"The Presently Weak Authority of the Schools". Child Labour Legislation, Compulsory Education and Family Strategies in Sweden in the 1860s and 1870s.

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Family Strategies in Sweden in the 1860s and 1870s

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Introduction

The circumstances in which children grow up today are totally unlike the nineteenth century. The differences are numerous. Today's children spend much longer in school. They consequently spend less time on the streets, and their first experience of work comes increasingly late in life. During the nineteenth century, school assumed duties that had previously been the responsibility of the family. The development of school was affected by the reduced need for child labour, making it necessary to prolong school attendance. It was also influenced by a concern for the working-class family; the way the working class rear their children has always been a problem for those in power in society. There are indications of a deliberate aspiration to get children into school and out of what were considered harmful settings -- the working class home and the streets.¹

This paper deals with a period when the discussion about children included concern for the way - and where - they ought to spend their formative years. I shall examine the background to the 1881 ordinance on child labour in industry. The aim is to present a political and institutional context which will allow us to understand the authorities' interest in legislative regulation of child labour. The discussion will deal with the popular reaction to the development of a compulsory schoolsystem as well as the consequences of the establishment of the schoolsystem in itself.

The fact is that the present state of research is so contradictory on some points that more research is called for. We shall begin by looking at the legislation and at previous research.

The state of research

From the mid-nineteenth century, child labour became an issue for debate in the Swedish parliament and among the bourgeoisie. After having discussed the question of minors' labour for a few sessions, parliament eventually managed to agree to set up a committee to deliberate legislation. The resulting Minority Ordinance of 1881 prohibited children under twelve from working in factories, while children between twelve and fourteen had their working day restricted to six hours. Children employed by factories, craftsmen, and other tradesmen were obliged to have instruction in school at times directed by the school council.² According to earlier research, it was largely a humanitarian attitude to children that brought an end to child labour. The legislation meant that child labour, which was never very widespread to begin with, could cease completely.³

¹ B Sandin, Hemmet, Gatan, Fabriken eller Skolan (Arkiv 1986).
² SFS 1881:64.
³ H Sellberg, Staten och arbetarskyddet 1850-1919 (uppsala 1950); B Hedvall, "Debatten om barnarbete i industri och hantverk 1850-1883"; Ideologi och socialpolitik i 1800-talets Sverige (178); T Gårdlund, Industrialismens samhälle (1942); T Fogelberg, "Den mindreåriga arbetskraften inom glasindustrin" In; Kronobergsboken (1973).
Legislation on child labour has attracted renewed attention in recent years. Lars Olsson, in his dissertation Då barn var lönsamma (When Children Were Profitable), questioned prevailing views about the relationship between legislation and the end of child labour. He argued that the growth of factory manufacturing in the first half of the nineteenth century brought about a greater use of child workers. Division of labour in the factories meant that children could do simple, monotonous jobs requiring no skills. Later, when the factory owners sought to increase and control production, they mechanized some parts of the work, with the result that there was neither need nor use for the children. They were replaced by machines. Children were no longer employed in these child-intensive businesses, even before the ordinance of 1881 could have had any effect on the extent of child labour. Olsson therefore challenged the view that the humanitarian and idealistic ambitions of factory owners and representatives of the authorities can explain the abolition of child labour. He also points out that the legislation made exception for the sectors where children were still employed. Olsson argues his case convincingly as regards the decline of child labour in the businesses he has studied. The background to the legislation itself, however, is not discussed in any detail. There is therefore reason to present previous research in somewhat greater detail.

Hjalmar Sellberg, in his dissertation on Staten och arbetarskyddet 1850-1919 (The State and Industrial Welfare 1850--1919), discussed child labour legislation under the heading "The Conservative-Liberal Phase". The initiative for legislation on safety was taken, according to Sellberg, by both conservatives and liberals. It was largely motivated by humanitarian concerns, without "subsidiary political motives". There was, however, a certain fear of discontented socialist agitation: Sellberg refers to the fact that the child labour committee brought up the risk of such agitation in connection with the presentation of the Belgian legislation. The proposed legislation in Sweden was mostly the work of the clergy and the farmers. In addition, some initiatives were taken by groups of entrepreneurs. No social groups in the debate stood out as particular advocates for or against the legislation. The clergy and teachers may have had certain professional interests making them more enthusiastic than others. Sellberg point out that the clergy had an interest in closing loopholes in the school legislation, but he does not develop this line of thought. What was characteristic of the period, according to Sellberg, was the lack of outright conflicts of interests and ideologies.

Barbro Hedvall has devoted greater attention to child labour legislation and the parliamentary debate, but she also fails to see any pattern in the positions taken for and against legislation. In her view the advocates and opponents of legislation to protect minor workers cannot be clearly divided on the basis of the type of argument they used, their social and economic status, or their political outlook.

4 L Olsson, Då barn var lönsamma (Tiden Stockholm 1980) especially chap. 8-11.
5 S Sellberg p. 66 ff.
6 A a p. 21 ff 66 ff.
Hedvall also shows how factory owners argued on both sides of the debate, but that "the proportion of representatives of the authorities, including clergy and teachers, was greatest among the advocates of legislation". By contrast, most of the employers were opposed to it. Hedvall concludes that it is difficult to see any definite patterns in the attitudes for or against legislation, but that "economic and professional interests" in a broad sense were decisive for a majority of the employers, but also for clergymen, teachers, and doctors.

What Hedvall demonstrates more clearly than Sellberg is that the issue of industrial welfare had two components. One concerned the problem of the working environment, while the other concerned children's knowledge and school attendance. Hedvall classifies the arguments for legislation into three groups: humanitarian concerns, the need for preventive social measures, and the example of foreign countries. Humanitarian views find expression in the concern for the children's physical well-being; children were to be protected from the shortsighted interests of both parents and employers by means of state intervention. Moreover, the children's spiritual - intellectual - development was to be guaranteed. The clergy discovered the intellectual deficiencies of the children during confirmation classes and demanded that the state acted to maintain children's education, especially Christian knowledge. A crucial argument, according to Hedvall, was that knowledge was valuable in itself, and she concludes that "it was in the interests of society as a whole to have knowledgeable, enlightened citizens. The employers had greater use for educated workers who could be entrusted with more difficult tasks." The state was to provide good elementary education and thereby assert the long-term interests of society.

The humanitarian arguments were expressed both by representatives of patriarchal conservatism, who valued the interests of society higher than private interests, and among representatives of classical liberal ideas, who attached importance to "general education and the notion that enlightenment was an important condition for society's progress". Hedvall claims that influences from continental and English legislation were significant for the Swedish legislation. There was also a pronounced social-conservative impulse for preventive action. It was the responsibility of the state to ensure that workers' conditions did not grow so harsh that their discontent could express itself in violent outbursts. Hedvall, however, does not attach as much importance to foreign examples as Sellberg. The critics put the emphasis on the expected negative consequences for industry and for families' ability to provide for their children when parents were deprived of the extra income from child labour. Many were opposed to state intervention, believing that the law was unnecessary.

