

The Social Democratic Congress

Stockholm 17th^h – 18th March 2007

Speech held by Göran Persson

Party colleagues!

”Human beings are our goal – Their development and freedom. Their desire for learning and education, their will to grow and breach new frontiers, their feeling of responsibility for future generations, their solidarity and love for their fellow men.”

These were the words I used in my speech when I was installed as party chair and it is with these words I want to begin today.

Deep down it is always a question of people.

For this reason we follow the same values year in and year out: freedom, equality and solidarity

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For this reason our values are never out of date.

For this reason our movement is needed just as much in the coming century as it was in the last.

The basic needs of people change very little over the course of time and centuries.

Everybody must grow up and enter adulthood, find a house and a sensible job, live their lives enjoy experiences and fall in love, perhaps have children and provide them with a secure upbringing and slowly on all of us want to grow old with dignity.

We make higher demands on the standards we want today, but basically our needs remain the same.

Work, a home and bread on the table – and a little more that makes life worth living.

All these systems and institutions that we build up- they are not built for the sake of building systems.

We build for people – for their security and possibility of achieving the best of their innermost desires.

Take a trip in space and time!

Hjalmar Branting can tell you about that struggle as the early grind of the labour movement for one man one vote.

Per-Albin Hansson has a lot to tell you about the crisis policies of the 1930s, about the struggle to keep the worst of the unemployment and misery of those times from the daily lives of the People's Home.

Take a trip to Bommersvik in the 1970s; sit down beside a retired Tage Erlander at his favourite table in the corner of the dining room, beneath the big painting by Amelin. In his slightly nasal dialect you can listen to him talk about his ambitions with the strong society and why it was important to have a universal pension system and how the whole modern welfare society developed.

While you sit there Olof Palme will of course saunter by and tell you about the reforms in working life, about the first attempts to develop a modern environment policy and family policy – and it may well be difficult to get him to stop talking.

Or while we are at it why not forget all that and have a chat with Ingvar sitting here in the first row...

The Swedish welfare society is grounded on social democratic values.

We have never hoped to build a monument to our own glory.

Our ambition has always been to free people from worry and insecurity – so that all of us would be able to live free and secure lives.

Just as we draw strength and guidance from the past so too will tomorrow's social democrats.

When the time travellers of the new generation come to visit me in Sörmland – how will I answer their questions?

What did the social democrats achieve during my time as chairman?

I do not need to think too long about my answer.

We started the construction of the green People's Home.

We saved the Swedish welfare model and it is now more modern than at any time before.

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Remember how things were at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

In those days the downy Moderates sat in the TV sofas, some of them are now members of the government, and talked about how the Swedish model made Swedes lazy, how security made us stupid and unenterprising and how we had too much welfare in Sweden – the public sector was described as a welfare narcotic that put the people to sleep.

In those days the long haired neo-liberals stood in front of the TV cameras and screamed that each and every individual could create their own lives with their own money and that we didn't need a parliament or government to achieve that.

That was how it sounded then. And when the welfare society was threatened to its very foundations by economic mismanagement there were many who listened to them.

1991-1994 the Moderates got their chance and showed us what they could achieve.

And when these miserable efforts were at an end Ingvar Carlsson was forced to read the following from the front bench in parliament:

”As long as we have a budget deficit and a national debt that grows, then the scope for democracy is limited. The future development of our country is threatened by forces beyond our democratic control. In the same way unemployment is a major threat to the basic values of our country. Unemployment is like a knife cutting through the very fibres of the Swedish welfare society.”

I was elected as party leader two years later.

To a party mangled by the work of cleaning up the budget.

To a labour movement pained by inner strife.

It was not a time of happiness.

It was torture to social democratic souls and it singed badly the cooperation with the trade unions.

Most of all it hit wage earners, families with children and pensioners.

Perhaps people will say of me that I was the man who cleaned up the finances of Sweden.

All right, I made a few calculations and I coined a few phrases.

“Those who are in debt are not free”, to quote one example.

But there were others who also coined slogans.

In 1998 the LO campaign slogan was” I saved Sweden”

Nothing could be truer.

