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## Campaign Country Going Green?

*Danish Government Campaigns for Saving Energy and the Rise of Environmental Concern, c. 1973-1995*

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Martin Dackling, Poul Duedahl  
& Bo Poulsen

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# Indhold

Martin Dackling, Poul Duedahl & Bo Poulsen: Inledning	5
Johanna Widenberg: Kampen mot boskapssjukan i 1700-talets svenska rike	11
Martin Dackling: Släktjordsfrågan i Sverige och Norge 1810–1860	43
Thierry Godbille, François Fulconis and Gilles Paché: Organization of Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Global Supply Chain Perspective	73
Sophy Bergenheim: “The population question is, in short, a question of our people’s survival”: Reframing population policy in 1940s Finland	109
Bo Poulsen: Campaign Country Going Green? Danish Government Campaigns for Saving Energy and the Rise of Environmental Concern, c. 1973-1995	143
Christian Widholm: Heritage and Imaginary Childhood Landscapes: On the Impetus of Tourism Entrepreneurs in Stockholm Archipelago	184
Jørgen Elsøe Jensen: Fødestrategier og civilisationsformer – en teori om Norden i et civilisationshistorisk perspektiv	208
Bidragssydere	230

# Campaign Country Going Green?

## Danish Government Campaigns for Saving Energy and the Rise of Environmental Concern, c. 1973-1995

Bo Poulsen

### **Introduction**

Internationally, and not least nationally, Denmark is often put forward as a country at the forefront of environmental awareness, energy savings, and the transition towards a cleaner pattern of energy consumption.<sup>1</sup> Even critical voices like Danish Greenpeace echoes the view of Denmark as a “frontrunner in energy transition”, and in 2013 the World Wildlife Fund presented the state of Denmark with their ‘Gift to the Earth Award’ in recognition of the efforts made to curb CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions.<sup>2</sup> On the website of *State of Green*, a government supported and public-private partnership platform, this idea is summarized in a statement on behalf of the Danish Energy Agency that “Denmark is a pioneer on greening the energy system and has since the first oil crisis in 1973 had a solid tradition for ever more energy efficiency and renewable energy oriented policies”.<sup>3</sup> Further, in an article entitled ‘The history behind Denmark’s energy transition,’ a commitment to environmental conscience is presented as integral to official Danish energy policies since the early 1970s: “Denmark was severely affected by the oil crises of the 1970s. It was decided to take a new path to

meet growing energy needs and, at the same time, to cater for environmental concerns”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed much has happened in Denmark with regards to curbing energy consumption since the early 1970s. The total primary energy consumption peaked in the late 1970s at a time when the varying growth rates of GDP seemed closely tied in with growth in energy consumption. Since then, GDP has grown substantially, while the level of energy consumption has remained stable. In other words, Denmark as an energy consuming unit has succeeded in breaking the curve, entering a new track towards a much more energy efficient society.<sup>5</sup> According to government statistics, the share of renewable energy sources by 2015 covered 56 percent of domestic energy consumption.<sup>6</sup>

Equally over the past half century, there has been steady growth in concern for the natural environment internationally. Both internationally and in Denmark, the negative environmental impact from the rapid economic growth post World War Two has gained public attention and political awareness and action since the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in Denmark the administration of environmental issues became institutionalized from the 1970s onwards, while sustainability as an issue of its own entered the government administration from c. 1990.

This means that history of Danish energy policy as well as the history of public environmental awareness to some extent has run on parallel tracks through the last more than 40 years. However, as we will see in this chapter, the Danish history of raising awareness of sustainable energy consumption is far from linear, when looked upon in a multi-decadal perspective.

This paper investigates more than 20 years of government led attempts to have Danish consumers curb their energy use. Looking at previously unexploited campaign material a number of results emerge, qualifying, the notion of Denmark as a front runner,

when it comes to environmental awareness. The first attempts to cut energy consumption came about as a direct consequence of the international oil crises of 1973-74, and for the following 15 years the government standing committee on energy savings issued a string of energy saving campaigns, fueled entirely by an appeal to common sense household economics and not least a significant portion of patriotism. Environmental justification was almost entirely absent throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

This changed only from 1989 onwards, as government initiatives to curb the ever rising consumption of energy commenced an extensive use of environmental justification.

This paper finally discusses the reason for this greening of government initiated Danish energy saving campaigns, which is seen as an indirect result of the 1987 UN report, *Our Common Future*.<sup>8</sup> The 1988 general election in Denmark led to the formation of a new center-right government coalition (1988-1990), where recommendations from *Our Common Future* became part of the new government program. The early 1990s witnessed a rare consensus on promoting environmental sustainability, which extended across traditional left-right party lines.

### **The Great Gamechanger**

In the modern post-World War Two era, few events have had such a profound impact on Danish society as the so-called first oil crisis of 1973 and 1974. The oil crisis was a game changer in society and in politics, which highlighted modern societies' profound dependency on fossil fuels. In October 1973 the Yom Kippur War played out between Israel on one side, and most of their Arab neighboring countries on the other side. As Denmark along with many other Western countries were looked upon as pro-Israel, the oil produc-

ing so-called OPEC countries of the Middle East unleashed what was partly a boycott on selling oil to the small Danish Kingdom in Northern Europe. Prices soared, and there was a genuine fear in the Danish government that the boycott would be total, resulting in a potentially devastating shortage of oil. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s Denmark had become increasingly reliant on cheap oil from the Middle East for heating as well as for transportation. Denmark now found itself in the so-called first oil crisis of 1973.<sup>9</sup> The later so prolific oilfields in the Danish part of the North Sea were yet to be discovered, and the wind mill industry was yet to take off as an important business and noteworthy source of sustainable and locally produced energy, hence Denmark was totally dependent on foreign imports of fossil fuel. The number of cars alone had risen more than tenfold from 1955, and by the early 1970s, more than 1,000,000 cars were registered in Denmark.<sup>10</sup>

As early as 19 October 1973, the social democratic Minister for Trade and Commerce, Erling Jensen formed a 'committee concerning fuel saving information activity' later known as *Energispareudvalget*, a standing committee for saving energy. Just a fortnight later, 31 October prices soared, and the crisis became very concrete.<sup>11</sup> The government then enacted a series of measures to save on energy, in particular mineral oil from the Middle East and for the Danish consumers a new era had begun, and an era in which saving energy became the order of the day.

One week later, the ministry of trade and commerce put forward general speed limits of 60 km/h in towns and 80 km/h in the country side. A more profound chock treatment was the enforcement of the so-called 'car free Sundays,' prohibiting cars from driving on Sundays. This was in place from 25 November and lasted until 10 February 1974, while other types of consumption and modern life in general was affected by restrictions on the lighting of shopping



windows, Christmas decorations in the street, as well as deliveries for private stoves heating with oil.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the speed limits, these measures were all fairly short lived and very unpractical for modern society. However, the standing committee on energy saving continued to operate until well into the 1990s, and the idea persisted for decades on that the behavior of the everyday consumer could be altered through campaigns for a more prudish use of energy. The official arguments would differ over the years, as we shall see in the following.

