

Jytte Hilden, Denmark

Jytte Hilden's Danish home town was only 26 km away from a nuclear power plant in Sweden. In her interview with her niece Juliane Dybkjær, Jytte emphasized that nuclear power is a global, not a national issue and talked about her various political activities against nuclear power and for women's rights.

### 1. familiar background

Jytte grew up in an intellectual home. Her dad was an economist, who was in the parliament and was the vice president of the organization Danish Industry. Her mother was a secretary, who was active in the women's rights movement. Religion played no part in her childhood. Jytte was born during the Second World War, has four children, six grandchildren and lives in Copenhagen. She is an engineer and worked in education until she became active in politics in 1973, when she became a member of the Social Democratic party. She was a member of the parliament for 16 years and Cultural Minister during the mid-nineties. In the 1970's, she worked on women's issues – free abortion, equal pay for equal work and so on.

She has always been against nuclear power, but her main issue to work on has always been women's rights. She was active in OOA (an organization working against nuclear power, who coined the famous "Nuclear power? No thank you"-logo), organizing meetings, writing letters and coordinating demonstrations. She did think about the risks of living close to a country with nuclear power – back then, Sweden had the nuclear power plant Barsebäck, which was located only 26 kms from Copenhagen on the other side of Øresund. In Jytte's mind, it was crazy to have a nuclear power plant so close to another country's capital, and that was the motivation for her to join the movement against nuclear power. As an engineer, she was aware that it was a real risk as well.

Her stance on the Cold War was that it was really a bad idea to spend so much money on weapon races and nuclear weapon races when so many people in the world were suffering. She would rather live in a world where politicians concentrated on development of the poorest countries in the world. She started the organization "Women for peace", who worked on not seeing the world as divided into two parts. Jytte's view on the Soviet Union was that in the Western world, people had the right to say whatever they wanted and commercial wealth was the focus of everything, whereas in the Soviet Union, there was focus on improving basic social conditions such as work and housing for everyone, but where other human rights were violated. She remembers the media covering news from the Soviet Union doing it in an entirely negative way. The main idea was that the US was good and the USSR was bad. She thought that was a very one-dimensional view on the world.

### 2. Knowledge about and attitude towards nuclear energy before Chernobyl

Jytte was always against nuclear power, and that was rooted in the belief that we do not know what to do with the nuclear garbage. It will be around for centuries. Using

coal to produce energy is connected with major environmental problems, using oil is connected with political problems in terms of security and total dependency on oil producing countries, especially in the Middle East, but using nuclear power is connected to risks that will affect our world for centuries and millennia to come. We should not forget that.

The debate over nuclear power was in Denmark very much connected to Barsebäck, and that was perfectly understandable. (der var en bred folkelig debat mellem almindelige mennesker og eksperter, der mente de skulle bestemme for de vidste bedre.)

There was debate over the risks of having a nuclear power plant so close to the Danish capital, and even though Jytte knew that an accident might actually happen, the thought did not affect her daily life.

### 3. Direct consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe

The first thing Jytte thought when she heard that there had been an accident in Chernobyl was that such a horrible thing must have cost many people their lives. She thought that it was the government's duty to calm the population down and really make sure that everyone felt safe. Some media began telling people that in order to avoid the risks of drinking contaminated milk, people ought to boil the milk before they drank it. Jytte knew that that was a stupid idea and that it would not have any effect on the radiation, but it was an example of the misinformation people believed concerning this subject.

Jytte was well aware that the information that the Western world received from the USSR might have been twisted. That was common in those times, and the Western world did not expect the USSR to deliver correct information.

Jytte was worried about her family and that they might be harmed from dangerous radiation. She followed the news closely. She thought that the debate would become fiercer, and she hoped that the only good thing to come of the accident would be that countries such as Sweden would now abolish the use of nuclear power.

Jytte thought that the government in Denmark did what they had to do.

Jytte thinks that the accident could have been a technical mistake or a human mistake because of lack of safety procedures in the Soviet Union, and she thinks that many people have interests in not revealing what caused the accident. We will probably never know.

### 4. In what way were Chernobyl and the nuclear energy issue important?

The accident made Jytte more aware about the risks of using nuclear power. It is important that we remember how serious the accident was and not forget it because the energy debate is focused in environmental issues at the moment. Jytte

was still active in the OOA throughout her political career. The influence of Chernobyl has for her been political.

#### 5. The importance of Chernobyl today

Jytte thinks that Chernobyl plays too small a part in the nuclear debate today. Other issues, such as environmental problems, have pushed the thought of an accident and the question of security concerning nuclear waste away from the debate, and that seems dangerous. Many nuclear power plants are still far too unsafe, and while OOA was successful in convincing the Swedish government to close Barsebäck, Sweden still has nuclear power plants, as do Germany and Poland.

Jytte stresses the point that nuclear power is a global, not a national issue, and that there should be international guidelines. She is not worried about a nuclear accident in her daily life, but she thinks it is an overlooked issue in the energy debate. People do not to this day realize that we still do not have a sufficient solution for storing nuclear waste, and because of that, we ought to not use it. The solution to the energy need of society is to be found in developing more sufficient ways of using energy, finding new, sustainable energy technologies and truly commit to green energy sources like sun, water and biogas. Nuclear power is and will always be a dead end.