



January 27, 2012

Venue: Museum of Photo – A forum for photography, Stockholm

Summary

Text of a speech by Mr Stefan Löfven, Party Leader

Thank you very much,

I am nervous, I can promise you that much. But more than that. Because I am so thoroughly convinced of the need for Social Democracy and Social Democratic policies. And I know well that our country wants our policies now.

The problem is not that people have turned their backs on our policies; the problem is our own shortcomings as a party so far. Sweden needs more Social Democracy.

I would like to thank you for the faith you have placed in me. This is huge for me. I am very, very proud and happy to have been chosen as Party Leader – the finest appointment a Social Democrat can have. Thank you for your confidence!

I have taken on this position precisely because I share the belief in Social Democracy and our values. I feel it so deeply; it is so strong within me, because I know that the Swedish people also share it with me. That's how it is.

Our values are timeless – we will continue to work for them!

We the largest political party in Sweden, and I say without hesitation that we are Sweden's best political party. But it is hardly a secret that we have been through, and are going through a tough time.

Politics is always difficult and sometimes politics is very hard. But despite the uphill struggle ahead, I feel great optimism.

Because I know our party. I know how many committed and knowledgeable women and men we have all over the country. Who burn for our values, who burn for democracy and for politics.



That's important. It is we alone, we, and only we together, who can restore people's confidence in the politics of Social Democracy.

It is therefore now our job and our responsibility to show together how our visions and our dreams, together with concrete, pragmatic policies, can build a stronger and fairer Sweden. A Sweden that is even better, where people's freedom always comes first.

Because Social Democracy is a freedom movement.

We believe in the equal value of all people, and that is why we also burn for the idea that all people, not just a few, shall have the freedom to pursue their dreams. But it is only in a society characterised by caring for each other and optimism that all people also can have that opportunity.

We want to tear down the obstacles and allow people to develop their strengths. Whether the obstacle is an old fashioned structure and hierarchies that form glass ceilings for women, or prejudices regarding ethnic background or sexual orientation. Whether the obstacle is a lack of ramps for people in wheelchairs or a shortage of opportunities for entrepreneurs to realise their ideas.

If you believe in the equal value of all people, you are also strongly opposed to discrimination.

I react extremely strongly when I see how women are discriminated against in our society and in our working life. How women often have lower salaries. How hidden structures restrict women's career paths and chances in life.

My fellow Social Democrats,

I am a fully convinced feminist – full stop.

I am so because it is every bit as strong as the idea of equality. You can't separate them and say that you support the equal worth of all people, and then not believe in equality between women and men. It's in your whole body, and I intend to fight for increased gender equality and the freedom of women.

I intend to fight against discrimination in all its forms. Because a Social Democratic Sweden is a Sweden for everyone. Because whoever you are, we Social Democrats will stand up for your opportunities.



We know that your freedom and your opportunities are also the precondition for mine.

That is why we are so committed, that is why we keep at it. That is what unites and drives us Social Democrats – in Sweden and all over the world.

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In my job as International Secretary and my other roles within the Swedish Metalworkers' Union I have travelled widely in the world. I have had the opportunity to meet many people and experience very different cultures. I know the world has many problems, but also that the world has infinite possibilities to develop.

The visions and values of Social Democracy are universal. People's dreams of freedom know no national borders.

That is why Social Democracy is international.

That is why it is natural for us to turn outwards, towards the world, and work together with other progressive forces.

Because of our solidarity with people in other countries, and our awareness that many of today's problems are global, Sweden cannot hide away in an international context.

Sweden must take responsibility in the EU, in the UN and in other international bodies.

Sweden's voice must be heard – for the equality of all people and for democracy. Swedish Social Democracy will therefore develop our EU-policy and our global policies.

In the coming years we will make sure we develop our European policies so that people once again believe in the possibility of more jobs, a secure economy and a better environment.

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My fellow Social Democrats,

Sweden is a fantastic country, so rich in opportunities of different kinds. For many years, I have been living in the beautiful city of Stockholm. It's a city full of life, culture and activity, and I'm really happy to be able to live and work here.

But at the same time, I see how the politics doesn't do enough for everyone's opportunities here in Stockholm. Every day I see people forced to beg. I see a segregation that holds people back. I see how many are forced into an almost inhuman stress in order to leave children at day care in time, to wait for trains that don't come and to simply be able to make it through their daily lives.

I also spend quite a lot of time in Örnsköldsvik, in the county Ångermanland, a place with completely different advantages. Fantastic nature, thriving businesses and a fantastic hockey team (Modo)... and a somewhat calmer daily life.

