THE NOT SO STAUNCH DEFENCE OF SWEDISH PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

PETER DAHLGREN

Peter Dahlgren is lecturer and researcher at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication, Stockholm University, Box 27861, 115 93 Stockholm.

In a situation where market forces continue to exert great influence over the character of television and radio, we can expect that the ongoing crisis of public service broadcasting in Western Europe will be a long one. Yet, broadcasting institutions are predicated upon and shaped by a wide array of historical factors — social, political, cultural, technological, as well as economic. Indeed, the factors operate in a configurative fashion, and it may border on abstractionism to isolate fully any one of them. Moreover, to understand the broadcasting institutions of any given country, one must take into account the specific historical circumstances of that country. The general international patterns are clear, and it is of course valid to generalise them as is often done, but we must not lose sight of the individual national cases. In Scandinavia, there have been a number of impressive analyses of the public service crisis: Trine Syvertsen (1991) has studied the Norwegian case (in comparison with the UK) and Henrik Søndergaard (1994) has analysed the developments in Denmark. A comparable sustained and analytic history of its public service broadcasting needs to be produced for Sweden, but major work is now under way and has so far generated a focused analysis of television documentary under public service (Furhammar 1995). We can expect that more work, taking in the larger picture, will be forthcoming in the future.

My more modest aim in this essay is to highlight a few aspects in regard to the Swedish case. I hope to add some (problematic) nuance to the standard way in which defenders of public service tend to portray the crisis, both in Sweden and elsewhere. There is by now a well-established international dramaturgy, whereby public service is seen as defended by staunch, progressive social democratic forces which are hampered by financial constraints

and assaulted by mercantile interests with historical wind in their sails. While this narrative framework certainly captures a good deal of the story in most countries, including Sweden, it can also hinder us from seeing other features which may not only be of relevance, but may be even at odds with this general picture. What I wish to bring out is that the defences have not always been that staunch. Indeed, the military metaphors of attack and defence add less clarity as we probe into the factors which have contributed to the debility of public service broadcasting; while the enemies may be obvious for the most part, it is not always clear who its "friends" are. While such perspectives as this may not enhance our optimism, they should at least strengthen our realism.

After a short presentation on television and radio in Sweden today, I briefly sketch the corporatist tradition in Swedish political culture. I see this tradition as essential to understanding the historical setting of broadcasting. I then take up two specific cases of "transition" in the history of broadcasting: the clamp-down on Swedish television journalism by the power elite in the early 1970's, and the introduction of commercial terrestrial TV broadcasting in the early 1990's. Both can be understood as manifestations — albeit varying — of the corporatist legacy. The first case points to how the power elite, operating through the state, suppressed journalistic freedom in order to attain ideological acquiescence. The second case shows how the state, in a growing ideational vacuum in regard to public service principles, opted for short term political harmony and economic expediency in the manner in which it introduced commercial broadcasting in Sweden. I conclude with some reflections on the need for a conceptual renewal of the notions of public and citizens in relation to public service. These notions need to be anchored in a political theorising which directly addresses the issue of market forces and their relation to democratic principles.

Institutional Contours

To provide some basic background, I will present in this section a brief portrait of the present contours of broadcasting in Sweden. As in many other countries, radio in Sweden commenced in the 1920's. Until recently, Sweden had three national radio channels, a system of regional radio channels, and a system of "neighbourhood radio" populated by various advocacy groups and associations. Television was introduced in 1956; in 1969 a second TV-channel was launched. On both television and radio, time was reserved for educational broadcasting, a separate unit within the broadcasting system. There have been a number of major reorganisations over the years, though the entire structure had basically been built on the model of a license-fee financed public corporation inspired by the BBC model. In 1993, however, Swedish Radio, Swedish Television, and Educational Broadcasting were transformed into independent companies, each of which is owned by a foundation (see Gustafsson and Weibull 1995).

In terms of regulation, there is a new fundamental Freedom of Expression Act, which has recently been established to ensure freedom in the area of broadcasting comparable to what has traditionally existed via legislation for the press (which dates originally from 1766). Next there are the all-important contractual enabling agreements between the government and radio/television companies which gives the specific organisations the legal right to broadcast. The actual conduct of the broadcasters is the area of concern for the Investigative Commission for Radio and TV, reconstituted in 1994. This governmental body is charged with review and control of public broadcast-

ing. It is to this Commission to which viewers and listeners may lodge complaints. Its findings, however, have only normative weight; it has no judicial powers. Issues relating specifically to journalistic ethics are handled by a system of voluntary adherence to codes of ethics covering both press and broadcasting; these codes are supervised by a Press Council and Press Ombudsman.

