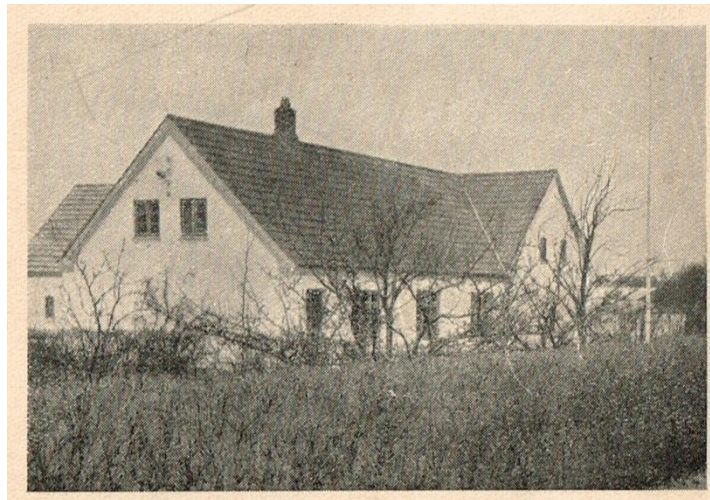


# **“Husmandsstandens Rejsning”**

**The small landowners struggle for a better life.**

**Emil Rasmussen's memories from a long life in the service of the small  
landowners\* association.**



by  
**Emil Rasmussen**

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Translated by Knud Rasmussen, Toronto, Canada

## Introduction.

Emil Rasmussen was my mother's uncle and I am translating his memories into English for the benefit of our family members and other people, who do not speak or write Danish.

Emil Rasmussen was a very interesting man, and a leader who dedicated his life to helping other people. Reading his memoirs, you will find that not much has changed in this world and we always need people like Emil Rasmussen.

### **A few words about my family and me:**

I was born in Randers, Denmark 1936 the son of Ebba Johanne Rasmussen and Paul Alfred Rasmussen.

When the Germans occupied Denmark on April 09/1940, my parents lost everything, since my father worked for Shell Oil. Out of work, they lost their house, car and the good life in a small provincial Danish town.

My mother, sister Birte, and I then went to live with my mother's parents in Odense. My father went out to look for work and a new place for us to live.

He found work as a manager at an open pit mine near Døvling, in Jutland, and rented a small house in the countryside nearby.

After Birte was dismissed from the hospital in Odense (she was admitted with an ear infection and spent almost a year in the hospital-there was no penicillin at that time), we all moved into the house and I started school.

It was a one room school, with one teacher, and if I remember correctly, about a dozen students from the local farms.

A year later, my dad left the mine because the two brothers who owned it wanted him to cook the books, so they could cheat the tax department.

With his last money, and by selling his hunting gear, he managed to buy a horse.

He and the horse were now a team rented out to the local farmers, who were digging peat moss to be used as heating fuel.

Later he left to work in "Kødbyen" (Slaughter house district ) in Copenhagen, and when the occupation ended May 05/1945 he came back, and shortly after we moved to Haderslev, where Uncle Erik (dad's sister's husband) had found a job for him managing a produce wholesale business.

The next year I wrote the entrance exam to Haderslev Katedral Skole (*a federal school, where all teachers had university degrees*) and spent the next four years there, before I graduated and started an apprenticeship as a mason.

After the first winter, I realized masonry was not going to be my calling and I was allowed to continue my schooling during the winter months for the rest of my apprenticeship.

Four years later I finished my apprenticeship, and the year after that, I graduated from KTS.

I had learned to read very early on, and always spent a lot of time in libraries, having grown up reading books by Hemingway, Remarque and, of course, Tarzan books, as well as many others.

There was no TV when I was a kid, but we did have the movies, and my friends and I saw at least two different ones every week.

This made me think about traveling, and a week after graduation, I left Denmark and immigrated to Canada in 1958.

I arrived on April 03, and since it was spring, I found work in construction right away. Compared to Denmark, everything was big, and a person was free to do almost whatever he liked, with little interference from the government.

My mother's sister Jenny also lived in North America, but she and her husband Valde immigrated to United States before the Second World War, and settled in Michigan, where a number of relatives had already settled. They had one son, Carl Mailand, who now lives in New Hampshire. Carl and I are probably the last ones here in North America who is Danish speaking as neither his children nor mine speak the language. I doubt the rest of the North American family does either.

Emil's memoir will give the family members and friends an idea of why so many people left Denmark, and also the aid in the understanding of why this little country is what it is today.

**\* Hereafter called**

Husmand – a small landowner

Husmænd – small landowners

Husmandssted – a landowner's small farm

Husmandsstanden – the society of small landowners and tenants

Husmandsforening – a landowner's association

Husmandsforeningerne – landowner's associations

Husmandsbevægelsen – the movement to organize and improve the conditions for small landowners

It should be noted that a lot of information about Denmark is available in English on the internet, in case you should want to explore more about the places and people mentioned.

## Introduction

When Emil Rasmussen decided after many requests to publish his memoirs, it made his many friends and former associates very happy. Those who knew Emil, and his beliefs from his earliest youth, will recognize his notes and say, "*Nothing has changed and he is the same right into his old age*".

All Husmænd, rural day workers, and everyone with an interest in economical and social conditions for these people can gain from Emil's knowledge and memories.

It was natural for a man with Emil Rasmussen's idealistic views of life and keen interest in the social conditions of our society, to join Husmandsbevægelsen on the island of Fyn, and in his years as president, he helped create the association's firm belief in the rights of ordinary people which holds to this day.

It was Emil Rasmussen's work to improve Husmandsstanden's economical, social and cultural conditions which became the start of his public life, and got him involved with the Fire and Accident Insurance Company for Husmænd, acquiring land to create new Husmand holdings under the land distribution association (*Udstykningsforeningen*), and later, the land reform committee (*Jordslovsudvalget*).

He never forgot where he came from and never lost the idealism of his youth.

His memories are described in a lively and interesting way, so the reader can follow him in the many events over years of difficult and often thankless work, for the benefit of his social group.

Emil Rasmussen's political work and the many years he was a member of "Folketinget" (*the Danish Parliament*) are, of course, also part of his memories and have their own chapters.

These years were very important for Danish society. The First World War and what followed, the new constitution of 1915, and the land law of Oct. 04/1919, had important consequences and would of course pre-occupy a man like Emil Rasmussen with his democratic views.

He was delighted with such laws, which made major improvements to the life of Husmænd.

It is with pleasure the board of the united Husmandsforeninger on the island of Fyn have agreed to present a copy of Emil's memoirs to every Danish Husmandsforening throughout the country.

For the people of Fyn, I take the opportunity to thank Emil Rasmussen for his work with Husmandsforeningerne, and also for his work with Fyn's Diocese "Husmandsskole: (*an after school for Husmænd and their children*). In good as well as bad years, he was always a faithful and steadfast helper to the school.

Personally, I take the opportunity to thank Emil from the bottom of my heart for his many years of faithful friendship and cooperation.

Lauritz Nielsen

Formanden for De Samvirkende Danske Husmandsforeninger  
(*President, United Association of Danish Husmænd's Associations*).

## **Herkomst og Barneår**

### **My ancestry and childhood**

A number of friends and coworkers in Husmandsbevægelsen's struggle over the past 50 years have requested that I record my memories.

The desire to work to help improve the bondage the Husmandsstanden lived under and helping them become a free and independent part of our society has filled my life, and for this I am deeply thankful.

In the latter part of the 18th century, a number of clever and dedicated men started to work on the self-awareness of Danish Husmænd. Men like P. Hansen, Lundby and many others did a lot of work, but not before the turn of the century did it really take off.

All over the country Husmand's organizations were formed and eventually united in a national association. The object was to create better living conditions and civil rights for Husmænd and farm workers.

My father was a "Gårmandssøn" (*son of a large landowner*) and according to tradition, as the eldest son he would inherit the farm.

However, he committed the crime of marrying the farm's maid and his mother, who was from the old school, disinherited him. With an inheritance of 300 "rigsdaler" (*old currency now replaced by kroner*), he had to leave his childhood home. Using this money he built a house on a small lot left to him at "Herregården Langesø" (*Langesø estate*). The house belonged to him, but the land belonged to the estate owner. To make ends meet and make a living for himself and his large family, he had to hire himself out as a farm worker in the summer and a lumberjack in the winter.

In this poor home, we were 13 siblings, 9 boys and 4 girls and I was the youngest. My oldest brother was 25 years older than me.

The wages for a lumberjack at that time ranged from 50 "øre" (*half a krone*) to 1 krone a day without daily meals and on top of this, you had to bring your own tools.

Everyone will understand that a mother with such small change having to feed and dress a large family had to be industrious and frugal.

The children had no choice and at a very early age, they would have to find work at the local farms, especially in the summer. Usually the pay for a whole summer's work would be a pair of wooden shoes and maybe half or one pound of wool. Many of those poor children had a hard time with homesickness and were often ill treated.

They would live together with the hired farm hand in an un-hygienic room in the stable.

This would not be too bad if they shared the room with a decent and kind farm hand, but in many cases, it was not so.

Being the youngest at home, I went to work when I was 14 years old. Together with an 11 year old boy, I worked on a large farm with 84 "Tønder" (*approx 125 acres*) land. The owner was an alcoholic and was often drunk on "Brændevin" (*literally "firewater" or snaps*) and his 54 year old farmhand was not any better.

The farmhand's room, both living and bedroom, was located in the cowshed, with a dirt floor and the beds were made by hammering 3 wooden posts into the dirt with two planks nailed to them.

The space between the planks and the wall was then filled with straw, which seldom got changed.

The bed was made on top of the straw and the 11 year old boy had to share it with the alcoholic farmhand.

Such beds were often filled with vermin, mice and rats and the farmhand had armed himself with a stick to keep the rats away, but often, he hit the kid, who hardly got any sleep, because he was afraid. Many times I got up to save the boy from a beating.

One of the first days the farmhand wanted to beat me, but I was big and strong and told him, if he touched me, I would kill him, so he left me alone.

Besides the three of us in the farmhand's room, the family also had a maid, who stole our belongings and anything she could lay her hands on.

At half past three every morning the farmer roared that we had to get up, or he would come after us with his cane.

My first chore was to take the horses along the roadside for grazing and when the women finished milking, I had to move all the cows on to the pasture. After this was done, I could go and get my breakfast which consisted mainly of "øllebød" (*a kind of soup made from beer and old rye bread*) and "flæsk" (*bacon*).

It was an inhumane life for children. I was big and strong when I started working, but literally stopped growing, due to lack of sleep, bad food, and heavy work.

A bright spot for me was the farmer's wife, who was unusually kind, but as her life was not much better than ours, we had to stick together.

The reason I am describing what happened to me as a farm boy in 1884 is to show what cruel treatment poor peoples' children could receive.

Since then, I have always followed the battles of Sabroe, Aakjær, Skjoldborg (*Danish writers and activists*) and other good men, who fought to improve living conditions for our little comrades, the farm boy. This experience has always made me work hard using my abilities to help the little man in our society.

Our goal is to reach a point that no one has to send their children out to strangers for work, when they are still too young. To be truthful, I have to say that fortunately, not all farmers treated their hired hands so cruelly.

My father, as mentioned, owned his own house on land belonging to the estate near Ruehed. The house had 2 ½ acres of land, with grazing in the forest, and we always had two cows and two sheep, looked after by the children.

This helped a lot in our diet, and most of the time we had milk, cream and butter, so our father's small daily pay stretched further.

It was before the co-op dairies time, so mother would churn the milk to make butter and sometime she was able to make curd and buttermilk cheese. This we could sell, but it did not make much money; however I was proud when I could walk down the road with a basket and hitch a ride with a farmer to Odense. In the afternoon I would return home with the money I had made by selling our products.

It was a huge step forward when the dairy in Rue was built, so Husmændene could make use of all their milk, and make some money on what they didn't use themselves.

Langesø Estate had 1300 acres of forest, and fifty men worked right through the winter months there.

They worked in teams of six or seven men, so they could manage the large trees and my father was a foreman of such a team.

It was mainly made up of older workers, and most of them were veterans from the war of 1848 (*against Germany*) or the 1864 war, also against Germany. When they had more snaps than normal, the old soldier songs echoed through the forest, and war stories were told, to make this hard life easier to bear.

Many discussions centered around which one of the local general stores had the best “Brændevin”. A man’s daily quantity was normally a whole bottle and he could handle it, but on payday they drank more and of course got drunk. They got their pay every 14 days and seldom more than 10 kroner per man. This income had to be celebrated and if it was too cold in the forest, such “Brændevin” parties sometimes happened at home. As a small boy I experienced many of those parties and listened to the discussions and never forgot them.

Before a “Folketing” elections (*federal*) such discussions was often of a political nature. Klaus Berntsen was their hero. He knew how to handle the right wing conservative people, and once during a meeting, told the dean in the city of Bogense that the days were over when one kissed the minister’s hand and called him father. People barely understood how it was possible to say such things to a dean, which ended with him leaving the stage in a rage and forgetting his hat. But the coin had another side.

A few days before an election the forester, in his best uniform, would visit the lumberjacks’ homes. He was always in a good humor then, sitting down to chat, and no one would realize that after the election, he was once again a tyrant, using his power over the workers ruthlessly for his own benefit. Only if the lumberjacks had an extra large bottle of “Brændevin” for the day, would he leave them alone and stay far away

At a visit to my home, he told my father: Listen Rasmus Jensen, I am here with a greeting from his lordship, an invitation to have lunch on Election Day at Langesø Estate and after, his teamsters will drive you to Bogense to vote. Arriving in Bogense it was then said: Let us now all walk down to cast our vote and after, we will go and have coffee punch (black coffee with Brændevin) together. As a result, after some coffee punches, they would shout hurrah for Klaus Bertelsen, but voted for the right wing candidate. I know a few men who had the courage to vote for the left wing candidate and then lost their jobs on the estate right away, never to be hired back again. My mother used to tell them: You are a bunch of fools to let them drive you to Bogense and then vote against your own interests.

The first thing I did after returning home at 17 years of age to help out the old folks was to get my father to tell them he was sick on election day. My first political deed was therefore of a negative character.

I was already as a boy interested in politics, and that is mainly because of what I heard and experienced in my home.

Also, I got a job as a farmhand with a liberal owner, who had “Fyns Tidende” (*a local newspaper*) delivered to him, and at that time, this paper was considered quite revolutionary. I had to read the paper for him every evening. I don’t know if it was because he could not see or did not know how to read, but in this manner I was exposed to radical ideas.

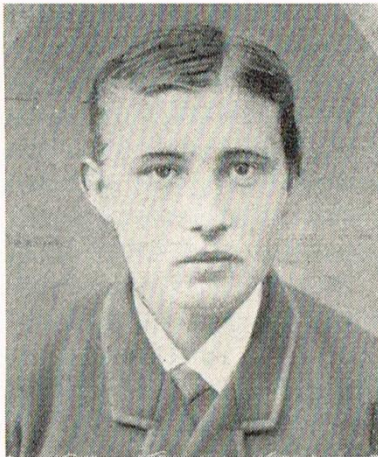
He had many conservatives (*højremænd*) in his family, and when they got together their discussions were heated.

I was often called in to report what Fyns Tidende had written, a job I was quite flattered about,

and it made me feel obligated to remember when something of particular political interest had been written. But it also made me interested in seeing and hearing the men, I was called in to defend such as Klaus Berntsen, Højmark, Christoffersen Bro and many more, resulting in myself as a young man walking long distances to participate in political meetings.

An election day in Sønderød in 1884 particularly stands out in my memories. I was only 14 years old and of course believed that everything the liberals stated was true, whereas what the conservatives said was pure lies and nonsense.

I went to all the local political meetings together with my old friend and schoolmate Hans Larsen Skov, and I paid no attention when the conservative farmer I worked for, told us that all the people who complained would be shot by the gendarme from Estrup.



