



Text of a speech by

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Extra Congress,  
Stockholm 18 March 2007

The Social Democratic Party of Sweden | STOCKHOLM

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

**We must both defend security and have the desire to embrace adventure!**

Party comrades!

Yesterday we expressed our gratitude to those who should be thanked – what a fantastic day! We were dancing, at least I was, too much – what a fantastic night!

But now it is time to talk about the future.

This very second, wow – what I have been waiting for it. Now I hope you will stand listening to me for a while.

118 years – that’s the span of our party’s long and proud history as we all know.

I now stand here feeling a bit shaky – the seventh party leader to be elected by congress and the seventh female party leader in the Socialist International – we are not more than that.

For the first time in history you have elected a woman as party leader. I now understand how strong this wish was among many party members.

I am proud, of course, as I said, to be the first woman to take on this role. So straighten your backs all you women in the Labour movement, this is about all of you too.

I was 25 when I was elected as the youngest Member of Parliament at that time. It was a bit nerve-racking when I entered the chamber for the first time and got myself thrown out because I was wearing jeans. Those were the days. But my opposite in many ways soon came to be an important and special friend – his name was Gunnar Sträng<sup>1</sup>, the oldest Member of Parliament those days. I was pleased having someone to talk to who had such a long experience of the party and of politics.

Today I am not quite one of the youngest, and I don’t need to feel that I am alone in that role

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<sup>1</sup> Minister of Finance 1955 – 1976

either. Its enough just to gaze over this room and see that there are many with experience, and that provides a sense of security.

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We were talking a lot, Gunnar Sträng and I. For me it felt a bit like travelling around in a Sweden I had no experience of. A conversation about a Sweden as it once had been and a conversation about what it could one day become.

We talked a lot about the future. About how important it is to keep the political vision burning – about the sort of society we really wanted our children and grandchildren to experience and live in. But we also talked about a sort of fear for the new things to come, a fear many experienced in those days.

But Gunnar was solid and had, as you all know, an unshakable faith in the future. He said that if we just remain faithful to our ideals – solidarity, freedom and justice – then we never needed to be afraid of the new to come.

Gunnar Sträng loved talking about his encounters – that is something I am sure all of you who met him know: All the meetings all over the country, cycling, walking, and later by car –workers, women and men, people living in towns as well as in the countryside. The Sweden of popular movements – but above all of them - the trade unions.

Today the trade union movement, and with them wage earners and the whole labour movement, is under a very strong and united attack from the right, stronger than we have seen in a long time.

The Moderate governed government, is at present carrying through dramatic changes for the worse in the labour market.

They are doing it quickly and shoddily.  
Without listening to the warnings of the unions.  
Without listening to the worries expressed by the public.

The Moderates claim that they love collective agreements, at the same time as they are to weaken the unions.  
Those two things could never go hand in hand – not even in this case.

The Labour movement consists of the trade unions and the party.  
Today we need one another more than ever before.

We must take on the fight now, just as Gunnar Sträng did, just as we have had to so many times before, and we will do it together. Side by side. The party and the LO. Local party associations and local trade union clubs. Wanja<sup>2</sup>, and I. Wanja whom I appreciate very much.

Yesterday, when we gathered in Sergel Square at the LO demonstration for collective agreements, we felt it, both of us: We have a massive support!

Now, we need to get in there as well as to stay in there. And that we will do. Because we realise only too well: Collective agreements and a strong trade union movement – they belong together.

Side by side will fight together, won't we?

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What is the foundation for Social Democracy?

It can be described in many different ways.

For me it is a question of freedom more than anything else.

“Arise slave and break free.”

The Social Democratic movement has always been a liberation movement. The struggle for everyone's right to work is essential. Because no person is so fettered as the person who has no gainful employment of their own, who cannot do something of value, not feel needed.

Work for all – but on sensible conditions of work, wages and security.

Our history is full of struggles for the freedom of individuals.

For the right to vote and for the freedom of speech.

For the right to have influence and for the right to organise.

For housing with light, and water, and an indoor toilet, for the right to keep healthy.

For shorter working hours and holidays, so that life would give you time for the children, friends and the family.

For decent pensions for all.

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<sup>2</sup> Wanja Lundby-Wedin, president of LO.

That struggle for freedom is not over yet. Our time have new restrictions on freedom.

People long for freedom today as they did in the past.

We mustn't let the right take over the concept of freedom.

What they talk about is their all too limited version of freedom of *choice* – or the limited freedom to make tax deductions.

We must talk about real freedom.

Freedom is all about making your own choices in life and running your own life:  
It is about having the opportunity to study and swot even if your parents never did so:

It is about getting the another chance and another after that – having the right to fail without being counted out;

It is about having the right to challenge norms and creating your own – and winning respect for that;

It is about being able to choose a terraced house, a husband and children as I have done – or marrying someone of the same sex, as Elisabeth and Minna have done.

Freedom as in possibilities, openness and respect.

Freedom as in control over your own life.

Freedom as in realising your own life adventures.

Party Comrades,

True freedom presupposes therefore equality as well.

True freedom requires both solidarity and personal responsibility.

We carry within us the insight that wider social divisions not only entail less freedom for those who are exposed.

Wider social divisions curtail freedom for all of us.

To have power has no value in itself – it is a tool to achieve change.

That is my vision of Social Democracy. It is our Social Democracy.

Let us win back the concept of freedom and put the Social Democracy into the movement for freedom that it ultimately is and must always be.

