

THE MURMUR

COPENHAGEN
EDITION

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SEPTEMBER 2016 VOL. 3 ISSUE 8



The Ambassador who humanised America

Rufus Gifford's public diplomacy was a hit, but he's much more than a reality TV star

THE MURMUR is a Danish newspaper, which just happens to use the English language. Through original reporting and photography, we tell stories about what it's like to live in Denmark.

THE MURMUR



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There's a great word in Danish, for political policies that have no legitimate aim except to send a message: *symbolpolitik*. These policies sound or feel good to their target audiences, but they have little impact on real issues.

Symbolpolitik speak to people's feelings. It gives them the sense that at least something is being done to improve their world. Who doesn't like a simple solution to a complicated problem?

Enter the burkini, banned from beaches in some French cities this summer. Designed so that Muslim women could enjoy the sea and sand while also conforming to modesty requirements, burkinis offend many French who regard it as contrary to their secular values.

Though French President Sarkozy called for the garment to be banned across the country, the courts rightly overturned the ban as unconstitutional. Many women wear hijabs, niqabs and burkas as a symbol of their sincerely held religious views and respecting those views is central to liberal Western democracy.

Still, I'm not a fan of cultural norms that insist women should hide their bodies from the male gaze. It suggests to me that women are responsible for attracting unwanted male attention, and that men are not responsible for controlling their gaze and behaviour. This is clearly oppressive, because it means women are less free than men, and makes men less responsible for their behaviour than women. It's a gender-based double standard that violates the principle that all people are created equal.

So we are conflicted: banning burkinis violates free expression, but a person wearing a burkini could be expressing a lack of free will.

It's not a surprise which side France came down on. Built on deep secular values, they have long taken issue with religious symbols displayed in public. Repeated attacks by Islamic extremists over the past 18 months have only fuelled the narrative that it is Islam itself that threatens France.

Banning the burkini is a deeply flawed example of *symbolpolitik*. Millions of Muslims live happily in Europe and don't kill us, while also holding sincerely held religious views that mean they dress modestly.

And, to the extent that there are Muslims living in communities separate from mainstream Western society, the burkini ban does little to bring them closer. It does the opposite, by making us look like hypocrites. For while we limit their right to express their religious convictions, we simultaneously advocate for free expression, especially the right to criticise their religion in deeply offensive terms.

Intolerant policies such as the burkini ban or the government's new anti-propaganda law – which makes it illegal to make anti-democratic statements in certain settings (see page 8) – undermine the very system we hope to protect.

I think the most powerful central principle of liberalism is that we don't have the right to interfere with each other. We do not agree about where to draw the line, which is why our societies contain libertarians, Marxists and everything in between. But the fundamental starting point is that we are all free and therefore must have a bloody good reason to interfere in someone else's life.

This powerful philosophy is what draws so many Muslims to the West seeking a freer life. But there are also Muslims in Europe who are anti-democratic. But only if we stand up for fundamental human rights and promote citizenship regardless of one's ethnic or religious background, can we persuade more people to support liberal democracy.

I read on Zetland this summer about a Danish Muslim man who was for about a decade a member of the Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir, which seeks to establish a global Islamic caliphate.

He ultimately left the organisation after realising that liberal democracies, with their focus on free expression, should be valued. He's still a devout Muslim.

It suits both the Islamist and the right-wing bigot to argue that Islam and the West are incompatible. But we know they're not. If we want more stories like the one above, we need to stand up to *symbolpolitik* and demand that our politicians embody the values they say they profess to protect with their short-sighted and bigoted policies. **M**

I acknowledge that there's significant imperfection in Denmark and that's what I love about it.

RUFUS GIFFORD
P22



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SPRÅK

MONTH IN REVIEW

Arson suspect caught

A 21-year-old man was charged with setting fire to ten cars and attempting to set fire to another 23 this summer. The man was apprehended thanks to CCTV footage.

Former North Korea ambassador defects

Thae Yong Ho, former ambassador to Denmark, has fled North Korea and is now living in Seoul with his family. He worked as a diplomat for many years, which brought him to Denmark in 1997. The embassy closed 18 months later due to financial difficulties. During his time in Denmark, the ambassador sold tax free cigarettes to afford a Danish lifestyle.



Christoffer Regild

KU AMONG THE BEST
Copenhagen University is the 30th best in the world and 2nd best in continental Europe, according to the 2016 Academic Ranking of World Universities.

TAXMAN GETS HELP

The ailing tax authority, Skat, is to be given seven billion kroner in additional funding.

Skat has been beset by scandals for years, suffering from failing IT systems, inaccurate property valuations, and a massive 12 billion kroner scam carried out by fraudsters demanding VAT reimbursement for stocks they had never bought. While 1,000 extra positions will be created, the total workforce will increase by 2,000 after planned cuts were abandoned.

Jesper Rønnow Simonson, Skat's director, was dismissed after four years on the job.

Sophie Frahm

Das Büro für DIF og Team Danmark



Denmark triumphs at Rio Olympics

Denmark won the fifth most medals, measured per capita, at this year's Olympic Games. The Danish delegation won 15 medals, beyond its 10-medal target. Denmark has not performed this well since the 1948 Summer Olympics in London, where Denmark won 20 medals. The Olympic adventures ended with the men's handball team beating France in the final, securing Denmark its second gold medal. Swimmer Pernille Blume (above) won the first gold medal with a victory in 50 metre freestyle. Additionally, Denmark won six silver medals and seven bronze medals in swimming, handball, badminton, rowing, road cycling, wrestling, kayaking, athletics, sailing and track cycling.

DEADLY VANDALS

A German woman was killed and another family member severely injured when their vehicle was struck by a large stone that was thrown off a motorway overpass.

The accident took place on the motorway close to Langesøvej near Vissenbjerg on Funen. Several similar cases were reported in August, including an incident on August 20 near Odense where a car was struck. In June, the front window of a bus was smashed using a milk carton filled with sand that was dropped from a motorway bridge.

Torture victims to sue
Iraqi prisoners can sue for mistreatment after the Eastern High Court ruled that their case is still valid. The 23 Iraqis allege that the Danish Military shares responsibility for the torture and mistreatment they were subject to after being handed over to Iraqi police in 2004 under a Danish-led operation. The case started in 2012 after former intelligence officer Anders Kjærgaard (below) released a video in 2012 proving that Danish soldiers didn't intervene to protect civilians from abuse.



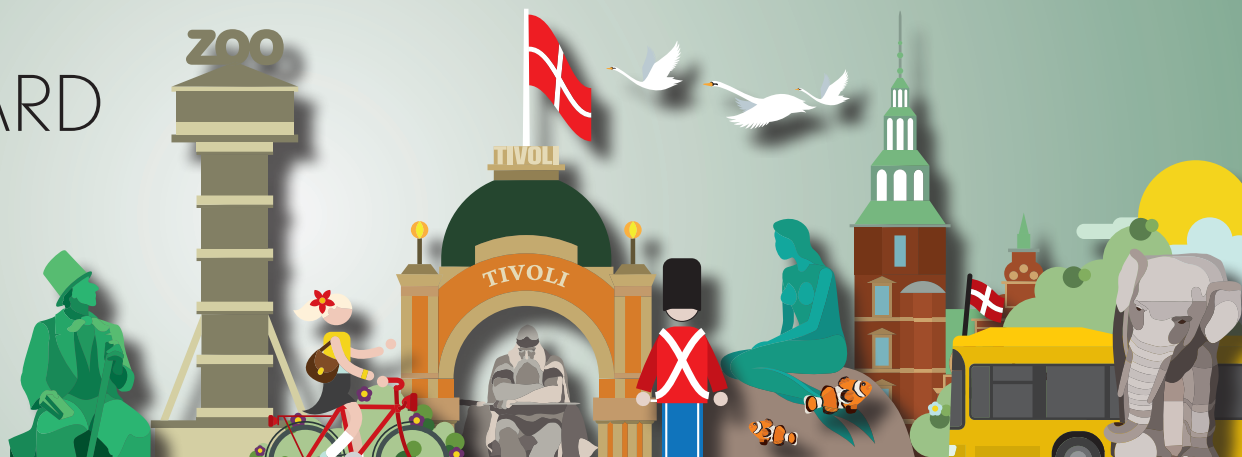
Ivan Riordan Bolt

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#TRENDING

DEBATING THE RIGHT TO BROADCAST HATE

An anti-immigration programme on Radio24Syv upset many on the Danish left this summer. It was the last straw for one prominent debater, who promised to boycott the station until the show was taken off the air. The radio station execs argued, however, that the debate programme would have aired listeners' concerns – if they had bothered to call in

"I will not participate in [Radio24Syv's] programmes as long as they maintain a management position that promotes racist and xenophobic programmes, and have so many programmes with lazy journalists at such a poor standard."

When Anne Lise Marstrand-Jørgensen wrote this comment in a thread on her friend's wall, she hardly expected it to spark a fierce debate about media and censorship. The activist and author is known for her work with the pro-refugee group Venligboerne (Friendly Residents) and was voted 'Copenhagener of the Year' by readers of Politiken newspaper this summer.

Marstrand-Jørgensen and her friend were discussing Radio24Syv's summer debate programme Je Suis Jalving. Hosted by Michael Jalving, a well-known right-wing historian and commentator, the programme focussed almost entirely on the negative impact of immigration and on the threat that Islam poses to Danish society.

Simon Andersen, Radio24Syv's news editor, came across Marstrand-Jørgensen's comment and shared it on his wall. His post was subsequently shared widely, enveloping Marstrand-Jørgensen in a minor shitstorm in which she was accused of intolerance and promoting political censorship.

Among her critics was Radio24Syv's head of programming,

Mads Brügger, who told Berlingske newspaper that "It seems like the left wing regards being right-wing as a mental illness".

Brügger argued that the radio station's remit required them to carry debate programmes with strong personal opinions, and pointed out that last summer they hosted left-wing journalist David Trads, who used his programme Tradsalderen to promote multiculturalism.

"I think it's striking that people who profess their love of tolerance and humanism and benevolence often get enormously angry and aggressive when they are presented with views that counter their own," Brügger said.

Marstrand-Jørgensen was also interviewed in Berlingske, and said she knew individuals that had boycotted the radio station due to its journalistic style. In a separate Facebook update, she recalls her worst experience with the radio station. It was during a debate about the conditions at a new asylum centre, in which she offered documentation that proved it suffered from major health and safety issues. Instead, the radio station rallied behind the immigration minister, Inger Støjberg, who denied Marstrand-Jørgensen's claims and ignored her evidence.

Beyond this, she believes Je Suis Jalving is problematic because it is presented as a journalistic debate programme.

"In reality, Je Suis Jalving is just a mouthpiece for the most anti-Islamic right wing, which is allowed to make its claims without opposition," she said.

The same allegation was made by listener Steffen Groth, who rang the show to complain about its editorial line. In a follow-up op-ed in Politiken newspaper, Groth argues that Jalving ignored attempts by listeners to share a more positive image of Danish Muslims, instead presenting the minority as unintelligent, inbred, and likely to cause a civil war.

"I accuse you of digging ditches in our society, building up an image of an enemy, and blowing at the embers of xenophobia," Groth wrote.

In a reply, Mads Brügger and Michael Bertelsen – who share programming responsibility at Radio24Syv – thanked



AnneLise Marstrand-Jørgensen
Selvom der også er gode mennesker, der laver radio for 24syv vil jeg ikke deltage i deres programmer så længe de har en ledelsesmæssig linje, der billiger racistiske og xenofobiske udsendelser og har så mange programmer med dovne journalister og uendelig ringe standard. Der er en del, der har bojkottet dem efterhånden. Så må de søde værter lægge pres på deres ledelse...

for 18 minutter siden · Synes godt om · 4 · Svar

Anne Lise Marstrand-Jørgensen's Facebook post that sparked a furious debate about the role of public service radio. It reads: "Even though there are good people who make radio for Radio24Syv, I will not participate in their programmes as long as they maintain a management position that promotes racist and xenophobic programmes, and have so many programmes with lazy journalists at such a poor standard. Many others have already boycotted them. So the sweet hosts should put pressure on their management..."

Groth for bothering to call in and share his concerns.

"When we aired Tradsalderen, there was no issue with getting listeners to participate – there was practically a storm of calls from Danish People's Party supporters. We hoped that on Je Suis Jalving, Mikael Jalving would be called by lots of 'venligboer' (pro-refugee activists), but sadly it was difficult to get them to participate. Instead, they preferred to sit at a distance and express their disgust about the programme. One of the exceptions was Steffen Groth, but that was only because a producer spent a lot of energy convincing him to participate in the programme after seeing his allegations against the radio station on Facebook." (PS)



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GET STUCK IN

Artival

"There are things out there that we cannot grasp, that we have no control over. This is a way of doing something that matters here and now to people who are involved in the migration horror that exists in Europe at the moment."