### **Material and methods**

This paper analyzes the arguments presented in six different government backed campaigns for saving on energy in between 1974 and 1995. Four of these were initiated through the government standing committee on energy saving, the so-called *Energispareudvalget*, whose campaign material is kept at the Danish public records office, the *Rigsarkivet* (RA).<sup>13</sup> From 1974-76, the committee was behind the campaign, ‘Spar på energien – det lønner sig,’ while in 1978-79 a follow up campaign was named ‘Spar på energien – det er nødvendigt.’ From 1979 until into the early 1980s, another campaign was labeled ‘Spar på energien – lyt til energisten. Then most recently the *Energispareudvalget* was backing the ‘Bilkørsel og miljø’ campaign in 1995, where the environment is at the forefront for the first time.

In between however, the Danish government sponsored a three year long campaign (1989-1991), ‘Vor Fælles Fremtid,’ which was a specially assigned committee appointed by the Ministry for the Environment. Considering the extensive character and game changing environmental expression to emerge from this campaign, this campaign will be discussed more extensively than the others in this paper.<sup>14</sup>

In the following, the argument presented in the campaign

material is analyzed with an eye to the Toulmin model of argumentation. According to this, any argument presents a claim or a conclusion. Considering the game changing nature of the first oil crisis of 1973, the claim from the first government campaigns was the call to consume less energy. The claim is backed by a fact, which in the initial case was the statement that there was a lack of oil, which then had become expensive. To enhance the strength of the argument, the claim also needs a warrant. In the following, the typical warrant for the claim tells the consumer that saving energy is good for his or her own household economy or that it would be beneficial for the overall economy of Danish society. Another warrant would be that saving energy would be good for the environment. Finally, the argument would frequently contain backing for the claim. In case of the energy campaigns, a range of beneficial side effects would tend to be enrolled. Toulmin's model has been criticized for not really grasping the complexity of many arguments presented, but in this situation, where, by necessity of being advertisements, the arguments are simple this model will be used as a framework for opening arguments, where the warrants are shifting over time.<sup>15</sup>

### **Save energy – it pays off**

The first campaign under the umbrella of the committee for energy savings unfolded in 1974 and 1975 under the heading 'Spar på energien – det betaler sig' which translates to 'save on energy – it pays off'.<sup>16</sup> Much of the campaign was formed as posters, where the claim to save energy, was backed by the warrant that it paid off to follow the advice presented in the published material. However, it is implicit that it paid off for the individual household. As a concrete example the campaign stated that one family could save 2,000 Liters

of hot water every year, provided they did their dishes in a tray filled with water, as opposed to have the tap running with hot water.



Figure 1. One of the posters of the first campaign. The headline translates; 'In the future we shall save on heating, and be comfortable.' The only hint of environmental awareness as such is the 'PS' at the bottom right corner asking: 'Did you consider that saving energy is an improvement for the environment as well?' (source: RA. Energispareudvalget).

One of the campaign adds was directed at insulation of houses, "... to make the birds keep warm by themselves". One suggestion was that individuals could mount an extra layer of windows in winter, while another proposal was geared towards insulation of attics. 10 cm. of insulation could provide savings of 1,000 Liters of oil, the campaign claimed, indicating that with current prices such an investment was profitable already after one year.

Finally, as a mere backing of the central economic warrant for the argument, however, the advertisement contained a *PS*: "Did you consider that saving oil, is also an improvement for the environment?" Why, this should be good for the environment is not explained explicitly, but one can deduce from the concerns of the 1970s, that it relates to air pollution (Figure 1).

It is noteworthy that a collective noun, 'We' is used a lot in the advertisement posters. Combined with the use of the Danish flag in the shape of a drop of water – or perhaps a drop of oil, the reader gets a sensation that the appeal is directed towards all Danes collectively, or in other words, as an appeal to patriotism. Saving energy becomes a patriot act, even if the concrete recommendations are geared towards individual households in particular, secondarily at people's work places.

'Insuler NU' for instance was a booklet 48 pages long, with a number of recommendations such as how to secure window frames from cold air using rubber linings or duct tape. This was followed by more general appeals such as this one: 'Has enough been done to save energy, where you live and work?' Again a 'PS' is inserted at the bottom of the poster, drawing attention to the possible effect on the environment, when energy savings are implemented.

In 1975 and 1976 the campaign continued, again with the same dominant facts and warrant to back the claim to curtail energy consumption. Air pollution was now explicitly addressed with the

## Campaign Country Going Green?

slogan: 'don't send energy up in the air – both lose their value,' yet the concerns of the environment was merely used as backing for main warrants.<sup>17</sup>

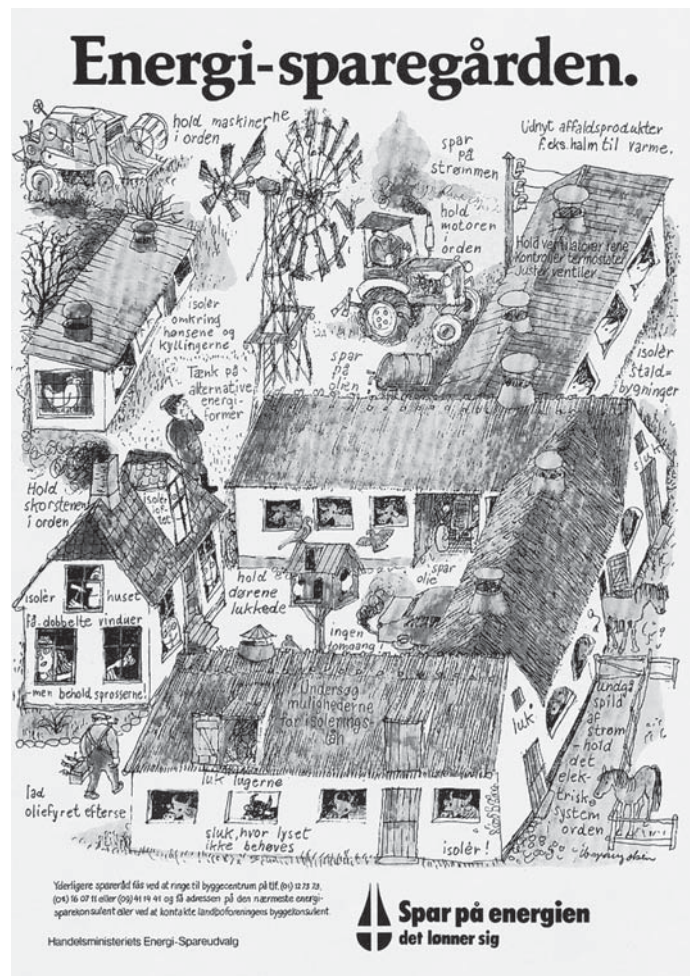


Figure 2. Recommendations for farm houses focus on the attractiveness of keeping machinery, stoves and chimneys in prime condition. Households in the countryside however, are also urged to think about alternative sources of energy. (source: RA. Energispareudvalget).

