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Noise regulations: Denmark accused of applying double standards to windfarm neighbours

Opposition to wind farms has been growing in Denmark. Because of this, the Danish energy company DONG had taken the decision to no longer erect wind turbines in the countryside, and to put them offshore instead. But wind farms at sea cost twice as much to build and to maintain, and the price of electricity for households is already, in Denmark, 100% more expensive than in most of Europe. So the new government elected in September wants to build more wind farms onshore, in spite of their adverse impacts on the health of neighbours.

To help placate angry country dwellers, noise limits are being reviewed by the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and a public consultation is underway. But there is much controversy. Dr Mauri Johansson, a Danish physician specialised in community health and occupational medicine (now retired), accuses the EPA of manipulations to the detriment of the health of neighbours. He is not alone: a team of researchers from Aalborg University led by Professor Henrik Moeller, an internationally-renowned acoustics specialist, are also putting in doubt the work of the Danish government. They are themselves supported by Kerstin Persson Wayne, professor of occupational and environmental medicine at Gothenburg University, Sweden. (1)

In a nutshell, under the proposed EPA regulations, for 33% of neighbours it will feel “as if a truck is idling just outside their homes”. Dr Johansson and Professor Moeller are at odds with their government, which claims against all evidence that “Denmark is leading the fight against low frequency noise from wind turbines.”

Canadian physician Dr Robert McMurtry, formerly Dean of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Western Ontario, and formerly Assistant Deputy Minister of Population & Public Health, at Health Canada, wrote a letter supporting Professor Moeller: “Truth has become a casualty. Sadly there are many ill-consequences to the policies for the installation of industrial wind turbines (IWT), not the least of which are adverse

effects on human health. I have met more than 40 people whose lives have been devastated when IWT became their bad neighbor. It is also clear that this is a global phenomenon and yet the denial by many of those in authority continues.” (2)

Support for the Danish and Swedish academic opposition to the new, lax legislation on wind turbine noise being concocted in Copenhagen has been coming from a number of noise engineers, acousticians, doctors, psychologists and nurses in the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, etc. who have expressed in conferences and in the media their concern about the failure of governments to address properly the wind farm health problem. To name a few: Dr Nina Pierpont, USA, author of “The Wind Farm Syndrome”; Dr Sarah Laurie, Australia, Medical Director of the Waubra Foundation; Dr Bob Thorne, Australia, Psychoacoustician; and Dr Carl Phillips, a Harvard-trained epidemiologist specializing in public health policy, formerly tenured professor in the School of Public Health, University of Alberta, who wrote about governments denying the health problem: “The attempts to deny the evidence cannot be seen as honest scientific disagreement and represent either gross incompetence or intentional bias.” (3)

Per Clausen, chair of the Unity Lists Energy Committee in the Danish Parliament, is concerned by the preferential (lax) treatment being applied to noise from wind farms. He understands that his government wants to speed up the deployment of wind turbines, but is opposed to applying double standards in favour of any industry, to the detriment of its neighbours’ health. (1)

European and North American wind farm health victims, represented by EPAW and NA-PAW, are concerned that the improperly-conducted, double-standard studies of the Danish EPA will be used as a model by governments world-wide. They remind the health authorities that the Australian Senate, after hearing evidence in a special public enquiry on wind farms, recommended that infrasound & low frequency noise issues be **properly** investigated. The above shows that this is not being done. A parallel may be drawn with the bogus tobacco studies conducted years back, which resulted in class action lawsuits.

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(2) – Dr Robert McMurtry: private email, available upon request.

(3) – Dr Carl Phillips: <http://bst.sagepub.com/content/31/4/303.short>