History of Education

Journal of the History of Education Society

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/thed20

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To cite this article: Carl-Filip Smedberg (2025) "A New Type of Aristocracy": Envisioning Educational Divides in the Swedish Conservative Party during the Birth of the Post-Industrial Society, ca. 1965–1972, History of Education, 54:1, 76-95, DOI: 10.1080/0046760X.2024.2418384

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2024.2418384

Published online: 18 Nov 2024.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION
2025, VOL. 54, NO. 1, 76–95
https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2024.2418384

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

"A New Type of Aristocracy": Envisioning Educational Divides in the Swedish Conservative Party during the Birth of the Post-Industrial Society, ca. 1965–1972

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ABSTRACT

In the 1960s, people across the West started imagining that they were in a societal transition. Crucially, in these future-oriented discussions, social class was often transformed into educational attainment as the main dividing line. These future studies garnered attention across the political spectrum, including the Swedish Conservative Party. This article aims to investigate the Conservative Party's considerations on the societal and future role of education during the 1960s and 1970s. I show how the Conservative Party was one of the first proponents in articulating visions of the post-industrial society in Sweden. It saw the societal changes it brought about as its chance to realign the electorate and the political landscape in its favour. The educated voter was constructed by the Conservative Party as a new leading class in a society centred around education. The article contributes to the history of educational ideas of the 1960s and 1970s, educational classifications, futurology and post-industrial ideas.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 16 April 2024
Accepted 30 September 2024

KEYWORDS
Post-industrial society; educational divides; Swedish post-war history; conservatism; future knowledge

Introduction

In the 1960s, people across the West started imagining that they were in a societal transition. This idea, initially proposed by various social scientists and theorists, gained broader discussion and traction across different segments of society. The new age was given different names, such as the educational, post-industrial and later knowledge society, all of which in some way signified the passing of the old industrial order. Higher education here emerged as the new focal point of society and the driving force behind growth. Sweden was internationally recognised in future studies as a pioneer in advancing towards a post-industrial society, serving as a model for other countries to learn from. Crucially, in these future-oriented discussions, social class was often replaced by – or transformed into – educational attainment as the main dividing line.

These future studies garnered attention and were undertaken not only by liberals and socialists but also by conservatives, including the Swedish Conservative Party, which is the focus of this article. I show how the Conservative Party was one of the first

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proponents in articulating visions of the post-industrial society in Sweden. It saw the societal changes the post-industrial society brought about as its chance to realign the electorate and the political landscape in its favour. Despite polling between only 10% and 20% of the electorate in a predominantly Social Democratic polity (Social Democrats being in power from 1932 to 1976), the Conservative Party offers valuable insights into the broader circulation of future studies, post-industrial theories and emerging visions of education in the 1960s and 1970s.

The article aims to investigate the Swedish Conservative Party's considerations – specifically the party's Programme Committee, which in 1965 was tasked with modernising its political programme – on the societal and future role of education during the 1960s and 1970s.[1] How did it assess the ongoing expansion of education and what implications did this have for its political strategies? To answer these questions, I have studied the Programme Committee's published works and texts by its chair Erik Anners (1916–1997), and the public debate it engendered through the Conservative journal *Svensk Tidskrift* and the Conservative Party membership journal *Medborgaren*, as well as in the Swedish press through the digitalised newspaper database at the National Library in Stockholm, covering the years 1965–1972.

The 1960s were a time of educational expansion on all fronts. In 1962, the Social Democratic Government introduced a comprehensive nine-year school system, and, by 1971, the various forms of upper secondary education were consolidated into a unified system, soon enrolling the majority of new cohorts.[2] Like many other western countries, Sweden transitioned from an elite to a mass higher education system, with university attendance tripling during the decade.[3] Research on educational conservatism has highlighted common themes, including concerns over lowering standards and a defence of tradition and Christian values.[4] Some Conservative parties defended selective schooling, while others such as the British Tories remained ambivalent.[5] In Sweden, many conservatives initially opposed comprehensive school reforms according to Lisbeth Lundahl, advocating instead a selective educational system. However, after the 1962 reform, their criticism largely subsided in fear of appearing backward. Furthermore, Swedish conservatives generally recognised the necessity of expanding education at all levels to ensure the country's competitiveness in the international economy.[6]

Although we have substantial knowledge about the educational politics and policy reforms of Conservative parties during the post-war era, there is limited understanding of their perspectives on the wider role of education, the new class of educated people they anticipated and the implications this had for their political strategies. Peter Mandler's insightful study demonstrates how the expansion of education was perceived by voters and parents as a new democratic right in the post-war era, characterising it as a "crisis of meritocracy" because it challenged the idea of higher education as a privilege for a small elite.[7] The problem with this is that at precisely this moment, brought on by expanding education, meritocracy was beginning to be discussed and feared.[8] In my view, historians need to engage in more in-depth studies on how historical actors made out both the opportunities and potential consequences of the educational revolution on social identities and society.

When studying Conservative parties in the 1960s, historians Martina Steber and Charles Lockwood have delved into the West German Christian Democrats and the British Tories. They uncovered a trend towards the scientisation of politics, marked by

a shift towards relying on opinion polling. Furthermore, there was a focus on long-term social planning, a robust faith in technology and the emergence of a novel environmental perspective in the latter half of the 1960s.[9] The Swedish Conservative Party has also been understood as being the most progressive in the 1960s, embracing planning, ecological thinking and the welfare state. However, the party also had its worst election ever in 1970, subsequently resulting in the party leader Yngve Holmberg (1925–2011) being ousted. This era of the party is thus seen as a failure.[10] However, I will show how it is also possible to view the party's strategic thinking here as the beginning of something new that would only grow in strength and with long-term consequences beyond the party politics of the time – the rise of the educated as a new imagined class.