One of the novel posters from 1975 was the so-called Energi-sparegården, which translates as the Energy-save-farm (Figure 2). Here the targeted audience is people living in the countryside in general, and in particular farm households, which in the 1970s still made up a sizeable part of total Danish households as well as some 100,000 farming units. Recommendations for farm houses focus on the attractiveness of keeping machinery, stoves and chimneys in prime condition. Households in the countryside however, are also urged to think about alternative sources of energy. This suggestion is accompanied by a drawing of a wind mill, but not the modern type of wind mill with delta wings. Rather, this 1975 drawing is accompanied by a 1920s type windmill, which in its day had been a popular solution for making one's own electricity in the countryside, during a time period, where electric wires from central power plants had not yet reached every corner of the Danish countryside. Yet, by 1975 these wind mills attached to generators was largely a thing of the past.

One advertisement read 'Last winter we learned something about saving energy.' To sum up for those, who might have forgotten, the advertisement explained that heating had now become more than twice as expensive as it had been the previous winter. Moreover, the total Danish oil expenses had soared from 3 billion in 1973 to 9 billion Danish Kroner in 1975. "This will have a serious impact on our foreign currency reserves," the poster stated, only to add: "and your wallet. Therefore, we need to save energy. We cannot afford not to".<sup>18</sup> To make the point that everyone in the country is making a difference, the poster showed an image from the Ministry of Housing, where an office corridor just outside the personal office of the minister appears gloomy, from the lack of effective lighting. The accompanying text ex-

plained that the ministry recently called upon all employees in the public sector to cut down on the use of heating and lights everywhere possible.<sup>19</sup>

**‘Save energy – it is necessary’**

Another campaign was launched in 1978-1979, “Spar på Energien – det er nødvendigt”, which translates as “energy savings is a necessity”.<sup>20</sup> The timing and focus was no doubt related to the outbreak of the second oil crisis. With the Islamic revolution in Iran overturning the shah and creating great political instability, 1978 saw another significant rise in oil prices World wide. Following the outbreak of war between Iraq and Iran in 1980, the tense situation in the Middle East continued into the early 1980s.

The focus in Danish government advertisement on energy savings was completely on economics and very much on patriotism, no environmental concerns. The urgency now sprung from the headlines of a series of posters with the message: “Denmark’s new room temperature: 20 degrees Celsius”. The number ‘20’ was shaped and coloured to remind the reader of the Danish national flag. The accompanying text added to this. Now it was no longer the pockets of individuals being targeted, but overall wellbeing of the Danish nation state: “Denmark must lower energy consumption with at least 5 percent. It is serious. Therefore, certain restrictions have been imposed. However, there are still some percentages to be earned voluntarily. We can do it: When everyone agrees to turn down the heat everywhere and maintain a sensible temperature in the living room at no more than 20 degrees, we will have saved a great deal of what we have to save” (Figure 3).<sup>21</sup>

# Danmarks nye opholdstemperatur:



Danmark skal omgående nedsætte sit energiforbrug med mindst 5 procent.

Det er alvor. Derfor er der også indført visse restriktioner.

Men der vil stadig være nogle procent, som vi skal spare ad frivillighedens vej.

Det kan vi også godt klare:

Når alle er enige om at skrue ned for varmen overalt og holde en fornuftig temperatur i stuen på højst 20 grader, så har vi faktisk sparet en stor del af det, vi skal.

Den eneste investering, det kræver, er et almindeligt stuetermometer.



**Spar på energien**

## Nu skruer Danmark ned til 20°

Handelsministeriets Energi-Spareudvalg

133

Figure 3. The patriotic message is embedded in the Danish flag on top of the '20 degrees' (source: RA. Energispareudvalget).



Compared to the previous campaign, the appeal to personal economic gains has vaporized into the chillier room temperature. Looking through the methodological framework of Toulmin, the claim is the same, that energy consumption must be curbed. Nonetheless, no factual reason for this is presented in the campaign material. The committee on energy savings must have taken for granted that the consumer was well aware that the dependency on foreign imports of fossil fuels was draining the state economy. This is the reason the warrant for the argument is centered on the consumer as a patriot citizen, who is expected to act in the best interest of the country, even if this should result in cold feet in one's own living room.

This campaign was also geared to magazine spreads, such as the one running the headline: "We have turned energy saving into a sport".<sup>22</sup> Here, the reader encounters a number of private citizens who all have a story to tell about how they have succeeded with saving energy in their homes. One family has taught their children to turn off the lights, when they leave a room, while another family has insulated their window and door frames. All the highlighted individuals were labelled with a noun, as they became the *energisparere* – 'the energy savers.' In the magazine spread as well as in a leaflet for car owners, the advert plays on the economic incentive to save money, while the patriotic aspects were less prominent than in the posters.

### **'Save energy – listen to the 'energist''**

The next campaign from the early 1980s was the most ambitious so far in terms of outreach. "Listen to the energizer", was the headline, introducing small cartoon figures, the 'Energisterne,' which would roughly translate into English as the 'energizers.' The energizers appeared not only on posters and newspaper ads, but on more specialized leaflets. One of Denmark's most popular writers and poets

at the time was Benny Andersen, who had been commissioned to write a number of short poems concerning energy savings.

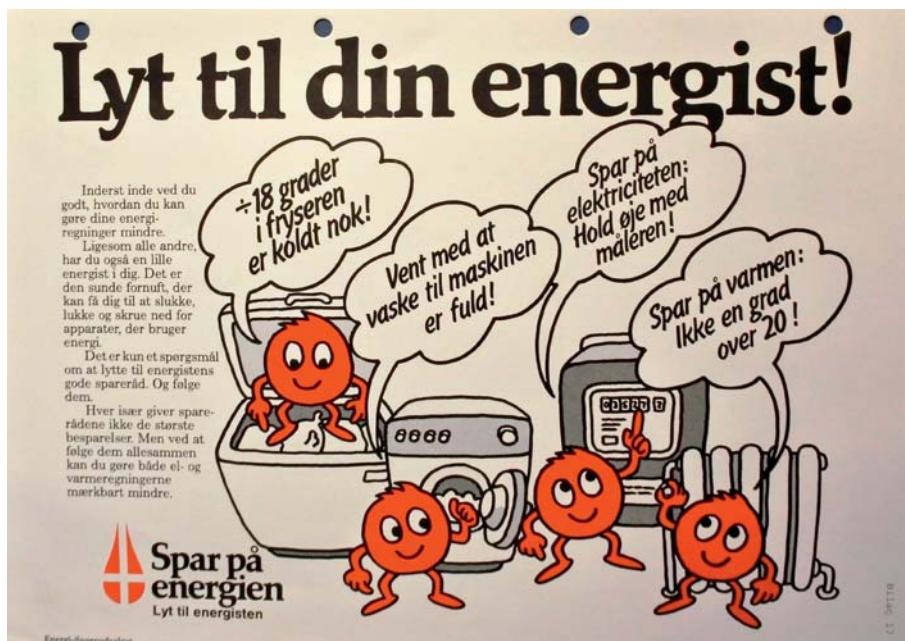


Figure 4. The 'Energizers' in full swing advising on how to save energy (source: RA. Energispareudvalget).

