

Dear friends,

We heard some pleasant news the other day: In 80 years time the global warming would transform our rather miserable climate in Denmark to something like that of South France! That sounds great!

At the same time the weather prophet gave us 95% chance of a white Christmas this year, which would be a pleasant change from our usual dark and wet winters.

That could also be yet another proof of the point in a surprising new debate here concluding that experts are also human beings. We hear and see them daily in TV, radio and papers, who present their views as indisputable facts.

Especially up to our general election in November the media called in experts to give their comments to all kinds of arguments and new proposals. These experts can always deliver quick and impressive answers with reference to international treaties, scientific research or other technical explanations, efficiently discouraging the journalist from further investigations into the real background.

I guess that even some of the experts get a little sick from this often quite obvious manipulation. In any case a newspaper last week brought some articles, where identified experts admit that they are just like other people with political, emotional and moral views – and that their comments obviously concentrate on arguments supporting just that.

As apparently several foreign media has got it wrong in connection with the election, I would like to try to offer an explanation.

We did have an “open” debate especially about our immigrants. The previous Socialist government in general did not really like to discuss this problem. In the election campaign however it became the main theme, and the foreign journalists who were here to cover the election apparently had never heard such an open discussion before.

As far as I understand most European countries have the same situation as we have, that some few immigrants do not like our societies and way of life, do not like to work (when the unemployment benefits give them more than low paid jobs). Rootless and jobless they get bored and become social problems or criminals.

We had this discussion and also political ideas about how to do it better. In general we like immigrants giving us a needed infusion of new cultures. However the few misusers of the system get the headlines and spoil it for the majority of fine people.

That is what the debate is about. We want to be sure that we can handle the challenge of hosting our immigrants in a decent way that satisfies both sides. The alternative could become riots, like we have seen in other countries, where they find it politically correct to close their eyes to the fundamental problems.

At least that is how I see it. I hope to be right because “my” party is now in the government, as the opposition won a landslide victory, mainly on that policy.

What kind of Christmas letter is this? Well, I am no fan of the Christmas race myself, as I find it difficult to find other than commercial interests – but of course it is a nice holiday with the family.

And this year, probably for the first time in my adult life, I have not been on any exot-

ic travels. Other things have happened though, sad and good – mostly good.

The saddest was the death of my mother, 87, in March. Even at that age it is a chock, but as a friend comforted me: You only miss someone very much, if you have loved her in the same way. She left this earth as she had hoped for: On Thursday she got a stroke, and on Friday she quietly and in dignity departed on the journey, which parted her soul from the body on Saturday morning.

It was probably even harder for our girls, Anja and Camilla, who used to live in her house on 1st floor. Coming into the family several years after the other grandchildren they got spoiled – and in the recent years she always lent them a compassionate ear to their teenage problems.

After having sold the house we then bought a small apartment in the town centre, where Anja is now living. She is in the final year of her Social Care education. At present she is doing practice as homecare helper, and is visiting on her own a number of elderly people, who live in their homes, but who need help for cleaning, personal hygiene – or just social company. Especially at this time of the year it is hard on the stomach, with so many sweets and coffee tables being offered.

Next summer she is planning to pursue her aim to become a physiotherapist. She is still only 17.

Camilla is now living in the next town, Viborg, with her boyfriend Michael. She is studying to become a nurse or...? This is a general study, and she now has got another 1½ years to decide the next step. Michael is the IT-specialist of Scanbox, the local variant of Universal Studios, although at present they mainly distribute

videos, DVD's, CD's and have a few contracts with artists.

Benthe is still working in Grundfos (www.grundfos.com), the local pumping giant with more than 10.000 employees. In August she was one month in Hungary to help training the locals in running a new Grundfos factory for electric motors. She liked that and in February next year she will go back for another round of education.

Being alone all August I reflected on how to get an adventure myself. The result was that I enrolled on a folk high school. This type of schools was invented in the 19th century by our great poet N.F.S. Grundtvig, as a way to give the farmers the opportunity to learn about cultural relations. Nowadays the schools are also very popular for brief holiday courses with all kinds of exciting subjects. People live on the schools, clean the rooms themselves and take part in the cooking and dishwashing too.

I had searched for the theme Philosophy, and the title of the week long course I choose was "Quality of Life". The teacher appeared to be a rather famous doctor, Søren Ventegodt (read more about him on this link: <http://www.fdz.dk/rien2000/lifequality.asp>)

His philosophy in brief is that we all have experienced some events in our childhood which could influence our mental and physical health during our entire life. It could be as innocent as a feeling in the pram that you needed to see your mother – and she was not there.

Had I known about the content of the course in advance I would never have come near the place. I have always been allergic to such talk. However it appeared to be quite an extraordinary event, which I

enjoyed immensely. My practical sense was satisfied by mr. Ventegodt's scientific approach, and by reading his books I have even found a lot of common sense.

Apart from that it was also great to be part of the fellowship of the group (40 people). I know myself so well that had I met those folks at a party we would not have had much to tell each other – I would probably have given them a minute or two. To my surprise, during the course I found out that they were all very interesting persons and each of them had an exciting story to tell.

Of course it was partly due to the very special atmosphere created by mr. Ventegodt and also to the general "togetherness". So now I just hope that I shall be able to remember and do what came so easily during the course.

By now you are probably waiting to hear the latest report from my corner window overlooking the forest and the feeding site for the birds and animals.

This winter they are more active than before, because they have to be aware of the cat.

Yes, we have got a cat! By accident I would say, because one evening when I returned from a trip to Holland Benthe showed me a tiny little thing which she had found under some bushes in the forest. We agreed to put out some milk to the nest under the bush, and later it got a cardboard box as shelter for the rain.

However eventually we started to feed the thing, which by then had been named Elvis, on the terrace outside the garden door. And you know, as autumn came with bad weather, instead of us going out we let the thing into the house. Now Elvis is living here and when tired from hunting

mice in the night he is entering through the window into the sleeping room where he has his favourite napping place on my foot end.

He is quite stupid though and without doubt missed his mother's upbringing. He actually thinks when he is happy that he should bite our fingers our nose or toes.

Christmas Eve we shall spend for the first time in the house of my in-laws, who are living in a village nearby. To compensate we have invited Anja, Camilla and Michael to a traditional Christmas lunch today, which means lots of marinated herring, shrimps, smoked eel, aquavit and several other dishes. And on 26th December we have yet another eating feast with the usual family celebration of my birthday.



During a break in the lunch today with Michael, Camilla, Benthe and Anja.

We wish you all the best for the season as well as for the coming year. May good health and happiness be bestowed upon each of you.

Søren, Benthe,
Anja and Camilla

22nd December 2001