

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND VALUES.**THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY — SOCIALDEMOKRATERNA****TRANSLATION OF MEMBERS' INDUCTION BOOKLET: 'VÅR IDEOLOGI' (2007)****Translator's note —**

The booklet has been translated in full with the exception of a few short marginal extracts from Swedish politicians' speeches, which illustrate ideas in the text but add little to the argument. Nor have I included the further reading list, because it is only in Swedish, and politicians' biographical notes have been omitted (most can be found on the internet). The illustrations are also regrettably not included here.

Translation is never a precise task. Differing language structures, nuances of meaning, idioms and expressions, all lead to the philosopher Karl Popper's observation that "Every good translation is an *interpretation* of the original text ... [and] ... a *precise* translation of a difficult text simply does not exist".¹ The original Swedish text is accessible at —

<http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/webbforalla/s%C3%B6lvesborg/ideologi.pdf>

The booklet was apparently not previously available in English. It is entitled *Vår ideologi* which translates literally as 'our ideology'. But ideology is often understood in ordinary English as conveying a narrower meaning than in the Swedish discussion. The Swedish term *värderingar* (meaning value judgements in this context) is much used in this discussion, which is broader and more concerned with principles and values than the term ideology may suggest to some non-Swedish readers.

Note that Swedish uses the terms 'social democracy' and 'democratic socialism' synonymously here (booklet p 16) although they are sometimes distinguished in English, in which democratic socialism tends to be more sceptical about the possibility of regulating capitalism, while Swedish social democrats are more pragmatic in regulating free market activity while controlling the distribution of wealth created.

All references to social democracy should be taken to refer to Swedish history, understandings and situations and not necessarily to those in other countries or groups from which it differs. References to the Swedish Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokraterna*) as such are given as SD to distinguish them from references to social democracy in general, though many references in the Swedish text could mean either. The Swedish text refers to 'the Liberals' meaning the conservative party (the liberal party has a different name); I have used 'conservatives'.

John Veit-Wilson

Newcastle University, August 2011.

¹ Karl Popper (1982), *Unended Quest. An Intellectual Autobiography*. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, pp 23-24 (emphasis in original).

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| <p style="text-align: center;">THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY — SOCIALDEMOKRATERNA</p> |
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OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES.

Members' education.

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p 2.

Introduction.

The Social Democrats must be a people's party. That means all of us have to take part and develop our ideas about the future. Perhaps the most important thing we can give you as a member of our party is a members' education worthy of the name.

Getting the opportunity to discuss politics and principles in a group strengthens our knowledge about the basis of our ideas, our history and how the party organisation functions. A good induction for members can give you better tools for activities and engagement as a participant — good conditions for active membership of the party.

The party's induction for members is based on this booklet, which aims to give a good general introduction to the party. It has sections on our history, our ideology and our organisation, and it's intended for all interested members, both new ones and those who have been members for some time. The parts can be used in conjunction with each other or separately. They can be used as topics for a study group, a course, a meeting or to be read on one's own. The decision is yours.

There's also a folder for the induction pack to contain any notebooks, local material or other stuff you need for the purpose.

Marita Ulvskog, Party Secretary.

² Pagination as in the booklet is given on the left hand side of the text (p 2. etc).

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FUNDAMENTAL VALUES.

Why are you a social democrat?

That's a question often aimed at those who have recently joined the party. What made him or her become a member?

Must a social democrat agree with the party about everything?

Party members are often held responsible for the whole package of policies. It's assumed that those who are 'in' think the same way the party does and approve of the leader, but as a member you know that the answer may be different. There are dozens of reasons for being a member of the SD. Members can have opinions which differ from the party's about lots of things — the SD is a party open to people with many differing opinions. That encourages a buzz, argument and development.

What unites us is our fundamental values. They are the basis of social democracy.

The equal value of everybody.

A social democrat considers that all humans have equal value. Social democrats aren't the only ones who hold this view. There are many ideologies, movements and regimes which acknowledge something of this kind. The UN *Declaration of Human Rights* expresses it similarly: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

What the idea of the equal value of every human means is that everyone has certain basic rights and responsibilities irrespective of their gender, religion or ethnicity. But on the other hand the idea does not necessarily mean absolute equality in the economic sense. Even if I believe that all humans have equal value, I can still consider the cash benefits employees get in case of sickness, old age or unemployment, should reflect their earnings in work.

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Democracy.

The clearest expression of people's equal value is democracy, universal and equivalent voting rights, freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to organise politically and occupationally. Those who proclaim themselves to be social democrats thereby acknowledge democracy as the expression of the people's inherent ability to rule a country.

Democracy is probably the world's most successful idea in the 20th century. Even if democracy has suffered serious defeats from time to time, it's acquired more and more supporters, and the numbers of those who can make use of their right to vote continues to increase. Democratic values are fundamental for a social democrat.

But of course that isn't something distinctive about social democracy alone. Democratic values are a part of many other ideologies. Since the SD in cooperation with liberals successfully introduced democracy in Sweden, it has become generally accepted by most groups in society. Political struggles are not about democracy as the basis of policy decisions; instead, they are about what democracy means and which decisions we want to take using democratic methods. We are united on the method even if disunited about the issues.

Welfare.

Social democrats understand the equal value of every human as meaning that everyone has a basic right to share in welfare. An individual's economic position must not decisively determine the right to medical treatment. All children have the right to education irrespective of the family's ability to pay the costs. Everyone has the right to a dignified old age, and no one should be excluded from reasonable accommodation. These concrete examples show what social democrats mean by people's equal value in ways which are not embraced by other ideologies.

We've seen too many examples of societies which have collapsed because the inequalities of welfare became too great. It's easy to abandon ideas of human worth when people's differences are too obviously extreme.

Conflict about goals.

Politics, it's often said, is the art of the possible. Conflicting interests frequently have to be jointly negotiated. There may be a variety of opinions even within a party, let alone between them, and some conflicts of interests are resolved by agreements which then threaten other values. Compromise is an essential part of everyday politics.

Those who believe that absolutely equal conditions are the supremely important goal, and who won't accept the slightest differences in pay or living conditions, have to face the consequence that people won't then have the right of free contract with each other. Two parties wouldn't be able to come to an agreement about how to judge the value of a job of work, and that would mean that trade union negotiating rights would be pointless. The conditions to be applied must be in accordance with centrally agreed rules. Pretty well everyone therefore agrees there has to be considerable restriction on both individual and collective freedom.

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Even those who demand a high degree of equality always have to make compromises and adjustments for other political objectives. It's these compromises and adjustments which make up a considerable part of practical politics even when the ideological direction of party policy has been laid down.

Those who make it easy for themselves by not accepting responsibility can of course ignore these conflicts over goals. It's easy to sympathise with those who suffer in society and always to promise more resources — as long as you don't have to explain who will pay. 'More for everybody' is an easy catchphrase but it's seldom productive.