The two non-commercial public service television stations (hereafter refereed to as SVT1 and SVT2) were originally organised for "internal competition." This changed in 1993 when they instead were to co-operate to compete "externally" with the new private terrestrial broadcasting channel, TV4. TV4 began as a satellite channel, but was given a concession from the state and an enabling agreement to start broadcasting on a commercial basis within Sweden in 1991. Already in the late 1980's, commercial satellite channels TV3, linked up from the UK, and Nordic Channel (later called The Five), linked from Luxembourg, were beaming into Sweden. While they initially had few viewers (still today only a little more than half the population has access to cable TV), they caused considerable discussion since they were not bound by the legislation which regulates broadcasting. Thus, in the present situation, SVT1 and SVT2 are competing with three significant commercial Swedish-language channels. To this can be added the availability of an array of familiar international satellite channels, offered via a number of different cable subscription "packages." Several pay-for movie channels are a part of this output.

SVT1 and SVT2 remain what researchers term "full service channels" (Gustafsson and Weibull 1995) despite the competition. They offer a wide variety of programs, many obviously not expected to draw large audiences. In the face of commercial competition, SVT1 especially retains a strong profile of diversity with at least as much current affairs and other informational programming as was transmitted in the mid-1980's. At the same time, it is very apparent that both channels, and especially SVT2, are increasing their light entertainment in an effort to compete with commercial television. Many of these programs are virtually not different from the kind seen on TV4, TV3 and The Five. The Educational Broadcasting unit has no channel of its own; it uses allotted time on both the existing public service radio and television channels.

TV4, with a concession from the state, is the commercial channel which most approximates the public service ones. For example, it has had a number of important current affairs programs. Yet, with its heavy emphasis on series, popular films, and entertainment programs, it cannot be said to have a full service profile. With TV3 and The Five, the mix is still more slanted toward series, action films, and light entertainment; for example, children's programs are very sparse. If we look at fictional programming, for example, this category comprises 24 per cent of the programming on SVT1, 16 per cent for SVT2, 61 per cent for TV3, 38 per cent for TV4 and 68 per cent for The Five (***Media Trends*** 1995, 44). In 1994 the market shares, measured in per cent of viewing time, of STV1 and SVT2 were about 27 per cent for each of them, with TV4 having 26 per cent, TV3 with 9 per cent and The Five 3 per cent (***Media Trends*** 1995, 39).

On the radio side, in 1993 the then ruling bourgeois coalition auctioned off a set of frequencies to introduce private radio as a way of stimulating diversity in the output. Regulation of output was of the minimalist kind. Today there are over 80 private local stations, mainly in urban areas. These are organised into four main syndicates, owned by a few big media outfits, with each syndicate running between 14 and 29 stations. As Sundin (1995) points out, it is in fact somewhat difficult to specify the actual own-

ership, since there has emerged a complex web of phantom organisations to get around the legislated limitation which prohibits any one owner from having more than one station.

For its part, Swedish Radio, which now has four channels, responded with dramatic restructuring. One channel, P1, retains its diversity in public affairs and cultural programming, even if it has reorganised this in more block scheduling than before. The other stations are characterised by classical music, sports, and youth programming, respectively. Swedish Radio is opting for a strategy of "station loyalty," which means unless listeners are prone to switch a lot between stations (and most are not) they get less diversity than before.

In general terms, the public service crisis in Sweden follows the recognisable refrains we have grown accustomed to from other countries. Over the years one has been able to witness, among other things: increasing costs of production, a fiscal crisis of the state, conflicts over the political ceiling for license fees, a somewhat moribund broadcasting institution, a shift in the political climate which has supported significant reregulation in favour of commercial enterprise, the establishment of commercially based television and radio stations to compete with the public ones, lack of clarity in program policy and a general ideational bewilderment as to the definitions and purposes of public service, and changing audience patterns and expectations, not least in regard to the growing multicultural character of Swedish society. Let me turn now to a more Swedish slant to some of these features by looking at the corporatist legacy.

The Unravelling Corporatist Consensus

While there were debates over many issues, such as the nature of the programming and how high the license fees could go, there had been an impressive consensus regarding the basic premises for broadcasting in Sweden until relatively recently. There was very little support for a commercial alternative. I would suggest that one can understand the continuing widespread and deep support for public service broadcasting as an extension of a prevailing corporatist climate which had taken explicit shape in Sweden during the 1930's with the coming to power of the Social Democrats. The party has remained in power with the exception of two periods in which a bourgeois coalition ruled the government: 1976-82 and 1991-1994. The fundamental contours of public service broadcasting were fully homologous with this corporatist tradition, which may help explain why Sweden was, with the exception of Albania, the last country in Europe to maintain a noncommercial broadcasting monopoly — as the neoliberal rhetoric was fond of putting it.

