



Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft
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The Organisation for Information
about Nuclear Power in Denmark.

THE DANISH INFORMATION CAMPAIGN ABOUT NUCLEAR POWER 1974-77.
AN ANALYSIS OF THE BACKGROUND AND A KEYWORD DESCRIPTION OF THE
CAMPAIGN MODEL AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE OOA.

*The topics of
this paper*

The purpose of this description about the OOA is not to give an extensive orientation about the information activities carried out by the OOA, but rather an attempt to give a keyword description of the basic motives and methods. The OOA is an example of how a controversial problem which is saturated with conflicts, such as the introduction of nuclear power, has been started up and further accelerated, before final decisions had been taken on the subject. The basic idea behind the work of the OOA was that nuclear power could never be introduced in Denmark if the public opinion was raised in consciousness about the hazards of nuclear power and the understanding that exploitation and development of renewable energy sources will, in every aspect, be favourable to society.

*A conflict
preventing
action model*

In most countries, opposition to nuclear power was first raised after decisions had been taken and nuclear power was already introduced, followed by large investments. Therefore, opposition to nuclear power in these countries implied serious conflicts between the governments and the nuclear industry on one hand and the public on the other. The OOA's action model is therefore a way to prevent later conflict situations if the model succeeds.

*Warning against
generalizing
OOA's experiences*

It is doubtful to which degree OOA's experiences can be generalized, as the conditions for this kind of activity is especially favorable in Denmark. One must keep in mind that this campaign has developed in one of the few countries which is able to call itself an "open" society, in the sense that it is possible to a large extent to establish a dialogue with both political and administrative agencies

as well as with industry. To a large extent, the mass media in Denmark is open to serious criticisms on the tendencies of developments in society. Denmark is a little country in which most of the relevant agencies are located around Copenhagen; in other words, it is possible and feasible to do your own research and to visit with opponents personally.

*The state of
affairs of
nuclear power when
OOA was founded*

The OOA was founded at a time where there generally speaking was no public debate about nuclear power. Only a very few people outside of the scientific community knew about the problems related to this kind of energy source. The atomic research station RISØ and the electric utility companies had been preparing for almost 20 years the introduction of nuclear power in Denmark. The investigations about the siting of the future nuclear power plants was nearly finished. In May, 1972, the electric companies published their first richly colored promotional brochures. At the same time, they arranged seminars for journalists and science teachers. In this way, they planned to establish the use of nuclear power without too much discussion or debate. With the exception of one small left-socialist party, all political parties were eager proponents of nuclear power, which had already for many years been consuming a large part of various research budgets in Denmark.

*The importance of
a preparatory phase*

Because we had decided to do information work on nuclear power, we knew that it was essential to collect knowledge about this energy form and its problems. We also decided that we had to have a preparatory phase of a reasonable duration. We got seven months, from June '73 to January 1974. The oil crisis in the beginning of 1974 caused the electric utilities to declare that they would speed up the plans for nuclear power. On January 30, 1974 the government published a list of ten sites for nuclear power plants in Denmark. The following day, January 31, the OOA was founded at a well attended press meeting in Copenhagen.

*Knowledge is the
most essential
weapon in doing
preventive work*

Collection of knowledge about nuclear power was essential. But it was even more important to get precise knowledge about the planning preparations being done by the utilities, as well as about legislation on the licensing of nuclear power plants. We could not of course have the same degree of knowledge as the professional scientist, but we had to know enough to offer strong arguments

showing that nuclear power was much more than a technical-economic question. It was also essential that we were for a long period substantially better informed than almost all the politicians and journalists. A solid, basic knowledge has supported the seriousness of our commitment from the beginning and it was a justification for calling ourselves an information organisation instead of only a pressure group. It is presumably a fundamental for all long-term, preventive, non-violent activities, to create insight through the spreading of knowledge. Because only a few people had knowledge about nuclear power, it was of vital importance to get as many as possible to listen to the contents of our information. Therefore, it has been a dominant principle for the OOA to avoid having the receiver block-out our message before even hearing it. We didn't want to push people away just because of our name, the way we looked, etc.. People should, figuratively speaking, let us in through the door before they decide whether our message is essential to them or not.