While adding to the history of educational thinking within the Swedish Conservative Party of the 1960s and 1970s, the article also contributes to the history of post-industrial society, futurology and the cultural history of post-war educational expansion. Jenny Andersson has shown how futurology emerged from international social science and political discussions in the post-war period and became especially influential in the 1960s.[11] Research on futurology in Sweden has mostly focused on the national Secretariat for Future Studies (Sekretariatet för framtidsstudier).[12] However, there have been no studies on how the Conservative Party engaged in a kind of translation work of the theoretical future studies into political knowledge and used this to rethink the electorate and the educated voter. The main theorists of the concept of post-industrial society, such as Daniel Bell and Fritz Machlup, are well known,[13] but how the concept circulated in wider public debates is yet to be studied, except for Jenny Andersson's book on Swedish and British Social Democrats in the 1990s and their visions for a knowledge society.[14]

Closely related to how actors started to conceptualise a new type of society was the hailing of a new key social division between those with a university degree and the less educated or uneducated. Sometimes described under the heading of a meritocratic order, social belonging and occupational belonging were seen as increasingly dependent on educational merit. The emergence of this divide between the less educated and the well educated is still unresearched, even though studies on the figure of the intellectual in China, the educated in the post-war Soviet Union and ideas of "the new class" among American neoconservatives have recently been published, adding to a new cultural history of the post-war transition from an elite system to a mass system of higher education.[15]

This article draws inspiration from the field of new political history, in which historians such as Jon Lawrence and Harm Kaal study representative claims – how parties and politicians claim a part of the electorate – to understand how representative democracy and political communities have been constructed historically.[16] The article connects new political history with the history of education and knowledge[17] in terms of analysing how political parties are intertwined with different circulating forms of knowledge (e.g. regarding their electioneering, ideological development and governance) and with views of educational and societal futures. Harm Kaal and Wim de Jong have in this regard investigated what they refer to as the *scientisation of the political* in the Netherlands – how the social sciences have influenced party politics – and discuss the examples of mass psychology and opinion surveys.[18] In Sweden, the parties' use of voter statistics in the first half of the twentieth century has also been covered.[19] This article

analyses an important form of knowledge starting in the 1960s, something I refer to as *future knowledge*, specifically concerning educational levels and changes in society. As we will see, the actors themselves saw this as facilitating party politics becoming more based on knowledge, which is why future knowledge serves as both an analytical and empirical concept.

The article begins with a discussion on post-war understandings of the electorate to then trace the development of the idea of the oncoming post-industrial society and the educated voter in the Programme Committee's work in 1965–1967, moving on to the public debate in the press and then finally to Erik Anners's political interventions in the early 1970s.

The Shifting Boundaries of the Electorate

To understand the changing electoral and educational ideas of the Conservative Party, we must look at general ways of understanding the voter in the post-war period. The dominant way of understanding the voter up to the 1960s was through social class. Statistics Sweden (SCB) had since 1911 produced voter statistics categorising the electorate into three classes: social group I (upper class), social group II (middle class) and social group III (working class). The regular production of class-based statistics after every national election served as a knowledge infrastructure in cementing this specific ontology of the political. In what was referred to as class voting, the working class was seen as mainly represented by the Social Democrats and the Communist Party, while the Centre Party and the Liberal Party represented the middle class, and the Conservative Party represented the upper class. While this was disputed by the Conservatives – for example, in that they argued that they drew votes from all classes by offering something for different strata of society – the idea that people had material interests and that it made sense to categorise Swedes into classes was seldom challenged. The SCB stopped using class in the voter statistics after the 1948 election as they did not view this as accurate or based on any stratification theory.[20] However, the social group taxonomy lived on in opinion polling, political science and the public debate. It served as the basis for how Swedish Gallup (1941–1955) and its successor, the Swedish Institute for Opinion Surveys (SIFO) (1955–), as well as the University of Gothenburg's centre for election research (1954–), classified political opinion.[21]

The "marginal voter" was a new concept regarding a psychological type of voter who, after having been mentioned in passing a few times in the 1950s, entered the national media stage in 1960 in editorial discussions, mainly between the Conservative newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* and the Liberal *Dagens Nyheter*. This type of voter had some precedent in a group that emerged from Gallup's election surveys for the 1948 election: the "floating voter" group between social groups II and III – referring to upwardly mobile workers and lower white-collar workers – which the newspapers believed could decide the entire election.[22] But unlike the floating group of voters between social groups II and III, which was thus hesitant to choose the Social Democrats or the Liberal Party, this new category of marginal voters in the 1960s was established more as a psychological group moving between parties based on ideological convictions and doubts. The term enabled interpretations of political and psychological motives behind party choices.[23]

The idea of an increasing portion of marginal voters was supported by an innovation in opinion polling and the press: the monthly update on party sympathies. Conservative sociologist Hans Zetterberg took over SIFO in the second half of the 1960s and started to orient the institute towards providing political support to the Conservative Party. Zetterberg introduced the Monthly Barometer in which, starting in 1969, SIFO in collaboration with *Dagens Nyheter* published a monthly update on Swedish political party preferences. This marked a change towards constant surveys of a shifting electorate. Previously, Zetterberg maintained in a programmatic statement that there had been extremely small changes in the electorate between elections, but something had changed: he was now seeing "fluctuations of almost continental proportions," which is why this new media form was needed in political coverage. The description of a stable electorate exhibiting small changes between each election was no longer valid. Instead, he wanted to understand the voter as constantly in motion and reactive to political and current signals: a voter difficult to categorise and less bound by his or her social background.[24]

These debates indicate the potential of realignments and new boundaries within the electorate that would open up the vision of a new class of educated voters. This was done by Conservatives in their contemplation and translation of knowledge concerning the future.