In 1998 the LO election campaign with its pictures of ordinary Swedish wage earners, women working in care, men in the building industry men and women in manufacturing, had as a slogan, “I saved Sweden”. And it was true.

Nothing could have been more on the mark.
It was the wage earners who saved Sweden.

There were many who did their bit and shouldered their responsibility for the country during those troubled years.

Olof Johansson, the leader of the Centre party was one of them and the responsible Centre party we had in those days.

With Bertil Johansson´s help, the chair of the Swedish LO, we succeeded in burying the hatchet within the labour movement.

We set the goal of 4% in unemployment that we were to be mocked for years.

By the end of 2000 we were there.

In 2000 I was able to get up in parliament and say:

”Mass unemployment has been defeated. We enjoy high growth. Sweden is now at the front of the new economy. We are well prepared to meet the future. The conditions for an active economic policy are now better than they have been for some time. For the first time in almost a decade the decisions of the elected representatives are no longer dictated by the confines of a policy based on a deficit.”

The scope of politics has been restored.

The Swedish model has proved resilient.

I was able to pronounce the magic words: “The time has come for reforms!”

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Today the young moderates have grown up and become both party leader and finance minister. They are no longer so clear about what they intend to do about welfare.

The minister of Finance has retained his old-fashioned style but he no longer says that politics is not needed.

The struggle for ideas, the ideological struggle- that struggle we won!

That is why the moderates sounded like social democrats in the election campaign in 2006.

But we failed to demonstrate that their plagiarism was a fraud.

Today’s moderates leave it to others to market the despicable neo-liberal rhetoric in Swedish politics, to describe welfare as a yolk and politics as shackles.

They leave it to others to push the moderates into a well organised retreat – away from their election promises on increased welfare and a reduction in social exclusion.

Instead they attack those who are already most disadvantaged.

The retreat and it is in full swing, it is stage managed by the confederation of Swedish Industry and tragically by the Centre party.

This is a cynical strategy, cold hearted towards people.

Promises are being broken one after another- the plus jobs are being cut down, labour law cut round the corners and there is now a free for all in selling out emergency hospital units. Now our common assets are being sold off.

Now the well off are being benefited. Those already lying on their backs are being kicked..

The promise of a thousand crowns to the many is no more than small change and in fact a minus for those who do not have a job.

The Moderates are quiet about what they are doing and where it will lead to.

What we are seeing is a change of system.

A grimmer class society is being built up.

The Swedish people do not want this sort of society. The Moderates could never win an election if they were open about their policies. They won mainly by using social democratic rhetoric.

Now when they are exposed there will be a quick reaction from the public opinion. The Swedish people want to see a social democratic policy and they expect after the next election to see that policy carried out by social democrats.

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Security does not make people lazy. How come that we have the most developed security system in the world and at the same time be one of the countries that has on all counts most people in work? How come that we have a growth rate per capita that beats both the EU's and the USA's?

Politics is not unnecessary. How could we otherwise construct the 200000 housing units just as we promised? How otherwise would we have a surplus in the finances of our municipalities despite the fact that we employ more people in education and health services?

Politics is no hinder for people's lives and for enterprise. How otherwise could Sweden be a leading nation in the field of, life long learning, quality in health care and longevity and still be at the top in terms of competitiveness and modernity?

Ask anyone living in the archipelagos, well not just an islander like them, ask me about politics and its role in the field of the environment and the return of the ospreys. These wonderful and beautiful birds. This morning I watched one flying slowly and majestically and scaring the life out of an eagle hawk. There were none just 15 to 20 years ago. They're back now and they shall have the right to live. That is politics for you.

Ask the pensioners if it plays any role whether the housing grant is raised or if it is cheaper to go to the dentist.

Welfare is no barrier to development. Every wage earner knows that who has enjoyed a reasonable 80% compensation when unemployed year after year and during our term in office rising real wages. It is something known to the hundred thousand who got the chance to improve their education during the period we ran the programme for Raising Skills. And all those young people who now have one of the 125 000 new places in universities and colleges all over the country.

Politics matters. That is something - more than any other – that the hundreds of thousands of women and men who were unemployed in 1994 but who can now get up every day and say:

I'm off to work!