The actual concept of corporatism only emerged in the early 1970's, but it has been used to designate developments stretching back to the early decades of the century. It signifies the tendency toward a high degree of organisation of — and co-ordination between — societal interest groups within a social formation. In practice, corporatism involves the delegation of much decision making to a segment of political and economic elites. The efficacy of the corporatist model is an important part of its democratic legitimacy: group interests are synchronised on a society-wide basis. One can note that corporatism is often contrasted with another ideal model of democracy, namely liberal-pluralism. Both obviously have their weak points. Corporatism, when grounded in wide-ranging value consensus within the major organised groupings of society, and an understanding of the rules of the game between these groups, can be

seen as an effective way for democracy to operate. If the consensus unravels, corporatism can degenerate into crass elitist interest group domination, deaf to the wills of a politically and culturally pluralised population. The corporatist consensus is still apparent in Sweden, but much of the recent political history of the country can be seen as a decisive unravelling of this framework (Micheletti 1994).

Since the 1930's, Swedish social democracy had not only been the dominant political force, it had also been a major force within the culture of civil society. For along side the Social Democratic party could be found the labour union movement — even today over 90 per cent of all employees are affiliated with a union — as well as a host of other so-called popular movements, focused on areas such as sports, temperance, and evangelical Christianity. The party and these popular movements, whatever differences they may at times have had, shared a basic orientation, namely one which situated an increasing number of aspects of social life within the sphere of the state in order to redress inequalities or in other ways adjust societal parameters for a better social order.

The history of the popular movements goes back to the nineteenth century, but it was the initial success of the Social Democrats in the 1930's and 1940's in providing the working class with considerable representation within state power that the overall contours of the Swedish corporatist society took shape. Swedish corporatist tendencies found their expression not least in the very orderly nature of organised yearly wage negotiations. The traditional capitalist class of Sweden was basically happy with the Social Democrats: the unions stood for a disciplined labour force. And as long as the economy expanded and workers saw their standard of living increasing, labour was largely satisfied. An accordance was attained, and the Swedish model, the so-called "middle way," had emerged. Beyond the unions, the other popular movements, as well as a myriad of associations — among industrial and financial circles but also among ordinary citizens — also contributed to a highly organised civil society, where a culture of collectivist interest-group democracy tended to prevail.

With the appearance of the leftist groups in the late 1960's, the Social Democrats began to feel outflanked, and they were very sensitive about the critique from the left. At about the same time, elite business interests were beginning to feel the constraints of the rather circumscribed limits to manoeuvrability within the established framework (Micheletti 1994). Bourgeois interests and associations were feeling stifled by the Social Democrats on the one hand, and the newer left on the other; much of the political and cultural climate was hostile to liberal-conservative values. A "rebellion" on the right was beginning to take form. Through book publishing, magazines, adult education courses, debate forums, and other means, a new ideological initiative was quietly launched.

A number of other elements which had defined Swedish civil society up until this period began to change. By the 1970's one could observe a dissatisfaction among various segments of the population with the prevailing corporatist structures; a growing pluralist/individualist discourse could be heard. This was increasingly fanned from the right. In fact, the discourse of the market was becoming very widespread by the mid-1980's. To compress quite a bit of history into a short synopsis, the growing fiscal crisis of the state led to increased taxes, against which the right could fuel discontent. Economic growth was sluggish; capital was fleeing the country. Massive loans were taken to keep the welfare state operating.

In the 1980's, Social Democratic fiscal policy increasingly began to follow a more bourgeois pattern, culminating in 1991 in the most pervasive change in the tax system to date, a change which tended to favour the well-to-do. Yet these measures were not enough; in 1991 a bourgeois coalition won the national election, led by the Moderates (who, with a sense of the spirit of the times, had changed their name from the Conservatives in the late 1960's). The Moderates then began a radical program of privatisation, decentralisation and cut-backs in social spending. Much of the public sector suffered massive reductions. The ideology of the market — with for example the drive toward profitability, individual wage bargaining, and the view of citizen-clients as "customers," began to take root in many public sector services. The effects were devastating in many areas, and in 1994 the Social Democrats, playing on the discontent, were voted back in.