Min skolekammerat og ungdomsven  
Hans Larsen Skov.

My school body and friend Hans Larsen Skov

The place in society that Husmænd and farm workers occupied was forever etched in my brain. They were considered to be of little if any use to society, and were often scorned. A Husmand could be used as the last resort as a witness to a fire, but the fire bailiff was always a large landowner. Usually during such business they all got very drunk and hardly able to count the chimneys on the houses.

In the years from 1884 to 1890, co-operative dairies were being built throughout Denmark. Prior to this, every farm had its own dairy. The large estates' butter was consider superior, since they produced enough milk and could build a modern dairy. Less superior was the farmers' butter and the Husmænds was bottom of the heap.

In the co-op dairy, everyone could participate and Husmanden's milk had the same value as everyone else, and brought more money to them. They could now also participate in the general co-op meetings, and even had the chance to be put in charge of some landowners' milk production.

This dairy money helped a number of Husmænd to improve their property, and they discovered it paid to work their own Husmandssted.



Prior to this, all Husmænd with 3 to 6 acres of land hired themselves out as farmhands, and had to work at night and on Sundays on their own land to produce extra food to feed their families. A second great improvement happened when Husmanden began to use draft animals to work the land. First, many started using their cows to pull the plow, but soon got enough money to purchase an Icelandic horse, and this had much more influence than many believe in getting Husmanden his independence and individual pride.

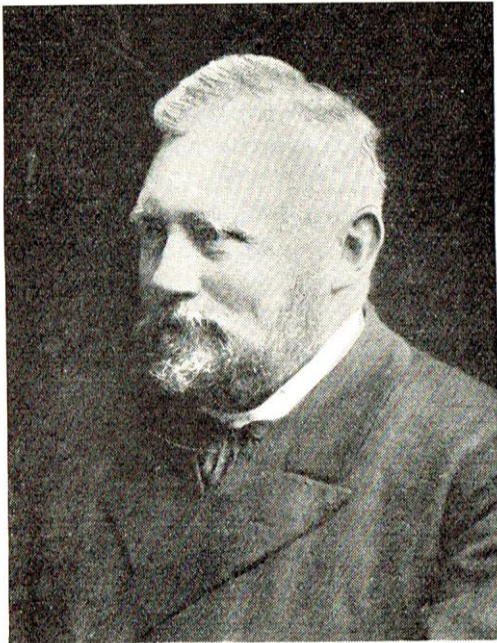
To get someone to plow their land, it was often made a condition that Husmanden must vote for the conservative candidate. The landowners were often so intolerant, that to use his plowman or getting sheep to his ram, Husmanden had to have the same political belief as his.

These conditions changed completely after the co-op dairies were built and horsepower became common. Many Husmænd shook off their bondage and became free men.

It was normal in my home, that my older brothers came home on Sundays and specifically holidays like Christmas, Easter etc. to help my farther with his work around his land. They offered their free time, so my father would not lose his day pay on such weekdays. Most often it was my mother who suffered, because on all Sundays and holidays year round, she had to patch and darn all the big boys clothes. It was often midnight before she could go to bed.

The advancement I have described was the foundation for the revitalization of Husmandsstanden living conditions.

A man who had to use all his abilities and power to keep the worst hunger away from his home, does not have the power, time or energy to fight for the right of the underclass to freedom and independence. On top of this, it was necessary to enhance such workers knowledge and skills, and the schools did not provide this for his children.



Lærer Andersen, min barndomslærer.

Teacher Andersen

In the school where I spent my first years, my knowledge came mainly from the catechism helped on with beatings. A complete change happened to me when I got a young teacher, the

well known author Anton Andersen. He treated the children with kindness and made teaching interesting and created a relationship of trust and respect between himself and the children. We all took pride in doing our best, but if a small boy arrived tired and sleepy because of his chores, he was often allowed to put down his head on the desk for a snooze.

The children who left school wanting more knowledge about political and social issues became the leaders for Husmanden's rights. Inferiority complexes disappeared and they knew that it was not just ancestry that counted, but the will and skills to perform in one's life.

At that time many Husmænd started to buy newspapers, and it was reasonable that such a paper catered to their interests. Personally, I subscribed to "Fyns Venstreblad" from its start, even if it was an outrage to the conservatives. A farmer's wife commented to me one day when she saw me reading "Fyns Venstreblad": *That dirty paper*. To which I answered: *I am not commenting on your paper "Fyens Stiftstidne" (a local conservative paper) and I decide what paper I want to read.*

For us it was fighting days, and I made many enemies, and only a few friends. As time went by, I found more and more people thinking like me, and that was what started the creation of Husmandsforeningerne.



Emil Rasmussen i manddomstiden.

Emil Rasmussen as a young man

## Husmandsbevægelsens start.

### Start of the movement to organize and improve the conditions for Husmænd

In the years before and after the new century, the movement got important help from many writers and politicians who made the little man aware of the coming changes. Already in 1897 Skjoldborg had written a song to remind people about the struggle, and it was sung with enthusiasm at thousands of meetings.

It told Husmanden to stand up, look forward to his goal at the same time as the worn steel shone from his hoe, spade and shovel. The fiery “Folketingsmand” (*Member of Parliament*) Peter Sabroe spoke at many meetings about the young farm workers treatment, while Aakjær in his first major novel portrayed the poor life many farmhands had on Danish estates. In 1896 came Skjoldborg’s fiery portrayal of the poor Husmand Søren Brander’s fight to overcome prejudice and distrust against Husmænd.

The portrayal starts with the following verse:

Da Husmanden som ørker den stridige jord  
og vover din arm og din bringe  
som dragger det første kulturens spor  
med plovjernets sølvblanke klinge  
mer ridder du er med din barkedede hånd  
end mange, der prydes med stjerner og bånd  
og tripper på bonede gulve

*It is difficult to translate such old fashioned Danish into English, but I will try my best.*

*When Husmanden is struggling with his land  
risking life and limb  
to draw the first traces of culture  
using the silvery blade of his plow, he is more  
nobler knight with his calloused hands  
than many adorned with medals and ribbons  
tripping on polished floors*

That such songs about Husmanden were even written about in Danish literature, contributed greatly to the awakening of Husmandsstanden, and to made them stand up for their rights. Men and women, who understood this knew that to improve life for working people only they, themselves could make it happen.

It was like spring had suddenly arrived and they got the feeling that it was possible, if they worked together, to reach the goal of a better economical and social life.

I was seventeen years old when I returned home to help my parents work their land, which had now increased to 7 ½ acres. In the winter I also started to work as a lumberjack in Langesø forest and during the summer in the peat bog.

This was interrupted, when for a year and a half I was a “Dragoon” (*army cavalry*) in Odense. Upon my return home I took over 5 acres belonging to Husmandsstedet and purchased an additional 4 acres, making the property more suitable for farming. I got married in 1892 and together with my wife, made the decision that I did not want to spend my life working as a lumberjack.

I bought two old horses and a milk wagon on credit and took over a milk route to Rue dairy, plus some plowing for other Husmænd. The horses made me able to control my land, but when I seeded part of it with beets, which was unusual at that time, my father told me: It may be good for the cows to get some beets, but where is our food coming from, when you seed beets and not wheat. However, it turned out very well, and instead of two cows, we then had four. The two old horses were replaced with two younger ones, so I could take on driving butter from Rue dairy to Odense and return with coal. The way it turned out was that during my weekly trips, I also got many orders from neighbors to take things back and forth for them. At that time we had no railway or buses, and all deliveries were made using horse-drawn wagons. It did not take very long before I had so much to transport that I needed two more horses, and hired a farmhand for the growing carrier business I had developed.

Later, I purchased a wagon that was used every Saturday to carry passengers, and soon we needed another pair of horses. I also started to haul wood from Langesø forest, and little by little, built up a large business transporting lumber to the local trades, and firewood to the merchants in Odense. It was also easier for the trades not to have to go to the forest auctions to purchase lumber, since I could provide that service.

This of course made me well known in Vigerslev parish and because I never kept my radical opinions secret, I had many opponents, but did get invited to the first Husmand’s meeting in Kominger Inn.

Prior to that people like Hans Jørgen Nielsen, Ferritslev, Peder Pedersen, Søllinge, Lars Hansen, Anderup, Niels Peder Nielsen, Lille Viby and more gathered in Odense and formed “Fynske Husmands Landboforening” (*an association for small landowners on the island of Fyn*). I was also attracted to the meeting in Kominger, since Lars Hansen Anderup would be one of the speakers. His speech was highly agitating, even if he was a very moderate man.

He pointed out to Husmændene, that it was not enough just to be better farmers, but also to stand together at parish and other elections, to protect Husmændenes interests.

I was elected as chairman for Vigerslev parish’s Husmænd and I strongly urged that the landless and tenant Husmænd at Langesø estate, should also be allowed to join the association. This resulted in Vigerslev becoming the largest association on Fyn.

From bitter experience I knew that tenant Husmænd and farmhands needed more than anyone else to improve their living conditions. We needed to reach all the way down and not leave anyone so disadvantaged in Danish society.

This is the reason that the social side of the Husmand’s movement was so important, along with the importance of professional education.

The same year I also got elected to the board of the united Husmandsforeninger in the diocese of Fyn.

The board consisted of people with very different political opinions and it was difficult to get to reach any majority conclusion. Hans Jørgen Nielsen, Ferritslev was the first chairman, but soon resigned, after which Mads P. Tange got elected.

Under his leadership, great discussions started about the organization's programs and name. The moderate members insisted that it should be named "Fynske Husmænds Landboforening", but the radical and social democratic members wanted to promote social progress by calling it "De Samvirkende Husmandsforeninger i Fyns Stift" (*The united Husmand's associations in the diocese of Fyn*).

Our discussion was often agitated and since none of us were experienced orators, the tone could be quite coarse. We also differed regarding the association's administration. The government grants to agriculture all went to "Landboforeningerne" (*the farmers associations*) and it was important for us to be considered, so Husmændene could benefit from this money to improve their productivity.

At one of our meetings we approved a resolution in regard to this and sent a deputation led by M. P. Tange to the Ministry of Agriculture in Copenhagen to try to convince him to make changes. They returned empty handed, since the minister told them that all Husmandsforeninger had to do was join the united "Landboforeninger" in the diocese of Fyn to get access to the grants.

This created a sharp divide in our organization. Should we join "Landboforeningen" and if so, would our influence be of value to Husmændene. At a later general meeting this question was put to order and resulted in a day long debate between the two opinions. In the morning Tange had a majority for joining and the name change, but in the afternoon more than 75% of the delegates were against it. Even Superintendent Jørgen Pedersen, from Dalum, had indicated to the assembly, that it was important to carefully weigh the pros and cons, and whether they could afford not to listen to the leadership of "Fynske Husmænds Landboforening".

Because the vote went against Tange and others of like opinion, the entire board resigned and the name "De Samvirkende Fynske Husmandsforeninger" (*The united Husmand's associations of Fyn*) was adopted with a large majority.

A unanimous board was elected with Julius Eriksen, from Stige, as chair, but he resigned after only a year. He was a smart and democratic thinking man, who most likely worked hard to make the association a success, but he never really reconciled with the split. I have to admit, we lost many good men like Lars Hansen, of Anderup, Peder Pedersen, of Søllinge and a number of others, who had founded the association.

At the next general meeting I was elected chair, and it paved the way for the moderate members in the association.

Led by Mads Nielsen, of Gislev, a petition with 54 signatures was collected to call for an extraordinary general meeting, when they called for my resignation. However, they met with complete defeat and peace was established, so we could start our work.

The demand for us to get our own finance budget appropriations was renewed and proposed to the ministry.

I negotiated with Anders Nielsen, but was told that the Finance Department had granted eighty thousand Kroner to promote farming techniques. This was granted to Landboforeningerne and the money belonged to them. Our association could not get any part of this, unless there was some left over. Obviously nothing was left, but it gave us good reason to agitate for this during all Husmands and political meetings all over Fyn.

Paul Frederik Jensen, of Horsebæk, who was elected secretary, and I took it upon ourselves to pursue all "Venstre's Rigsdagsmænd" (*conservative farmers upper house members*) at their election meetings all over Fyn. Rosager in Gudmekredsen, Aadal in Bogensekredsen and

Pinstrup in Kerteminde (*local dioceses*), where we demanded our rights and pointed out that all the large farm and estate owners got eighty thousand “Kroner” (*crowns*) yearly for crop research and Husmændene got nothing, since we had to wait and see if anything was left over. This agitation was very effective, paying off in hundreds of new members and on top of that, respect from our opposition. From time to time we even got support from estate owners and some of “Højremændene” (*conservative party members*) were rubbing their hands, when we really went after “Venstremændene” (*conservative farmer’s party members*). In the end it resulted in the Ministry of Agriculture establishing a commission to work out new regulations for distribution of grants.

“Folketingsmand” Pinstrup (*a member of the lower house*) chaired the commission and the ministry called for “Landbo” and “Husmandsforeningernes” leaders to be part of the discussions. Personally I have been part of many commissions, but never seen a chair stopping negotiations and declaring: *We have now heard enough and cannot continue with all that nonsense, so I am proposing a resolution and that is all we will be discussing.* With such an ultimatum the commission discussions became useless. For two days we discussed in general and proposed to the ministry, that a federal crop commission be established to administer and distribute the grants according to the two organizations proposals.

Husmandsforeningerne demanded to get their own grants, administrate them without interference from other organizations and only be responsible to the ministry. Chamberlain Beck, of Engelstoft then said that he could not understand Husmændenes dissatisfaction, since in Jutland no one complained about current conditions. After this statement I pointed out the many resolutions accepted all over Denmark, but of course some Husmænd were still afraid to make their opinion known to the Chamberlain. His response was: *Yes you may be right in this.* Husmændene maintained their demands and Karl Hansen, of Ankerstrade suggested that I should be part of the general commission, but I declined. The result of this commission’s discussions was the creation of provincial commissions each with five elected members.

If “Landboforeningen” had more members than Husmandsforeningen, they would select 3 members and vice versa if Husmændene had more members. It was a bad decision from the beginning, creating only discontent between the parties and not cooperation. The minister, the Commission chairman and “Landboforeningerne” still wanted to preserve their influence and be custodians for Husmændene. I stated at that point *“Many people can of course have some use of a custodian from time to time, but only an idiot needs one all the time”*.

In regard to the island of Fyn, the majority belonged to Husmændene, so we had 3 committee members and “Landboforeningen” had 2 represented by Peder Pedersen, of Søllinge and architect Christensen, of Særslev, a couple of decent men, but since they represented the landowner’s viewpoint, they were voted down at the meetings with the minister and only stayed a year before they resigned. They did not want to be part of a commission where Husmændene had the majority.

One of the cases creating a lot of disagreement was the selection of judges for selecting the best managed Husmandsbrug. Prior to the committee, it was always the large landowners, estate owners and “Jægermestre” (*persons arranging the royal hunts*) chairing such judging committees, and we felt the best Husmænd could very well be judges too, resulting in us deposing all the judges and selecting Husmænd instead.

Prior to Husmandsforeningen being part of the committee, trips lasting several days to meetings were common and we wanted to keep that, but also to add some one day trips for visits to different parts of Fyn. Few Husmænd would be able to be away for several days and it was difficult for a husband and wife to be away for such a long time too, but day trips was possible. Time has also shown that there was a great need for such one day meetings and sometime they had up to a thousand participants.

In regard to this, a second disagreement came up. We all agreed such meetings should end with a lecture, but we could not agree on who should give it. We wanted the subject to be of a social political nature, but since the committee could not agree, such lectures never took place.

Many of the large landowners became uncomfortable, when they saw Husmændenes 40 to 50 wagons filled with happy women and men and worse, when they chartered trains for 1000 people for meetings in Askov or Høng agricultural school. A large landowner commented once to me *“It’s a great thing you have created, but it would be wise, if you stayed home and looked after your land.”* He then named a Husmand, who had participated in a meeting, when his field of beets had not been weeded. However, this man became one of the best in the parish, thanks to his trips, where he saw many well kept fields and listened to excellent lectures. With our own grants and having the right to manage our own businesses, it was now reasonable for us to we start investigating the many other concerns to the small landowners.