Responsibility.

Accepting responsibility has always gone hand in hand with the SD's successes. Irresponsibility has never bought any support and populism has never filled the cupboard in social democracy. But that has also meant that from time to time the SD has been accused of betraying its principles by not pursuing sufficiently equalising policies but instead accepting large and growing inequalities in society. But the greatest betrayal, for instance of the weakest in society, is by those who don't dare take the difficult decisions. It's only by explaining the compromises between different social objectives that it's possible to defend the groups who are hardest hit.

The ideals which this is based on are best defended through free and open debate. In an advanced democracy with equal opportunity, people are free to take decisions about their lives, to develop freely as individuals, and to seek solutions to collective problems in free association with others.

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THE VALUES OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM.

There's an inherent advantage in having common values in society, and that is that one doesn't constantly have to argue, for instance about the need for democratic elections or whether everyone has certain basic rights. But we have to be on our guard the whole time against those people who want to belittle these values, showing contempt for democracy or suggesting that people of a particular race or religion are worth more than others. Wherever such tendencies spring up the defence of democratic values must be unshakable. That's why we've always got to be ready to defend even what is obvious!

Everyday political disputes can then focus on the real differences between the political parties and be based on their conflicting values. Analysis of these values can start from various political expressions of ideas.

The French Revolution.

The slogan ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’ can be traced back to the French Revolution of 1789. Since then *fraternity* has been supplanted in most contexts by the gender-neutral term *solidarity*. It has become the slogan of the organised working class.

In Sweden there are many trade union and political banners from the end of the 19th century with the words Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood. The early Swedish workers’ movements had a close affinity with the French revolutionaries because they saw it as a justifiable revolt against the ruling, oppressive and undemocratic authorities.

The Swedish SD can trace many of its ideological roots back to what became the French Revolution’s ideological heritage. Let’s therefore examine what we social democrats understand by the three concepts of freedom, equality and solidarity, while at the same time comparing them with other political ideologies.

Freedom.

The word ‘freedom’ is perhaps the most misused of all political concepts. How many injustices have been committed in the name of freedom, how many have died in wars so that, victorious, they could offer freedom to their fellow citizens, and how many have lost their freedom because others have appropriated greater power for themselves?

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Freedom for whom and for what?

“Freedom for whom and for what?” is the question posed by Ernst Wigforss [early 20th century SD politician and theorist]. That’s probably the most intelligent question and the answer is political dynamite.

There are no reasonable grounds for a social democrat to oppose the freedom of the individual; it’s obvious that everybody should be as free as possible. Liberation from the power of others is exactly what democratic socialism aims at. But, first, there are occasions when two people’s freedoms clash with each other. Next, society can gain such welfare advantages through laws and regulations that they outweigh the restrictions on individual freedom they involve. Third, a restriction in the use of one’s own income through taxation can enlarge freedom so much more for other people that the tax is justified. Finally, the debate about freedom also includes opportunities for making use of freedom with others, collective freedom.

The clash of individual freedoms.

Your freedoms and mine can come into conflict in lots of daily situations. If I make use of my home the way I want, it may restrict my neighbour’s freedom. It might block his view or even prevent him from continuing to live there because of noise or bad hygienic conditions. *Whose freedom should count most — my freedom to do whatever I want with my home, or my neighbour’s freedom to continue to live nearby?* Daily conflicts like these generally don’t have political aspects, but we social democrats probably consider that it’s right to protect the weaker party’s right to enjoy their freedom. We want to protect those who find it hardest to assert themselves, for example because they lack economic resources.

The conflict is significantly more politically loaded when it concerns for instance a factory owner’s freedom to release pollutants into a lake, making it impossible for local residents to swim in it. In such situations social democrats are probably more ready to restrict the freedom of the factory owner than (for example) conservatives are.

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Laws and regulations which restrict freedom.

Individual freedom is about people’s ability to take their own decisions about their lives. It’s about the difference between one’s own choices about how one wants to live and the laws and regulations which control our lives. *How far should we be allowed to incur the risks life faces us with, and how far should society set limits on our actions?*

Speed limits are an example. An individual might insist that of course he can drive his car faster. However, road accidents increase at faster speeds. It isn't only oneself one puts at risk by speeding — even passengers have the right to safety on the road. Most of us agree that it's essential to have speed limits even if they do restrict individual freedom.

It's a bit harder to argue for compulsory safety belts. But even here, experience shows clearly that those who wear seat belts run appreciably lower risks of injury or death in traffic accidents. But what right has the state to restrict the individual's freedom to drive without a seat belt? Everyone who drives may not have all the skills needed to do so safely. The state can use regulations to increase knowledge about how to behave appropriately. Of course it's right to add the economic argument as well, that those injured in road accidents put burdens on public health services and thus our collective resources.

Swedish alcohol policy often raises similar arguments. Is it an individual's own responsibility and freedom to drink alcohol? Must the majority suffer restrictions just because a small number can't manage their alcohol consumption? But up to now solidarity with the most excluded individuals has carried the most weight. Knowledge about the damage alcohol causes has become more widespread as greater availability and lower prices have driven alcohol policy.

As far as restrictions on the right of individuals to determine their own lives are concerned, there's a dividing line between social democrats and conservatives. At the rhetorical level conservatives are far readier to emphasise individuals' right to determine their own lives, but in practice the difference is much less noticeable. Nevertheless, the political right (especially the Christian Democrats) contains many who go extraordinarily far in deciding what other people should do with their lives, when they moralise about some kinds of behaviour, and when they are intolerant of groups following alternative and unconventional lifestyles, of households who don't observe ordinary family patterns, and of people with different religious beliefs from the usual ones.

Freedom and taxation.

We social democrats maintain that taxation is one of the ways of increasing the freedoms of a great many people. We must never forget what taxes are used for. Financing a range of activities by means of taxation ensures that *everyone* can have an education, be cared for according to need and have access to services and security through tax-funded provisions. That enlarges a lot of people's freedoms.

Conservatives insist that taxes reduce individual people's freedom, and that's why they see lower taxation as an end in itself. They often say that if taxes were lower then benefits need not be so high, but in fact it's not the same individual who both gains from lower taxes and who depends on various kinds of benefit.

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People who have comfortable incomes would of course gain from lower taxation. He or she would have more opportunity to take holidays or change cars more frequently. But as a result, people with fewer resources might lose their chance of medical treatment, which increasingly has to be paid for privately and not from taxation. That's a considerable reduction in freedom for those who don't have freedom of choice and for whom medical care is literally a matter of life or death. For most people, tax-funded services mean their security is significantly greater and thus their freedom as well — the fear of all sorts of illnesses won't necessarily also have to mean an economic catastrophe. What this is all about is whose freedom is the more important — the well-off who can afford to pay taxes or those who depend on society's support in such a variety of ways?