Nicol Savinetti is describing what drove her to launch Immigrant Art – a platform for bringing migrant artists into the public realm in Denmark – and Artival, a week-long showcase of migrant art at venues around Copenhagen.

Savinetti is British born and has lived in Denmark for 16 years. After finishing a PhD in social policy and migration last year, she was looking to develop on her theoretical foundation and work with vulnerable groups. After being introduced to the work of several Syrian artists in Denmark, and discovering that they weren't being exhibited, she set up Immigrant Art.

"As I met more artists, it became apparent that there was a need for networks specifically for immigrant artists in Denmark," Savinetti says.

"Good artists are not necessarily good networkers. Immigrant Art is about showcasing the work of artists who might not have the opportunity to get out there otherwise, and create a network with that in mind."



'Syria Go' by Saif Aldeen Tahhan.

James Clasper

Crucially, Immigrant Art's steering group includes both Danes and non-Danes. According to Savinetti, one of the platform's aims is to use art as "the meeting point for the immigrant and the Dane, see what happens when they meet and, in a sense, figure out why the integration project doesn't work very well in Denmark".

Although Artival's programme is mixed, increasing the exposure of

migrant art in Denmark is an important aspect of the festival. Changing the perception of immigrants is another.

"People get scared when they get 'immigrants' shoved in their face," Savinetti says.

As well as visual art, the programme includes photography, music, street art and film screenings. There are also talks with artists, in-

cluding the Danish-American artist Maria Dubin, who will hold an open house at her studio in Vanløse. According to Savinetti, one highlight is a poetry reading at Natkirken in central Copenhagen. Three poets will read their works in their mother tongue – together as a group, with music.

"They will be speaking to each other through their poetry, in their own language," she says.

But how much does the art reflect the migrant crisis? Savinetti says she put out an open call to artists in Denmark and asked them to only send their best work, not necessarily art that reflected their experience of migration. Still, some art on the programme is explicit in its depiction of the crisis. Syrian artist Saif Aldeen Tahhan's latest work, 'Syria Go', mimics the augmented-reality game Pokémon Go to highlight the plight of children in Syria.

"Art is something that's accessible to everyone, something that's with us every day, whether we like it or not," Savinetti says.

"And it's the perfect medium to try to speak to people who speak different languages and can't understand each other. It's a wonderful way of breaking down those barriers." M

immigrant-art.com



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108

Travel guides like to claim that no Copenhagen experience is complete without dining at Noma. Perhaps they're right – even if you suspect fewer people have succeeded in the quest than repeated the credo.

For many, though, eating at the world's most famous restaurant is no more than a pipe dream. With similar restaurants in the city proving equally exclusive, it can be tricky to enjoy new Nordic nosh without breaking the bank.

But in the last few years a number of restaurants have cottoned on to the problem and opened relatively affordable versions of themselves.

Lazy hacks describe them as 'value-for-money' spots, which suggests that diners elsewhere don't get that. The alternative is to label them as an extension of the family – 'little sisters' or 'baby brothers' – which implies they're smaller, brattier and, unlike the first-born, allowed to make more mistakes.

That may have explained 108, which took over Noma's kitchen for a few months at the start of the year when Rene Redzepi and his team headed to Australia.

As pop-ups go, 108 was something of a letdown. Despite flashes of brilliance, too many dishes misfired. Worse still, the ambience was misjudged, the service sloppy, and the seating uncomfortable.

What a delight, then, to discover that having moved into digs of its own a stone's throw from the 'kissing bridge' on Strandgade, 108 is a triumph. Gone are the woes of winter – the service is exemplary, the ambience spot on, and the cooking much improved.

The menu nods confidently to new Nordic. Think: mackerel cured in celery vinegar with salted gooseberries and spruce oil; raw lamb with elderberry capers, nasturtium and rose-

hip; and braised oxtail seasoned with fresh pine.

Highlights include a trio of dishes designed to be shared: grilled seasonal greens, lamb shoulder with onions and blackcurrant leaves, and grilled monkfish with chamomile-cooked cabbage. Sharing dishes often implies stinginess, but not at 108. You get a hunting knife to carve the miso-lacquered lozenge of monkfish, such is its heft, and you won't go home hungry.

The puddings are fun, too. A bowl of wild Swedish blueberries comes with birch syrup, cornflowers, and double cream whipped with ale. It looks elegant, and tastes like the tipsy end of a late summer's day spent foraging in the forests of Skåne. Equally inventive is a cone made from leftover sourdough, filled with blackcurrants and toasted barley ice cream. It comes topped with chopped hazelnuts and propped in a bowl of barley. Instagram fame beckons.

Someone's had a think about the prices, too, because they're no longer in nosebleed territory. But if 108 still looks wallet-busting to you, here's a tip: go to its cafe, The Corner, instead. Every morning they bake three kinds of pastry: rosehip, blueberry, and fermented beef. At 40 kroner, they're not cheap, but the latter in particular is fast becoming a cult favourite – if you want to experience a bit of that Noma magic, it's the best 40 kroner in town. The baristas may tell you to pair it with an espresso. Fine, but if you're on a budget, take a filter coffee instead. It's just as good, and the refills are free. And that truly is value for money. **M**

108
Strandgade 108, CPH
108.dk/en



Freya McOmish / Scandinavia Standard

Food photos: Hannah Grant



Caramelised milkskin with grilled pork belly and spicy herbs.



Raw lamb with last year's pickles.



Sourdough cone with toasted barley cream.

POLITICS

REFUGEE EXPERTS EXCLUDED FROM RULING ON ASYLUM CASES

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) may no longer be allowed to appoint members to the Refugee Appeals Board if the government gets its way.

All asylum applications that are rejected by the Immigration Service are automatically appealed to the Refugee Appeals Board, which is chaired by a judge and includes four other members drawn from the foreign ministry, immigration ministry, the Danish Bar & Law Society, and the DRC.

If the representative from the DRC is removed, the representative from the foreign ministry will be also, in order to preserve an uneven number.

Immigration minister Inger Støjberg argues that the DRC's representatives may be too biased toward helping refugees when they make their assessments.

"I think their independence can be doubted," Støjberg told Politiken. "Given that the Refugee Appeals Board is a type of court, it is essential that this doubt be removed."

Andreas Kamm, Secretary General of the DRC, is disappointed by Støjberg's decision, however, and is concerned that the board will have less expertise upon which to make their decisions.

"[The DRC members] have a legitimising effect, because they have witnessed what is taking place. The legal system won't break down without them on the board, but with fewer competencies its quality and legitimacy is only weakened."

The law is likely to have broad support from the right wing bloc of parties, including The Danish People's Party (DF).

"We should go all the way and eliminate the board and let the Danish Immigration Service make all the decisions," MP for DF Martin Henriksen told Information newspaper. (Refugees.dk)

CRITICISM OF HATE SPEECH LAWS

New regulations to crack down on anti-democratic statements risk being too broadly applied warn critics

Muslim imams present such a threat to Danish democracy, according to the government, that greater controls are needed on what they can and cannot talk about.

In a new draft law, the government hopes to ban statements made in the context of religious teaching that promote terror, murder, rape, violence, incest, paedophilia, kidnapping, coercion, and bigamy. Breaking the law, which covers statements made in public and private, would result in a jail term of up to three years.

Associations can also have their public funding restricted if their goals or behaviour opposes democracy, fundamental freedoms or human rights.

An aisle-crossing political majority supports the law, which was first proposed after a TV2 documentary went undercover in Danish mosques and discovered widespread anti-democratic preaching.

The law does not apply to statements made in ordinary debate, but solely to those made in a context of religious education, and which are evangelical in nature. These sorts of statements can be made in a variety of settings, such as religious ser-



Justice minister, Søren Pind.

mons, study groups or lessons, but also on social media such as Facebook, if the person making the statement has authority over the audience.

Both legal think-tank Justitia and the Institute for Human Rights argue that the law is written too broadly, however, and makes it difficult for people to know whether they are breaking the law or not.

"You need not be a religious preacher – the law will also apply in situations such as on Facebook when a debate can become evangelical, or in other private settings, so the context of the law is very unclear,"

Justitia director Jacob Mchangama told Politiken newspaper.

Professor Lisbet Christoffersen, an expert in religious law at the University of Roskilde, also argues that the law might violate the constitution.

"We have ordinarily interpreted section 70 of the constitution to mean that we cannot use religion to discriminate in law or administration. But that's what they are saying they want to do: religious organisations are being targeted. There is no reason given for why the law should not also target gang headquarters," she told Politiken. (PS)

FOREIGN STUDENTS A PUBLIC DRAIN?

The government says it's a waste of money to educate so many foreign students, but educators argue it's worth it if they stick around after they graduate

Normally the government is worried about foreigners who come to Denmark and don't leave. But now they're worried about those who do.

Denmark is becoming an increasingly attractive country to study in, and 3,000 EU students are currently enrolled in short-term higher education according to DR. Danes account for only 16 percent of stu-

dents in English-language vocational education, and 36 percent of English-language Professional Bachelor's degrees.

The rest are foreigners, many of which leave the country after receiving a free education and study grants, which education and research minister Ulla Tørnæs says is a waste of taxpayers' money.

"If you come to Denmark as a foreign citizen and get an education, then of course you need to stay in Denmark and contribute to Danish society," Tørnæs told DR in May.

The Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) have now expressed a willingness to work with the government to restrict the number of English-language education places.

"When only one in six people who start a particular education are Danish, then we need to ask whether we are spending our

money properly," Socialdemokraterne MP Kaare Dybvad told DR.

"In the autumn, we will take a look at how education funding should be divided. If there are a lot of foreign students in an educational programme who return home afterwards, then we must ask whether the course should retain its economic support."

Konstantin Lassithiotakis, director of the vocational training centre VIA University College, argues that it is a bad idea to cut the number of places.

"International students are important for the development of the Danish economy," he told DR. "We need them and we should both educate and retain them in Denmark."

According to a study from the college, 80 percent of VIA's students remain in Denmark after finishing their education. (PS)

Report urges utility privatisation

Privatising utility companies could save the public sector billions of kroner, according to a report from McKinsey.

"There is an enormous potential to reduce costs in the utility sector, which will benefit citizens and businesses," wrote Climate, Utilities and Energy Minister Lars Christian Lilleholt in a press release.

"By doing things better and more effectively, Danish households could save money while increasing business revenue."

McKinsey found that 7.1 billion kroner could be saved every year if utility companies were better managed, allowed to merge into larger companies, and given better incentives to invest in improving efficiency.

"The report underlines the fact that businesses and consumers can get precisely the same services as today at a much lower price if we learn how to renew and develop our utility sector," Tine Roed, chairman of Dansk Industri, told Altinget.

The report sparked a heated political debate about the risks involved in privatising utilities such as water and district heating, which are normally owned and operated by municipalities.

"Heat and water utilities should not be handed over to swindlers and profit hunters," wrote Per Christensen, chairman of the union 3F, in Politiken.

"The idea of privatising heating and water is so un-Danish, and runs so contrary to our sense of community, that a popular protest movement is needed to stop the heist before it is irreversibly started."

DF presents immigration demands

The Danish People's Party (DF) has long used the summer months to launch new policies, and this year was no exception. At their summer meeting in August, they proposed 13 new immigration laws.

These include permanent border controls, investment in repatriation programmes, eliminating the right of immigrants to earn unemployment benefits, exiting international rights and refugee conventions, as well as assessing asylum claims immediately at the border.

The list of demands arrives before a series of important political negotiations this autumn, including a 2025 economic plan and income tax cuts promised by the Liberal Party (Venstre) government. Despite being generally pro-welfare, DF is allied with

the centre-right Venstre government due to its stance on immigration.

DF looks set to swap votes for tax cuts in exchange for tighter immigration laws, which are likely to be accepted by the rest of the right-wing 'blue bloc'. In August, the leader of the Liberal Alliance, Anders Samuelsen, announced his support for ending the practice of granting asylum to spontaneous applicants who arrive in Denmark.

"We should be accepting far more refugees directly from camps near conflict zones and use the money we save on creating better conditions in the camps," Samuelsen told Berlingske, adding that housing and processing the applications of spontaneous asylum applicants was far too expensive.

"Denmark is partially responsible for the people who drown and the women who are raped as they flee to Europe. We are morally responsible because we are playing the role of humanitarians by only helping a small percentage of victims, instead of the far greater numbers who remain near conflict zones."

Sex without could be a crime

Several parties in the left-wing 'red bloc' have proposed changing rape laws to make it easier to prosecute offenders.