## **Husmændenes Program Formes.**

### **The progress of the small landowner's associations**

As soon as I became president of the Fynske Husmand's association, I started to contact similar associations across Denmark immediately, so we could begin working together.

We invited the president from "Jydske" (*Jutland*) Husmand's associations Jørgen Nielsen, of Viby and "Sjællandske" (*Zealand*) Karl Hansen, of Ankerstræde, to speak at our convention and I was invited to participate in their conventions in other parts of Denmark.



Jørgen Nielsen, Viby.

Jørgen Nielsen

After many meetings in 1906 we were able to arrange a convention where all Husmands associations' boards participated and we established the "United Danish Husmand's association" with Karl Hansen as its first president.

It did not go very well, since we had a lot of disagreements, both about goals and financing, but we worked hard for the common good.

Karl Hansen was an excellent speaker and rabble-rouser, but he was difficult to work with, especially if he did not get his own way. Jørgen Nielsen also did not give in easily, which resulted in them not working well together.

Personally, I got along with Jørgen Nielsen much better than Karl Hansen.

When Hansen resigned, I was elected president, but I only stayed for one year.

Time and time again, I called the board to meetings about many urgent matters and we managed to agree on many, except the most important of them all. A common social program could not be agreed upon.

I therefore decided not to accept re-election, and nominated Jørgen Nielsen as the next president. In 1910 we agreed to a general convention in Odense, and at the same time accepted a program listing the association's professional and social goals.

It was difficult to get an agreement on the social goals, and Karl Hansen was asked to work out the details and start negotiating.

In the meantime, dissatisfaction about Karl Hansen in the "Sjællandske" (*Zealand*) association over his purchase and distribution of horses to members had arisen, and the day before the



general meeting in Odense the association's board demanded that Karl Hansen present his proposal for the social program for their approval.

Karl Hansen declined and the board then asked me to prepare and present their program proposal at the convention the next day. I had very little time to work out the details, but I managed to present the proposal.

Referring to the well known "Køgeresolution" of 1902 (*The greatest organized force in Denmark, the small landholders counting some 100,000 members, demanded changes to the taxation of land values and the abolition of taxes upon industry and consumption, taking the question into politics in 1902, with the adoption of their now well-known resolution passed at their Convention in Køge that year*). In a lecture by Sophus Berthelsen, a resolution demanding easier access to land and a new property tax replacing present taxes and other burdens was drafted and unanimously adopted.

The previous Husmandslov (*law regarding small landowners*) never finished its mandate. Just the opposite, since it raised the cost of land to the benefit of the owners, and many Husmænd suffered economic distress. A law for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many messed up the land reform and needed to be repealed as soon as possible.

In my speech to the convention I outlined the following:

The delegates from this convention propose that any honorable man or woman, who is skilled in farming, will be given the right to a farmland lot at a reasonable price and size, so a family can live on it and not have to seek outside work to support itself.

The lot price should, as proposed by the "Jyske" (*Jutland*) Husmand's association, not be more than the governments set land value tax, plus any reasonable additional cost the commission saw fit. The user of such a lot should not pay remuneration greater than that equal to a reasonable rental of such a property.

When the government's land tax is respected, the buyer should, of course, also have complete disposal of the land without any form of restriction.

The existing "Statshusmænd's" (*small landowners granted land from the government*) obligations to the Federal Treasury would be relieved if the purchase cost of their land was greater than the tax value, making it equal to Husmænd purchasing their land after the new law was in place.

Husmandsstanden would also have an appropriate influence in the selection of members appointed to commissions.

When the government accepted this proposal, insuring the cost of all land at a regulated price, it would have done its duty.

We want to expressly point out that Husmændene will not be satisfied until "Køgeresolution's" tax reforms are implemented, or guaranteed in the near future.

The convention also declared: *The revisions to Husmandsloven must remove the present exceptions and inheritance rule, and must guarantee every Danish man the right to land for his own home at an affordable price.*

The convention maintained, unconditionally now, as previously, that "Køgeresolution's" legal principles would be the foundation to any future reforms and it stated its disappointment in the parliament's newly passed Customs Law. This law, like the new tax laws of 1903, did little for Husmændenes reasonable request for a common reform of direct and indirect taxes, and they would not rest until it was fully in place.

At this convention 110 delegates participated, 50 Jutes, 35 Zealanders, 16 Fynboer, 3 Bornholmere, 4 Lollændre and 2 from Langeland. Jørgen Nielsen declared the convention open with the following people invited: Prime Minister Zhale, Paul Christensen, Member of "Folketinget", Lawyer Vilhelm Nielsen, Estate Steward Berthelsen, Principal Søndergaard, Teacher of agriculture, Jakop Lange, N. J. Brant, of Bramminge and all Husmands' Associations board members.

The first topic was a detailed discussion about establishing an agricultural council, and Principal Søndergaard proposed we contact the government, asking for the establishment of such a council to advice on all matters regarding farming. This council should have 10 members all elected from Husmands and Landbo associations. In addition, we would demand the existing law covering livestock be reformed, to be useful for the small landowner too.

The social issues were presented by me and were unanimously passed, with, however, the proviso that it should be presented again at the convention in 1913.

The United Danish Husmand's association board was instructed to present the convention's program statements to all "Rigsdagskandidater" (*Rigsdagen was Denmark's first parliament, and it was incorporated in the Constitution of 1849. It was a bicameral legislature, consisting of two houses, the Folketing and the Landsting*) prior to the next election.

Jørgen Nielsen closed the convention to great enthusiasm, and we finished by singing Skjoldborg's song, ending the first national congress.

Several historians believe the United Danish Husmand's association was founded during the convention of 1910, but that is not correct. It was founded during the convention in 1906, and even if we had difficulties agreeing to the movement's social programs, much important work was done that cannot be ignored.

In the period from 1906 to 1910 great economical undertakings were started, such as: Mortgage institutions, fire and accident insurance, and parceling of large estates.

We were also able to get important grants previously denied the small landowner.

After the convention in Odense we had much better cooperation with all the associations. Jørgen Nielsen was president for the United Danish Husmand's association and a year later, Niels Fredriksen was elected president for the "Sjællandske" association.

Jørgen Nielsen was president until his death and was a skilled and respected leader.

After Jørgen Nielsen passed away, Rasmus Jensen Vandman was elected president for a number of years. He was a man everyone trusted for his social and democratic ideas. After he resigned as president, he was replaced by Jens Holdgaard, who became an important and skilled leader contributing much to Husmændenes growing influence. After his much too early death, he was replaced by Niels Peder Andreasen, the president for the United Sjællandske Husmand's association.

In 1912 we experienced a disagreement on the board of the United Fynske Husmand's association. This was caused by Hans J. Hansen, of Tommerup, who became angry at me and started a partition to have me removed as president. He was prepared to use any means to accomplish that end, and when I was elected Member of Parliament for Præstø ward, he did all he could to damage my reputation.

Later, during the process of parceling land for three Husmænd from Bågøgård, he presented himself as a witness against me, and repeated an old story, which a High Court judge later called some kind of "kællingsludder" (*bitch nonsense*).

The board then decided to resign in order not to hurt the association. Johannes Hansen, of Sødunge, was elected president, and since then, I have had nothing to do with the United Fynske Husmand's association. However in all years except one, I sat on "Husmandsskolen's" (*the school for Husmænd*) board, until retiring and becoming an honorary member.

## **Statens Planteavlsudvalg**

### **The Government's committee for crop farming**

I was elected by the United Danish Husmand's association to the board of the government's committee for crop farming for 14 years.

Prior to this, the committee's members were elected from the "Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningsselskab" (*Royal Danish Landowners Association*), Danish Farmers organizations and the Agricultural College, but I was the first Husmand on the board when it added two new seats. The second one represented Danish gardeners.

Part of the committee's work was to distribute grants to farming and horticultural research stations, which at that time were being expanded significantly, and this was very interesting and instructive work for me.

The leaders of such research stations became very important to the development of agriculture and horticulture in Denmark, and as a board member I worked closely with a number of important people.

During the last year members of the board, visited Holland to study the reclamation of wetland, since experiments had started in Denmark to reclaim marchland around Ribe and Tønder (areas in southwest Jutland).

Holland is a beautiful country, and I have never seen a place with such well kept buildings and specialized agriculture and horticulture.

Each farm is the size of a municipality, and specialized in products for export to London England, such as flax, birdseed, potatoes etc. At drained and reclaimed areas, different types of onions were grown, while in other places, greenhouses covered large areas, and I have never seen anything so beautiful.

While driving, we saw many groups of large villas, each with several acres of garden and park. We were also very well received by the local people.

The director of the large companies cultivating onions spoke Danish, and he was our guide for several days, making sure that we saw everything of interest to us.

As a final gesture, he invited us to a fancy dinner in Den Haag, a very beautiful city. We often talk here in Denmark about Copenhagen being too big a head for such a small country, but in Holland there are 4 cities the size of Copenhagen. However one can also see, it is not the land alone here in Holland that makes it rich, since much comes from their wealthy colonies overseas too.

This trip was a very interesting ending to my time spent with the committee, and during a pause in the trip, a small party was arranged, giving me an opportunity to say farewell and thank the board for the many interesting experiences I had had over the years.

The Danish state owned, and for many years leased out, two large farms. Trollesminde and Faurholm, but it had never been a profitable deal for the government. When I was a member of "Rigsdagen" (*upper parliament*), it was decided the two farms should be managed by the government directly, and used for research into livestock, farm equipment, and poultry rising. The Minister of Agriculture Kristjan Pedersen, formed an administrative committee, appointing the principal of the State Research Laboratory Hoffmann Bang as chair.

This committee for crop farming selected 2 members to the board, and I was one of them.

Deputy Minister H. C. Larsen from the Ministry of Agriculture and Professor O. H. Larsen from the College of Agriculture were also selected. Principal Rasmussen, of Næsgaard, represented the livestock committee and for Husmændene, N. P. Nielsen, of Spjellerup.

This committee was now in charge of managing the farms to make sure that both land and buildings would be suitable for the task. Since both were in very poor condition, it was important to select a knowledgeable inspector to manage it all. Estate owner Jensen Overgaard, an unusually energetic and respected man was selected, and he became an excellent leader, who quickly got the properties in order and they became important research stations.

At that point Jensen Overgaard resigned and deputy minister H. C. Larsen took over. It should also be noted that a lot of money was spent to get the two farms operating properly before they could be turned over to the administrative committee.

## **“Husmandsbrandkassen”**

### **The small landowner’s fire insurance company**

At the start of the Husmands movement, a connection with Vilhelm Nielsen, a lawyer from Copenhagen, was made, and he became an important benefactor to the association. Husmændene needed legal expertise, and a man who not only understood the movement’s goal and work, but also could present such ideas in a proper manner.

Vilhelm Nielsen not only gave us his legal expertise, but also his rare administrative skills and this association was a great benefit to the movement.

The first benefit was the creation of “Husmandshypotekforeningen” (*mortgage credit union*), a Fire and Accident Insurance Company and a land redistribution association for copyholder farms (*A copyholder was a farmer, who had a contract for a copyhold- farm. The condition of the contract became binding, when the copyhold-contract was paid. If the copyholder honored the conditions in the contract, the landowner could not cancel the copyhold during the lifespan of the farmer and his widow. The common description of a copyholder was “hovbonde” (peasant who performed villain service)*).

All this turned out much better than we ever had expected, and after Vilhelm Nielsen left, we started to promote the Fire and Accident Insurance Company nationwide, since it needed to be a certain size to be approved by the Ministry of Justice.

The idea was to make the insurance company into a stand-alone business, but until it was launched and approved by the government, the board consisted of Husmandsforeningernes’ presidents, and they were the people promoting this all over Denmark.

On the island of Fyn, we created a promotional committee conducting meetings in most of the local parishes. Usually we had 3 speakers for such meetings, one for the insurance issue, one for promoting an afterschool for Husmænd and one about the general movement for Husmænd. Never has such a systematic and successful promotion been undertaken, and in every parish a man was appointed to go from door to door signing Husmænd up for the Fire and Accident Insurance Company.

Besides the many meetings on Fyn, I also spoke at 60 meetings in Ribe, Viborg, Randers, Aalborg, and Hjørring, counties in Jutland.

The president of the united Husmandsforeninger in Jutland, Jørgen Nielsen of Viby and Paul Jensen of Bramminge, had a very difficult time, since they had libeled some of the managers of “Landbygningernes Almindelige Brandforsikringer” (a commercial insurance company). They were found guilty of libel several times and fined, so it was difficult for them to speak at many places.

There was plenty of work for all of us, so I managed their meetings, which often had heated debates, especially in Viborg County. Here an employee from the commercial insurance company followed me from meeting to meeting, and often it was not very parliamentary language that was used in our debates.

The local Husmandsforeninger in Viborg parish arranged a meeting, where 7 to 800 people showed up. Blacksmith Thomas Pedersen of Rødding, opened the meeting by telling them that we had two speakers: Emil Rasmussen, the president for Fynske Husmandsforeninger, and the great liar from Raunstrup, Niels Chr. Nielsen.

I was amazed. Could he really get away with such a statement? Nielsen got up and stated: *I am taking note about your insult, Thomas Pedersen*, who then just replied: *You do just that Niels, but remember everyone here knows it's true*. No trial came out of it, but Nielsen was present at all meetings in Viborg and Randers parishes.

I had little experience in the insurance business, but either did he, so we were equal. When I spoke for an hour, I used three quarters to explain Husmændenes movement and goals and then in the last fifteen minutes about fire insurance as part of the movement. Niels Chr. Nielsen then made a stupid decision to debate my statements point by point, so he also had little time to talk about insurance and often before he got to that, he was booed by the audience. He never realized that he was using a completely wrong tactic in all such meetings.

In Aalborg, Hjørring and Ribe counties, it was much more peaceful. In Ribe I also managed to establish nine new Husmandsforeninger and every place I visited, I was received with fantastic hospitality and often met by a Husmand driving a wagon pulled by a pair of frisky Icelandic horses.

A retired blacksmith, Niels Thuesen of Tvile, who later became district manager and representative for Husmandsforeningen's insurance company, had a pair of Icelandic horses, which were like purebred racehorses.

We drove many miles over the moor and I often thought that few people would show up for our meetings, but when we arrived at a school, where the meetings usually took place, it was often a full house.

At some places the landowners would show up to try to stop the founding of a new Husmandsforening, and the evening before they would say to me: *We hope you are not going to talk politics and create a split between us. Here we are all equal with no difference between Husmænd and Landowners*. When I then asked them how many Husmænd sat on the parish council or the board of directors at the co-op dairy, they had to admit there were none. During many lively debates, there was never complete agreement between Husmænd and Landowners. At such meetings, a new Husmandsforening was often founded, and many signed up for our insurance company.

During my travels on the moors, I met many peculiar Husmænd. They had such large farming areas that on Fyn, they would have been estates. I stayed with a man in Finderup, who was co-founder of a local Husmandsforening, and when I asked him how much land he had, he told me 300 acres. A second Husmand told me that in his family, there were 7 siblings, and each got 30 acres from their father's house. At another place, I met a man with 4 horse spans and 100 milk cows. He was a very skilled farmer, who managed to cultivate a large property from the moor and now had land the size of a large farm, so it was no longer proper for him to be part of Husmandsforeningen.

At meetings in Aalborg parish, many displayed great interest and it helped us a lot that local people, who by skilled and hard work had become prosperous, were still interested in the movement and the insurance company.

