

Chapter 11: The Swedish Transition to Democracy

1. Sweden's Written Constitutional History

The constitutional history is institutionally similar to that of England, although both its history of international entanglements and its evolutionary path differ in many respects from the English case. Although the territory presently governed by Sweden emerged well after England was assembled, the constitutional laws of Sweden are among the oldest in the modern world. As early as 1319, a letter of privilege was signed that bound the crown to govern by rule of law, assured due process, and allowed new taxes to be imposed only after consultation with the Royal Council (Weibull 1993, p. 22); thus, with the election of the young Magnus Eriksson, an early form of constitutional governance was codified with a written agreement.¹²⁴ The essential principles of those early documents were incorporated into a succession of laws of governance that extended to the whole kingdom of Sweden as it emerged in the centuries that followed.¹²⁵ These laws of governance were more than occasionally violated, as was also true of Great Britain's Magna Carta of 1215, but the basic principles of bipolar government endured for the next six centuries. As the case in England, there were often a number of constitutional reforms that played important roles in the evolution of the relationship between the King and the Riksdag. Identifying these reforms, their causes, and their consequences is the main focus on this chapter.

It bears noting that my usage of the term constitution differs somewhat from that used by most Swedish scholars. In Sweden, the term constitution is normally translated as Grundlag (foundational or grounding law). Under that definition, there have been just two constitutions since 1809. The 1809 remained in place until 1975. It essentially specified that Sweden was governed jointly by a king and Riksdag, and provided for royal succession. Under that single grundlag, however, Sweden went from a

substantially unelected parliament with four chambers, to a two chamber parliament elected with wealth weighted voting in 1866, to universal male and female suffrage under proportional representation in 1909-20, to a unicameral parliament in 1970. During this period, the king went from being the dominant figure in Swedish politics to a largely symbolic figure in the decades before the next grundlag was adopted in 1975. By the usage adopted here, the Swedish state may be said to have operated under at least four fundamentally different governmental systems during that period: one written in 1809 with clear medieval antecedents, one that emerged from amendment of the Riksdag Act in 1866, one that emerged from major electoral reforms in 1920, and one generated by merging the two chambers of governance in 1970. For the purposes of this study, it is, of course, the fundamental procedures and constraints of policy making that are regarded as constitutional, rather than particular pieces of parchment that explicitly claim to be constitutional documents.

2. Medieval Sweden

For the medieval period the king of Sweden was chosen by gatherings called for that purpose, Tings. Once elected a king normally retained power until his death, but kings were occasionally dispatched for extreme malfeasance of their duties. As the Swedish territories expanded, the Tings were replaced by more formal gatherings of the four estates: the nobles, burgers, clerics, and peasants (non-noble land owners). In addition, a standing council of state also emerged whose members were normally appointed by the king from the most powerful families in Sweden. During this period the king and council template remained, although control of the central government was also affected by relations with the Hanseatic League and Denmark. The balance of power between king, council, and Riksdag fluctuated somewhat through time, but it seem clear that both the council and Riksdag were relatively important bodies during these early years.

¹²⁴ In 1309, after a twenty-year period of considerable turmoil and mayhem within the council and the royal family, Magnus, son of Duke Erik, was elected at a meeting at which, according to the *Rhymed Chronicle*, "both the commons and privileged estates had assembled . . . to elect a king." Magnus Eriksson was elected King of Sweden at the age of 3. At that time, Sweden was perhaps the largest empire in Europe (Moberg 1970, p. 111).

The early kings of Northern Europe were often elected at formal meetings, which could be considered precursors to parliament. Petersson (1994, p. 6) briefly describes these early collective decision-making bodies. *Tings* (ting, lagting, or althing) combined aspects of modern judicial and legislative branches of government. They were deliberative assemblies that met at regular intervals to settle disputes, pass sentences on law breakers, and elect kings.

¹²⁵ Magnus Erikson promulgated a new code of laws for the entire kingdom in 1350 that included the original language of the 1319 letter of privilege (Kristoffer's code [1442]), which contained the same guarantees of council approval of new taxes, rule of law, and the right of due process (Weibull 1993, p.22).

Robustness of the King and Council

In 1544, there was a significant shift of power to the king when a new succession agreement (arvforening) was accepted by the Riksdag that made the office hereditary. The elimination of the Riksdag's control of succession, clearly reduced its bargaining position within the government, which was further reduced by the Protestant reformation. The Protestant revolution produced large transfers of real estate from the Catholic church to the Crown, which as elsewhere in Northern Europe reduced the need for parliamentary supplements.

