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## **FEATURE ARTICLE, WEEKENDAVISEN**

### **THE WIND INDUSTRY PROVIDES ITS OWN RULES**

Feature Article. The Danish Parliament favours the wind industry to a degree where the constitutional state is weakened. Ida Auken, Minister for the Environment, is so indifferent to facts that in a consultation she delivers 38 wrong answers, including the information that wind turbine noise does not disturb more than noise from any other source, and that the regulations are stricter for wind turbine noise than for any other noise.

By Peter Skeel Hjorth, journalist, Henrik Svanholm, Master of Laws (cand.jur.), and Peter Prinds, MD

Shortly after she took office as Minister for the Environment, Ida Auken signed two statutory orders, The Statutory Order on Wind Turbine Noise and The Statutory Order on High-Speed Ferries on December 15 and 21, respectively. The two statutory orders specify different sound insulation figures for Danish houses.

The sound insulation figures in the Statutory Order on High-Speed Ferries have not been changed for many years and are regarded by experts as by far the most correct. The figures in the Statutory Order on Wind Turbine Noise, however, are far too high. They imply that Danish houses are more soundproof than is the case. In real life you could therefore imagine that the authorities have to reject a high-speed ferry service due to too much noise in the neighbourhood and at the same time approve a wind turbine even though considerably more noise in the very same neighbourhood.

There is only one explanation for this discrimination: Preferential treatment of the wind industry.

The wind industry's impact on Danish society and political decision makers is so big that it seems as if the wind industry has obtained so much power over the Danish state apparatus that in actual fact this industry controls both national and international activities in the country when it comes to wind power.

The wind industry has made the Government and a vast majority of the

Danish Parliament to regard wind power as a renewable energy source free of problems and even creating jobs and export profit. The industry obtained a political majority for “the world’s best test centre” in Thy in Northern Jutland and managed to obstruct that a noise limit would increase distance requirements at the installation of 900 giant turbines up to the year 2020.

But also the constellation of a consultative committee under the Danish Energy Agency shows in an unequivocal manner that an almost perfect merger between the wind industry and the Danish State has taken place. The committee’s assignment is to advise the Danish Energy Agency on the approval process for wind turbines, *including interpretation of the infrastructure of the regulations and the wording of new rules and directions.*

The problem is not the fact that the wind industry is represented in an “expert committee”. The revolting fact is that the representatives of the wind industry hold the predominant majority. Energinet.dk is the only representative of the public authorities. Indeed, DONG\* sits in the committee but as the representative of the big wind turbine owners and as a key member of the trade union called the Wind Industry.

Thus, a public authority has presented an industry with the possibility of forming the rules and directions it is supposed to follow. It is quite inconceivable that another public authority as the Danish Health and Medicines Authority would succeed in forming a consultative committee on for instance mass vaccination against influenza mainly consisting of representatives of the medical industry.

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When it comes to wind power, however, there is no differentiation between public and commercial interests. The composition of the consultative committee in the Danish Energy Agency means that the advices given to the State are neither neutral nor independent. Through the committee the industry is in fact able to dictate its own terms. And then we face a democratic problem as large as the 250 metres tall wind turbines to be tested in Thy.

That it has come this far can only be explained by the fact that the Members of Parliament only listen to the wind industry and have given the groups Vestas and Siemens a political favouritism which is unprecedented in Danish trade. Wind power has become an issue so sacred to a broad majority of the members of the Danish Parliament and their political parties that all criticism is disliked. This has excluded necessary discussions pro et contra and caused a serious democratic deficit.

A joint consultation in the Danish Parliament with *Ida Auken*, Minister for the Environment, gave a hint that the political mirage is based on very limited knowledge and insight. She was on shaky grounds 38 times with provable errors and misunderstandings, big as well as small. It equals a blunder every 2.5 minutes and demonstrates how little she actually knows

about the issue.

*There is nothing to indicate that wind power noise is more disturbing than noise from other sources*, the Minister for the Environment said. She stated that only 1,150 people will be affected by the planned installation of up to additionally 900 wind turbines on land. When applying the two Danish outdoor noise limits, 4 per cent and 11.5 per cent, respectively, will be disturbed.

However, noise from wind turbines *is considerably more disturbing* than noise from for instance traffic. This is scientifically proved. At the same sound level, noise from wind turbines disturbs *about 7 times as many* as noise from other sources like roads, railways, and planes.

Also her information about *the number of disturbed neighbours* is way out. The results of a test ordered by the wind industry at Jysk Analyse show this. But the results were presented as a proof that the neighbourhood was unproblematic.

However, if you go over the basic material, a whole new picture emerges. The wind industry's own analyses show that more than 20,000 people will be affected. 40 per cent of neighbours up to 2 km away can hear the turbines. Up to a distance of 750 metres 29 per cent of the neighbours have acknowledged sleeping disorders. 41 per cent of the neighbours up to 1000 metres away are disturbed by the noise. Low frequency noise is heard by 20 per cent even as far away as 2 km from the turbines.