In order to prove rape, prosecutors currently need to prove that a perpetrator used threats or coercion in order to knowingly rape their victim. This is difficult to demonstrate, however, especially when the victim knows the perpetrator.

In a recent case from 2014, several young men were initially cleared of raping an intoxicated young woman, as it could not be proved that the young men were aware that she did not want to have sex. They were later found guilty in the Eastern High Court.

The proposal from Socialdemokraterne, Radikale and SF would mean that all sexual acts must be actively consented to. This means the burden of evidence will move away from the victim, who currently has to prove they did not consent, to the perpetrator, who must prove consent was given.

It was swiftly rejected by the government, however, which argued that it would mean all sexual acts would require a contract, or else risk accusations of rape.

But SF leader Pia Olsen Dyhr told Ritzau that there were many ways to give consent.

"There is definitely a difference between indirectly saying yes and not reacting because you are unconscious or unable to resist." (PS)



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CITY



Looking north toward the Opera, through The Inner Harbour Bridge – or Kissing Bridge.

Injection facility for addicts opens in Vesterbro

The largest legal drug injection facility in the Nordic region opened in August. There is space for 24 users to inject at a time at the 1000M2 facility in Halmtorvet, called H17, which is staffed with medical professionals. Another area of the facility allows up to six users to smoke heroin at a time.

It will cost the Copenhagen City Council around 30 million kroner a year to run the facility, which is painted with soft pastel tones to create a relaxing atmosphere for the drug users.

"Our primary goal is to reduce the harm caused by living a life of drug abuse on the streets," H17 manager Louise Runge Mortensen told Politiken newspaper.

"They can take their drugs here in a safe space, and hopefully, given that the space is calm and relaxing, we can find the time to get them to talk to a social worker."

It's not the only drug injection facility in Copenhagen, but it is certainly the largest. There are also injection rooms in Denmark's other main cities, Odense and Aarhus.

The first injection facility was mobile, the Fixelancen, launched in 2011 by social entrepreneur Michael Lod-

berg Olsen in the back of a renovated ambulance.

The City Council has since bought its own mobile injection facility, but this year it decided to stop the facility's funding. Olsen is upset by the decision, as he believes there are vulnerable drug users across Copenhagen who need the help the facility provides.

"Of course it's super that money is finally being spent on drug users, but for the 30 million kroner they're spending, they could have bought five mobile injection rooms and paid the staff and running costs for five years," Olsen said.

"Copenhagen City Council has

Peter Stanners

created a factory for drug users, instead of creating smaller facilities that encourage better relationships and opportunities to get the drug users into treatment."

The Danish People's Party (DF) also criticised the new facility, arguing that it supported criminal drug-dealing networks – an allegation that was dismissed by Copenhagen's deputy mayor for social affairs, Jesper Christensen.

"I don't think we have any other options," Christensen told DR. "If we can offer these people a life where there is both dignity and an opportunity to move on, then this is the best offer we can come up with."

The Kissing Bridge is massively popular

After years of delays, Copenhagen's new Inner Harbour Bridge (Indrehavnsbro) opened this summer, connecting the two popular tourism spots of Nyhavn and Holmen.

Known as the Kissing Bridge because of the way the bridge opens and shuts, it's been an instant hit with Copenhageners and tourists alike.

According to Politiken newspaper, 22,000 cyclists and pedestrians used the bridge on Thursday, August 18, rising to 27,000 crossings on the following Saturday.

With at least half the crossings being made by bicycle (11,000 on the Thursday and 18,000 on the Saturday), the bridge's popularity is far higher than the 3,000 to 7,000 cyclists originally projected by the City Council.

"Often, we want to cross the harbour to get from A to B as quickly as possible. But with the bridge, we created a shortcut that can also be a destination in itself," Morten Kabell, deputy mayor for technical and environmental affairs, told Politiken.

The Kissing Bridge has been a massive headache for the City Council, with repeated delays caused by engineering errors and the bankruptcy of a contractor.

Soon after the bridge was opened to the public in July, it was struck by another disaster – it couldn't open, preventing a ferry operator from leaving the harbour. **M**

Bo Wermus / Instagram - @bowermus



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Government death by taxes

The taxes paid by Denmark's top earners is the focal point of the coming political season. The outcome remains uncertain, but the future of both the current government and the country's progressive tax system hang in the balance

A CORNERSTONE of Denmark's welfare state is a progressive tax system that levels the playing field for all Danes. Central to the system is the philosophy that the broadest shoulders should carry the greatest weight. In other words, the more you earn, the more tax you should pay.

But soon, the broadest shoulders might have a little weight lifted from them. Tax reform for Denmark's top earners promises to be a central aspect of the coming political season, as the Liberal Party (Venstre) minority government attempts to follow through with a promise to lower the supplemental tax on the highest incomes, known as *topskat*, from 15 to 10 percent.

This was widely seen as a concession to libertarian support party Liberal Alliance (LA), which has made lowering the top tax rate as one of its key issues. LA leader Anders Samuelsen has threatened to withdraw his party's support for the government – sparking a snap election – unless the government follows through with the tax cuts.

But another support party, the populist Danish People's Party (DF), is opposed. Despite belonging to the 'blue bloc' of right-wing parties, it has always run on a left-wing, pro-welfare economic platform. Last December, deputy leader Søren Espersen told Altinget that his party had "no interest" in entering discussions about lowering the tax on the highest incomes.

Tax cuts for top earners is a divisive issue. A Norstat poll conducted last May found that 52 percent of voters are opposed to lowering the top tax rate, while only a third support the idea. This means that Venstre could risk upsetting a large percentage of voters should the proposed changes go through. Should it fail to implement the cuts, however, it could lose the support of LA and risk a new election.

WHAT IS TOPSKAT?

Topskat, is added on top of other municipal and state taxes on annual income over 507,934 kroner,

Currently,
we have
very limited economic
growth,
and that
is an issue
we need to
address.

MADS LUNDBY
HANSEN, CEPOS

Elias Thorsson

or 42,330 a month, and currently stands at 15 percent. Should the proposed reforms pass, the rate will drop to 10 percent.

The number of Danes currently in the top tax bracket is at its lowest since it was introduced in 1994, due to tax reforms in recent years. A study conducted by the Economic Council of the Labour Movement (Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd) found that only 488,150 Danes paid *topskat* in 2014, down 50 percent from its peak in 2008.

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE CHANGE

One of the more outspoken opponents of lowering the tax on the highest earners has been the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO). The union fears that the move will lead to cuts in the welfare state, will increase inequality, and will fail to spur the economic growth its proponents claim will follow.

"This is a tax on the very richest in society, people that earn more than half a million annually. So if you lower it, while at the same time reducing services, then you are acting very harmfully in regard to wealth distribution," says LO economist Morten Aastrup Jørgensen. "The population is also growing and in the future we will have more elderly people and children, so the state will need the revenue."

According to LO, lowering the tax will have only a small impact on average earnings. A person making 600,000 kroner will receive around 4,000 extra a year, while a person making 8,000,000 will earn a further 342,000 annually. Those in the top tax bracket pay a marginal tax of 56.2 percent, which is the eight highest of the OECD countries. For the average earner that number drops down to 42.5, or the nineteenth lowest, just under the US and Slovakia.

Proponents of lowering the tax on the highest earners claim that the move will finance itself through increased productivity and job growth. But Jørgensen points out that numbers from the Ministry of Finance show that the direct reve-

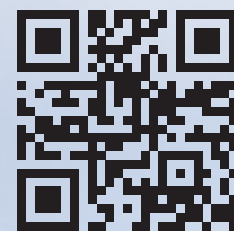


Frits Ahlefeldt-Laurvig

How much should the richest pay? The rate of the top tax bracket is currently up for discussion in parliament.

► Continued on Page 37

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Competition for right-wing voters heats up

Three new right wing parties are hoping to run in the next election. They complain that the government could do more to regain sovereignty and introduce tougher immigration policies, but the reality is that even if elected, they unlikely to extricate Denmark from its international obligations

"YOU'LL NEVER be house trained."

This was the scathing indictment Poul Nyrup Rasmussen levelled at the Danish People's Party (DF) from the speaker's chair in Parliament in 1999. The former Social Democrat (Socialdemokraterne) prime minister condemned the party for its anti-immigrant rhetoric that alienated foreigners in Denmark.

While DF continues to be accused of scaremongering tactics against immigrants and refugees, they are no longer political outsiders. Now the second largest party in parliament, winning 21.1 percent of the vote in last year's election, and with their former leader Pia Kjaersgaard appointed Speaker of Parliament, the party has firmly established itself in the political establishment.

But DF has become too mainstream, at least for some voters. And now three new populist parties are vying to occupy the space on the fringe of Danish politics – Dansk Samling, Nye Borgerlige and Danskernes Parti

They range from libertarian populism (Nye Borgerlige) to racist national socialist (Danskernes Parti), but they all agree that DF is not doing enough to keep Denmark's borders shut.

THE NEW RIGHT WING

The increased competition for populist voters is, however, not an indication that Danes are becoming more right wing, argues Professor Christoffer Green-Pedersen from the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University. He points out that recent surveys do not indicate such a change in the political landscape.

"Radical views have always existed, it is a question of whether DF are able to capture them or not. By being centrist they have simply paved the way for new radical parties," Green-Pedersen said.

Radical views have always existed, it is a question of whether DF are able to capture them or not.

**PROFESSOR
CHRISTOFFER
GREEN-PEDERSEN**

Sophie Frahm

Jesper Qvist



Danskernes Parti leader Daniel Carlsen at a press conference in August.

Professor Susi Meret, from the Department of Political Sciences at Aalborg University, agrees – DF's move towards the centre has opened up space on the far-right.

"DF has become more pragmatic and mainstream following their role as a government support party, as well as shouldering the responsibility of being the second biggest party in Denmark. These new parties have picked up on that, and the rise of the new far-right is a clear sign of discontent, especially with DF's handling of the immigration crisis," she said, adding that she does not believe that all three parties will secure the 20,109 signatures needed to stand in the next election.

Thomas Funding, political analyst at TV2 News, thinks Nye Borgerlige stand the best chance of election.

"Danskernes Parti, on the other hand, are much more unlikely to do so due to their leader Daniel Carlsen's unfortunate past, making the party and its policies too extreme for most Danes," Funding said, referring to Carlsen's ties to the Danish neo-Nazi community and his well known Nazi sympathies.

ANTI EU

Regardless of their electoral viability, the three parties agree on a number of issues beyond the need for stricter immigration law. Cen-

tral to their mission is EU scepticism, which was given a boost this summer with the UK referendum to leave the EU.

Funding explains that the EU's inability to tackle the refugee crisis has been particularly damaging to the EU's standing.

"It has created scepticism because many expected that the EU would solve the issue. And the fact that they haven't has created a legitimacy deficit," Funding said.

Following the British referendum he has become convinced that a debate about Danish EU membership is likely to gain traction.

Both the far-left Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) and DF have already called for a Danish referendum on EU membership. The centrist parties, however, remain more supportive of continued EU membership. Among the population EU support remains high as well and a Norstat survey conducted in June found that only 27 percent of respondents were in favour of leaving the union.

THE CONVENTION DEBATE

The three parties are also highly critical of international conventions that limit the government's ability to introduce tight immigration policies. The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), refugee conventions and the UN Convention on Statelessness prevent Denmark from limiting the number of refugees arriving in the country, and its ability to deport foreign criminals.

Recently, the Liberal Party (Venstre) government has pledged to look into the limitations imposed by the conventions.

"What's certain is that the government and the Ministry of Justice are searching high and low for ways to tighten immigration regulations," Funding said. "The future of the conventions will largely depend on the Ministry, and its abil-

NEW PARTIES ON THE RIGHT

Danskernes Parti (Party of the Danes)

- Established in 2011 by Daniel Carlsen, a former member of the Neo Nazi organisation Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Bevægelse.
- Inspired by far-right parties in Germany and Sweden, the party failed to win representation in the 2013 municipal elections.
- Their central ideology is ethnoplurism, in which different cultures should be geographically isolated from each other.
- Their policy platform includes an immediate stop to immigration and deportations of non-Western immigrants.

Nye Borgerlige (New Conservatives)

- Established in 2015 by Pernille Vermund and Peter Seier Christensen.
- The party brings together small-government fiscal conservatism with strict immigration controls.
- With a strong anti-EU position, the party wants to return sovereignty to Denmark in a number of key areas, particularly immigration.
- They look likely to gather the necessary votes to run in the next election.

