

## Översikter och meddelanden

### Elites as Gatekeepers: Democratic and Oligarchic Tendencies in Swedish Cooperative Organizations\*

Elite is one of the oldest concepts in the discipline of political science, with a heritage in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. The meaning and referents of the word elite and similar terms, frequently but incorrectly, employed as synonyms are discussed by Zannoni in an effort to clarify the concept (1978). Elite research had been criticized for paying too much attention to elites at the expense of the mass electorate (Alfort & Friedland, 1974). Although a division of labor between "elite" and "mass" research simplifies the researcher's tasks, it is an open question whether it contributes to substantive gains in our knowledge of complex political processes or the relation between the various parts of the political system. We feel that both the attitudes of elites and the structures which they to a large par determine can facilitate or impede citizens membership participation. Thus mass participation and elite decision-making are conceived of as interrelated parts of a whole, whether it be in the political system or in cooperative organizations. Furthermore, we do not agree that the conceptual and empirical severing of elite from mass research are warranted by a careful reading of the theoretical literature.

Easton's systems analysis of political life discusses cultural and structural mechanisms for regulating the

process of want conversion (1965: Chs. 6 & 7). Gatekeepers in a political system can be conceived of as an elite with reference to their numbers and their functionally distinct roles (Zannoni, 1978:6). The elected officers and paid staff of voluntary associations similarly serve as gatekeepers in the process of want conversion into demands for authoritative allocations of organizational values. One of Easton's prime concerns is the amount of control the gatekeepers have over the conversion process. The lower their control is the greater the danger of input overload (1965:90). Michels, on the other hand, sees a danger in oligarchic tendencies where organizational elites become separate social strata with special interests of their own which set them apart from rank and file members. Through control over organizational resources elites can be transformed into directors vis-à-vis members, who in an inverted position become the directed (1915 & 1962:353).

Research on membership participation has consistently demonstrated that there is a clear negative relationship between organizational size and membership activity. Our own research on Swedish cooperative organizations documents the same tendency. The six local cooperative associations included in the Cooperative Democracy Project report the following attendance at the 1978 annual general meeting (see Dellenbrant, 1979 for further details). (Table 1.)

Table 1. Membership participation and size of local coop organization

Local Coop Association <sup>a</sup>	Membership in 1978	Attendance at the 1978 Annual Gen. Meeting
Bernshammar (CC)	216	26 %
Enköping (PC)	902	21 %
Fagersta (TC)	2,042	12 %
Arosbygden (PC)	3,542	12 %
S. Västmanland (TC)	8,896	15 %
Västmanland (CC)	67,463	3 %

<sup>a</sup> CC = Consumer coop, PC = producer coop, TC = tenant coop.

The Cooperative Membership Participation Project reports the average national attendance in 1978 at annual

general meetings in the three Swedish cooperative organizations. (Table 2.)

Table 2. Average membership participation and size of national cooperative organization

Coop Organisation	Membership (in 1 000s)	Average size of local association	Average attendance at annual gen. meeting
Producer Coops (SLR)	113	5 918	10 % <sup>a</sup>
Tenant Building Coops (HSB)	343	4 129	21 %
Consumer Coops (Konsum & KF)	1,886	11,092	7%

<sup>a</sup> estimate

Attendance at the local and the aggregated average attendance at the national level demonstrate a negative relationship with size of organization. However, it is worth noting that size of the local organization is not normally determined by members themselves, but rather decided in accordance with plans drawn up by the leaders of organizations. This became clearly manifest during the wave of structural rationalizations experienced by numerous voluntary associations in Sweden in the 1960's and 70's. Thus the elites themselves usually determine the parameters for the number and diffusion of gatekeepers within an organization. It is therefore necessary to study not only elite attitudes toward membership participation, but also the implications of their decisions about the structure of the organization itself. We will therefore discuss both cultural and structural mechanisms for regulating the process of want conversion in Swedish cooperative organizations.