The Riksdag regained authority in 1594, at a time when succession rules were ambiguous. At that point, the four estates required future kings to take an oath of office (konungaforsakran) at the time of their succession. A new more restrictive oath was in 1611, under which the new young king Gustav II pledged not to "make laws, declare war or peace or form alliances without the estates and council's consent not to impose any new taxes without first consulting with the council" (Wiebull 1993: 40). The first formal Riksdag Act was adopted in 1617, which affirmed the legal requirement that the King consult the four estates before declaring war or forming alliances. In 1650, the Riksdag secured exclusive authority to pass new laws (Roberts 1986: 4). In 1660, a protocol calling for the routine meeting of Riksdag was adopted, which gave Riksdag a more independent standing.

On the other hand, the royal effort to avoid parliament's veto were many, occasionally violent, and often quite successful. In many cases, the return of policy-making power to the executive branch was often less evident in formal documents, but reflected a new or newly energized king. Often, a king can use existing constitutional procedures to increase his control over public policy.

For example, not every parliament is decisive, especially when it is composed of four chambers. For example, a shift favoring the king took place when Karl XI took office in 1675. After a 15 year regency during which there was considerable evidence of mismanagement and worse by both the 5 regents and the council of state, Karl asked the lower chambers of the Riksdag (the burghers and farmers) to investigate the regents. The lower chambers found against the regents, and directed that all countships, baronies, domains, manors and other estates producing an annual rent of more than 70

per annum should revert to the Crown (the *reduktion*). Karl XI then used the proceeds of land sales and grants to reduce debts and finance his relatively efficient government.

However, constitutional formalities were maintained. The new more efficient Swedish bureaucracy could regulate and interpret the law although it could not adopt new ones. New laws were routinely approved by Riksdag, as were new taxes. During times of war, the Riksdag often gave Karl XI significant temporary authority to impose new taxes for a few years at a time. In 1693, the Riksdag extended this taxing power again for a period of crisis, but this time without an explicit time limit. As wars were commonplace at this time, this transfer of tax authority clearly reduced the bargaining position of the Riksdag. The result was a nearly absolutist system of governance, which was turned over to Karl XI's 15 year old son, Karl XII, who was evidently a less effective manager than his father, and perhaps more of an autocrat. He never called the estates together (Roberts 1986:5). National debts rapidly increased, in spite of the crown's freedom to tax.

The Age of Liberty

The unexpected death of Karl XII in 1719 suddenly reversed the tide toward Swedish absolutism. The council and the Riksdag had the opportunity to select a new monarch and there were two very reasonable possibilities. The absence of a clear heir and the Army's support gave Riksdag the ability to choose the next king, a power which they had not exercised since 1544. Negotiations were undertaken, with constitutional provisions in mind.¹²⁶ As a consequence of the agreement reached, Queen Ulrika Eleonora's oath of office (Accession Charter) included the promise of no taxation without consent, freedom of election, and the right of free speech in the Riksdag (Roberts 1986: 60, nt.9). Most of these privileges had been granted Riksdag in previous times, as noted above--although these powers had largely been negated during the rule of Karl XI and Karl XII. The new constitutional regime was defined jointly by three documents: the new Grundlag (1720), Frederick's Accession Charter (1720), and a new Riksdag Act of (1723).

The new constitution reestablished and strengthened the Riksdag's control over legislation and taxation. In addition to restoring the medieval constitution, there were several new constitutional reforms as well. In former times when some but not all of the four chambers had disagreed with a royal proposal, the king would simply accept

¹²⁶ The Army had declared that it would not take an oath to a king not elected by parliament

the opinion of the chamber closest to his own, as noted above for Karl XI's *reduktion*, which reduced the number and indirectly the strength of the Noble chamber. Under the new constitution, Riksdag would meet three months every three years, and all new laws and taxes required majority approval by three of the four chambers. A "secret committee" composed of 50 nobles, 25 clerics, 25 burghers, and 25 farmers served as the agenda controller for all four of the Riksdag chambers. It had formerly dealt with sensitive foreign policy issues (secrets), but now was given responsibility for developing policy proposals, monitoring the cabinet (council) and the courts. Constitutional amendment would henceforth require the assent of all four chambers.

Most of the members of lower three chambers were generally selected via elections of various kinds, often with quit narrow suffrage, and often indirectly through wealth-weighted voting (Roberts 1986:70). For example the burgher representatives were often appointed by town governments, and, consequently, it was largely composed of burgermeisters (mayors). The farmer representatives were often appointed by local county governments, which were often dominated by large land owners. The clerics were elected by their fellow clerics. All nobles, however, retained the right to participate in their chamber, with the consequence that it was the largest of the four chambers.