Dansk Samling (Danish Unity)

- Founded in 1936, Dansk Samling is a nationalist party that played an active role in the Danish resistance movement during World War II. They have not contested an election since 1964.
- Historian Morten Uhrskov became leader in 2013 and has since tried to increase the party's membership.
- The party's key policies include stopping non-Western immigration, leaving the EU, lowering taxes.

ity to find loopholes in the legislation. Are there any grey areas in the conventions that allows us to employ stricter rules without leaving the conventions, well then that's what we'll do."

In August, PM Lars Løkke Rasmussen finally conceded that Denmark would not unilaterally withdraw from the conventions, a possibility previously alluded to in their election manifesto. According to Funding, there is broad support in Parliament for challenging many of the international conventions, but most agree that a unilateral withdrawal would prove too harmful.

"Leaving the conventions would have international consequences and lead to heavy criticism of Denmark," Funding said.

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT

The government's course change is, however, more likely to strengthen the new right wing parties, who are less interested in Denmark's international reputation, than Denmark's ability to control its borders.

While the new parties might attract dissatisfied DF voters, these same voters are also being wooed by the centre-left Socialdemokraterne. After losing power last year, the leading left wing party joined the minority Venstre government in passing a range of re-

strictions to immigration laws and stricter conditions for refugees living in Denmark.

DF voters are being pulled from both directions and depending on where they go could have a dramatic impact on the political landscape. Should Socialdemokraterne win over DF voters, the left wing bloc would increase its chances of regaining power during the next election. Should DF lose votes to one or more of the new right parties – if they succeed in getting on the ballot – it could keep a right wing government in power. However, if any of the new parties fail to secure two percent of the vote, therefore failing to hit the electoral threshold, the votes would be lost, which could guarantee a new left wing government.

According to the latest EU survey of public opinion in Denmark from May, 57 percent of respondents said immigration was one of the two most important issues facing Denmark, with health and social security (26 percent) a distant second.

Immigration policy will, therefore, remain the central arena in the battle for voters, explains Meret, who adds that DF will remain a key player in developments at the far-right.

"What's interesting is which political direction DF will go, to the left or right, and whether they have even peaked yet." **M**

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Pernille Vermund, photographed in Helsingør where she represented the Conservative People's Parliament in the municipal council between 2009 and 2011.

The emerging hard right

Building on a populist anti-EU sentiment and seeking to exploit space to the right of DF, Nye Borgerlige wants to completely transform Denmark's relationship with the wider world and pull the country out of international obligations and institutions. The party's leader Pernille Vermund explains why a more radical right is needed

LASTYEAR, the Danish voting public veered to the right and pushed out the centre-left government led by the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne). Among the biggest winners was the populist Danish People's Party (DF), which doubled its share of the vote, securing 21.1 percent.

Despite campaigning on a pro-welfare economic platform, DF has a long history of supporting right-wing governments and has frequently voted for austerity policies in exchange for tighter immigration policies – the party's key issue.

DF has become too mainstream for some voters, however, and an Infomedia poll conducted in June found that 24 percent of Danes would vote for a party to the right of DF. Several new parties are attempting to fill that space, most prominently among them the New Conservatives (Nye Borgerlige), which takes DF's tough stand on immigration and mixes it with an economic platform based around tax cuts and a small public sector.

Over the summer months, Nye Borgerlige leader Pernille Vermund has become an increasingly visible face in the Danish media, where she has been sounding out her party's anti-EU, small government and anti-immigration message. The interest in her party was evident when she arrived at our in-

Denmark attracts the wrong immigrants due to our existing immigration policy and tax level.

Sophie Frahm

terview in a small Vesterbro café shadowed by a camera crew from DR2. With the cameras rolling, she is at pains to stress that her move into politics is not about setting up a long political career for herself.

"My primary objective is to take care of my job, my company and my children. I would be able to do that if the Danish MPs would do their job and solve this country's problems."

ROOM ON THE RIGHT

Vermund works as an architect and owns the company Vermund+Gere, but between 2009 and 2011 she was a member of the Helsingør City Council, representing the Conservative People's Party (Konservative).

Last autumn, together with Peter Seier Christensen, she launched Nye Borgerlige to satisfy the perceived demand for a party that combines traditional conservative economic and social values, with a tight immigration policy.

"For too many years people have been compromising when voting in Danish elections," Vermund says, emphasising the party's desire to challenge EU and international conventions that, she feels, threaten Denmark's sovereignty over immigration issues. After leaving Konservative she

had become a political nomad without a place in politics.

"Yes, I was missing a party," Vermund says.

Nye Borgerlige was formed in response to Vermund's frustration at a lack of political action on the right wing – "it's difficult to trust people who promise one thing and then do something else" – and her view that Konservative no longer represented traditional conservative values.

"Time will tell whether or not there is room for more right wing parties in Danish politics," she said.

THE EUROPE QUESTION

At the core of the party is a deep dissatisfaction with the EU and the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR). Vermund says the party is in favour of international cooperation and free trade, but the time has come to take back decision-making powers from European institutions. The ECHR, for example, has on several occasions struck down Danish immigration legislations, which it found to unfairly discriminate.

"Just imagine a family, not allowed to put a lock on their own front door meaning that anyone can walk in and out at any time, that would seriously challenge one's family life. I don't think that's fair," says Vermund.

"It's a big problem when a majority of society wants something, elects politicians who want the same, and then when these politicians enter government they say they can't deliver because of some conventions that we are afraid to leave, because then we'll get kicked out of the EU."

As an alternative, Vermund is attracted to the relationships that Norway and Switzerland have with the EU, which enables them to trade freely with the EU's single market without all the burdens linked to membership.

"Even though Norway is part of the free market, it doesn't keep them from kicking out an illegal immigrant, or from leading the immigration policy of their choice."

In a follow up email, I later challenged Pernille on this, pointing out that Norway, Switzerland and Iceland all have to accept free movement in order to trade with the EU single market, and that they are also subject to the ECHR. This places them under the same restrictions and limitations in regards to deporting criminal immigrants, if doing so is a violation of their human rights.

As of going to print, we did not receive a reply. At any rate, Vermund believes Denmark's days as an EU member are numbered.

"Britain has voted to leave the



Pernille Vermund

Age 40 – Born December 3, 1975 in Copenhagen.

Educated architect and owner of Vermund+Gere architecture studio.

Represented the Conservative People's Party in Helsingør City Council between 2009 and 2011.

She ran in the 2015 general election for the Conservative People's Party, but failed to win a seat.

Established Nye Borgerlige in October 2015 together with Peter Seier Christensen – brother to Saxo bank founder Lars Seier Christensen.

EU as the first country, I expect that a number of other member states will follow their lead. I'm pretty sure that we are heading towards something new and better in the future".

Should Vermund achieve her aim then Denmark will need to completely change how it operates internationally.

"I want Denmark to cooperate as much as possible internationally, as long as it's in our interest to do so," she says, adding that a politician's primary responsibility is to defend Danish interests, freedoms and security.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Vermund is keen to stress that Nye Borgerlige isn't opposed to immigrants moving to Denmark as long as they can support themselves. If it were up to Nye Borgerlige, only Danes would be entitled to receive Danish welfare, and Denmark would be closed to refugees and asylum seekers.

"Denmark attracts the wrong immigrants due to our existing immigration policy and tax level," she says, arguing that reform is key to attract the 'right' immigrants.

"In Switzerland they make it clear that all immigrants must be able to provide for themselves as well as abide by national law. This means that immigrants going to Switzerland are aware that you cannot move there and live off

Experience has showed us that second and third generation immigrants, from especially the Middle East and North Africa, has lead to increased crime and low levels of self-support.

benefits, but you have to contribute to society in order to succeed. And we can learn from that."

ASSIMILATION IS KEY

Vermund is keen to talk up the benefits of immigration for the economy, and while she says she is not concerned by multiculturalism, she believes immigrants need to assimilate if they are to remain in the country.

"As long as immigrants behave, abide by national law and are able to provide for themselves, then I don't care what they look like or who they believe in. What's important to me is that we preserve Danish society and its values," she says.

"But of course, there are limits to how many we can offer citizenship, as there are limits to whom we will allow into our country. Experience has showed us that second and third generation immigrants, from especially the Middle East and North Africa, has led to increased crime and low levels of self-support."

Nye Borgerlige wants to set an upper limit on the number of foreigners who can be granted Danish citizenship every year, and applicants would be judged according to their ability to assimilate into the Danish society. Looking to Switzerland once again, the power for conferring citizenship should be handed from parliament to the local municipalities.

"This means that you have to be a good and active citizen in your municipality in order to get citizenship. I think that's great, that you take it down to a level where each individual applicant is evaluated in the society where they live and work, because it is very difficult for a politician in parliament, to make such judgments."

DECENTRALISATION OF STATE TASKS

Citizenship is just one area of power that Nye Borgerlige would like to decentralise from parliament in order to achieve their vision of a smaller state with more freedom for individual citizens.

"Sometimes Christiansborg is just extremely far away," she says, presenting the case for a federal Denmark where municipalities have more choice over how to create services and support residents.

"Those who want higher taxes and more public funded welfare can settle in the municipalities that offer just that. Conversely, those who want more freedom and who want to handle more things themselves should settle in a municipality that permits them to do so. Thereby letting voters vote with their feet, so to speak."

Pernille adds that she's pretty confident that, in time, people living in the high welfare-municipalities will realise that it's unsustainable.

Decentralising state tasks and giving more freedom to each municipality would mean a radical departure from Danish society as we know it. Vermund, nonetheless, sees it as a way of building bridges between our differences, rather than pushing people of differentiating views further apart.

"Decentralisation will in fact counter societal divisions, by acknowledging our differences and making room for them, because we are different. And as long as we don't recognise our differences, this societal division will exist."

THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER?

To appear on an election ballot, new parties need to secure 1/175 of the votes cast at the last election. Therefore, Nye Borgerlige needs 20,109 verified signatures, which they say they are well on their way to securing.

Vermund has previously stated that she would not support any candidate for prime minister who doesn't guarantee a complete stop on granting asylum in Denmark, forced deportations of criminal immigrants and asylum seekers with temporary residence permits, as well as limiting welfare services to Danish citizens – all policies that violate Denmark's obligations under international treaties.

"If no other candidate will adopt these three requirements, then I will throw my hat in the ring." **M**



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CAPTURED

Aleksander Klug

DISPATCH FROM DANSKERNES PARTI'S PRESS CONFERENCE

Outside the Royal Library, small groups of protesters, all dressed in black and sporting bandanas and masks, zigzag in-between armed police officers and bewildered Asian tourists hunting for Pokémon at the popular tourist attraction.

Inside the library building, Arne, a 59-year-old shop owner looks on in dismay. "These people don't love Denmark" he says, "they just love the freebies that come with it."

The protestors are for the press conference organised by Danskernes Parti (Party for the Danes) who are, according to a post on their Facebook page, about to "change the future of Denmark".

Following a summer that has seen a number of terror-

ist attacks across Europe, the party has slowly been gaining momentum. Founded in 2011 by Daniel Carlsen alongside veteran activists from the National Socialist Movement of Denmark, Morten Schjetne and Kenneth Hellesøe, the party has so far managed to secure 10,306 of the 20,109 signatures needed to get on the ballot in the next parliamentary election. Something that doesn't surprise the party leader.

Euroscepticism has been on the rise in recent years and Carlsen believes the reason can be found in what he calls the incompatibility of different cultures. "We've seen a radical change in Denmark in recent years. We have ghettos with almost no ethnic Europeans in every major cities in Denmark.



In all of the major ghettos there is some form of sharia law. We have a lot of symbolic immigration policies in Denmark but it is all a farce," he recently said in an interview with Red Ice Radio, a nationalist radio broadcaster based in Sweden.

Back in the library, Martin and a small number of journalists and photographers have huddled up in a small conference room on the first floor. As Carlsen prepares to make an announcement, protesters outside the building can be heard chanting "say it loud, say it clear - refugees are welcome here."

Nine minutes later the press conference is over and the media is escorted out of the conference room. Carlsen's talk

was a far cry from the momentous revelation he had advertised it as. Instead, he referenced a survey of 1,051 voters conducted by TNS Gallup. According to the survey, 3.4 percent were likely to vote for a party with such core Danskernes Parti's core issues - Islam, the EU and family values - while 12.6 percent had said maybe.

Outside the building, the activists had moved away from the main entrance to an emergency exit below the overpass that connects the Royal Library with the Jewish Museum. When Carlsen and his fellow party members finally leave the building the scene quickly changes and skirmishes between protesters and baton-wielding police officers breaks out. A

small group of activists break off from the main group and attempt to block the road, but they are quickly dispersed by police officers. As Carlsen drives off in a taxi escorted by police vans, the protesters slowly begin to disperse in different directions.