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I am not just the first woman leader of the Social Democratic party in many years - I am also one who has been elected leader in opposition and that has not been the case for a great many years.

We are now in opposition and opposition is what we intend to offer.

But we must spend some time considering why we are here today as a party in opposition.

What made people doubt about our political alternative?

With humility and self criticism we must examine the election loss.

We shall not duck that discussion since it is fruitful.

It makes us stronger as a party and as a popular moment.

After the previous election defeat in 1991, Anna Lindh wrote the following in her analysis of the outcome:

“I do not believe in a party where everyone dances in step. I have felt really sad at heart to see how many of my own age have left the centre stage of politics, despite the fact that they should remain there. It is easy for bosses or party leaders to reward those who are yes-men and to kick out the critics. If the social democratic party had listened more to its own affectionate critics then we might well have been in a stronger position than we are today.”

Those were Anna's words

Criticism is not dangerous.

We have affectionate critics in our party today as well.

I have met many of them when over the past few months when I was out travelling around the party districts. We have spent many hours talking about the future but also about the election defeat. A recurring question has been, as one friend in the party put it in Sundsvall was “We printed on the election posters “EVERYONE TO BE INCLUDED” – but the question is *where* are we going?”

That's one way of putting it.

We were not seen as the bearers of a sufficiently strong vision.

We failed to clarify our dreams, our frustration, what Social Democrats wanted and that it does matter who sits in government.

We seemed at times to be defending the system, perhaps more than those whom the system should help. We appeared perhaps more satisfied than proud.

This is what another young woman, Maryam Yazdanfer, a member of parliament for Solna in Stockholm, writes in a column that she titles "A postcard from the suburbs."

"Is political involvement a question of the ceiling on charges for pre-school? Or that the income base for your sickness benefit is based on the income you have earned over the previous six months or twelve months? That's not the case with me. All the damned same I joined in on knocking doors, standing in the election booths and talked about a single charge for public transport and subsidies in dental reform. And all the while our political opponents had another story. The story about why the members of our People's home are perhaps not all that happy."

When we Social Democrats are at our best we carry forward our values and our fight for security at the same time as we are driven by a restless will to change and a vision of a Sweden in the future where each and every individual is free to realise his or her dreams.

The road to this goal is a road through our most affectionate critics that I am convinced of.

We must defend security and be prepared to embrace adventure.  
And always, always be a force for change.  
There, colleagues, lies our mission.

I believe and I know that we want to have an open, exciting and curious post election debate.

The group set up by the party to analyse the election results will present its findings.  
This will provide a starting point not finalised conclusions for the continued work.

We will listen and pay attention to what is said. We will make changes where necessary. We will review our policies together with members and voters.

We must open our popular movements to new groups and with open ears find new ways to channel their engagement in social issues. We will develop new technical possibilities of communication with more people. We must broaden our

contacts. Draw inspiration and imagination from research, associations, cultural groups and the business community.

As a party we need to become more curious

Today, we have 125 000 members. But just as our Secretary General, Marita Ulvskog, said we need to recruit more members and keep the ones we already have so that we can once again become a strong popular movement. There must be ways of being active that take consideration of the preconditions and the life situation that people are in. In our party as in the society at large, the daily puzzle of life must be manageable.

Political involvement must not become a question of bad conscience – there must be a desire, a will and there must be values.

When I travelled round the country I have had many discussions on the need to renew and broaden our leadership.

This is a question of how we look at things – in local party associations, in municipal associations, in district organisations and when it comes to it, in one or more union clubs. More representatives must be given a seat and the chance to take part in the debate; internal democracy must be strengthened; the team is always bigger than the individual.

A leadership of this type makes both the party and my leadership stronger. But it is also a question of the party's attitude outwards, towards the citizens and the voters. We must tackle our common needs in partnership – not do things for others. We must become the representatives of Citizens - and not of the system. That is the sort of leadership I want to embody together with you.

Never forget – that is *our* party.

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"You will be the first generation that must not fail. At least in three decisive areas."

Those were Olof Palme's words when he addressed the SSU Congress in 1984.

I attended this congress, and I know that many of you sitting here today were there, too.

I belong to that generation; in fact we all belong to that generation that must not fail.

The three areas Olof Palme underlined were; jobs, the environment and peace.

Today I would like to add another area and that is welfare.

“ If you are to avoid failure”, said Olof Palme to the congress,” then you must first and foremost have an unbending faith in the future, a conviction that problems can be solved, together with others, through political action, for the improvement of society”

The Moderates had a campaign a few years ago that we may well remember;” We are not politicians – we are Moderates.”

We know that we are Social Democrats and that is why we are politicians.

We also know that we are the generation that must succeed.

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The environment, jobs, welfare and peace – I would like to pinpoint a few things that are important for us to have in mind when we discuss these challenges of the future.

The first is the environment – the climate and the changeover to a green policy, the Green Welfare State.

In the same way as we once built the country, we must now rebuild it, and the awareness of why we must do that, is increasing.

The global warming.  
The glaciers melting.  
The deserts expanding.  
The sea levels rising.  
The extreme weather conditions.

Today the men and women of science agree: it is the emissions caused by human activity that is to blame.

Since it is we human beings that have, as Göran<sup>3</sup> said yesterday, caused the problems then it us who must find a solution to them.

It is not the last country to leave dependence on fossil resources that will be the winner. On the contrary. For Sweden, already in the forefront, this means tremendous possibilities. Not least when it comes to new jobs. No branch enjoys the rate of growth like the environment technology sector. The world is already screaming for sustainable products, and jobs in this green sector will increase.

