

Score one for reason in Denmark

A government panel introduces what the environmentalists fear the most: scientific rigor. Poul Rasmussen reports.

At a time when superstition and irrationality are flourishing and the environmental insanity is spreading worldwide, science and reason have won a small, but important victory in Denmark. Commissioned by the Danish government, 22 senior scientists from nine different countries have made a critical evaluation of Danish environmental research, and their conclusions were as simple as they were shocking for the Danish public: You have forgotten that *all* research—including environmental research—has to be objective.

The report from the 22 scientists hit Denmark like a bomb. Everyone had suffered from the delusion, that Denmark is at the forefront of so-called environmental research. As a matter of fact, both the Parliament and government had established the goal, that Denmark should become *the* leading nation in environmental research. The international experts brutally destroyed this illusion.

In 1987, when Denmark introduced the most comprehensive Water Protection Plan in the world, a handful of critics warned that this \$2 billion boondoggle was without any scientific basis whatsoever. In an open letter to the Danish Parliament on Jan. 19, 1987, the Danish Schiller Institute Farm Commission wrote: "A close review of the reports from these 'experts' . . . shows that they have absolutely nothing to rest their case on. Nowhere in these reports can one find any reasonably established connection between leaching of nitrates, agricultural use of fertilizers, increased plant growth in the sea, and oxygen deficiency and the death of fish. There is an abundance of postulates, but that is an entirely different thing."

To counter the critics, the parliament asked the government for an international review of Danish environmental research. This request was made on the firm belief, that such an evaluation would confirm their illusion, that Denmark was already leading international environmental research. Today, the 22 international experts have concluded that the Danish Water Protection Plan is "hasty and without any connection to scientific research." In other words, Denmark is in the process of wasting \$2 billion.

With a foreign debt of \$60 billion and a population of only 5 million people, Denmark is, per capita, the most indebted country in the world. Wasting \$2 billion is no small

matter, and therefore the statements from the international experts have caused a wave of newspaper articles and editorials calling for an end to the "green insanity." Certainly a new phenomenon.

Good at propagandizing, bad at science

In their evaluation of the individual laboratories and research institutions in Denmark, the international panel presented some revealing disclosures. While most of the old and well-established research institutions received good and flattering reviews, the new environmental research facilities under the Ministry of Environment and the National Agency of Environmental Protection are ripped to pieces. The most general evaluation of these institutions was "poor, and below Danish and international standards." Although the international panel bent over backwards to remain friendly and polite, some of these institutions were so bad, that they couldn't hold back their sarcasm.

In the evaluation of the Marine Pollution Laboratory of the National Environmental Agency, which was responsible for a major part of the Water Protection Plan, the international panel commented:

"The panel wishes to compliment the Laboratory on their popularization of pollution issues but stressed that careful review of the accuracy of the scientific content was essential. In the examples presented to us this had not occurred."

On the Center for Terrestrial Ecology at the National Environmental Research Institute the international panel commented:

"Frankly, we felt that the Center does not measure up to Danish standards in research. . . . The setting up of a board of 12 members to oversee the work of four scientists must be some kind of bureaucratic record."

And on the Freshwater Laboratory of the National Environmental Protection Agency, they wrote:

"The research work was recognized as being of value in relation to the management of Danish lakes and streams, but the science element needs to be strengthened with a greater emphasis on the hypothesis testing approach. The panel believes that external peer review at all stages from program formulation through to regular three year reviews is neces-

sary. We sense that in some cases goals of the programs were not clearly defined.

"The laboratory has organized its research programs as democratic teams with no project leaders. The panel were unconvinced that this is the best approach."

Privately, members of the international panel told *EIR* that they were shocked at the degree of conscious political manipulation and utter disregard for basic scientific principles conducted at some of these "research institutions."