The Conservative Programme Committee Towards the Year 2000

In 1958, Swedish sociology professor Torgny T. Segerstedt had already predicted an upcoming global shift towards an "Educational Society" focused on education and research.[25] The specific idea of Sweden as protean in a new stage of world history, however, mostly originated from analysts outside Sweden. In the book *The Year 2000* by American Cold War policy intellectuals Herman Kahn and Anthony Wiener and in the book *Le défi américain* (The American challenge) by French left-liberal journalist and politician Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, Sweden was hailed together with America, Canada and Japan for transitioning to a post-industrial state. Both books came out in 1967 and were soon translated into Swedish. Servan-Schreiber visited Sweden and met up with Prime Minister Tage Erlander, along with businessmen and intellectuals.[26] Moreover, Kahn was invited to a business workshop in Malmö together with the intellectual Daniel Bell and with Segerstedt to discuss the new social transition.[27] In Servan-Schreiber's widely popular book – selling more than 400,000 copies in France – Sweden represented a successful alternative to American capitalist ideals as a technically advanced export nation and a welfare society.[28] Kahn and Wiener, on the other hand, saw similarities. When placing the countries in the world on a scale, Sweden was only a few years behind America in modernity. For both, however, post-industrial society meant a drop in people working in the manufacturing sector and a rise in people working in the service and information sectors.[29]

Both books took inspiration from Bell, who in the late 1950s had started to conceive of the idea of a transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society. Since 1965, he had led the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' commission on the year 2000 to finally publish his book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* in 1973. Bell foresaw theoretical knowledge as the organising principle of the new society – and universities, laboratories and think tanks as being new centres – eventually becoming more important than capital

and natural resources.[30] Bell's work may be situated within the rise of an international movement for futurology and future studies, in which the future was seen as open. There was a strong overall belief in the possibility of long-term planning.[31] In Sweden, several Social Democratic intellectuals became interested in future studies, and in 1973 the governmental body, the Secretariat for Future Studies, was established.[32] One of the earliest proponents of future studies, however, was the Conservative Party and its 1965 Programme Committee.

Since the enfranchisement of most men in the 1911 election and of women in 1921, the Conservative Party had slowly dropped in support from being the largest party. The Social Democrats had already overtaken them by 1917, and that has not been reversed up to this day. In the 1950s, party leader Jarl Hjalmarsson was able to regain some votes, attaining 19.5% of the electorate in 1958 based on a consistent message of lowering taxes and increasing economic liberalism.[33] The new party leader in 1961, professor of political science Gunnar Heckscher, marked a more positive attitude towards welfare reforms, but bad polling in the 1964 election led to him being ousted in 1965. The new party leader in 1965 was Yngve Holmberg, former party secretary.[34] In 1969, the party changed its name from the party of the right (Högerpartiet) to the Moderate Coalition Party (Moderata samlingspartiet) to signal its modern outlook.[35]

One of the key ideological agendas and narratives of the Conservatives during the post-war period was that of a property-owning democracy (*ägardemokrati*), which was borrowed from a British Tory slogan[36] in the early 1950s and remained part of the political discourse up until the 1980s. The idea was to get Swedish voters to see themselves as owners – of homes, farms, cars, shares or companies – as a common political identity. This was a vision meant to encompass all of society, making everyone an owner, and in doing so rejecting industries being nationalised but also monopolistic capitalist tendencies.[37] The party's voting base was found in business owners and farmers, but it also sought to branch out to white-collar workers and the middle class.[38]

One of the first actions of the new party leader Yngve Holmberg was to assemble a party programme committee. It was led by Erik Anners, a professor of legal history. Anners had previously chaired the Conservative student national organisation from 1944 to 1948 and in that role participated in the 1946 Programme Committee. Here, he sought to make the party more socially conservative with ideas for positive reforms to expand the welfare state. He early on argued for a "radical," "modern," "active" and "progressive" Conservatism.[39] As the publisher of the main Conservative intellectual journal *Svensk Tidskrift* from 1957 to 1979, Anners was very much an ideas man, and, starting in the early 1960s, he often figured in the television debate programme *Nya kammaren* as the representative of the Conservative Party.[40]

As chairman of the Programme Committee, Anners invited different kinds of experts and appointed 18 special delegations to work on different questions. These were partly inspired by the programme work of the Austrian Conservative Party (ÖVP).[41] Historian Torbjörn Nilsson aptly writes that Anners created a "mini university" in the Programme Committee.[42]

Anners recruited Gustaf Delin (1930–2023) as programme secretary. Delin had a law degree from Uppsala University and had participated in the youth party's debates on the renewal of Conservatism. From 1966, he was working as "chief researcher" at the Conservative Party, thus highlighting the party's ambition to scientise its approach to

politics. To showcase and circulate the ideas of the Programme Committee, Anners and Delin published the debate book *Framtidens politiska vilkor* (*The Political Condition of the Future*) – with a preface by Yngve Holmberg – in the summer of 1966, while Delin also published the book *Arbetets framtida vilkor* (*The Future Condition of Work*) at the same time. Delin and Anners presented new fields in politics that they believed would become more important as time went on. These included foreign aid, computerisation, environmental policy and traffic safety. Anners would later reflect that this early adoption of American and French futurology gave the Conservative Party "a considerable edge" in these new types of political questions, which took the other parties years to catch up with.[43]