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 A a passim
10 A a p. 213 ff.
11 A a p. 213 f cit p. 214.
12 Ibid
13 A a p. 215 f.
14 A a p. 216.
Hedvall and Sellberg both start with the assumption that child labour was on the increase during this period. On this point they share the perception expressed by some of the people who were active in the debate. It was maintained that child labour was increasing and that legislation was necessary to halt this trend. But the reality was different. In the trades studied by Lars Olsson, it was found that child labour was decreasing from 1860 for the entire group of children under fourteen. For the 10-12 age-group child labour was relatively insignificant in scope already in the 1860s. This development is explained by changes in the production process.\(^\text{15}\) Humanitarian ideas and a positive view of learning are thus not enough to explain the abolition of child labour. This shakes the foundation of previous research into the decline of child labour.\(^\text{16}\) Since Olsson's dissertation, Eva Österberg and Rolf Nygren have had cause to discuss child labour and legislation. Both seek in different ways to assert the importance of ideas for the ending of child labour and the passing of legislation. Eva Österberg, in her review of Lars Olsson's book, expresses the view that fluctuations in the extent of child labour as a result of the economic cycles, the supply of manpower, and the general development of ideas, together with changes in technology, explain changes in child labour and hence also why it ceased.\(^\text{17}\) This explanation has been rejected by Lars Olsson in a reply where he points out that changes in the economic cycle and variations in manpower supply cannot be seen as alternative explanations of the structural change. He also cites other empirical evidence for his opinion, and broadens the discussion to consider different ways of viewing history.

Rolf Nygren puts great emphasis on the humanitarian views of children and child labour as an explanation for the change in legislation. In this respect he concurs with previous research and avoids taking a stance vis-a-vis Lars Olsson's results. His article is characterized by a highly positive view of the legislation as an expression of the authorities' desire to protect the children and guarantee their right to an education. The state acted to save the children from

\(^{15}\) Olsson p. 105 ff, 135 ff.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

both parents and employers, and, like the humanitarian outlook, influenced the scope of child labour.

Ironically, Olsson's explanation of the end of child labour, although inspired by historical materialism, means that the former idealistically oriented view of the background to the legislation holds firm. For if child labour was already declining before legislation, how can the legislation be explained if not by reference to humanitarian ideas? Why introduce a law that was unnecessary? Research hitherto has explained that humanitarian ideas were the fundamental reason for the passing of the law, quite irrespective of whether the law put an end to child labour or not.

The problem

As the state of research is today, only one explanation of the child labour legislation of 1881 has been presented. Humanitarian beliefs united philanthropists from different camps to pass laws to protect children. Legislation was intended to safeguard the physical well-being and intellectual development of the children. However, the different components of the research findings do not cohere very well. There is a fundamental discrepancy between Olsson's results and the explanation of the child labour legislation as a consequence of humanitarian ideas. The passing of the law now seems incomprehensible, at least if one doubts the value of ideas as the central explanatory factor in political decisions.

In the case of the present topic there are several possible explanations which have not been considered by previous research. Let us therefore once again attempt to sketch a conceivable explanation for the child labour legislation, one which can also take account of the fact that child labour in child-intensive industries was discontinued early on as a stage in the development of the production process.

Research into the child labour legislation can be used as a starting-point for demarcating the problem area, as regards both facts and theories. The school question played an important role in the debate, according to both Sellberg and Hedvall. Despite, this, neither of them discusses the development of school in the light of child labour legislation. Still less have they considered the latter in the light of the former. There is therefore good reason to look more closely at the connection between the development of school and the child labour legislation. It may then be appropriate to begin by presenting the way in which the school question was defined in connection with the debate about child labour, as regards both the contents and the matter of school forms, After that I shall present the relevant details in the development of the school system.

There is also a theoretical reason for choosing a perspective different from that expressed in the earlier studies. Sellberg and Hedvall consistently present the debate about child labour
from the viewpoints of the individuals or professional groups involved -- it is always a question of the doctor, the teacher, the employer, or the public official. There is no discussion of what these concepts might mean when translated into terms of class or politics. The consequence of this individual-oriented approach is then, it seems, an unproblematic view of knowledge, mechanically coupled to vaguely defined societal needs -- knowledge requirements. But what sort of knowledge mattered? The child labour debate was not about children in general -- it was about working-class children. It was thereby an expression of power relations. The right and opportunity to influence the life and existence of another social class was a given part of the political system. One must then ask why working-class children were not supposed to work. Another important question is: What institutions administered and expressed the socially determined demands and opinions about the labour of working-class children? Who pursued the issue of the abolition of child labour, and why?

Another problem is how the reality is perceived. Was child labour on the increase, as Hjalmar Sellberg and Barbro Hedvall seem to think, or was it declining, as Lars Olsson shows? Sellberg and Hedvall accept the picture of reality as portrayed in the contemporary debate. How could people then believe that child labour was increasing if it really was decreasing? Let us begin by following the debate about child labour.

"A certain measure of knowledge"

We can begin by noting that questions concerning the teaching of children did not constitute a discrete educational issue but also affected legislation in other areas. Since the early nineteenth century at least, the education of children had been an important sphere of responsibility for poor relief. It was not until before the passing of a law in 1842 that school was clearly defined as a distinct sphere, but co-operation with poor relief was still to remain of central importance for the school system. In addition, legislation concerning crafts and industry had long considered the instruction of the working children. Master craftsmen were responsible for the moral development of their employees. It was the duty of employers to ensure that their subordinates had a reasonable knowledge of the catechism. The Factory and Craft Ordinance of 1846 decreed that no one under twelve could be taken on as an apprentice, factory worker, or craft worker. Minors who fell short of the minimum requirements specified by the Elementary School Code were to be given instruction at times determined by the employer. In 1850 the Handicraft and Industry Association in Göteborg took the initiative for legislation to protect minor workers. They expressed a will, as also expressed later by the county administration and the city council, to prohibit night work for minors, to limit working hours,

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18 Sandin chap. 5 och 6.
19 A a p. 144 ff.
20 SFS 1846:39
and to demand proof of knowledge and age. It appears to have been mainly tradesmen on the city council and the Factory Association who argued in favour of these demands, while the representatives of the cotton industry opposed them. The former claimed that children's knowledge must be maintained until the age of confirmation, and above all that children without the required minimum knowledge should not be employed. When the government in 1852 prohibited night work for children under twelve, no action was taken about the level of children's knowledge.