Below the overpass, Martin has been following the action closely. He had travelled all the way from Aarhus for the press conference. "This is what you get for standing up for freedom and liberty, and for being able to live in a country run by its own people and not by foreigners," he says as the last groups of protesters disappear in the distance. **M**



A most modern ambassador prepares his goodbyes

Rufus Gifford has redefined the role of an ambassador by opening up his life to the Danish public through his reality TV show. Now in his last year, Gifford reflects on his time in Denmark, the rise of European and American populism, and the need for the establishment to find new ways to forge trust with the public

Machine gun wielding police officers watch over a queue that slowly snakes its way towards the US ambassador's residence in the affluent Ørdrup suburb north of Copenhagen. We show our invitations to the Fourth of July celebration and hurry through to the garden.

While we gorge on food and spot celebrities, a long line of people wait patiently to greet the US Ambassador, Rufus Gifford. An hour later, people are still queuing and Gifford is still shaking hands, still smiling, still in character.

There is a reason why so many people want to meet Gifford – he's a celebrity. The star of a reality TV show on state broadcaster DR – *I am the Ambassador from America* – the Danish public watched as Gifford wed his partner Stephen DeVincent, learn Danish, play wheelchair basketball with amputees, and drive across the city during last year's election night to meet with political parties.

With his diplomatic work shielded from public view, Gifford comes across more as a cultural ambassador for America than the United States' most senior diplomatic envoy in Denmark. His rise to celebrity is a brilliant execution of soft power and public diplomacy, though it's raised questions about the role of a modern diplomat. Does his public persona distract from his role as the representative of a country facing criticism for its surveillance programmes, extraordinary renditions, and use of torture?

While Gifford largely steers clear of tricky diplomatic questions on his TV show, he is

I love that Denmark's a country that's self aware and understands the challenges it's faced with, and is still trying to be great and do the right thing in the world.

Words:
Peter Stanners

Photos:
Rasmus Degnbol

still an opinionated political animal. On the programme he referred to Europe's far-right as having "politics that I disagree with at the pit of my soul".

Following a career as a producer in Hollywood, he worked as a fundraiser for the Democratic Party and as Finance Director raised more than a billion dollars for Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign – a feat that earned him the Ambassadorship to Denmark.

It is clear that Gifford is politically driven. But that's not what he's known for in Denmark. At his Senate confirmation hearing in 2013, Senator Tim Kaine – now Hillary Clinton's running mate – heaped praise on Gifford for his social skills and ability to leverage relationships to achieve his goals.

"Rufus has been a great problem solver and deals with folks whether they feel happy or unhappy and makes them feel listened to and makes them feel included," Kaine said. "Rufus is a master of hospitality."

THE CHALLENGES TO MULTICULTURALISM

Just over three years after his appointment, he greets me with a warm smile and a firm handshake in his small office in the US Embassy in Østerbro – an iconic eyesore of misguided modern architecture. He launches himself at the questions, speaking rapidly and at length.

I bring up Donald Trump, who had the night before suggested that gun rights activists "do something" about Hillary Clinton. He puffs his cheeks and rolls his eyes, then apologises and says he can't comment directly on the US election.

"What I can say is that what's happening in the US is exactly what's happening

around Europe. Our candidates are just a lot more flamboyant. If you look at what Trump said on the Muslim ban, Espersen (MP for the Danish People's Party) proposed roughly the same thing. There's lots of talk about eliminating Schengen within the Danish political debate. Brexit was largely fuelled by immigration. So if you look at the political narratives that are operating in Europe, it's roughly the exact same thing Trump is getting attention for – Muslims, the wall, more isolationism, anti trade. European politicians are saying the same thing and every single one of them is growing in influence in their home country."

Trump is then, simply, the American manifestation of a xenophobic movement coupled with an anti-Establishment fervour that is rising across the West.

"You can see it in his slogan 'Make America Great', but the most important word is 'Again'. Because it's this idea we used to be great, but are no longer. What does that mean? Does that inherently mean, when things were simpler, when things weren't so complicated? When was that? What kind of images does that conjure up in your head?" he asks rhetorically.

"I think all those political movements are fuelled by this – that a multicultural global society is challenged, and progressive values have challenged our democratic norms. We struggle with that and that's, in my mind, what's fueling Trump. He's running against a candidate that is the definition of 'establishment'. Hillary Clinton and her husband have been running for office for 40 years. As the President says, she's probably the most qualified person to run ►



Rufus Gifford sits with his phone at a quiet spot next to the stage while hosting the yearly Investors Ball, an event with over 100 danish businesses and startups, which is hosted at his residence at Rydhave north of Copenhagen.

for president, or at least one of them, but that's not what people are electing right now."

A BETTER CASE FOR COOPERATION

The electoral success of the Danish People's Party last year demonstrated that the Danish electorate is increasingly attracted to populist themes and messages. A number of new right wing parties have since launched, sensing a growing appetite for anti-immigration and anti-internationalist policies.

The Liberal Party (Venstre) government has also started to flirt with the emerging populism. They supported former UK PM David Cameron's renegotiation with the EU, and share his government's frustration with the European Convention on Human Rights, which places limitations on the deporting of foreign criminals.

While Gifford won't comment directly on the government's position, that the convention needs reforming, he argues that international conventions and alliances – from climate agreements to NATO – need to be empowered, not discouraged.

"We have to explain to people more effectively why these institutions are effective and why they have been so important for the peace and security and harmony of the world over the decades. I will be the first to say that I think we've done a terrible job of that. We need to explain to people – be they pig farmers in Jutland or mechanics in Ohio – why globalisation is a good thing, because they don't get that right now. And we've done a terrible job at that. I do think it's fuelling a more isolationist narrative but ultimately we need to fight the basic political trends that are driving countries to be more isolationist. Who does that benefit geopolitically? I would argue there is nothing more that Vladimir Putin wants than a splintered West."

BECOMING AN AMBASSADOR

In the time between his selection and arriving as ambassador, Gifford says he read extensively about diplomacy and spoke to three former ambassadors to Denmark. But while the US State Department provided him with a broad mandate – promoting American interests and consolidating the relationship with Denmark – he was given no clear method for achieving his goals.

"My obsession was taking something that is really good and to make it better. How do you take an old friendship and make sure you're not taking it for granted? How do you actually make the relationship richer and take it to the next level? When I arrived here this was the mission I wanted to focus on."

So Gifford spent as much time travelling the country to listen and talk to Danes. And it quickly became apparent that most people had little idea about what ambassadors did with their time.

"People were curious, but what they thought we did was just wildly inaccurate. There was this concept that we played golf during the day and went to cocktail parties at night, and in the middle of the day I would come to work at this iconic hideous building and do nefarious things."

He found that while the American brand was good, there was still a level of widespread mistrust amongst Danes about the intentions of the US government.

"Danes would ask 'are you tapping my phone lines? Are you advocating for massive multinational corporations? What are you doing that's good? What is your purpose here? Are you advocating for trade deals that are going to steal jobs from Danes?' But instead of answering those questions in a bureaucratic way, my obsession was to answer them in a human way," Gifford says.

"We used to have a real trust between the countries, and we still do to certain extent, we just haven't focussed on it as much. Going back to the Second World War, the relationship between Danes and Americans has been really, really rich, so that's what I really wanted to focus on with the general population. I wanted to engage with issues that are debated in every single classroom, in every single boardroom in Denmark. I wanted to ask how do you insert yourself into that conversation, how do

you present a more nuanced definition of the United States? How do you have a more honest conversation with these people? Not necessarily to get them to agree, that would be great, but it's more about respect, about understanding."

He says he's discussed everything from gun violence and gay rights, to Snowden and climate change. And while the debates are often level-headed, there have been some memorable confrontations.

"I will never forget this moment when I was answering questions at a gymnasium in Herning and the first question I was asked, in front of a thousand people, was 'how does it feel to be an ambassador from a country that tortures its prisoners?' I realised right then that we needed to be doing this more, sitting in these rooms answering questions. Because these are issues Danes are debating in their civics classes, they're hearing about it and reading about it. So for the American Embassy to ignore that narrative is terrible," Gifford says.

"I answered the question by saying I felt three ways. As a human being I'm disgusted, as an American embarrassed, but as an ambassador I'm actually proud. The truth is we have to live in a world where we acknowledge what we have done wrong, come clean on it and say this is what happened, we were not operating in a way that was consistent with our values, we are sorry, and we are not going to do it again. That was not what the State Department emailed us. But the point is that you have to have a heart when you're discussing some of these issues. I think you have to add an element of humanity into the work I do, which is inherently bureaucratic."

DENMARK IS NO MODEL

Gifford's job of humanising the US administration, and representing progressive and liberal values – leading the Pride march and marrying his same sex partner – is only part of his role. His experiences in Denmark are conveyed back to the US government, and provide insight into a social model that contrasts strongly with the US.

Interest in Denmark from liberal America has never been stronger, particularly due to the praises of Senator Bernie Sanders during his failed run to become the Democratic presidential nominee. Gifford, however, is far more measured in the ways that the US can learn from Denmark.

"Can you do, as Bernie Sanders eluded to, take a Danish system and plop it on top of the United States? Of course not. People ask me what the biggest difference between Denmark and the US is, and I answer that, politically speaking, the system here is based on the concept of trust in government, while our system in some ways is based on a distrust of government. Every Dane I've spoken to about Obamacare, regardless of whether they are left or right wing, do not understand why Americans are so upset about the idea of providing healthcare to people. But to understand Americans you have to understand that government solutions are usually the last thing a certain segment of the population wants. It should be privately earned, rather than to have the gov-



Rufus Gifford in his garden at Rydhave while hosting the Impact Investor Ball.

ernment force it on you. To understand the US you have to understand that the decentralised pioneer spirit of America is alive and kicking."

"Still, the health care reform shows that we are moving in a more social direction. Ever since our founding we have been moving in a more socialised direction, whereas Denmark is moving in a more privatised direction and what is that, is that progress on both sides? I would say yes. Democracies have to change and breathe and evolve."

A FRAUGHT PUBLIC EXISTENCE

Gifford's time in Denmark hasn't been without mishaps. In season two of the documentary show, he invited guests to his residence to watch the TV show *Homeland*. He and his staff secretly prepared for a helicopter to arrive just before the screening, but as it hovers over the garden, the powerful downdraft blows over the screen, injuring an audience member. A camera crew captured a clearly despondent Gifford, embarrassed that his surprise backfired.

Gifford also recalls the time he spoke out about the decision by Copenhagen Zoo to perform a live autopsy on its giraffe Marius, which had been put down. The killing provoked international outrage, though the zoo argued it was necessary as Marius risked inbreeding if kept alive, and that there were no zoos which would take him.

In a Facebook post, Gifford wrote that he found the situation "disturbing" and would

How do you actually make the relationship richer and take it to the next level? When I arrived here, this was the mission I wanted to focus on.

reach out to the zoo for answers. But the backlash was immediate, with more than a hundred comments, mostly from Danes, suggesting his position was both hypocritical and ill-informed.

"In some ways it was the most interesting moment of my ambassadorship, because it allowed me to understand Danish culture and where I fit in. I wrote a statement, which was the most innocuous thing, but I also realised later what my responsibility was, and that it wasn't appropriate to do what I did there, which was important for me to learn."

PERFECT IMPERFECTIONS

These hiccups aren't likely to overshadow his accomplishment as the most visible and well-liked US Ambassador in living memory, however. At a time when the US is coming to terms with the fallout of the Iraq War, its secret drone programme, and the Snowden revelations, Denmark remains a strong ally of the US, contributing personnel and fighter jets in the US-led missions in Libya and Syria. The country also provided assistance in the removal and destruction of Syrian and Libyan chemical weapons. Gifford was the face of the US that the Danish public and political establishment could sympathise with, making it easier for parliament to continue its close relationship with the beleaguered superpower.

Gifford's time in Denmark is now coming to an end and he insists he doesn't know what the future will bring.

"I'm trying to figure out what to do with the rest of my life. I had this conversation with (former Danish PM) Helle Thorning Schmidt, that there's no job listing in the world where they say they are looking for a former ambassador or prime minister. She said the same thing, that the work experience is amazing but it's sort of random as well, it doesn't lend itself to something specific."

Whoever follows Gifford is unlikely to garner the same public attention. But Gifford claims that if his predecessor is to forge a bond with the Danish people, there are two central concepts to keep in mind. First is the Law of Jante (Janteloven), which emphasises collective success over individual accomplishment, and 'hygge', which describes the sense of well-being and coziness that Danes strive to maintain.