This was indirectly reflected in the main recommendations to the Danish Council for Research and Planning, which said:

"To assure that the research (both basic and applied) is of high quality, two steps are needed that appear to be uncommon in Danish environmental research. Firstly, a **peer review system** [bold emphasis in the original] is needed, for use in all parts of the scientific funding, performance and reporting system. Peer review should make use of international experts whenever necessary. Secondly, increased attention must be given for the need to assure that all measurements are reliable; without demonstrable and quantifiable **quality assurance** of data, there is little credibility in extrapolations or assessments made using them."

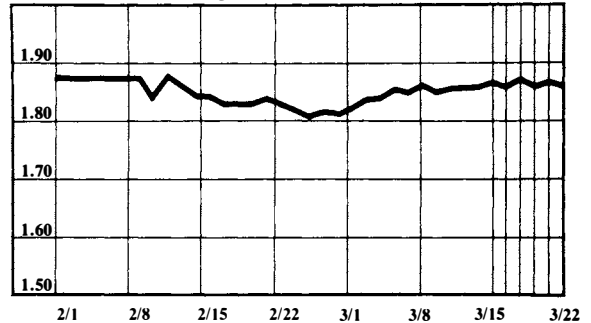
When the report was presented to the public on March 15, Dr. John Philip of Australia made clear what this meant. He said: "We cannot continue to have the mass media putting pressure on the politicians, who then in turn put pressure on the scientists. Research can only be conducted in an objective environment. It is paramount to keep research at arm's length from politics."

At the March 15 public hearing, the Danish Minister of Education, Bertel Haarder confirmed that the recommendations of the international commission will be implemented. That is good for Denmark, but the same system should apply to all so-called environmental research worldwide. Imagine if rigorous scientific principles were implemented everywhere. Myths of "greenhouse effects" and "ozone holes" could quickly be dispensed with, and humanity would stand a chance of surviving.

Currency Rates

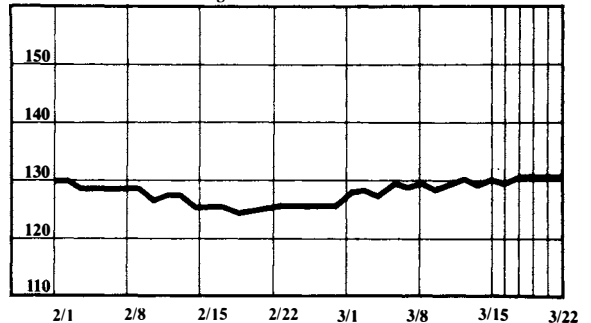
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



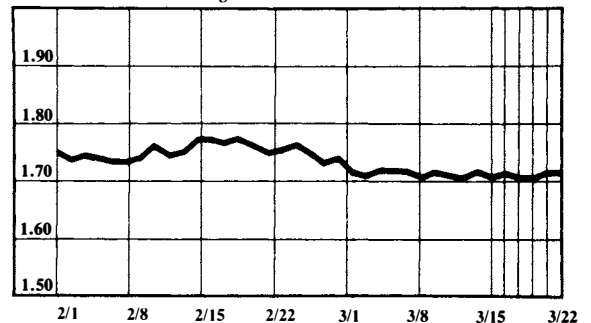
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



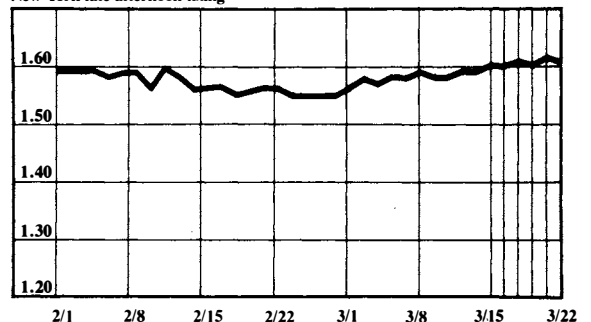
The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



Weekly EIR Audio Reports Cassettes

Now Available by
Subscription

- News Analysis Reports
- Exclusive Interviews

\$500/Year

Make checks payable to:
EIR News Service, P.O. Box 17390
Washington, D.C. 20041-0390
Attn: Press

MasterCard and Visa Accepted