Before doing so we will briefly present the two projects providing the basic data for our analysis, and the three cooperative organizations which are the focus of our study.

#### *Data and methods*

In the Cooperative Democracy Project the attitudes of the elites in a sample of local Swedish cooperative associations have been studied. The project was funded by the Swedish Parliamentary Commission for the Official Investigation of the Swedish Cooperative Movement. The Cooperative Democracy Project focused especially on six cooperative associations in Västmanland County in Central Sweden. The attitudes of 140 elites in these associations were studied with the help of a mail questionnaire. Their attitudes were compared with the

reported levels of membership participation in each organization. Special attention was given to the study of attitudes of the elites towards increased participation of members and towards decentralization of decision-making (Dellenbrant, 1979).

The Cooperative Membership Participation Project was commissioned by the Cooperative Institute in Stockholm and focuses both on the individual attributes of active and passive cooperative members and on the structural attributes of Swedish cooperative organizations which influence membership participation (Pestoff, 1979). Most of the data taken from this study will be at the national aggregate level.

Our research includes three cooperative organizations. At the national level they are The Swedish Farmers' Supply & Coop Marketing Association (SLR), the National Association of Tenants' Savings & Buildings Societies (HSB) and the Swedish Cooperative Union of Wholesale Societies (KF). We will refer to them below as the producer coops, the tenant coops, and the consumer coops.

#### *The Cooperative Model of Representative Democracy*

Swedish cooperative organizations are characterized by a high degree of organizational differentiation and a strongly hierarchical organization structure. Membership control is channeled through a system of meetings at different levels, known as the cooperative parliamentary organization and distinct from the cooperative economic organization (Ruin, 1960:29). The basis of this parliamentary organization is that the lower organizational level elects the next higher level.

This is therefore a system of representative democ-

racy. Elections are conducted according to formal democratic rules. Although the parliamentary structure of the three cooperative organizations differs in details, the nevertheless share some common traits (see Dellenbrant, 1979 for details). The parliamentary organizations are divided into sub-units or districts. There are now only a few examples of small local units with direct democracy in the producer and consumer coops, while this remains the basic form in the tenants coops. Individual members are only directly involved in the decision-making process at the primary level of their local cooperative organization or in one of the district annual general meetings.

#### *Gatekeeping: Cultural Mechanisms*

As mentioned above, the Swedish cooperative organizations are characterized by a hierarchical structure. The elites of cooperative organizations have different functions in this system. Elites play an important role when dealing with suggestions and complaints from the members of their organizations. In the theoretical literature, this role of elites has been referred to as gatekeeping.

Gatekeeping can be performed overtly through structural mechanisms, but also through the cultural context within the organization. One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the Swedish investigation of cooperative organizations is the the cultural context of the cultural mechanisms of gatekeeping are of considerable importance in these organizations.

Easton points out that a set of central values within political systems functions as restrictions of demands from individual citizens. These values set limits to the arenas of political controversy (Easton, 1965:106 f.). Furthermore, they exclude certain possible demands from entering into the system. They also tend to decrease the absolute number of demands (Easton, 1965:102).

This perspective of cultural mechanisms of gatekeeping could be used as a pertinent point of departure for studying the Swedish cooperative organizations. In this section of the paper some prevailing cultural norms of the Swedish cooperative organizations will be discussed. These norms all have a close connection with the notion of democracy in the cooperatives. After the presentation of these norms there will be a discussion of the possibility that these central values are used in order to regulate the inflow of ideas and suggestions into the cooperatives, i.e. their gatekeeping function will be considered.

For a long time it has been a self-evident fact that the cooperatives should be governed in a democratic fashion. The cooperative pioneers in the 19th Century had a clear democratic inclination. In the modern cooperative organizations in Sweden a representative de-

mocratic structures is the basis of the systems decision-making (see Ruin, 1960 and Dellenbrant, 1979). The Swedish cooperative organizations also claim to be democratically governed popular movement. They are regarded as an important part of "organizational Sweden".