* * *

A lot can be said about our period in government. One thing is true we didn't sit there and twiddle our thumbs!

For every reform, every decision we took in our executive, for every party congress, for every new bill or budget we produced in the cabinet Sweden as a nation became stronger- in faith in the future, growth and creativity.

The results we achieved in this period are by any international standards sensational.

The Swedish model delivered.

The bumble bee flew.

You remember, the image I used when it was claimed that our social model didn't work, that it was impossible. Taxes were too high; there was too much public expenditure. There was no way we could run a competitive economy with that sort of structure. I said then that that was what you believed. You are just as wrong as those who cannot understand how a bumble bee manages to fly with its big body and its tiny wings.

The bumble bee flew and still flies and the Swedish model flies as well. It hums away so nicely and is so much better than an angry bee, that I can assure you.

Now others study our bumble bee economy. It's not surprising`, now when we have stepped on to the sidelines and others come here and have a look and ask: how do you do it? I get invitations myself from all over the world to talk about it. I am more than wiling to explain. I have never bought the idea that the Swedish model was finished.

The economy with the huge public sector and the high taxes - it's up and flying in the new global economy.

So much so that other countries are attempting to construct their own bumble bee economies.

We never bought the idea that the Swedish model was out that the unemployed were lazy or that social security was too extensive.

We stick to our welfare model.

We believe in our idea that people who feel secure are people who are prepared to take risks, that freedom requires equality and security is not a hindrance to development but is instead a precondition for it.

We believe in a Sweden where everyone is included and no one is left out.

We have reason to be proud of this!

If anything was important during the past twelve years it is this: We defended our model and we demonstrated that it is still modern in a new age!

We took the welfare society into the globalised economy and demonstrated that it even better than it did before. Welfare is modern.

We know that change will continue to take place.

But we believe in our way of running politics, we believe in our values and we believe in politics – for very good reasons.

To use that old quote from Anders Ferm that I have used often over the past years. He wrote the following in an editorial in Arbetet, a Labour newspaper:

“When the age old suppositions on love, freedom, equality and brotherhood echo down the ages, they will always be vital and modern, as long as there is any humanity left. They cannot be rationalised out of people’s idea on politics with a few simple neo-liberal concepts. And what they tell us is that the worth of a human is greater than the value of the market.”

That’s how it is and how it will remain.

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On the 18th of September 2006 Dagens Industri wrote the following:

All economic indicators point in the right direction. The next Swedish government faces a golden opportunity.

Then they popped up one after another, reports showing. The job explosion is on the way!

By then we had lost the election of 2006.

It was a bitter experience, that I can assure you was how I felt.

That bitterness was all the greater when we had to listen to party colleagues who said that we lacked a policy for creating jobs. Jobs are not created at the drop of a hat;

they require a long term and sustainable economic and educational policy. Many small and new enterprises, new universities, low inflation and low interest rates. Good conditions for the transport of people and goods – both physically on land and in the air.

We have laid the ground in a long term policy and now we can see the results. There is no reason to say anything other than that the policy we left behind us was a policy for full employment and a policy that did so by holding Sweden together, based on equality and community. It worked. It worked during 2006 but the fact that we did not win the election on the basis of this policy leaves a very bitter memory.

We must draw the right conclusions from this.

We have a group analysing the results is doing its job but there are some lessons to be learnt from the 12 years we have behind us.

The first one you know from bitter experience.

It goes; allow no deficits in public finances they put politics into a straightjacket.

And with no politics comes no modernisation of welfare, no successful struggle against unemployment.

The second one is: a Sweden for everyone requires cooperation.

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Cooperation is difficult, especially when it comes to parliamentary cooperation.

I have led a government; I have only led a government, for ten and a half years that has struggled with difficult parliamentary conditions. You have had the same situation in your municipalities, county councils and regions. You know what I am talking about.

In the short term it can be the case that cooperation has a limited value for other parties, but also for us. Look at what happened to the Centre party after the period when they shouldered responsibility for the country – those who opted for cooperation in preference to confrontation did not win on it.

For my own part I can say: cooperation takes time, it is hedged with problems and it is not always enjoyable! Still we continue to cooperate over and over again.