However, elections were sufficiently competitive that political parties emerged fairly rapidly in this period (the "hats" and the "caps"), first as coalitions of representatives with shared interests, and then for purposes of national political campaigns.¹²⁷ These affected government policies and the membership of the council of state that governed Sweden during the 33 month periods in which the Riksdag was not in session.

Royal power did not disappear, as is sometimes claimed, but was greatly diminished in importance for the next fifty years. The royal cabinet (council of state) was reinvented as a quasi-representative body. Members of the council could not sit in the Riksdag, but were nominated by Riksdag. Members of the council were selected by King from a short list of candidates, normally three, recommended by the Riksdag. In this manner, for the first time Riksdag gained significant control over the selection of

ministers and other advisors of state. The King served on the council as its president, but had only two votes (out of eighteen) and the ability to settle ties (Roberts 1986: 82, Weibull 1993:53). The council of state was quite important, because it issued rules as necessary when the Riksdag was not in session, which it was not 33 out of every three year cycle. Although their rulings were to be affirmed by the next meeting of Riksdag, this was clearly a difficult task for the committees of the Riksdag (Roberts 1986: 82) Royal control of the executive and the fact that a broad cross section of members of Riksdag held senior positions of one kind or another gave the King some leverage over the Riksdag. It was far from complete, because many of the positions were formally lifetime appointments reserved for nobles alone. On the other hand, many other noble members of the Riksdag were members of the army whose support the Riksdag and King both sought.¹²⁸

The Age of Liberty came to an end shortly after the accession of Gustav III to the crown in 1771, partly because the government had not been able to resolve the fiscal crisis, which many believed required significant institutional reforms. Riksdag met in 1771 to revise institutions but it could not find a lawful method of revising the existing constitutional arrangements. The consent of all four chambers were needed for constitutional amendments, but the lower three chambers insisted on displacing the fourth. Although there were clearly problems, no constitutional gains from trade could be identified for the Riksdag as a whole.

In 1772, with the poorly paid army at his side, Gustav III "suggested" a new constitution that reestablished considerable royal powers, although not an absolutist government as sometimes claimed. Rather, the new constitution reversed the tide of liberalization and again restored the Medieval constitution. Under the new constitution, the estates were no longer self-calling. They would assemble only when called, and the Crown would have complete agenda control, rather than the Secret Committee. However, Riksdag retained its control over taxation and legislation. No new taxes, laws, or wars could take effect without the consent of a majority of the four estates. Thus the Riksdag held the purse; and this guaranteed both of its independence and its frequent use. The cabinet, however, returned to being a royal instrument of governance with the

¹²⁷ In a rough sense, the "hats" could be regarded as English Tories, with French support, and the "caps" could be regarded as English Liberals, with Russian and occasionally English support.

¹²⁸ Karl XI had greatly expanded the nobility by granting titles to senior bureaucrats--in part as a method of saving money on salaries, in part to diminish the landed interests of the present nobility, and in part to increase his control over the house of nobles (Roberts 1986: 74).

Crown regaining complete power of appointment. The Riksdag assembled in mass accepted the new constitution by acclamation with armed troupes assembled outside (Roberts 1986: 206). Governance during the age of liberty with its high debt, inflation, and recent famine had undermined its support. In response to the "coup d'etat" the Stockholm was filled with a "tumult of rejoicing" (Roberts 1986: 204).

Importance of the Age of Liberty

Overall, the Age of Liberty is an important period for the purposes of this paper for several reasons. First, it demonstrates that parliamentary supremacy can emerge quickly and peacefully from a radical shift in the bargaining position of Riksdag vis à vis the king. Second, it demonstrates that such shifts can occur peacefully. led to a half century of parliamentary domination of policy making—from 1719-72, the so-called Age of Freedom. It was during this time (1766) that the first Freedom of the Press Acts were adopted.¹²⁹ Third, it is another period of parliamentary supremacy that is unaccompanied by significant electoral reform. Electoral reform is not always in Riksdag's interest. A Swedish suffrage movement began to gather steam only in 1769, but the estates, if anything were inclined to tighten the requirements for membership in Riksdag (Roberts 1986: 208-10). Fourth, the relatively poor fiscal policies of Riksdag during this period suggest that Riksdag also often has problems controlling its tendencies to spend more than available from the national tax base. National debt fell initially, but rose substantially during late in the "Hat" government, rising tenfold between 1757 and 1762 because of "peacetime extravagance" (Roberts 1986: 19-20). Indeed the problems were so severe that the government lacked the means to pay interest on the national debt or salaries for the Army. Both can generate serious political problems.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Sweden's constitutional reforms were entirely the result of domestic pressures during this period. War and complex alliances occupied much of Sweden's governmental energy and treasure since the Protestant reformation. Indeed, the successor to Fredrik I, who died without heir, was the product of a negotiated exchange. Liberal ideas had begun to percolate between European intellectual and political centers. Swedish interests in a more liberal state clearly combined economic and ideological interests. And although it can be argued that the former were more important than the latter, the bumper crop of political pamphlets

published during the Age of Liberty, itself a consequence of more liberal censorship rules, clearly demonstrate that ideas as well as interests affected policy and constitutional developments. In particular, Locke's theory of legislative supremacy was taken seriously by many (Roberts 1986: 61). However, it was also clear, that the new constitution was not truly revolutionary, but rather adopted minor changes in existing institutions that significantly changed distribution of policy making authority within the king and council template.