In the Cooperative Democracy Project the attitudes toward democracy among a sample of elites from a limited number of cooperative organizations were studied (Dellenbrant, 1979). In particular the attitudes of the cooperative elites toward the following three central areas were investigated in detail:

- 1 the general participation of members in cooperative activities,
- 2 revitalizations of democracy in cooperative associations, especially at the lowest levels of organization, and
- 3 decentralization of decision-making in the cooperatives from national and regional bodies to local associations.

Nearly all the elected officers of the Västmanland county sample of cooperative claim to have very favorable attitudes toward the participation of members in the life of their associations. Over 80 per cent of the officers answered that they welcome very much the proposal of resolutions by members at the annual general meetings. In the two smallest cooperatives, a consumer coop and a producer coop, virtually all of the officers expressed a favorable attitude. About 70 per cent of the elites of the larger coops had this attitude. But on the whole, elite attitudes toward the proposal of resolutions by members is extremely favorable.

Other measures of the attitudes of officers toward the participation of members gave similar results. An overwhelming majority of the officers answered that they are in favor of membership participation in cooperative activities. The difference between the six associations on this point is small.

Most of the officers also have the opinion that democracy in the associations must by revitalized. As many as 85 per cent of the officers in the sample held the opinion that a revitalization was necessary. Officers in the two smallest cooperatives, which had the highest reported participation rates by members, were somewhat more reluctant to articulate demands for a revitalization of democracy in their organization. But generally speaking it seems that a large majority of the officers were not satisfied with the existing level of influence from the rank and file members and that participation by members in the decision-making process should be increased.

Participation of members in the decision-making pro-

cess could and should be achieved, according to the officers of the cooperatives in the sample, through increased decentralization of the organizations. Most of the officers, over 70 per cent, claimed that national and regional organizations should have less power in decision-making and that local associations should be granted greater decision-making authority in relevant matters. The overwhelming majority of officers in the larger cooperatives are of the opinion that some decentralization is necessary. Officers of the smaller cooperatives also realized the need for decentralization, but this group was somewhat more hesitant about subscribing to the statement that decentralization was necessary.

All three objectives, general participation of members, revitalization of democracy, and decentralization of decision-making, met with a large extent of agreement among the cooperative officers in the sample. Only very few officers did not support all three of these objectives. The supportive attitudes were in fact surprisingly high. Each of these areas could be said to reflect the central value of democracy in the cooperatives. It could, however, be argued that it was impossible for the cooperative officers to respond differently from the answer they in fact gave. Even if the officers were not personally in favor of membership participation, etc. a negative answer would have been interpreted as failing to adhere to an important central value in the cooperative ideology.

A paradox in this situation is that certain developments in the Swedish cooperative organizations point in a direction entirely different from that which the majority of the officers in the sample supported. In a broad sense, there are three tendencies in the development of the Swedish cooperative movement that seem appropriate to mention when dealing with the attitudes of the officers in cooperative associations. These tendencies are:

- 1 the strongly hierarchical and representative nature of the decision-making process in all three cooperative organizations,
- 2 amalgamations of the smaller local cooperative societies into big associations covering whole metropolitan areas or regions (a process which has gone farthest in the consumer coops), and
- 3 centralization of decision-making at the national level.

These three developments have taken place at different rates in different cooperative organizations. However, the overall development along these lines seems difficult to refute.

Apparently the current development of the cooperatives does not correspond with the attitudes of the cooperative officers. The officers of the cooperatives also seem very reluctant to accept any criticism of their

associations in the matters. They refer to the central value of democracy in the cooperative movements as a guarantee for future democratic developments.

