

Chapter 24 : Royal house laws

Further legislation would prevent the princes from practising a profession or business. In Sweden, §45 of the 1809 form of government stated:

”Neither the crown prince, nor heir princes of the Svea Kingdom, nor the other princes of the royal house shall have any livgeding [income of personal fiefdom] or civil office; However, after old usage, titles of duchies and principalities may be awarded, without right to the landscapes, whose names they bear.”

This meant that the princes had to live on appanage, wealth, business or military office. Living on is perhaps the wrong word. The first Bernadotte claimed that the office of chancellor was not a civil office because it was unpaid. The same was alleged to apply to jury service in freedom of press cases. Oscar (I) & Charles (XV) were for a time chancellors of the university. When it was Oscar (II) turn, the interpretation of civil office had changed. Charles's way of running the office remotely & without familiarizing himself with the matters caused such conflicts that he became the last prince in it. Business was also banned. Charles John & Oscar I ran business as an alternative to having money at the bank. This led to such political conflicts that during Oscar I the practice was changed. The royal house was still allowed to do business, but not to make a profit. The most prominent case was the use of the estate Stenhammar that under Prince Wilhelm was zero-rated. It is unclear how the princes' military offices were paid. Current practice is to give the salary to charitable purposes.

The ban on a civil office was over time interpreted as a total ban on both princes and princesses working in public activities at all - the state, county council or the municipality. Princes and princesses were also not allowed to work in privately owned companies. Moreover, the legal position was so unclear for their own companies - the exemption from declaration and taxes, the advertising value vis-à-vis competitors to be royal, etc. - that in practice the choice of profession was limited to landlord, artists or by definition non-profit-making activities such as charity where there was a precedent.¹ Moreover, there was public pressure – that charging for service rendered was unworthy of a prince or princess who was already paid through his or her appanage. There was also public pressure to irrespective of your means live according to your rank.

Most of the writing has been about the princesses' attempts to exercise a bourgeois profession. Prince Oscar's daughters Maria & Elsa worked for some years as nurses within the Red Cross, at the Saxon Children's Hospital, at the Seraphim Hospital & at Sabbatsberg. Prince Gustaf Adolf's daughters Margaretha & Birgitta had similar vocations. Margaretha attended two shorter courses in physiotherapy and child care. She then practised at Crown Princess Lovisa's Children's Hospital, at St Göran's Children's Day Hospital, as a play leader in the children's ward of ”Middlesex Hospital” (in England) & finally as an unpaid assistant occupational therapist at Karolinska Hospital, where she had to stop when another person sought the place. Birgitta trained as a gymnastics teacher & practised without pay at Broms school.

Mother Sibylle's attitude was that her daughters needed an education, but not to make a living - ”maybe a profession, at least a job, where they can develop their individual

¹ Malmgren 1957.

abilities.”² The daughters considered seeking employment at the extremely exclusive *Schloss Salem* in Germany, where their birth was a merit rather than trouble, but then they got married.

In 1974, §45 was abolished, but the corruption legislation - not to exploit your position for personal gain - now fulfils the same function.

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Another restriction on personal freedom was the king's position as ”pater familias”. The children, grandchildren and their families had not only to consider the whims of the Swedish & Norwegian Parliament, but also the ”house laws”, customs & the king's discretion. §48 of the 1809 form of government read:

”The king's court is under his individual rule; to command as he feels fit. All personnel is hired or dismissed at his discretion.”

In practice, this meant patronage. At least the princes swore an oath of loyalty when they came of age. There was no religious requirement, but all the children were confirmed in the Lutheran faith. Mention has been made of the restrictions on the children's right to marry of their own choice.

The children did not have any personal appanage. The Parliament gave the king a lump sum which he distributed among the children and these to their children. The children and their spouses did not decide the composition of their personal court. The suspicion was that the their court was loyal to the king rather than to themselves. The grandchildren had it easier because they had no personal court.

The king's powers over the members of the royal house extended as far as King Oscar II having Princess Thérèse and King Gustaf VI having Prince Carl Jr declared legally incompetent. King Oscar II even took it on himself to provide Princesses Thérèse, Victoria & Maria with a psychiatrist. The family power even extended outside the royal house proper. Folke Bernadotte's widow Estelle Manville felt compelled to ask Gustav VI for permission before she remarried. The examples can be multiplied. Since the king ruled over the appanage, it was easy to blackmail persons or put them under economic guardianship.

1810-1921 there was yet another restriction. §7 of the order of succession forbade them to travel abroad without the king's knowledge and consent. Law 1921:21 restricted §7 to the Crown Prince. The Parliament's decree formally concerned the abolition of the patronage law (right to demand ecclesiastical taxes, etc.) & some of the privileges of the nobility of October 16, 1723, where §32 dealt with the requirement that the king must approve a move abroad, or the property be confiscated. However, for this reason to change the order of succession seems overdoing it. The decision seems rather intended to weaken the patriarchal traditions of the court & made the later so notorious princely marriages abroad possible. Under the old order of succession, the princes could have been stopped at the border.

