

Our English Page

The organization of Social Work in Sweden.

The State Social Administration.

It is characteristic of the Swedish state administration that the central administration is distributed among the Ministries and Central Boards of Administration, subordinate to them but acting with a very large measure of independence. The principal task of the Ministries of State is to prepare such business as is to be dealt with by the Cabinet (Council of State) and to put into execution the resolutions of the Government. The ministers, the majority of whom are also heads of Ministries, are really only heads as far as the staffs of their respective Ministries are concerned. The business that is not of such a nature as to require a Government decision, is not usually handled by the Ministries but by the Central Boards of Administration established for special branches of the administration. The final determinative authority within them is generally exercised by a general-director or director-in-chief who has at his side a number of members also usually functioning as bureau chiefs. The members have to prepare and place before the heads the business proper to the respective bureaus or departments, in certain cases also to cast their votes when a decision is taken, and they have the right in every case to make a written reservation when they hold an opinion at variance with the decision. Like other ordinary permanent civil servants they are removable. Certain exceptions from the principle of irremovability are made as regards heads of administrations, in that in some cases these can be dismissed by the King—a right which is hardly ever exercised—or else can be appointed for a certain number of years only. Of recent years, there has been a tendency for the latter form to become the usual one for such chief posts as are considered to make special demands on the capability and working capacity of the holder.

To illustrate the relation between the Government and the Central Boards of Administration, it may also be pointed out that the right of independent decision of the Boards of Administration is limited in that their decisions may be appealed against to the Government and in this way amended. On the other hand, however, the Government is under an obligation, before a decision on more important matters is taken, to call for expressions of opinion and proposals from the

Central Boards of Administration concerned, which thus have the opportunity of officially and publicly to set out their opinions on the matter in question and often decisively to influence the result.

Since all the business going to and coming from the State administrative authorities is, by the constitution, accessible to the public, the latter can exercise continuous control over administration, which is very effective, especially through the co-operation of the press.

The administrative problems within the social sphere are, in accordance with the above-mentioned system, assigned in the first place to the Ministry of Social Affairs set up for that sphere of administration, and secondly to the Central Boards of Administration belonging to the said Ministry, and in certain cases also to the Boards of Administration subordinate to other Ministries.

The administrative sphere of the Ministry of Social Affairs is considerably more extensive than the name really indicates, in that that Ministry also has to fulfill certain functions which in other countries are usually assigned to the Ministry of the Interior (supervision of local administration, police, etc.). Of the various branches of actual social administration, the most important are the Poor Relief and Child Welfare, which is assigned to the Ministry, which has a special bureau to deal with these matters, the head of which also serves as the inspector of poor relief and child welfare. For other allied branches of administration there are the following Central Boards of Administration and similar institutions:

The Medical Board, for matters relating to hygiene and the care of the sick;

The State Insurance Office, to deal with social accident insurance;

The Insurance Council, to deal with disputes concerning the application of accident insurance legislation;

The Pension Board, for old age and invalidity insurance and

The Social Board, which is a central authority to deal with such matters of a social nature as are not specially assigned to any other Board of Administration. The Board, which thus has an extensive and varied sphere of activities, is at present organized into six bureaus, of which two work out official statistics and one is set apart for matters of a legislative nature, while the administrative business devolving upon the Board is distributed among three bureaus in accordance with the following scheme:

The First Bureau: for matters concerning public and private labor exchanges (page 47), arbitration and labor conflicts (page 43), emigration and immigration (page 60), the care of inebriates etc.

The Second Bureau: for matters concerning the protection of workers (page 63).

The Third Bureau: for matters concerning sickness benefit and sickness benefit societies.

The investigations carried out at the Statistical Bureaus of the Board are included in the Swedish Official Statistics as a special series under the designation of "Social Statistics." Statistics of a regularly recurring nature, and returns and reports on social questions at home and abroad, are also published in the monthly periodical "Sociala Meddelanden" issued by the Board.

In addition to the Boards of Administration already mentioned there are special central organs with such spheres of administration as are subject to regulations of a more temporary nature. In these are included:

The Labor Council, which as to deal with matters concerning the application of the temporary legislation as to the eight hours' working day, etc.

The State Unemployment Commission, which deals with State assistance for combating unemployment.

The State Building Bureau, which administers the building subsidies.

In this category can also be included the Labor Court (page 42), set up to decide problems involving the interpretation and application of collective agreements.

To the work of the Ministry of Social Affairs obviously belongs the handling of such business as is connected with Sweden's membership of the International Labor Organisation and with her representation at the sessions of the Labor Conference. There is now a permanent organ for dealing with business connected with this

matter, the Delegation for International Social-political Co-operation. For the present the head of the Social Board acts as the chairman of the Delegation. Co-operation with the International labor organization is maintained also by a Social Attaché stationed at Geneva.

All the institutions mentioned, with the exception of the Medical Board, have come into existence during the last few decades (the State Insurance Office 1902, the others still more recently). In view of the fact that certain of these institutions take decisions in provinces where conflicting interests make themselves strongly felt, they have been organized in some degree on lines differing from those usually adopted for Boards of Administration in general. Special importance has been attached to giving certain lay elements—especially representatives of the employers and workers—an opportunity of co-operation. Thus within the Insurance Council, the Labor Council, the Labor Court, and the Delegation for Social-political Co-operation, the right of decision is usually exercised by a body of seven members. Two of them are representatives of the employers and two of the workers and appointed by the Government, on the nomination of their organizations. In the Social Board the corresponding interests are protected by two so-called social delegates—one representative of the employers and one of the workers—

who, in the case of more important decisions, have the right as well as the members of the Board to take part in the discussion of the business, although they have no right to vote. Side by side with the Board there is an advisory body, divided into several sections, the Social Council, consisting of representatives of the employers' and workers' organizations and other experts, who, when necessity arises, are called in to give evidence in more im-

portant matters with which the Board has to deal.

To ministers other than the Ministry of Social Affairs belong inter alia, the following administrative organs of social character:

The Control Board (belonging to the Ministry of Finance), which supervises the application of legislation regarding the manufacture and sale of intoxicants (page 156);

The Central Board of Education (attached to the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs), which is the central authority for education (page 285);

The Board of Trade (belonging to the Ministry of Commerce), which is, inter alia, the chief authority for the inspection of shipping (page 76), and

The Own Homes Board (belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture) which is the central authority for the small holdings movement (page 215).

NATURE.

Nature is upheld by antagonism. Passions, resistance, danger, are educators. We acquire the strength we have overcome.

INDUSTRY.

Mankind are more indebted to industry than ingenuity; the gods set up their favors at a price, and industry is the purchaser. Addison.

SORROW.

Sorrow is a calamity, but brooding over it is a disaster. — Rev. Daniel Russel, D. D.

TRUST.

In the end those who trust most will find they are nearest truth.

White is a color that stands for joy, woman are married in white but men never are.

The best way to preserve the teeth is to put them in water overnight.

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