The SD has never hesitated to use higher taxation to pay for comprehensive welfare. That's strengthened people's security in numerous ways and thus ensured that many have had greater freedom to choose their own ways of life for themselves.

Freedom and choice.

Social democrats naturally consider the individual's freedom to manage the pattern of his or her own life is important. But we have to consider what freedom people have to make use of their freedom. The poor beggars on Calcutta's [Kolkata's] streets have little chance of using their freedom of choice. Those who have security, in the face of old age for example, also can also better enjoy the

freedom they have. Restrictions on people's freedom must not become socially sanctioned moralism, nor a recognition of the ruling classes' right to impose their values on others around them. Social democratic principles presuppose freedom of behavioural choice.

Conservatives often insist that freedom has nothing to do with individual welfare — freedom is the capacity to hold one's own beliefs and no public authority has the right to take decisions about oneself. From their perspective freedom is therefore just as great for poor people as it is for rich ones. But that's actually a paradox, because conservatives put such emphasis on rich people's freedom being restricted by taxation.

Social democracy sees it differently. We social democrats emphasise that freedom is tied up with the opportunities for exercising one's freedom. Freedom is meaningless if it can't be put to use. For social democrats freedom must be combined with something. People who can enjoy some degree of wellbeing first can only then have opportunities for freedom. Those who can get an education, who have the right to medical care, who can safely face old age and who have their daily needs secured, can experience freedom. Social democracy insists on the importance of having freedom of thought to express one's opinions and freely to develop one's ideas, but it's also important to have opportunities to provide for oneself. To feel secure is an essential part of freedom.

Individual and collective freedom.

Freedom may refer to individual freedom, but freedom also concerns the individual's right to join together with others so that the group can contribute to creating a greater freedom for the individual.

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Conservatives generally place most weight on individual freedom: it's the individual who is the bearer of freedom. By 'individual' they also mean businesses. But by contrast they see the group as a threat to individual freedom.

For social democrats the freedom to join others and make a difference together, to pursue activities and take joint decisions, is equally important. Just as the individual must have considerable freedom so the group must equally have freedom to take collective decisions on various matters.

This dividing line between conservatism and social democracy leads, for instance, to the consequence that we often have conflicting perspectives on the scope of democracy —

- Conservatives insist that as many economic decisions as possible must be left to the individual, the household or the business enterprise — we social democrats think it's important that political assemblies should be empowered to take decisions on what is for the common good.
- Conservatives want to leave questions of e.g. distribution to be left to what market forces produce — we social democrats want the market to be regulated to a greater extent because it's important that there is a fair distribution of what is produced.
- Conservatives want labour market conditions to be matters only of relations between individual employees and their employers — we social democrats consider that it's important that the employees' trade unions should have a decisive influence.

This difference has become much clearer in recent years. Opportunities for wage-earners to organise themselves occupationally and to assert their rights through trade unions is extremely important for social democrats. It's obviously always been part of wage-earners' freedom that it includes combining and putting forward collective demands, even though that may sometimes restrict the freedom of individuals to put forward their own specific demands and to reach private agreements with their employers. But for social democrats the freedom to combine is just as important as the freedom to make individual decisions.

Individual freedom is emphasised in countries like USA, which is often described as freedom's 'promised land'. This has also meant that in USA labour unions' freedom to organise throughout the entire country has been considerably restricted. Individuals only have the freedom to join labour unions and collectively reach decisions if they conform to the very strict US labour market laws. These lay down, for instance, those situations in which the labour unions have the right to reach

collective agreements with the employers. They provide that at least half of the employees in question must, in a definitive vote, demand collective bargaining, or the entire labour union activity in a business is unlawful. To protect the freedom of the market they have thus imposed detailed restrictions on the right to combine.

Equality.

People are different, and therefore our opponents often maintain the struggle for equality is futile. But it isn't only our political opponents who commonly and mistakenly assume that equality means similarity. The assumption is completely wrong.

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Equality means we cherish everyone's capabilities equally well, so that everyone has opportunities for their aspirations and the outcome of our efforts is distributed fairly.

Equality is not the same as similarity, so we recognise everyone's right to be different. Equality can be combined with freedom to have one's own opinions, one's lifestyle and to arrange one's life the way one wants it. One way isn't better than another.

But striving for equality also means wanting to iron out the big differences in the circumstances in which people live their lives. It means striving for greater equality of incomes and the necessary conditions in which one can achieve one's goals and dreams in life.

Equal start or equal outcomes.

Even conservatives often assert they stand for fairness and equality. But there's a classic distinction between the meanings of equality which conservatives want and those which social democrats struggle for. *Should equality be concerned only with the conditions at the start of life or what one achieves as the result of one's life?*

Conservatives generally say life's starting conditions should be equal. Everyone should have good opportunities to realise their aspirations, but then it's up to the individual to realise them. How well we do that depends on our own abilities, our ambitions and good luck. But we can't manage the direction our lives take; two people starting life with equally good opportunities may have very different outcomes at the end. How they used their opportunities is up to each one of them; it's not something society should get involved in.

Social democrats think it's just as important to achieve equal and fair results. It should not only be the starting conditions and opportunities that should be equal; the outcomes of how we have used our chances in life that should be equally fair. We'll argue the reasons for such a system step by step.

First of all, we must set out where we stand on the question of whether individuals should have extremely low levels of living and be deprived of welfare. Social democrats can never accept that anyone should be totally excluded from society or that there are individuals we shouldn't care about. There are many reasons why someone may end up badly in life. We've always got to be looking for the explanations. Welfare applies to everyone — not just to some of us.

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Second, we have to take a position on extremely high incomes. *Should we put up with any degree of high incomes and wealth?* There aren't the same humanitarian reasons for stopping someone from having an extremely large income, and so you might say it's just a matter of congratulating someone who, with care and good luck, has managed to acquire a fortune or who has a large income. But in fact it's not so simple. Making sure that differences between people are reasonable is an end in itself. It makes it easier to hold society together and there's greater solidarity between different sections of society. A society focused on enabling single individuals to achieve extremely high incomes risks creating conflicts between groups, which hardly furthers social efficiency. It's reasonable that economic growth, that's to say increased production, is shared fairly between different groups.

The third reason is that the conditions for equal chances at the start of life depend on what real opportunities different individuals are in fact given. They may be the same in a formal sense, such as

nursery provision, compulsory education and equal opportunities to proceed from primary via secondary school to further or higher education. But we already know that the motivation to study and exam results are closely linked to class background and the actual home situation. Children who grow up in a home where they have to share a bedroom with several siblings have significantly worse opportunities than those who have their own room, access to their parents' many books and facilities to help with their children's schoolwork. That's why it's a basic precondition for talking about equal opportunities that there is some sort of equality in social conditions and thus a fair distribution of economic production.

Income fairness and distributive fairness.

The same reasoning can apply to the question of fairness and equality. Nearly everybody wants a fair society. The question is what we mean by fairness.