In our movement we have striven to find broad solutions in important questions.

We have also sought cooperation with the Confederation of Swedish Industry.

We have done so because our goal is a society for all, not just a few. Broad majorities provide for stable rules. And what is needed are stable rules. For wage earners, for employers, for home owners and for companies. Most important of all in this context is the cooperation with the trade unions. That can also be time consuming, but is almost always constructive and productive.

Sweden has gone from success to success and this is due in no small part to the fact that the trade union movement has regained its ability to achieve responsible agreements. Only yesterday as was demonstrated by our friends in the Swedish Metal Workers union. Without the the important efforts made by Göran Johnsson and others Sweden would not be where it is today. It has not always been easy on the trade union front, something we all know. It has been heavy going and critical at times. But the political side has understood the importance of that and has always supported and provided backing, held out its hand to colleagues on that side. In that cooperation, in that community we have shared the job of restoring Sweden's strength.

Within the party we know: without the unions we are weak. The unions know that too. Without the party we cannot defend security and jobs. It is when we stick together that we are strong. Cooperation between the party and the unions is a part of the Swedish model that we believe in.

Cooperation is needed inside the party as well. We are not just any party.

The social democrats are a large party. We are a movement consisting of a large number of people with many different backgrounds- people of every sort from all the counties and countries, with ideas that range from the right wing of the Left party over to the left wing of the Liberals. That I can state after having travelled inside the party over many years. There are few standpoints that I have not met. But if we were to meet someone who does not have the party programme in their back pockets but who still thinks right and we were to say "you cannot be in our party" then it would be a sure way to becoming a 4% party. No indeed, and for myself I can say that I have not always liked why is written in the party programme but we defend the total picture. Having a total picture is something you have to feel for. We are the large party of the left in Swedish politics. A progressive party with international colleagues. That is why we have had influence in Sweden, far and above any other party but also in international politics. I do not think that there are all that many parties of the size represented by the Swedish social democrats that have had so much influence on the international scene. It is a question of cooperation. Cooperation also within our own party and that takes time.

We can quote Max Weber the German philosopher who at the turn of the last century said:

"Die Politik bedeutet ein starkes langsames Bohren von harten Brettern mit Leidenschaft und Augenmass zugleich."

"Politics is a slow process of drilling into, or sawing tough planks – with passion and an eye for measurement in combination."

Not bad! 110 years later and we have better tools.

There is nothing wrong with passion in our party.
There is nothing wrong with our eye for measurement.

But we are sometimes impatient.

Impatience is the constant companion of the reformist and that is a good thing
But when we have to take a stand on important issues in our party then we cannot
be in too much of a rush.

Sometimes we have to act at a mad pace and the decision is forced through.

Then we can meet arguments of the following type: that group is too far to the right,
that other group too far to far to the left. Those too green or too technocratic we
can ignore. There shouldn't be too many academics, too many unionists.

We manage 51% - and then there is a call for a vote and rest on the decision of the
gavel.

The one side wins the other loses.

It's all over quickly.

But what has really happened? How many were involved and how many were
disappointed?

It is difficult to get everyone along with every decision – but it is important to try.

This is what we have always tried to achieve in our party.

Unity gives strength.

Sawing into drilling is into the plank is a tiring job, and it has required both passion
and a n eye for the measure.

Then we get to a compromise that the majority of this large party can support. A
compromise which because of its character has won respect and a broad support.

Politics is difficult – an art that calls for both heart and brain.

If I may give you some advice on how to work internally it would be this:

Try to solve problems in a spirit of cooperation.

Include those members who do not belong to the mainstream of the party.

Make sure that as many as possible are involved in developing policies.

And do the political work in the public eye. Argue for what you believe in. Stand up
for it and avoid every type of secret groupings and clubs.

That is not our way. Never has been never will be.

I do not want to see our party as one among many others.

I want to see our party continue as a great party.

That calls for cooperation.

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Work together with the progressive forces in our world.

Sweden has always needed the rest of the world and the rest of the world has always needed Sweden, in a pretentious way. This means the EU and the UN as well as all the other international institutions and networks.

This EU that we always love to hate, as I often put it.