An essential aspect for the Programme Committee was that Sweden had transitioned from a society of scarcity to an affluent society, using Galbraith's terms, expanding not just to an abundance of resources but also a changing social structure, towards what Anners and Delin called "a new civilisation." This was driven by the massive expansion of knowledge and technological progress. Society could now afford to coordinate resources based not on profit but on need, and new jobs would subsequently be found in the sectors of development aid, education, health care, nature conservation and criminal reform.[44] Anners and Delin constantly returned to how they could not let technology become the master. Instead, the needs and values of society should inform and guide technological development. Here, nineteenth-century ideologies and institutions offered little guidance. Rather, the historical values of brotherhood, freedom and civic responsibility could offer stability in a time of flux.[45]

Anners and Delin took inspiration from American debates on automation, discussions initiated by the businessman John Diebold with his 1952 book *Automation*. Historian Lina Rahm has argued that between the 1950s and the late 1960s, the workers' movement saw automation as something good if it could be guided towards social goals such as more leisure time.[46] Anners and Delin's innovation in public debates was to link automation with literature on cybernetics, borrowing the concept of cybernation from the American debate and launching it in the Swedish public debate, meaning how machines and computers started to learn and improve themselves.[47] This would soon accelerate, they argued, with a large portion of production being fully automatised in 20 years. It was possible, they envisioned, to imagine whole sectors of physical labour ceasing to exist. This meant that the electoral base of the Social Democrats was eroding. However, Anners and Delin took things one step further: This not only affected the unskilled workforce, but also the more educated and skilled workforce. People who managed information and who monitored and planned work, even executives, could soon be replaced by computers.[48] All jobs "undignified for humans" (*människoovärdiga*) would be eradicated.[49]

In a twin publication of *Arbetets framtida vilkor*, Delin expanded on the question of automatisation. The eradication of simple and physically demanding jobs would enable people to work using abilities only available to humans, such as flexibility and the ability to think, analyse, decide and coordinate. However, there would be little space for the unskilled. To discuss the coming political effects of this, Delin included a chapter on immigration. We see here the beginning of a logic in the public debate in which immigrants were linked to a lack of education, thus representing a problem in the coming post-industrial knowledge society. Delin envisioned how immigration would

assume a more prominent role in the public debate as it would be increasingly difficult to offer immigrants jobs. They would need to take jobs that native Swedes did not find attractive.[50]

An aspect seen as pivotal by Anners and Delin was how the entire link between employment patterns in the population and productivity was getting severed. Going from a society of scarcity to an affluent society meant that for the first time in history, man did not have to work.[51] In a newspaper interview, Anners wanted Swedes to imagine a world beyond labour – what other scholars writing about automation and basic income have referred to as the end of "homo laborans."[52] Anners claimed that "man's main function is no longer to be a labourer, a factor of production."[53] What we see in Anners's and Delin's thinking is a new Conservative materialist analysis of politics but with a twist. The current affluence and economic security had allowed for a rebirth of values. All previous morals had been dictated by survival and one's place in the economic system. Abundance would make society pluralistic in terms of values as people were actually free to choose for the first time.[54]

An internal memorandum in the committee stated that the political considerations were even more stark in terms of how the Conservatives needed to adapt to the affluent society. Since experience could no longer offer a direction, experimentation and social science research should form the basis for political opinion and social action. However, according to the memorandum, a new type of uncertainty and lack of safety was spreading a feeling of disillusionment, disorientation and powerlessness. Hence, new forms of social control must be created. Organisations would need to orient people towards coexistence. Importantly, in the society of scarcity, politics had been an expression of the struggle of economic interest groups. With increasing material abundance, "this aspect of politics will be pacified," they wrote, and explained that political conflicts "may eventually become more about the difference in principled values resulting from differences in general cultural views than from differences in economic interests."[55] They saw a new politics emerging, similar to what political scientist Ronald Inglehart would later start to refer to as postmaterialist.[56]

In their book, Anners and Delin strongly emphasised that large-scale job loss should be countered not with an attempt to create new unskilled jobs but with the expansion of learning. Education could provide people with the intellectual tools, attitude and background for understanding rapidly emerging new problems. What they valued was theoretical education: "Is not the most useful and practical education for the future the theoretical one?"[57] Education also influenced attitudes towards the ways in which people think of and perceive reality and getting them used to the idea of progress and change, as well as enriching the life of the individual and making him or her able to enjoy more leisure time.[58] Thus, education would be at the heart of society. However, as explained in an article in the party's membership journal *Medborgaren*, due to the extraordinary expansion of knowledge, the question of who was educated constituted a moving target: "the 'graduate' of 1967 will be virtually uneducated in 1987." It was thus "necessary to plan for a lifelong education," but the distinguishing mark here was that lifelong learning was "for all those who are able to benefit from it."[59] This was in concurrence with the party's earlier view that theoretical education should be limited to those with the right precondition.[60] In contrast, Minister of Education Olof Palme, who would later become prime minister, in 1969 launched his vision for "Recurrent Education" at an Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) meeting. In his view, everyone could benefit from recurrent education.[61] However, what united them was the focus on education as key for future welfare and prosperity.