A lot of people think that those who earn high incomes should be allowed to keep the fruits of their labours; there's no reason why the state or the local authority should deduct heavy taxes in order to increase fairness in society. The greatest fairness we can have is when we are allowed to keep as large a part of our incomes as possible.

Social democrats by contrast consider it just to distribute what work produces in a fairer way. We think it's reasonable that those who have high incomes should be included in society by paying for more of its collective benefits than those who have lower incomes. That's what's called distributive justice.

Equality and efficiency.

Our opponents often claim that equality hampers the efficient use of resources. They assert that if everyone is equal it blocks creativity and initiative.

But there's no evidence that equal societies are less efficient than more unequal societies. On the contrary, evidence shows that many of the countries with a well-developed public sector, equally distributed wealth and a developed public welfare system, also have high per-capita productivity. There is no scientific evidence that high tax countries have low productivity or lower growth than countries with low taxes. This at least suggests that the degree of equality achieved by many countries has not damaged productivity.

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Solidarity.

To show one's solidarity is an expression we value very positively. Most political movements based on human beings' equal worth and which acknowledge political democratic decision-making generally use solidarity as a positively-loaded concept.

Solidarity and loyalty.

Loyalty may be evaluated positively in the workplace. Those who also see loyalty as a positive political concept probably think along totalitarian lines, for example national socialist movements which are loyal to the nation and the national values.

Loyalty is expressed across unequal social relationships. Solidarity is expressed between equal social relationships.

Solidarity and well-being.

There are however dividing lines between different spheres of use of the concept of solidarity. For a lot of people solidarity with the weak means giving money for philanthropic purposes. That may reflect the best of intentions behind the gifts and build on a deep solidarity.

But philanthropy can never build a solidaristic society. The individual who needs support and help ends up in a hopelessly excluded position if he or she is dependent on philanthropy.

An old person who has a right to a pension and care services naturally has quite different freedoms compared with one who is dependent on the goodwill of their relations and friends. Philanthropy can never give old people any rights but only hopes that the goodwill will last.

A solidaristic society is based on the principle that those who get into difficulties have a range of rights. Social democracy considers that what basically makes for a solidaristic society is precisely the fact that it gives people rights in particular situations.

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Solidarity with whom?

It's often said that we can only show solidarity with those who are closest to us and that solidarity with people in worse circumstances diminishes the further off from us they are. It's easy to show solidarity in the family, one's circle of friends, among colleagues and in a group. It's not so easy to maintain an interest in solidarity with starving people on the other side of the globe, those caught up in a war or who are being oppressed.

There are lots of dividing lines between all the different political ideologies which to a greater or lesser extent treat solidarity as a positive concept..

In the first place, it's a question of whom we are solidaristic with. For conservatives it's often among one's closest circle in which solidarity is shown, the family, a group or among friends. For social democrats the circle is a wider one; we quite simply think that solidarity must include everyone who finds themselves in crisis or need.

Second, it's a question of how solidarity is expressed. For conservatives it's often the donor who stands at the centre and decides as an individual whether or not to be solidaristic, and whose choice of whom to express solidarity with is based solely on their personal ideas. For social democrats it's the recipient's rights which are central. As society changes, we want to give those who suffer problems the right to benefit from society's safety net.

Solidarity from our perspective is a way of describing human sympathy. People who express solidarity do so irrespective of their own interests. Solidaristic relations shouldn't expect to give a quick return to the donor.

There are many opportunities for showing solidarity in working life. The whole point of trade unions depends on the idea that employees show solidarity towards one another because they believe they can achieve more together than by each one on their own. Collective wage policy is a concrete expression of how different groups of employees show solidarity towards each other.

Freedom, equality and solidarity hang together.

Are freedom, equality and solidarity compatible or do they stand in opposition to each other? Is it possible to reconcile these diverse concepts? We see them as woven into a strong and durable ideology — that of democratic socialism.

Freedom and equality each entail the other. Equal citizens can practice freedom without infringing the freedoms of others, and conversely, equal people can't exercise unreasonable power over each other.

It is only those who have the crazy notion that equality presupposes standardisation who insist that it infringes the individual's freedom. If it really were the case that equality meant that everyone had to wear the same clothes, for instance, that would of course restrict personal freedom a lot. But equality is not a matter of standardisation but an expression of everyone's equally valued right to exercise their freedom. Anyone who seriously believes that freedom must apply to everybody thereby accepts that this also assumes a certain degree of equality.

Correspondingly, solidarity is one of the conditions for equality. Obviously solidarity doesn't exclude people's own aspirations for personal development, but it stands in contrast to the egoism which permits the exploitation of others for one's own benefit.

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Solidarity is instead the spirit which unites people and encourages them to work together. It's what enables the strong to desist from using their strength against the weak.

At the same time, it's only the solidarity based on social change which allows everyone to have freedom. The weak become stronger because their rights can never be removed; they become free of dependency on the goodwill of others and independent of arbitrary and capricious individuals.

"That's the way the three values affect each other" wrote Ingvar Karlsson and Anne-Marie Lindgren in their book *What is Social Democracy?*: "Freedom implies equality; equality implies solidarity; and solidarity implies freedom and equality."

[The following quotation is from Olof Palme's speech as SD leader at a party debate 1982. Trans.]

I'm a democratic socialist with pride and pleasure. I became one when I was in India and saw the dreadful poverty in spite of some people's immense wealth; when I travelled around USA and saw in some respects even more humiliating poverty; when I was young and came face to face with the lack of freedom in communism and people's oppression in the communist states; and when I encountered the Nazi concentration camps and saw the records of dead social democrats and trade unionists.

I became one when I grasped that it was the social democrats who broke the ground for democracy in Sweden; when I grasped that it was social democracy which lifted the country out of poverty and unemployment through crisis policies in the 1930s; when I was myself involved in the struggle for the ATP [general occupational pensions scheme] and engaged with the socialist campaigns when ordinary wage-earners were trying to secure their old age. That's what you were involved in, too.

I became one through many years' working with Tage Erlander [former PM and leader of SD], when I learnt what democracy and humanism really were, and with close friends like Willy Brandt, Bruno Kreisky and Trygve Bratteli who risked their lives in the struggle for human values.

But what's more important is that my convictions were strengthened when I looked out at the world, when I saw the wars and the rearmament, the unemployment and the divisions between people.

My convictions are strengthened when in our own country I see the growing injustices, rising unemployment, speculation and cheating going on all around; when I look into the future the right-wingers seem to offer, in which wage-earners become poorer and the rich richer, in which social security becomes more fragile and luxury yachts more numerous, where solidarity is weakened and selfishness given greater strength, where the strong can take what they want and the weak have to make the best of a bad job.

Of course I'm a democratic socialist. I am one with pride in what this democratic socialism has achieved in our country, I'm one who's joyful because I know what important tasks will face us when the conservative government is over. And I'm one with confidence, because people now know what happens to their jobs, their security and their stability when the power of the right takes over.