But don't believe for a minute that this development was created by the market. The boom is the result of effective steering measures and targeted investment. This calls for political decisions, clear rules and broad cooperation.

Few things make me so angry and sad at the same time, as the Moderate led government's lack of engagement and concrete action.

They have their own little climate and energy agreement – a promise to do nothing at all over the coming four years. A kind of balance of terror with atomic power at the centre, and this is what they say;” You cannot demand closures because if you do we will demand an expansion.”

The threat to our climate demands that we take a responsibility both in society and as individuals. That's what politics is all about. Today Sweden is leading in what we call green certification.

We have already produced 5 TWh of environment friendly and renewable electricity, as much as is needed in household consumption by one million detached houses in a whole year.

Certification can sound very technical, but what it actually means is that the political process makes demands through legislation – a sort of group task for the market. The individual company can follow the law on its own or it can buy a certificate from another company that is well ahead in using electricity efficiently. In this way those companies that are most environment friendly earn most and make the best profits for their money. The system follows the motto that the market is indeed a useless master but a good servant.

Now is the time to make progress and introduce two new certificates. One for a changeover in the transport sector – we can love our cars but hate petrol – and another to promote the efficient use of energy, something that has the potential in itself to act as an energy source. This is something I want to develop during the

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<sup>3</sup> Göran Persson former Party Leader

coming years in opposition. We all know that we must speed up our efforts, something that the government is unaware of.

In the short term perhaps the most important task is to create the possibilities for those consumers among us who are aware of the climate problems, to be able to engage and to take responsibility for their own everyday situation.

We cannot expect that each and every individual sits down and draws up a life cycle analysis for the products they purchase. But in cooperation with industry and commerce we can create simple tools that enable people to engage and to make a difference.

I want us Social Democrats to invite the food processing industry, the energy sector and representatives for the transport sector to a meeting and together with them work out a standardised climate symbol that enables those who want to take a responsibility to have the chance to do so.

At the congress in 2005, under the excellent leadership of Göran, we sat up the goal of ending dependence on fossil fuels by the year 2020. The government has not quite close down the work of the oil commission but has managed to shuffle aside most of it. That is truly appalling.

I want to continue that work under the leadership of the party. We have no time to lose.

I believe and I hope that the debate about the future will once and for all make the green issues something that engages all our members and elected representatives.

This task is just as great, just as important as and just as socially significant as the struggle against the class society was a century ago. That's just how important the issue must be for all of us.

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There is no challenge, no question so international in its nature as is the question of climate change. It cannot be answered unless the countries of the world choose to cooperate.

No government and certainly not the Reinfeldt government can point to the climate problem as a global issue and then run from its responsibility. It will only lead to no one taking the lead and demonstrating what can be done.

We Social Democrats will put pressure on the government and on the ever so mild and humble Maud Olofsson, Minister for Energy, who claims that she has inspired George Bush. I will be happy enough if I can inspire Fredrik Reinfeldt and get him to realise that environment policy is more than changing the colour used in his party's election posters.

“Moderates – the greens” – is what they say. It should be closer to the truth if they were to say “Moderates the chameleons”

The second issue that we must not fail in, as Olof Palme said, is closely related to the green changeover. It is the issue of jobs.

Sweden has so far been a winner in global competitiveness in many ways. A stable labour market with security in the face of change had made us open to what is new and modern. A high level of knowledge, a public sector that has had the means to employ more people at a time when the demand for health and care services has increased. The labour market has had the resources. Our basic industries have continued to play a vital role in the economy. At the same time more and more small companies emerge with new ideas, services and products.

We have every reason to be tough in our criticism of the Right and what they are doing at present. But we must be self critical. Have our own policies been good enough? Are the resources we have used so far been sufficient in achieving a significantly lower level of unemployment and more jobs?

All too many remained unemployed. We did not do sufficiently well in getting people back into work. We struggled with the problems of absenteeism due to sickness. Despite all that people ended up all too far away from a job and income of their own. We struggled against discrimination but it remains a growing problem.

We must therefore be very clear about what is and will remain the core of the social democratic work line.

I think we should formulate it in the following way:

We see work as a right – but participating in working life in accordance with ability is an obligation. Our social model requires that everyone is engaged and contributes to maintaining our welfare system.

This will make it clear. We intend to develop our alternative on the basis of this way of seeing things. Rights and duties. We Social Democrats do not accept a labour market that sets people aside.

It is therefore our task to create a labour market that makes room for all. And a social climate where everyone has a place and space of their own.

Those who are met by employers with the news that they are too old or too young, have a name that is a little difficult to pronounce, those who are homosexual, who are not physically perfect, those who hear that they are off sick too often or do not have a good enough education – these are the people we must have in mind when we shape our labour market policy.

Our angle must be both security of income as well as security in change. Both of them.

Unemployment insurance is a part of this. Even if we cannot say exactly what our proposals will look like in the run up to the election of 2010, even if we have no idea today of how far the bourgeois government will go in attacking our social security, security will be an issue in the 2010 election.

We must have a good and strong unemployment insurance. We cannot afford a poor insurance because we cannot afford to turn our backs on people. Reckon on a conflict over this issue in the next general elections!