3. The 1809 Instrument of Governance

The 1772 constitution imposed by Gustav III remained largely in place for the next 40 years, although the balance of power gradually shifted gradually towards absolutism, it did not return to the nearly polar case of Karl XII. Parliaments were routinely called and passed legislation and tax bills. The tax base was expanded to include Noble estates, which had largely been untaxed, although they had been taxed in kind for military purposes. European entanglements continued to influence Swedish foreign policies and also domestic ones, as had been the case since the Reformation. Royal successions were far from routine as kings died for unexplained reasons, but the other parts of the constitution remained stable for much of the period.

Another succession ambiguity in 1809, which gave the Riksdag another chance to modify the constitution. It designed one that was somewhat between the medieval constitution of 1772, and the more liberal one of 1720. The new constitution clearly took account of the institutional experiments of the Age of Liberty. Accepting the new constitution was, as before, made a condition for gaining the Swedish crown. Thus, in 1810 a new Grundlag (often interpreted as "Instrument of Government," and abbreviated as "IG") was adopted by the Riksdag and approved by the king. This was the grundlag under which Sweden very gradually made its transition from monarchy to parliamentary rule and subsequently to democracy.

The new grundlag affirmed the long-standing king and council template. Policy-making authority was formally divided between the King and a four-chamber Riksdag; the King dominated policy formation and the Riksdag had veto power over some forms of taxation (IG: A4, A57). The Riksdag could meet without being summoned by the King (IG: A.49), and every executive act required the countersignature of the relevant minister (IG: A9, A37). Ordinary legislation required

¹²⁹ *Constitutional Documents of Sweden*, 1996, Introduction, pp. 12 and 56; Weibull (1993), p. 61; Herlitz (1939, p. 22-9).

agreement by the King and majority approval in three of the four chambers (estates) of Riksdag. Constitutional reform required agreement by the King and majority approval in all four estates of Riksdag (IG: A114).¹³⁰ Severe penalties faced anyone who interfered with a member of Riksdag's effort to execute his duties.¹³¹

This time, as shown below, the long-standing template for bipolar governance began a gradual but systematic evolution during the next 150 years. In the end, the Riksdag, rather than the King, came to dominate policy matters and government became based on the principle of popular sovereignty, rather than the proper succession of kings. In this case, neither coup d'etat nor popular revolts were required. Rather, changes in underlying political circumstances led to a series of relatively large, but peaceful changes in the organization of Riksdag that made Riksdag more effective and powerful and that, in the end, completely transformed Swedish governance. In this, the constitutional history of Sweden parallels that of England after 1700 more closely than the revolutionary experiences of France or America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Swedish constitutional history, however, differs from the British experience in that much of the shift in power was accomplished through explicitly constitutional means.

Pressures for constitutional reforms in Sweden are nearly continuous, although periods of major reform after 1809 are concentrated in three periods about 50 years apart. All three of these major episodes of reform increased the power and legitimacy of the Riksdag and, thereby, its control of public policy. The first of these occurred in the 1860s when the ancient four-estate Riksdag was replaced with an elected bicameral one.¹³²

Generally speaking, these constitutional reforms increased the power and legitimacy of the parliamentary leadership. The major changes in the organization of Riksdag were agreed to by both the King and the Riksdag as per the 1809 instrument of

governance. These began in 1866, when the ancient four-estate Riksdag was replaced with a bicameral one.