However, this could lead to a new class structure. In a subheading titled "The Educational Class Society," Anners and Delin discussed fears of a meritocracy, which had been named as such ever since the translation of Michael Young's 1958 book *The Rise of the Meritocracy* but which had been discussed in Sweden at least since the 1940s.[62] Some Social Democrats such as Alva Myrdal had expressed fears of the possibility of the depleting intelligence of the working class now that they were able to educate themselves and move up into the elite.[63] There was still hope and a belief, especially in the Social Democratic Party, in expanding secondary and higher education as leading to an equal society.[64] Likewise, the Conservative leader Yngve Holmberg, when asked about income inequalities in 1969, said: "As the differences in educational attainment become smaller, incomes will certainly become more equal."[65] Anners and Delin instead warned that new class boundaries were created by education. They described a class society in which status was measured by merit and asked how one could "prevent those who are declared to be the best from realising their position and forming a ruling and normative elite?" The answer, once again, was education. Moral and ethical education of the new elite must become key in the education system.[66]

The Committee's Ideas in the Public Debate

The main Conservative-leaning newspaper showed a lot of interest in the committee, and Anners and Delin were interviewed several times regarding their visions of the future.[67] The Conservative Party's membership magazine was also supportive and published interviews and summaries of the committee's work. An interesting comment, however, was made regarding Anners and Delin's dismissal of the classics of Conservative ideology, which showcases the frictions that their work could cause among Conservatives: "it is not difficult to see a variant of the Marxist materialist view of history in their writing."[68]

Social Democrats and Liberals referred to Anners and Delin's programme as somewhat interesting, albeit exhibiting limited political concreteness, and that their lofty visions clashed with their mundane reform aims of expanded education, a ministry of environment, traffic safety and development aid. Adding to this was the Conservative Party's unwillingness to commit tax money to this.[69] The Liberal *Dagens Nyheter* rather slyly pointed out that, according to Anners and Delin, everyone made redundant should be employed in education, care services and environmental protection: "According to traditional concepts, this must mean a huge expansion of the public sector at the expense of the private sector."[70]

Another source of contention was the committee's commitment to equality. Anners and Delin had written that Conservatives cannot accept differences in terms of status, property and income if these are not justified by their social and economic function. Liberals and Social Democrats wondered what this meant. At the press conference for the publication of Anners and Delin's book, Yngve Holmberg insisted that, for example, the break-up of private wealth was off the table.[71]

The committee handed over its conclusions to be discussed at the 1967 party congress in Karlstad, which had been given the name "Towards the Year 2000." Around 20

subgroups divided into different areas worked on the committee's material to be presented at the congress. After the congress, the inner party council took over the job from Anners to summarise and revise all of the material into a coherent party programme, which was then presented in 1969.[72] Removing the cybernetic and futuristic ideas, what was left from Anners's committee was stronger support for the welfare state along with demands, for instance, for more development aid and environmental protection. The foundation of society was still the individual and the family, but the programme also spoke of the need for social justice, planning, the break-up of power concentrations, profit sharing, employee participation in decision-making processes in companies and the right to work.[73] Anners was also given a mandate to create a scientific and technological advice panel in the party in order to offer facts and guidance from academics, the first permanent panel of its kind within a Swedish political party (although it actually only lasted for a few years).[74]

In the public debate, the future knowledge concerning automation and a new meritocratic order took hold. There was a direct line from the committee to the public debate through the Conservative-leaning newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, which set up its own future team (*framtidsteam*) in late 1968 consisting of 25 intellectuals, politicians, high-level bureaucrats and businessmen, together with journalist Tom Selander. This team then ran a series on likely scenarios of what Swedish society might look like in the year 2000. The articles were turned into a book that same year, which was one of the first popular Swedish books in the genre of futurology. Delin, together with the professor of education Torsten Husén, set the tone in the group with visions of a technologically advanced society divided by educational attainment.

It was highly likely, according to the future team, that by the year 2000, Swedish gross domestic product (GDP) would have quadrupled, industrial workers would be only a small minority group and all citizens would be guaranteed a basic income.[75] The future panel merged with the more optimistic American futurology in viewing Sweden as an emerging, highly affluent post-industrial society, in which citizens enjoyed extensive leisure time and where making profits was not the driving factor.[76] The other influence constituted the British discussions on meritocracy and the darker processes of the changing socio-economic structure. It was not that the future consisted of economic disparities. Everyone, even those outside the labour market, would live well. It was more a question of a new class society where the educated would have the interesting jobs, be acknowledged, held in social esteem and be in power. "A new upper class," explained the future team, "the meritocrats, who base their positions on intelligence and education, are likely to be the real power holders in turn-of-the-century Sweden." None of the panel experts wanted it, but it seemed like the unavoidable outcome of a society based on knowledge and advanced technology: the price of progress: "The new 'underclass' is made up of those people who, due to intellectual or character limitations, are unable to orient themselves in the changing world." The team added that they "will not be materially deprived, but they will probably be excluded from any real influence."[77] This line of reasoning led to the conclusion that the Social Democrats would need to reinvent themselves when the number of workers shrank to constitute only a small minority of the population. The panel also found it likely that the unions would restructure themselves around educational levels. A new "academic party," based on those with a university degree, could become the largest party in Sweden by 2000.[78] Thus,

there was agreement among the new future experts regarding the direction of Swedish society: an affluent welfare society with less work for everyone. The new elite, the valued citizens governing and contributing to welfare and growth, were the ones with a university education. If organised, they would be able to become the leading political force. The problem of this type of educational class society would not be income inequality, but disparities in terms of respect and influence.

The student radicalisation in 1968 did intersect with the visions of the Programme Committee. Delin and the Conservative education politician Britt Mogård defended the students. The student movement was not, in their view, a question of socialism versus capitalism but of young versus old, and change and innovative thinking versus inertia. Universities and colleges were seen by many students, they argued, as "education factories, mass-producing labour at a time and for a future that demands originality, foresight and freedom."[79] This was in line with the Programme Committee's visions of the dynamics of the affluent society. The educated struggled against the slow conformist world of industrial society towards the freedom of the post-industrial society.