We must develop life long learning so that people can cope with the constant changes in working life. Recurring opportunities in the form of education must be a cornerstone in our work line. We must develop new and smarter ways to educate people and to improve competence, to have labour market programmes of high quality. Unless, we build bridges between vacancies and job seekers then we risk facing inflation and a shortage of labour. We must find new forms of personal support and solutions to labour market policy needs, both for employees and businessmen.

We must also find forms of employment that are adapted to those who have been away from a job for a long time or who have never had a foothold in the labour market. Wanja, the president of the LO, and I have agreed to work intensely together to change integration policies and to put discrimination at the top of the agenda!

We must develop working life – the content of work and the conditions. The work that was begun together with the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union - in

order to make the public sector into a role model in terms of employers' action must continue. The discussion needs to be broadened, I believe, and include the conditions of working life, health and safety and stress, hierarchies and influence, wages and working times, responsibilities and comradeship.

Last year 610 000 new vacancies were registered at the job centres. This is a fantastic number of jobs. Despite this, we see that long term unemployment is growing among the young. This is a result of the government's policy. It is beginning to be difficult to find skilled labour – but the Minister for Labour is destroying the labour market programme. Talk about being out of step!

He must be like the worst competitor in the TV series Let's Dance. He beats them all when it comes to being out of step! The worst contender in the TV series had at least the sense to ensure that he would be disqualified, unlike the present labour minister. He would definitely deserve that honour!

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Our future discussions about jobs must also include a discussion about small businesses and entrepreneurs. This is, when all is said and done, not especially controversial. Nevertheless it still feels like it must be said. Loud and often. It is my intention to do that.

If we Social Democrats are to develop working life so that it fits more people's lives and if we are to have a dynamic Swedish labour market, then we must also better understand what it is that drives our entrepreneurs.

It is time for us to ditch some of our prejudices.

Sweden's entrepreneurs run their activities far from the world of the top executives, far from all the gilt edged options programmes.

The entrepreneurs I meet- are often people who burn for an idea. But what pushes them is different from person to person; realising a dream; having one's own business, not having to listen to a boss; having the chance to show what one can do and that one can succeed; creating something that grows; making money.

Entrepreneurs seldom get rich on their work. Wages and other conditions are much the same as for many wage earners.

The businessman or entrepreneur needs security just like the rest of us if he or she is to dare to invest more, security in order to meet globalisation.

We Social Democrats can also be the party of the entrepreneurs – we should be their party already.

Because if there are any who believe in peoples will to grow, learn, find new ways forward, be creative, believe in an idea and dare to launch something new – it is us. We believe that people have this driving force within them – we do not believe that it is something that must be forced out of them, we believe that entrepreneurs are needed.

That is how we will include entrepreneurs in our discussion on the future of jobs. That is my request to you.

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I also want us to look more closely at the service sector.

The service sector today is already bigger than the manufacturing sector, in terms of the number of employees and in terms of our GDP. No other sector is expanding so rapidly at the moment.

But I fear that the right-wing government could disrupt that positive spiral.

Misdirected subsidies that benefit dog psychologists and astrologers, that are a disadvantage to manufacturing and the retail sector – in combination with lower levels of insurance – risk promoting a new kind of low pay market that we Social Democrats rightly fear. We do not want the situation that we see in the USA where many people are forced to one and a half or even two jobs in order to be able to pay the rent.

The jobs of the future are to be found higher up in the process of refining, also in the service sector.

Let us set our aim high and shape policies for the future service sector – in that way we can contribute to creating many more of the new jobs that we so clearly need.

We are speaking about a sector that meets sharp competition, not least in those areas such as education, media, tourism, environmental technology and IT. But there are other areas that are not so exposed to competition.

Here we can find an ecological, cultural and perhaps even an existential dimension. Is it desirable that we spend all our money on gadgets? This has been a

question over many decades. Isn't it better to have services that answer to many peoples desire for quality in life, more knowledge, culture, experiences or just more time for ourselves?

How can we support the positive benefits that a service sector has to offer? Do we have a policy that ensures competition on equal footing? How do we create good working places in the service sector? How does all this impact on education policy, the local and regional efforts to promote growth, how does it impact on research?

This is a new reality and a new possibility. I would like to see us accept and engage in this discussion as a lead in our policy for full employment.

Let the Minister for Industry continue to pretend that household beavers, – or whatever she called them – are the future in cleaning homes, and we can get on with developing the *whole* service sector instead.

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Real jobs have always been seen by the Right to be jobs in the private sector. For us all jobs are real jobs, but few are as important as the jobs in the public sector.

Over the coming ten years tens of thousands of people will have to be recruited to the public sector. Health and care services face a generation change. But does the public sector attract all these new engaged people today? The answer is both yes and no at the same time. We must continue to develop and improve the working places and the influence over them. But we must also raise our voices on the issues of women's wages.

At congress after congress we have emphasised the responsibility of the social partners. Time and again we have said that there must be an end to discrimination. But still women earn only 92% of the average male wage.

The women working in health and care services look after what will always be most important in our lives; our children, our elderly parents, our closest relatives. How much longer can we go on accepting that they do all this that we cannot do without for 16 000 Swedish crowns a month?

Now that the LO has coordinated its efforts in the negotiations and been able to make even clearer demands. This is more important than ever when a right-wing

government, using unemployment insurance as a battering ram, tries to force down wages.

Colleagues we must lend a helping hand, both at the central level as well as locally.

We give our union colleagues our wholehearted support.

Half the power and the whole wage!

And the right to a full time job – the time has come to stand up for this demand, throughout the movement.