The energizer campaign was targeted at almost every corner of Danish society, at least within the public sector. For the school children special stickers and small comic strips with the energizers were constructed. If anyone had to go to their General Practitioner, to a hospital or they went to the public library, they would be met by posters and leaflets with information on how to save energy. Again there was a direct appeal to public moral and patriotic duty. In some of the posters the energizer was red on a white back-

ground, suggesting that this was particularly Danish. “Deep down, you know how to minimize your energy bills”, the advert ran, suggesting that after almost a decade of being exposed to campaigns for saving energy, the Danish consumers were now well equipped to take the wise decision and cut down energy consumption. There was a clear appeal to citizenship when the campaign continued: “Like everyone else, you have a little energizer in you”.<sup>23</sup>

### **Vor Fælles Fremtid - Our Common Future in Danish**

The government initiated committee, Vor Fælles Fremtid, came about as the result of a broad majority decision in the Danish parliament across party lines. From 1988-1990, the Danish government was made up by a center-right coalition, where the Prime Minister represented the Conservative Party, (Det Konservative Folkeparti) while the coalition partners were the Liberal Party (Venstre) and the somewhat smaller social liberal party (Det Radikale Venstre). Lone Dybkjær from Det Radikale Venstre held the post of Minister of the Environment. One aspect of the coalition agreement in 1988 dealt with the issue of addressing the issue of sustainability, as this had been put forward in the recent (1987) UN report, Our Common Future.<sup>24</sup>

In the spring of 1989 the government Standing Committee on Environmental and Development issues initiated the formation of a committee to “promote a campaign to raise awareness concerning sustainable development”. The committee was to plan and oversee the campaign financed through government and private funds. Furthermore, the work of the committee built on the experiences of the past government campaigns to save energy as well as the most recent experiences with promoting the European Economic Council’s ‘Year of the Environment’ in 1987.<sup>25</sup>

The framework of the campaign was to promote “new solutions

and collaborative patterns” to promote the principle of sustainable development, as this had been coined in the *Our Common Future* report. This included the desire to support global thinking coupled with local action, as well as a promotion of knowledge of how society is connected through ecology and economics. To be successful, the government stipulated that these ideas should be embraced widely in society by individuals, NGO’s and the corporate world.

The concrete activities were scheduled as TV-advertisements, leaflets, newspaper ads and posters on public transportation, while more targeted educational material was to be produced. Finally, the dream was to foster new solutions and ways of living for individual citizens and families. The committee therefore should encourage funding applications for green projects from all around Denmark from various interest groups, including the concept of ‘green city councils.’<sup>26</sup>

To ensure a broad sense of ownership to the campaign, the Minister for the Environment, Dybkjær appointed representatives for the committee from across political and societal divides. In May of 1989 appointed her younger party member, Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen as Chair of the committee, and as well as Jonna Petersen from the same party.<sup>27</sup> Gerner Nielsen was a fresh face on the public arena, 29 years old, and when Dybkjær was asked by the newspaper, *Jyske Vestkysten*, why she chose Gerner Nielsen, her reply was firm: “I only appoint women to positions like this one, I always do, and I always have done in my time in office as Minister for the Environment. There are men in top positions everywhere in society, so I can’t see there is anything wrong with that.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, this comment on gender was in tune with public sentiments at the time and was not questioned in the reports from the conference. Only the tongue-in-cheek satirical commentator, ‘Teddy the Troll’ commented that it was no news that women were asked

to do the cleaning.<sup>29</sup> Pia Kjærsgaard from the right wing populist Fremskridtspartiet labeled it *silly*.<sup>30</sup>

The environment stayed in focus. The press conference to kick-off the campaign was situated outdoors at the scrapyards of the recycling company, Uniscrap, where the minister welcomed the press by saying that “everyone needs to start thinking in a new way. We need to change our behavior and live more eco-friendly”.<sup>31</sup> She continued stressing the tragedy that so few are choosing unleaded petrol for their cars. Then she echoed some of the energy saving slogans from the previous couple of decades since the first oil crisis of 1973-74, as she emphasized the need for shorter showers, while jeans perhaps could be worn for more than one day before they went into the laundry. Everyone knows we have environmental problems. Finally, the planning group behind the campaign launched what in the press was dubbed ‘the ten commandments’ ideas where individuals could make a difference. These were: 1) use unleaded petrol, 2) drive together in cars, 3) drive less, 4) wash yourself less, 5) sort your garbage, 6) don’t use chemical cleansing for the toilet – use boiling water instead, 7) use less detergent, 8) do the laundry less often, 9) recycle your leftover foods and finally for 10) share freezers with your neighbour.<sup>32</sup>

Gerner Nielsen told the readers of another daily paper, *Aktuelt*, that she was rather naïve herself when it came to environmental politics, but as a child of the post-1968 era of environmental conscience, she had grown up with the belief that human kind had to take action if we were to have clean water 50 years ahead.<sup>33</sup> The Christian oriented daily paper, *Kristeligt Dagblad* reported from the press conference that Gerner Nielsen had made a plea for ‘spiritual compost’ in the way Danes were thinking about the situation with the environment. She explained that it “is so dire that we can no longer leave it to politicians and experts to solve the issues at hand. The environment must and shall be a common responsibility. However, the biggest barrier is the

dominant lack of belief in the future. We no longer believe that we can actually interfere and change the course. Therefore, we should initiate a spiritual compost process, where fear and lack of action is turned over, to be championed by public engagement and a belief that you, and I, and we together are shaping the future.”<sup>34</sup>

The presence of Kirsten Toxværd, also appointed by Dybkjær, covered the interests of the conservative party, while the journalist Bertel Bavngaard most likely was approved by the liberal party.<sup>35</sup> By early July the entire committee was ready. In addition to four members appointed by the minister herself, the list of members of the executive committee included representatives from the Danish society for nature conservation, (Svend Bichel, Danmarks Naturfredningsforening), the business council of the labour unions (Hardy Hansen, LO/Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd), the employers’ organization (Niels F. Gram, Industrirådet), the youth organization of the social democratic labour movement (Anders Haselager, DUF) and Margrethe Clausager from Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd, an umbrella organization for educational institutions. The executive committee was backed by a board of 38 people representing as many organizations, such as the Danish car owners’ society (FDM), the association of Danish electricity plants (Danske Elværkers Forening), Danish hunters’ association, the Organisationen for Vedvarende Energi working for sustainable energy, the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, the Danish Chamber of Commerce and the Danish Tourist Board just to name a few participants from across the traditional political divides.<sup>36</sup> As the campaign gained momentum in 1990, many more organizations followed suit, thus by the end of 1990 63 organizations had joined in.<sup>37</sup> The daily management of the campaign was in the hands of a secretariat, first headed by the social democrat, Ole Løvig Simonsen, later by the former development aid consultant, Lars Norman Jørgensen, who became Secretary General in 1990.<sup>38</sup>

