

## SWEDEN

Date of Elections: September 15, 1968

### Characteristics of Parliament

Until the constitutional reform adopted in May 1968 \* comes into force in 1971, the Swedish *Riksdag* will continue to comprise 2 Chambers.

— The First Chamber, or Senate, has 151 members elected for an 8-year term by certain communal assemblies, an eighth of whom are renewed in October each year.

— The Second Chamber, or Chamber of Deputies, consists of 233 members elected for 4 years by direct suffrage.

On September 15, the electorate went to the polls to vote for the entire Lower House, which had come to the end of its legislature.

### Electoral System

All Swedish citizens of both sexes, at least 20 years old, are entitled to vote. They must moreover be resident in Sweden; exceptionally, Swedish citizens who are not legally domiciled in the country may however request permission to vote if they can prove that they have been resident there during the 5 years preceding the elections. The electoral rolls are brought up to date each year.

For election to the Chamber of Deputies, voters must be at least 23 years of age and must not have been deprived of their civil rights. Persons who have been convicted of fraudulent bankruptcy or electoral crimes (corruption) are not eligible.

\* See *Parliamentary Developments in the World*, p. 21.

Deputies are elected in 28 constituencies under the party-list system, without preferential vote or vote-splitting. Political parties are not allowed to form alliances.

Seats are distributed by proportional representation in each constituency according to the d'Hondt method and using the following divisors: **1.4, 3, 5, 7**, etc.

### **General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

The major unknown factor in these elections was whether the Social Democrat Party, which had been in power since 1932, would succumb to the twofold influence of political atrophy and the combined attack launched by its opponents on the Right and in the Centre. In the previous elections in 1964, the party had lost a considerable number of votes and, as the Norwegian and Danish electorates had since revealed a tendency to move away from Socialism, there was a good chance that the same phenomenon would occur in Sweden.

The electoral campaign brought to the fore a housing crisis, a threat of unemployment and problems in tax policy; the basic theme, however, was whether or not a change of Government was needed. The moderate Liberal and Centre parties had reached agreement on a programme for change which the right-wing Conservative Party partly supported, without giving it full and official backing. These three political groups sought to give the impression of being in a position to govern the country together; however, their coalition seemed to lack real coherence and did not succeed in gaining the confidence of the electorate. The voters no doubt chose to leave the Government in the hands of the experienced party, whose record offered a comparative guarantee of security despite the problems of the moment, rather than take a chance with an excessively ill-assorted team. Finally, one must mention the intensive effort made by the reigning party, which mobilized all its supporters as well as the trade unions and managed to get the abstainers, whose votes they had so sorely missed in 1964, to go to the polls. It changed its

programme, and adopted a more dynamic and youth-orientated style.

The Social Democrats, who obtained an absolute majority of votes (50.1 per cent — a gain of 2.7 per cent) and of seats in Parliament (125 — a gain of 12 seats), won their greatest victory since 1940. This phenomenon was accompanied by a fall in the number of votes and seats of the Communist Party which lost 5 deputies and and 76,000 votes, representing a drop from 5.2 to 3 per cent. It was generally acknowledged that this was the price it had to pay for recent events in Czechoslovakia despite the reservations expressed by Swedish Communist leaders with regard to the military intervention there.

There was a significant change in the Centre. Along with 9 of its seats and 3.5 per cent of the votes, the Liberal Party lost its position as leader of the so-called "bourgeois" opposition to the Centre Party, which won 3 extra seats and improved its percentage of the votes from 13.2 to 16.1. This, then, marked the transformation of a group formed by the merger of two agrarian parties into a vigorous national party. The projection of this new image is largely the work of the leader of the Centre Party, Mr. Gunnar Hedlund, whose combination of joviality and extensive political experience won over the urban voters. As for the Conservatives, their position remained largely unchanged. Although their 88,000 votes reflected a slight gain of 0.2 per cent, they lost a seat. Finally, the Christian Democratic Union did not obtain any seats and its votes dropped from 1.8 to 1.5 per cent.

An interesting point in the 1968 elections was the extremely high participation in the poll (89.3 per cent). Voting by correspondence was also very high — representing 5.2 per cent of the votes cast — and strongly in favour of the Conservative and Liberal Parties which thereby won 4 and 11 seats respectively.

Elections for the future 350-strong unicameral Parliament will be held in September 1970. Mr. Tage Erlander, the Socialist Prime Minister, has made it known that he intends to retire from the political scene before this date. Among the moderates, there is

some talk of a fusion of the Liberal and Centre Parties which are aimed at very similar segments of the electorate. Mr. Hedlund, however, is against any such move for the moment. There is no doubt that a merger of this kind would accentuate the current isolation of the Conservative Party. Aware of this situation, the Conservatives are endeavouring to move closer to the Centre although, if the latter governs the kingdom one day, it may well do so with the votes but not with the ideas of the Right.

## Statistics

### 1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Chamber of Deputies*

Number of registered electors . . . . .	5,445,333
Voters . . . . .	4,861,901 (89.3 %)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	32,522
Valid votes . . . . .	4,829,379

Political Group	Votes obtained		Number of Seats in the Chamber of Deputies
Social Democrat Party. . . . .	2,420,242	50.1	125 (+12)
Centre Party. . . . .	779,818	16.1	39 (+ 4)
Liberal Party. . . . .	724,899	15.0	34 (— 9)
Conservative Party. . . . .	670,478	13.9	32 (— 1)
Communist Party. . . . .	145,172	3.0	3 (— 5)
Christian Democratic Union. . . . .	72,411	1.5	
Others. . . . .	16,359	0.4	— (— 1)

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2. *Distribution of Seats in the Two Chambers among the Parliamentary Groups*

	Senate	Chamber of Deputies
Social Democrat Party. . . . .	79	125
Centre Party. . . . .	20	<b>39</b>
Liberal Party. . . . .	26	34
Conservative Party. . . . .	25	32
Communist Party. . . . .	1	3
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	<b>151</b>	233

3. *Distribution of Parliamentarians in the Two Chambers according to Professional Category*

Cadres. . . . .	64
Civil Servants and Employees. . . . .	148
Ministers. . . . .	15
Owners and Managers. . . . .	<b>114</b>
Unemployed Women. . . . .	11
Workers. . . . .	32
	<b>384</b>

4. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Sex*

	Senate	Chamber of Deputies
Men. . . . .	<b>134</b>	197
Women. . . . .	<b>17</b>	36
	<b>151</b>	233

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