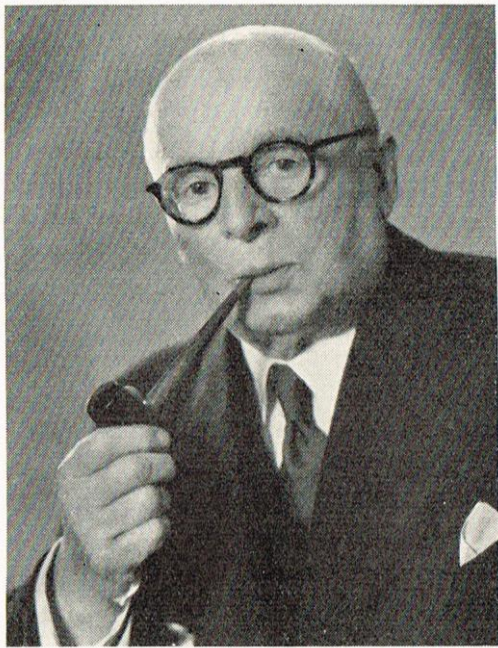
In Hjørring I had a lot of support from Otto Thorhauge, who later became a Member of Parliament.

All the other places in Jutland and Fyn had little resistance to our work. "Branddirektør" Guldbrandsen, of Odense, (*a civil servant for the local fire department*) visited only one meeting in Lumby Community Center together with Lars Hansen, of Anderup, who represented a

commercial fire insurance company, because they quickly realized, that their presence became advertising for Husmandsforsikeringen.

As a result of our promotion, we signed up more than 30 million Kroner in fire insurance.

That was 10 million more than required by law, but even then Justice Minister Alberti had the nerve to deny us recognition, creating great astonishment and anger in our committee. All of us then showed up at Alberti's office to try to get him to change his mind, but he refused. Vilhelm Nielsen reproached him with strong words for his behavior, and Jørgen Nielsen, of Viby, finished with the following: *With your decision, we are now prepared to travel the country and create such a movement against you that your seat in Parliament will start to shake.* To this Alberti answered that we could do as we pleased. He was arrested shortly after as one of the country's largest swindlers.



Direktør Vilhelm Nielsen.

Director Vilhelm Nielsen

We now had to start over again, but we more than doubled the amount of money signed up for insurance policies, plus a large fund to cover unforeseen expenses. A large accident and liability, plus a servant and youth insurance, were also added. All this was possible under Vilhelm Nielsen's excellent administration.





Der trækkes lod om præmier for dygtig medlemstegning.

The Insurance board draws prizes for the top insurance sellers



Husmandsbrandkassens ejendom på Nørrevold 16, der giver plads til alle de økonomiske foretagender. Foran bygningen står brandkassens repræsentantskab.

Headquarters for the Husmands Insurance Company on Nørrebro 16, Odense with all the local representatives in Denmark.

## **“Husmandsskolen in Odense”**

### **The Afterschool in Odense for Husmænd**

The president from Frørup parish Husmandsforening, Johannes Knudsen, who had been a student at Skaarup Agricultural College, had discussed with its principal, Søndergaard, the possibility of cooperation between him and the Fynske Husmænd, and he had indicated much interest in such a project.

During the highly charged convention, with the disagreement among the delegates who wanted to remain part of the landowners association, and us, who wanted to have our own association for Husmænd, Principal Søndergaard had been on our side. I remember him stating: *Do not join the landowners association, who just kicked me out. Preserve your own independence.*

We on the board had several conversations with Søndergaard, but it was not possible to get anymore land for Skaarup College, so we started looking for property for a new college. The first result was an agreement with Nyborg municipality, which offered a suitable property for a reasonable price. We also looked at property at Erholm Estate, but we did not think the property offered to us was suitable; however proprietor Chamberlain Cederfeld de Simonsen indicated he would still support us, since he thought a college was a sound idea. He then donated 1000 kroner to the college fund.

Later, we tried to get other landlords interested in the project, which was badly needed, but it was disappointing. The Duke on Einsiedelsborg greeted us kindly, but he did not want to support us with funding and he stated that if Husmænd went to school and become too smart, then they would not want to work for him.

We did manage to collect some funds, but not enough for such a large project.

We reached an agreement with Nyborg's city council, elected a board for the college, and hired a manager, as well as purchasing horses and equipment to start cultivating the land.

However, the property sale had to be approved by both the Ministers of Culture and the Interior. As usual, we met with resistance from the ministers, and our money was wasted.

In the meantime, we made a connection with Barrister Jens Rasmussen in Odense and Editor Marott, both member of Odense city council, who indicated they were interested in opening a discussion about a property in Odense as well as offering us very favorable terms.

I was elected chair of the committee and Fredrik Hansen, of Korup, chaired the building committee.

We entered into negotiations with the two men about a beautiful location in Odense, and after much hardship, we were able to build the college with a lot of help from Principal Søndergaard. Professor Nyrop, the contractor for Copenhagen's city hall, designed the college and then turned it over to architect Strøm Teisen to supervise the construction.

Our intention was to spend 50 000 kroner on the building, but before we could complete the project, the cost had risen to 100 000.

With our naive optimism, we had been sure that the country's first real independent college for Husmænd would meet with much generosity.

Accepting the position as president for the College Board, I insisted that the position should always be filled by a president from the United Fynske Husmandsforening. That way the movement and the college would always be in tune with each other.

We acknowledge Husmandsstandens' knowledge was insufficient and we needed both better farming skills, general knowledge, and culture.

Husmandsskolen must therefore be not only an agricultural college, but also a "Folkehøjskole" *(The Danish folk high schools offer non-formal adult education. Most students were between 18 and 24 years old and the length of a typical stay was 4 months. Students slept, ate, studied and spent their spare time at the school. There were no academic requirements for admittance and there were no exams - but students would receive a diploma as a proof of attendance).*

High ideals and nice talk were not enough, and much money was required to fulfill our dream.

Barrister Vilhelm Nielsen was our legal adviser, and helped us a lot during negotiations for a possible university grant from Copenhagen. Many of the local Husmandsforeninger also contributed funds, but it cannot be denied that it was difficult to find enough funding.

The money we collected was used for construction as the college progressed, until one day when we did not have enough funds to pay the trades. We needed 30 000 kroner and all our efforts with political parties and individuals resulted in little more.

As a result of such dire circumstances, a meeting was called in Odense where the College Board and Principal, together with friends of the school, decided to divide this money among us and use it to our best ability. At the last minute, we were able to save the college and I have never had a happier day in my life. To make this happen, it should be pointed out that each of us at the meeting had to personally guarantee the money he was responsible for, and make the payments. Many Husmænd still did not understand the importance of the college and what it would mean to them. They cheered loudly every time we asked them, but when it came to collecting money, few contributed.

Luckily, we still had people who understood how important such a college would be to Husmændene's movement, and many stood behind the board, helping us make the payments. I would like to thank the following people: Niels Peter Nielsen, of Lille Viby, Peder Pedersen, of Nørre Broby, Paul Frederik Jensen, of Horsebæk, Gerhard Nielsen, of Herrested, Principal Søndergaard, Johannes Christensen, of Frørup, Hans Larsen Skov, of Farstrup, Benjamin Nielsen, of Rue, Estate owner H. P. Hansen, of Sønder Esterbølle, Doctor Trautner, of Bogense and many more, who helped the board fulfill their commitments and save the college's and the Fynske Husmænd's honor.

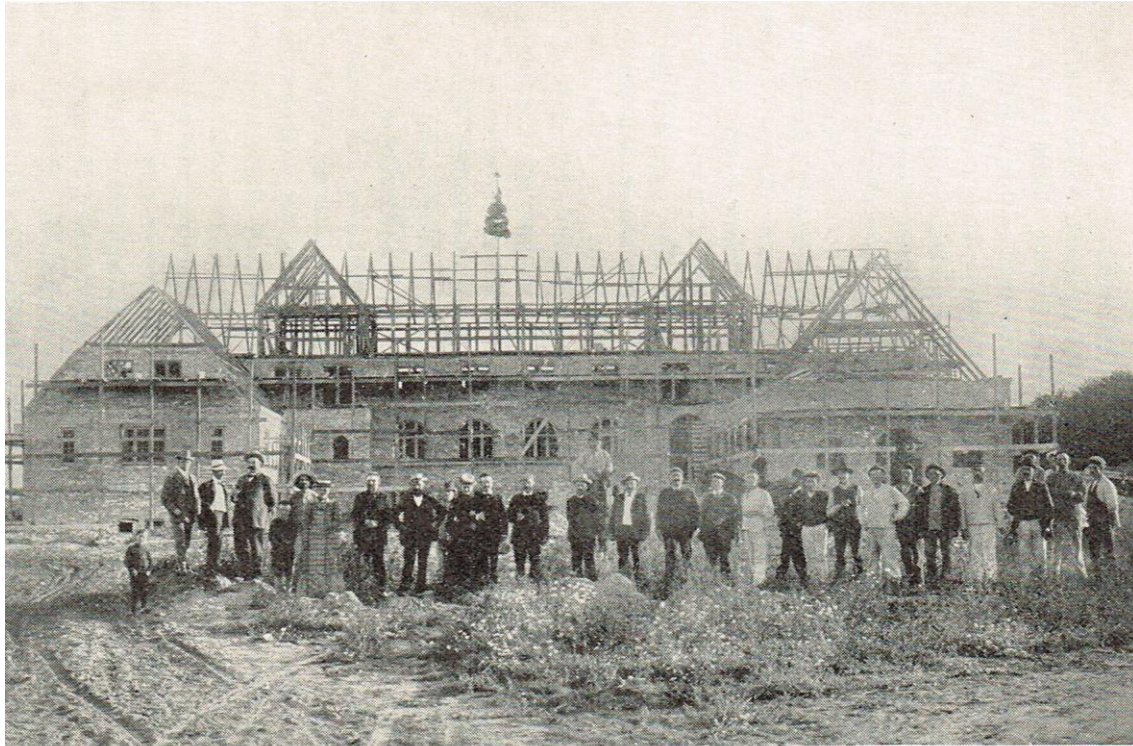
All who worked on building the college got paid and it should also be mentioned, we had excellent advice from Vilhelm Nielsen and Jens Rasmussen, with Barrister Niels Madsen as legal adviser.

Today, when we think how much it cost to build a school, 100 000 kroner is not much, but at that time, it was ten times more difficult to raise money than it is today.

When the new College cornerstone was laid, people from all over Fyn gathered, as well as the presidents from Husmandsforeningerne around the country, and I was very happy and proud to have the honor of laying the cornerstone.

During "Rejsegildet" *(a Danish tradition, when the roof framing is completed on a new building, there is a party)* many people also showed up, and Frederik Hansen, as chair of the building committee, made a great speech about what the college was going to do for the Husmand's movement.





Rejsegilde på Fyns Stifts Husmandsskole.

“Rejsegilde” for the Afterschool in Odense

However, the biggest gathering came at the inauguration, where Principal Søndergaard made an emotional speech about the struggle to complete this project. A number of other dignitaries also spoke and several songs were composed to praise the new college.

Skjoldborg and teacher Andersen, as well as others, had composed songs to celebrate the event. We had an enthusiastic atmosphere and I remember my wife telling me; *I was often sorry about all the time and money you spent on this project, but after what I saw and heard today, I no longer have any regrets.*

The college also proved that this idea was sound and right. Principal Søndergaard did an excellent job starting the college and managing it for the first years. He was a good economist, but did have some problems with the livestock manager at that time, as well as the college committee's co-chair Frederik Hansen, resulting in the committee being split in two.

Søndergaard then resigned and bought a farm in Ejby close to Odense.

Former “Højskoleforstander” (*a principal of a Danish folk high school*) Nielsen-Svinning was at that time available and was asked to take over management of the college. He was an excellent academic, but not as good an economist and he wanted to create a trade department, which the board was against, and as we still had economic problems, he resigned.

After advice from Paul Frederik Jensen, we approached Jakob Lange, a teacher at Dalum Agricultural College, who we all admired and wanted as our new principal. We were delighted, when he accepted the position, and since he at the same time got married, we not only gained an excellent principal, but also his wife who became “Højskolemor” (*not easy to translate, but I think it's close to “a substitute mother for the students”*).

Jacob Lange was a good and firm scientist, able to manage the college well, and his wife, a lovable housewife, was much appreciated by many students. Jakob Lange's time as principal will always stand out in the heydays of Husmandsskolen in Fyn.

The board pretty well gave him freedom to manage the college affairs as he saw fit, but being close to 70 years old, he informed the board that he would retire as soon as a replacement could be found.

Based on Lange's recommendation, we offered Principal Fjord Jensen, who very few of us knew, the position. Both he and his wife did an excellent job. He was well informed and a good economist, who always had the college budget well under control, especially the farm "Højstrupgaarden", which earned much income to help us create stable conditions for the College's finances.

It was not always appreciated that the College farmland in Nielsen-Svinning's time had been leased out to the United Husmandsforeningen, to be used for creating a large orchard and model chicken farm. This continued under Lange's leadership.

The price of the land was set very low, guaranteeing a large income for the United Husmandsforeningen, but Principal Fjord Jensen felt that such a large profit rightly belonged to the College, and the lease should be cancelled. For that reason, a conflict between the boards of the principal and the association began. On top of that, we had a very difficult time after the 1940 occupation, when the German army took over our building and we had to find new locations to continue the College. I admire the patience Principal Fjord Jensen and his wife used to deal with such difficulties, but eventually they became too much for him, and he had to resign. Mrs. Fjord Jensen was the ideal "Højskolemor"; she had all the good qualities of Mrs. Lange. Always kind, friendly and helpful to everyone, as well as skilled in her work; all qualities well appreciated by anyone close to the College.

It was with great sorrow that we got the message from the Germans that the building was seized, and even worse, that it was to be used as a prison where Danish men and women from the resistance were tortured.

I remember, and could hear the explosions all the way to Hannesborg, when the English bombed and destroyed the building. This was unnecessary, since it was only a matter of days before the Germans capitulated. On top of that, the Germans had been suspicious and left the building before the bombardment. Other houses in the neighborhood were also destroyed. Several people were killed and many wounded.

I was apprehensive regarding the change of leadership, especially after the difficulty we had had getting a majority of the board to agree to purchase Vrangsbækgaard at Snestrup for the new College. We had disagreed as to where the new College should be built. My position was that the College should be rebuilt on the old property, after so many years of effort on this beautiful and lucrative property which was large enough for us. Some people believed that the college would be too cramped in by new development around the property, and to top this off, there were plans for the college farm at Højstrup to be turned into a military base, so they felt it would be undesirable for the female students.

I never understood this fear, since we cannot babysit grown people, and soldiers were no worse than other young people. Some even suggested moving the College away from Odense, something I personally was much against, since I did not see how the morale could be better in the city of Assens.