In the summer of 1989 the campaign was announced in a press release,

where Minister Dybkjær pointed out that to solve environmental problems, the lawmakers should take initiatives, but in order to truly foster a more sustainable development, citizens needed to take responsibility as well and change their way of living. This was the way forward, she stated, not only for the benefit of the environment, but also for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren.<sup>39</sup>

”We must think in a new way...” the Minister specified, and the Danes therefore should “think in totalities and change our behavior in many ways. This goes for taking big decisions, but it also affects us in our daily business of deciding on whether or not to buy unleaded petrol, commodities that are sensibly packaged, taking short showers etc.”<sup>40</sup>

One of the draws of participating in the campaign for Our Common Future was the special government grant to spend 21 million Kroner on campaign activities in 1989, 1990 and 1991. 6 million Kroner was assigned to running the secretariat from 1989-1991, and the rest to actual activities. 10 million Kroner was to be spent following application from interested parties.

### **Miljøkaravanen – The environmental caravan.**

To raise awareness, on the first outreach activities scheduled for the summer months of 1990, was the so-called Miljøkaravanen (The environmental Caravan) visiting 16 towns around the country, often in association with local town festivals. The tabloid newspaper *Ekstra Bladet* reported from the kick-off event that was launched at the small Port of Vedbæk North of Copenhagen. The then minister for education, Bertel Haarder from the liberal party graced the opening, answering quiz questions and writing the first sentences on what was planned to the World’s longest list of environmental advice. “Don’t be late, when it comes to cleaning

*Bo Poulsen*

the World”, he wrote. Meanwhile though, the newspaper reported a slip of the tongue of his, as he declared the recent invention of energy saving light bulbs to be “a piece of shit”. Nonetheless, the caravan signified that in practice as well as in theory, the ‘green issue’ was able to unite associations and politicians across party lines in 1990. Thus the event in Vedbæk was co-sponsored by the Danish Train Service (DSB), the association of Danish housewives, the Nepenthes NGO working to save the rain forest, while according to the news report, most children were occupied by the presence of a giant panda teddy bear with a sweaty man inside, representing the World Wildlife Fund.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Green Families**

Vor Fælles Fremtid initiated a campaign, where 26 families around Denmark volunteered to live in a more sustainable fashion for more than 4 months in the fall of 1990. In the county of South Jutland, the county administration advertised in the newspapers to have families sign up. They received 90 applications, but could only select a few. This suggests that the chosen families were very motivated to adjust their lifestyle. Each family was handed a manual with ideas on how to be more sustainable, and at the same time they were tasked to keep a diary with their experiences. The green families project served the double purpose of advertise to other Danish consumers that green awareness was possible, and the action could be taken on a family unit level. However, at the same time, the project was to inform producers, green organizations and decision makers on possible obstacles for meeting the requirements of a greener lifestyle.<sup>42</sup>



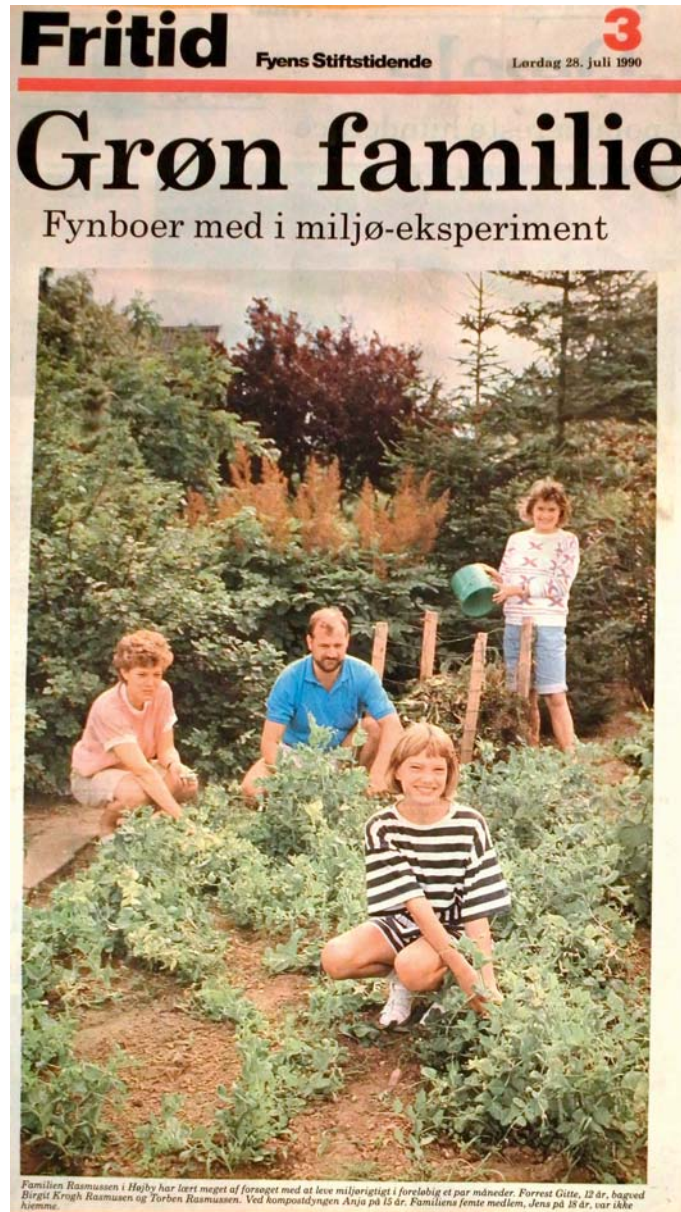


Figure 5. One of the families involved in the Green Families project (source: RA. Vor Fælles Fremtid, scrapbøger).

One of the families taking part in the experiment was a mother and daughter in Esbjerg, in West Jutland. The mother, Jane Lykke told the regional newspaper, *Vestkysten* about their experiences with the four month long project they were taking part in. The family had moved to Esbjerg only six month earlier, and they found it a very difficult town to shop in, when trying to be eco-friendly. As supermarkets did not cater for their needs, they had had to shop in smaller specialized shops. Jane Lykke readily admitted that she missed Copenhagen, where she was used to many more 'green' commodities, and to find them she was using the *Den grønne forbrugerguide* (the green consumer) a book by journalist, Kjeld Hansen. "Our new bible", Jane Lykke stated.