*The principle of
avoiding blockings*

Besides calling ourselves an information organisation, we emphasised that we informed about, not against nuclear power. A closer relationship with the OOA would quickly convince anybody that it was critical information about the problems of nuclear power which had our interest. In this manner, we managed to be evaluated on the basis of our information materials, instead of being named just another "anti"-organisation.

*The signal-value
of a name.
The Organisation
for Information
about Nuclear Power*

The wish to avoid all kinds of prejudices and clichés also contributed to our decision to start the OOA as a new organisation, without attachment to either existing organisations or political parties. Those who undertook the initiative were actually unknown in the public debate. We have been very much aware of keeping our language free of ideologically charged clichés. When we direct ourselves to the media or to political parties, we direct ourselves to everybody and not only to those whom we suppose to be our sympathizers. We have neither tried to attach representatives of the political parties or journalists to us, just like the OOA's representatives and contact persons, with few exceptions, do not have at the same time any positions in the political parties.

*The importance of
independence*

*OOA's self-
knowledge as a
counter-organisation*

The OOA was thus initiated in every aspect as an independent institution. With the basic view that the questions about nuclear power are deeply controversial, we appeared with such a degree of self-knowledge that the public had to weigh our points of view against those put forward by the utilities, the authorities and others. Furthermore, it was our opinion that a crucial question like nuclear power could not be settled before the public had had the opportunity of either accepting or rejecting this energy source. We thought a minimum period of three years should be given for this information to reach the public.

*The risk of a
polarisation is
smaller with
a dialogic attitude*

The name OOA and our demand for a three year moratorium are only two examples of the very little "absolutist" image we have. In a way, you can call it a form of "sober idealism". This tendency has also been reflected in our slogans and our information materials. Instead of postulating we asked questions to make the public itself think about whether it was a reasonable decision to accept nuclear power. Our magazine is called "Atomkraft?", two of our brochures are called "Nuclear Power, who has the advantage?" and "A future with nuclear power?". Our slogan, "Do you feel secure with nuclear power?", was later changed as the politicians pressed for a decision, to the more sharp but still polite "Nuclear Power? No Thanks", combined with a smiling sun. Instead of posing with a strict categorical and saved attitude, which presumably will only reach those already sympathizing with our views, we have been "dialogic". This form of communication has shown itself to be very useful when you want to avoid polarisations and to keep the discussion oriented towards the subject.

*The controversy-
strategy as a means
to get equal treatment
of the pros and cons*

This method of asking questions is presumably very well suited for elucidating the controversy surrounding nuclear power. The "controversy-strategy" was crucial, because it would make plain that the acceptance of nuclear power by the official nuclear research station and the utilities was not an expression of a neutral attitude, but was very biased and based on considerations in their own interests. Furthermore, the more obvious the controversy becomes, the more opportunities the politicians have of possibly understanding that the evaluation of nuclear power must be based on political goals which are desired by society as a whole and not based on a purely technocratic evaluation where technical and economical considerations are the only criteria. To promote a public debate

on nuclear power as a consistent "pros vs. cons" debate, it is an essential prerequisite to have nuclear power treated as a political problem and to get opposition to nuclear power recognised as equal to the established research and large industry's support, who are the proponents of nuclear power. If the strategy is successful, it will lead to an equal allowance of both points of view. This in fact did happen in connection with the two year energy information campaign by the Danish government from June, 1974 to April, 1976.

*To find supporters
is more essential
than to attack
opponents*

The "controversy strategy" implied that we had a great interest in breaking up the united front of the politicians and the research workers. In practice, this meant that we were more concerned about finding supporters instead of attacking our opponents. In a country the size of Denmark, we believe that it is feasible, via the Parliament and via research, to realise changes in the tendencies of development. Therefore, we have given high priority to information work towards these groups and also to the media.

*Avoid collective
condemnations*

Because our desire was to find supporters, we have as far as possible avoided to categorically condemn/attack on a collective basis. We have either attacked single persons directly or, we have for example said "somebody" or "most of", in the Parliament or among nuclear scientists, have points of view which are open to criticism. In this manner, there has always been room for individuals to think that the criticism is not directed against themselves.

