

Erik Moberg ©:

THE SWEDISH LIBERALS LEND SUPPORT TO MY THEORY

My book “*Towards a Science of States: their Evolution and Properties*” contains, among others, “*A theory about democracies of different kinds*” (page 334 ff). One of the kinds is parliamentarism combined with proportional elections, that is the kind of democracy that characterizes in particular quite a number of countries in Western Europe, among them Sweden.

As explained in the book this kind of constitutional order requires, for its proper functioning, political parties which are stable over time and disciplined, in particular with respect to voting in the parliament. Usually the parties also live up to these requirements since the incentives of the party leaderships to form their parties in that way are strong, and usually their means for doing so are effective as well. The system is dependent on lists and these lists are not only controlled by the leaderships but they also severely restrict the possibilities for the individual list members to advance their own sakes. When they agitate, for instance in election campaigns, they, almost by necessity, work for their party, not for themselves.

In Sweden this system was however changed in an interesting way in 1998. It became possible for voters to support some specific member on the list of candidates in their constituency by setting a cross in front of that candidate’s name and thereby enhancing that candidate’s possibilities to get into the parliament. The lists became in that sense open. But that, obviously, also meant that the candidates were given possibilities to agitate for themselves rather than for their parties.

In my book I made this comment (page 346):

“The introduction of open lists in Sweden, making it possible for voters to support specifically individual candidates, is from this point of view interesting. Since this may give some members of the legislature a stronger personal base, and thus make them somewhat less dependent of their party, it may also lead to some loosening of party discipline. Since the majority behind the executive in this kind of system often is quite narrow ... this may be a problem. It is surprising how little this has been discussed in connection with the introduction of open lists.”

Now, in September 2016, the *Liberals* party, since 2014 in opposition, has become hit by an open internal conflict or crisis which clearly illustrates the problem mentioned. It all started when the party leader, *Jan Björklund*, publicly declared that the Swedish government ought to invite the *Sweden Democrats* party, hitherto

held in isolation, to political negotiations, and also that the establishment of new religious free schools should be forbidden. *Birgitta Ohlsson*, a member of the parliament with a strong position within the *Liberals*, protested against both proposals, also publicly, and thereby the crisis was a fact. A number of influential politicians in the party gave their support to *Birgitta Ohlsson*. What is particularly interesting in this context is that Ohlsson's name, in the last elections, was crossed by almost twice as many voters as Björklund's. She has thus a very strong personal platform, which adds to Björklund's problems when trying to uphold the party discipline. So the hypothesis advanced in my theory is supported. The fact that the party now—that is in the latest opinion poll—is supported by only 5.2% of the electorate does not make the party leadership's problems easier.

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