As a woman, I want to see us take the step with our razor sharp high heels- and demonstrate that we are feminists. That we see the need to have our gender equality glasses on all the time. Once on, you can never remove them.

When we see that 70 000 women die every year because of illegal abortions.

When we see the death penalty for lesbian women.

When we see the resistance in Sweden to allowing women from abroad to have the right to a legal abortion in Sweden.

When we hear Reinfeldt saying: Away with dependency on benefits - and for this reason we will introduce a subsidy for parents who decide to stay at home with their children.

The fact that the Christian Democrats are for something is reason enough, as I see it, for being against it.

When the new Secretary General of the chameleon party says that they are now chasing women then I have only one thing to say: Run!

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The public sector, the work of welfare, must maintain a high level of quality. All over the country.

Welfare must be distributed according to need. When that is the case the low- or high-income earners need never think about how to pay for the operation they need. We need to pay tax, and that must be proportional to income. We shall never need to run the risk of being turned down by an insurance company because there is something that looks bad in our health certificate, and we shall never need to compare premiums and conditions for insurance. Everyone must have the best possible.

Welfare has become the glue that holds Sweden together. A goal that we have been able to agree on across the boundaries of class. It has often been the

intention of Social Democracy – to bind the different groups in society together, at the end of the day because we all understand that when divisions become too great in a society then this makes society less secure for everybody.

The future of my kids and of other children hangs together.  
This has been the case for a long time, and that is how most people living in Sweden want it to continue.

Despite that it will now be possible for the county authorities to sell off larger hospitals, to set up what they call profit making health care malls. Equality and democratic control risk disappearing. The traffic insurance proposed by the Moderates involves forcing people to pay according to how costly they can be considered in terms of health care. The security provided by unemployment insurance, health insurance and parental insurance is being changed for the worse.

In this way Sweden is changing tracks – from being a tax financed welfare system, equal for all, to being a system where each and every individual looks after themselves and relies on their own wallets.

What is needed here is solidarity.

Solidarity as Margot Wallström<sup>4</sup> usually says, you either show or not. Its much the same as being pregnant – you cannot be just a little bit pregnant. And we stand up for the value of solidarity.

We face a tough political fight against the Moderate led government policy, at the same time as we must review our own welfare policy more critically. We must discuss why there are so much injustice and social divisions that cannot be changed by our welfare system.

People are not one-sided.

People are not just a level of social benefits.

People are not just a category –such as a worker, a woman, a county dweller, sort sighted or a relative.

People are not just strong. People are not just weak.

People are not just sick or healthy, loaded with resources or socially disadvantaged.

Most of us are all of these things at the same time though to a different extent over time.

We Social Democrats have created fantastic systems.

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<sup>4</sup> EU Commissioner

To solve one problem at a time.

When you arrive at the emergency ward with a heart attack then you get the best care in the world, even if you are homeless. Everyone gets the same care – and we want that to continue to be the case.

But then?

When you have been treated for the heart attack and need a home, drug rehabilitation, contact with a psychiatrist or rehabilitation for work – then something happens all too often with responsibility. Then it becomes the responsibility of the individual but not the duty of anyone else.

For those who don't have a job to go back to, or who have more than one problem to handle this could be the hardest time. Will I get economic support, when will the decision be made and who will make it? Who is responsible for my composite diagnosis? Who will help me when I am too healthy for sickness insurance but too ill to register with the job centre?

We cannot tolerate that our tax money becomes passive, when it is an active support that we need.

We cannot tolerate that we are world champions on a few points but lose the overall responsibility for the individual.

I believe that we must continue our discussion on welfare from precisely this perspective.

I would like to see us Social Democrats trying out an idea about a new organisation in parts of the welfare system. Something local. Something for the individual to turn to. Something that puts the individual first. Something that can work in a more preventive fashion with earlier efforts to help, a tailor made rehabilitation. Something that can give the individual who need another chance, and perhaps another to return to health, to a job or to education more quickly.

I think that we should take a look at the Norwegian model with its work and Welfare offices and at the experiences of our Norwegian friends.

Include that in your discussions, party comrades.

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There was a band in the 80s called Hanson de Wolf United. They sang "Where do the kids come in". A really great song.

We had a focus on children in our welfare policies. Over the past 12 years we have done an awful lot for parents and children with our policies on children's allowance, the ceiling on pre-school charges, improved parental insurance, and major investments in more adults in pre-schools and a schools, better pre-schooling and schools, national curricula with anti-discrimination demands and a campaign to stop bullying.

But what about the young people, those who are a little older as children, what sort of situation do they have in our society?

Sweden is a very open country, open to the world; we are a modern country and quick to adopt new technology and research. We are open to change and we are independent. We have a high level of education. The demands are high and so too is the tempo. Over the past decades the communications technology has stormed into our daily lives with the Internet, cell phones, web cameras, TV-games, modern technology of every sort.

All this opens up new possibilities and makes it a fantastic time to live in.

But how does all this affect the kids and teenagers?

What is it like to grow up in the middle of an information storm, in the midst of an entertainment mumble, in the centre of all these rapid decisions, all these opportunities for travel, encounters and new impressions?

The choices and the rapid decisions come earlier and earlier. The Minister of Education is doing his best to make the school a place where seven year olds at that early age will get to know if they have passed or failed.

Apart from the pressure with school grades the anxiety of making the wrong choice in studies or in schools, not managing to do ones homework in time, exams and leisure time activities, there are all those unspoken demands. Fitting in. Sticking out. Having lots of friends. Having a style. Enjoying status. Being someone. Being something.