Demands for certificates of education, however, were raised during the parliaments of the four estates in 1856--1858 and 1859--1860. Dean Rundgren from Norrköping proposed a motion to change the conditions for employment in factories. Children were to have reached the age of twelve and have a certificate to show that they had acquired a minimum of elementary school learning, "at least reading and religious knowledge". In the parliament of 1856--1858 Rundgren's proposal was supported only by the clergy, despite favourable treatment in committee. During the following parliaments, 1859--1860 and 1862--1863, support diminished further, and the motion had no direct consequence for later legislation. Rundgren's argumentation may nevertheless be of interest in this context.

He began with the Factory and Craft Ordinance of 1846 and the prohibition of night work in 1852. According to the former, it was the duty of factory owners and others to monitor the minor employees' "piety, orderliness, and good conduct". Children without proper knowledge were to be made to attend Sunday schools or other places of learning intended for factory and craft workers. The prohibition of night work also meant that children under twelve could not be employed. Rundgren thought that the existing legislation was obviously insufficient, chiefly because it was poorly enforced. He declared that, although it was impossible, even in an industrialized society, to prohibit the employment of children under twelve, it was difficult to ensure that those minors who lacked Christian knowledge were given sufficient instruction. The extent to which the law was followed came to depend on "the employer's perception of his duty to those who are left in his care".

Rundgren was therefore of the opinion that legislation should not content itself with stating an age limit of twelve. The law should also state the other criterion for determining maturity, namely that "the children shall have attained a certain degree of knowledge, a certain intellectual development". He also looked at the international scene for support. He took his examples from England and France, where children had to have certificates to show that they had attended or were attending school. In Prussia, according to Rundgren, the law required

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21 Civildep Konseljakter 22.5.1852 Nr 3 (RA).
22 Hedvall p. 132 ff.
23 A a p. 136 Om remissbehandlingen av göteborgsföreningens skrivelse och dess mottagande i övriga städer see a p. 134 ff.
24 För en allmän översikt av frågans behandling se Hedvall p. 138 ff.
25 Prästeständets pr 1856-1858 p. 341 ff.
26 A a p. 342.
documented proof of literacy or three years' school attendance if the factory did not have its own school.27

Industrial development in Sweden made similar regulations necessary. To begin with, it was not so easy to catch up on neglected education after the age of twelve; moreover, twelve-year-olds who had attended school needed continued instruction if they were to retain their knowledge. The law must be clear on these points, said Rundgren,28 who urged that

"as a condition for starting employment there should be prescribed a certain measure of knowledge of religious truths, which can be inspected so that the state may be sure that the young citizen is not totally ignorant in this respect. A certain knowledge at the age of twelve can, if it is forgotten, easily be relearned."29

A modicum of knowledge was to be required before children were allowed to work. Since the Elementary School Code had certain minimum requirements of the knowledge of school leavers, these should be prescribed as the level of basic knowledge required for starting to work. School legislation would thus be co-ordinated with labour legislation. In this way there would be less conflict between work and school in factory towns. Children's education would not be neglected if people knew that it was a necessary condition for getting a job.30

"A strong helping hand would thereby be given to the school's present weak authority over parents. The conflict between work and school ... would be diminished. ... The employer who needs young labour would also be given an interest in the work of the school, and children would come to understand that not only physical but also intellectual development is necessary to enter the ranks of the employed (italics added)."31

At the following parliament of 1859--1860, Rundgren once again brought up the relationship between work and school. He emphasized the danger of families choosing "to sacrifice their children's education for immediate gain; the employer has no less a temptation to ignore the spiritual well-being of someone else's child with an eye only to his own temporal interests".32 Society must also consider the growth of spiritual forces, so the minimum requirements of elementary school must be co-ordinated with laws on safety at work. Rundgren and Dean Sondén of Jönköping (who supported Rundgren in both parliaments) were not interested in schools run by the factories themselves. The quality of teaching could not be inspected so easily, and the employer could evade fines simply by referring to his factory's school, regardless

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 A a p. 343.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
of its educational standards. Above all, argued Sondén, employers could not be expected to make work subsidiary to school at their factories, and it would scarcely be possible to increase the knowledge of children who were working at the same time. "For a factory owner can rarely allow the children enough time for attending school." Nor could he be expected to have sufficient control over a school. Despite this, Sondén claimed that he knew employers who were in favour of the proposal, since it would make the work of the factory school easier.

Rundgren argued his case eloquently. He claimed that it ought to be a joy and a security for employers to see their work being carried out by thinking people. It was on the basis of this truly enlightened rhetoric that Rundgren pleaded for legislation that did not even demand all the minimum standards of the Elementary School Code. It was enough if children met the requirements of reading and religious knowledge.

At the parliament of 1856--1858 another motion was proposed, according to which working hours for children in factories should be limited. Children under fifteen were to work no more than eight hours a day. Both this and Rundgren's motion were supported by the general appeal and economy committee. In parliament the motion was supported only by the clergy, while the motion to limit working hours was supported by all the estates except the bourgeoisie. Rundgren's motion was supported by the clergy with no debate in 1856--1858 and 1859--1860, but it was rejected there in 1862--1863. The other estates in parliament gave a chilly reception to Rundgren's motion on all these occasions.

The peasant estate rejected Rundgren's motion without debate at the two latter parliaments. At the first, however, there was some debate. It was asserted that it was unreasonable to fine an employer who took a child into his factory out of mercy, and there was a risk that demands for certificates of education would also be raised in the countryside. Barbro Hedvall sees the negative attitude of the peasants as due to the risk that the proposal would in the long term "affect the peasant farmers as employers". At the same time, however, the demand for shorter working hours for children in factories was accepted by the peasant estate.

The bourgeois estate rejected the proposal to reduce working hours in 1859--1860. Only one speaker was in favour of the motion. The criticism of Rundgren's motion on certificates of education was not so compact. Although some entrepreneurs, such as Waern and Murén, dismissed it as a coercive measure, others were in favour of it, including Ekman, a mill owner, and Swartz, a factory owner from Norrköping. The latter was a zealous advocate of certificates of education in the bourgeois estate in the 1850s.