And I'm also one with a bit of a smile because I know that modern Swedish history is full of worthwhile reforms which you described as nasty socialism. But later on when people have experienced what they actually mean, you fight over who should get the credit for introducing the reforms.

Of course I'm a democratic socialist, like Branting was when he introduced voting rights for all, like Erlander when he developed social security and the occupational pension scheme. It's all about solidarity and mutual consideration for each other.

(Olof Palme (1982) in *PS – Palme himself, Selected texts* [in Swedish])

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VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF OWNERSHIP.

The ideological expression synonymous with social democracy is what we usually call democratic socialism. The workers' movement is part of the socialist movement. But at the same time we distance ourselves from ideologies which identify state power with dictatorship and oppression.

Democratic socialism seeks practical ways of finding the most durable solutions for various social problems. Political opponents try to insist that socialism always involves dictatorship, oppression and suppression of people's human rights. That is not true. Democratic socialism identifies opportunities for human freedom with the right to intervene in social development by political means, at all times observing the rules of democracy. While our political opponents on the right often deny society's right or ability to solve problems by intervening, social democrats believe that such interventions are both possible and desirable. Sometimes socialism is seen as synonymous with nationalisation, i.e. taking companies and activities into social ownership.

Few subjects have led to such heated ideological struggles as ideas about ownership. Examples are Ernst Wigforss's proposal for inheritance tax before the 1928 election, or the idea of employee shareholdings in the 1982 election.

Questions about ownership weren't the leading issue in the development of social democracy. People were much more focused on practicalities, introducing democracy and the 8-hour working day, as well as relieving want and hardship. That didn't stop ownership from being on the agenda; for many, private property rights and the capitalist system were themselves the symbols of humiliation, oppression and injustice. The social ownership of the means of production would, it was believed, prevent that happening. But at the same time everyone understood that simple nationalisation in itself could not ensure that the workers' conditions would improve. The day after nationalisation they would still be using the same machinery, working conditions would not instantly have become better and the chances of better pay based on output would still depend on the scale of production.

It's also become obvious that those countries with socialised economies have very considerable problems. They are centralised and place limits on people's freedom to develop projects and enterprises individually or with others. It's difficult to get a centralised economy to function effectively to satisfy the full range of demand there may be for clothes, furniture, food and other commodities.

Swedish social democrats encountered the problems associated with a centralised economy at a very early stage. In 1918 Gustav Möller wrote that the only reason why people would support the socialist mode of production was if it improved their lives. Of course no one would be in favour of a system which made things worse.

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These observations quickly led the early social democrats to promote their influence and workers' participation in other ways than through socialised production. Once they had won voting rights they could assert their political interests and implement many of their ideas by developing everyone's general welfare. In that way it became possible to unify political freedom with growing equality, taking power over social change as well as the advantages of economic growth in which efficiency and rationalisation were the driving forces. Thus the ideas of democratic socialism became intertwined with the development of the welfare state in which a rising standard of living and security against vulnerable situations were top of the agenda.

But the explosive ideological force of ownership rights has not diminished. We saw that in the 1980s when the employee shareholding scheme was rejected.

Today we see it again quite widely in political argument around the ownership of health care and the sale of social housing. And we are likely to see it in the future when the global economy increasingly allows the owners of the means of production to exercise their power, playing one nation state against another and winning back territory which the workers had largely won during the 20th century.

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Here again, democratic socialism's values are practical ones. *How shall we cope with the worsening conditions which the globalised economy brings with it? What can we do to profit from the efficiencies which accompany increased competition? And what methods should we use to maintain our political goals and policy aims?*

When social democracy won power to carry out its policies once democracy had been introduced, ownership did not play the decisive role. What was of paramount importance was social security in the broadest sense, justice and fairness, and care for people's welfare. The equal society was built within the framework of *folkhemmet*.³

Welfare had to include everybody and should be of such good quality that all social classes would want to make use of it. "Only the best is good enough for the people" was how Gustav Möller put it. The fact that the company director's son met the cleaner's daughter in the same school class had a value in itself. There were positive advantages in the shopkeeper and the agricultural worker finding themselves in adjacent hospital beds when they each needed appendix operations. It was this kind of equality that democratic socialism aimed for. It could be achieved in a free economy but only within a framework of political decisions about the use of what has been produced.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF WELFARE SOCIETY.

In its early years Swedish social democracy abandoned demands for wide-ranging nationalisation and planning as ways to achieve democratic socialism. What replaced them as Swedish social democracy's means of achieving its goals was a regulated market economy and functional socialism. It chose to base its policies on a well-developed welfare society with a large and comprehensive public sector. Social democracy wanted to use the welfare state to shape a society which combined the productive efficiency of the market economy with the public sector's capacity for using political means to bring about a fair distribution of what is produced.

Political means enabled both society and workers to increase their influence over the activities of the economic system. Thus over time demands grew for control of industry's environmental effects, and employees gained rights to participate in management and job security. Political means made it possible to use tax methods to determine what proportion of total output should be used, for example for expanding the school system and social and care services, as well as for pensions, sickness insurance and child benefits. This was the way in which many of these issues were shifted from being consequences of free market operations to being decisions taken by the variety of political assemblies. The scope of political decisions increased and the power of the democratic input was strengthened.

At the same time, political influence was conditional. It was and continues to be essential for economic conditions to enable industry to be competitive internationally, since Sweden is a small country highly dependent on exports. If we are to have high levels of welfare and something to divide between different groups it's essential that industry is efficient and cuts its costs so that it can export much of what it makes. If costs rise too far and foreign demand falls, income from exports will be reduced, which would also result in falling domestic demand, with the risk of setting off a vicious spiral of falling production.

We are thus dependent on an economic system capable of renewing itself, of rationalisation and of producing goods for which there is a market demand. That requires constant development and improvement. Market demands never stand still but are constantly influenced by trends, innovations,

³ Translator's note — *Folkhemmet* is a Swedish expression meaning literally 'the people's home'. It is used as a synonym for a social democratic society for all, chosen to emphasise the image of the family in which all members are equally valued and protected, including step-children and without favouring some children over others. In this it differs from the class-based approach or the typical continental and global academic use of the term 'welfare state' to denote the conservative state's narrower definition of welfare in a hierarchical society. I am indebted to Dr Robert M Page for this explanation.

new research and social changes. If crude market powers were left untouched by political decisions, inequality would become far greater and no one would accept responsibility for people needing security at various stages of life and for the values that cannot be measured in money terms.

Social democracy has the ongoing task of balancing this market-dominated economic system with a politically-responsible public sector in which decisions are taken on the basis of totally different values.