4. The New Bicameral Riksdag of 1866

New liberal pressures for governance were immediately evident in the the period following the adoption of the 1809 Instrument of Government. For example, the estates themselves were modified as membership in three of the four estates was extended to provide representation for new groups. In the 1820s the clergy estate invited new members from the major universities and from the Swedish Academy of Science; in 1830, the burgher estate added industrialists to their long-standing guild-based membership; in 1845 the farmer's estate was expanded to include owners of tax-exempt land and further expanded in 1863 to middle-class property owners. Other substantial reforms were also adopted. In 1830 the parliamentary debates were made public. In 1842 compulsory education was introduced. In 1846 King Oscar I abolished the guild system by decree. In 1860 a law of religious toleration was passed. Numerous proposals for the reform of the Riksdag were also introduced, including demands for unicameral (1830) and bicameral parliaments (1840 and 1851), with memberships based on elections rather than occupation, but none secured the necessary approval of all four estates.¹³³

Finally, in 1862 Chancellor De Geer proposed a new organization of the Riksdag. The new Riksdag would be composed of two chambers: a first and second chamber. Riksdag was to meet every year on January 15. Although previously the King could call for new elections, members in the new Riksdag were to be elected for fixed terms. Members of the first chamber would have relatively long terms of office (9 years), be relatively wealthy and relatively old (>35 years), and not receive a salary, but live on

¹³⁰ See Verney (1957, ch. 1) for additional details concerning the 1809-10 Instrument of Government.

¹³¹ Anyone, including ministers or other high officials who forcibly interfered with a member of Parliament's efforts to dispatch his duties was deemed guilty of treason. The mandated punishment required that the accused's right hand would be cut off, after which his bones would be broken on the wheel, and he would then be executed. Moreover, the treasonous party's properties were forfeited to the Crown (Verney 1957, p. 23).

¹³² See Verney (1957) for a detailed discussion of all parliamentary reforms during 1809–1930. The discussion here relies extensively on his clear discussion of constitutional details and politics during that period.

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their own means. Membership in the second chamber would be less restricted, more directly elected, and have shorter terms (3 years).

To be adopted, a majority in all four existing chambers plus the King had to favor this radical reorganization of Riksdag. Chancellor De Geer managed to achieve the required level of consensus by proposing an ingenious combination of an expanded franchise for the second chamber and wealth-weighted voting for the first.

The first chamber was designed to protect the interests of the former Burgher and Noble chambers, insofar as it was restricted to men of property. Only the wealthiest men of Sweden were eligible for membership in the first chamber, and they were to be elected indirectly by the provincial councils in a manner roughly analogous to that of the American Senate. The former point guaranteed that the first chamber would consist of the Swedish elite, now defined by wealth, rather than family; and the latter point guaranteed that local interests would be directly considered. The nobility was protected by another striking feature of the 1866 reform: voting weighted by wealth. The wealthiest members of the rural communities received as many as 5,000 votes, whereas those in towns received up to 100 votes in elections for the first chamber. Together, the weighted voting system and wealth requirements assured that a majority of those already in the Noble and Burgher estates would continue to be elected to Riksdag (Verney 1957, p. 89). These general features allowed the proposed reforms to be accepted in the chambers controlled by those two estates.

The interests of groups such as the farmers and early Liberals who favored a more democratic form of governance and a somewhat broader suffrage were also advanced by De Geer's proposal. The interests of the Farmer estate would be advanced by its relatively greater membership in the new Riksdag, especially in the second chamber. Royal prerogatives were reduced, and the Aristocracy was no longer to be privileged by constitutionally guaranteed representation. Elections were to take place every three years (A. 15). Terms in the first chamber were to be nine years, a third of which would stand for election at a time, and those in the second chamber would have three-year terms.

Voting in the indirect elections for first chamber members, although wealth weighted, were largely unrestricted. Voters for the Provincial Councils only had to be tax-paying citizens, which included independent women (Verney 1957, pp. 52 and 91). However, only about 5 percent of the population as a whole actually voted, partly

because, to vote, one had to reveal taxable income and partly because the weighted voting system often allowed local elections to be determined by a handful of wealthy men. In 10 percent of the districts the weighted votes of just three voters could be decisive (Verney 1957, p. 91).

Voter eligibility was somewhat more restricted in the direct elections for members of the second chamber. Voters for the second chamber were males (initially Lutherans) who satisfied taxable real estate or income restrictions that limited the potential electorate to about half that of the first chamber. In essence, eligible voters were successful farmers, bureaucrats, small businessmen, and successful professionals. Ownership of real estate was given preference, inasmuch as De Geer believed that ownership of real estate gave a man a greater stake in the country (Verney 1957, pp. 52-53). To vote, it was sufficient to pay taxes on 1,000 riksdaler of real estate, which was one-eightieth that required for membership in the first chamber. Satisfying the voter income requirement required payment of taxes on 800 riksdaler of income, which was one-fifth that required for membership in the upper house (A. 6 and A 14).

Membership in the second chamber was much less restricted than for the first. Candidates simply had to be older than age 25 and eligible to vote in the local elections. The latter implied that representatives to the second chamber also had to meet minimal wealth constraints (A 19).