In other ways, much had changed between Anners and Delin's findings in 1966 and the situation in 1968, namely the rediscovery of entrenched poverty in the welfare society in Sweden and other western countries at the time, thereby making the cornucopia of the automatised society seem far off. The governmental Low-Income Commission (1965–1971) started in 1968 to publish its statistical findings on the living standards of the Swedish population.[80] According to its radical secretary Per Holmberg, the academic union Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation (SACO) had increased income inequalities during the post-war period by defending its privileges. In turn, the low-income earners were described as uneducated. Holmberg wanted to revalue the manual labour of low-income earners as deserving higher salaries compared to the easy lives of university graduates.[81] Thus, the vision of social boundaries being drawn by education was confirmed in this radical critique and the 1960s rediscovery of poverty, albeit turning the hierarchy upside down.

Anners's Vision of the Educated Class

No longer heading the Programme Committee but building on its future knowledge and translating it into practical and political strategy, Anners started to argue for making the educated the foundation of the Conservative Party. He launched this idea in *Svensk Tidskrift* in 1970. This was after the party's electoral decline in 1968 and once again in their worst election ever in 1970, garnering only 11.5% of the electorate. Part of this defeat, Anners argued, could be ascribed to the uprooting of the Programme Committee. This disappointed everyone wanting to see change within the party, especially among the members with university degrees. However, the Conservative Party would still be able to accomplish a major task: a reorientation "towards an intellectualist and technological party on a foundation of Conservative humanism," where the highly educated would be its new party members and electorate. There were hundreds of thousands of students and graduates, soon perhaps making up as much as 30% or more of the electorate and, Anners claimed, "society's difficulties are due in no small part to the fact that the vast majority of them are indifferent or even reject party politics." Hence, it was of utmost importance for the future of Sweden that they should be persuaded to change their attitude: "A broad-

based effort on their part could restore the democratic balance of power and help lift us out of the economic quagmire into which we have been plunged."[82] They could remake the polity. It was hardly

> too bold to hope that the large number of highly educated . . . will lead to a much broader interface between science and its rationalist methods of thinking, on the one hand, and the great mass of the population, on the other. It follows that the principle of objective truth – with the highly educated as the medium – could be brought to and taken up by the great majority of people, i.e., that the political debate and the formation of opinion would be objectified in general.[83]

Anners thus envisioned that these voters could scientise society in general and the political debate in particular. Leading these intellectuals should be the guiding principle of Conservatism. It was thus important that the party's ideological efforts exhibited "scientific substantiation, clarity and precision."[84] Anners argued that this group wanted well-considered guidelines for the longer term. The educated needed a party turning directly to them and saying: "we are not locked into our thinking, we want to be at the very forefront of the social debate, we want to work directly with you to shape the future of our society."[85] Obviously, the party wanted voters from all of society. Nevertheless, a party should first mobilise the educated due to their decisive influence in shaping public opinion. This was an important factor for Anners: the educated were by nature of their education well versed in convincing others of their opinion. They could get the rest of the voters onboard with the Conservative message.[86]

It is important to note that the right was not the only force in Swedish society imagining the power of a new class of the highly educated. Social Democrats were in full swing, expanding education at all levels as a part of justice for the working classes having previously been excluded from formal higher education. Furthermore, with the import of human capital theories in the early 1960s, the understanding of education and talent as the main resource in bringing about growth became prevalent among politicians.[87] The trade union for those with a university degree, however, sounded the alarm bell for potential mass unemployment and overproduction of university graduates.[88] For Anners, this desperation on the part of the newly graduated could be useful. In a newspaper debate article in *Svenska Dagbladet* in 1972, he warned of the grave effects of the Social Democrats winning once again in the next year's election: state socialism influencing a whole new generation of Swedes. The thing that could break it was the educated. Most of them were already hard-pressed by student loans and, even worse, many people with low or mediocre grades did not find work in the profession for which they had studied. These individuals were disappointed and resentful of society, having been lured into a lifetime of debt slavery, and a party that "addressed the difficulties of this abused section of society" would quickly grow in strength.[89]

Anners presented his vision to an American audience in a chapter in the 1972 anthology *Politics in the Post-Welfare State*. Swedish Conservatism put the betterment of mankind and the individual at the centre, and they did so through the educated. A struggle still existed with the Social Democrats as to whether these educated individuals would become collectivistic or individualistic in their outlook. But the Conservatives had an edge here since academic training presupposes and perpetuates classifying people according to talent, which naturally turns them against collectivism. The risk of rampant

meritocracy could be counteracted by teaching the educated humanist values, which would create a deeper sense of community. This would lead to a democratic order "governed by a new type of aristocracy for whom the meaning of life would consist of the search for scientific truth, the ethical development of their own personalities, and a humanist-inspired quest for the common good."[90]

The Transformation of the Future

The techno-utopian visions and the Conservative Party embracing welfare reforms and planning were halted when the party leader Yngve Holmberg was ousted in 1970 by party secretary Gösta Bohman. "Clearly, Yngve Holmberg is less interested in the immediate political issues – what fascinates him is the idea of tomorrow's society," as the Conservative Party membership journal *Medborgaren* memorialised Holmberg after he was voted out.[91] Bohman was more focused on liberalising the economy and society, lowering taxes and becoming a clear alternative to the Social Democrats.[92] The futuristic debate died down. As one commentator in 1977 described the Programme Committee: "But what became of this grand venture? Nothing!"[93]