"Unless you understand those two in particular, you don't understand Danish society, you don't understand how Danish people think and work, even businesses. Those two concepts make Denmark special and unique," he says, adding that while he loves Denmark, he doesn't like anything to be too perfect.

"I acknowledge that there's significant imperfection in Denmark and that's what I love about it. I love that it's a country that's self aware and understands the challenges it's faced with, and is still trying to be great and do the right thing in a globalised world. That's why I love it and love the people too." **M**



Marianne S. Ulriksen, a Dane, and her South African husband Derek Phillips, expect their family reunification application to be rejected as they do not meet the so-called attachment requirement.

Collateral damage of a flawed immigration system

A Danish woman and her South African husband are unlikely to be granted family reunification because she has spent too many years living abroad. Danish expat lobby group Danes Worldwide is worried that Denmark is set to force out its citizens unless it abandons hurtful immigration rules

WHEN MARIANNE S. ULRIKSEN moved to Tanzania 16 years ago, she didn't realise it was the start of a long adventure in Africa. She was in her 20s and had secured an internship with the Danish embassy as a part of her Master's Degree in Political Science at Aarhus University.

Then she met Derek Phillips. She and the South African native started dating and stayed together while Ulriksen returned to Denmark to complete coursework in

Peter Stanners

2001. In 2002 she returned to Africa and they married in 2005. Since then they have lived in five different African countries.

In January, Ulriksen moved back to Denmark to be close to her mother who suffers from multiple sclerosis, and whose condition has been worsening.

She secured work as a Postdoc at Aarhus University – where she completed a PhD in 2010 – and then filed a family reunification application for Phillips so he could join her

and start a new life in Denmark.

But this summer the family reunification rules changed and their future together in Denmark is now uncertain.

"Our life is out of our control. We are good at settling and adapting to new countries, but we can't adapt and plan because we are in a waiting position."

The problem stems from the years Ulriksen has lived outside of Denmark. In order to qualify for family reunification, a couple

has to have a combined attachment that is greater to Denmark than to any other country. While Phillips has spent around a year in Denmark during holidays, taken together, it is likely that the Immigration Service will rule that their attachment to Denmark is not strong enough.

"Obviously the attachment requirement is not a new rule and it's something we have discussed over time, but to be frank, I find it hard to believe this is what the

government wants to achieve," says Ulriksen.

"I cannot see why Danish citizens shouldn't be allowed to come back to their country just because they are married to a foreigner. So, no, I didn't see this happening."

DISCRIMINATION

Until this summer, couples could bypass the attachment requirement if either one was born and had lived in Denmark for at least 26 years. This rule was abandoned this summer, however, after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found that the rule discriminated on the basis of ethnicity, which is forbidden under article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

"[The 26-year rule] favours Danish nationals of Danish ethnic origin and places at a disadvantage [...] persons who acquired Danish nationality later in life and who were of ethnic origins other than Danish," the ECHR concluded in the case Biao v. Denmark.

It's no secret that the attachment rule was introduced in 2000 to make it more difficult for naturalised Danes to settle in Denmark with a non-Danish partner.

"There are Danish nationals who are not particularly well integrated in Danish society, and for this reason the integration of a spouse who has recently arrived in Denmark may entail major problems," the Supreme Court stated in 2010.

Soon after the attachment rule was introduced, it became apparent that Danish nationals who had settled abroad were also being affected. To remedy the situation, the government introduced the 28-year rule in 2003 to make it easier for Danes who were born in Denmark, or brought to Denmark at a young age, to settle in Denmark with a foreign partner. In 2012, it was changed to the 26-year rule.

ABOLISH THE ATTACHMENT RULE

After the ECHR's ruling in May, the immigration Service announced its new policy to disregard the 26-year-rule on June 28.

As a result, Danes now risk becoming collateral damage in an anti-immigration political campaign, argues Anne Marie Dalgaard, Secretary General of the Danish expat group Danes Worldwide.

"The attachment rule was introduced in part to prevent forced marriages, but it was easy to bypass the rule by resettling in Sweden," Dalgaard said, referring to Sweden's more lenient family reunification rules.

"At the end of the day, it was or-

I cannot see why Danish citizens shouldn't be allowed to come back to their country just because they are married to a foreigner.

MARIANNE S. ULRIKSEN

dinary Danish families who were hit by the attachment rule. This will happen again without the 26-year rule, which we think will affect 60,000 of our members. They contribute to Danish growth through their international experience and know-how. We really want these people back in Denmark."

Instead of introducing new regulations to give expat Danes a more easier access to family reunification than naturalised Danes, Dalgaard argues the attachment rule should be abandoned completely.

"Why should you have to have special attachment to your own country?" asks Dalgaard, adding that the Immigration Service can already reject family reunification if there is reason to believe it would result in a burden on the welfare state.

She is also opposed to introducing new regulations, such as a special points system, to preferentially select Danes with particular educational backgrounds or labour market experience.

"We are reluctant to support a point system. Denmark needs labour, so why only go after people with PhDs? In many cultures it's also normal for the wife in a marriage not to work and to take care of children. It's not the government's role to judge as long as the family is not a burden on society," she said.

"If you're a Dane, you should be able to come back to Denmark and live with your family. Politicians are so concerned with keeping out certain types of foreigners that they are prepared to treat their own citizens as collateral damage. These are resourceful people and we need to do whatever we can to attract them back, rather than punish them and introduce obstacles."

FINDING A WAY IN

Ulriksen and Phillips have spent around 10,000 kroner on their family reunification application, and plan on appealing if it is turned down. But given her husband's line of work, there are alternative ways to get him into the country. Phillips works in the energy industry and worked 23 years for Siemens, which is a big employer in the region near Aarhus.

While they are confident he should be able to secure a work visa, Ulriksen also says it is a matter of principle.

"It shouldn't be the route we have to take, it seems crazy that this would be the way we stay together. He is lucky to work in the electrical power and energy field, where the Danish labour market needs people. We are lucky for being resourceful and have the means to live in two different households at the moment. But it's an issue of principle, that we should be allowed to settle in Denmark through family reunification." **M**

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PEOPLE FORGET THAT **PRIDE** IS ACTUALLY A DEMONSTRATION

Last month, Copenhagen's 20th annual Pride Parade put the city's LGBTQI community in the spotlight. But while there is plenty to celebrate, Niels Holm – manager of the popular gay nightspot Jailhouse CPH – fears that the community has become complacent in their fight for LGBTQI rights

Jailhouse CPH is nestled below street level on a picturesque street in the Copenhagen city centre. Prison bars are fitted to the window and inside

it's dimly lit, but the popular LGBTQI spot is far from gloomy. The interior feels fun and cosy, and decorated with flowers, handcuffs and a rainbow flag. In the evenings, it buzzes with energy.

Manager Niels Holm explains that two brothers, "one gay, one straight," opened the bar and restaurant 14 years ago, and later sold it to their mother, a retired psychiatrist looking for diversion.

"Jailhouse has a lot of significance for the gay community," says Holm, who leans across the bar while wearing the bartender's uniform – a police outfit.

"With the décor, there is an element of fetishism. But mostly, it's just a place where people go to have their daily drink and their daily gossip."

STILL A WAY TO GO

Holm is a known personality in the gay community – "Everybody

knows me, I'm like a Z-list celebrity," he jokes – and has worked at Jailhouse since moving from Aalborg to start a Master's degree four years ago.

At Copenhagen Pride – which celebrated its 20th annual Pride Parade last month – Holm rode on Jailhouse's float under the tagline "love is not a crime". It sported a banner that listed every country where homosexuality is still criminalised.

This is hardly the case in Denmark, which has historically led the way for increased LGBTQI rights. Denmark was the first country in the world to recognise same-sex unions, and the first in Europe to allow individuals to legally change their gender without a medical intervention. The first successful gender reassignment surgery also took place in Denmark.

But Holm is worried that the gay community, and the broader Danish population, have become complacent about LGBTQI rights both at home and around the world. There is still plenty of latent discrimination that needs to be addressed in Denmark, he argues.

"What I can't fathom is how, whenever pride rolls around, you get people complaining about why there isn't also a straight Pride Parade," says Holm. "You have every day of the year – we only have one."

The more I get to know the gay community, the more I realise that everyone seems too content with the status quo – and it's heartbreaking.

Words:
Lena Rutkowski

Photos:
Rasmus Degnbol

As a gay man, Holm says that there are still ways in which the current system doesn't leave him feeling like an equal to his fellow heterosexual Danes. He points out that he's not allowed to donate blood, even though he does not have any sexually transmitted diseases. He argues that this stems from an implicit assumption that the blood of gay men is "dirty".

"A lot of mainstream Denmark is not aware of the rights that the gay, or broader LGBTQI, community don't have. Not necessarily from a legal perspective, but through general discrimination or stereotypes in our society."

NOT JUST GLITTER AND DANCING

That doesn't stop them from participating in the Pride Parade, however, which drew almost 200,000 people this year. But Holm is cynical about its burgeoning numbers.

"Gays are very fashionable right now, so Pride attracts major sponsors like 7/11. We're like the new black," says Holm, pointing out that ten years ago the event was chiefly sponsored by the actual community, mostly the gay bars.

"Now, we have big travel agencies sponsoring it. Meanwhile, all the political parties want to have a float and say 'it's okay to be gay'. But they don't really preach it. You'll later see them on TV, some

of them saying horrible things, not realising that young people are listening and feeling bad about themselves."

He worries that people – both gay and straight – get so caught up in the glamour of the celebration that they forget about the fight for broader LGBTQI freedoms, especially beyond Denmark.

"It's all about glitter and dancing. And of course, it should be a party. But I don't see a lot of the participants actually owning up to what they are celebrating," he says.

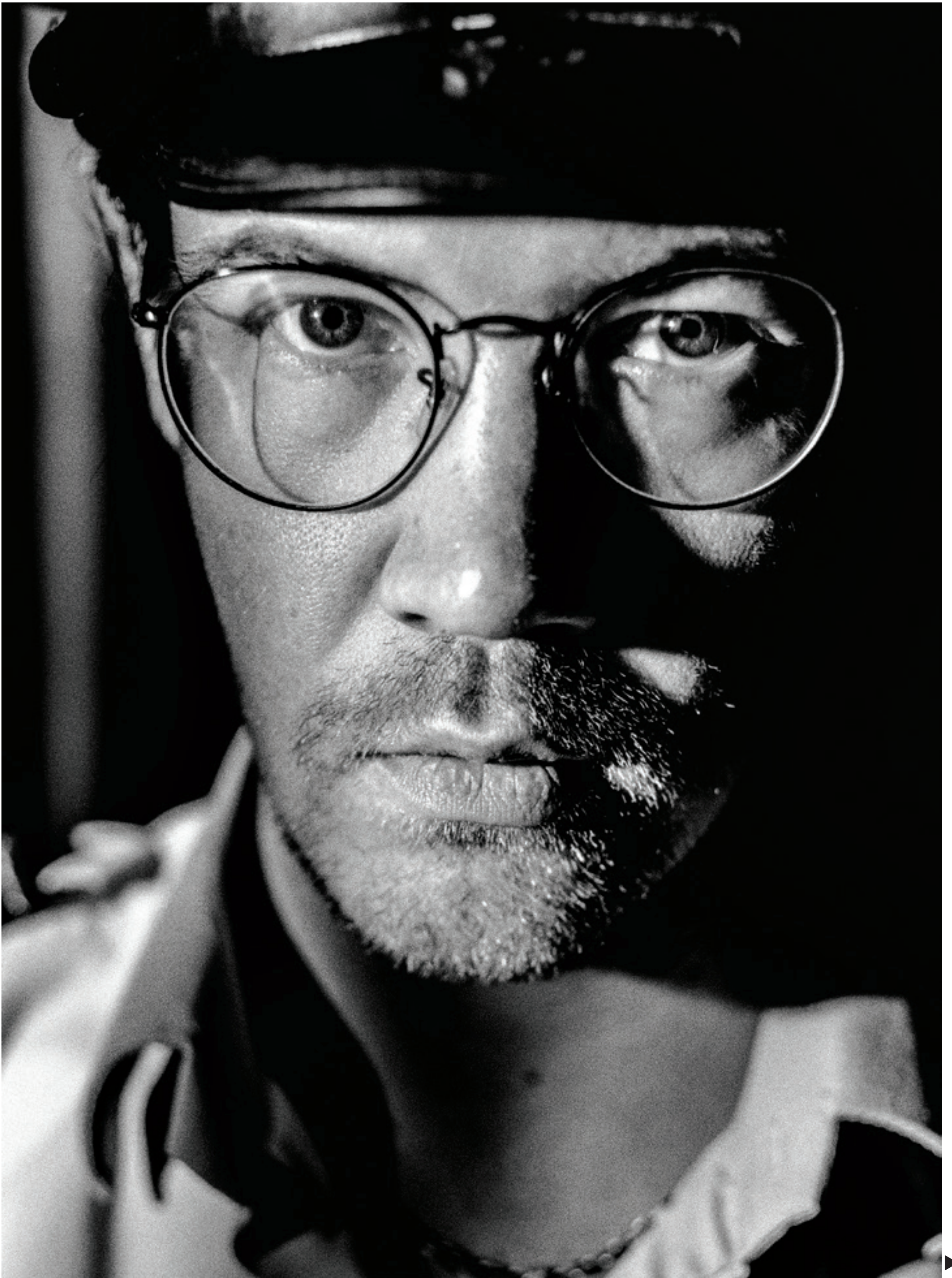
"You don't have to be an activist every single day, but it feels as if people forget that pride is actually a demonstration."