In short, the demand for certificates of education received scant support in parliament during the period in question. Support from the committees also declined after the parliament of

33 A a p. 316, 313 ff.  
34 A a p. 315.  
35 A a p. 315.  
36 Hedvall p. 138 ff quote 147.  
37 A a p. 144 ff; Borgarståndets pp. 1859-60 III p. 612 ff.
1856–1858, probably as a result of the changed composition of the committees. A parliamentary letter to the government in 1857 concerning a restriction of working hours for minors made no mention of certificates of education. The letter was referred to the Board of Trade, who asked for opinions from factory associations in Stockholm, Göteborg, Karlshamn, Gävle, and Nyköping. The reaction was mostly unfavourable. They could conceivably accept general legislation, not laws directed against certain trades only. On the other hand, the factory association in Göteborg also expressed a view, fully compatible with the attitude they had expressed previously, that protective legislation was above all "required out of concern for the children's education and instruction".38 A reduction in working hours was intended to give children time for schooling and must therefore encompass all trades.39

The Board of Trade declared in its pronouncement to the government that a change of current legislation was scarcely called for. If the time was ripe for a more detailed investigation of the matter, a committee of experts should be established, "on which doctors, primary school teachers, and factory owners should preferably be represented".40 No committee was set up, and the estates' letter in conjunction with legislation on freedom of trade did not result in any changes in children's working hours or required knowledge.41

"In respect of children employed in factories"

The issue came up once again in the reformed bicameral parliament of 1870, where a parish clerk named Jöns Rundbäck (Farmers' Party) proposed a motion about children's factory work in the Lower House. The plight of factory children was painted in vivid colours and with critical pungency. Working hours were too long, he declared, and the teaching given to children was highly limited. Existing legislation was insufficient. At the age of twelve a child had not developed fully enough to endure factory work. Nor could children's upbringing and education be considered complete. Rundbäck demanded that working hours for children between twelve and sixteen should not exceed ten hours per day.42 The committee gave favourable consideration to the motion, and a majority of those who spoke in the house were in favour of a regulation of working hours. The mayor of Jönköping, however, was highly critical. Objections were also expressed by the former proposer of motions on the issue, Dean Rundgren of Norrköping. His view was that the crucial problem was rather that the age of employment was too low and that a certain degree of knowledge should be required before employment. Other suggestions, such as a limit of twelve working hours, were made, and the earlier parliamentary letter was brought up again. The result was that Rundbäck's proposal was

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38 A a p. 149.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Motioner AK (Motions to the Lower House) 1870 no 88.
referred once again to committee consideration, after which parliament had no time to deal with the matter.\footnote{Ak pr 1870:3 p 307 ff.}

Jöns Rundbäck returned to the next parliament with new ideas about the issue. He now attached greater importance to the educational question. Rundbäck suggested that working hours in the factories be limited to ten hours a day for children and young people between twelve and eighteen. For craft work a restriction of working hours was not as essential, since sanitary conditions were generally better there than in factories. The minimum elementary school knowledge and an age of at least twelve were to be the absolute minimum requirements for employment in shops and factories or apprenticeship to craftsmen. Yet another important addition was made: children were to have the opportunity to have "necessary" teaching for about an hour every weekday and the chance to go to Sunday school.\footnote{Motioner AK (Motions to the Lower House) 1871 no 68.}

Some amendments were suggested when the proposal was examined by a committee. It was not the working hours that were a problem, but the sanitary conditions of the younger workers. Moreover, conditions were not the same in every branch of industry. Legislation should therefore apply primarily to factories where sanitary conditions were worst. Those specially mentioned were the textile industry -- spinning and weaving mills -- along with cigar, paper, and match factories. The demands for minimum knowledge needed particular attention "in respect of children employed in factories". Factory work had a detrimental effect on children's ability to assimilate instruction. The problem was greatest for children whose knowledge was lowest when they began work in production. The committee therefore felt that it was justified to demand minimum elementary school knowledge of child factory workers. Unlike the regulation of working hours, the knowledge requirement was to apply to all factories without exception, but it was not to apply to children employed in shops and craft work. Shop workers, according to the committee, were bound to acquire more knowledge than what was required by the decreed minimum, while children working in crafts did not work so intensively as to prevent general schooling. At the same time, the committee rejected the demand for daily instruction of child workers, since this was considered to impair the children's chances of finding work\footnote{Bih till Riks pr 1871 saml 2., adf 2., band 14., häft no. 25.}. The Lower House passed the motion by acclamation.\footnote{Ak pr 1871.}

Rundbäck's motion met a different fate in the Upper House. The committee which considered the motion and the proposal from the temporary committee in the Lower House drew quite different conclusions. There was a detailed account of the treatment of the matter in the Lower House, and there was an admission of the general importance of the problem for the state. At the same time, it was asserted that the country was not suffering any great problems on account of "insufficient statutory regulations" -- industrial activity was far too limited for this. Statistical calculations now showed that the number of young people in factories was
increasing. There was therefore good reason to intervene in time against "the evil", while the problem was still limited in scope. The experience of other countries, however, scarcely gave any unambiguous indicators of the most suitable approach. The point of departure for legislation was not only the work environment but also the need for sufficient education. Regulation could be justified on account of "the more or less harmful effect of factory work on young people, who have not yet attained that stage of development where they have the necessary resistance to the harmful influence of factory work on the health, . . . (as well as the need for the requisite time to be granted to them to acquire the degree of knowledge intended by our normal elementary school instruction."47

Foreign legislation provided guidance in the latter respect. It had been shown that working hours should be limited to different extents for different age groups. The committee was therefore negatively disposed towards the Lower House's decision in favour of restrictions on working hours only for children in particularly insanitary industries. Something had to be done about health hazards in factories, but the need for schooling justified the restriction of working hours by legislation affecting "factories in general or in greater conformity with the motion as proposed"48. The time young people spent in insanitary places had to be limited and effective supervision had to be established. The committee was in agreement with the Lower House as regards the need for legislation. The complicated nature of the matter, however, meant that a committee of inquiry should be set up. This was also the core of the proposal submitted to the Upper House, but with the recommendation that the motion as presented in the Lower House should be rejected 49.

The debate in the Upper House was short. The proposed committee to inquire into the need for a reduction in working hours was rejected. Rundbäck's motion was thus defeated by the opposition of the Upper House. The debate gives little information about the reason for the negative attitude. The regulation of working hours and the proposed control system were evidently delicate issues. The favourable statement of the committee had been accompanied by a dissenting opinion to the effect that relations between the classes, one of the knottiest problems of the age, risked being undermined by a law which could not be supervised or enforced. It was necessary to avoid reducing the confidence in their masters and employers felt by the servant class, in particular "the generally less peaceable factory workers in the larger towns"50.

In both houses the education question had a central place in the discussion about what was the very problem of child labour. It was also obviously the case that the regulation of working

47 Bih till Riks pr 1871, saml 2., afd 1., band 7., häft no. 8, quote p. 5.
48 Ibid.
49 A a p. 7.
50 A a p. 7 samt FK pr 1871; 4 p. 467 ff.
hours for children was now viewed not only as a health issue but in equal measure concerned the possibilities of educating children. In addition, the question could be presented as a need for general legislation for all factories as a result of the fact that the demand for knowledge applied to more children than those working in insanitary conditions. The significance of the education question is also shown by the fact that the discussion referred primarily to "young people", including minors up to the age of eighteen.