In Esbjerg both her and her daughter experienced eyes rolling with shop assistants, implicitly declaring that they mother and teenage daughter were 'eco-fanatics' (miljøfanatikere). Some had responded in a friendly manner, when they asked about the availability of organic meat, but excused themselves that this was a no go, because of the price.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Energy Weekend**

For the weekend 24-25 November 1990 the campaign secretariat teamed up with the association of Danish bakers, the YMCA/YWCA scouts organization to promote the use of 'one's own energy' for transportation in the weekend going to the church on Sunday, or when heading for the local bakery to buy fresh bread in the weekend. Boyscouts and girlscouts from all over Denmark enlisted to distribute leaflets, such as the *Energiavisen*, the 'energy newspaper' to the customers at bakeries, and the churchgoers in the Danish Lutheran Church. In total more than 120 bakers took part in the event.<sup>44</sup>

To further stimulate interest, a number of the so-called 'green families' had visits from energy consultants from their local electricity providers. This was set to stimulate interest in this service from the various electricity companies.<sup>45</sup>

The energy weekend was planned months in advance, and the press release was scheduled to go out on 22 November. As it turned out, the Prime Minister Poul Schlüter, called a general election on the same day, which undoubtedly curbed the attention of the general public towards the energy weekend. Nonetheless, several pieces of press coverage surfaced from the weekend over the next few days.

### **Generational contract for the environment**

In many ways, the campaign *Vor Fælles Fremtid* was riding on a rising wave of green awareness around 1991. On the initiatives, which appears to have been well received, were leaflets produced to inform the business sector about ways in which they could cut their energy consumption, and in turn cut expenses associated with their production. One such case was in the Århus county in East Jutland, where the leaflet, *Rent Miljø* (clean environment) was sent out to more than 4,000 small and large businesses, sponsored by the campaign, jointly with the employers' association, the Confederation of Danish Industries (DA) and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO). Here, some best practice examples of companies that had succeeded in cutting the resource use. One sports retailer had saved 34,500 Danish Kroner annually when they switched to energy saving lightbulbs.<sup>46</sup> On a somewhat larger scale, the local brewery, Ceres had cut the water spending from 2.8 liters a year to 2.3 liters, which earned them a cost reduction of 1 million Kroner, and a nearby dairy had succeeded in saving

*Bo Poulsen*

1.4 million Kroner a year, when they changed their cooling system from water to air, while the cooling water they did use, was reused for cleaning the plant.<sup>47</sup>

The regional chairman of the employers organization, Mogens Boyter, even went so far as to proclaim that “in the 1990s the typical CEO in East Jutland will be an environmental activist”, and in concrete terms he advocated that each and every company should work out a dedicated environmental policy for their own internal use. “When developing new products, processes and systems, we need to look at the total environmental impact, or to put it in another way, the route of the product from cradle to grave. This is to reduce the impact as much as possible. We should all be determined to leave East Jutland to the next generation, just as clean as it was when we were young”.<sup>48</sup>

Mogens Boyter was a fairly flamboyant figure in East Jutland, who combined his ownership of a factory producing toilet seats, with a string of elected positions, including at one point the chairmanship of the local professional football team, AGF. However, it is perhaps particularly noteworthy that he was also an active politician rallying for the conservative party, whom he represented in the regional county council. A conservative appeal for environmental activism on behalf of CEO's would be rare before the 1990s, and it has become rare again in the past one and a half decades as well. Yet, at this moment in time, Boyter could issue a statement that it was timely to be pro-environment, for the sake of the environment, as much as for the sake of the corporations in East Jutland, he was representing.

### **Approaching children**

As an example of the approach to children, some of the protest

songs of the 1960s for instance, were dusted and re-written to meet the new challenge of addressing environmental problems. The social democratic youth association (DUI Leg og Virke) teamed up with more liberal leaning association of free kindergartens (Frie Børnehaver og Fritidshjem) to produce an environmentalist version of Tom Dooley, a folk song made popular by the Kingston Trio in 1958, portraying the tragic hanging of Tom Dooley, who perhaps did not commit the murder, for which he was sentenced to death. In the 1990 version, we the people on planet Earth are the perpetrators causing harm to the planet we inhabit. In English translation the gloomy text reads: The sea is filled with oil / the forest is dead / The fish is dying in streams / the winter just rain and sleet / the hour is near for the planet / the hour has come my friend / the time has come / we will preserve it / In a direct call for the parent generation, the targeted audience for the children's singing, one of the sentences reads: We want to breathe the air / not having water from cartridges / grownups use your senses / don't you understand a thing?

In a Scandinavian song tradition, Norwegian composer, Nordahl Grieg's *Til Ungdommen* (*For the Youth*) is even more famous. Written in 1936, Grieg calls for fighting guns with knowledge seeking, and emphasizes the responsibility of people for changing their own lives and conditions, as well as those of other people, for the common good. Thus, the recognizable tune itself carries a number of connotations, even if the text is different in the environmentalist version:

The grown ups are polluting / more than they think / they don't consider / our common earth / they think they can just / keep being dirty / without asking / you or me

*Bo Poulsen*

Following two verses of statements on the pollution from factories and cars, the last verse again returns directly to the intended audience, the adult population:

Now we will thank you / who listened to us / asking all of  
you / stand up against the pigs / stop pollution / it concerns  
us all / otherwise the earth / will end on the dumpyard.

While the concrete impact of these protest songs can be difficult to measure, there is no doubt the campaign as such made an impact while it was in business from 1989-1991.

### **Vor Fælles Fremtid – policy making and the new government**

In the Danish parliamentary system, general elections can be called by the Prime Minister, whenever he or she chooses, but it has to be within 4 years from the last election. However, the 1970s and 1980s, were marked by the formation of coalition governments, where the governing coalitions never had a majority of seats in the parliament between themselves. Compromising with political parties outside the government was the order of the day, and whenever a deadlock appeared, the Prime Minister would call a new election. This happened again the end of 1990, which resulted in a change of the composition of government. The center-right coalition was dissolved, and the social liberal party, Det Radikale Venstre left the government. However, the conservative Prime Minister, Poul Schlüter was still able to cajole support for another minority government consisting also of the liberal party.