A possible explanation of the unusually broad support given by cooperative officers to membership participation and other democratic norms is incumbent in the role these values play in gatekeeping. Findings from the Cooperative Democracy Project support the view that the central values concerning democracy could be used as a cultural mechanism for gatekeeping. In any case it is in the interest of the elites of the cooperatives to stress their democratic orientation. The democratic values can be used for various purposes, one of which is gatekeeping. Criticism of managements and demands for changes in the cooperatives is easier to refute if one can refer to the prevailing democratic values of the association and their democratic decision-making process.

#### *Gatekeeping: Structural Mechanism*

Two kinds of structural mechanisms or regulators of want conversion are relevant to our investigation. The first is the degree of intra-system structural differentiation or the number of roles which are functionally distinct from that of general members of the system (Easton, 1965:87). Structural differentiation can also be referred to as the division of labor within organizations (Michels, 1915 & 1968). The second kind of structural regulator is the degree of diffusion of the points of entry for membership wants of the number and diffusion of gatekeepers.

Gatekeeping according to Easton can be conceived of in structural terms as "... a checkpoint on the channel (of demand inputs) where a demand may find itself stopped completely, modified etc. These structural points are gateways regulating the flow along the demand channels" (1965:87-88).

The diffusion and number of gatekeepers in a system is a function of the structural differentiation in an organization and the functional specialization between the elite and rank and file members (Easton, 1965:91). A division of labor based on the need for technical specialization and expert leadership is an inevitable result of all complex organization (Michels, 1968:70). Although Easton maintains that there is a relationship between the number of gatekeepers and an organization's structural differentiation he does not specify the nature of this relationship in detail, since he is concerned with the process of want conversion rather than a structural analysis of complex organizations. However, our emphasis in this section is on the latter. Before considering the quantitative aspects of gatekeeping in Swedish cooperative organizations we must discuss the implications

of the qualitative aspects of the division of labor in complex organizations.

Central to our focus is the discussion of the nature and growth of oligarchic tendencies found in Michels (1915 & 1968). "The mechanisms of organization... completely invert the respective positions of leaders and the led" (1968:70). This is due to the development of an inevitable opposition of the interests of the leaders and the rank and file as organizations grow in complexity and strength. This conflict of interest stems primarily from the fact that the organization becomes an end in itself to the leaders. They are therefore endowed with aims and interests of their own which are qualitatively different from, and which can come into conflict with, the interests of ordinary members. This is explainable in terms of the status, and perhaps even economic rewards which leaders of organizations incur. Thus, the division of labor within an organization, once it is consolidated, results in a special strata, fulfilling specific functions, which tend to become isolated from its members (1968:338 & 353).

Although we do not necessarily subscribe to Michels conclusion that the leaders of an organization tend to undergo a transformation into a distinct "ruling class" (1968:354), we feel that there are grounds for examining the implications of his assumption of a conflict of interests between the elite and ordinary members of an organization. In order to give more analytical precision to the concept of the division of labor in the present context, the peculiar interests of each strata of "leaders" would need to be specified. For our part, that would require distinguishing the interests of the elected officers and employees of the central organization from those of the local organizations; the directors from ordinary staff; the white and blue-collar workers engaged in the auxiliary functions, such as manufacture or production in the building, and consumer coops and wholesale or retail in the producer coops, from those employed in the primary functions in each coop organization, etc.

The information for such a detailed quantitative analysis is unfortunately not available in either of the studies reported here. It is nevertheless reasonable to argue that the interests of elected officers differ substantially from those of employees. The latter have a much greater vested interest in the organization than the former since it is not only a source of status, but also provides them with their economic security. Furthermore, unlike elected officers, employees are not subject to direct democratic controls; whereas elected officers are subject to some democratic restraints, however much or little that may be. Thus, it seems imperative to consider the implications of the relationship of the democratic part of

the organization, with its special interests and paid staff, before discussing the number of diffusion of gatekeepers. The degree of centralization of an organization's bureaucracy is also an important consideration in this context.