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Social democracy sees the purpose of welfare society being to alter the distribution of resources created by crude market methods. It's a matter of providing for the needs people have at every stage of their lives. Children and young people have their needs for care and education. Families need economic support based precisely on the fact that it costs more for families to have children than not to have them. The justification for family support policies, for instance for child benefit, is thus not just that it goes to some poor and needy families but that it acts as a compensation to families for the extra costs of children. We'll come back to this when we discuss welfare policy more generally below.

The needs to be covered by the public sector have grown. As a result, the proportion of the gross product devoted to taxation has increased. Decisions taken by a range of public assemblies (government, county and local commune) allocated almost half of the gross product to needs which the public sector is designed to cover. But that doesn't mean that public assemblies decide how the money is eventually spent; in fact a large part, almost half of the public sector budget, is returned to households in the form of pensions, benefits and cash support of various kinds. How the money is actually spent is therefore a matter for individuals to decide for themselves.

Another development which took place was that decisions in several fields were switched from market actors to others. Employees won the right to take part in managing their company, partly through formal co-determination rights over production and management decisions, partly by improving the security of employment more through employment protection. But the changes also happened because workers increased their negotiating strength with employers.

Society's responsibility increased in a variety of ways through, for instance, demands for industry to improve the environment, and more decisions were increasingly taken in the public sector. This was no formal nationalisation of companies but, rather, that many of their functions were taken into social management. In ideological terms this was expressed as the concept of functional socialism.

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There are many reasons why activities should be under public management. Fairness is one reason. Social democracy wants to protect everyone's equal right to be involved in an activity. Social care is an example to which this applies. There's a particular value in social care not being carried out to make profits, and that everyone should have access to care by the same system. Public care systems should ensure the highest quality so there's no need for private care: everyone should get their care needs met and the quality of care should not depend on ability to pay. Those too poor to afford to pay for their own care should get all they need, and the rich who could of course afford to pay for their own care should have no reason to choose other care systems.

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VALUES IN THE FUTURE.

Swedish social democracy is more than a century old. It's a child of industrialisation but with values reaching back far further. That may not be especially long from a historical perspective, but it's a very considerable time for a leading political party.

Will the idea of every human's equal worth survive? Ideas of this kind are very widespread. In fact it's only very small groups with elitist notions who don't recognise everyone's equal worth, though threats to this universal fundamental value naturally do exist. A lot of people hold racist opinions which don't ascribe the same value to people from other backgrounds, or who believe that

there are other grounds (e.g. religious or ethnic) for discriminating between people. Threats to human worth can also come from groups who don't grant humans the unique position they have in nature and biology. There are groups who want animals and humans to be treated alike, believing there are no ethical grounds for distinguishing humanity. Because in practice it would be impossible to treat all animals in the same way as we'd like all humans to be treated, such ideas imply — however sympathetic such a thought seems at first glance — an actual threat to humanity.

In spite of all this, there is a significant degree of fellow-feeling between different peoples, and similarly globalisation of the economy is accompanied by more natural connections between different national groups. That can mean greater understanding of and insight into other people's lives and fates. But on the other hand economic globalisation can also be challenged by international political powers capable of taking decisions to deliver a variety of results. Human worth has constantly to be defended. That's why capital punishment is unacceptable.

Democracy's foothold.

Democracy has gained a strong foothold throughout the world. The penetration of democracy during the 20th century was striking and it has marched triumphantly across all continents. But even as recently as the 1970s, large parts of southern Europe and considerable parts of Latin America were still governed by dictatorships, and the whole of eastern Europe led by Russia were not democratised before the 1990s. It's often justifiable to question the strength of democracy in many countries. But even so, democratic elections have been introduced in the majority of countries, with the world's most populous nation, China, as a notable exception.

Many in our own country warn about the crisis of democracy. Fewer people vote in national elections, involvement in party political action is declining and fewer choose to become party members. Extra-parliamentary action is becoming more common, and involvement can find its outlet in local parties or in single-issue movements with which it's easy to identify.

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Democracy must constantly be practised. Getting involved in politics is the only way to create a living democracy. In so many fields business forces want the effects of the market to rule, as against the political forces who want much of production to be driven by political decision. Thus what's called the crisis of democracy means something completely different to those political parties who believe finance should decide everything, compared with social democrats who believe distributive policies are important.

The economic crisis.

Perhaps the crisis of democracy results from the economic crisis, making things worse for western nations, where politics no longer has surpluses to distribute but has for some time actually had to make cuts and thereby impose change for the worse. But it doesn't have to be a permanent crisis, even if it's clear that new times demand new patterns for the parties. If they are to survive for the longer term they must engage with voters using modern methods and a form of politics suited to current conditions. That doesn't mean abandoning the values on which the parties were founded, it just means that they have to be interpreted in ways which today's groups of voters can understand. Democracy doesn't stand still, nor do parties — that's why renewal and modernity are essential for conquering the future with the future's ideas.

Freedom?

What will the concept of freedom look like in the future? How will tomorrow's citizens experience freedom in their daily activities? With greater mobility across frontiers and greater economic globalisation the concept of freedom will naturally acquire a somewhat different meaning. Freedom to travel across frontiers has always stimulated people's longing for mobility. Mobility will certainly become a larger part of life in the future; it will become more common to study, work and live in different countries. That implies a greater openness to other cultures, ideas and ways of managing one's life. It doesn't in the least have to mean that freedom becomes identified with a smaller public sector or lower taxes. Freedom can mean increased opportunities to advance oneself and to take part in the greater availability of chances to study and work.

In a time of mass unemployment, fears have grown that young people may develop subcultures such as choosing to stay unemployed and passively existing in a self-destructive community in which settled work seems unattractive. As far as can be judged, such fears are groundless. If there are any such communities they are very small, and more generally being in work is still commonly valued highly by the youth generation. It's through work that one realises oneself and achieves the freedom which having a job of one's own gives one.

Equality?

Is equality extinct?

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At a time when today's youth are growing up with constant reminders that small but noisy groups can appropriate larger and larger rewards for what they do, when business leaders enrich themselves with fortunes which would have seemed unreal in the past, one may well ask if it's feasible to keep the idea of equality alive. *Is it possible even to suggest we ought to work for a more equal society when large sections of it are actually living completely outside the framework on which an egalitarian distribution is based?*

There's a new individualism in society which emphasises individual development and self-actualisation through one's work and recreational interests. The new individualism mustn't be confused with old-fashioned egotism. We should instead call it solidaristic individualism.

New generations still feel strongly about fairness running beside their growing interest in individual development. Of course the necessary conditions for equality have changed. Open frontiers have made it impossible to pursue independent national policies in all fields. Swedish policies have been greatly influenced by developments in other countries; our conditions are affected by mobile finance capital which crosses frontiers with lightning speed. Companies we used to call Swedish are now mostly transnational in terms of both ownership and activities. Decisions by directors and managers are affected by what's happening in other countries. They justify their higher pay, capital payments and bonuses on the basis of international market comparisons. But these capital payments and bonuses have been criticised and it hasn't always been straightforward for companies to introduce the most flagrant bonus schemes for small elites. There's a growing concern about fairness.