As the campaign, Vor Fælles Fremtid was financed over three years, activities continued unabated by the political turmoil, yet

in year three of the campaign, in 1991, the leaders of the campaign, Gerner Nielsen and Normann Jørgensen took sides against the government in such issues as the planning of a bridge between Denmark and Sweden. “The decision to build a bridge across The Sound is not consistent with the ideas laid down in the Brundtland-report”, a press release ran. This was the case both in terms of the decision making process as well as the anticipated environmental impact of the new bridge. As for the policy process, there ought to have been a general election on a topic so important, while the environmental risks associated with constructing a large bridge was not thought through. The Vor Fælles Fremtid recommended that, while it was desirable from an economic and cultural point of view to strengthen the infrastructure between Denmark and Sweden, which at the time was connected only by way of ferry transportation, the environment would suffer from a bridge. While no one knew exactly, how significant the impact would be, measures should be taken so as not to disturb the then current flow of water in The Sound, the salinity as well as the habitat changes which might impact seal populations and bird populations in the area. To safeguard nature, the Vor Fælles Fremtid recommended that a tunnel was dug all the way between Copenhagen and Malmø in Sweden, which would then not disturb The Sound.<sup>49</sup>

In the end though, the decision was maintained that the new connection would consist of the combination of a tunnel for the first third of the way from Denmark to Sweden, while a large bridge was constructed for the remainder of the distance. There is no indication whether or not, this interference with actual policy making, was questioned within the executive committee of the campaign.

### **Summary of activities**

Towards the end of the campaign in 1991, the Chairman, Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen summed up the result in a letter to the then conservative Minister of the Environment, Per Stig Møller, who represented the two-party minority government of the conservative and liberal party (1990-1993).

Gerner Nielsen emphasized that c. 160 public lectures had been held, targeting some 8-10,000 people around the country, which added to the impact of 20 publications on sustainable consumption, sustainable farming, sustainable workplaces etc. In the area of 100,000 attendants of evening school for mature students had been presented with leaflets, while television viewers had been watching advertisements, such as the ones for the activity, 'Green Families'. 600 schools had been involved in raising children's awareness through specific targeted broadcasts from the national broadcast corporation, Danmarks Radio. Eight different conferences under the heading of sustainable farming, 'Bæredygtigt Landbrug' were held in collaboration between the nature conservation movement, The Agricultural Council's educational association, and the liberal education association, (LOF). By then, some 620 local projects had received support from the committee Vor Fælles Fremtid.<sup>50</sup> Midway through the campaign some 201 local project had been initiated, where exhibitions and happenings in schools had been the most sought after activity.<sup>51</sup>

When it comes to focusing on the environment, and linking environmental concerns to the issues of energy policy, the Vor Fælles Fremtid had provided a platform reaching out to many more people than before, and the wave of green concern continued in the years thereafter. Thus, when in 1995, the Energispareudvalget again launched a campaign to save energy, the environment had taken center stage, for the first time ever.



### **‘Car driving and the environment’**

In 1995, the Energispareudvalget sponsored a campaign targeting car drivers, under the heading *Bilkørsel og Miljø*, which translates as car driving and the environment. Now, the dominant discourse had changed completely. The claim of the argument was still, save energy, but the environment had now taken center stage, as the campaign opened with the following statement from the preamble of a campaign leaflet:

”Today there is hardly anyone in doubt that we are facing significant problems with the global environment. Almost every day, we hear about the greenhouse effect, the thinning of the ozone layer, clearing of the rain forest, acid rain and the pollution of the sea around us. A significant portion of these problems stems from our consumption of energy for transportation”.

In other words, the claim of the campaign is to cut down the use of petrol. The section cited above however, establishes a series of facts (planet Earth suffers) which is backed by the warrant that we as daily commuters have created a sizeable portion of the problem.

In this 1995 leaflet there is no reference to the notion that cutting down on energy consumption is beneficial for the economic wellbeing of individuals. Rather the appeal is directed at factors outside the family unit or even the nation. Car drivers instead are urged to think globally, and internationally at any rate. As the preamble further stated: “We must follow the international call for reducing our energy consumption with 50% during the next 50 years”.<sup>52</sup>

The whole text is very factual and the ideas presented are clearly reflecting science based recommendations from the UN Climate Panel. Carbon dioxide pollution is to be reduced with 25% by the year 2030, catalyzers are already being installed in new cars, and lead should be removed entirely from petrol sold in Denmark with

*Bo Poulsen*

a span of a few years. In addition the plan expressed the wishful thinking that from 2030, we will have cars able to drive 50 km on one liter of petrol. Nonetheless, the concrete recommendations for what people can do themselves are in tune with the advice from previous decades: Walk to the baker in the weekends instead of driving, use public transportation when possible, and fill up the car with people to and from work. Finally, chauffeurs are urged to drive more calmly thereby saving as much as 20% fuel over a given distance.

It is worth noting that the preamble of the leaflet was signed by Ib Thyregod in his capacity as chairman of the *Energispareudvalget*. Thyregod is a Danish lawyer, who has also represented the liberal party in the Copenhagen City Council. This suggests that even if by 1995 the concern for the environment was shared across left-right party division. From 1993-2001 Denmark was ruled by a center-left coalition government with a rather strong minister jointly for the environment and energy planning, Svend Auken from the Social Democrats. At any rate, Thyregod from the liberal party, traditionally the choice of farmers and people in rural areas, appears not to have had quarrels signing a document underlining this new plan for changing the transportation patterns of the Danes.


## **Conclusion**

This paper has revealed a number of developments in the way in which the Danish government tried to convince the citizens of Denmark to save energy from 1974-1995. During the first wave of campaigns, the environment was treated as a secondary issue, which would also profit, as a side effect, from saving on energy, but the environment disappears as a recognizable factor in campaigns

### Hvilken forurening kommer der fra bilerne?

I forbindelse med bilkørsel udledes der flere forskellige affaldstoffer, der virker skadelige på både mennesker og miljø. Her er nogle af de væsentligste:

- 1. KVÆLSTOXIDER (NO<sub>x</sub>):** Kvælstof omdannes i luften til salpetersyre og salte. Af bilernes bidrag til belastningen stammer i dag 2/3 fra benziner og 1/3 fra dieseler.
- 2. PARTIKLER (sod og støv):** Stammer primært fra dieselerne. Partiklerne er små og kan trænge dybt ned i menneskers lunger. Partiklerne er bærere af forskellige skadelige stoffer.
- 3. KULLITE (CO):** Stammer primært fra benzinerens udstødning. Kullite kan være meget skadelig selv i små mængder.



- 4. KULBRINTER (HC):** Stammer efter indførelsen af katalysatorer primært fra dieseler. Kan skabe meget ubehagelige lugtgener og sundhedsmæssige lidelser.
- 5. SMOG:** Et sammensat ord af det engelske smoke (røg) og fog (tåge). Det er koncentrationen af svovldioxid og kvælstofoxid, der måles som smoglag. Den forekommer især i byområder med mange biler.
- 6. BLY (Pb):** Stammer primært fra benziner, der kører på blyholdig benzin. Bly virker skadeligt på menneskers helbred.

### Vejviser til et bedre miljø.

Hvis vi vil være med til at bevare miljøet, kan vi som bilister gøre en vigtig indsats for at begrænse forureningen. De næste sider er udformet som en slags håndbog, der kan virke som vejviser til et bedre miljø. Nogle af de gode råd handler om at ændre køremåde – andre om at holde bilen i god form.