Both these matters are directly related to the size of organization and therefore indirectly to the division of labor in Swedish cooperative organizations, as we will see below. The three cooperative organizations under consideration here differ substantially in the nature of the service rendered to members and therefore in the number of employees per 1 000 members. However, the proportion of paid staff on the payroll of the local organizations, irrespective of differences in members' service demands, is a matter of concern when discussing democratic and oligarchic tendencies in organizations. We will assume that, other things being equal, membership influence decreases as the central organization's control of the bureaucracy increases. Equally important is the ratio of elected officers to employees. Can democratic control be maintained while a group with vested interests is permitted to expand and become several times larger than the elected officers? The table below (table 3) presents data for selected years concerning the structural aspects of the Swedish cooperative organizations relative to these problems.

The index of local control has remained consistently high in the producer coops. It has increased over the last ten years in the tenant coops and it has decreased substantially in the consumer coops since 1930. The number of employees per 1 000 members in the producer coops has nearly tripled between 1955 and 1977, going from 33.3 to 85.9. The number of staff employed by local organizations has increased at a rate equal to that of the central organization. The number of employees per 1 000 members in the tenant coops has decreased during the last 10 years from 16.6 to 13.5, due mainly to the selling of its industrial sector. The number of employees per 1 000 members in the consumer coops increased until the 1950's, from 30.4 to 52.2, then decreasing to 38.2 by 1977. During the entire period the central organization has increased its share of the staff, doubling it between 1930 and 1977. Thus, it appears that the wave of "structural rationalizations" of the 1960's and 70's involving numerous local amalgamations, etc., bore with it a considerable increase of the bureaucratic centralization of the consumer coops. A comparison among these three cooperative organizations shows that members of the producer coops have more local control over staff than do members of the other two cooperative organizations.

The index of democratic control of staff has experienced a rapid decline in both the consumer and pro-

Table 3. Structure Indices of Local Control of Paid Staff and Democratic Control of Staff in Swedish Cooperative Organizations for Selected Years

Year <sup>a</sup>	Index of Local Control <sup>b</sup>			Index of Democratic Control <sup>c</sup>		
	SLR	HSB	KF	SLR	HSB	KF
1930	n.a.	n.a.	.78	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1950/55	.91	n.a.	.72	.62	n.a.	.36
1965/7	.90	.41	.61	.47	n.a.	n.a.
1972/3	.88	.48	.60	.34	.86	.22
1976/7	.89	.58	.54	.36	.87	.17

<sup>a</sup> Years for SLR are 1955, 1965, 1972 & 1977; HSB 1967, 1973 & 1977; KF 1930, 1950, 1965, 1972 & 1977.

<sup>b</sup> Index of Local Control = proportion of paid staff on the local payroll.

<sup>c</sup> Index of Democratic Control = proportion of the total staff (officers plus paid staff) which is elected.

SLR = Farmer Supply & Coop Marketing Association

HSB = Tenant Building Cooperative Societies, and

KF = Consumer Cooperative Wholesale and Retail Societies.

ducer coops, while not enough information is available from the tenant coops to draw any conclusions concerning developments over time. In both the former organizations the index has nearly halved since 1950. This represents a substantial increase in the number of employees accompanied by a decrease in the number of elected officers in both cases. In 1977, there was approximately one employee per six elected officers in the tenant coops. This ratio was reversed for the producer coops, where there were two employees for every elected officer and it reached four employees for every officer in the consumer coops.

Having considered these structural indices we want now to shift the focus of our attention to the number and diffusion of gatekeepers in the Swedish cooperative organisations.

Since the number and diffusion of the gatekeepers is supposed to be a function of the division of labor we can expect that the more extensive the latter is, the

smaller the number and the more sparsely distributed the gatekeepers will be. Furthermore, according to Easton the probability that a want will be converted to a demand is closely tied to the number of gatekeepers regulating the admission process and the rules of the game under which they operate. However, as all three systems under consideration here are representative democracies, it will be assumed that they all operate under the same rules. The number of gatekeepers then becomes the most important consideration for our examination of the admission process. Thus where the division of labor is low and the gatekeepers are widely distributed there is less central but more membership control over the conversion process.