Cuts in the public sector have attracted a lot of criticism because they hit the weakest groups hardest. That shows there is a widespread desire to share some of the total resources out in a fair way. There's also a strong feeling that education, care and social services should be available to everyone on an equal basis.

Solidarity?

Solidarity remains strong in Swedish society. In spite of the trend to growing individualism, there is solidarity with excluded groups. Sympathy with the weak is strongly felt. That means that there is a significant will to pay for a strong public sector. But if it is to remain in being, the public sector must be of high quality and must deliver what it promises, i.e. public sector services must meet high standards of expectation. That's the only way in which welfare services can gain the legitimacy indispensable to justifying solidaristic funding of the entire public sector.

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Constant change but enduring values.

It's hard to find any insuperable objections to the old values which lie at the heart of social democracy. It's completely justifiable to uphold them even in today's society. What is needed is to adapt the means and methods we use to achieve our goals according to our values.

Society is never static. Great changes take place all the time. Changes in technology, economy or policies may make conditions appear completely different from what they were even a decade or two ago. It's often suggested that change is taking place faster now and the speed and scope of change is considerably greater than in previous generations. That's meant that the pace of political decision-taking is also considerably faster. A lot of important policies are decided every decade,

which has made it more difficult to get them firmly embedded and to argue their pros and cons from various perspectives.

Seen this way, the 1990s were very turbulent. Nearly half a million jobs were lost in the economic crisis. The budget deficit necessitated reviewing massive public sector expenditures. The tax system had been eroded, necessitating a large-scale tax reform. Attitudes towards the EU changed making it possible for Sweden, after a referendum, to apply for membership and become a member in 1995. After the fall of the Berlin Wall Sweden's security situation changed drastically, which led to wide-ranging reviews of defence policies. The reviews covered a lot of detail and affected everyone's welfare. It's easy to understand why so many people felt exhausted and dizzy in the face of the jungle of changing policies.

Economic interests were simultaneously being promoted over a broad front. Changing manufacturing conditions meant the interests of capital had a decisive influence on the location of industry. The return on capital, its share of the gross product, was deliberately raised, together with a variety of deregulations and privatisations. Global free trade has advanced in spite of apparent setbacks for those who wanted to expand it even more.

These developments have in many ways been positive, not least for us as consumers. The prices of many goods and services have fallen. There's been a visibly wider selection and many novelties to make life easier have become available. But many people have become more insecure as their lives are characterised by increased uncertainty, and it's no longer the case that 'things are as they always were'. So it's no surprise that this has its effects on people's willingness to engage in politics and on their political allegiances.

What happened in the 1990s did surprise a lot of people. They couldn't foresee the immense changes which took place and the political parties were largely caught dozing. The economic crisis of the 1990s caused great strain for the SD. Essential policy decisions had to be taken without opportunities to explain the principles and reasons lying behind the decisions.

What changes are going to take place in future years which will affect the SD's ability to carry out policies based on the party's values and principles?

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Globalisation.

It's obvious that globalisation has important effects on the scope of national policies. It becomes easier for capital to move production to where it's cheapest. The largest corporations are increasingly building up international networks, making the corporations' national domicile meaningless. It's hardly an exaggeration to say that these corporations become like nations in themselves.

New information technology, IT, helps business to manage production worldwide. Some functions are managed on a 24-hour basis by linking units in different parts of the world. Information transfer is instantaneous, which means that managers and other decision takers have to take decisions with very little lead time. Other modes of communication — by internet, email, mobile phones, television and radio communications — are becoming integrated. The global network makes use of whatever medium suits best and offers the most secure information path.

Globalisation will affect all of us, and much that is positive grows from increased globalisation. For one thing, it's hard to imagine how dictatorships will survive in a world with so many channels of communication. All dictatorships are built on the monopolisation of information and when the conditions for keeping that intact become more difficult if not impossible, one of the cornerstones of dictatorship falls away. Globalisation can also offer efficient means for the division of labour between countries. Each country can increasingly manufacture what it is best at and thus contribute better to collective wellbeing. Third, the technical advances which globalisation is based on allow productivity to increase significantly. Increased productivity is a precondition for higher welfare and ensures that all of us could get more from a given labour input. Fourth, some believe that this creates openings for wage-earners to gain power in their businesses, because it's the employees' skills on which the IT-based businesses depend. But such beliefs run up against the decisive objection that

nowhere are such skills distributed equally, and apart from anything else capital investment is indispensable for manufacture. In other words, capital will always play a crucial role in production.

New technology, global business and rapid communication are sometimes described as the new economy. What's new about the new economy is that technology has affected pretty well all aspects of life and it's important in all sectors and at all levels of working life. It affects the commercial supply of services and to a considerable extent the public sector's ability to satisfy our need for welfare services. It affects our free time, what we do, where and when. It increases the pace of product innovation and can instantly increase productivity very significantly. One could say that IT is the gateway to a new economy in rather different circumstances from industrial and service society — we are quite simply entering a new phase of economic development.

Naturally such development arouses considerable misgivings. First, there's a risk that countries start to compete with each other through the lowest prices and taxes. Welfare policy is threatened if production is heedlessly transferred abroad where it is cheaper simply to avoid paying the costs of welfare.

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Second, wage-earners may be driven to competing for lower pay since those who accept the lowest wage rates get the jobs. Third, even the rate of change may bring increased insecurity, a sense of being the outsider who can't cope or keep up with the changes. Fourth, an uncontrolled and unregulated market economy may bring about environmental damage, especially when third world countries industrialise and increase production.

Social democracy has to set a number of future goals for policy against the possible consequences of the new economy, to enable it to defend its values and make it possible to live in a democratic, free, equal and solidaristic society.

Economic globalisation makes it even more imperative to pursue more active international politics through the UN, the WTO or the EU. What's important is that there are international forums and a genuine readiness to carry out policies which further the values that social democracy stands for. The UN of course has to play a major part, including as a 'defender of the peace' in its important role in offering security to people throughout the world and especially the sovereignty of small states. The UN can additionally actively help to regulate and shape healthy conditions for the new economy. The WTO could also play a valuable part not just through its promotion of free trade arrangements but by also ensuring that they are subject to socially acceptable conditions. The EU has crucial significance in almost all spheres of European policy.

Necessary conditions for social democracy.

Successful national politics based on social democratic values require the following actions to be possible —

- to carry out welfare policies which promote equality and which are collectively financed;
- to give the entire population working conditions which promote the freedom and security needed to manage their own lives;
- to promote ecological sustainability which combines solidarity with future generations and with people in other parts of the world.

The SD has always been international, and international solidarity has always played a leading role in the party's politics. However, there's always been a strong sense of nationhood in the party, pride in our country and the politics which pushed Sweden into the world class during decades of social democratic government. If we can unite international solidarity with national pride, social democracy may once again become a leading power in shaping the renewal of politics, with our own values as the foundation.