But there too I see clearly how today's political solutions are not sufficient – far, far from it. Because I see people who have difficulties finding a job getting stuck in unemployment. I see people who are being thrown out of the health insurance system, out into insecurity. I see people who don't have access to higher education so that they can improve their position on the labour market.

These things are connected. That's what we see now: wherever we look in 2012, we see the need for more politics, not less.

That we need new and better solutions to people's problems – all over Sweden, all over the world. People are crying out for Social Democratic politics!

So we stand upright, and now continue together to develop a strong, forward-looking Social Democracy to win the election in 2014 and give every person in our great country the opportunities that these people so richly deserve.

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My fellow Social Democrats,

I have only been Party Leader for a few minutes, so I don't intend to stand here and deliver a complete programme.

Furthermore, the party has a set of policies, even though many people have not understood this. Social Democratic policies are in place – we had a Congress in 2009, and there is a Social Democratic budget proposal in parliament – there is a set of Social Democratic policies, so that is what we will continue to develop.

I don't intend to hold a political speech covering everything, that's not my ambition, but I want to say something about jobs. Because I want to be clear on the issue of jobs. We might as well admit that we have not been strong and clear enough.

The thing that helps people understand that we are the ones with policies for the jobs of the future.

More jobs are Sweden's greatest asset and it will be my most important priority.

First,

The obvious starting point for sustained growth and more jobs is sound public finances. We understand, perhaps more than anyone else, that if we don't have order in the public finances there will be poorer conditions for creating jobs. A strong economy is the foundation, but not enough for jobs to appear.

Two other efforts, at least two, need to be made simultaneously.

Sweden must have an active policy for business and industry. People need to start new companies and existing firms must grow. That requires investment in innovation; it requires investment in research and development of new products and services.



Now is also the right time to further heighten our ambitions in the field of climate change and environment. We need to invest in new environmentally friendly technologies. We must build Sweden socially, economically, but also ecologically of course. If we do this in a smart way, it will create both jobs and growth.

We need to strengthen the collaboration between university and business. We need better and more efficient access to venture capital. We need once again to grasp the interaction and dialogue between business and politics. Sweden is a small country, and we must stick together. In business and industry policy too, we will make Sweden strongest by acting together.

Second,

We must give people the conditions to meet the demands from companies and the public sector for labour. People must have the skills for the future jobs and not, like all too often is the case today, find themselves without the competence that is needed.

People must be allowed to grow and equip themselves with training and education. This means there must constantly be new opportunities for competence development and lifelong learning at work.

We must stop wasting people's desire to work. This is fundamental to Sweden's chances of maintaining its competitiveness internationally.

In a situation, and I feel it is important to say this, where Sweden has mass unemployment, we should therefore prioritise education, training and research ahead of reduced value added tax for restaurants.

In a situation where Europe is in crisis while China, India and Brazil continue to grow, we must have active policies for strong Swedish competitiveness.

That is how we will finance the welfare state in the future, and that is how investment today creates the conditions for growth and jobs tomorrow.

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My fellow Social Democrats,

We Social Democrats do not fear the future, we long for it. We look forward to it. The future is full of opportunities for a political party that dares to believe in the strength and power of people.

The future is not something that just happens, something predetermined by fate. Let me stress that. The future is formed by people together. Through democratic decisions made by people with shared goals we progress successively and develop people's potential – it's politics that makes this possible.

There are some people who think politics is boring. It's exactly the opposite. Exactly the opposite. Because politics is the best tool we human beings have to improve the societies we live in. Politics makes a difference.

Social Democracy is a people's movement. We are a people's movement – and I will never forget the policy forum we carried out a few years ago. In activities around the country, we formulated policies and discussed. We invited people from outside the party, researchers and everyone that we wanted to contribute. The enormous task that we carried out in that forum, no other party can manage that. No other party would have done it.

We are a people's movement, and we must hold on to that – firmly. We are a people's movement, we need to be out among people, we need to collect people's opinions, we need to develop policies.

We unite people in opposition to society's injustices – and that, my friends, is a unique strength that we must utilise.

Optimism about the future, strong belief in the strength and power of people and in the possibilities of politics – and over 100,000 members that are to be even more. That is a very good foundation.

We want to set free the power within every person in our country. We believe in Sweden, we believe in everyone who lives here. We want to make a fantastic country even better.

So there, my fellow Social Democrats, we have a very clear mission: We are now modernising and opening up our party and its procedures, so that even more people can take part and feel involved, and want to be involved.



We are now developing policies with the equality of all people at their core and our burning desire to create freedom and opportunities for all.

I promise to take my share of the responsibility, and I promise that I will work hard for this.

Please join me on a difficult and sometimes tough assignment.
Now we stick together and now we work together.

Once again, thank you for your faith and confidence – now let's turn our eyes towards the future!

Thank you.