EU membership has at the end of the day been good for Sweden.
We have changed the EU and the EU has changed us.

The Swedish model is no longer exotic and inimitable.

Within the EU our model acts as a vital and successful example of a modern European economy characterised by ambitions for welfare and equality.

Sweden is a pioneer country in many regards, modern, forward looking, open, peace loving, egalitarian, driven by technology and knowledge, an ecologically aware country based on solidarity.

We have a position to defend as a banner country – in the EU and in the world.

Sweden has a government that is silent.

We have a Foreign Minister who no longer calls genocide for what it is.
A Foreign Minister who only a few years ago at the bidding of American lobbyists worked for the invasion of Iraq – in conflict with international law.

A Foreign Minister whose private financial interests here and there in the world makes it very unclear whom or what he represents – Sweden, a multinational company, or just himself?

One thing is unfortunately obvious.

It is not only in Sweden that people pay attention to what is written about this Foreign Minister.

Through embassies this analysis of his doings is communicated to heads of state and of governments all over the world.

What do they think of Sweden today?

We cannot allow the reputation that Sweden has as a democratic, open and cooperative country to be eroded in this way.

It has been said of Olof Palme that he made Sweden appear abroad as a country that was bigger than it is in reality. This can be said without hesitation about Anna Lindh.

To all of you active internationalists I have this to say;

We do not need to make Sweden much bigger – must we must help to ensure that we can continue to be the people that we are.

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The most pleasant experience I have enjoyed over the past years has been Dan Andersson, not the chief economist at the Swedish LO but the poet whose songs are once again being sung. We have a treasure of songs and poems that are close to the beginnings of the labour movement, forever young – as he would have put it himself:

“Come, sun, as a god to meadow and field.
Shine heart and long for the light,
Blow winds come rain in the glades,
Grow grass over the wild murrain.”

Nature has always meant a lot to people.

With its resources – oil, metals, food, herbs and fodder for beasts.
With its cultural values – recreation, experiences, open plains and the freedom for the flights of the mind.

“Come stand by me at the meadow gate,
When the wild geese fly over town.”

Isn't I beautiful?

“When living is to carry rocks
And your song is a sorrow, the wandered cranes can call”

Dan Andersson. There is so incredibly much in this treasury of poetry and song.

I could have read from our guidelines, our election manifesto, speeches or proposed bills. They are not so easily memorised; strange when you think about it! But they too have a beauty. They too are for reading. We have produced so much through all the years, as you would see.

They are called, and this is poetry for our times: LIP, HUT, KLIMP and the commission on oil – they don't sound quite so beautiful but they are.

In terms of the facts it is difficult to find anything more important to get done today than the building of an ecologically sustainable society.

At the end of the day it is an issue of tremendous importance.

An issue neither for me, nor for you either – when I gaze over this room. We will make it. But what of our children? What of their children? And their children? It sounds simple but the challenge is tremendous.

In a strange sort of way environment policy in our movement is something we think we can manage. At the start when the first uncertain steps were taken it wasn't uncommon to hear of the conflict between the possibilities of running an industrial policy and economic growth and on the other hand to continue, as a condition for such policy, to exploit our natural resources.

We managed to sort that out over time. Today most people think that the next leap forward in economic growth can only be done if we ensure that it is ecologically sustainable. These things hang together, we understand that now.

Still it is sometimes a sticky issue. I know. I have worked with the question for over eleven years day in and day out. Sometimes it has been easy. Sometimes we have cheered at our meetings. But sometimes someone has come forward and said "Must you harp on about all that? That's what you said last year at our district conference".

Yes I did say that. But things still look the same as they did last year. We haven't budged much since then.

For my own part it is an insight that has developed over the years. We have a moral responsibility for those who come after us and it is an infinitely greater and more demanding task than we could ever have imagined.

We will not be able to manage the environment problems we have as they appear at the moment. We will not be able to set aside the threat to the climate. We have to go on working with it. Their children will have to go on working with it.

Man has created the problem. Man is a fantastic creature. I began with a declaration of faith in man His and her ability to grow and develop. But human beings also achieve results that are not always quite so beautiful This is a clear example of it.

But whatsoever man has created man can also undo. We believe in mankind.