Hvis vi kan overholde disse råd, kan trafikens miljøbelastning nedsættes væsentligt og privatøkonomien vil få det bedre.

- **ACCELERATION.** Undgå kraftige accelerationer. De koster unødigt meget benzin.
- **BENZIN.** Undersøg om bilen kan køre på blyfri benzin. Det kan næsten alle nyere biler- og danske bilister kan umiddelbart spare miljøet for 60-80 tons bly om året.
- **BREMSE.** Sørg for at få justeret bremserne jævnligt. Hvis bremserne "løser", skal motoren bruge mere benzin.

- **DÆKTRYK.** Kontroller dæktrykket regelmæssigt. For lavt tryk koster ekstra liter benzin.
- **GEARSKIFT.** Kør i det højest mulige gear. I visse situationer kan det være en fordel at skifte direkte fra 2. gear til 4. gear – eller fra 3. til 5. gear.
- **HASTIGHED.** Det gælder om at tilpasse hastigheden efter trafikrytmen og være forudseende, så man kan holde en jævn fart.
- **KARBURATOR.** Få indstillet karburatoren, så den er justeret i overensstemmelse med bilens specifikationer.
- **KATALYSATOR.** Fra 1. oktober 1990 skal alle nye, benzindrevne personbiler være forsynet med katalysator. Biler med kat. forurener 80-90% mindre end biler uden.

**Når der skal købes ny – eller brugt – bil.**

Undersøg benzinforbruget nøje, når der skal investeres i en ny – eller brugt – bil. Der kan være store forskelle på forbruget selv mellem biler af samme størrelse. Vælg den, der kører længst på literen.




Figure 6. By the mid-1990s the green wave had swept across Danish society. By then the style of car driving had become a means to help save the planet (source: RA. Energispareudvalget).

for saving energy for the next almost 15 years until 1989. Around 1975 and 1980 in particular there was a particularly strong appeal directed at the survival of the Danish state through prudent energy consumption, which then became an act of patriotic duty. Only after the release of the UN report, *Our Common Future* in 1987, did the environmental start to play a role for the way in which campaigns to save energy were justified to the public.

The campaigns initiated through the Energispareudvalget became more and more distinct in terms of which audience they tried to address. The campaigns of the 1970s were targeted pri-

marily at changing the behavior of private citizens as home owners and commuters, whereas from c. 1980 the campaigns using the 'energizer' cartoon figures had a wider ambition of targeting children in schools as well.

Eventually, the environment came to the forefront of arguments for why to save energy in the late 1980s. The onset of the 1989-1990 campaign, *Vor Fælles Fremtid* was directly inspired by the recommendations in the UN Report, *Our Common Future*. Now, the citizens of Denmark needed to cut down on their energy consumption, and in general to lower their use of the scarce natural resources of the planet Earth. The *Vor Fælles Fremtid* campaign came about in 1988, when the parliamentary situation in Denmark led to the formation of a center-right government where the Conservatives and the Liberal Party teamed up with the pro-environment social liberal party, *Det Radikale Venstre*. This campaign became the most ambitious government campaign so far, trying to reach out to all age groups and social groups in Danish society. Open university lectures and open science conferences, leaflets, children's songs, Lutheran priests and bakeries around the country were all instruments in spreading the message, or the wave of opinion that we should take better care of the environment, including the lessening of dependency on fossil fuel.

This change in discourse, or ways of arguing for saving energy however, was most closely related to the overall rise in environmental awareness, which had matured in most societies in the Western World in the preceding decades.

During the 1960s a number of important developments took place which was all linked to the future availability of sufficient natural resources. In 1968, the American biologist Paul Ralph Ehrlich published the influential book, *The Population Bomb*, in which he warned that the growth in the World's population would even-

tually lead to overpopulation and a dire shortage of natural resources. Then in 1972 the United Nations held the so-called Stockholm Conference, which led to the Stockholm Declaration, where the countries of the UN agreed that social and economic development was tied to the solution to a number of environmental problems, not least the availability of natural resources. The shortage of resources was also the focal point of the book, *Limits to Growth*, which also in 1972 prophesized that Planet Earth would run out fossil fuel and other important natural resources within less than half a century.<sup>53</sup>

Three main events catapulted the rise of the new environmental discourse in policy as well as in the campaign material analyzed above.

First of all, there was a reservation towards implementing nuclear power into the Danish energy supply, which was linked to concerns of potential radioactive contamination if the power plant leaked or was damaged. While this had been a concern throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the 1986 explosion at the Sovjet Union's nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine, sent a shockwave through all of Europe, as heightened levels of radioactivity was registered from Poland to Northern Sweden. In the case of Denmark this event effectively shut down any further debate concerning the implementation of nuclear power, putting further emphasis on alternative ways to meet the demand for energy.<sup>54</sup>

Secondly, the United Nation's report, *Our Common Future* was released in 1987, making sustainability and sustainable development buzzwords around the World. This was linked to the recent realization that the ever more extensive use of fossil fuel caused the release of large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. The additional amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> would block more of the sun's radiation from exiting the Earth's atmosphere, thereby leading to the greenhouse effect.<sup>55</sup>

Thirdly, and this is perhaps speculative, by the late 1980s the Danish oil and gas pipes from the North Sea had begun to supply mainland Denmark with the country's fossil fuel, thereby lessening the threat of unpredictable prices and supplies from the OPEC Countries in the Middle East. This may also have played a role in the way energy savings were presented. When Denmark was now self-sufficient with oil and gas, it was no longer possible to claim that the state finances were crippled by soaring prices on fossil fuel.

Still, the Danish government did not play what one might call 'the green card' until the late 1980s when it comes to promoting prudence in energy consumption. This is in line with the central themes in post-oil crisis Danish energy policy as identified by Mogens Rüdiger. According to Rüdiger, the security of supplies was central until 1990, when the center-right government proposed a new energy plan, the so-called *Energy 2000*. Now suddenly the focus had shifted towards lowering CO<sup>2</sup>-emissions and thereby prioritizing the environmental impact of energy consumption<sup>56</sup>

What this also means, is that apart from the scant reference to air pollution in the campaigns from the 1970s, the discourses prominent in government induced campaigns did not attach themselves to the discourses of the environmental movement before the 1988 change in government, when the *Vor Fælles Fremtid* campaign a discourse of sustainability. In an international context, this is early for a government led initiative to focus on sustainability. Nonetheless, the claims made by the current energy awareness initiative State of Green, referred to in the opening section of this article, the State of Denmark did not in any great measure commit itself to environmental concerns right from the time of the first oil crisis in 1973. When trying to sell energy pru-

dence to the Danes prior to 1988, household benefits and appeals to the patriotic deeds associated with literally turning down the heat were of paramount importance.

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Bo Poulsen

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*Campaign Country Going Green?*

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