

IDROTTENS VÄG TILL FOLKHEMMET.  
STUDIER I STATLIG IDROTTSPOLITIK 1913-1970

av  
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## ABSTRACT

Norberg, Johan R, 2004: Sport's Road to the Welfare State. Studies in Swedish government policy towards sport, 1913-1970. 491 pp. Language: Swedish, with a summary in English. ISBN 91-85138-14-2, ISSN 1652-3180

Swedish sports, with their unified/uniform organisation and democratically evolved structure, represent in many ways the archetype of a popular movement. However, the sports movement has also since the beginning of the 1900s received regular – and over time substantial – state support. In addition, the main sports organisation, *Sveriges ridsidrottsförbund*, (RF) has developed a close co-operative relationship with government powers. This intimate sport-and-state relationship highlights a question regarding organisational autonomy: has it been possible for the sports movement to retain its autonomy while at the same time accepting public funds? Or, put another way: how are we to comprehend government politics vis-à-vis sport? As a strategy to control the voluntary movement, or an attempt to encourage its independence?

As shown by these questions, the aim of this thesis is to produce a characterisation of the state's relationship with the sports movement. More tangibly: to analyse how the relationship between the autonomy of sports clubs and associations, and government control, was resolved in Swedish sports politics between 1913 and 1970.

Theoretically, the investigation takes its starting point in a politico-philosophical discussion on "what the state *should* be doing". Three idealtype-constructed positions on how the state can act towards the sports movement are presented: passive neutrality, active neutrality and perfectionism. In regard to an adjacent question, "what the state *can* do", a perspective of legitimacy is applied, signifying that the state's possibilities of political control are limited by the sports movement's propensity for autonomy.

The subsequent empirical study is divided into three themes: government economic support for the sports movement, the role of RF as an authority, and the taxation of sport. The investigation shows that active neutrality was a dominating principle in the state's relation to the sports movement. The primary aim of economic support for sport was not in order to govern, but to strengthen the movement's character of a voluntary and independent mass movement. But the state's neutrality was not unconditional. The government demanded extensive measures designed to control the use of public funds. Moreover, the principle that economic support was not a gift was clearly emphasised. Attached to the grant was thus the condition that the movement itself took on the responsibility of ensuring sport's development as wholesome, voluntary and idealistic. This policy can be most easily understood as an *implicit contract* between the state and RF. Its main function was ensuring the sports movement's right to both state support and a relatively high degree of autonomy, conditional upon it reciprocating by voluntarily bearing a public welfare responsibility

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