The King's agreement was made more likely by the fact that the reorganization of Riksdag did not directly affect his power. The King retained powers of veto and initiative, and laws continued to be published and issued in his name (A. 79, A. 81, A. 82) (see Verney 1957, pp. 52-58. The interests of the Clergy were also accounted for. A new Church Assembly was to be formed in which national church matters would be decided by the Clergy without being subject to veto by the other estates (Verney 1957, p. 64).

In June 1866, after much debate and majority approval in the four chambers of Riksdag, the King signed the new Riksdag Act and the major reforms of Riksdag and election laws advocated by De Geer were adopted. The king ended the last session of the ancient four-chamber Riksdag on June 20. In his remarks, he declared that:

"We end today not only a memorable session, but a whole era in the history of the Swedish people, an era that is measured in centuries."

As a consequence, as Verney notes, “Some of the pomp and ceremony left Swedish life. The heralds and trumpeters appeared for the last time and Ministers ceased to ride in their colorful robes to the State opening of Riksdag.” (Verney 1957, p. 78) Overall, even with all the restrictions on franchise and office, it is clear that the membership of both chambers of the new Riksdag rested on elections, rather than a noble family heritage, appointment by the King, or membership in specific interest groups. These significant parliamentary reforms helped to set in motion a series of future reforms that even more radically transformed Swedish governance.

5. 1907-20: Proportional Representation and the Expanded Franchise

In the last part of the nineteenth century, a variety of political groups inside and outside the governments of industrialized nations were pressing for an expanded suffrage. In this Sweden was no different from many other industrialized nations with parliamentary systems. For the present chapter, it is sufficient to note that both labor unions and liberals inside and outside of government lobbied aggressively for an expanded suffrage and that mass demonstrations were often held by disenfranchised groups. The economic and intellectual origins of these pressures are analyzed below in chapter 4. Parliamentary systems were unable to resist the combined pressures of mass demonstrations and democratic intellectual arguments.

In 1907 the conservative Prime Minister Lindman proposed several additional and important modifications of the voting procedures by which members of Riksdag were selected for the two chambers. These reforms were partly motivated by the apparent necessity of expanding suffrage and partly by the concern of conservatives that an expanded suffrage would end their participation in government. First, the franchise was to be expanded dramatically by reducing the property requirements in a manner that would double the franchise (from 500,000 to 1,000,000). This modification would essentially allow universal male suffrage. Second, the weighted voting system used for selecting members of the first chamber was to be moderated (maximal votes were reduced to 40). Third, proportional representation was adopted to determine the makeup of Riksdag and committees within Riksdag.¹³⁴

As in 1866 the proposals were designed to secure majority support in each of the chambers of Riksdag. Proportional representation was seen as a method for minority

parties (such as the conservatives in the first chamber) to retain some power in the Riksdag after reductions in weighted voting and the expansion of the franchise. The broadened suffrage appealed to Liberals and Farmers in the second chamber, who were divided about proportional representation. (Most liberals favored the continuation of plurality voting in single member districts.) Out of these divisions, Lindman crafted a compromise that allowed for expanded suffrage, but protected, to some extent, the interests of his own supporters within both chambers. His proposal won supermajorities in each chamber. It was passed 93 to 52 in the first chamber and 128 to 98 in the second.

These reforms together set the stage for the dominance of political parties in the years to come. Proportional representation gave party leaders direct power over their members in the legislature by allowing the leadership to control who would be on party lists and thereby who could potentially be in Riksdag. This greatly increased intraparty discipline. The expanded franchise created a new electoral base by which the Social Democrats would shortly come to dominate Swedish politics. (These and other consequences of constitutional reforms are analyzed below in chapter 5.)

In 1918-20, the franchise was further expanded as property restrictions for voting were eliminated and women granted the franchise. Voters still had to be taxpayers of sufficient age, but other restrictions were essentially eliminated. The weighted voting system modified ten years earlier was eliminated, although differences in the electoral method and eligibility for the first chamber remained.¹³⁵ (Members of the first chamber, the “Swedish Senate,” continued to be restricted to the very wealthy until 1933. Persons who were on relief or bankrupt were unable to vote until 1945 (Verney 1957, p. 215.) The resulting more disciplined and more broadly representative bicameral Riksdag became the chief architect of public policy for the next half century.

6. Swedish Interest Groups in the Nineteenth Century

Political histories of modern Sweden emphasize that the internal pressures behind constitutional transformations were generated partly by changes in accepted ideas about proper forms of governance and partly by changes in the relative strength of interest groups. This book largely accepts that conventional analysis, but directs

¹³⁴ The term of office for the first chamber was also reduced from nine to six years.

¹³⁵ The terms of office were also modified in the 1918-20 reforms. Members in the first chamber retained office for 8 years and those in the second chamber for 4 years. (Verney 1957, p. 248.)

attention toward economic conditions, ideological shifts, and constitutional rules that have contributed to and constrained those shifts in political power.