The table below (table 4) gives the average number of elective officers per 1 000 members in the Swedish cooperative organizations for selected years.

The number of officers per 1 000 members has decreased in the producer coops (SLR) from 68.4 in 1950 to 47.3 in 1977, although the later figure represents an impro-

Table 4. Number of Elective Officers per 1 000 Members in Swedish Cooperative Organizations

Year	SLR	HSB	KF
1950	68.4	n.a.	29.4
1965	42.9	n.a.	n.a.
1972	38.1	n.a.	10.9
1974	39.2	97.2	n.a.
1976	n.a.	87.9	n.a.
1977	47.3	n.a.	8.3

vement over the situation between 1965 and 1975. This means that nearly one of twenty farmers had a theoretical chance of being elected to an honorary office in 1977.

The number of elective officers per 1 000 members in the building coops (HSB) has declined by 10 in two years, from slightly under 100 per 1 000 members to slightly under 90 per 1 000. This means that nearly one in eleven members in the building coops had a chance of being elected to an honorary office in 1977. The number of elective officers per 1 000 members in the consumer coops (KF) has decreased by more than 70 per cent since 1950, from nearly 30 per 1 000 members to less than 10 per 1 000 members by 1977. This means that on the average less than one in 100 members in the consumer coops had a chance of being elected to an honorary office in 1977. These figures correspond well with data concerning changes in the organizational structure of the latter two cooperative organizations. The average size of the local tenant building coops societies in 1977 was 86, while it was 11.092 for the local consumer retail societies (see Pestoff, 1979 for details).

Comparing these three organizations we find that there are approximately ten times as many gatekeepers in the tenant coops as the consumer coops, and nearly

twice as many in the former as in the producer coops. Clearly, the gatekeepers have the most control over the conversion process in the consumer coops, followed by the producer coops and the least control in the tenant coops. Conversely the probability of members wanting being converted is greatest in the tenant coops, followed by the producer coops and least in the consumer coops.

A final consideration pertinent to the number of gatekeepers in Swedish cooperative movements is related to variations in their distribution according to size of organization. If, as Easton assumes, the distribution of gatekeepers is a function of the division of labor, we should expect that their number per 1 000 members will decrease with increasing size of organization. Furthermore, we should expect this relationship to be more pronounced in more heavily bureaucratized organizations. The table below indicates the number of elective officers and employees per 1 000 members as well as the ratio between them in the Swedish cooperative movements according to size of the local or regional organization. Since this information is available for all consumer cooperative organizations, the average for various size categories has been employed. In the other two cooperative organizations, selected local branches have chosen for presentation. (Table 5.)

Table 5. Variations in Number of Elective Officers and Employees per 1 000 Members According to Size of Local Organization (number of members in parentheses)

Coop Organization	Officers per 1 000 members	Employees per 1 000 members	Index of democratic controlled staff
<b>A. Farmers' Supply and Marketing Coops (1977)</b>			
Enköping (902)	27.6	84.3	.25
Arosbygden (3,542)	93.3	109.3	.46
Lidköping (15,870)	13.9	71.6	.16
average for SLR	47.3	85.9	.36
<b>B. Tenants' Building Coop Societies (1976)</b>			
Falköping (354)	322.0	25.4	.93
Fagersta (1,926)	97.1	8.3	.92
S. Västmanland (8,843)	101.3	9.8	.90
Stockholm (60,948)	50.6	4.9	.91
average for HSB	87.9	13.5	.87
<b>C. Consumer Cooperative Retail Societies (1977)</b> (size in 1 000s members)			
< 1	23.4	18.8	.60
1.0- 2.9	19.1	15.5	.55
3.0-19.9	14.4	21.8	.40
20.0-89.9	3.6	20.7	.15
> 90.0	1.1	21.6	.05
average for KF	4.7	21.0	.17

The variation noted in the diffusion of gatekeepers when controlling the size of local organization among producer coops are not strictly relative to size of organization. The middle range organization has the largest number of officers per 1 000 members. The smallest organization, which is the only Swedish producer coop to practice direct democracy at the regional level instead of representative democracy combined with district annual meetings, does not elect representatives to the regional annual meeting and therefore has relatively few elected officers per 1 000 members. It is in this respect somewhat of an anomaly.

