

## Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

### It's illegal to think of nuclear power

*The extremists determining party politics in Sweden are modern King Canutes trying to stop the tidal wave.*

**Y**ears of relative silence in Sweden regarding nuclear energy—after the 1980 popular referendum ostensibly settled the matter once and for all—have now been followed by a new demand to shut down all nuclear reactors. Ironically, the renewed nuclear energy debate erupted after the Social Democratic minority regime sought to outlaw even *thinking* of building more nuclear plants.

After the 1980 referendum, the Parliament decided that no more nuclear reactors were to be built in Sweden. But the coming on-line of several new reactors then already under construction, has more than doubled nuclear electricity generation since 1980, accounting now for fully one-half of all Swedish electricity, a nuclear ratio surpassed only by France. Thus the paradox of one of the world's most anti-nuclear regimes presiding over one of the biggest nuclear energy programs per capita.

In spite of this—or, maybe because of it—the many opponents of the cheapest, safest, cleanest, and potentially most abundant energy technology already in operation, have reactivated their campaign to translate Sweden's consensus of 1980 into practical policies today: 1) build no new reactors; and 2) shut down the last reactor by 2010, at the latest. Secretly, they have begun to fear that this policy might not be workable, unless people start getting used to life without energy.

In order to enforce this anti-nuclear policy, an ad hoc majority of the

Swedish Parliament, composed of the ruling Social Democratic Party, the supportive Communists, and the opposition Center Party, passed legislation proposed last year by Energy Minister Birgitta Dahl, stipulating that “nobody must make construction designs, calculate costs, order equipment, or take other such preparatory measures aimed at building a nuclear reactor within the country.”

Nicknamed the “Brainwashing Paragraph,” the law is meant to ban all qualified projections of costs that might show the economic superiority of building more nuclear reactors, relative to coal- or oil-fired power plants, windmills, etc. Rather than the previous legislation, which simply outlawed new reactors, in itself an extreme measure, *the new law attempts to ban the act of merely contemplating more nuclear power!*

Energy Minister Dahl wants to shut down the first two reactors, those of the Barsebäck nuclear plant on the southern Swedish coast, during the 1990s, in spite of their intended lifespan extending well into the 21st century. But the anti-nuclear extremists of the Center Party, to whom Dahl appears to be a “pro-nuclear hawk,” want to shut them down by 1987-88. These are backed by, among others, the Danish Social Democrats—the Barsebäck plant directly faces the Danish capital of Copenhagen, across the straits separating Sweden from Denmark.

Even Swedish Social Democrats have opposed such a radical shut-

down, knowing that this past winter, for example, Sweden's electricity consumption was only barely met by its own electrical power production. Experts estimated that a temperature drop of but a few degrees centigrade would have sufficed to trigger an electricity blackout, as demand for heating would have surpassed power supply.

But come spring, the fundamentalists within the Center Party and the Danish Social Democracy, much like 11th-century Danish King Canute's attempt to stop the incoming tidal wave, are calling for the shutdown of the Barsebäck plant, which in 1986 produced 7% of Sweden's electricity, in reckless contempt for the overwhelming probability that another winter will come in 1987.

While Sweden's parliamentary parties—having kept the Greens out, not by fighting their ideas, but by adopting them as their own—are all complicit in the dismantling of one of the world's most ambitious nuclear energy programs, many scientists have now begun to speak up against this unprecedented waste of advanced research and high-technology investments launched in the late 1940s through the 1960s.

In an open letter to the government, 60 science professors from Lund, the university town neighboring Barsebäck, warned on Jan. 21 of a premature reactor shutdown, and attacked the hysteria being whipped up against nuclear energy. Noting that an end to nuclear energy would mean massive construction of coal-fired power plants, with a “serious increase of the air's carbon dioxide content,” the scientists demanded an energy policy based on “reason, knowledge, and responsibility,” where not only no premature shutdowns would occur, but the decision not to build any more reactors would be reversed.