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² Martin Siwertz. Intervju med Sibylla. Husmodern, 1949:17. [Okänd originalkälla.]

The royal house was long time so wealthy that the children could live on inheritance while carrying out the artistic or non-profit activity of choice. After 1918, however, their living expenses through King Gustaf V's actions became a "political" issue as the princes who had lost their titles & appanage needed to take the economy seriously. Carl and Folke Bernadotte were soldiers who married money. Prince Carl Jr (Belgian title) & Carl Johan Bernadotte represented in the industrial arena. Sigvard & Lennart Bernadotte devoted themselves to film, industrial design and a conference centre. It was considered an unshakable truth that all princes were useless idlers, and especially Folke & Lennart Bernadotte were obsessed with proving the opposite.

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The shift from prince or princess to ordinary citizen was difficult. The royals were marked by their upbringing and the surrounding was unsure how to respond. They were not to be given special treatment but neither their former rank ignored. I describe Sigvard Bernadotte's experiences of his "semi-official" position:

By his marriage to Erica Patzek, March 8, 1934, Sigvard had lost his prince title & with it his noble rank. Prince Carl Jr had received a Belgian Prince title through his brother-in-law. July 2, 1951, following the death of King Gustaf V, the rest of the defected princes, Lennart, Sigvard & Carl Johan, through Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg (at the request of King Gustaf VI) received the same Luxembourg noble title as once Prince Oscar, Count of Wisborg, that under Luxembourg law both covered his wife and was hereditary. For Sigvard, the title meant that he began to ponder his wrongs. This became worse when he 1961 moved back to Sweden and after his father's inheritance did not have to work any more. From 1972 to 1983, he and his wife Marianne with the support of King Carl Gustaf had a "semi-official" position, which I have not been able to sort out. He was met with a certain ceremony. As honorary chairman of e.g. the Center for the study of international relations (CSIR; 1971-1985?) he met statesmen. He had assignments from the court as a judge at e.g. equestrian competitions at the stadium.

In 1976, his brother Bertil married his long-time mistress Lilian Craig. Bertil was allowed to keep his prince title & Lilian received a corresponding princess title. This caused a long-lasting dispute between Sigvard, his wife Marianne and the court, where they felt they were being unfairly treated. It also had a practical side, as until 1975 all royal heirs paid inheritance tax at a lower rate from 1941 to 25 percent, the rest of the population to 36 percent, which meant a significant reduction of Sigvard's inheritance. After a new conflict in 1983 - this time about his official rank - Sigvard was regarded by the court as a non-person. Sigvard began to call himself Prince and his wife Princess. He pushed the title issue all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, but died before the case was heard.

The two most comprehensive depictions of the title conflict are in Marianne's memoirs³ & Staffan Skott's chronicle.⁴ There are also a number of newspaper articles. King Carl Gustaf discussed the matter with his lawyer Bengt Ljungqvist but decided not to unravel a cabinet decision "made under another constitution". Probably

³ Bernadotte 1986: ss. 155-188.

⁴ Skott 1996: ss. 375-379.

he feared that all other deposed princes & their descendants would make similar claims. Sigvard had not been treated worse than the other princes, and so it was.⁵

There are several opinion polls on what the Swedish people thought. In 1986, the majority believed that Sigvard should take it as a man.⁶ As his brother Carl Johan's wife put it: "You should not cry over spilt milk. Especially if you spilled it yourself." By 2001, however, the opinion had shifted so that a majority thought that Sigvard could have his title.⁷ However, the question had by that time lost its importance because the prince title was no longer a noble title, but merely honorary. Meanwhile, Sigvard approached lawyer Gunnar Bramstång for a legal investigation.⁸ It was not too encouraging. Oscar II's attitude seems to have been that the prince title followed birth, not the person's official rank, but under Gustaf V no such distinction was made. The Court appears to have followed German case law. However, Bramstång pointed out the often overlooked fact that the order of succession 1937 changed to Swedish princes being allowed to marry foreign private citizens, which meant that at least Gustav VI's opposition to his son Bertil's marriage to Lilian Craig did not have the support of the law, but was only to assert the exclusive status of the royal house.

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The restrictions of the civil rights of princes & princesses has since 1918 been an issue in the republican debate. But if you abolish the special legislation, the monarchy will most likely unravel at the personal level. Both whip, sense of duty & carrots are needed to keep it going (see part 4: chapters 22-28).

⁵ Dagens Nyheter, 2001-05-26.

⁶ Sifo & Hänt i Veckan, 1986:5.

⁷ Aftonbladet 2001-05-15, s. 8; Expressen 2001-05-15, s. 16.

⁸ Bramstång 1990.

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