The emergence of new Swedish interest groups in the nineteenth century can largely be explained as a consequence of the same technological changes that generated that century's rapid economic transformation. Economic progress is broadly evident within Sweden during the nineteenth century. Both life spans and population increased as per capita income nearly tripled by the late nineteenth century.¹³⁶ Greater income and wealth clearly provided more resources for individual pursuits, including politics.

Economic opportunities also affect relationships among people and their shared economic interests. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, about three-quarters of the population resided in agricultural districts. By 1910 the agricultural sector accounted for less than half of the Swedish population. In 1850 only about 10 percent of Swedes lived in cities; by 1950 more than half did (Heckscher 1954, pp. 214-15).

Industrialization had indirect effects on the welfare, lifestyles, employment, and location of an overwhelming majority of Swedish citizens. Ordinary work became more impersonal and intense, whereas ordinary life became more urban and prosperous.

Improvements in the equipment used to produce existing products and in the methods for organizing people led to larger scale and more efficient production of goods and services. Increased efficiency also allowed many new products to be brought to market, which were formerly too expensive to be profitably produced. Large-scale production also required the creation of new organizations, such as the corporation, to coordinate the men and women, machinery, and materials that produced those goods and services. Similar organizational methods could be and were used to organize interests not directly tied to production, not all of which are apolitical.

The same organizational methods developed for coordinating large groups of laborers, suppliers, and machinery could be and often were applied to manage other collective activities, some of which had specific political aims. The same reductions in transportation and communication costs that account for many of the economic advantages of urban-based manufacturing and commerce also promote collective action by firms and workers by reducing organizational costs. The concentration of

workers and firms within cities clearly reduced the cost of organizing labor unions and producer cartels. At the same time, technological innovations, such as the train, telegraph, and telephone, reduced the cost of coordinating activities within cities and across the nation as a whole in those industries that remained diffuse, such as iron works and timber.

Both the new industries and the new organization of work, therefore, often created new or at least more obvious common economic interests. *In economic terms, industrialization caused the benefits of many kinds of collective action to rise and their costs to fall.* In many cases, new political ideas and economic interests have reinforced one another. For example, in addition to every union member's economic interest in higher wages and better working conditions, the union movement had its own ideology emphasizing socialism and the solidarity of the working class. Together, ideology and economic interest can account for a good deal of the impact of unions in both private sector negotiations and public sector reforms.

Economic interests provide a clear explanation for the general pattern of unionization observed in nineteenth century Europe and America. Economic developments not only provided labor with common tangible interests, but also provided a practical means of solving the free rider problem. Workers who did not join unions generally received wage and benefit packages that were inferior to those of union members. Free riding could thereby be discouraged and membership encouraged through promises of higher salaries and better working conditions. Yet, the ideas of economic justice and solidarity clearly helped motivate many in the labor movement, which reduced organizational costs.

Moreover, the broad economic and ideological agendas of union activists could clearly be advanced through political means as well as through direct negotiations with employers. Unions soon found it in their interest to lobby for a wide variety of new public policies regarding labor practices and union organization and an expanded suffrage.

The leadership within firms also shared economic and ideological interests. Firms, especially those within an industry, share narrow economic interests in lowering

¹³⁶ Heckscher notes on the one hand that real per capital national income increased nearly threefold in the 1861-1914 period (1954, p. 260). On the other hand, the large-scale emigration that took place during the late nineteenth century suggests that not all Swedes realized increased income, particularly in rural areas of Sweden. Heckscher notes that beginning around 1880 the money wages of farm laborers fell dramatically (p. 258). However, the general increase in the population of Sweden and its longevity suggests significant and widespread prosperity.

production costs, increasing demand and profits. Consequently, firms often organize to share information, promote sales, and reduce competition, such as might be achieved by coordinating purchasing and pricing decisions. Again, the shared economic interests of firms can explain the broad pattern of industrial organizations, especially with respect to trusts and cooperative associations. Access to useful information and the cost savings of monopsony contracts could be largely limited to members in the relevant trusts and cooperatives. Members might also anticipate differential advantages from targeted government programs, such as tax preferences, direct subsidies, trade policies, and provision of complementary government services.¹³⁷

Yet, the broadly shared liberal world view also played a role in both industrial organizational efforts and the policy arena. The liberal view implied that innovation, increased production, and, perhaps, free trade were goods in their own right and socially important engines of progress.¹³⁸ The ability of employer groups to persuade the public or government of the merits of policies that generally improved the returns to economic entrepreneurship and trade and the general enthusiasm of many members of trade associations were clearly enhanced by the broad appeal of liberal arguments inspired by the economic writings of Adam Smith, J. B. Say, Bastiat, and Mill.¹³⁹

