

Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen och arbetskraftsinvandringen 1945-1972

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ABSTRACT

The Swedish Employer Confederation and labour migration 1945-1972.
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Labour migration to Sweden is analysed from an employer perspective. The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to determine how the Swedish Employer Confederation (SAF) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) were affected by labour scarcity; and second, to explore how SAF and LO tried to influence supply and demand on the labour market by controlling the stream of labour immigrants between 1945 and 1972. This thesis also questions whether the so-called Swedish Model was based on consensus between employers and trade unions, as it is usually claimed. As regards theory, the thesis focuses on collective action and how employer organisations and trade unions try to avoid competition among buyers and sellers by using cartel strategies.

Although previous research has identified the trade unions' rhetoric and actions regarding labour migration, hardly any attention has been given to the employers. This thesis comprises thus the first systematic study of how SAF tried to increase the labour supply by immigration. The employers' ability to increase the labour supply was limited by the close relations and cooperation between the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party government, as well as the trade unions influence over the National Labour Market Board. SAF lacked an equally powerful ally. Because of labour scarcity LO agreed to increase the labour supply in the 1940s, as long as the native workers' position was not threatened. SAF on the other hand meant that LO restricted the inflow of foreign labour and thereby maintained the excess demand for labour. In the mid 1950s Sweden implemented a more liberal migration policy which to a large extent pleased SAF, even though LO could still regulate non-Nordic immigration. In the 1960s the trade unions started to criticise the liberal migration policy and used their relations with the government to implement strict regulations. As a result LO could control all non-Nordic immigration. SAF protested against the new regulations but the government did not heed to the employers will.

KEYWORDS: Employer confederation, trade union, labour scarcity, cartel strategies, labour migration, the Swedish model.