We know that ill health due to stress is on the increase among children and teenagers. The number of children on the children's helpline to BRIS, has gone up. Save the Children and The National Board of Health and Security report that there is a steady increase in alcohol consumption and in new drugs. We have eating disorders both among girls and boys. We have bullying via SMS and the net. Girls slash themselves. Boys take out their frustrations in violence.

Do all these things hang together? Yes, presumably.

There is something called “Peer comparison anxiety” among young people today and that worries me because it is so closely connected to the individual, the individuals achievements and above all to their own bodies.

How many have you blocked on your MSN?  
 Do you have any Cheap Mondays?<sup>5</sup>  
 Are you alternative`?  
 Are you allowed to pierce yourself?  
 How often do you go to the gym? What’s your BMI?  
 What!! Are you a virgin?  
 Naw, have you posted these pictures?  
 Did you see her on “snyggast.se”<sup>6</sup>?

Successful is equivalent to attractive.  
 Best means prettiest, smartest, most popular and slimmest.

Teenage magazines analyse every last drop of body fluids that kids have.  
 Advertising promotes revamped ideals that are so made over that the body ideals teenagers want to imitate just do not exist in reality.

What is at stake and what is to be gained from all this.

Can we offer a break in this struggle? Can the public domain be desexualised?  
 Can we offer alternatives to the non-stop beauty competition? Can we offer enough security? Can we succeed in convincing young people that they don’t need to be better than they are in reality?

Will we make it on time?

This is what Josefine Adolfsson wrote in her documentary novel ”Kårnulf was here”, published a couple of years ago:

“I want someone to come and pick me up in a boat. I want someone to row me home. I want someone as a lifebelt round my body, knowing what I need without me asking for it. I want someone to see without me having to show them. Weightless and floating for someone to row me somewhere where I am not alone and afraid. Somewhere where I can reach the bottom, one simple service. Please tell me you understand and that there is still time:”

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<sup>5</sup> jeans

<sup>6</sup> web site

That's what I want us to talk about.

\* \* \*

We cannot shape our visions of the future without understanding the needs of young people, their anxiety and demands, their wishes and dreams about the future. They are the future.

So when we go out to meet the rest of society, and we must, to discuss politics and long term visions then we must invite the young people in and invite ourselves to share their reality.

We must support SSU so that our youth organisation can win back its strength.

SSU has always played an important role in our party and for many of us on a personal level. It will continue to be so. There have been times when SSU has supported us as a party – not least during the election campaigns as they usually do. I expect from all of you at the local, regional or at whatever level you find yourselves that you will help to build up a vital SSU organisation.

It's now our turn to help SSU. Do so.

\* \* \*

I would like to make a comment before going on to foreign policy.

When we now discuss these issues and begin to draw up our programme, we must think about a future that stretches beyond the congress in 2009.

Twelve years ago the Social Democrats returned to power. In these 12 years we have achieved a lot – but far from everything we wanted to.

The failings we didn't manage to handle, the problems and challenges we didn't manage to complete working with – these are not enough as a starting point when we now draw up our policies for the years following 2010.

We must reckon with the fact that Sweden will be strongly affected by the policies of the right wing changes to the system.

If we want to correct the worst changes in the change of system after an election victory in 2010 then we must realise that it will take time, energy and resources – in much the same way as it took more than half of the twelve years we have

behind us in getting the economy out of a crisis and back onto a strong growth track.

If we want moreover improve things a little create new improvements for the future - then we must look beyond a single period in office when we decide on our policies.

What sort of problems will hold the centre of the stage? What sort of medium term goals shall we set up for our work?

We must discuss these important issues with party colleagues and the unions, and also with people in organisations, the business community and other social movements outside our own. And not only because we want more people to vote for us but because we want policies that win respect through a broad swathe of the Swedish society and that can be sustained for a long time forward.

Otherwise Sweden can be turned into a table tennis match – with tougher smashes, back and forth over the net.

That sort of game means that we are all losers.

\* \* \*

The system changeover has been initiated and the first reactions can be heard.

The thousand crowns promised by the Moderates have been forgotten and hidden away, the promise no longer holds. Now we can all see that the winners are those with the highest wages and the biggest properties. The promise not to sell off hospitals is already broken. Now is the time to sell off our common assets at bargain prices. More and more young people are queuing at the job centres and social exclusion is growing. Exclusion is a word I do not like – not when used by the powers that be, not when a Prime Minister stands there and points at people telling them

”You are an outsider, you are excluded”.

All the talk about gender equality has gone quiet – the government now has a new principle: half Moderates, that’s what it has come to.

All the talk about consensus and a better policy on government appointments – now all the agreements are being broken and well known Moderates are being given top jobs. The referendum was to be respected – but apparently not the referendum in Stockholm on toll roads.

We now see a wave of disappointment surging up from many citizens – and we can all of us talk about the daily encounters we have with people who are disappointed and fearful.

But we see a disappointment in other quarters as well. Urban Bäckström, the CEO of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, now writes that the goal of a surplus of 2% in public expenditure must be abandoned. He thinks it is a hinder to the government's policy of handing out bigger benefits to the already well-off.

But the goal of a surplus was our way of putting aside money for harder times, for downturns in the economy in order to avoid such swings leading to cuts in security. A good organisation of public finances is and will remain a fundamental precondition for low unemployment and jobs for all.