"In the large factory towns"

A motion about child labour was proposed in the Upper House in 1875 by F. F. Carlson, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs (whose portfolio included educational affairs). The question was raised at the same time in the Lower House by A. W. Staaff. Both motions mentioned the consequences of labour for the children's health and the need for a more rigorous examination of children's knowledge on their entry into working life. Different arguments were emphasized. Staaff described conditions in the cities. Pupils often left school without the prescribed degree of knowledge, "which should now be unconditionally required of every member of society". The causes were the poverty of the population and the need for "quick gain", as well as the attraction of the numerous jobs as a way of allowing children to contribute to the support of the household. It was admittedly true, said Staaff, that the Freedom of Trade Ordinance of 1864 made employers responsible for ensuring that children were receiving schooling, but "how shall this come about when the children are put to work from early morning until evening?" He wondered if it was possible to expect the "strength and inclination" for study after a hard day's work. For all those children who lacked the necessary skills in reading and writing, "for which daily exercise is required", an occasional hour's teaching on Sundays was of little help. The situation was "of a pernicious and profoundly far-reaching nature for the population of the large towns and cities, and of no little significance for the future of our native country".

The importance of the matter demanded as comprehensive and effective regulations as possible, and "also changes with regard to working hours". It was not enough to append to previous legislation a provision for certificates of the minimum elementary school education. Parliament should request the government to restrict working hours and to prohibit the employment in shops, crafts, and factories of children without the necessary knowledge.53

F. F. Carlson referred in his motion in the Upper House to foreign legislation -- the foremost models coming from Denmark and England -- and to conditions in the large factory towns. He also referred to the law of 1864, pointing out its weaknesses. There were no regulations about

51 Motioner FK (Motions to the Upper House) 1875 no 19 (FF Carlson) Motioner AK (Motions to the Lower House) 1875 no 126 (A W Staaff)
52 Motioner AK (Motions to the Lower House) 1875 no 126 p. 23
53 Ibid.
the length of the working day or sanitary conditions, and "it is left to employers to decide the
days and hours when factory children can enjoy schooling". Further regulations were called
for. In view of the increased number of young workers he felt that conditions "in the large
factory towns appear both to show the necessity for guarantees for the enforcement of the
existing law and to call for new legislation".

F. F. Carlson supported his argument by referring to reports from the school authorities in
Stockholm, Norrköping, and Malmö. The elementary school inspector in Stockholm had
presented material to show the great number of children under twelve who had left school
during the period 1872--1874 to work in factories and craft workshops. In addition, he was
able to present details of working hours for those pupils who attended continuation schools
and catechetical schools. The school board in Göteborg deplored the children's long working
hours and the consequences for "health", "languishing strength", and "spiritual development".
The elementary school board in Göteborg had already appealed to the government for a
change in the 1864 Freedom of Trade Ordinance regarding the stipulations about the education
of factory children. The school board in Malmö had also expressed a desire that the 1864
legislation should be co-ordinated with the regulations of the elementary school code,

"and that irrespective of age, no children may be employed in factories other than those who after
attending the minimum teaching have received a leaving certificate from the school. For it has been
found that a great multitude of children, as soon as they reach the age of twelve, disappear from the
elementary schools not only in the towns but also in the surrounding localities, although they have often
failed to acquire even primary school knowledge".

In Norrköping the school council had tried to achieve an agreement with employers to allow
children to attend continuation school on Wednesday afternoons. The efforts of the school
council had been unsuccessful.

F. F. Carlson concluded that the consequences of this development were so obvious that
they scarcely required any comment. "Physical weakness and the seeds of life-long illness must
be thus incurred, and no less a threat is the vulgarity which otherwise results when the door to
education is closed". It was necessary to promulgate "regulations concerning the length of the
working day, concerning daily teaching for the children, concerning the sanitary conditions in
the factory and the supervision which the state should exercise in this respect". In conclusion,
F. F. Carlson appealed to the government to draw up a statute regulating the use of young
people in factory work.

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54 Motioner FK (Motions to the Upper House) 1875 no 19 p. 25.
55 A a p. 28.
56 A a p. 29.
57 Ibid.
58 A a p. 30.
The motions were passed on for consideration by committees. The chairs of the two committees were occupied by F. F. Carlson and A. W. Staaff. Barbro Hedvall points out that it appears as if there was some consultation between the two committee chairmen, since their two motions concluded in virtually identical wording. It is moreover obvious that the Lower House committee had been influenced by the arguments put forward in the Upper House by F. F. Carlson, since there was a consideration of foreign legislation, and an illustration of the argument by reference to conditions in Swedish towns. The temporary committee of the Lower House emphasized the duty of state and local government to work on behalf of an increase in educational standards. It was a fundamental demand that no child should lack that "little measure" of knowledge encompassed in the minimum requirements of the elementary school. It was claimed that current legislation was often ignored. Not only were children under twelve employed, but the continued teaching was also highly unsatisfactory. The children's long working hours made proper teaching impossible.

"That no small number of the urban population thus grows up without acquiring other than in a highly imperfect manner the most essential general knowledge is an experience which finds support from the observations which the clergy have been forced to make when preparing young people for communion. It is also not infrequently evident that many children of both sexes have not had any instruction, or at least only very incomplete instruction, for several years, occasionally not since the age of nine or ten." 59

The Lower House committee therefore found it desirable to introduce a regulation about the degree of a child's knowledge on employment, and, so that knowledge would not remain at this low minimum, "there is also a great need for a restriction of working hours, adjusted to suit the different ages". The physical well-being of the children now had to be given greater consideration than before. In addition, the state was to introduce effective supervision to ensure that the regulations were observed. 60

In the Upper House committee the education problem was further underlined. Industry had developed vigorously and the number of minors employed had doubled in the preceding ten years. Since working hours were not restricted, the provisions of the 1864 Freedom of Trade Ordinance, to the effect that children should regularly attend Sunday school, did not have the intended effect.