The economic situation, including unemployment levels not seen since the early 1930's, however, was worse than it had been three years earlier. The Social Democrats, politically and fiscally pressed, continue to oversee the dismantling of the public sector. With the ongoing economic crisis, a series of major scandals among public officials, as well as the divisive referendum which brought Sweden into the EU, the traditional class-based accordances have dissipated to a great degree. The Social Democrats appear unable to provide a renewed ideological direction as an alternative to the present problems. Any convincing degree of hope for future reconstruction of at least some of what has been lost, is largely absent.

While Sweden is not politically or economically worse off than most other Western countries, the point is the contrast between the recent present and the traditions which have defined political and public culture in Sweden since the early decades of this century. Many citizens today are experiencing a profound "culture shock": they do not recognise the current forces at play and have difficulty orienting themselves in a fundamentally altered political milieu. It is with these broad developments as a backdrop that we can trace some of the more specific dilemmas confronting public broadcasting.

Journalistic Impertinence and the "Big Chill"

Public service broadcasting was long perceived as a self-evident and integral feature of the Swedish model. The very structure of ownership, with a broad representation of industry, labour, the popular movements, and the press, made Swedish broadcasting a model corporatist structure. During the early 1980's, questions about alternative arrangements began to arise, not least with the introduction of video, which at this time provoked much reflection on the premises of monopoly broadcasting. Yet, Swedish broadcasting, especially the television service, was still feeling the aftermath of a trauma which had begun over a decade previously. This trauma did not centre around commercial alternatives or the lifting of the monopoly, but rather around the status of television journalism and its independence from the power structure. (Much of this history is covered in detail in Furhammar 1995.)

If we go back just a bit further in time, the 1960's are often perceived as the "golden age" of Swedish television. Not only was there just one channel, which amplified television's role as a social and cultural unifier, but there was a general sense of television's positive role in the construction of the "people's home," as the welfare state has been affectionately called. It was a time of televisual experimentation, of

expansion. The medium, via both documentary reportage and fictional "realism," often took up social problems and focused attention on deficiencies in the ongoing construction of the welfare state. While some of the points of view may have been perceived as intense in the context of the times, there was little sense that the prevailing consensus itself was being challenged; it was a question of improving society according to the basic agreed-upon model of development. Television in this optimistic period played an important role in the public sphere in Sweden, in its coverage both of domestic issues and international developments, not least its coverage of the Third World. SVT, with a large cadre of free-lance producers, was energetically bringing (and constructing) the national society to the audiences. One of the important achievements to note here was that for the first time the Swedish working class was made very visible. Its histories, its experiences, its everyday social realities were given voices and faces.

The political climate evolved as the decade proceeded. By the late 1960's, the leftist movement was making a strong impact. The ruling circles were getting uncomfortable. At SVT there was an enormous creative vitality, a belief in the power of the medium to make a profound difference in societal development. Also of significance within SVT at this time was the emergence of anti-hierarchical structures among those working in program production, and the increasing independence of producers from management steering. Throughout the decade, this energy was matched by rising budgets and a general expansion at SVT, particularly in the realm of non-fiction. The extended documentary, often with an engaged point of view, became the dominant form for television journalism. The second channel was introduced at the very end of 1969, but from the perspective of the power structure it now seemed that instead of the diversity of viewpoints that had been hoped for, there was instead a doubling of radical voices. The programs vehemently criticised the political and economic elites as well as the popular movements; they attacked what was perceived to be ideological remnants of old bourgeois "high culture."

In this development it must also be said that some of the programs were more driven by a sense of ideological correctness than by an understanding of what makes good television. Furhammar (1995), while basically in sympathy with the progressive intentions of the producers (and he was himself a TV producer at this time) finds in reviewing this material today that there was for example, a rather limited range of dramaturgical devices; the powerful vs. the victims was a pervasive theme, often coupled with a puritan or ascetic sensibility. Indeed, the entertainment division at both channels had a rather difficult time for a while; "escapism" was not deemed politically correct by the majority of producers. While television at this time was dynamic, there were signs that it was becoming a bit boring. Segments of the audiences — both those with more conservative views and those who simply wanted more "fun" from television — were getting fed up.

For television, 1969-71 proved to be a watershed, a period when creative energy from within was still propelling the medium forward, even if a tiredness in form and themes was setting in. Yet the really decisive changes came from outside SVT. A number of transmissions in particular rattled the power elite at this time. One was the coverage of the miners' strikes in the north, which the establishment saw as grossly partisan in favour of the miners. Another was a documentary series entitled ***From Socialism to Enhanced Equality***. The series accused social democracy of selling out on

its commitment to socialism, and argued that it had not really contributed to the reduction of class hierarchies, but had instead only provided an economic boost for all groups in the decades it had been in power. It is interesting to note that by today's journalistic standards, these programs appear somewhat mild (Thurén 1995) . In the context of their times, however, they were seen as a profound attack on the prevailing consensus.