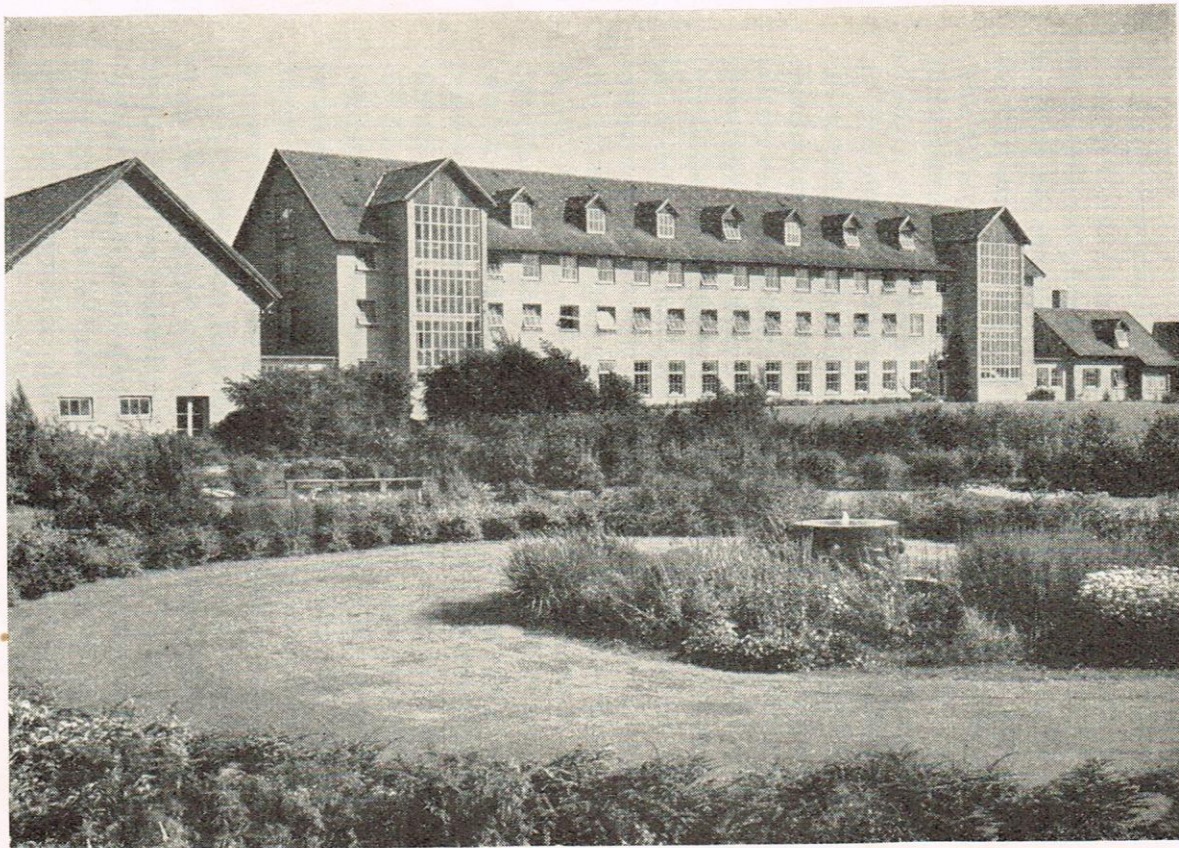


After all, Odense was the most central place on Fyn, and a natural gathering point for large Husmand conventions.

If it was up to me, I would choose the Snestrup location again, even if I had to admit that it would take several years before we would have a beautiful place like the old one. It would be expensive, and before we could start, the necessary funds had to be raised, but I was delighted to work towards this end, and this time, the value of the project was much better understood by most Husmænd. Guided by Lauritz Nielsen, the president for the united Husmandsforeninger, we managed to raise considerable funds. Husmændenes Fire and Accident Insurance Company donated 5000 kroner and “Fyens Disconto-kasse” (*a Trust company*) also donated 5000 kroner. Many large businesses related to the Co-Op movement and even some old opponents donated funds, even more than we had expected. A complete list of donors can be found displayed at the College today.

My fear that the college would have economical difficulties disappeared.

Lauritz Nielsen, as chair of the building committee, had much help from the new College’s architect Mr. Kyhl, who designed a beautiful building well equipped to meet the needs of educating the young and the Fynske Husmænd could be proud.



Den genrejste Fyns Stifts Husmandsskole.

Fyns Stifts new Afterschool in Odense

My fears regarding the change of management also proved false, since the new principal Grønborg and his wife, took up their new positions with great skill and created much respect for

the College, as can be measured by the increase in students.

The reputation of the College has reached far outside Denmark's borders, and many national and international conventions are now staged in our building.

An important part of this reputation must also be given to Principal Grønborg's public speaking activities, making the College known to many more people.

Excellent consultants and college teachers also made their contribution to the good reputation of the college, and we can only be happy and proud with the rebuilt Husmands College.

Its reputation has had a great influence on many of the students who studied there, and a number of the country's best fruit plantation owners acquired their knowledge there. Consultant

Munkegaard, who was the first consultant attached to the College, created an education of great advantage to young students, who would now be able to make a decent living growing fruit on

relatively small plantations. To tell the truth, we now had a College like I had personally dreamed about as a young man, where a Husmand, his wife and grown children, could achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to make a contribution to the betterment of our community.

Participating in the work for Fyns County Husmands College has given me so much happiness, that now in my old days I can sing with Jeppe Aakjær:

Lad mig kun flagre hen som blad i høst

(Let me just flutter away like a leaf in harvest)

Når du mit land, min stamme, frit må leve

(When you my country, my tribe, are free to live)

## **“Udstykningsforeningerne”**

### **Associations for land distribution**

The first Husmandsbrugs (*small farms*) were created with help from the federal government and had a long history of many discussions over the issue of ownership or copyholder (*A copyholder was a farmer who had a contract for a copyhold- farm. The condition of the contract became binding when the copyhold-contract was paid. If the copyholder honored the conditions in the contract, the landowner could not cancel the copyhold during the lifespan of the farmer and his widow. The common description of a copyholder was “hovbonde”*).

From the time Pastor Chr. Clausen received a gold medal 1771 in Brande for his proposal, regarding how to distribute farm land, more than 100 years passed before the first Husmandslov (*law about small landowners*) became law in 1899. Its title was “The law about land for farm workers” and its content corresponded to the title.

The law would give farm workers support, so that they were tied to a specific place, but still available as farmhands for the estates and large farms. The size of such lots was set between 3 ½ and 5 acres and the government loan could not be more than 4000 kroner. Such Husmandsbrugs were the kind of residences which gave a family a place to sleep at night and spend Sundays, since the husband had to work the other six days of the week.

A total of 2 million kroner was made available yearly to finance the law, making it possible to establish 813 such Husmandsbrugs in the first 3 years.

In Randers county where Member of “Folketinget” (*Lower house*) Pedersen-Nyskov chaired the committee, this law was used quite aggressively, but it took 5 ½ years for “Rigsdagen” (*Upper house*) to agree to this law. It had little value, but it was at least a start toward making it impossible to stop the land reform from making properties available for the little man.

In 1903-04, the law was renewed for a new 5 year period, and the government loan raised to 5000 kroner, and 5 million kroner was made available yearly.

However, it was becoming clear that a much more aggressive land reform law was needed. In the 10 years from 1890 to 1900 54 000 Danes immigrated to USA, and from 1900 to 1910 immigration increased to 61 000 making it clear that something had to be done to keep young farm workers in the country.

It was also becoming clear that there were little risk in the government’s loan activities. Up to 1908, 3520 Husmandsbrugs were created with 15 million kroner in loans and only 6870 kroner defaulted.

This law was specifically used in Jutland, and I remember well how people looked down on a “Statshusmand” (*a Husmand with a federal loan*). They were viewed as a lower class of Husmænd, and the land they could buy was usually in poor quality and location. The establishment of land distribution associations was important to the cause.

In 1904, an association was founded in Randers County, followed by the Zealand association in 1906 and expanded in 1913 to cover Fyn, as well as Southern Jutland in 1922.

Such land distribution associations did significant work: for example on Zealand and Fyn, where they, in a span of 18 years, purchased 136 properties with 20 000 acres of land parceled out to 1529 “Husmandsbrugs”. After the 1919 land law, 1200 acres were also transferred to the government’s land law committee, as well as land sold to expand “Husmandsbrugs” in need of more land. The need for larger loans was raised by many “Husmandsforeninger” during the



convention in Jutland in October of 1906.

In 1908, a demand to increase loans to 8000 kroner was made. The Minister of Agriculture then proposed this to the Upper House of Parliament, where its importance was heatedly debated. During the debate it was pointed out that such a law would be better for the seller than the buyer of land, but that was denied by Pedersen Nyskov, the commission chairman for the county of Randers.

It was pointed out that the present law did not fulfill its mission, since it could be shown that the average Statshusmand worked 155 days yearly as a day labourer for others.

When the new law was adopted, loans were increased to 6500 kroner and, if the land was especially expensive, up to 8000 kroner. The title of this new law was "The law for creation of Husmandsbrugs". The significance of this would be that the size of a "Husmandssted" could be large enough to support a family on its own.

To some degree this law met "Husmændenes" demands, but the cost of land and buildings were increasing so fast, that it made little difference to the size of each property. Director Vilhelm Nielsen, the chairman for Zealand, Fyn and Southern Jutland land distribution associations, did an excellent job, helped by local county lawyers and land inspectors. There were no lawsuits or other difficulties with the many distributions he oversaw, and we were able to raise a lot of capital in the local banks. Under his guidance "Husmandsforeningerne" acquired great trust from both banks and landowners. At that time, there were periods when we bought a farm weekly, and an estate biweekly. There were too many to name, but "Husmandsstederne" are there today, witness to our work.

Normally any new buildings were built with government loans after the old law, but larger properties were sold with good buildings plus a plot of land. This approach was often criticized, when perfectly good buildings were demolished, making it very costly. During this period many Husmænd got good quality land and a good location for a reasonable price.

Prior to the land distribution associations, a "Husmand" would often end up with undesirable land bought for a too high price.

The associations also bought estates consisting of several large farms e.g. Dalum and Glorup on Fyn. In such cases, we would sell the estate separately, but still have considerable farmland left over for distribution. Our approach was always to sell such land for a reasonable price and any profit created, went into the associations consolidated reserve fund. This created a financial trust and, even if we sold the land cheaply, we managed to create a large reserve fund. The big estates bought on Fyn often earned a large profit, and this benefited the movement greatly. It made it possible for the land reform association to support a number of institutions beneficial to the new "Husmænd". I just want to mention one: "Bedre Bykkeskik" (*Better Building Practices*), which had skilled architects design not only practical, but also pretty, new buildings for the new "Husmændssteder". Sometimes we were also able to give rent-free loans to many Husmænd toward the purchase of livestock and equipment. In addition, we loaned "Husmandsskolen" in Odense the money to drain some wetland on its property.

As was previously mentioned, the Zealand and Fyn associations also got involved in land distribution in Southern Jutland. The first large farm purchased was Stakkehoved near Haderslev. The president for the Southern Jutland "Husmandsforening" Jørgen Petersen, of Halk, and Anton Hansen, of Galetus, both did excellent jobs.

Since some of the large landowners were unwilling to work with the Zealand, Fyn and Southern Jutland Associations on land distribution, a Southern Jutland association was founded, but it never achieved much importance.

Our Zealand, Fyn and Southern Jutland association were invited to a public meeting in Vojens, where H. P. Hansen, of Aabenraa was present. After the introductory speech, a number of “Husmænd” from Southern Jutland took to the floor and stated: *It is strange that some of the large landowners are interested in land distribution. They were never interested before, all they wanted was to purchase as many houses as possible, then dismantle them, adding the property to their own.*

They also stated their gratitude for the help they have had from the Zealand, Fyn and Southern Jutland Association.

I was present, being invited by the Southern Jutland “Husmandsforening”, and when my turn came to talk, I indicated that we had never wanted to impose our assistance, but only offered capital and expertise if it was wanted. H. P. Hansen then got up and left the meeting without participating in any of the other discussions.

To be fair to the large landowners who dismantled many small properties, it should be mentioned that, during the Prussian occupation, many had fought to keep the land in Danish hands. It was decided that small properties were an easier target for the Germans than the larger ones. That was the reason many such small properties were purchased during that time.

*(The Second Schleswig War was a military conflict as a result of the Schleswig-Holstein Question. It began on 1 February 1864, when Prussian forces crossed the border into Schleswig).*

As was well known, the Germans had purchased large areas of farmland for domain farms stretching across Southern Jutland.

Such farms employed only Germans as tenants, who often also filled important positions as district revenue officers etc., and they employed mostly German farmhands.

To some degree, that can justify the purchase of so many small properties by large Danish landowners, but on the other side, some self-interest must also have been there. Some people can never get enough property, and they could, of course, have leased the small farm properties to Danish Husmænd.

## **“Fæsteafløsningsen”**

### **Law to replace copyholder tenancy terminated upon the tenant's death**

See [http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/faestevaesen/?tx\\_historyview\\_pi1\[lang\]=1&cHash=1d846cf751041ac5ccbe80e482d70935](http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/faestevaesen/?tx_historyview_pi1[lang]=1&cHash=1d846cf751041ac5ccbe80e482d70935)

Minister of Agriculture Paul Christensen established a commission in 1910 to look into copyhold farms and property. It was an old problem, and under the slogan “Fri mands jord i fri mands hånd” (*Free man's land belong in a free man's hand*), he now wanted to resolve it once and for all.

Farm copyholder Hans Paul Petersen, of Viby Vestergaard, chaired the commission with the following members: House copyholder Lars Peder Nielsen, farm copyholder Kristian Kristensen, tenant Husmand Lars Iversen, of Uglerup, estate Steward S. Berthelsen, of Høng, Agency for Statistic's administrator, Henrik Petersen, and “Hofjægmester” Rosenkrantz, of Rosenholm (*hunting master of the court is a title awarded to a limited number of major and usually noble, landowners by the Danish monarch*). Assistant in the Ministry of Agriculture, Oluf H. Krabbe was the commission secretary, and I, as president of the Fynske Husmandsforening, completed the commission.

Hans Paul Petersen was an excellent leader for such negotiations as a copyholder himself on Wedellsborg Estate.

The commission created a detailed report, but was also split into a majority and a minority of estate Steward S. Berthelsen and myself.

Our opinion was that copyholder tenancy was a good form of tenure if the state owned the property and the tenant's right of use were guaranteed, as well as any compensation for improvements to property. We also insisted that the right to inherit was protected.

The copyholder tenancy act did not become law until Zahle's second term in 1917, and at that time the land distribution association on Zealand and Fyn had assisted many copyholders in purchasing their own property.

These commissions also made the large estate owners realize, that the time to modernize the copyholder tenancy had arrived.

On Fyn, which had by far the most copyholder tenancies, the land distribution association under Vilhelm Nielsen's leadership managed to solve most of the issues before the law ever came into effect.

On each estate we established a committee, with half the members elected by the land distribution association, and the other half by the copyholder tenancy. Such a committee was always chaired by a member of the land distribution association and a co-chair from the copyholders. The association's lawyer assisted in legal matters, and produced all the deeds. The committee received offers from copyholders, presented them to the estate owners, and in almost all cases, we managed to come to an agreement.

In that way we solved the tenancy situation on Wedellsborg, Arreskov, Hvedholm, Schelenborg and Glorup on Fyn as well as Ledreborg and part of Gjorslev estates on Zealand.

I still meet many copyholders from those estates, who with gratitude, remember the work of our committee.

I chaired a number of copyholder tenancy committees, and one of them was regarding some properties close to Stevns Cliff that Gjorslev estate did not turn over after the sale. The reason was the production of chalk and bricks, but since the copyholders had always cultivated this land, they now wanted it to be part of their property.

Another committee I chaired regarding Wedellsborg Estate was a six man committee co-chaired by Hans Paul Petersen, of Viby and barrister Jens Rasmussen, of Odense, as well as lawyer Jorgensen, of “Wedellsborg birk”, (*judicial district*,) as legal advisers. Wedellsborg was the country’s largest copyholder estate and a very interesting project in regard to the turnover of the copyholder tenancies.

Nowhere in the country had I seen such well kept buildings, both farms and houses. The Count appreciated that everything was well kept, and he sold the properties for a very reasonable price.

The only real problem was to make it fair to everyone purchasing property.

We had to obtain agreements between the copyholders and estate owners, but at the same time, the Count’s acceptance. On the other side, we also had to make sure the copyholders did not become worse off than was stated in the new law, so the price was balanced to meet yearly income possible from such a property.

To arrive at a fair price, we used formulae to calculate life expectancy, since there were great differences in the ages of copyholders, and the price for properties, even if they were equal, could not of course, be the same. An old man, who had used up most of the copyholder value, could of course not get the farm for the same price as a young man, who had most of his life ahead to enjoy the value of his property.

Many debates took place regarding this question, before it was completely understood by all.