"It is in the nature of things that a previously deficient education cannot be successfully made complete; not even what has previously been learned can be maintained, and the consequence is that a significant part of the population is growing up in a serious state of vulgarity." 61

59 Hedvall s. 158 f.
60 Bih till Riksd pr 1875, 8 saml., 2 band., 14 häft. no 21, quote 2 f.
61 Ibid.
62 Bih till Riksd pr 1875, 8 saml., 2 afd., 1 band., 4 häft. no 4, p 4.
The school boards in the factory towns had not been able to cope with the child labour problem with the aid of current legislation. The factory owners had not been able to meet the demands of the school boards, not even in isolated cases, on account of the risk of losing in competitiveness against other, less scrupulous employers. It was therefore necessary that

"no children should be allowed, at least not without the authorization of the relevant school board, to be employed as shop assistants or factory or craft workers, unless they have been duly certified to have learnt the minimum requirements prescribed by the Elementary School Code. A foundation would thereby be laid, upon which could be built, with some hope of success, a continued education limited to a small number of hours per day. It is further considered necessary that there be rules to determine how many hours a day a minor may be kept at factory work. . . . This would be a way to remedy not only the complaints that have been heard, that monotonous and strenuous work with long periods between breaks hampers or disturbs physical development, but it would also provide an opportunity to obtain tuition during a certain part of the day."\textsuperscript{63}

The problem of industrial welfare thus had different components. The demand for certificates of education meant a more distinct co-ordination with the elementary school code's minimum knowledge requirements. Changes in working hours were advocated primarily with reference to the need for education, but in large measure also for health reasons. As regards the need for education, the Upper House motion for the first time made a clear distinction between children aged 12--14 and young people aged 14--18. In addition, the committees proposed legislation to apply to all factories and craft occupations. This stance was also influenced by the more general problem of school and education, although in the debate it was mostly the conditions of factory children that were emphasized.

According to Barbro Hedvall, parliament handled the motion like a skilful pilot negotiating potential shoals. There was, for example, no discussion of any concrete proposals which might provoke objections from the various interested parties. The formulation of a statute was left to the government and a committee of inquiry. The success of these tactics naturally depended on the positive attitude of the government. F. F. Carlson's place in the government guaranteed this.\textsuperscript{64} It was probably also important that the legislation was expected to apply to all spheres of business. It was stated in the committee proposal that in other countries this had meant a breakthrough in gaining the approval of employers. This suggestion thus disarmed the criticism which had greeted the proposals in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, to the effect that they would have negative consequences for some factories and businesses. The only concrete suggestion in the motions and committee resolutions was the stance adopted on

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Hedvall p. 160 ff.
the issue of schooling, the demand for certificates of education and continued teaching. It was this which justified the age distinction, as well. All other questions were left to a committee of inquiry. A proposal to inquire further into the matter was passed by acclamation in both houses\textsuperscript{65}. The debate, however, was not without interest.

In the Upper House, industrialists questioned the need for a reduction in working hours, while rural interests were doubtful about the examination of children’s knowledge. Revd Rundgren from Norrköping was also against a reduction in working hours, but in favour of a more comprehensive examination of knowledge. Those who supported the motion included educationalists, clergymen, doctors, a few farmers and a few public officials, the publicists S. A. Hedin and Lars Johan Hierta, Granlund the coachbuilder, Wedberg the wholesaler, and the two Göteborg businessmen Aron Philipsson and Peter Hammerberg.\textsuperscript{66} The elementary school inspectors’ data the number of children who left school prematurely were questioned by Berg, a cotton manufacturer. As far as he knew, no children under twelve were employed in the factories. He therefore doubted whether the children under twelve who left school actually got work in the factories and craft workshops. If this happened it was because they lied about their age. He also thought that the working hours were incorrectly reported and that the work was generally light. In his opinion, the factory owners themselves should be allowed to decide when children should go to school, for example in the way he himself had handled the problem. Berg, however, did not propose any motion. He only declared that he wished to contribute some information on the matter. F. F. Carlson observed that no other motions had been proposed and that there was no reason to doubt the reports of the Stockholm elementary school inspector. The house passed the motion as proposed.\textsuperscript{67}

The debate in the Lower House was more extensive. An estate owner named Ehrenborg, for example, criticized the way the committee had been given such freedom to draw up a proposal. The concrete views on the need for education were severely criticized. Compulsory schooling was impossible to implement, and in any case the factories were a far better moral and physical environment than the workers’ homes. This was guaranteed by the owners’ magnanimity and concern for the children. It was appropriate, however, to restrict working hours so that children could attend school, but this could be achieved by amending the legislation already in effect.\textsuperscript{68}

Ehrenborg’s speech received a reply from A. W. Staaff, the proposer of the motion. He refuted the criticism of the formal procedure and went on to discuss the core of Ehrenborg’s argument, that certificates of education were unnecessary. Experience from the elementary school pupils of the capital and from those children who had gone out to work had convinced

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, see note 65
\textsuperscript{66} Hedvall p. 158 ff.
\textsuperscript{67} FK pr 1875:III36 p. 3 ff.
\textsuperscript{68} AK pr 1875:39:IV p. 5 f quote p. 8.
him that it was absolutely essential not only to reduce working hours but also, if knowledge were to be maintained, to demand certificates of education.

"We should also see to it that it should no longer be possible for children to leave school so early that they know nearly nothing. My original intention was not so much to speak of a specific measure of minimum knowledge which could be expected as that some knowledge, however slight, ought to exist (italics added)." 69

The committee, however, had already decided that it was most suitable to express the expected degree of knowledge in terms of the minimum elementary school requirements. Staaff claimed that these requirements should not be any deterrent. If children started attending school at the age of eight, seven, or even six,

"then by the age of twelve, thirteen, or at the latest fourteen they should have managed to get through the work required. . . . Now it is obvious that every demand must be qualified, . . . there is always some elasticity in this minimum. To take Christian knowledge, for instance, or even reading, it is clear that it is only at a more advanced age that they can show any real insight in the former or true skill in the latter; but at the age mentioned they ought to be at least reasonably well acquainted with and trained in these subjects. I do not think that this is asking too much." 70

He also challenged the view that legislation had become too strict, adding: "I would further emphasize that something must unconditionally be done" (italics added). The house was not to have exaggerated fears about the implementation of the law. His Majesty's government was free to establish the conditions and "grant exemptions where particularly pressing circumstances may dictate". 71 The house approved the motion that the matter be further investigated. 72

There is no need to follow the debate further. To be sure, some time was to pass before the law came into force. A committee of inquiry first examined the matter and reported its opinion, after which the royal ordinance was sanctioned. This prohibited child labour in factories for children under twelve. It also restricted working hours for children aged 12--14, for whom it required organized school attendance. It is obvious that the school question, here as in the parliamentary debate, had a guiding influence on the classification of children's age groups. It was declared that children under fifteen, whether working in factories or in crafts and other trades, were obliged to "avail themselves of teaching" at times determined by the

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69 A a p. 9 ff quote p. 10.
70 Ibid.
71 A a p. 11.
72 A a p. 18 ff.
school council, after consultation with the employers. The demand for education thus applied not only to child factory workers but also to all children in towns.

Practically nothing new was said about the issue after the parliamentary decision to set up a committee of inquiry, although the differences between the committee's proposal and the wording of the final statute are rather interesting. The daily extent of teaching, for example, was not regulated by the ordinance, although the committee had suggested that the children should be taught for two hours a day. 73 Nor did the ordinance heed the committee's suggestions for proper measures to supervise and enforce the statute.