The power elite responded vehemently, putting heavy pressure on the directors of SVT. In 1970, a new director general took over SVT from the retiring visionary leader who had done so much to build up the organisation in the previous decade. The new director, a political appointee with the sense of the importance of the situation, coordinated the following year an "overhaul commission" to examine the organisation and economic situation of STV. The findings, not surprisingly, led to major economic cutbacks, which began to be felt throughout SVT by 1974. The flow of increased funding to television had now been decisively reversed. The pulling of the purse strings made it clear that the intent was to put the political scare into television executives, editors and journalists. It was successful. Management mobilised itself and began drastic reorganisation. While few producers and journalists were actually purged, many were "quarantined," cut off from participation in production. A virtual freeze on new hiring was initiated which was to last for many years. A stronger organisational control was instituted by constructing larger editorial collectives, with more traditional hierarchies. The previously strong position of documentary makers began to give way to the more anonymous editorial collectives. Production became more organisationally homogenised. Decreased budgets meant fewer productions generally, and imported material increased.

Even the forms of televisual expression began to change: magazines and studio talk shows became more the norm. These were not only more economical, but often allowed for immediate reply on controversial topics, blunting strong interpretations. With the sharp decline in documentaries, the "social mirror" of television had begun to move indoors, as Furhammar (1995) notes. Magazines were tightly edited and focused increasingly on current issues of the day rather than on the broader social processes that documentaries could take up. The editorial desks of the regular news programs were accorded more prestige.

Television journalism, in short, experienced a "big chill." The enthusiasm, the curiosity, the audacity, were gone by the mid-1970's. While the clamp-down managed to weed out the "vulgar Marxism," it also snuffed out much of the vitality of television journalism. As a result of this abuse of power by the state, the organisational momentum dissolved, and SVT has arguably never quite recovered, even if one can point to many outstanding efforts over the years, and especially a mini-renaissance of journalistic initiative at SVT in the 1990's. Today, in a situation which is economically very much constrained and where SVT is prone to making its version of popular game shows to compete with the commercial, we do witness some impressive investigative efforts and documentary reportage, though on a small scale and largely in the context of magazine programs. Significantly, trivial talk shows and infotainment are also on the rise, with all the issues that such popularisation of journalism implies (see chapter three in Dahlgren 1995, for a fuller discussion).

In the 1970's it became understood that the medium could be politically dangerous for the power structure, and thus had to be "housebroken" to ensure its subordina-

tion. As I have tried to suggest, the kind of journalism being pursued was not without its own problems, but the response from the establishment was so heavy-handed that the consequences for independent journalism — and the television organisation as a whole — was devastating in both the short- and the long range. External discussion and debate on these developments was limited, and it was not all that difficult for SVT's management to legitimate the changes as necessary organisational reforms. For one thing, the leftist wave itself was generating not an insignificant disaffection among viewers. For another, audience statistics made it very clear that after the introduction of the second channel, large numbers of viewers were "shuttling" between the channels to explicitly avoid current affairs programming and watch the entertainment output which the other channel would competitively run in the same time slot. Little public discussion focused on the manner in which television was punished for violating the consensus. The political right wing could sit back and watch the proceedings without sullying their hands.

While the big chill lasted many years, it in itself was not enough to shore up the old political consensus. This continued to unravel, as I discussed above. When the particular threat of radical leftism had receded, attention could be turned to other aspects of television policy. In the 1980's and 1990's, these had largely to do with fiscal issues. Less ideational energy was spent on specifying what kind of "service" should be provided and what is meant by "public." The Social Democrats were not able to generate a compelling new vision or policy for public service broadcasting; with some risk of exaggeration, one could say that it remained largely an object of technocratic administration increasingly coloured by fiscal concerns. This paved the way for the manner in which commercial television was introduced, as I will discuss shortly.

In 1974 a governmental commission proposed a new structure for public service broadcasting. A "parent corporation," as an umbrella organisation, was constituted; the television and radio channels were subordinate in this new arrangement. This lasted until 1987, when a new reform was launched and yet another difficult and expensive restructuring initiated. The new organisation this time centred on defining STV1 as a Stockholm-centred channel and constituting SVT2 as a channel comprised of 10 provincial district units. This model lasted until the early 1990's, when still another reconstruction was under way, whereby Swedish Television, Radio and Educational Broadcasting were reconstructed as separate companies, as mentioned earlier. Among the reasons for this latest restructuring was the desire on the part of many shareholders — in particular the press and industrial financial interests — to move their holdings to the commercial media sector (Sundin 1995).