I do not know if the Moderates recognise it themselves - but the fact is that they are being squeezed more and more between the expectations they have created in the country as a whole – and the demands of the economically powerful groups who demand a full return on their investment now that their party runs the government.

That's why I feel uneasy.

The previous time they were in office, the easy-going attitude on tax cuts combined with a strong pressure to live up to their expansive election promises led to an economic collapse in Sweden.

Reinfeld often says about me that he has nothing to say about me, because he can't think of anything that I have achieved during my time in politics. But I was there when the crisis hit unlike the prime minister whom Carl Bildt, the then leader of the Moderates, had put into their party freezer where he spent his time organising internal power struggles in the Moderate party.

Ingvar Carlsson, myself and Göran Persson and many others sat together with Anne Wibble, the former Finance Minister, and Carl Bildt, Prime Minister and tried to stitch together the 1992 crisis agreement in order to get the country out of the serious situation we were in.

I was there in 1990-91 together with the social partners and the Rhenberg Commission when they proposed the stabilisation agreement that pulled down the level of inflation and led to the Industry-wide agreement. That was a time when Reinfeldt was fighting a battle in the Moderates youth organisation so there we can have his plausible excuse for not knowing what I did in those years.

I do not accuse Fredrik Reinfeldt or the present Finance Minister, Anders Borg, for causing the nineties crisis. That is not my point. But what I do demand of them is that they should take their historical inheritance seriously. Do not let the pressure from the employers or from their partners in the Alliance, now when they meet a debate on renegeing on their promises, to lead to them taking it out on the economy of the country. Not one more time, please.

The Swedish economy is incredibly strong but not so strong that it can survive a right-wing government that loses its grip.

During the election campaign, I wrote ten open letters to Reinfeldt with questions and a challenge to a public debate. He refused to answer the questions and turned down the challenge every time I asked it.

Today I am leader of the Social Democratic party and as such I turn again to the leader of the Moderates. Let us meet in a political debate! Let us debate the dividing lines in Swedish politics. I expect you to accept the challenge.

I long for an answer – let us have a debate!

\* \* \*

The Social Democrats` struggle for freedom, equality and solidarity has never been limited to our nation`s borders. Our struggle has always been international. The freedom of all peoples, peace for the whole world.

Perhaps the deep domestic crisis of the 1990s made us for a moment in our history become a bit too inward looking. There were times when the Swedish economy`s crash landing required almost all our energy.

A renewed inspiration can provide a new content to our international engagements in the biggest international issues of our time.

Large parts of the western world share the challenge that comes with a growing proportion of the population becoming elderly; climate changes threaten us all; wars and persecutions continue to cause suffering in the world and moreover force millions of people to flee their homes; jobs not only move to new centres but even across continents; sickness that can easily be cured with medicines in our part of the world reap the lives of millions in another part; the global market forces call for a global political resistance; the UN must be reformed in order to stand strong and stronger still in this our common world.

Say what you will about the EU – and there are many who do so – but it is the best force for opposition that we have against the free and rapid flow of capital across borders, against the only remaining superpower the USA and its dominance, against wars and repression, for peace and democracy, for a better environment.

The enlargement of the EU, first with Spain, Greece and Portugal in the 80s to today's enlargement with Romania and Bulgaria, we have fortified the process of democratic development on our continent.

It is now time to look at the EU as one of the political arenas where we are. It is time to stop saying yes and no to the EU. It is time to say yes to a complete participation in European Social Democracy. To all of that we say yes.

How we make use of the EU will be decisive in determining how well we succeed in meeting our major challenges. In an age when we are close to a “post-Bush” and “post- Putin” there is room for the EU to take more initiatives and for us to take initiatives in the EU.

That we will do in order to build up a forceful climate policy, growth and jobs, the fight for gender equality, against international crime, for social security and a democratic influence over the process of globalisation.

Together with our party colleagues in other countries we can formulate an ambitious and challenging agenda for the EU and move our positions forward.

With Wanja Lunby-Wedin as chair of the European trade union confederation – a union federation that organises 60 million wage earners – we will be in a stronger position when we push for union rights and a social Europe. We are proud and happy to cooperate with Wanja when she has that post too. It's really tops!

In the field of foreign policy which is a major arena for us I would like to prioritise some special questions in our party.

It is about Africa – that enormous continent that contains so many gaps; tremendous poverty and enormous wealth not least in South Africa; genocide and mass flights of people in the Sudan, but also the sense of hope that follows from a well functioning African Union, and a fragile but spiralling economic growth in some quarters.

I want to see our party sharpening a policy for foreign aid and just and fair terms of trade with Africa in focus. The struggle against world poverty is a struggle for freedom in the proper sense of the word, for people's power over their everyday situation and their resources – but also for their lives.

We must contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS. This disease which has become a symbol for the world's injustice and for the ignorance, racism, lack of gender equality and a capitalism that denies people equality.

The international aid towards the struggle against HIV/AIDS amounts to some 30 billion Swedish crowns per year. That may sound a lot – but we are discussing here absurd proportions. The cost of the occupation of Iraq is roughly 40 billion Swedish crowns - per month! In the course of a few days just as much is spent in Iraq as it costs to provide the medicine needed in the course of the whole of the coming year.

HIV/AIDS afflicts the poor more than it does the rich, more women than men. Today more than 40 million people live with HIV. Southern Africa is hardest struck. If we are to tackle HIV/AIDS, then we must direct our efforts at the real causes, since HIV/AIDS is more than just a disease. The real causes are inequality between the sexes, discrimination on the grounds of sexual preferences and poverty.