*The noise limits for wind turbines are more restrictive than the limits for other industries*, Ida Auken claimed at the hearing. They are not the least more restrictive. On the contrary. The noise limit for industry as such is 35 dB at night. For wind turbines it is 44 dB both night and day in the open landscape and, after all, the turbines are installed here. This means an allowed difference of 9 dB noise between wind turbines and all other industries.

And the noise limit for low frequency noise from wind turbines of 20 dB does not cover the third of the houses with very poor insulation. Furthermore, it only applies to calculated noise. If the turbines are installed as close to the neighbours as the regulations allow, the limit is more likely to be exceeded in at least 75 per cent of the houses.

But the limit for low frequency noise should not impede the installation of wind turbines. It was a political demand in order to please the wind industry and not the neighbours. Therefore, the rules are so cunning that they have no real meaning though it looks so on paper. The minutes of a preliminary meeting in March 2011 reveal the process of thought behind.

The meeting had nine participants, five representing the wind industry. Three participants came from the acoustics companies called Delta and Grontmij, companies with close relations to the wind industry, who cannot be regarded as neutral advisers. The Environment Protection Agency was represented by one employee who also wrote the minutes of the meeting.

He found that a limit value of 20 dB would be fine. However, “*it depends on the overall target: e.g. that the new limit value should not lead to new limitations for wind turbines*”, which are his exact words. The regulations were then adapted to this demand assisted by the wind industry’s own acoustic experts.

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In the political landscape, especially the link between The Social Liberal Party and the wind industry draws your attention. Many things indicate that the party has become a political spearhead for the wind industry, and it is striking that the points of view of the industry are repeated almost word for word by *Rasmus Helveg Petersen*, the party’s spokesperson for energy politics. How is that possible?

At the beginning of March 2012, a new writer entered the scene of Danish media holding views meant to promote wind power and go up against criticism. It was Henrik Vinther from the website called *VidenOmVind.dk* (knowledge on wind) which the entire wind industry is behind.

“*Wind. Neighbours must learn to live with the turbines*”, was the headline of an article by Henrik Vinther in *Politiken*, a social liberal newspaper. It was presented as an “analysis” which truly was an editorial flop. It is a biased contribution by one of the parties. Henrik Vinther claimed, a.o., that medical science denied that there were adverse health effects by living close to a wind turbine. Similar articles by Henrik Vinther were published in all major newspapers.

6 months later, Rasmus Helveg Petersen was interviewed to a newspaper on Zealand and said, almost word for word, the same as written by Henrik Vinther. Neighbours must get used to living with the turbines. Fear and resistance were based on myths. And there are no adverse health effects.

This is hardly a coincidence. Henrik Vinther is a social liberal and for many years he has had relations to political circles through, a.o., leading positions in political organizations. He has been active in social liberal local policy and candidate for Parliament for the party. He has also been head of communication in ActionAid Denmark, where *Martin Lidegaard*, the social liberal Minister for Climate, Energy and Building, has held positions as both public relations manager and vice secretary-general. Martin Lidegaard’s brother is *Bo Lidegaard*, editor-in-chief of *Politiken*.

Occupational interests are one of the arguments for wind power. *Lone Loklindt*, the social liberal chairman of the Danish Parliament’s Environment Committee, ostensibly thinks that the installation of 900 giant wind turbines on Danish soil will result in 125,000 jobs. She said so in a meeting with two citizens about the problems of the Statutory Order on Wind Turbine Noise. They both heard her say 125,000 jobs. Where she got that figure is all in the air.

In 2010, Vestas had 8,318 employees in Denmark, mainly working in administration and development, but a major reduction in the number of employees was imminent. Siemens had 3,913 employees. Even though the

production of wind turbines leads to jobs for sub suppliers, it is far from the many jobs that Lone Loklindt and others dream of.

Economic life has always had a considerable influence on political life but when it comes to the wind industry it has gone too far. This is a gloomy sign that there is something fundamentally wrong with the democratic process in today's Denmark. *Eva Smidt*, professor, Doctor of laws, detects a strong weakening of the Danish constitutional state, and all participants in a conference held by The Procedural Foundation in October 2012 called "With the State as counterparty", were deeply concerned with the democratic deficit in the Government services.

The wind industry's firm grip on political life and civil servants strongly pushes development towards totalitarian conditions where people are trampled under foot and forced to live with disturbing wind turbines of little use-value in their neighbourhood.

By letting themselves control by the wind industry, Government and Parliament have obstructed the democratic process, and a big showdown awaits just around the corner. The situation is grave. The responsible politicians in general and The Social Liberal Party in particular have to change direction in order not to face more accusations.

\* DONG is the state owned Danish energy giant.