In the eagerness to reduce spending, these reorganisations were carried out with more cutbacks and further demoralisation of personnel. Most recently, in a surprise move, the Social Democratic government in 1995 required that the funding for radio and television be decreased in parity with the cutbacks imposed on all other state-funded institutions, despite the fact that public service broadcasting is basically financed by license fees, not direct state funding. The results put television and radio in a very difficult situation.

Stumbling into the Commercial TV Era

With its internal difficulties, SVT was not in the best state for meeting the growing pressure from commercial cable — and satellite television in the late 1980's. Market

forces and technology, not the initiatives of a visionary government media policy was and is in the forefront of shaping the new television landscape. We can notice that by now the political visions of the Social Democrats had taken on a very defensive character. The welfare state project was in serious fiscal trouble, and the ideational foundations of corporatist accords were being seriously assaulted by market ideologies. If one is going to introduce commercial broadcasting into a situation which had been a non-commercial monopoly, it would seem that great attention and care would have to be paid to the definitions and implications of public service in the new setting. This is precisely what was not done.

In 1989 a government commission study on television policy concluded that in the given situation in which some viewers are able to receive satellite programs and others are not, the public service criterion of diversity suggests that a terrestrial TV station, financed by commercial revenues, would be the best way to proceed. Much of the discussion in this report centres on the importance of popular entertainment programming. It is **this** kind of diversity which is underscored. The way was now clear for the establishment of a new television channel financed by advertising. The manner in which the decision-making actually proceeded in the awarding of the license to TV4 in 1991 reveal what Canadian observer Bill Roberts (1996) calls the "impractical adhocracy" behind the way in which public service broadcasting is handled in Sweden.

Roberts, who works for public television in Ontario, finds it puzzling that Sweden, with its social democratic traditions, has no public hearing process or independent review mechanism for the awarding or reviewing of enabling agreements between the state and broadcasters. Not even in the case of TV4, which marked an historic transition away from the monopoly structure and non-commercial character of broadcasting, was there any hearing process. Indeed, the steps towards the privatisation of part of the airwaves passed with a minimum of public debate. The licensing process took place in closed negotiations between those applying for the license and top politicians. Much can be said about the insulation from direct public input into broadcasting policy. For example, in Sweden, there is no interest group or association of television viewers, as found in many other countries; it is assumed that the viewers' interests are adequately represented by the prevailing structures. These democratic deficiencies, the growing non-representative character of present arrangements, can be traced to the social evolution of Swedish society. The structures are not keeping up with the sociological realities.

Indeed, Roberts found that there is no media and cultural policy which has a "mission-driven reference for public broadcasting to anchor on, no overarching legal assertion of a national public interest in the electronic media, and no evident appreciation of the inevitable consequences of audience fragmentation and escalating viewer/consumer choice" (Roberts 1996). Even the recently constituted Commission for Diversity in the Mass Media holds no public hearings, and its membership is determined by a Cabinet minister. While Roberts is using his analysis as a foil and a warning for the Canadian situation, he puts his finger on some serious shortcomings in the Swedish model.

His assertion that much of the original motivation behind the licensing of TV4 had to do with preventing TV3, the London-based satellite channel (which resides beyond the control of Swedish regulation) from raking in all the advertising revenue for itself, is quite accurate. The new media situation forced a decisive reaction, regardless

of how prepared or not the government was in terms of a visionary policy. This situation is of course not unique to Sweden, but it is indicative that within the government there was no office for media affairs until the early 1980's, and at that time it was part of the Ministry of Education. Today media affairs are the domain of the Ministry of Culture, which was established in 1993. And the current Minister of Culture, laudably a woman, was tellingly a manager at the commercial TV3 before assuming her post.

In the actual awarding of the license to TV4, the first issue was to whom it was to be awarded. The second was what kind of stipulations regarding financing and programming would be built into the enabling agreement , which, since it was a license for commercial enterprise, was also a form of concession. It was originally assumed from the government's side that the license would go to Investor, a holding company of the Wallenberg clan, the leading "old money" industrialist family in Sweden and the majority owner of TV4 as a satellite channel. The Social Democrats could live with this; it had been worse from their point of view if one of the more ideologically active wings of the industrial-financial sector were to get the license. It was feared that they might use the channel to enhance the growing right wing climate (the Berlusconi model was becoming well known by now). On the other hand, if there were no competing bids, and the license was more or less just handed over to the Wallenbergs, it would not look politically very nice for the government. Moreover, even if the Wallenbergs were traditionally low-key in exerting political pressure, if theirs was the only bid, they would be in a strong position to dictate the terms of the concession.