*Sober criticism
is often answered
with personal
polemics*

We chose as our main opponents the electric utility companies. Yet also here, we made our attack in way which were not condemning, but based on a critical analysis of their energy policy and on revealing their PR-policy for nuclear power. On the other hand, it is characteristic that the counter-arguments from the utility people and others are becoming more and more polemic and attack persons rather than answer the questions raised.

*The opponents
undermine their
own credibility*

Our opponents' desire to bring us in discredit imply that the demand for self-discipline and for consistent, sober argumentation, has to be increased accordingly. We made it clear very early that we didn't find it reasonable to answer the most sub-standard attacks and we have since normally ignored such attacks in public. On the other hand, we found it even more essential to publish

well-documented material. The resulting effect was that the representatives from industry and the atomic research station have gradually undermined their credibility.

*On our guard
against "boomerang"
effects*

Securance of credibility has in many ways determined our model for action. Many aspects have been illustrated in the preceeding. Another aspect is that you cannot voluntarily give yourself away for instance by carrying actions into effect that are doomed to fail in advance, or actions which are expected to have negative secondary effects. Although many people, almost from the beginning, impatiently wanted to arrange marches of protest, demonstrations and circulate protest petitions, we deliberately delayed these types of actions for two or three years, until we were strong enough to carry them out successfully. In the early phase, we arranged some meetings which were well prepared and consequently also well attended. Our idea was that we would not allow ourselves any failure - and not at any rate in the early phase - it might have a boomerang effect; rather keep a low profile then bend the bow too far, has always been our unspoken motto.

*Focus on energy
legislation*

The first two years of outgoing work were strongly influenced by the efforts to affect the legislation on energy and this has been to a high degree successful. At the founding of the OOA, a principal claim was that the decision to build nuclear power plants should be taken away from the central administrators and handed over to be the responsibility of the Parliament. This claim was very quickly complied with, as the politicians well perceived that the question is of such far-reaching importance that it would be absurd that the responsibility should lie elsewhere than in the Parliament. Besides this, it was attained that a plenary meeting of the Parliament should make any decisions concerning any nuclear installation - nuclear power plants, waste storage, reprocessing plants, etc.. In this way, nuclear power became a political question.

*Political realism
creates respect for
our work by the
politicians and
the media*

The OOA's demands concerning energy legislation can be characterised as being "realistic". Thanks to the quality of our informational activities concerning the legislative initiatives under preparation, it was possible to make demands which several times delayed the treatment of nuclear-related legislation and resulted in changes to our advantage. In the first three years, many of the OOA's demands for changes in the field of energy-administration have also

been met. This does not mean that we do not have further demands for today, which are even more wide-ranging. But the immediate, essential effect of the "realistic", perhaps reformistic policy, was that we documented our political capabilities and judgement for the politicians and the media, as we obtained one concession after the other.

*The elastic
moratorium*

The basis for the demand of a moratorium was that Denmark did not know enough about nuclear power and that there were no well-documented solutions to a number of serious problems concerning this kind of energy. It was our opinion that a decision could not be taken before these problems were solved. This implied, among other things, that we deliberately didn't press the political parties or individual politicians to give their final view on nuclear power. To change old points of view implies, as everybody knows, a loss of prestige. For the same reason, the OOA never demanded a referendum. It has been our opinion that such a demand would be the same as a retreat from the still unsolved problems. In reality, we would thereby be accepting as sufficient for the basis of a decision, that which we had earlier been claiming as being totally unacceptable. It would of course be a completely different situation if a political majority forces a decision about the introduction of nuclear power through the Parliament. In that case, a referendum is needed.

*Mobilisation in
the Spring of
1976*

In the Spring of 1976, the government and the political majority in Parliament was determined to resolve the question of nuclear power. At that time, the OOA finally started a broad mobilisation of the public. Our magazine, with a circulation of only 3000 copies, was distributed as a newspaper in three separate issues (900,000 copies) throughout the whole country. In six weeks, we collected 170,000 signatures demanding that a decision on nuclear power be postponed. This decision was postponed from May until a special assembly of the Parliament was called in August, 1976.

*The "Smiling Sun"
campaign during
the Summer of 1976*

The collection signatures from April through May was followed up in the summer by a massive campaign to get those who signed the petitions, along with as many other people as possible, to wear our badge, the Smiling Sun, with the text: "Nuclear Power? No Thanks". About 200,000 badges and car stickers and almost 1 million letter stickers were distributed during the course of the summer. Opinion polls showed a dramatic change in favor of the

opponents of nuclear power. The government drew the consequences and on August 10, 1976 the government announced at a special assembly of the Parliament that the decision had been postponed indefinitely.