To complicate the value of property, the Count also valued some copyholders more than others, if, for example, they had served as coachmen, estate servants or supervisors. It was therefore impossible to satisfy everyone, and some would contact the Count directly to complain about the price they had to pay compared to others. Usually, the Count would reply to such complaints, stating that if they did not agree to a price proposed by the committee, they did not have to buy the property, and if their own property was not too expensive, then it was not their business what other copyholders paid.

The committees work was not made easier by lawyer Sejr Briksø, of Svendborg, when he became interested in the tenancy land distribution as legal adviser to copyholders. Before the committee arrived, he would travel around appraising properties, resulting in many copyholders becoming suspicious and unfriendly toward us, but in the end a majority of the distribution was solved to the satisfaction of most people.

Sejr Briksø at one point accused the committee of being biased, when farms were sold for 72% of the property mortgage and “Husmandsstederne” only 57%. To this I replied: such an attack was the best recommendation we could get, since the mortgage was almost always greater for “Husmandssteder” than for farms.

Sejr Briksø and one of the copyholders from Wedellsborg then called a large meeting at Fyns community hall, where they attacked us regarding the modest fees we received for our work. Before the meeting, I managed to get a copy of a copyholder agreement Sejr Briksø had prepared and presented to the Minister of Agriculture Kristjan Pedersen, where he had added a much higher fee for himself. The meeting ended in a fiasco for them.

When Parliamentarian Jensen Sønderup stood up and criticized us in parliament, I replied by

reading a thank you note the committee received from all the copyholders, thanking us for the unselfish help we had given them during the voluntary land distribution for estate copyholders. Everything considered, the distribution of land was completed without major disagreements. At one point, the Count of Hvedholm declared that he only wanted to sell the farms, and not the “Husmandssteder”, and my reply to him was that unless both farms and Husmandssteder could be sold, we would have no interest in being part of the distribution. After that the Count agreed to sell all properties.

On the estate of Schelenborg, we had no problems with the land distribution, but “Hofjægmester” Wenzel Neergaard, who chaired the administration for the local county, wanted to raise the sales prices by 50 000 kroner. He invited me to his estate, and suggested I should visit the copyholders with him, so we could get them to agree to the increase. I then pointed out to him that the entire purchase price would be added to the entailed estate capital. Further, if the agreed amount was used to purchase mortgage bonds, the capital gains would be equal to the 50 000 he wanted. This exited Wenzel Neergaard, and we drove to Odense right away to finalize the details. The copyholders were so grateful for this agreement that they held a party for the committee, including their families, where they thanked us for our work in making this deal.

In this manner, almost all the copyholder tenancies were completed before the new law entered into force, and only a few copyholder farms and other properties remained to be distributed around the country. All copyholder estates in Denmark had changed to individual ownership. All the new owners made a profit on the deals, but when property was sold later on, the new owners were faced with larger mortgage payments. The more profit the first owner made, the greater the burden would be for the new owner.

The payments a new owner paid to own was not much greater than payments as a copyholder, and I still believe the position estate Steward S. Berthelsen and I took, was the right one and served copyholders and our society in the best way.

The old slogan “Fri mands jord i fri mands hand (*Free man's land belong in a free man's hånd*) was now a reality.

## **“Den store Jordreform”**

### **The great land reform**

During all the work I have described so far, the “Husmand” never forgot the most important goal: *The constitution promised to free land from county and manor houses, and distribute it to create “Husmandssteder” (small farms) as proposed in the Køge resolutions.*

In 1909, then Minister of Justice Svend Høgsbro, appointed a commission to look into the replacement of county and manor house ownerships. The commission was mainly made up of owners of large estates, assisted by civil servants and lawyers. It had 5 estate owners, 6 large farm owners, 1 “Husmand”, 2 editors, 1 legal professor, and 2 ministerial officials.

At that time, Denmark had 20 Count Estates, 14 Baronial Estates, 34 Manor Houses and 10 Entailed Estates. The total value of such properties was 203 million kroner for estates, 90.4 million kroner for large farms, 75.5 million kroner for forest property and 150 million kroner in entailed estate bonds. Of the 78 properties, 30 would return ownership to the government should there be no successor in the family.

In 1849 the constitution forbade the creation of any more entailed estates (*Entailed land is that granted by the king for services rendered,*) as well as promising a new law to free ownership of county and manor houses. This established society’s rights to ownership of such estates, if an owner were no longer able to manage the property, and an administrator would be appointed. In that way, the large estates were maintained and the value preserved for the occupier. I have always believed that society has not only the moral, but also the legal right to manage such real estate. This was confirmed in the land law of 1919, which gave the government ownership of large areas of land and created a land fund of 100 million kroner.

As time went by, this fund grew larger, and the Danish public would be able to purchase all the farm land and distribute it according to the land distribution law.

Besides the previously mentioned estates, we also had 2 convents for nuns, Vallø and Vemmeltofte, with a combined value of 26 million kroner. However, they were considered private institutions by the land committee.

When the land distribution law of 1919 was implemented, the then sitting Minister of Agriculture Kristjan Pedersen established a commission to administer the law.

Sitting parliamentarian Niels Frederiksen, who chaired the parliamentary committee for the land distribution law, was appointed chair for the new commission, and I and several other of “Husmændenes” leaders, were also appointed as members.

At the first meeting, we agreed to a name for the new committee: “Statens Jordlovsudvalg” (*The country’s land law committee*), and we faced a very large project.

From all copyholder county and manor houses, as well as rectories, large areas of land suitable for “Husmandsbrugs” had to be distributed, resulting in the committee purchasing large parcels of land.

I participated in this work with great interest until 1940, when I became 70 and could no longer be elected.

To describe all the details of the committees work over the years would be too much, so I will stick to the major achievements, especially around the distribution of land on Fyn.

The committee divided the country into districts, each administered by a 2 man sub-committee, together with the committee chairman.

Besides the land from Copyholder County and Manor houses, as well as the Rectories, we also received land after the reunification of Southern Jutland. There was 36 crown land farms, with approximately 6010 hectare of land, and from Graasten Estate, 550 hectares, all handed over to the committee as leases expired.

I mention such details to show the magnitude of the committee's work, but we also had excellent cooperation from Office Managers Hermansen and Holdstrup (*Civil servants*). Later, Office Manager Wilcke, who was very interested in "Husmandstanden's" case, became an important part of the team. Promoted to Deputy Minister, he became a valuable connection to the Minister of Agriculture for members of the committee.

Subcommittees settled all the minor land distributions, but the larger ones required the full committee.

On Fyn, Emil Marott and I formed the subcommittee until 1924, when Marott, who took a particular view of the Southern Jutland issue, did not get reelected, and Paul Frederik Jensen replaced him.

During the time with Marott, I had by far the most work regarding all distributions on Fyn, until Paul Frederik Jensen joined and took over Odense and Assens counties, leaving Svendborg to me. We took turns to chair the subcommittee, depending on the location. As well as the Estates and Rectories, we also purchased many other properties for land distribution. Purchasing was often the most interesting part of our work, when we made contact with many different people; those such as the owners we purchased the property from, and realtors assisting with the property deals. Not all the realtors were honest, and it happened several times after we had closed a deal, that they found a buyer with a better offer and sold the property again. Generally speaking, we managed well, and at no point was it necessary to take legal action. As a rule, the seller was committed to the agreed price, but we did take the position that all purchases had to be approved by the Land Distribution Committee or the Minister of Agriculture.

The only property I had some problems with was Bågøgårs land on Langeland, which we bought from the Land Distribution Association. At that time, I also sat on this association's board, when Clausen the owner contacted us regarding the sale of a piece of reclaimed land, where part of it was less suitable for farming.

I contacted our local representative a "Husmand" Drejer, who lived in the same area, regarding the property's suitability for use as a "Husmandssted". He recommended we purchase the property and together with Carl Taisen, of Gislev, a member of the association's board, made an offer to purchase it. In reality, they were the people looking after this proposal, and we agreed the price was reasonable, since a similar property had been sold to private buyers for 200 kroner more an acre than we had agreed to.

I wanted the property to be sold to the Government's Land Law Committee, since "Husmænd" got better terms than in a private deal. The property was therefore offered to the committee and Chr. Ernst Christensen and I presented the proposal. We agreed to the purchase, which also included a windmill used for pumping water out of the reclaimed area.

However, it turned out that the land was not as suitable as we were led to believe. We had enough local applicants who had worked on the estate, and knew how to take care of such land, but few of them were suitable to become "Statshusmænd", and local newspapers, especially the Social Democratic paper in Rudkøbing, raised a lot of criticism.

This led to 3 Husmænd making a complaint about Niels Frederiksen and I to the then Minister of

Agriculture, Madsen Mygdal. On the 10th of May 1928, an open letter to the minister appeared in "Langelands Socialdemokrat" newspaper with the following headline:

*"Former Member of Parliament Emil Rasmussen is committing fraud against the Government's Land Law Committee and President Niels Frederiksen is helping him to keep it secret."*

The article was signed by 3 Bågøgårs Husmænd, whose properties were sold at a foreclosure auction in the fall of 1926. They accused me of personally making 175 kroner per acre for the land sold to the Land Law Committee and that this was known to Niels Frederiksen, who covered the cost by adding it to the purchase price, and preventing their complaint from being presented to the committee. The article ended with a statement that it was indecent for such men to have important public positions.

When the committee Chairman read this article, he announced that the Ministry of Finance had demanded foreclosure against the concerned Husmænd, since they had largely defaulted on all their commitments. None had paid any land taxes or interest on mortgages. Any overdue taxes had been paid for by the local Land Distribution Association and all of them had also defaulted on all the costs due upon the original land distribution.

After this information had been presented publically, the Government's Land Law Committee suggested that I should sue those people involved for libel. I declined, since it was my personal belief that it was up to the committee to do this, because I had never done anything not approved by it in all the deals I had personally been involved in over the years. However, I did agree to take legal action provided the committee agreed to bear all expenses incurred, should I win the case. That was agreed to, proceedings were instituted, and I engaged Supreme Court barrister Karsten Meyer to represent me. The High Court's decision was made on the 12 of May, 1929. All the published statements were declared null and void and the signatories fined 500 kroner or 40 days in jail. It should be noted that all the Husmænd were granted free legal aid, even though that was not customary in such libel cases. After the judgment, all the Husmænd requested clemency, and none of them were man enough to accept the consequence of their lies.

I was asked if I would recommend clemency, which I agreed to, since I did not think they should be fined just because they signed an article written by someone else. It was the man behind it all who should have been fined and held responsible.

This case disappointed me, but fortunately it was an exception, and in the big picture, we only met happiness and gratitude in most places.

One of my best memories came from a land distribution meeting at a large estate. We had 7 to 800 acres of fertile and well located land to distribute between 80 applicants, who showed up at the meeting with their wives and sometimes, parents or girlfriends.

It was a solemn moment for them to draw lots for a place where they would live and work for a lifetime. Prior to these meetings, they would walk around the land to find the section they thought best for them. Often, they had come to an agreement about land distribution before our meetings, and in such cases, there was, of course, much satisfaction. Incidentally, we never denied anyone the right to refuse a lot drawn by them, if they were not happy with it.

With many of the large land distributions, it was often necessary to have a lottery to distribute the properties, and it was a joy to see the happiness when a person got the lot he had wanted. If a Husmand had a strong wish for a specific property, it was also possible for the committee to accommodate him, if no one objected.

For such large land distribution, we of course received criticism from time to time. Niels



Frederiksen purchased Hvedholm Estate and we had to accept that the lessee still had two years left in his contract. We conducted surveys of buildings maintenance, which was the lessee's responsibility, and he had to pay the cost for considerable repairs. However, since we wanted to install electric power at the estate, we made a deal with the lessee that he would pay the loan interest, and at closing, the entire cost would be added to the purchase price.

This approach was criticized by Faaborg "Husmandsforening" and Jens Holm, of Horne, who was their spokesman during the convention in Odense. He accused the committee of giving 10 000 kroner to the lessee, and therefore wanted us to parcel out the entire property. This was just utterly foolishly, because if we did not leave a main parcel of land with the farm, all buildings would have had to be demolished, and cost to the committee fund would be at least 100 000 Kroner.

Had we been so reckless in purchasing the many large estates, as well as crown land farms in Southern Jutland, the fund would have been bankrupt.

The committee's chair, Niels Frederiksen, had always been very careful with fund money and when H. P. Hansen once suggested that we should purchase a much larger area in Southern Jutland after the reunification, he told him that even the cost of loving one's country can be too expensive.

Even if we all wanted to have as many new "Husmandstæder" established in Southern Jutland as possible, we were always mindful not to diminish the fund resources. To distribute all land into small parcels was not wise, unless the main buildings were burned down, or so old that they had no value.

Hvedholm was a good land distribution project with decent farmland and very good location close to roads.

Another question was the drainage of marshland, which Jens Holm also criticized, but I could inform him that "Hedeselskabet" (*a business created for the cultivation of the moors in Jutland*), had already inspected the property, and was working on a draining proposal which would be completed as long as "Husmændene" agreed to pay the interest expenses for the coming land valuation.

One other thing should also be mentioned; when "Husmændene" took possession of their new properties, some local residents demanded that the large stone fences found in many areas be declared heritage sites, and be protected. However, the parish council chairman and some local farmers felt such fences should be used for new buildings and roads, as it became necessary.

A meeting was called at the premises in question with Judge Vaage Jensen, Count Ahlefeldt, Hvidkilde and Jens Holm, of Horne, from the heritage commission.

The "Husmænd" and I, representing the land distribution committee, were against protecting the stone fences, since we found it strange that suddenly there was such great interest in declaring the remaining fences heritage sites, which were not even close to the roads. Those gentlemen would have been better off if they had used their influence when the count established a stone crushing plant, and sold all the fences along the road, which everybody could see. No one objected then. It was pointed out that the stone fences were a beautiful memorial created by the estates, but I pointed out that to me they stood as a reminder of the bondage of farm workers, since they were built using serf labour. At the end of our discussion, Judge Vaage Jensen decided to drop the request for heritage designation.

A second protection request on Hvedholm Estate involved a small forest of about 40 acres,

situated right against the estate buildings. The forest was over-harvested and neglected, but here and there it had some unusually beautiful and rare small groups of very old oak trees, and the largest ash tree I have ever seen. I was against declaring the entire area a heritage site, since the land then would be worthless, but thought we could declare that some of the largest and most beautiful trees be designated a heritage site, and in that way, be protected. The count then said to me: *Are you really against protecting this beautiful forest, Rasmussen?* And I replied: *Why did the count, who had owned the forest all his life, not protect it?* The result was that the some of the trees and the treed avenue from the road to the estate buildings were declared to be a heritage site.

All Denmark's manses' lands, (*clergy houses inhabited by, or formerly inhabited by a Lutheran Minister*), were also distributed in that period, and I think this was very important to the movement. Such farmland did little for the residing minister, and the ones leased out were often over-exploited and many were neglected. However, the land value and location were often desirable.

As a member of the finance committee, I participated in requesting information from the Minister of Religion as to how many manses were managed by the local minister, how many were leased out to individual tenants, and how many to farmers in the parish.

We received some quite interesting data from the ministry. Only a very few ministers actually farmed the land themselves which was not surprising, since few had ever let a cow to pasture or had much knowledge in regard to running a farm.

By far the bulk of such land was leased out to large landowners, and for ridiculously low rents, so it was difficult to understand why most ministers were against the land distribution reform. When the local land distribution association bought Store Vistoft and then sold it to the land reform committee, the then parish council chairman, and a large farm owner, travelled to Copenhagen to ask Klaus Berntsen to help prevent the land distribution. The idea was to get Klaus Berntsen to contact Madsen Mygdal the Minister of Agriculture and convince him to cancel the sale. As it happened, I also traveled to Copenhagen the same day to finalize a sale with the land reform committee, and ended up in the same train compartment, where we had a long discussion about Store Vistoft. The large farm owner was so sure that that he would win, that he offered to take me to dinner, if we won. When Madsen Mygdal contacted Niels Frederiksen in regard to this case, Frederiksen asked the minister if he would approve the sale, if two of his party members on the committee visited the property and then recommended the sale. After their visit, the two committee members recommended the sale and the land distribution was completed. I never got the dinner the large landowner owed me and he died a short time after, but I think his death was hardly because of that.