In the late summer of 1991, when the negotiations were under way, a competing applicant appeared, Jan Stenbeck, who via a growing media conglomerate called Kinnevik, owned TV3, the satellite channel transmitted from London. The government negotiating team, representing several parties, was somewhat split in its views regarding commercial television and its possible implications for SVT1 and SVT2. The tension hovered around placing strong economic demands on the concession — part of the profits would go to the state or, alternatively, placing high demands regarding program quality and adherence to the spirit of public service — and pulling in lower revenues. The Wallenberg group made a strong case for a public service approach, while Stenbeck enticed the government with promises of great economic success.

The timing was delicate, since there was an election scheduled for September. The Social Democrats and the Moderates were apparently split. Finally a decision was reached which was satisfactory for all partners: Stenbeck agreed to withdraw his application in exchange for joining ranks with the Wallenberg's application. In this arrangement he landed 36% of the shares in the agreement. The Wallenbergs kept about a third, while the remainder was spread among smaller holders. The political parties avoided a major confrontation, and the government did not appear to have just handed over the concession to the Wallenbergs. Stenbeck became not only the largest share holder of the new terrestrial TV4, but also landed a monopoly over advertising sales for TV4, which was to be handled by one of his subsidiary companies. Commercial television broadcasting in Sweden had now been launched via closed-door wheeling and dealing in which not only the public had no say, but in which the final formulation of the agreement for TV4 says little about the interests of the public.

The two existing directors of TV4 (from its satellite phase)were men who had held a vision of public-service minded commercial television. This was not Stenbeck's vi-

sion, and he fired them on the spot, effectively putting an end to any lingering thoughts about the viability of a "middle of the road" or "responsible" commercialism. Along with transmitting programming largely aimed at the widest possible audience, TV4 also soon began piling up citations for violating such features of the enabling agreement as those prohibiting the interruption of programs with commercials and commercials aimed at children. Yet, since the Investigative Commission for Radio and TV has no legal powers, the symbolic slap on the wrists per se are of limited effect on someone like Stenbeck. And the government, eager that TV4 will be a financial success, is not overly persistent in pressing reforms. (In fairness, it must be pointed out that there is and has been some serious current affairs programming on TV4, though this comprises only a very small portion of its transmissions.)

Stenbeck, a Swede by birth, had been working in the financial world of New York for many years. He launched TV3 in 1987, and began investing in other media projects. With the settlement over TV4, he rapidly became the new-style media mogul of Sweden in the 1990's. Through his Kinnevik conglomerate, he continued to buy into the new growing television sector, with a number of local stations, cable systems, several satellite channels, including subscription film channels, a shopping channel, production companies, newspapers and magazines. With the privatisation of local radio in 1993 he acquired 14 stations. Stenbeck pursues the tactics of "vertical integration," that is his Kinnevik corporation strives to control all the stages of media flow from production to distribution. His many subsidiaries are thus involved in the whole spectrum of media activities. If one looks at the financial state of his media empire, however, it seems that his audacity outreaches his strategic abilities. His overall profit returns hover at about five per cent; many operations are pulling large losses, and he has to use the profits from his forestry industrial holdings to shore up his media empire. Sundin (1995) suggests that today the Wallenbergs are the dominant influence at TV4. This lack of stability presages further turbulence in the years ahead: fast buying and selling, sudden closures.

If Stenbeck's empire is shaky, it is, at the same time, setting a new tone for the professional culture of media production. The American style of high pressure and raw edge operations is grooming a new generation of media professionals to whom "public service" is a foreign concept. It is not surprising that he becomes in some circles an obvious object of demonisation and comes to personify the decline of public service broadcasting. This is, of course, too easy; however one cares to judge his dealings, it must be understood that he walked into a situation long in the making and ripe for exploitation. The failure to adequately define and defend public service was not a sudden phenomenon. One must look to the long-term evolution of media policy, framed by evolving political and economic circumstances, to understand the origins of the present situation.

