.3 19			2.3 0		90.8 %
1976	15.6 55	11.1 39	24.1 86	42.7 152	4.8 17			1.7 0		91.8 %
1979	20.3 73	10.6 38	18.1 64	43.2 154	5.6 20			2.1 0		90.7 %
1982	23.6 86	5.9 21	15.5 56	45.9 166	5.6 20	1.6 0	1.9 0			91.4 %
1985	21.3 76	14.2 51	9.8 43	44.7 159	5.4 19	1.5 0	2.6 0			89.9 %
1988	18.3 66	12.2 44	11.3 42	43.2 156	5.8 21	5.5 20	2.9 0	0.7 0		86.0 %
1991	21.9 80	9.1 33	8.5 31	37.6 138	4.5 16	3.4 0	7.1 26	6.7 25	1.2 0	86.0 %
1994	22.4 80	7.2 26	7.7 27	45.3 161	6.2 22	5.0 18	4.1 15	0.9 0	1.2 0	86.1 %
1998	22.9 82	4.7 17	5.1 18	36.4 131	12.0 43	4.5 16	11.8 42	2.5 0	0.1 0	81.4 %
2002	15.1 55	13.3 48	6.2 22	39.9 144	8.3 30	4.5 17	9.3 33	3.4 0		80.1 %

(First number: voting share in %, second number: number of mandates)

Distribution of Swedish mandates in the European Parliament

	M	Fp	C	Kd	SAP	V	Mp	Turnout
1995	5	1	2	-	7	3	4	41.6 %
1999	5	3	1	2	6	3	2	38.4 %

- C - Centerpartiet – Centre Party (Farmers League until 1957)
 Fp - Folkpartiet Liberalerna – People’s Party of the Liberals
 Kd - Kristdemokraterna – Christian Democratic Party
 M - Moderaterna – Moderate Gathering Party (Right Party until 1969)
 Mp - Miljöpartiet De Gröna – Environmental Party The Greens
 Nyd - Ny Demokrati – New Democracy
 SAP - Socialdemokratiska Arbetarepartiet – Social Democratic Workers’ Party
 V - Vänsterpartiet – Left Party (Communist Party of Sweden until 1967; Left Party Communists until 1979)

Swedish Governments since 1969

Period	Minister President	political composition
1969-1976	Olof Palme (SAP)	SAP (19)
1976-1978	Thorbjörn Fälldin (C)	C (8), M (6), Fp (5), independent (1)
1978-1979	Ola Ullsten (Fp)	Fp (19)
1979-1981	Thorbjörn Fälldin (C)	M (8), C (7), Fp (5)
1981-1982	Thorbjörn Fälldin (C)	C (10), Fp (7), independent (1)
1982-1986	Olof Palme (SAP)	SAP
1986-1991	Ingvar Carlsson (SAP)	SAP (22)
1991-1994	Carl Bildt (M)	M (8), Fp (4), C (4), Kd (3)
1994-1998	I. Carlsson/G. Persson	SAP
1998-2002	G. Persson	SAP
2002-	G. Persson	SAP

Vänsterpartiet (Left Party)

- 13,868 members (December 2001), organised on the local, district and central level
- 280 local associations in which all members of the municipality/town district are organised,
- annual election of leadership,
- all local party groups in a province are gathered together into a district,
- there are 23 districts,

- at annual delegates conferences the district leaderships and their chairpersons are elected, the working plan and budget are passed, suggestions from members and local associations are discussed,
- every other year a party convention takes place as the highest decision-making body with 225 delegates from the local associations. It elects the highest central party organs, including the committee for the preparation of a new programme,
- the Left Party co-operates with others in the New European Left Forum (NELF) and in the United Left within the European Parliament (GUE/NGL). It has 3 representatives in the European Parliament,
- the party chairperson is Gudrun Schyman.

Miljöpartiet De Gröna (Environmental Party The Greens)

- Approx. 6,700 members,
- youth association with nearly 1,200 members
- 24 regional organisations,
- Green Student Association founded in 2002,
- the party has two speakers: Maria Wetterstrand and
Peter Eriksson.