The ideas and interests associated with industrialization led to the formation of new political alliances and eventually to the emergence of new political parties at the turn of the century. In Sweden, the Social Democratic party emerged out of the

suffrage and labor movements in 1889. The initially more influential Liberal party was organized in 1899 as a coalition of more or less like-minded members of Riksdag organized over dinner at Tattersall's restaurant.¹⁴⁰ Large-scale economic organizations such as labor's Landsorganisationen (LO) were organized in 1898 partly with the support of the Social Democrats. Industry's employer association Svenska Arbetsgivarföreningen (SAF) was organized 1902 with the encouragement of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. (Heckscher 1954, pp. 136 and 235). Both economic interest groups could clearly expect to profit if their party gained control of government.

7. The Evolutionary Nature of the Swedish Constitution

Until around 1920, most of Swedish political history in the second millennium could be regarded as a struggle between Riksdag and the King for control over policy in which the locus of power shifted back and forth over the centuries.¹⁴¹ Peaks in parliamentary powers were often marked by formal revisions to the instruments of governance, as in 1720 and 1809. The King occasionally regained power through constitutional reform, as in 1789 (Verney 1957, p. 24) and at other times by playing the estates off one another. At such times, the powers of Riksdag were often rather limited, but the basic bipolar template of Riksdag and king remained evident. The flexibility of the "king and council" template,¹⁴² together with the lack of an effective constitutional

¹³⁷ Heckscher (1954) provides evidence of the political success of the Swedish cartels in sugar, milling, and oleomargarine, which were able to obtain significant and profitable protective tariffs in the early twentieth century (p. 263).

¹³⁸ Heckscher (1954), p. 214.

¹³⁹ Heckscher (1954) attributes much of the sudden rise of liberalism in the middle of the nineteenth century to writings by Bastiat and such Swedish liberals as Hans Forssell and J. W. Arnberg. He also notes that the creation of the Nationalekonomiska Föreningen (Economic Society) in 1877 provided a useful forum for liberal businessmen and senior civil servants (p. 263).

Verney (1957, p. 137) notes that J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* was influential among the intellectuals who played a role in forming the Liberal political party and founding of the Verdandi, a student organization for the dissemination of liberal ideas.

The ideological foundations of the Social Democrats and the labor movement were, of course, different from that of the liberals. A good overview of the ideas and norms that seem to have shaped the outlook of moderate socialists is provided in Castles (1978), who analyzes the broad social democratic movement that swept through Europe in the twentieth century.

¹⁴⁰ Verney (1957, pp. 98-99) discusses an earlier and less formal liberal party, the New Liberal Association, organized in 1868 just after the parliamentary reforms were adopted. It was, however, unsuccessful in its legislative aims and disintegrated in the next two years. The Farmer's party was evidently much more successful in its early forms (1867), partly because it was based on membership in the old farmer estate.

¹⁴¹ Sweden as a proper kingdom originated at about the same time that the first constitutional documents were adopted in 1319 (Weibull 1993, p. 18-22). Bellquist (1935, p. 857) provides a concise overview of the emergence of the Riksdag in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that suggests an essentially simultaneous emergence of the early Riksdag and the Swedish kingdom.

¹⁴² Congleton (2001) analyzes the king and council constitutional framework. The analysis demonstrates that this bipolar system of governance allows the gradual transformation of dictatorships and kingdoms into parliamentary democracies as policy making power is gradually shifted between king and council. This pattern is clearly evidenced by Swedish history, but also in many other European

court, left much of the day-to-day structure of governance to the particular personalities, talents, and circumstances confronted by those in government, as stressed by most historians. But, the tradition of formal constitutional law remained evident throughout Swedish history.

The underlying continuity of the long-enduring Swedish constitutional template of 1309 remains evident in the latest instruments of governance ratified in 1975/77. Both the King and Riksdag remain players in the political realm, although the balance of power within the bipolar constitution has essentially reversed itself. The revised instruments of governance continue to assign minor authority to the King (who, for example, presides over special sessions of Riksdag [IG: Ch. 5, A1]) and to characterize rules for succession, but the King's authority has become largely ceremonial and advisory, much as might have been said of the first Parliaments.¹⁴³ It was not until the 1975/77 constitutional reforms, however, that the elected Riksdag became supreme in law as well as in practice.

countries.

¹⁴³ See Verney (1957) and Holmberg and Stjernquest (1996). The power of the prime minister and his relationship to the Parliament, indeed, now resembles more closely the original constellation of power between the medieval kings and their councils than that between the royal family and parliament.