Variations in the diffusion of gatekeepers according to size of local organization among building coops are similar to the pattern found in the other cooperative organizations. In the smallest local building coops nearly one of three members has an honorary office. In both the medium sized local building coops one of ten members has an honorary office, while in the largest building coop society in Stockholm one of twenty members has an honorary office. Thus the number of elected officers per 1 000 members in small and medium sized building coops is above average, while it is below average in the largest category. The number of employees per 1 000 members is below average in all categories represented here. The index of democratically controlled staff demonstrates relatively little variation according to size of building coop.

Variations in the diffusion of gatekeepers according to size of organization among local consumer coops are considerably greater than among the other two types of cooperatives. There is a clear decrease in the number of elected officers per 1 000 members with increasing size of organization, falling from 23.4 in coops with less than 1 000 members to only 1.1 in coops with 90,000 or more members. Note that only one member per 1 000 has an elective office in the largest consumer coops! Variations in the number of employees per 1 000 members according to size of organization are not nearly as dramatic as variations in the distribution of gatekeepers. The number of employees in the smaller local coop societies is 10–25 per cent below average. This finding is somewhat surprising in the light of the intensive debate regarding the streamlining of consumer coop organizational structure which took place during the 1960's and early 70's. Considerable economic gains were frequently put forth as a prime motive for undertaking mergers between local coops. The number of local coops decreased by 75 per cent since 1950, from 681 to only 165 in 1978. Yet it is the smaller and not the largest coop societies which have a more trim organization structure as measured by number of employees per 1 000 members. At the same time it seems that the larger

local coop societies have nearly succeeded in eliminating their elective officers. There is a much larger proportion of elective officers, or gatekeepers, in the smaller coops.

Expressed in terms of index of democratically controlled staff, elected officers and actually in the majority in the smallest two categories of local consumer coops, but from that point on the employees increasingly dominate in numbers. In the largest category of consumer coops, 90,000 members or more, there is only one elected officer per 19 employees. Perhaps the changes brought about by the wave of structural rationalization during the 1960's and 70's have nevertheless resulted in a more rational decision-making system. Unnecessary delays in reaching rapid decisions can now be reduced to a minimum since the cumbersomeness imposed by the democratic elements can in reality be ignored. However, it seems necessary to ask at what point does the ratio between officers and employees express a manifest danger that the democratic element will be dominated by the bureaucratic?

Comparing the three cooperative organizations we find that size of local organization normally demonstrates a strong negative relationship with the number of officers per 1 000 members. Both the number of gatekeepers and the probability of converting members' wants into demands for authoritative allocations of organizational values decrease dramatically with increasing size of organization. The indices of democratically controlled staff normally demonstrate a strong negative relationship with the size of local organization. As the organization grows, or is permitted to grow, through amalgamations, etc., so too does the professionalization of its staff. Elected officers are replaced by full-time paid staff. However, since the latter is not subject to the same democratic control the conversion of members' wants seems to be at a double disadvantage in large organizations.