The crucial question can now be asked: Why did the issue of child labour achieve a breakthrough in parliament, a breakthrough which actually led to legislation? My intention here is not to identify the actors in the affair, but rather to try to indicate the social forces which were channelled in the public debate.

"The school's present weak authority over parents"

We can begin by observing that the knowledge that was expected appears to have been relatively modest. Nothing more than the minimum elementary school requirements was even hinted at. Knowledge of the catechism was what was demanded. Even when the rhetoric spoke of the need for educated, enlightened workers, the arguments boiled down to demands for the most basic and rudimentary requirements of the Elementary School Code. The conclusions drawn by previous historians about the need for educated workers thus seem to find little support, not only in the Elementary School Code of 1842 but also in the debates of the 1870s. The demands for knowledge did not envisage any development of school education, aspiring only to attain the lowest expected school standards. When the question first came to the fore, the problem was formulated as a need to strengthen the weak authority of the school over children and parents. The same can also be illustrated from arguments used in later debates, as should be clear from what has been said above. The pattern is well known from earlier years. The debate about elementary school education and the Elementary School Code itself are examples of legislation which was ultimately a critical questioning of families' ability to look after their children in a satisfactory way. 74

At the same time, however, the Elementary School Code did not provide a particularly powerful weapon for the authorities to use against "contumacious" parents. Compulsory school attendance was formulated as the amount of knowledge children were obliged to be taught; no particular ages were stated between which children were expected to attend school. It was expected that the minimum knowledge would be acquired before children attended church confirmation classes. The parliamentary debate shows that this weakly formulated rule

73 Hedvall p. 164 ff 188 ff.
74 Sandin chap. 6.
"in a city like Norrköping it happens not infrequently that people from the countryside move in with their children, with the very motive of harvesting an income through them, because the children have already reached or will soon reach the age when they can be put to work."76

If children went to school for a shorter time up to the age of twelve, their lack of basic skills meant that teaching was completely wasted. The lacuna could scarcely be filled after the children had left school. No extra tuition could be permitted by the employer, and the working-class children hardly ever attended any catechetical examinations.77

Other speakers in favour of regulating working hours pointed out the generally poor control the urban schools had over attendance. It should perhaps be underlined that all the industrialists who spoke in the debate declared that they did not employ children under twelve, referring to the Factory Ordinance. They also claimed that the education provided by the factory schools ably met the expected standards. This was questioned by several speakers, who said that the teaching in the factory schools was unsatisfactory on account of the children's exhaustion. Those who spoke against regulation maintained that the factory at least offered the children an environment that was better than what they had at home.78

Let us leave the debate in parliament and ask a new question. Can it be that child labour and the low level of school attendance were a problem for urban authorities? To answer this question in detail would require a thorough analysis of the development of school in Swedish towns and cities. No conclusive answer can be given here, but it should be possible to clarify some lines of development.79

*NOTE*

The presentation of the development of the urban school system is based on a study of unpublished school council and school board minutes and documents from the period 1847--1880, from the Stockholm Board of Education, the school board and council in the Stockholm parishes of Katarina and Klara, and the school boards and councils in Malmö, Norrköping, and Göteborg. In addition I have used the published annual reports and the statistics they contain.

76 Borgarståndets pr 1859-1860 III p. 612.
77 A a p. 612 ff.
78 A a p. 612 ff FK pr 1875:111:36 p. 2 ff AK pr 1875 IV p. 5 ff
79 Framställning av skolväsendets utveckling i stadsmiljöer bygger på en genomgång, otrycka skolråd- och skolstyrelseprotokoll samt handlingar till protokollen under perioden den 1847-1880, från Stockholms skolöverstyrelse, skolstyrelserna/skolrådet i Katarina och Klara rorsamlingar- Malmö skolstyrelse/skolråd dito för Norrköping och Göteborg. Dessutom har de tryckta årsberättelserna och där anförd statistik använts liksom material från centrala myndigheter För en detaljerad redovisning hänvisas till en kommande slutredovisning av projektet "Barn skola och social utveckling i sveriges storst.id. 1850--1910".
as well as material from state authorities. A detailed account will be presented in a final report from the project "Children, School, and Social Development in Sweden's Cities 1850--1910".

*END NOTE*

It is perfectly clear that the urban school authorities had aspirations and demands of school far exceeding the code that applied to the nation. In this respect there are distinct parallels to development before the passing of the Elementary School Code in 1842, when there was a fundamental difference in the scope and nature of the school system in the towns and in the countryside. After 1842 the capital Stockholm and the cities of Göteborg, Norrköping, and Malmö issued local codes according to which school attendance was to be compulsory from the age of six or seven up to twelve. Steps were also taken to provide organized primary school teaching before elementary school proper began. School could not build on the teaching of reading in the home, as the national code had decreed; this must also be taught in school. The authorities also took steps to provide essential instruction for children who had left school. Sunday schools and continuation schools were arranged for working children. A royal circular of 22 April 1864 also decreed that the school councils were responsible for ensuring that children who had left school maintained their knowledge. This circular from the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs must be seen in connection with the parliamentary debates of 1862--1863 and the regulations concerning education which were introduced then and renewed in the Freedom of Trade Ordinance of 1864.

The authorities' demands and expectations of school bore the stamp of a highly negative view of conditions in working-class families. On the one hand they condemned working-class "indolence" and "lack of discipline", while on the other hand they felt compassion for the harsh conditions prevailing in working-class homes. In both cases the same conclusion was drawn: children had to be separated from the injurious environments of home and street and the unsuitable environments of work and factories. School was the instrument to achieve this. It was symptomatic that the elementary school board in Stockholm in 1860 did not consider it necessary to specify the minimum educational standards in the same way as in the national code, since it was thought that no one could fail to learn so little during the time the pupils were obliged to attend school. In the light of Staaff's complaint some fifteen years later about schoolchildren's defective knowledge, this attitude appears a trifle optimistic.

The consequences of poor education were of the utmost political importance. The elementary school board in Göteborg formulated its goals in 1865 as follows.

"The constantly increasing immigration from the countryside, . . . of which the majority comprises poor labourers, should not fail to call upon every effort on the part of society to counter the perils which would otherwise derive from this source. What is required to forestall the threat of a proletariat from this
quarter is, first and foremost, that the elementary schools take in the growing children from the families in question in order to communicate to them good and honest knowledge, obedience to law and justice, love of God and one's neighbour. *80*

But this was easier said than done. The children's attendance was highly irregular. It varied according to the need for the children's help in the home and according to their chances on the labour market. Even more seriously, children left school altogether when either they or their parents considered suitable. Nor did those children who started work worry excessively about retaining their knowledge by attending continuation school. A new circular about the registration of children in continuation schools was issued on 15 October 1869. Parental supervision of children's attendance appears from the school boards' reports to have been as ineffective as the schools'. The difficulties are underlined by the fact that the authorities did not exactly know how many children there were in the towns. Registration was imperfect and mobility high. For Stockholm the establishment in the early 1880s of the roteman system (with a person responsible for each ward) meant a more effective registration of schoolchildren, who could thereby be more efficiently supervised and controlled.