*To win a referendum
not held*

The resoluteness of the politicians in the Spring of 1976 was answered by the OOA in the form of a referendum-like campaign. In a way, you can say that we anticipated the referendum and won it, before the politicians had made the formal decision to have a referendum.

*The structure must
make dynamic
development possible*

When the OOA was founded, the group of activists therein was of a modest size, about 30 in Copenhagen and a couple of groups in other parts of the country. It is obvious that the OOA had to go through a very dynamic development if it was to achieve its goal. Those who were active would have to make a great effort. This implied problems of an organisational nature. It was therefore decided to build the OOA with a structure that would be as open as possible. The OOA would not be a member organisation with an elected committee to steer it, but would be a movement open to everybody. One single criterion was posed; it was expected that activists adopted the demand of a moratorium on nuclear power for a minimum duration of at least three years. This was the absolute minimum of consensus for the OOA.

*The dilemma
between a
central and
decentral
movement*

To obtain a broad movement, we found it essential that our structure was in principle decentral in nature, with total autonomy for all local groups. But on the other hand, we were facing an opponent which was centrally organised, in the form of industry, administration, government, etc.. We could only obtain "striking power" if the OOA had a centrally placed core of activists. The solution to this dilemma was found in a kind of decentralisation, which can be defined as a division of labour.

*OOA's national
secretariate*

The OOA's national-secretariat in Copenhagen, to which almost the whole original working group was attached, got the job of collecting information about all organisations of interest, concerning both the utilities and industry, as well as within the political and administrative areas. Every Tuesday evening there is a common meeting in the national secretariat, where the different working groups coordinate their work, and where binding decisions are taken. This meeting is, like the daily work, open to everybody.

The local groups

The first local groups were established before the first press meeting, in January 1974. A rapid development has occurred since, and today there are about 170 local groups and single contact persons, who are spread throughout the whole country. The local groups take care of the same kinds of functions as the national secretariat, with regard to the authorities in their local areas. Rules for which people can name themselves an OOA group have never been laid down. Neither has there ever been any demand to call yourself an OOA group.

OOA's object clauses

In connection with the press meeting of January 31, 1974, the original working group announced three object clauses for the OOA. This program has until now, in unchanged form, been the basis of the OOA's work. These object-clauses were certified at the OOA's first national meeting in the middle of March, 1974. The formulation was:

1. A critical evaluation of all problems and issues connected with the use of nuclear power.
2. Increased researched in and renewed evaluation of alternative sources of energy.
3. Improvement of a long-term energy policy that considers both social and ecological factors.

Frequent national meetings unite the movement

The high degree of decentralisation with the OOA structure involves the danger that there won't be enough unison within the movement. This danger has been counter-acted via frequent national meetings. In the first two years there were 3-4 meetings each year. Now there is held 2-3 meetings a year. At these meetings, in which attendance ranges from 100 to 200 activists, we discuss and plan the activities up to the next meeting. The result of this has been that all nation-wide activities have been considered and decided on at national meetings. This has had a big influence on the unity of the OOA in campaign situations. At the national meetings, we also adopt resolutions of a political nature, which contain the lines of direction to be followed by the national secretariat and the local groups, until the next meeting.

Making the movement visible via a campaign symbol

The OOA has no members, but the national secretariat has since the start of the OOA, collected names and addresses of about 10,000 sympathisers, which form a core group in a campaign situation. A lot of these people are active in the distribution of OOA material and especially the smiling sun campaign symbol. The spreading of

this symbol is in this way far greater than any member-organisation could hope to achieve. The smiling sun symbol is very important as a symbol of unity for the movement. Everybody can see that we are many, from all walks of life - young and old, motorist and cyclist, town and country - in short, from all parts of society.

*Internal
communication
between local
groups*

Between the national meetings, the local groups communicate with each other through an internal newsletter as well as through material sent out via the national secretariate. In the internal newsletter, we exchange ideas and experiences. The internal newsletter is also used as an organ for making economic decisions about grants for the activities of the local groups.