I put my faith in technology, in science. I believe in the power of rational thought. I am convinced that much of the technology we need to solve our problems is already at hand, or within reach. But it is not emerging and the question is why not.

Well because the forces that represent the old technology still draw up the agenda. That's how it is. Lobbyists do not work for the new ideas. Lobbyists work for the old. The solutions for tomorrow have no lobbyists. The solutions of tomorrow- they are borne by people of conviction who have ideals and values. Values that are based on the idea that we have something to hand over to those who come after us, more than we have inherited ourselves. That's where politics comes in.

There is no other movement with the strength that we have and that can meet the challenges to the environment.

What we have to do is what we have done in so many other areas of life.

We must build, invest, do research, and educate. We must set limits, draw up rules. We must do everything needed that requires common decisions based on faith in politics. The market will not solve these problems. The market is an excellent servant but a bad master.

Those who solve the problems will be those who work together in political processes. We have the knowledge. We have the engagement. We have the task. This is the major challenge facing social democrats in the future and it is not about us but about our grandchildren.

Take the chance to do something!

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There is another lesson to be learnt from the years past that we can take with us into the future.

After the 1998 election the party executive sat and discussed the results at the party's headquarters. It was not a particularly happy gang that met.

It was the 25th of September. We had lost the support of every fifth voter. Still many of us thought that the election campaign had been good and that we had got our message across.

It was a clear warning. When I read the minutes of that meeting I see that I said as follows:

“We have an old body with a strong heart and arteries that are a little clogged up at the extremities.....We don't have any feeling there. We could operate and put in a pacemaker or do a by-pass but if our fingers are white then there's not much we can do. This is the situation we face. This is the first and most important thing to consider. How can we lose so many votes in an election? Is it the case that our party no longer has any contact with those groups that decided to stay at home on Election Day?”

Everyone sat there with long faces then we rallied and won the election in 2002. Then the same thing happened again. And just as clearly as we won the 2002 election will we win the election in 2010. That's it.

I will not steal a march on the work of the groups analysing the election results.. But the most dangerous conclusion we face is this:

The moderates can sell as many hospitals as they want to.
 They can lower unemployment insurance to shamefully low levels.
 They can segregate children in schools more brutally than they say.
 They can erase the wonderful work of municipal adult education.
 A warning to municipalities. Keep an eye on this.

They can pour billion on billions over the already well-off.

What it will lead to is a feeling of powerlessness, increased social exclusion, greater social differences – all that.

What it will lead to is insecurity and disappointment for many – all that.

It will lead to dissatisfaction- all that too.

But those who stand to gain from dissatisfaction are not the social democrats. We are not a party for the dissatisfied.

We know what happens when powerlessness deepens and reaches a low point. The energy created does not benefit or play into the hands of a democratic party – it opens the door for a frightening and dangerous development that has little to do with democracy.

Those who gain from dissatisfaction are parties of the type we have now met in many of our democratic assemblies.

It is for this reason that a moderate government is doubly dangerous for Sweden.

We are now witnessing changes in Swedish society that cannot be reversed. Everybody will be affected – few have asked for it.

The moderate government has a weak mandate, 60 -70 000 voters made all the difference. See the weak mandate in relation to the victorious feeling and the almost superior attitude that the moderate leader displays when he talks about the strong mandate that he has been given to carry out all these far reaching changes. It is difficult to understand it.

Put that against the speed crazy liberal party leader who said only the other day to a leading newspaper that he had met a man from Gothenburg who according to Lejonborg had said:

“I wake up every morning feeling happy because the government is so smart.”

I wonder if I have ever met anyone who has said anything similar about us. That I would say calls for some carefulness. I have worked together with others so I know that one shouldn't expect to be too happy when one wakes up, but well prepared for hard work and good comradeship.

We have spent a lot of time, resources and energy in restoring basic security after years of economic crises and balancing the budget.

Things can be restored. I would like to warn against an attitude that is spreading now that they are destroying the unemployment insurance system. We can make sure that unemployment insurance is once more strong and acceptable. Clearly we can afford that. I am convinced about it. Politics is a question of choice, all the time a question of choice.