MISSING SOLIDARITY

LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex) refers to a broad group of sexualities and gender identities that have traditionally been considered non-normative. Each face their own particular struggles and challenges.

While Holm feels that the gay community is visible in the media, he worries that the representation of LGBTQI people is limited to either "fashionable" gay men, or gay people who carry the hallmarks of cisnormative, heterosexual people.

"We do see gay journalists, actors and singers, but they're very 'normal'. To be accepted, they ei-





ther have to act very mainstream, or be a camp character. Meanwhile, a young man can find it hard to walk down the street in a dress. People have difficulty dressing in genders other than the ones society labels them as."

Holm also criticises Denmark's reluctance to embrace gender-neutral language.

"Why can't we use the term 'chairperson' instead of 'chairwoman' and 'chairman'. What is it to you? It is so important to acknowledge that gender is a much more complex and fluid thing than our binary categories," he says, adding that it's especially problematic that this type of conservatism is also present within the gay community.

"It's ridiculous that we have been fighting to get out of boxes and now we are putting each other back in them."

TOO CONTENT

Earlier this year, Amnesty International launched a campaign, in collaboration with the trans community, to address rights violations faced by trans people with-

A lot of the people I meet at this bar and other bars don't take the trans fight seriously.

in the national health system. Yet Holm is worried that the fight for trans rights hasn't been taken up by the gay community. He wants to see more solidarity, given that gay Danes understand what it is like to be discriminated against as a result of binary assumptions about gender and sexuality.

"A lot of the people I meet at this bar and other bars don't take the trans fight seriously. It should be a community here, they should take it up," says Holm.

"I wasn't part of a gay community until I moved here, but today I am a big part of it and I know a lot of people within it. And the more I get to know them, the more I realise that everyone seems too content with the status quo – and it's heartbreaking."

We're interrupted by Holm's co-worker, asking for advice about where to place a flower arrangement, and the tone shifts from grave, to light-hearted banter. Holm glances around at the windows lined with metal bars and throws me a smile.

"It's a gay bar. Even though it's a prison, we still have fun." **M**

LIFTING THE BAN ON GAY BLOOD

If you are a man and have ever had sex with another man, you may not ever give blood.

Previous attempts to lift the law have failed but now, thanks to the initiative of the Social Liberal Party (Radikale), it may just be overturned.

"With the screening methods we currently have, there is no professional argument for this type of discrimination," Radikale leader Morten Østergaard told TV2 News.

According to Information newspaper, new screening procedures were introduced in 2007 after two individuals contracted HIV from blood transfusions. As a result, it's almost impossible for HIV infected blood to end up in the blood bank.

"We can see the time has come. Other countries have already gone in this direction. Denmark has a proud tradition of breaking down taboos in this area, and this should be the next step," Østergaard added. According to the infectious diseases

agency, SSI, men who have sex with men are 50 times more likely to carry HIV than men who only have sex with women. In 2013, the equality board, Ligebehandlingsnævnet, ruled that preventing gay men from giving blood was not discriminatory.

Speaking to Ritzau, a spokesperson for the Danish Patient Safety Authority said they were not in favour of changing the rules, giving the higher risks posed by gay men. Denmark also has enough blood to meet current demands.

Clinical professor Jens Lundgren, from the University of Copenhagen, disagrees. "There is no reason to exclude a portion of society," he told Ritzau.

Most EU countries still prevent men who have sex with men from giving blood. Sweden and the UK, however, have made it possible under certain conditions.

With a majority supporting the Radikale's proposal, Denmark might just be next.

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Hana Hasanbegović

The academic sausage factory grinding out dull students

Professor Rane Willerslev thinks the educational system needs to find a way to reward creativity and risk-taking. The alternative is a generation of students who know how to get good grades, but not much else

STUDENTS AREN'T ENCOURAGED

to be creative because of a grading system that lacks nuance and rewards them for playing it safe.

It's a concern that politicians, experts and business professionals have all expressed in the last few months, including Professor Rane Willerslev of the Department of Anthropology in Aarhus.

"We have become so focused on solving tasks correctly that correctness itself becomes the main focal point," says Willerslev, blaming the increased influence of the civil service over the development of the educational system.

Hana
Hasanbegović

"We've created this square society that is ideal for accountants – and not many others," he says, adding that teachers and professors, who are the actual professionals in the field, have become alienated from the educational system as a result of initiatives such as the Study Progress Reform.

"To me, the most daunting thing is the fact that taxpayers' money goes to developing these bureaucratic reforms instead of being invested in the teachers and the people who are actually in touch with reality in the educational institutions."

The Study Progress Reform was introduced in 2013 to shorten the time it takes students to complete higher education. The goal was to reduce the average time to complete of a five-year education by 4.3 months by reducing the length of time that a student can claim SU – the Danish Students' Grants and Loans Scheme.

But instead of speeding up studies, Willerslev argues, the reform eliminated many aspects of the educational system that help to develop interesting, enlightened individuals.

"That wanderlust, which a lot of

young people have after finishing high school – those journeys that they embark on to foreign cultures – are no longer possible, because now they have to hurry up and start studying again."

ADMINISTRATIVE LOGIC

The Ministry of Education and its economists have a hard time recognising value in anything that lies outside of a traditional education, in Willerslev's opinion, which results in a very uniform student body.

In a recent TV debate with MP Jakob Engell-Schmidt, higher edu-

cation spokesperson for the Liberal Party (Venstre), Willerslev argued that innovative and risk-taking entrepreneurs, which the government claims are the future of Danish economy, are in danger of drowning in the system.

"Administrative logic has taken over – and the worst thing someone working in administration can do is make a mistake."

Concerns that too many students are achieving the top grade, 12, has led a number of opposition parties – including the Socialist People's Party (SF), the Alternative (Alternativet), the Social Liberal Party (Radikale) and the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) – to call for new methods of assessing students. This vision is shared by the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), a lobbying group.

"If students gets a 12 for a mediocre performance, then the incentive to make an effort disappears and we are left with weak candidates," wrote DI's Assistant Director, Charlotte Rønhof, in a comment to Information earlier this year.

Willerslev agrees, arguing that assessing students primarily on their correctness means that they end up choosing conformity over creativity.

"The students become lazy, and the result is one indistinguishable sausage factory – the same flavour of student gets produced."

NO SPACE FOR FAILURE

With students focused on meeting formal requirements rather than experimenting and learning through trial-and-error, there is little room for innovation or failure at university. In Willerslev's opinion, this is not only a failed pedagogical approach, but a deeply flawed worldview.

"Some of the most interesting people have failed over and over again in life – even successful business people. We need to live in a society where failing is acceptable."

Central to his critique of the assessment system is the 7-point scale (ranging from -3 for an F, to 12 for an

That wanderlust, which a lot of young people have after finishing high school – those journeys that they embark on to foreign cultures – are no longer possible, because now they have to hurry up and start studying again.

A) that replaced the 13-point scale in 2014. While the 7-point scale was introduced to enable an easier conversion from Danish grades to international ones, it lacked the nuance of its predecessor – the top grade, 13, was given only in exceptional circumstances.

The current top mark, 12, is becoming increasingly common, and in the academic year ending in 2015, as many as one in seven students got a 12 on one of their final exams, according to a recent survey.

These figures are of concern to the Danish Evaluations Institute (EVA), an independent state institution that explores and develops the quality of schools and educational programs.

"My assessment is that we are witnessing a creeping inflation of grades," EVA's Head of Division, Jakob Rathlev, told Berlingske in March. "This could cause problems later on, because suddenly everyone will be getting a 12, and there will be no differentiation of the very best students."

The answer is not necessarily to return to the old 13-point scale, says Willerslev. The issue is the emphasis on graded assessments in determining student achievement. This suggests that the answer could lie in the English system, where there is a larger emphasis on written statements and letters of recommendation from professors.

"I've studied in England, and there I learned that statements were much more valuable than here in Denmark. I don't believe in prizes or accolades, which some politicians have suggested – but I do think that we need to put more effort into recommendations."

When asked how he goes about rewarding creativity in his own teaching, Willerslev explains that it is a matter of allowing the unpredictable to happen, and making the idiosyncratic acceptable.

"There isn't really a system for ensuring a creative environment, but it is important to acknowledge that mistakes are part of the learning process – they're what education is all about." **M**

THE MURMUR WANTS YOU!

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We are looking for an aspiring journalist with a passion for reporting and feature writing, to join us for a six-month internship starting in October 2016. You need to be curious, self-motivated, and willing to learn. Most importantly, you must be interested in seeking out the human angle behind the headlines. We would prefer a student intern who can organise their hours around their studies, but we will consider all applications.

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Over the past two years The Murmur has worked with dozens of writers, photographers, editors and columnists. We love collaborations and fresh points of view, no matter how obscure or niche. Even if you just have a seed of an idea, you are welcome to pitch it to us.

Payment for all roles is negotiated, and depends on the candidate's qualifications and level of experience. If you are interested, please get in touch by emailing our Editor-in-Chief Peter Stanners – **PETER@MURMUR.DK**

The Arctic Ocean's top predator is a geriatric shark

Greenland sharks can live at least 272 years, according to a groundbreaking new study from the University of Copenhagen, which has shed light on the ancient apex predators that lurk beneath the Arctic ice

THEY HAVE BEEN HUNTED for hundreds of years for their meat and oil, but to this day, precious little is known about the Greenland shark. A member of the family of 'sleep-er sharks', it grows up to seven metres long and moves at a crawl through the frigid Arctic Ocean, where it is most prevalent.

The shark's slow pace doesn't keep it warm. Instead, its meat and skin contain a chemical anti-freeze, TMAO. In cultures that eat the Greenland shark, such as Iceland, the meat is prepared over many months to remove this toxic chemical. Even then, though it

Jon Stubbe Wissing

is considered a delicacy, the meat is still widely considered to taste disgusting.

Little light reaches the sea floor, where it normally hunts for carrion, so it doesn't mind that its eyes are often infected with a parasite that renders it blind. Instead, it uses its other senses to find dead animals that have sunk to the sea floor, or to ambush sleeping seals.

Their age has been shrouded in mystery. Fifty years ago, Danish fishery biologist Paul Marinus Hansen found that they grow no more than one centimetre per

year, and put their maximum age at around 200 years.

But they can get older – much older – than that. In fact, according to a new study from the University of Copenhagen, we now know for certain that Greenland sharks are the longest-lived vertebrates currently alive.

We can thank the shark's useless eyes for helping researchers from the University of Copenhagen's Department of Biology to put a more accurate figure on the shark's age. According to the Royal Society of Chemistry, scientists normally determine the age of an-

imals by counting growth rings in calcified tissues that form on various anatomical structures, including scales and bones. This is not possible in Greenland sharks, however, as they have no calcified tissue.

PhD student Julius Nielsen, however, found that the sharks' eyes contain tissue that does not change from the moment the shark is born. That means that the eye tissue can be measured for its levels of a heavy form of carbon known as carbon-14. The less it has, the older the shark is.

According to his results, which



Julius Nielsen



Julius Nielsen

Greenland shark fishing from Sanna close to Upernavik 2014.



Henrik Schumann

Two Greenland shark entangled in the longline. Amasalik 2012.



Julius Nielsen

Greenland shark in the MR-scanner at Department of Forensic Medicine, Rigshospitalet, Denmark.

were published in the journal *Science*, Nielsen found that after testing 28 different Greenland sharks, their maximum life span was at least 272 years. But since the measurement has a margin of error of about 120 years, the sharks might live to be over 400 years of age.

This means that there are sharks alive today that roamed the oceans when Danish-Norwegian explorer Otto Fabricius first set out to make detailed observations of Arctic animal life in Greenland in the mid-18th century.

"Greenland sharks are among

the largest carnivorous sharks on the planet, and their role as an apex predator in the Arctic ecosystem is totally overlooked," Nielsen said.

