

Organized Resistance is beginning to stir in Sweden

The media are increasingly more open to organized resistance and have got more professional writers, said Matthias Rapp from the Swedish Wind Energy Trade Organization at an obviously one-sided wind power seminar at Häsleholm Culture House in Skåne, Southern Sweden.

By Peter Skeel Hjorth, journalist

Organized resistance is beginning to stir, noted Director *Matthias Rapp* of the Swedish Wind Energy Trade Organization at a wind energy seminar on Saturday 16th January at Häsleholm Culture House, a seminar which was arranged and programmed by Eolus Vind a/s and took place at the Annual General Meeting for the shareholders late in the afternoon.

"In today's newspapers, I have seen 8-9 negative articles", said Executive Director of Eolus Vind *Bengt Simmingsköld* to the more than 300 participants in the hall, thus indicating that the wind power industry does not like a critical press.

The first lecture "This is how we promote wind power in Sweden" stressed the same point, namely that the industry does not feel comfortable with wind power opponents. The very first remark by President *Jan-Åke Jacobsson* of the Swedish Wind Organization was a harsh and implacable attack on Föreningen Svenskt Landskapsskydd (FSL), a very active Swedish protest movement. He showed a poor and grainy group photo of the board and asserted that it was more a cult than a movement. It is possible to have a reasonable conversation with only one member of the board, he continued.

The wind power opponents are getting better organized and they have obtained a still stronger voice in the media, a fact that did not please Matthias Rapp. He was supposed to talk about "Lies and Myths about Wind Power", but the emphasis of his lecture was the growing opposition and criticism.

His first slide bore the text: "Organized resistance begins to stir". Matthias Rapp said that the resistance gets more and more space in the media, has engaged more professional writers and describes legitimate criticism up to a point. Correct data are mixed with wrong data, he said and myths are spread although they are contradicted by facts. Then he showed a long list of Swedish protest groups.

Neither the organizer nor the lecturers concealed the bias of the seminar. There was not set time apart for a single critical voice.

The absence of critical examination of the human consequences for neighbors of giant turbines was remarkable. They were not mentioned by a single word. The seminar dealt with especially profitability and technology and also with news from the major suppliers Vestas, Enercon and Siemens.

After a review of the Vänern Wind Park where 10 turbines of 3 MW are placed at the bottom of the lake, a redeemed man took the floor. It was *Robert Johannesson* from the consultancy company Sweco. He was supposed to describe the preliminary work of the gigantic Blekinge Offshore wind farm close to the south coast of the counties Blekinge and Skåne - a project of 50 billion Swedish kroner (SEK).

Robert Johannesson talked about himself and that he had previously worked in a number of public administrations. Also he had just returned from a skiing trip to Åre - a winter holiday center in Mid-Sweden - where electricity was used for lifts, sauna, street lighting and much

more. The electric consumption was enormous. Yet and this to his astonishment Åre has chosen to be a municipality free of wind mills.

Thereafter, he went through the consultation process with authorities and residents about the project of between 500 and 800 offshore turbines – probably the largest offshore wind farm in the world if realized. The whole process was described in such positive superlatives and so rosy terms that there was no end to the glory. Judged by his voice and his choice of joyful words Robert Johannesson seemed like a man who had just converted to the true teachings.

To be quite frank the whole seminar could be characterized as a revival meeting for a new religious movement. Participants were repeatedly called "ambassadors of wind power" and a female wind power activist was described as "goddess".

This is how the seminar looks like from a critical journalistic approach of the kind that the Wind Power Industry and its supporters do not like.