

Skåne Facts

Red Skåne

May 1 demonstration in Malmö, 1936. Demonstration along Amiralbron. Photo: Otto Ohm/ARAB

The election last September of the centre-right government led by Fredrik Reinfeldt saw many writing obituaries for the famous Swedish "Welfare" Model characterised by high taxes, high unionization and relatively even distribution of wealth. Though the Social Democratic party may have lost power the new government's manifesto is far from a wholesale rejection of the Swedish Model, which claims its origin in Skåne – the cradle of Sweden's welfare system - with Malmö supplying many of the leading minds behind the Model.

On a cold November day in 1881 at the hotel Stockholm in Malmö August Palm (1849-1922), a Socialist agitator born and raised in Skåne, gave a speech entitled "What do Socialists want?". It was probably the first socialist speech ever made in Sweden and changed the country forever. Palm's speech marked the birth of the Swedish socialist movement. Eight years later, the Social Democratic party, the oldest political party in Sweden, was established followed by the powerful Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) in 1898. Palm spent the years after his historic speech touring the country and editing socialist newspapers. He also visited America, where he spent a few months in prison for spreading anti-militaristic ideas. Though Palm made enemies both within and outside the labour movement, he is still considered one of the founding fathers of Swedish social democracy.

A Working Class Hero

Born to a working class family in Fosie, Malmö, Per Albin Hansson (1885-1946) was a natural-born political activist, who rose through the ranks of the Social Democratic party and became its chairman in 1925. Three years later he made his famous Folkhemet speech, introducing the concept of "a welfare state" to the Swedish public. Hansson was elected prime minister in 1932 and served four terms. It was during his 16-year rule he con-

structed the famous Swedish welfare state while controversially keeping Sweden out of the Second World War.

Other innovative minds

Ernst Wigforss (1881-1977) was born in Halmstad and studied at Lund University. An important Social Democratic theoretician, member of parliament, and finance minister, Wigforss advocated social welfare, high progressive taxation and socialization of industry in order to achieve a free, secure and efficient society.

Nils Karleby (1892-1926) was born in Västra Karleby. He was a writer and ideologist who started out as a journalist and editor at Skånska Socialdemokraten and went on to become an influential publicist advocating socialism based on freedom and democracy. Perhaps more than anyone else, his views led the way to the movement's welfare politics.

Gustav Möller (1884-1970) was born to an extremely poor family in Malmö. At the age of 34, Möller became a member of parliament and later minister of social affairs from 1936-38 and 1939-51. Though he failed to become party leader, Möller is credited as the architect of the Swedish social security system.

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