Citizens, Publics and Democracy

These two cases — the clamp-down on journalists and the manner in which commercial television was introduced — highlight the vulnerability of public service broadcasting in Sweden. In the first case, public service was at the mercy of state power. In the second case, a shaky fiscal situation and an underdevelopment of public service principles in a changing political climate, signalled its weakness. The current situation of course only gives us more reason for concern. While it is prudent to take a

realistic view of politics and material interests, I would argue that it is also imperative that public service be given as much conceptual potency as possible. From the Swedish perspective, its principles need to be given compelling clarity and legitimate clout in the current turbulent situation.

As is well known, the definitions of public service are slippery. If we cast the public in terms of a single viewer, in the Swedish tradition this viewer has alternatively been seen as a member of society in general, as a member of specific groups and organisations, as a participant in societal dialogues and other communication, as a holder of specific values that need to be taken into consideration, and as a private consumer of television. Obviously there is overlap and potential collision here, as well as considerable elasticity. There is clearly not a rigid boundary separating the concepts of citizen and consumer, but rather a sliding scale. This ambiguity can be both an asset — permitting some needed adjustment to changing circumstances — as well as a drawback. On the negative side, it can mean a lack of general direction and vision; more seriously, it can entail a lack of conceptual clarity or ideational firmness in the face of various pressures.

Without a coherent ideational framework for democracy in general and anchored in national traditions in particular, the response in defence of public service will continue to be frail. Without a clear sense of the democratic limits of the market, a view in which the market is seen as having to adjust to democratic ideals and not the other way around, the defence of public service is undercut. Without a solid commitment to the ideal of an animated and multidimensional concept of citizenship, counter-arguments about "the public" will have limited clout. And it precisely such weaknesses, unfortunately, that we find in contemporary Swedish discussions and policy proposals.

Thus, from neoliberal circles in recent years there have come a number of ideological attacks on the concept of a public service monopoly (Jaensson 1992; Borg 1994). In terms of debate strategies, these represent thorough and well-thought out positions. One sees of course operating in these arguments a notion of "freedom" which is inexorably linked with the logic of the market and the traditional notions of individualism associated with it. Not surprisingly, these arguments use a notion of "citizen" which is basically devoid of the horizons of **social** citizenship. Citizenship in these neoliberal writings on public service depart from the abstract individual, with little attention to the societal factors which condition the possibilities of societal membership and participation. The accent is on the citizen as individual consumer, and the nuanced, multidimensional character of the concept of "the public" is profoundly reduced.

The response has of course been forthcoming. For example, in a recent collection of debate contributions (Jacobson 1995) we have a series of responses from a generalised social democratic perspective. These come from various opinion leaders, pundits, journalists and media experts. The contributions are good at the descriptive level, specifying empirically what is afoot. However, at the analytic and prescriptive levels there are not many steps forward. There is earnest exhortation, moral indignation, and predictable incantation, all basically lamenting the present situation. Yet the various rhetorical strategies do not add up to any specific policy direction or an inspiring vision for a renewal of how to think about public service. There is no systematic confrontation with the ideological assumptions of neo-liberalism. We find little attempt to empower the notion of citizen as a way of legitimating the demands that can be made in

the name of "the public."

At a general level, there is thus a deep need for a thorough refurbishment of the philosophical foundations of "public" and "citizen." While there is considerable academic work being done in this area today, it is not making sufficient inroads into the policy thinking of the political elites. Without such foundational efforts, policies aimed at strengthening what Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) call "civic communication" — addressing audiences in their roles as citizens — will be vulnerable to the immediate vicissitudes of politics and economics. Such efforts are a prerequisite; they are of course insufficient in themselves. The political will must also be mobilised within media policy.

Moreover, in Sweden in the present historical juncture, any defence of public service broadcasting — let alone attempts at a sustained conceptual and institutional renewal — must be firmly grounded in the changing contours of an increasing pluralised society which is shedding much of its corporatist legacy. This has consequences not least for the problematic of "representing" the public within broadcast institutions, as the current research of Anna Edin (1996) so clearly underscores. The existing structures, such as the legal-political framework, corporatist ownership patterns, traditional journalistic ideals, and regulatory mechanisms are inadequate. The task is in part to develop formalised mechanisms so that public service broadcasting can be said to legitimately represent the entire spectrum of society. Yet, as Edin notes, we may be reaching the point where it is not possible to "represent" the fragmented and protean publics of late modernity. Other conceptual strategies are necessary; they do not seem self-evident at this point, but we need them badly.

At this juncture, efforts to reconstruct public service broadcasting begin to link up with larger questions about our historical circumstances and the pressing project of renewing democracy under the difficult conditions of late modernity (cf. Ang 1996). The reconceptualisation of public service broadcasting requires, among other things, a creative encounter between broad sociological horizons and rigorous political philosophy.

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