"Thousands of them accidentally end up as by-catch across the North Atlantic, and I hope that our studies help to bring a greater focus on the Greenland shark in the future."

The study also found that the sharks first reach sexual maturity at around age 150, meaning that they are vulnerable to overfishing. While project leader Professor John Fleng Steffensen wouldn't speculate on the precise size of the

current population, he speculates that it must be healthy.

"The Royal Greenland trade in shark oil gives an indication of the amount of sharks that used to be caught and sold. There used to be a significant trade. Logs show that the number of barrels of shark-oil traded annually from 1890 until World War II is equivalent to about 30,000 sharks per year".

In 1963, the trade in shark oil ceased in Copenhagen, and there is currently almost no market for it.

"That's a piece of good news for the Greenland shark," Steffensen said. **M**

The study was a collaboration with Aarhus University, which carried out the carbon-14 analyses, and with biologists at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources. The PhD project will last three years and will examine other aspects of the Greenland shark's biology, using specimens that were collected primarily through by-catch during the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources' annual fish survey, as well as from UiT Norway's Arctic University, DTU Aqua and University of Copenhagen research vessels. The *Science* article was written together with researchers from the National Aquarium Denmark, Oxford University, Indiana University South Bend, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

COLUMN

To beat the new right wing, we must talk up immigration

If Danskernes Parti and Nye Borgerlige get into parliament, 40 years of progress could be reversed as a new anti-refugee and immigration arms race begins

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to misunderstand the priorities of far-right political party Danskernes Parti (Party of the Danes). Led by Daniel Carlsen, a former member of the Neo-Nazi Danish National Socialist Movement (DNSB), the party is driven by an all-consuming fear of immigrants, foreigners and refugees.

Their anti-immigration policies include a wish to deport all 'non-westerners' and people who have 'non-western' ancestry, leaving the European Union and having a foreign policy mantra that reads "Every country for its own people". The party wants to ignore international human rights and refugee conventions and stated (referring to the Danish citizenship test) that no "African who has learnt the answers to 40 questions" could ever become Danish.

While Danskernes Parti's presence in the Danish parliament is a scary enough prospect in itself, there is no way the party will be able to change much on their own.

But they aren't the only far-right party trying to get on the next ballot. The Nye Borgerlige stand a good chance at running in the next election with a hardcore anti-immigration, anti-EU and anti-welfare agenda.

With the possible introduction of two such aggressive political parties, the fight for voters on the right wing could become a brutal, chaotic and hateful race to the bottom.

Over the past two decades the Danish People's Party (DF) has steadily increased their power and influence through their hostile anti-immigration rhetoric. Their strategy has been to swap government support for anti-immigration policies. Despite being a pro-welfare party they have repeatedly voted for cuts to social services in order to serve their primary interest – keeping out immigrants.

Their success in last year's elec-

Boredom is driving us towards proto-fascists like Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen.

Joshua Hollingdale



Danskernes Parti leader Daniel Carlsen (middle). His vision for Denmark is far from a utopia.

tion, where they won 21 percent of the vote, came amidst the largest refugee crises in recent European history – a crisis that has undoubtedly had a palpable and possibly long-term influence on Danish foreign policy.

Their success demonstrates a continued appetite among the Danish public for anti-immigration policies. But DF might now be too mainstream. Their inability to push through some of their most sought after policies, such as permanent border controls, has encouraged parties such as Nye Borgerlige and Danskernes Parti to seek influence in parliament.

Both parties will need 20,109 signatures to qualify for the next ballot, which is almost certain for Nye Borgelige, and a distinct possibility for Danskernes Parti. Should they run, the rhetoric on refugees, immigrants and foreigners will undoubtedly become increasingly aggressive and hateful as the competition for right-wing voters heats up.

Even if the absolute num-

ber of right-wing voters remains the same, the increasingly hateful rhetoric could seep into the remaining parties. We have already seen how the Social Democrats (Social Demokraterne) have moved to the right, and voted in favour of restrictions of refugee rights, in order to stop losing voters to DF. The introduction of a party as hateful as Danskernes Parti, and as cynical as Nye Borgerlige, could prompt a political trend that would scupper 40 years of progressive development that has seen Denmark move towards a modern and multicultural society.

For the sake of all of the immigrants who contribute to Danish society and help work towards making Denmark a wonderfully diverse and progressive place, let us hope Danskernes Parti do not get those 20,109 signatures.

If the party does manage to get on the ballot and ends up in parliament, there will be a tremendous need for the rest of political Denmark to distance itself from the far-right. The left wing needs

to refocus the debate about the large numbers of refugees and migrants that have arrived in recent years, and shift it from focussing on the problems they present, to the long-term benefits they provide Denmark.

Great immigrant nations such as the US, the UK and Germany have shown us that long after the initial pressure on public finances and the economy, immigrants bring new ideas, innovation, hard work and cultural diversity. Apple was invented by second-generation immigrants, Youtube was invented by the son of a Bangladeshi immigrant, and Google was invented by a first-generation Russian immigrant.

In order to combat the chaos and hate, which could very well dominate the right wing of Danish politics in the very near future, the left wing must make the benefits of immigration palpable and understandable to frustrated Danish voters who are fearful of a more multicultural future. If they do not succeed, I fear for the diverse Denmark I love to call my home. **M**

Government death by taxes

Continued from page 12

nue loss will be 5.2 billion kroner. Even when taking into consideration the potential revenue generated from the predicted job growth resulting from the tax cut, the state would end up 2.7 billion kroner worse off. And because the government has pledged not to increase taxes across the board, this revenue loss cannot be made up through other forms of taxation.

But the issue is also a matter of principle, says Jørgensen.

"We are big proponents of a progressive tax system. People make a lot of money here because they have benefitted from the services society offers. You are able to hire well-educated employees, childcare is available, and you have most likely gone through an expensive university education offered to you for free."

LO also fears that lowering the tax will increase inequality – measured by the 'Gini coefficient' – and decrease social mobility.

"Lowering the top rate won't change the Gini coefficient by too many points, but it will have an effect. Reforms in recent years have already created a slippery slope, which is resulting in the rich getting even richer and the poorest getting poorer."

THE ARGUMENT FOR THE CHANGE

Among the most vocal proponents of lowering, and even eliminating,

The cuts will end up costing the state 2.7 billion, and we will have to find that money somewhere. Anything else is just speculation at this point.

MORTEN AASTRUP JØRGENSEN. CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

the topskat is free-market think tank CEPOS.

"These are some of the most growth-hindering taxes out there," argues CEPOS's chief economist Mads Lundby Hansen.

"Currently, we have very limited economic growth, and that is an issue we need to address. We also don't believe the change will lead to cuts in government spending, even though we believe that would be a good idea. The former government's Productivity Commission found that the tax cuts will actually pay for themselves through increased productivity. Lowering the rate will not lead to any problems for the state."

In his view, opposition to the reforms are based on "scare tactics" that attempt to paint a bleak picture of welfare cuts that, he claims, will not materialise.

Hansen is also unconcerned by growing inequality. He points out that Denmark is already one of the most equal countries in the world. Even with the changes resulting from lowering the *topskat*, Denmark will remain a more equal country than both Sweden and Finland.

Hansen also argues that lowering the top tax rate will help attract more highly-educated foreigners to the country. He points out that the so-called expert tax (*forskerordningen*), which allows

foreign researchers and key employees to pay just 31.92 percent tax for up to five years, has been hugely successful.

Jørgensen contends, however, that the level of taxation is not a high priority for people when choosing where to live.

"Studies have shown that taxes play only a limited role when people are deciding which country to live in. People also place childcare and welfare highly on their list of priorities. The OECD has researched how taxation impacts migration and found it hard to establish a clear correlation. Studies have also offered no proof that tax rates have an influence on Danes moving abroad."

But Hansen doesn't believe LO is being sincere in its opposition to the tax cuts and feels that the union is just "playing politics".

"You should look for their criticism of changes to the top tax rate during the left-wing Socialdemokraterne government – it doesn't exist. The only reason they are coming out against it now is because there is a right-wing government in power. There is a broad consensus among economists that the changes will be beneficial."

Jørgensen dismisses this criticism and claims that part of the problem is that CEPOS and Hansen are trying to frame the cuts solely as a growth issue, whereas

it ought to be seen as part of a bigger picture.

"This is a political issue and Mads (Hansen) is trying to frame it as solely a question of growth. This is also a question of wealth distribution. If CEPOS believes that lowering the top tax rate will not lead to cuts in services, or that they will end up paying for themselves, then they must be including unknown factors in their calculations. We can only refer to the numbers from the Ministry of Finance, and those show that the cuts will end up costing the state 2.7 billion, and we will have to find that money somewhere. Anything else is just speculation at this point."

WILL IT PASS?

The deciding factor in the debate will most likely be DF. In recent weeks, the party has for the most part kept out of the debate and has not given a firm answer as to how it will vote on the issue. But despite their opposing views, both Hansen and Jørgensen believe the party will come around and vote for the tax cut.

"Sadly, we expect the change to go through. The blue bloc party that has been against it has paved the way for it in return for changes to immigration laws. We still hope that DF will put their foot down and say no, but we fear that won't happen," Jørgensen says. **M**



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WHAT'S ON • SEPTEMBER



TODD HAYNES
The Danish Film Institute presents a retrospective focusing on the acclaimed director of works such as Carol, I'm Not There and others.

Cinemateket,
Gothersgade 55, CPH
Dfi.dk
All month

ALL MONTH

MARTIN BIGUM
Arken presents an exhibition on Danish artist Martin Bigum, portraying Denmark and the world through his psychedelic style.

Arken Museum of Modern Art,
Skovvej 100, Ishøj
Arken.dk



38 ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE
ARoS presents an exhibition on the legendary photographer, featuring portraits of New York celebrities of the 1970s and 80s as well as his self-portraits.

ARoS
Aros Alle 2, Aarhus
En.aros.dk
All month

ALL MONTH

POUL GERNES
Known for working on famous buildings in Copenhagen such as the Palads movie theater and the interior of Herlev hospital, Gernes' art features a distinctively colourful palette.

Louisiana,
Gammel Strandvej 13, 3050
Louisiana.dk

7

CPH WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL
The Copenhagen World Music Festival celebrates musical cultures across the world with many events suitable for the whole family.

Multiple locations
bit.ly/cphworldmusic
Ends September 12



DANIEL RICHTER
The exhibition of German painter and sculptor Daniel Richter's work showcases the artists' progression from the beginning of his career to the present day.

Louisiana,
Gammel Strandvej 13, 3050
Louisiana.dk
Starts September 8

10

HAVANA DAYS
Come to the meat packing district for a celebration of Cuban culture. The event will feature drinks, Cuban music and dancing.

Flæsketorvet
Copenhagen V
bit.ly/cphcuba
Ends September 11



HELENA HAUFF
One of the finest selectors working in techno today, Helena Hauff brings her eclectic taste to Culture Box.

Culture Box
Kronprinsessegade 54, CPH
culture-box.dk
September 10

EVENT OF THE MONTH



12

CODENSE FOOD FESTIVAL
The Odense Food Festival returns for its second year with a celebration of all things food.

Multiple Locations across
Odense
Spisodense.dk



DEERHOOF
Art rockers Deerhoof bring their unique sound to Denmark with a performance at Jazzhouse.

Jazzhouse
Niels Hemmingsens Gade 10,
CPH
Jazzhouse.dk
September 15

26

LATIN AMERICAN MARKET
A three-day celebration of Latin American cuisine, featuring a lot of great food and good music.

Nørre Alle 7, CPH
bit.ly/latincph
Ends September 17

Oliver Raassina

WHAT'S ON • SEPTEMBER

23

NITE JEWEL

A night of dream pop and lo-fi sounds at Vega with Los Angeles musician Nite Jewel.

Vega,
Enghavevej 40, CPH
Vega.dk



flickr / othree

Comic Con Copenhagen

Comic Con comes to Copenhagen for a celebration of pop culture with many events and activities at Bella Center.

Bella Center,
Center Blvd. 5, CPH
bit.ly/comicconcpb
September 24-25

24

LEON VYNEHALL

UK house brought to you by producer/DJ Leon Vynehall who takes over Culture Box.

Culture Box
Kronprinsessegade 54, CPH
culture-box.dk



HOLSTEBRO INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Some of the world's best in classical music come to Holstebro for a festival celebrating the genre.

Nørregade 40, Holstebro
Klassiskedage.dk
Sep 29 - Oct 2

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WELCOME

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a green shirt, is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She has her hand resting on her chin, suggesting she is listening intently. In the background, other people are blurred, indicating a classroom or lecture hall setting.

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