*The work is based
on volunteers
supported by paid
coordinators*

As the organisation grew larger, it became necessary to employ a number of people to handle co-ordination functions. At the national secretariate, there are now the equivalent of 5 full-time jobs. The legal minimum wage is paid. In Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city, there is an energy office with two paid OOA'ers who work with a number of other activists who are also paid, although from other organisations. This type of collective effort between various organisations has recently led to the formation of a number of regional energy offices where safe energy work is being done. But it is important to underline the greatest part of OOA's work is carried out by volunteers. However, it has been the experience of the OOA that permanent co-ordinators is needed to help the volunteers, or in emergency cases when there are no volunteers around.

*Financing the
OOA*

Financially, the OOA has been on its own from the beginning. In our presentation letter, we promised that everybody who sent 30 kr. to the OOA during the course of the next six months would receive information material. This soon became the price for a subscription to the OOA magazine "Atomkraft?" ("Nuclear Power?"). The sale of OOA information and campaign material has been increasing rapidly in volume. On different occasions, we have arranged special materials. Financially, our turnover increased from 85,000 kr. in 1974 (11 months) to about 200,000 kr in 1975 to about 1,200,000 kr. in 1976.

*The economics
of decentralisation*

In 1976 the sale of the "Smiling Sun" badges began to increase rapidly. The selling price is far above the production price, which

made it possible to sell the badges to local groups so that they could finance their activities. In regards to selling Smiling Sun materials, it has been the policy of the OOA that the largest part of the profits per unit sold would go to those groups selling the materials. This price policy has in a very effective way encouraged decentralisation and has given the local groups autonomy. The national secretariate, who is responsible for production and distribution, makes a very small profit per unit sold to the local groups. On the other hand, the national secretariate is selling to so many local groups, so there is still a profit to be found here. But as mentioned before, it was our desire to see as much of the profit as possible go to the local groups, instead of seeing the money being accumulated centrally. The OOA, because of the large production runs, also sells Smiling Sun materials to groups in many other countries, who could not otherwise get these materials on their own so cheaply. It has been the OOA's policy that where Smiling Sun materials are sent internationally, that we should not do so for profit, but should do so as part of our contribution to the international fight against nuclear power.

*Stabilising
OOA's economy
- the Guarantee
Fund*

As the intensive campaign in Denmark has relaxed a bit and the market for Smiling Sun materials is becoming saturated, the OOA has taken the initiative to start what we call the "Guarantee fund". This fund would be used to cover wages, rent, insurance and the like. The Guarantee fund is our replacement of membership fees, which we don't have. We have invited our supporters to support the OOA with a financial contribution either every three months, six months, or once a year. This money is pledged in advance, so that we can make financial plans accordingly. The Guarantee fund has been a great success and there are now over 9000 contributors.

*An open structure
without members*

In connection with the Guarantee fund, it became evident that the open structure of the OOA, without members, was crucial to the course of our work. Because there are no members, there is nobody who can elect "competent organs". The only exception is that the OOA's national meeting, once a year points out 3 people who can sign on OOA's behalf any legal papers necessary for the relevant authorities. This was especially important with regard to economical matters. However, there is connected no political competence to this signing right.

*The open structure
prevents the
creation of fractions*

The OOA has been almost free of internal strife and fractions. One reason for this might be that there are no elections to any positions. Elections almost always start fights for power and personification of the work. We have tried to practice a consistent project-oriented work and it has been our opinion that those people who do the work are also those who are responsible while they are active. New people can enter at any time. This way of organising the work has shown itself to be both effective and fruitful, but it depends very much on confidence in dealing with each other, which must not be misused.

*Activists make
the decisions*

As far as possible, all decisions are taken at the weekly meetings at the national secretariate. A similar model holds for the local groups as well. But you often have to act ad hoc. In those situations, you have to make the decisions together with those activists present or via telephone. The prerequisite to have a voice in the decisions is that you are present - that is, that you are active. The same principle holds for the national meetings as well. There are no delegates - in principle, everybody could come and be a part of the decision making process. Thus, there is no fundamental difference between our structure and the structure of a representative democracy, where you have a personal mandate for a certain period of time. As it is essential in the OOA to be present, you could perhaps call this kind of structure a "presentative democracy".

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