At a land distribution for a manse in Assens County, we had some strange negotiations with the parish council and some farm owners in the city. Prior to our arrival, they had discussed the possibility of dividing the manse land, which was located close to the city, among themselves. They would then offer Husmændene similar land from their farms, but located far from the city. I then indicated that I never had any problems with sound "magelæg" (*a legal form for exchanging land between property owners*), as long as it benefitted everyone involved, but in this case I could not recommend it, since "Husmændene" would get poorly located land of poor quality. The farm owners also stated that if new buildings had to be built, the cost should be the same as if they were built on the outlying lots.

Adding buildings to such new properties would, of course, significantly increase their value, but the only thing wrong with this proposal was, of course, that the real profit would end up in their pockets, and “Husmændenes” property would be worth a lot less.

When we distributed the land from Gudme rectory, I had decided that the planning would happen on a Saturday and this got the then minister so excited, that he sent me a letter which stated in no uncertain terms, how very little understanding of a minister’s duty I had, since I had the nerve to come to the rectory on a Saturday just to plan a land distribution.

However, the planning would only take half an hour, so it is doubtful if it would make much difference to his preparation for the Sunday service.

When we arrived, we never met the minister, but his tenant was there and that was sufficient to complete the planning.

During this land distribution, another issue arose, since the rectory property had no access to public roads, and it was necessary to create a 400 meter long access through private land.

This property was owned by a farmer/horse trader, and when we approached him about purchasing the necessary property, he demanded ten times the normal price for such land. He probably thought by asking such a price, we would be prepared to make a deal with him for 4 to 5 times the going value. Since his price was so outrageous, I told him that we would not be prepared to negotiate, and offered 25 øre (*a quarter kroner*) per square meter, and should this not suit him, we would start expropriating the necessary land. He then decided that it was better to accept the price offered.

I cannot claim the commission’s purchase of land was always priced according to market values, and several times it became necessary to pay more than the original purchase price for a property in order for the owner to pay off the mortgage.

I participated for more than 30 years in work regarding land distribution. First in “Udstykningsforeningen” and later during “Jordlovsudvalget”, which for me personally were the most important and the best parts of my working life. I will remember those times as long as I live.

Much happiness existed in the homes created from land distribution properties, where previously, our ancestors had slaved in copyholder tenancy. Our youth can now grow up and become industrious and skilled citizens, protecting our farming culture, and not have to move to the cities to become unemployed, as often happened before.

I trust the work done by “Jordlovsudvalget” has laid the foundation and will never stop. We have enough land, as long everyone has the right to have a piece of the fatherland to farm. I will comment as professor Birek once said “*Wise conservatism changes with the time*”. It was better to use the many millions to support the unemployed by creating new “Husmandsbrug”.

A Husmand or a Husmandskone (*wife*) were never unemployed, and they lived a healthy life as free people. Our society was better off when workers had a reasonable living standard and did not have to slave for capitalism. Right now capitalism takes first, as long as there is something to take, even if the ones who do the work go hungry.

All farm properties should be financed with government loans and controlled interest rates, and in that way landowners will not speculate and will be more interested in how much profit they can make, when they sell it. Every time a property is sold for more, the new farmer has to pay tax to the seller, who puts the profit in his pocket. It is a disaster for Danish farmers.

One time, when I was a member of the parliament, we had a visit from three Swedes studying the Danish “Husmandsbevægelse”, which at that time still had not started in Sweden. We, of course, received them well. The Minister of Agriculture Kristjan Pedersen made sure that they were shown around in Copenhagen, Niels Frederiksen showed them around in Sjælland (*Zeeland*) and I hosted them in Fyn (*Foen*).

As a memento of their visit, they asked the minister and me to be photographed with them, and both of us were presented with a picture to thank us for the reception they had received in Denmark.

At that time, there was a lot of interest in the Danish “Husmandsbevægelse” in Sweden, and I was invited to visit Stockholm to present a speech to 60 small landowners from all areas of the country.

Arriving in Stockholm, I was received by bookstore owner Hansen, and mayor Lindhagen, who made all the arrangements for the meeting and took care of my travel expenses.

In my speech, I spoke about the Danish “Husmandsbevægelse’s” agricultural knowledge, as well as the social movement.

Later the mayor spoke, and proposed that the small landowners should create an association similar to the Danish one, and start working for a better the life for Swedish “Husmænd”.

I invited the newly elected president of the Swedish organization to “Husmandsforeningen’s” next general meeting in Odense. He was there, but after that I never had any further correspondence with him.



Nordiske gæster. Siddende: Edv. Nordstrand, Kr. Pedersen, Viktor Herou.  
Stående: Emil Rasmussen, Folke Palm, Niels Frederiksen.

Nordic visitors

Edv Nordstrand, KR. Pedersen and Victor Herou in the front row.

Emil Rasmussen, Folke Palm and Niels Frederiksen behind

## **“Min store Udenlandsrejse”**

### **My big trip abroad**

After the land distribution committee completed its work, it presented me with a trip to Germany, Czechoslovakia (*Now the Czech Republic and Slovakia*) and Poland, as an appreciation for my work over the years. Consultant H. J. Pallesen joined me for the trip, especially to help with the languages, since he had visited Germany a number of times. He was well acquainted with the most interesting locations, and also an excellent travel companion. We travelled from Hamburg to Hildesheim, where we spent a few days before continuing on to Quedlinburg, a city well known for its seed trading.

We continued on to Nurnberg for a national exhibition, and then on to Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia. Here, we were very lucky to meet a man, who, after he found out we were Danes, offered to show us around. He knew Denmark, the land of Queen Dagmar, well and showed us many attractions in Prague including Tycho Brahe's church (*a Danish nobleman known for his accurate and comprehensive astronomical and planetary observations*).

We then travelled to Poland and spent several days in Krakow, a beautiful old city with many interesting buildings.

At that time, it was inexpensive for a Dane to travel in those countries. We stayed at the best hotels for 70 øre (*Danish money*) a night, and a taxi would drive us a full day for 35 øre. The merchants on the farmers market in Krakow had a nosebag (*a bag used to feed a horse with*) around their neck to keep all the bank notes in.

At Wieliczka we visited a world renowned salt mine, and took an elevator down to a large cave with a lake, an assembly hall, and a church, all carved out in salt. We had a guide with us, who showed us through the long mineshafts, where the salt was blasted out and loaded into dump carts pulled by small Icelandic horses to the elevators.

In Kattowitz, we witnessed a vote to see if the city should be Polish or German, and it was the same day the German minister Rathenau was murdered. French and English soldiers were also present to keep law and order. It was impossible to find lodging, but a police officer helped us to find a private place where we could stay. They only had two beds and they were both occupied, but if we would share the bed with a stranger, we were welcome. We tried to get the two strangers to share a bed, so Pallesen and I could have one, but they refused, since they did not know each other. We crawled into bed with them, and had a good sleep. When I woke up in the morning my mate had disappeared.

We visited large coal mines, and noted, as everywhere in Poland, that the women were the ones doing the heavy work. At the farmers markets, it was the women who carried the heavy sacks on their backs, as the men walked beside them smoking a pipe.

Our impression of Poland was that was an extremely poor country. In Wieliczka, we lodged with a family who told us that before the war, they had saved enough money so that they could live in reasonable comfort in their old age. Now, their savings were worthless and they had nothing. Out in the country we visited a Polish “Husmandsbrug” and it was the most wretched place I had ever seen. People shared the same room with their livestock.

We got a shockingly bad impression of the social conditions in Poland. Children and grownups lived in very un-hygienic conditions, and led a life as slaves because of ignorance and lethargy.

Such conditions reminded me of the conditions our forefathers had live under in Danish “Herregårde” (*manors*).

It was clear to me that the farm workers in Poland would not be able to change their life on their own without help, and especially enlightenment and awakening about social issues. In my mind I praised “Husmandsbevægelsen” and the democratic progress in Denmark, and felt strongly convinced that I belonged in the “Radikale Venstre” (*the party Emil Rasmussen represented in the Danish Parliament. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish\\_Social\\_Liberal\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish_Social_Liberal_Party)*). When we returned to Germany, it was like being in a completely different world.

## **“Politisk Indstilling”**

### **My political beliefs**

When I think back to the conditions in my childhood and what I experienced in Poland and Czechoslovakia, I have come to believe that human lives are governed by the political conditions under which they live. Normally, intelligent humans will seek to improve themselves and be part of the struggle fighting the injustice that exists. They will demand that laws are equal for all and not just for a single class, which has money and properties inherited from their fathers, so they can dominate and rule others.

That is why “Husmandsbevægelsen” is democratic and I have always known that my interests are best undertaken by the “Radikale Venstre” (*a liberal-socialist party*).

I participated in its first national convention in Odense 1905, since I had begun to disagree with Venstre’s (Left’s) politics, and with the leadership of J. C. Christensen.

I will never forget the speeches during the “Radikale Venstre’s” first national convention, where the foundation and platform for the party was agreed upon. Ove Rodes words “*We will never forget during people’s daily struggle, the voices from our youth*” excited us all.

This was not because such ideas were new, but because they were awakening the honor and dignity of the old liberal party’s politics.

“Radikale Venstre’s” members were taunted by our former party comrades, who scolded and accused us of being traitors, even if it was they who had betrayed our common ideals.

Our party has its roots far back in Danish political history, and in our chamber on Christinasborg (*the Danish Parliament building*), the pictures of Grundtvig (*a Danish pastor, poet and many other things* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.\\_F.\\_S.\\_Grundtvig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N._F._S._Grundtvig)) and Georg Brandes (*a Danish critic and scholar* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg\\_Brandes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Brandes)) were displayed. They may not have been radicals in a strict political sense, but their intellectual work formed the basis for the “Radikale Venstre’s” development and principals. Such democratic views did not respect borders and developed from one country to the next, as exemplified by the declaration of human rights during the revolution in France, which then spread to many countries in Europe. Power should rest with the people and not a single individual. Leaders should be elected by the people.

Freedom means one could do anything one wanted, as long as it did not interfere with the rights of others.

A question drawing the strongest dividing lines between the Liberals and Radicals as well as Liberal and Conservatives, had been the military. Liberals believed that a small country like Denmark would never be able to impose its will by the use of force, and any superpower could ignore us, when it came to their own interests.

To me, it is completely incomprehensible that anyone who is a reasonable person cannot agree to this, and fanatical admirers of the military are again promoting a military buildup. With the birth of the United Nations, it should be possible for such all destructive programs to no longer exist. All Danish parties, including the “Radikale Venstre”, are prepared to accept any sacrifices demanded by the UN, based on the size of our country and our economical abilities.

We have experienced how highly civilized people can allow themselves to be agitated by the propaganda of a ruthless dictator into attacking peaceful neighboring countries. I think it is

disgraceful that science largely abused its abilities in order to produce lethal weapons of mass destruction. Professor Birck once stated: *If you see a great scientist, shoot him*. Great discoveries are often used to serve evil and not to improve prosperity and happiness for the people. It is my personal hope that this new organization will be able to enforce law and human rights all over the world.

A second political issue that has interested me since my youth is the fight for the common right of all citizens to vote.

We owe the fathers of the new Danish constitution of 1849 a great thank you, since they believed in this for the common man. Sadly, this new constitution was badly protected, and in 1866, to a large extent modified, but a few years later many people got together to return the many lost rights.

It was a long and hard fight, but already in 1872, the Liberal party included in its platform, that the old constitution, with rights for all people, should be reinstated.

The peasantry also rejected and fought the upper class, which in 1866, had been guilty of abuse of power in changing the constitution. We would not recognize that the upper class could rule society as they pleased, and we demanded equal rights for everyone doing useful work, whether manual or intellectual. The Liberal party demanded that the majority in the parliament should rule the country.

Aptly expressed in Viggo Hørup's (*One of the most influential politicians of the Danish non-Socialist left wing*) well known words: *Nothing above and nothing equal to Folketinget (the Danish parliament)*.

I will never forget the commotion in Denmark when the Upper House approved Estrup's (*a leader of the Conservative party*) provisional government.

I was a dragoon (*mounted infantry*) in Odense in 1888-89, and during the election for Folketinget, we were told not to leave the base, but I could not resist and went to an election meeting to hear the Conservative candidate Colonel Hedemann and Liberal's Svejstrup. I cheered for the liberal candidate, and received a reprimand the next day, in front of the squadron, where it was emphasized that all dragoons were prohibited from participating in any election meeting.

Never had political views been so divided as at that time. Hostilities erupted between neighbors or family members, and it was common that a worker was fired if he did not vote the way his employer told him.

Many "Husmænd" lost their plow man (*who came from the estates*) because of their political views, and in those days it could be serious, since it was difficult to find a replacement. It was also difficult for "Husmænd" to get transportation to polling stations, something that was no longer a problem when it became common for them to have their own horse or bicycle. Later, when I had established my haulage business in Vigerslev, I would provide 2 large wagons for "Husmandsforeningen's" members free of charge, and that created great indignation from the conservatives. They threatened to boycott my daily wagons into Odense. My reply was that they did not use my wagons to help me, but used them because it was the cheapest and easiest form for transportation into Odense. They also threatened me with losing the lumber freight from Langesø forests, but I must say, the owner of Langesø never brought it up and I reminded anyone who stated their "kind" recommendations, that I did not care.

In my experience, you get more respect by making your opinions known.



During Estrup's provisional government, the Liberals, in general, had the same opinion, but when a group in 1894 backed Estrup, a bitter internal fight erupted in the party and it spread from the Rigsdagen (*the national legislature*) throughout the country.

This resulted in the creation of "Venstrereformpartiet" (*Reformed Liberal*) 1895 and at the next election it won a huge victory, and together with the Social Democrats, formed a majority in Folketinget, resulting in constitutional changes in 1901.

People celebrated all over Denmark, and during the big celebration at "Kongens Have" (*the king's garden in Copenhagen*) we listened to Vilhelm Lassen's memorable words, that the Liberals must always have a political platform, which doesn't cater to a few, rather than the many.

However the "Venstreformpartiet" also failed, and resulted in the creation of the "Radical Venstre" party in 1905.

## **“The Radikale Venstre”**

### **The Radical liberal Party**

The new party's leaders had a tough fight both in “Rigsdagen” and throughout the country, but it was fought with skill and perseverance. One of my friends from the first year, Carl Slengerik, was the editor of “Fyns Venstreblad” (*a local newspaper*) and every time I came to Odense with my day coach, I would make sure to visit his office. Such visits earned me a lot of political knowledge and a friend for life.

Later, when I became a member of “Folketinget”, Slengerik was a staunch supporter. At political rallies he was always in his element, and the more he was heckled, the better his speeches. Over many years he had acquired a deep political knowledge and was quick witted and funny. In 1901 he was elected member of “Folketinget” and Nordahl Petersen, and later Elmholt, became editors of “Fyns Venstreblad”, but I still continued to visit their office anytime I had an opportunity. Elmholt also did a lot of work for a number of years all over Fyn, and we made many speeches together at “Husmands” meetings all over the fertile island, and as a result of such work over many years, many Fynske “Husmænd” joined the Radikal Venstre Party.

My political beliefs were, of course, the reason I had put so much effort into the social side of issues at the start of “Husmandsbevægelsen”.

From my political work as vice president in the Radikal Venstre's national federation and numerous meetings, I became well known in political circles, and was encouraged to run as a member of “Folketinget”. As president for the Fynske “Husmandsforeninger”, I was often invited to speak at meetings all over Denmark.

In 1909 I was approached to run in Kerteminde electoral district as a candidate for the Radikale Venstre against a local farmer, who was very much against the proposals accepted at the “Køgeresolution”, but the party decided I should run in Bogense electoral district at the next election instead. I received so many votes that Venstre decided to replace Aadal with K. Jensen, of Højby, a well known farmer and politician, to run against Gunnar Fog Petersen, the Radikale Venstre's candidate.