Delin became chairman of the city council of the town of Sigtuna in 1968 and tried to implement scientific governance by setting up task forces collecting data that the city council could then act on.[94] However, environmental concerns and business consulting took over his thinking. By the early 1970s, he had left politics and worked full-time with workshops and consulting for businesses, using the futurology methods he had learned in the Programme Committee.[95]

It is easy to see the decline of techno-utopianism in society at large, which explains the shift in the Conservative Party. After the stagflation of 1973 – with failing industries and declining growth figures – the post-industrial society did not seem like such a promising future. Within the Secretariat for Future Studies, according to historian Karl Haikola, the future became fragmented in the 1970s: a loss of faith in political collective solutions in terms of choosing a common future. The role of the state became to keep up with global capitalist competition.[96] A few Swedish Conservatives, especially those linked to the free-market agenda of big business and the think-tank Timbro, in the early 1980s imported the American neoconservative diagnosis of the special interests of "the new class."[97] In their view, educated people in the growing public sector only wanted to increase their power, thus leading to burdensome taxation and declining profits. The educated were no longer rational planners or aristocrats of scientific truth.[98] For most political discourse, however, the belief and hope in education as the key factor for a better tomorrow only grew stronger.[99]

Conclusion

This article set out to study the Swedish Conservative Party's considerations – specifically the party's Programme Committee – on the societal and future role of education during the 1960s and 1970s. While we have considerable knowledge about the educational politics and policy reforms of Conservative parties in the post-war era, our understanding of their views on the broader role of education, post-industrial society and the emerging class of educated individuals they envisioned, as well as their use of future

studies, remains limited. The article connects history of education and new political history with the history of knowledge in terms of analysing how political parties are intertwined with different circulating forms of knowledge and with views of educational and societal futures. I show how future knowledge, coming from the international movement of futurology, was translated into practical and political knowledge by the Swedish Conservative Party, thereby opening up longer temporal frameworks for party strategies.

The Conservative Party was one of the first actors in Sweden to discuss both futurology and the post-industrial society in its attempts to claim new voter segments, redefining the electorate and imagining new political questions to break the Social Democratic hegemony. The well-educated voter was here constructed as a leading class in the coming post-industrial society, and the article thereby contributes to a new history of the educational classifications frequently used today to describe and analyse the social structure as arising out of the future debates of the 1960s. Crucially, for the historical actors articulating and constructing these new educational boundaries, the social dynamics and identities ascribed to people were not fixed but rather open to interpretation. However, more studies are needed on how different actors, in Sweden and in other countries, conceptualised educational cleavages during the latter half of the twentieth century.

The article shows how the Swedish Conservative Party in the 1960s and 1970s to some extent embraced welfare reforms such as mass secondary schooling and the expansion of higher education, going beyond the picture that Adam Laats and other historians have given of educational conservatism. Another important contribution is to what Peter Mandler has called "the crisis of meritocracy" brought on by educational expansions of the post-war era. My article in fact shows how this democratisation was seen across the political spectrum as giving rise to a reformed meritocracy and new hierarchies. It underscores the need to be more attuned to historical actors' shifting views on educational expansion.

Party programme chair Erik Anners and secretary Gustaf Delin saw collective gains to society arising from automation, ushering in more leisure time, education, and human and environmental care. They foresaw continuing trends towards a more educated population. They also presented and discussed a new gap between the winners in the new society and the losers. The well educated would become a new strategic voter class for the Conservative Party, Anners argued, seen as the rulers and main contributors of the post-industrial and affluent society. A key point was also that the educated, by virtue of their education, were skilled at persuading others of their opinions. They could effectively bring the rest of the voters on board with the Conservative message. In order to keep the educated civic-minded and democratic, they needed to be taught ethics. The rest would re-educate themselves and work in service areas such as care. Lifelong education for the population became an important vision, because education could equip individuals with the intellectual tools, mindset and foundation needed to grasp the rapidly emerging new challenges. It also shaped how people perceived reality, helping them embrace the concepts of progress and change. Additionally, education enriched individuals' lives, enabling them to better enjoy their leisure time. Moreover, the affluent society, according to Anners and Delin, leads to

more moral freedom as people are no longer restrained by material factors. It heralded a new individualism but also collective identities based on education that we still have with us today.

Notes

1. The party was up to 1969 called Högerpartiet and then changed its name to Moderata Samlingspartiet. For pedagogical reasons I will call it the Conservative Party throughout this article. All translations of the source material to English are my own.
2. Marklund, *Skolsverige 1950–1975, D3*.
3. Börjesson and Dalberg, "Massification, Unification, Marketisation, Internationalisation." On the expansion of universities in the 1960s in a global perspective, see Taylor and Pellew, *Utopian Universities*.
4. Laats, *Other School Reformers*; Landahl, "Defending Christianity."
5. Wiborg, *Education and Social Integration*; Legh, *Conservative Party*.
6. Lundahl, *I moralens, produktionens*, chap. 6.
7. Mandler, *Crisis of the Meritocracy*.
8. Littler, *Against Meritocracy*; Landahl and Lövheim, "Varning för meritokratin."
9. Steber, "Better Tomorrow"; Lockwood, "'Action not Words.'"
10. Neither the political scientist Stig-Björn Ljunggren or the historian Torbjörn Nilsson, who have analysed the post-war transformations of the Swedish Conservative Party and the Programme Committee of the 1960s, have discussed the ideas of a new educational class society and the claim to mobilise the educated for the Conservative agenda. See Ljunggren, *Folkhemskapitalismen*, chap. 6; Nilsson, *Mellan arv och utopi*.
11. Andersson, *Future of the World*.
12. See, for instance, Andersson, "Choosing Futures"; Haikola, *Framtidens fragmentering*.
13. Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*; Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern*; Starr and Zelizer, *Defining the Age*.
14. Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*.
15. Eddy, *Creating the Intellectual*; Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*; Battistini, "New Class of Neoconservatism."
16. See Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*; Kaal and Slootjes, *New Perspectives on Power*.
17. For an overview of the field of history of knowledge, see Östling, "Circulation, Arenas."
18. De Jong and Kaal, "Mapping the Demos."
19. Tistedt, "Knowing the Demos"; Tistedt, "Folket i siffror"; Smedberg, "Klassriket."
20. Smedberg, "Klassriket."
21. Särlvik, "Politisk rörlighet och stabilitet."
22. "Vad händer vid valet?"
23. "Marginalväljaren."
24. Zetterberg and Busch, "Avläsningar i rörlig väljarkår."
25. Segerstedt, "Den triviala vetenskapen."
26. Andreas Mørkved Hellenes has investigated the French–Swedish connections in the making of the idea of a Nordic model. See Mørkved Hellenes, "Tracing the Nordic Model."
27. Holmberg, "Future."
28. Servan-Schreiber, *Le défi américain.*
29. Kahn and Wiener, *Year 2000*.
30. Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 197–8.
31. Andersson, *Future of the World*.
32. Haikola, *Framtidens fragmentering*.
33. Nilsson, *Mellan Arv och utopi*, 87.
34. Möller, *Mellan ljusblå och mörkblå*.
35. Nilsson, *Mellan arv och utopi*, 92–3.