With the economic development we have laid the foundations for we will be able to see vigorous growth during the coming years. This provides room for reforms and changes in taxation and to reduce the national debt. We can decide for reforms and what we will push for is decent unemployment insurance because it provides a basic security for people. We can afford it and we have demonstrated that strong unemployment insurance can be combined with a competitive economy. Don't buy the argument about what we can do or not do in four years from now. Be careful about taking any benefits in advance but there will be considerable room for reforms.

Returning hospitals that have been sold to the public sector will be very difficult but it can be done.

A morning fix will perhaps be more difficult than any other.

How do you give the chance back to a generation that has lost it?

How do you restore the loss of self confidence for thousands of people who have been thrown out of education, out into unemployment or low paid jobs?

If we are to win the election in 2010 then we must formulate a political alternative that catches the worries and disappointments of people. Change a sense of powerlessness to a dream about something better.

Social democracy has over all the years been a movement that has stood for hope and faith in the future.

Butt hen we cannot have white fingers!

We must understand ourselves, believe in ourselves know what we want and who we are.

During the coming years we will not bear responsibility for the nation. We can and we must put more effort into responsibility for the party, for the popular movement that is social democracy.

More members, more local associations and more activities.

But also new ways of meeting people among all those who can become our future supporters. Among all those who have no one to speak for them.

This must be our way to regain feeling in our fingers.

After that we must formulate a critic of society as we have always done, and turn it into a policy directed at the future.

Le us then be careful with our analysis of the election results.

Let us get to the bottom with it.

But at the same time let us not bury ourselves in the analysis.

There is a time ahead when we know that social democracy will be needed.

At that the national board of the party in 1998 that I mentioned I also said: "the situation is serious but not hopeless. We are all tired, but we are not out for the count."

That's how it was then. That's how it is today.

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one final reflection before I end my speech:

When Tage Erlander handed over to Olof Palme, the finance minister of the day, Gunnar Sträng, said:” social democracy is not a party that elects a new prime minister every ten years.”

That says a lot about Sträng`s time and about our own.

But he was wrong about it, the good Mr Sträng.

After Olof Palme, Ingvar and I have in principle held the chairmanship for ten years each.

But Sträng had as a background the conditions that held sway during Erlander`s time. That was a time when prime ministers could go home at around five in the evening and walk about freely on the streets and squares of the town. There was only one the two television channels, a national radio and a lively labour press.

In those days it was a matter of course that we elected a party chair and a prime minister at the same time.

The party chair we elect today will start as leader of the opposition.

For better or worse.

I got no opportunity to try it out. To be honest the only days I felt that I could feel that I wasn`t prime minister and only party chair, was the First of May.

The First of Mat, we will soon be there, this fantastic day in the year.

That feeling I can only hope the new party chair will enjoy – being the chair of the party first and foremost and then later of course, the prime minister of the country.

It remains to be seen if it will be a question of a decade this time round as well.

But a little advice, Mona, from someone who has experienced it: eleven years is enough!

* * *

Now I draw the line.

The next chapter will be written by the new chair.

I hand over the gavel.

I shall join the fantastic band of has-beens.

Just look at them! Here we have the boys from the young socialists, Ingvar and Thage. I will enjoy being among them.

I have had years of success, years of despair and fantastic years.

They have been a mixture of experiences, debates and scrums, discussions and fights, memories and unforgettable encounters.

There have been trips here and there, cities and forests, placards and believe me some pie casting.

It has been a time for compromise and a fantastic amount of affection.

I see that you have prepared a small thank you ceremony.

I think it's a bit back to front.
It's not for you to thank me. I must thank you.

Thank you is a small phrase and short.
Its amazing that it can contain so much.

Years of trust. The trust placed in me by so many. Years of fantastic meetings in the party. Years of comradeship strengthened by the disappointments. The feeling of togetherness, the parties and the flags – the intoxication of happy days.

And all these good results from the policies we pursued.

We have made a difference. We have wrought change. We have made improvements.
We social democrats, working together.

I feel certain sadness, but also pride and joy – and some relief.

Göran Persson ended his speech with a roll call of thanks to different groups within the labour movement and the social democratic party.