In 1910 I was elected as a candidate for the Radikale Venstre in Ribe electoral district and ran against a local farmer, Brodersen. During that time, I lived at the home of Doctor Jensen, of Gørdinge, who was later elected a member of “Folketinget” for Ribe. Doctor Jensen drove me each evening to meetings, and participated with gusto in the discussions. I received so many votes in this district that Doctor Jensen was elected a member of Folketinget at the next election, and Brodersen transferred to a different district.

It was not a disappointment for me to lose both in Bogense and Ribe, since I performed the type of electoral work young people must do, before they can expect to be established enough and have the possibility to be elected.

Beside the Ribe district in 1910, I was asked to run in Vinderup, Ruds Vedby and Lejrekresen, but chose Ribe because of my work with the fire insurance, and I had many friends there.

In 1913 the Radikale Venstre party in the district of Præstø invited me to be their candidate in the next election. The district had elected a Radikale Venstre to Folketinget, but local “Husmænd” proposed my candidacy for “Rigsdagen” (*the Upper House*) and in the seven years I represented them, I never had any misunderstandings.

From the previous elections, I had learned a lot and did not feel nervous to run for office this time. The Radikale Venstre and the Social Democrats formed an alliance during this election, resulting in the Social Democrats voting for me in the Præstø district, and the Radikale for Pastor Dael, the Social Democrat in Vordingborg district.

My rival candidates were Chamberlain Vestergaard, a large landowner close to Køge as well as Baron Reetz Thott from Estate Fedgaarden and a son of a previous “Konseilpræsident” (*a government leader*).

Borgbjerg and Slengerik visited Præstø during a meeting before the election, and Borgbjerg recommended that his party members vote for me, and Slengerik stated in his speech: *Here in the district of Præstø there are a lot of ordinary folks, and that is why you should not vote either for a Chamberlain or a Baron, but for a “Husmand”*. The result was that I received as many votes as the two other candidates together.

It was a pretty easy race, since the Baron in the beginning could be a bit superior, interrupting us as he pleased, and he would become enraged if anyone interrupted him. I reminded him that he could demand no interruptions at home in Fedgaarden (*his estate*), where everyone kneeled in the dust for hr Baron (Mister Baron), but during political meetings it was completely different, because all candidates were equal.

From that day on the Baron became friendly and amenable. Only during a meeting in his own county, where one of his tenant farmers was the moderator, did he loose his cool and complain that he had to ask one of his own “Husmænd” for permission to speak.

The seven years I spent as a member of Folketinget was a controversial time, and it was often difficult to calm people down during meetings in your own district. An angry landowner asked me during a meeting to take a message to Rode, and tell him that if he did not stop his price control, the voters would start a revolution.

I replied: *That I will not do, because during a revolution many will starve, and as long as you get 4000 kroner for your horse, 1000 for your cow, 300 for your pig and 50 for a goose, you are busy enough counting your money and getting it to your bank account. People who are homeless on the street have more reason to revolt.*

In those years our government was much occupied with proposals to make changes to the constitution.

Zahle, the prime minister, promised the parliament that as long as such negotiations proceeded, any disputes about existing laws should be avoided as much as possible. In the parliament there were no disputes about the military at this time, since all knowledgeable members were fully aware that it would be unreasonable to start a political fight during the world war. Even the Conservatives agreed, and did not want to call an election over this. “Landstingsmand” (*member of the upper house*) Piber gave the well-known statement that one should never change horses in midstream.

In my years as a member of parliament, I spent five years on the Finance Committee, headed by Social Democrat K.M. Klausen, and sitting next to J.C.Christensen, who always offered his great political knowledge any time I requested it. It was a great advantage to me, as a newly elected member sitting on this committee, through which all funding passed, often in consultation with the individual ministers. During the world war, our work in the finance committee increased to a volume never experienced before.

In the years between 1913 and 1920, more reforms were implemented than ever before in such a

time span. The June constitution was completed with many improvements, such as the right to vote for women and tenants, as well as the land reform and distribution of manse, county and manor houses. The law to eliminate copyholders was completed, as well as improvements for “Husmænd” leasing farmland. On top of all this, we also had the difficulties of balancing foreign policy between Germany and England, so we could sell our products to both of them (*Denmark was a neutral country during the First World War*). Finally we should also remember Rodes’ difficult work with price control, to make sure the Danish people would have food at a reasonable cost, which of course was strongly opposed by most businessmen and conservatives. But as George Brandes, (*born Morris Cohen he was a Danish critic and scholar who greatly influenced Scandinavian and European literature from the 1870s through to the turn of the 20th century*) once wrote: *No political party becomes great from its good deeds, only from the stupidity of its opposition. As time passes, history will remember the men who governed Denmark from 1913 to 20.*

When Zhale passed away, all sides praised him for his rare ability to hold his party together and work with others. All of us younger members looked to Zahle as an older brother, who was always available with kindness and understanding. Danish women can thank Zahle, who in every way possible, fought for them to be equal to men. He was very happy when the new constitution came into force, and Danish women thanked him with a huge parade in Copenhagen. At the election in 1920, which took place under the new electoral law using proportional representation, I was not able to run in the Præstø district. The previous alliance with the Social Democrats no longer existed, and two of the best townships for the Radicals changed to different districts. I was sure the possibility of being reelected was slim, but decided after many of the Radical voters in the district appealed me to run, that I would try my best. Many believed the Radicals could elect two members in Præstø County, so the party elected Jens Andersen as the first elector in Store Heddinge, and me as the second. It turned out that we had over-estimated our strength, and we were only able to elect one member. It also turned out that the largest amount of Radical votes were in the Stege-Vordingborg district, and Jens Andersen was replaced with Mads Larsen at the next election. Had I followed Zahle’s advice to run in the Stege-Vordingborg district, I may have had a good change for reelection. Zahle was the former mayor of Stege, and he had promised to help me, but I had already committed to run in Præstø, and I did not want to break a promise. Zahle told me I was a very loyal man, but not very smart. I was strongly encouraged to run in Præstø in the two elections we had later that year, but since it was far from my home, I felt in good conscience that I could say no, and brought an end my political activities.

Of course I am going to miss my parliamentary work and the many good friends I made during my years in parliament, which at that time sat almost right through the whole year.

During such serious work, I also remember many cheerful situations. One day Slengerik and I had a cup of coffee in “Snapstinget”, (*name for the parliament cafeteria, but literary the snaps (alcohol) parliament*), when “Kejser” (*emperor*) Nielsen (*a conservative member of parliament*) came up and said: *Is there anything I can do for you two here or beyond?* “No” said Slengerik *we do not want all those middlemen. We address ourselves directly to God*”.

I had many cheerful moments in “Grundtvighus” where many members of parliament lived. See <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kristianjohansson/sets/72157622446143840/> .

A special thank you for my friendship with Zhale, Slengerik, Paul Christensen, Mads Larsen,

Nøhr, Niels Frederiksen, Peter Jeppesen Drusebjerg, Vejstrup, Jens Onsted, Valdemar Nielsen, Peter Petersen, Killerup and Rasmus Rasmussen all members of "Rigsdagen".

In the summer of 1920, two more elections took place, where I ran in the Otterup district, so the Radical votes could be counted to benefit the party (*proportional representation*). I had several good candidates running against me, plus the pleasure of participating in an election campaign again.

The reason for these elections was the reunification of Southern Jutland. Both "Venstre" and the Conservatives brought all the contentious issues from the war to the fore. They claimed that Rode never went to bed until he had a plan, with which he could embarrass agriculture and industry owners. However, the truth was that no other minister had ever worked so closely with industries. Excitement was running high in the more moderate press, and it did not get any better, when Madsen-Mygdal left the "Radikale Venstre" and joined the "Venstre" Party.

He became the party's spokesman and travelled across the country promoting its platform. His many meetings had an impact on all the people who were against the government's policies doing the world war. In the end, he was the one with the biggest disaster, when he as a minister, steered the Danish Farmers into the worst crises in their lifetime. His outrageous austerity policies, and procurement of unnecessary goods from foreign countries, resulted in a colossal foreign debt in the country.

That is why the present "Venstre" government learned from Madsen-Mygdal's misguided policies in 1920 and now admit how unjustified and unfair their attacks on Zahle's ministry during the First World War were.

To be frank, it was hard to believe the kind of accusations that were made against the "Radikale" Ministry, especially regarding the unification of Southern Jutland. Some people even accused Zahle of being paid by the Germans.

My rival candidate in Præstø dared to call our ministry a "Tyskerministerium" (*a German ministry*), resulting in the entire meeting standing up and demanding that he be removed from the hall. I managed to calm them down when I promised to reply to his comment.

It turned out the newly elected "Venstre" ministry, which, in opposition to Zahle, had fought every price control proposed, now ended up having to implement many similar restrictions during their time in government.

In the 1924 election the "Radikal Venstre" requested that I run in the Gudme district, where the well known "Venstre" man Jensen-Broby was my rival. The Conservative candidate was Niels Larsen, of Edelgaard, and he aggressively went after Jensen-Broby, since the year before he stated the country was on the edge of bankruptcy under the "Radikale" government, but now he was praising the "Venstre" government, when the national debt had gone by with 400 million kroner. As far as I am concerned, some of those statements had to be lies.

From my participation in "Husmansbevægelsen", Husmandsskolen", "Brandkassen", Land Distribution and the "Radikale Venstres" platforms, I have written much about politics during that time, because I believed that this was important in helping the underprivileged in our society to become equal and accepted.

We have to accept that a poor man, who carries out useful work to the best of his abilities, is just as honorable a man as the one who has millions.

There is still a way to go, before this idea is accepted by all, and until then, we still have class struggles, not only between the individuals in society, but also among countries.

My hope and belief is that the United Nations, the new world organization, will be able to fulfill this mission.

We have plenty of farmland in our little country, and if we also have love, no one has to go hungry or be in need. Let's hope the day will come when the world can agree that food and clothes are better than guns and atom bombs.

To people who find my recollections too critical regarding the existing conditions of the little man, I can only say that I always believed that complacent and indifferent people never changed anything to the better.

If we take a look at the co-op movement in all its complexity, it was the men who were dissatisfied with the existing situation who then created co-op dairies all over Denmark, benefitting Danish farmers so much, especially "Husmænd", who now also could get their milk to the market as a first class product.

The same goes for co-op slaughterhouses. Before, the individual farmer had to sell his pigs to the closest butcher for any price offered, but when people grew dissatisfied with this state of affairs and created the co-op's, it also benefited the farmers, and especially "Husmænd", who only had a few pigs to sell. The same can be said about all the other co-op's created during this time, especially purchasing cooperatives for grain, animal feed and fertilizers, where "Husmænd" paid the same price for their needs as the farmer, who could purchase by the truckload.

"Husmændene" can refer with pride to their own big undertakings, like the fire and accident insurance company, which covered their risks for a cost similar to the large landowners.

At the same time, many "Husmænd" involved with co-ops were being trained to not only promote themselves, but also becoming more involved with the management of the businesses, they had helped create.

"Husmænd" must use their own initiative, or they will remain under the same conditions as their ancestors. At the time we started this movement, we were not greeted with happiness in many places, and the opposition was often great.

I remember one newspaper which wrote that we created envy and hate among landowners, and I agreed, since the first requirement for a man to be independent is his dissatisfaction with his place in society.

Paul Frederik Jensen replied to the paper's accusations that as long as they did this, "Husmænd" could relax, since they were on the right track.

One must remember that as long as "Husmænd" and farm workers co-operated, they were tolerated, and I thought about the many who made speeches about the benefits of co-op's, that made both large and small owners equal, even if many still insisted at a dairy's general meeting, that votes should be based on how many cows the individual farmer owned.

## Husmændenes Selvstændighed

### Small landowners Independence

When I was elected President of Rue Dairy co-op, at the same time as I chaired Vigerslev Parish “Husmandsforening”, I organized an opposition against “Kostemmer” (*literally cow votes*). I arranged for all “Husmænd” to sign a proxy statement, so their vote always would be counted. I then proposed that all future votes should be based on a person with all members being equal. This created a great commotion with the farmers and estate owners, and they demanded a written vote. I then replied that we had no problems with this, since there was not a “Husmand” present who did not have his pockets filled with proxies. Looking out over the people at the meeting, they realized how many “Husmænd” were present, abandoned the proposal, and “Kostemmer” was defeated by a show of hands.

At “Husmandsforening’s” next board meeting a demand for an extraordinary general meeting was made and I pointed out; *such a meeting can of course be called, but there is no need, since “Kostemmerne” no longer existed and each member’s vote is equal*. The demand was dropped. When I moved to Kaløgården from Ruehed, I applied for membership in the local co-op dairy, but it was denied with the comment that their “Kostemmer” would then be eliminated too. Lucky enough, a second co-op nearby did not have “Kostemmer”, and I was accepted as a member.

It should be noted, that any improvement for a “Husmand” always had to be fought for. Just look at the Council for Agriculture, where it took several years before “Husmændene” finally were accepted as a members.

However, it proved impossible for us to work with the council, because of the many “Tordonskjoldsoldater” (*soldiers who think they are heroes like Tordenskjold* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Tordenskjold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Tordenskjold)) who sit on this council, and we all resigned, even if it was “Husmænd”, who in 1910 proposed the creation of such a council.

**In stating my beliefs about the future, to conclude my memoires, it will be this: *It is important to remain firm in supporting our “Husmandsforeninger”, supporting our own economical enterprises, working and cooperating with other organizations when it can be done on equal terms with all parties benefiting, and insisting that all co-op board members are selected by “one man one vote”.***

**When all this is accomplished, then the goals of “Husmandsbevægelsen” have been met.**

It is not enough, that your chairman dine with the other side and listen to flattering speeches about our movement. It is necessary that all “Husmænd” work to improve their skills to better their lives, and we now have the tools, through our organizations, schools and consultants. Many “Husmænd” still lack self-confidence and want to be known as polite, easy-going individuals and do not want to speak their own minds, in case it offends others.

Sadly, many who do speak out, still lose, and miss out on many good things and jobs. We see that every day, when we have to select a new leader. If a “Husmand” is proposed for election, we are often told that it is not a problem, but the one we proposed is not the right person. They



propose another “Husmand”, whom they know will be subservient and harmless to their interests.

That is why the “Husmand” who thinks independently, must fight for his right to be elected. It is amazing and regrettable, that in 1950, so few “Husmænd” are sitting in executive positions in our co-ops.

This has to change, now that the Danish “Husmand” is an intelligent educated person and can be of benefit to all our organizations. It was not like that 50 years ago, when we travelled all over the country to establish new “Husmandsforeninger”. That was why we built the school for “Husmænd”, and hired consultants to help them be more efficient. All this work was done to prepare the individual to mature and become independent, finding their place as equals in the parliament, county and parish councils and the co-ops.

Today we must still promote this in every meeting that it is here that “Husmanden” and his wife must direct all their energy and use their majority. I also want to state that all I have written so far about the “Husmand” also goes for his wife.

I am now an 82 year old man, so I can retire and live on my memories, and lucky me, they are thankfully good and happy. The work I was involved in for half a century has succeeded beyond all my expectations.

The reason I worked all my life to improve the conditions for the lower class, was because they were poor, downtrodden, uneducated and barely respected.

Do not get me wrong, this does not mean that I wish any harm to any of the other classes in our society, but a happy and fair mother country is only possible when the most downtrodden also make a decent living and we can all work for a better country.

When this is achieved for all in our society, then it is possible to have a happy and prosperous life on this earth. If just a few of the things that I have always believed in can help to achieve this, then I am happy, and thankful to have been part of the solution to improve the life of so many people in our underclass.



Min nuværende bolig paa Hannesborg.

My house Hannesborg



Bygning paa Faurholm.

Addition part of Faurholm