### *Conclusion*

The attitudes of the elites represented in the sample of Swedish cooperative organizations are favorable to membership influence. Nearly half of the cooperative gatekeepers felt that members have too little influence and more than half of them supported the idea of increasing members' influence (Dellenbrant, 1979). Overall, the attitudes of cooperative gatekeepers could be termed "participative", i.e. they are in favor of membership participation, of decentralizing the decision-making process, etc. However, these attitudes do not always correspond with realities in these three cooperative organizations. Structural rationalizations of the 1950's, 60's and 70's have resulted in a large increase in the size of local organizations and the disappearance of the majority of



primary organizations in the producer and consumer cooperatives. Amalgamations have not had the same effect in the tenant coops and the size of the primary organization has remained relatively unchanged since 1950 (Pestoff, 1979). The consumer coops have also experienced an increase in the role of the central organization at the expense of the local organizations. These and similar developments impede rather than facilitate membership participation and influence.

How then are we to interpret the positive attitudes of the cooperative elites toward membership influence in the light of the structural changes experienced by their organizations, changes to which they have perhaps contributed? Three alternative answers suggest themselves. First, the attitudes of cooperative elites are merely on way of paying lip-service to the cooperative ideology. In this case these values can not be expected to facilitate membership influence, but rather to serve as cultural mechanisms for gatekeeping. Second, the attitudes registered here are an expression of a growing awareness that membership influence and interest have reached a low point and this trend must somehow be reversed. Third, the elites of Swedish cooperative organizations are not fully aware of the reasons or remedies for the decline in membership participation and influence. Further academic interest in cooperative organizations could help specify the causes and suggest some solutions to the problem of declining membership interest and influence in this important sector of Swedish organizational and economic life.

Jan Åke Dellenbrant and Victor Pestoff

#### Footnote

\* This is a revised version of a paper presented by the authors at the Moscow IPSA Congress of August 12–18, 1979.

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#### Skolhistorisk forskning -och statsvetenskaplig

Att läsa framställningar som behandlar undervisningens och skolorganisationens utveckling är inte bara lärdoms-historiskt intressant utan ofta också i en vidare mening bildande. Den som visserligen inte själv är fackpedagog men som ändå – dels av nyss nämnda skäl, dels av andra mer yrkesmässigt nödtvungna – under årens lopp har tagit del av ganska många skrifter från den skol-historiska forskningen kan dessutom inte undgå att konstatera hur dessa arbeten ofta också har ett direkt statsvetenskapligt intresse.

Statskunskap och pedagogikhistoria – det kunde vara ett ämne att göra såväl principiella som empiriskt grundade betraktelser över. Beröringspunkterna är faktiskt många. (Med större precision i begreppen bör man kanske i detta sammanhang i stället för *pedagogik-historisk* forskning snarare tala om *skolhistorisk* forskning, i betydelsen forskning om *skolväsendets historia*). Många skolhistoriskt inriktade vetenskapliga undersökningar har påfallande likheter med traditionella statsvetenskapliga framställningar. Författarna må vara avhandlingsskribenter inom pedagogikämnet, deras frågeställningar må vara motiverade med hänsyn till skolhistoriska eller mer allmänt pedagogiska aspekter – den statsvetenskapligt intresserade läsaren slås ändå gång på gång av iakttagelsen att dessa arbeten i fråga om källmaterial, stoffurval, materialbehandling och diskussion företer likheter med historiskt inriktade statsvetenskapliga avhandlingar.

Detta är i och för sig föga märkligt. Skolan är ju en viktig samhällsinstitution, framväxt och successivt reformerad genom politiska beslutsprocesser. Dess mål fastställs av statsmakterna, likaså dess organisation. Formerna för undervisningens bedrivande bestäms till stor del genom offentliga myndigheters beslutsfattande och fortlöpande ämbetsutövning. Kostnaderna bestrids av det allmänna. Stat och kommun har i varierande omfattning varit och är alltjämt – nu i än högre grad än förr – skolverksamhetens huvudmän. Skolan är också en av de samhällsfunktioner som genom åren spelat en stor roll i den allmänna politiska debatten.

Mot den bakgrunden är det självklart att den svenska skolpolitiken – liksom också delproblem och detaljfrågor