The school authorities exerted themselves to make the children come to school. All the towns were divided into districts with inspectors responsible for supervising the children's school attendance. Teachers were entitled to fetch the children from their homes, and parents and children were warned of divine wrath and secular punishment before the class or the school board. Children received corporal punishment for failure to attend school. The establishment of reformatories made it possible in some cases to remove children from unsuitable homes. In addition, collaboration began with the police to ensure that children of school age did not roam the streets, sell newspapers and pamphlets, or commit thefts of various kinds. Children caught in Malmö, for example, were recorded in the "detectives' register of minors receiving punishment or warnings" for thefts of coal, clothes, and food. Punishment consisted of a caution or a flogging, sometimes in the presence of parents summoned to witness it.

In this way the development of school in the towns in the period 1847--1875 meant a massive institutional and educational process of change. The internal work was consolidated by the establishment of a functioning school administration and a decidedly hierarchical organization which was in large measure created to facilitate supervision of school attendance. At the same time, the authorities grappled with the difficulties of creating effective sanctions at a local level, without the support of national legislation.

In all the cities mentioned there were difficulties in making employers respect the laws and give the older children the opportunity to attend classes. In Norrköping and Göteborg meetings were held with employers to discuss the problem, but without result. In Malmö the

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80 Berättelse rörande Göteborgs stads folkskoleväsende 1865 (Göteborg 1866) p. 19.
legislation of 1864 was published several times in the newspapers, urging employers not to take on minors and to respect the needs of school. According to a Norrköping textile manufacturer, it was impossible to let children between twelve and fourteen attend classes without causing grave production problems; no children under twelve were employed.

The measures were not very successful. We can observe, for example, that although the number of older children registered in the schools between 1852 and 1870 was increasing, a majority of the children had already left school at the age of ten or eleven. Moreover, at the beginning of the 1870s more children were leaving school at an earlier age than before. It can also be noted that the school attendance of girls was increasing more rapidly than that of boys. In other words, the boys must have been on the streets or in different forms of employment. This development must have occasioned concern when immigration to the towns was rising at the same time. It may have been difficult for the authorities to prevent children from leaving school once they attained the minimum level of knowledge, and -- perhaps to an even greater extent -- to make the newly arrived children come to school. Perhaps there was a rise, not in the number of children working in factories, but in the number employed outside school. Child labour was not confined to industrial work but comprised many different activities, from minding children to hawking things in the streets.

School, towns, and state -- a perspective

Let us now return to the introductory questions. Although a detailed analysis of the development of school in urban settings remains to be made, it can already be stated that the national legislation can be explained with reference to conditions in Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö, and Norrköping. Social development meant that the weaknesses in the school system were manifest there. It was not possible to socialize children via school in the desired manner. Children were not kept off the streets, and it was doubtful whether the negative influence of the families could be countered. The interval between leaving school and being confirmed was felt to be a problem. That the school authorities negotiated with employers bears witness to the belief that part of the solution was to be found in a restriction -- or regulation -- of the demand for child labour (especially children aged 12--14).

At the same time there was a development of state regulation and supervision of conditions in the municipalities. For the elementary school this meant the appointment of school inspectors and the elaboration of a subsidy system. This control went hand in hand with the development of the local school administration. The cities dealt with here were made into single consolidated school districts at an early date, with local school inspectors being appointed. At the beginning of the 1870s the inspectors in the cities were of great significance. Moreover, the state system of inspectors and subsidies meant that a close link was established between the urban school boards and the superior authority, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical
Affairs. The evidence for this comes from the reports and correspondence about the minors' question, of which there was a steady traffic between the ministry and the urban school boards. This is an example of a general feature of the way the new state power ruled and brought the autonomous local government along with it.  

It was therefore no coincidence, nor was it a question of personality, that it was the head of the ministry responsible for school affairs, F. F. Carlson, who proposed a motion that was actually within the sphere of responsibility of the Ministry of Public Administration. The proposal strove to regulate a question of crucial importance for the urban school system, namely: between what ages must children attend school, and how shall education be organized for children who leave school early? The impact of the education question -- on the debate, on the committee inquiries, and on the wording of the ordinance itself -- makes it legitimate to ask whether the idea of legislation on industrial welfare was not a disguise for school legislation. Was the Minority Ordinance perhaps part of an attempt to prepare the way for a renewal of the school law? This was issued in 1882, one year after the Minority Ordinance, and meant that school attendance was compulsory between the ages of seven and twelve, and children were obliged to have teaching up to the age of fourteen. An ordinance concerning state subsidies to continuation schools had been issued in 1877 -- by F. F. Carlson. These attendant questions cannot be answered here. But we have made some progress along the way. 

The explanation for child labour legislation must be sought in the social development of the towns and in the establishment of influential school boards. It was not, at least on this point, a question of any development of a humanitarian ideology, but rather a problem of social conflicts in towns and an administrative solution. The conflicts were about where children should best spend their years of growth. The choice was between the home, the street, work, or school. The answer of that age, as of our own, was school.

81 I Norrlid, Demokrati, skatterättsvisa och kommunal demokrati (Lund 1983).
82 Compare Hedvall p. 161.
The Department of Child Studies

Linköping University hosts an interdisciplinary Institute of Advanced Study known as the Institute of Tema Research. The Institute of Tema Research is divided into five separate departments, each of which administers its own graduate program, and each of which conducts interdisciplinary research on specific, though broadly defined, problem areas, or "themes" (tema in Swedish, hence the name of the Institute). The five departments which compose the Institute of Tema Research are: the Department of Child Studies (Tema B), the Department of Health and Society (Tema H), the Department of Communication Studies (Tema K), the Department of Technology and Social Change (Tema T), and the Department of Water and Environmental Studies (Tema V).

The Department of Child Studies was founded in 1988 to provide a research and learning environment geared toward the theoretical and empirical study of both children and the social and cultural discourses that define what children are and endow them with specific capacities, problems, and subjectivities. A specific target of research is the processes through which understandings of 'normal' children and a 'normal' childhood are constituted, and the roles that children and others play in reinforcing or contesting those understandings. The various research projects carried out at the department focus on understanding the ways in which children interpret their lives, how they communicate with others, and how they produce and/or understand literature, language, mass media and art. Research also documents and analyses the historical processes and patterns of socialization that structure the ways in which childhood and children can be conceived and enacted in various times, places and contexts.

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