This is something we will give priority to.

I also want to give priority to the struggle against nuclear arms.

The old super powers' arsenal of bombs may well have shrunk, but there have never been so many fingers on the firing buttons as there are today. Five nuclear arms states became seven when India and Pakistan joined the ranks. Today there is uncertainty about at least two more acquiring nuclear arms. The UN is trying to contain the risk of Iran being added to the list.

When Iraq was invaded, Anna Lindh took the initiative in forming a commission on weapons of mass destruction, later headed by Hans Blix. The commission's action programme is now on the table. I would like to see our party raising new initiatives in this area of concern, in the spirit of Anna Lindh.

We must also underline clearly our standpoint on Iraq. Iraq was invaded in contravention of international law and without the clearance from the UN. When Iraq enters a new phase, the demands for increased engagement will arise. We do not hesitate in our will to support international solidarity. But we do not hesitate

either as to which mandate Sweden can contribute under – it must be a UN mandate.

One mistake on the part of the USA does not legitimise a new mistake. The USA must withdraw from Iraq in a way that is acceptable to the world community.

That is our line on this issue.

No other conflict has engaged our movement deeper and longer, and few conflicts are so far from a solution as the conflict in the Middle East.

The Palestinians need our solidarity and the people of Israel need security.

Sweden must now work actively within the EU to arrange the proposed international conference on the Middle East. The agenda must include the question of Iraq and relations with Iran.

International law, disarmament, equality – this is the voice of Sweden in foreign policy when we Social Democrats have the say. And when we don't then Sweden's voice is scarcely audible. But with Carl Bildt as foreign minister we should perhaps be grateful that this is the case – so it can be.

I want to see an active foreign policy and European policy playing a central role for Social Democrats during the coming years. Not least in view of the important European Parliamentary elections in the year of 2009.

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that I have asked two persons – Jan Eliasson, our foremost diplomat in the whole world and everything Carl Bildt is not, and Margot Wallström – to lead a new international working group within the party which will work during the coming years to raise the level of engagement, agitation, development of policy in the run up to the European parliamentary elections and the next general election in Sweden.

And to you Margot – welcome back!

Before I finish – let me just say something about the refugee question.

Our country has for many years offered a haven to the persecuted from every corner of the world. This has changed and improved Sweden.

In the years of political activism in the 1970s', most people in Sweden had a contact, in one way or another, with the refugees and their background, who came to our country. We knew who Violetta Parra was, we knew what happened to Allende, we knew about the football stadium in Santiago, we knew what the Greeks left when they came here.

Support for the refugee policy was strong. Today things are different. Support for our refugee policy is weaker at the same time as more people are fleeing for their lives. The locations of human suffering are multitude – and we no longer know those places so well.

But we must not forget that it is the same struggle for human dignity as it always has been. We must not duck the issue when it comes to a humane and solidaristic refugee policy that we must have – and every municipality must contribute to receiving refugees.

Now is the time to meet Sverigedemokraterna<sup>7</sup> in open debate!

Those who only recently said that Zlatan was a non-Swedish phenomenon. But Zlatan is a Swede – it is the Sverigedemokraterna who will remain a non-Swedish phenomenon!

Before I finish I would like to borrow 1 minute and 51 seconds to someone who can say this much better than I can. 1 minute and 51 seconds for Olof Palme:

*“Democracy is firmly anchored in our country. We respect the fundamental freedoms and rights. Muddy theories on race have never gained a foothold here. We regard ourselves gladly as free from prejudice and tolerant. But it is not quite so easy as that. Prejudice does not need to be anchored in some nasty theory. Its origins are much simpler than that. Prejudice always has its roots in everyday life. It flourishes in the workplace and in the local neighbourhood. It is an expression of personal failures and disappointments. It is most of all an expression of ignorance and fear. Ignorance of other people's own identity, fear of losing a position, a social privilege, an advantage.*

*The colour of a person's skin, their race, language and place of birth bear no relation to human qualities. To grade people according to such measures stands in sharp contrast to the principle of every person's equal worth. But it is shamefully simple to use such measures for those who feel inferior – at the workplace, in social life, in competition on a girl or a boy.*

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<sup>7</sup> Nationalistic Party

*Prejudice is therefore always lurking by, even in an enlightened society. It can flame up in the shape of a harmful word, an ill considered reply, a demeaning remark in small things. Perhaps the one who acts means no ill. But for the one who is struck it can open a sore that will never heal.*<sup>8</sup>

We will now continue with the general debate.

After the congress, the new Executive Committee and the Party Board will decide on the form for the advisory consultation procedure on future policy – a consultation process that will provide the basis for the work of the ordinary congress in 2009.

We have a job to do!

It will be enjoyable. Being a Social Democrat and an active politician is a privilege. It is a tremendous trust – but it is also an opportunity to change that which we consider to be wrong or unjust.

The key word that I want you to take home with you- for the rest of the day and in the continued work is this:

- Security in the face of change
- Curious and self-critical
- Anger at the unfairness of the Moderates
- Passion and happiness
- Determination to change and renew
- Defend security
- Embrace our common adventure!

Thank you!

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<sup>8</sup> Radio talk 25/12 1965. Source: Palme, Olof, Politics is to Will, Stockholm: Prisma, 1968, pp 64-65. The speech has been set to music by the group Latin Kings and is included in their record My Quarter under the name Prejudice 2 “