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SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND FUTURE QUESTIONS ABOUT PRINCIPLES.

In recent years Swedish party politics has got into difficulty. That's been expressed in less party involvement, fewer party members, more division into several parties, and lower percentages voting. The SD has received far fewer votes in recent elections than previously.

Reconquering the lost territory is not just desirable but very much possible. The arguments about principles and values must be intensified. Previous positions must be reviewed. There's plenty of room for political renewal, and what we have to do is to find a form of social democratic politics which is as modern, accessible and transparent as possible. We need a lot of active party members to carry this out and to be involved in discussions, committees, study groups and other forums where our ideas for the future can be thrashed out.

Future SD debates about ideas will raise a whole host of questions whose answers may determine if our party can continue to be a leading political force in Swedish society. It's a matter of how, by applying our values, we can get to grips with a variety of imbalances —

The global imbalance.

Rich countries become ever richer and poor countries find it ever harder to make ends meet. Civil wars are being fought in several countries, many of them caused by lopsided relations of power, influence and welfare there. It's a considerable challenge for the rich western world to work together towards a more equal distribution of resources between different parts of the world. The potential for free trade between nations without it leading to social dumping is a key factor in development in poorer countries. The SD has an important role to play in international affairs by applying its values to contribute to more equal shares between different parts of the world.

The economic-political imbalance.

The globalisation of the economy, the spread of new technology and the networks which trade and industry develop in large global businesses help to create imbalances between the holders of economic and political power. It's essential to build political institutions at similar international levels so that politics can match the strengths which the large corporations have. Politics is important at the national level but to be really effective it has to find agreement at the international level to regulate relations between nations and codes of conduct for business.

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The environmental imbalance.

If future generations are to enjoy decent lives, each generation must care for nature's bounty. As long as we live beyond the means nature offers and use finite resources carelessly, we force future generations to face serious adjustment problems. The responsibility lies heavily on the richest fifth of the world's population who use the most resources to adjust production and consumption to environmentally sustainable levels. By environmentally sustainable we mean to levels at which more is not taken from nature than is offered. In the long term we have got to live in a permanent cycle of renewable raw materials, energy and recyclable products. The challenge for social democrats is to work for a sustainable environment at local, national and international levels.

The demographic imbalance.

Swedish society, in common with many other European countries, has an ageing population. There are fewer and fewer people of working age to support more and more older people needing care, which places growing demands on care and social services and other welfare provisions. This also strengthens the argument for working in the economy, meaning that as many as possible should take part in work as far as possible and for as long as possible in the most productive way throughout their working lives. It also has to be accepted that this condition greatly affects the chances of achieving highly desirable cuts in working hours. Social democratic values enable us to find reasonable ways through the difficult problems presented by the demographic imbalance.

The regional imbalance.

There's a growing imbalance between the country's regions. Expanding regions attract young people to the colleges and universities, and businesses prosper in those parts of the country which have rapid growth. But in those parts where growth does not take place the population falls and grows older. It will be very hard for sparsely populated areas, villages, communities, smaller built-up areas and towns to live up to people's justified expectations for welfare services. Social democratic values face a major challenge in working for a reasonable regional balance.

The ethnic imbalance.

Many new Swedes who came to this country in recent decades continue to live in the shadow of the welfare system which the older Swedes built up. Many of those born in Sweden of immigrant parents are discriminated against because they bear strange names as their heritage.

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Many immigrants who have university qualifications from their countries of origin find difficulty in entering the Swedish labour market at appropriate levels but get stuck in jobs with low pay and low status. Social democratic values take it for granted to insist on everyone's opportunities to develop on the basis of their own capacities.

The welfare imbalance.

There's an imbalance in the broadest sense of the term between different groups in society. Inequalities in health are manifest between different social groups, where the lower social classes have clearly worse health than the better-placed. Access to recreational opportunities and rewarding occupations distinguish different social groups very considerably. And not least, incomes and wealth are very unequally distributed. It's a priority task for social democracy to insist on the ideal of equality to achieve a greater balance in welfare between groups in the population in future society.

The information imbalance.

New technology demands greater competences, lifelong learning and keeping up with all the changes. That makes for big imbalances between the generations and their ability to adjust to the new conditions presented by technology. The older generation who may have been employed for 20, 25 or 30 years in the same workplace can suddenly be faced by the fact that their skills are no longer required when the business rationalises its activities and there aren't any other similar jobs on offer.

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This generational competence gulf must be bridged. But it's also a matter of equipping younger people with the competences to manage their changing working lives flexibly. An important social democratic task is to improve everyone's skills to enable them to get on in life and to take decently-paid jobs so that they can look after their own needs — Sweden won't compete in future world markets through lower pay but through better knowledge and skills.

Renewal.

Social democratic policies must be renewed if they are to solve the problems created by inequalities and imbalances. That must not become just a matter of passively reflecting short-lived opinions but a genuine renewal of policies to solve today's problems. Merely following current opinion is like dead fish flowing with the stream. Social democracy has firm and unshakable values which are just as valid in society today. They are the foundations on which its policies can be renewed.

The political power needed to take part in shaping society in the future must first analyse society's principal problems and opportunities to reveal how the problems can be solved and opportunities exploited. Throughout the 20th century Swedish social democracy has shown a unique capacity for applying its own values to meet future needs and solve current problems. That tradition will similarly guide the SD to a leading position in Swedish political life in the future.

Renewal is sometimes made to sound as if it means abandoning our fundamental principles. In fact political change may be required by changing conditions or previous needs which no longer have to be met, or when negative policy effects exceed positive ones or methods no longer suit the current situation. In other words the principles don't have to change just because practical policies have changed in some ways.

Social democracy has always supported reform and been positive about technical and future-driven change. This optimism has been called into question in recent decades. Many have seen disadvantages in technical developments, been apprehensive about change and have wanted to set limits on its effects. We believe it's important to restore self-confidence and push development in the right direction. There are so many unsolved human problems which can only be solved by technology and by progress in research. The opportunities are immeasurably greater than the difficulties.

We social democrats naturally insist that the policies we want to implement are based on a solid foundation of ideas. That's why it's essential that these questions are debated on the basis of our principles and values, and that we weigh up the pros and cons of different political positions against the background of this ideology.

“If you have great needs but can't afford to pay for them, don't worry, because it's the needs which count and we fund services collectively. We don't investigate you and means-test your resources in order to decide if you need care, social services or education — you have a right to them irrespective of your personal situation!

But then you've got to contribute towards funding them according to the resources you have. Some can contribute more and pay higher taxes, others less. But all must contribute according to their ability.”

(Göran Persson, Social Democratic Prime Minister of Sweden 1996-2006, speech at Swedish Local Authority Congress 1998.)