36. The slogan has roots in 1920s British Conservatism, see Edwards, "'Manufacturing Capitalists,'" 106–7.
37. Ljunggren, *Folkhemskapitalismen*, chap. 3.
38. Nilsson, *Mellan arv och utopi*, 122–3.
39. Ibid., 86.
40. Westholm, "Ett redaktörsporträtt."
41. Nilsson, *Mellan arv och utopi*, 90.
42. Ibid., 313.
43. Anners, "Conservatism in Sweden," 267.
44. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, chap. 1.
45. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, 125–30. See also Waldemarson, "Den nya konservativa visionen."
46. Rahm, "Computing the Nordic Way."
47. Waldemarson, "Högerpolitiken i morgondagens samhälle."
48. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, chap. 2.
49. "Datateknik och vision."
50. Delin, *Arbetets framtida villkor!?*, 64–6.
51. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, 31.
52. Jäger and Zamora Vargas, *Welfare for Markets*, 174–9.
53. "Datateknik och vision."
54. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, chap. 1.
55. "Idépolitiken i välståndssamhället," 1965–1969.
56. Inglehart, " Silent Revolution."
57. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, 36.
58. Waldemarson, "Den nya konservativa visionen."
59. "Med sikte på framtiden."
60. Lundahl, *I moralens, produktionens*, 140–1.
61. Elfert, *UNESCO's Utopia of Lifelong Learning*, 133.
62. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, 41. On discussions of meritocracy in the 1960s, see Landahl and Lövheim, "Varning för meritokratin."
63. Myrdal, "Den inre skolreformens strategiska betydelse," 208.
64. Larsson, *Olof Palme och utbildningspolitiken*.
65. Johnson, *Ny giv*, 65.
66. Anners and Delin, *Framtidens politiska villkor*, 41.
67. For example, Waldemarson, "Den nya konservativa visionen"; Waldemarson, "Högerpolitiken i morgondagens samhälle."
68. N.C., "Behöver vi ett trestegsprogram."
69. "Gammal känd högerpolitik"; Strand, "5:te spalten."; The newspaper *Arbetet* was impressed, however, by the committee's discussion of automation; see Welinder, "Läsning i valrörelsen."
70. "Högern och maskinerna."
71. Strand, "5:te spalten."
72. Ljunggren, *Folkhemskapitalismen*, 258.
73. Nilsson, *Mellan arv och utopi*, 91–2.
74. "Nytt centralt råd."
75. Selander, "De 25 toppexperterna."
76. Selander, *Sverige år 2000*, 32.
77. Ibid., 85.
78. Ibid.
79. Delin and Mogård, "Ungdomligt engagemang."
80. Smedberg, "Låginkomsttagarna."
81. Vinterhed, "Utredare om låglönade."
82. Anners, "Moderata samlingspartiets framtid."
83. Anners, "Ideologi för västerlandets intellektuella?" 53.

84. Anners. "En ideologisk betraktelse," 46.
85. Anners, "Moderata samlingspartiets framtid," 393.
86. Anners, "En ideologisk betraktelse," 46.
87. Waldow, *Utbildningspolitik, ekonomi*.
88. Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation, *Akademikerexplosionen*.
89. Anners, "Att bryta sig ut."
90. Anners, "Conservatism in Sweden," 277.
91. "Yngve Holmberg."
92. Ljunggren, *Folkhemskapitalismen*, chap. 7.
93. Lindgren, "Idépolitiskt vaacum."
94. Kall, "'Vetenskaplig' politik i Sigtuna."
95. Äng, "Kaos"; Hedlund, "Vilket enfaldigt slöseri."
96. Haikola, *Framtidens fragmentering*.
97. Battistini, "New Class of Neoconservatism."
98. See, for example, Larsson, "Om den heliga arbetarrörelsen."; Ehrenkrona, "Samtal med Lars Gustafsson." On this type of critique of a new governing class of bureaucrats in 1970s Denmark, see Olsen, "Welfare State Criticism."
99. Grubb and Lazerson, *Education Gospel*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help of Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad and Eskil Vesterlund who commented on earlier drafts of this article. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers of this article for their comments and suggestions.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Funding

This work was supported by Åke Wibergs stiftelse.

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