

Heroes of today

Former president of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton and former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and lead weapon inspector I Iraq, Mr. Hans Blix are visiting the Faroes. This is not the first time they give this "Once in a Lifetime" lectures and they are brought to the Faroes by the organizers because they believe that these two world personalities have something to give the Faroese audience. I have heard them, and they have much to give any audience wherever in the world



Bill Clinton



Hans Blix

BOGI ELIASEN

master of political science



The interesting question then would be, what has the Faroes to give them? What could they gain from this visit and insight into Faroese history, current society and political situation?

First of all, the Faroes are proven to be the safe haven on earth, according to statistics, it has the lowest crime rate in the world. If we look at violence, the picture is the same.

Natural balance

Faroes is one of the very few modern places still in touch with nature. It is still an integrated part of nature to go fishing and having sheeps in the mountains. All though most youngsters live a life similar to other young people in the western world, it still comes with a touch and respect of nature, and when you feel the nature's power here in the North Atlantic, you don't ask why. So what you might say is that the Faroese are born with the respect of nature and resources that the world is asking for today. But this does not make the Faroes a perfect society, yet.

Oldest parliament in the World

The social contract in the Faroes is strong, there is a strong culture and pride in having kept the Faroese language in spite of being at very small population. But it has also been a struggle to do so.

The Faroes have not been independent since it came under first Norway then Danish rule. However the Faroes have also acted very independently and the Faroese have one of the oldest parliaments in the world. In ancient times it has been situated in the older part of Tórshavn, just

outside the office of the Prime Minister. We might not have an Oval Office, but the Prime Ministers personal office gives a view over the oldest parliamentary places in the world, and thus great responsibility. The Faroes not only have the oldest parliament in the world, but the heart of political power is still at the same place.

The Faroes has been a very remote society without much contact with the world. The Danish colonial rule did not do much to help that situation. This has resulted in a distinct culture and language. But it also meant being out of touch with the rest of the world and history shows that the Faroes follow European development with some lacking behind.

Wars

II World War separated the Faroes from Denmark as Denmark was occupied by Germany. The Faroes were out of Danish rule for 8 years, and after a struggle of independence or status quo a Home Rule arrangement was constructed. The Cold War made the Faroes interesting in geostrategic international politics. The Faroes became a crucial link in the surveillance and control of the North Atlantic and had a great value for NATO. The Faroes has herself never been to war.

From remote to central

The Faroes have always paid the price of being "The Far Away Islands". But this remoteness is no longer an obstacle. Modern technology makes knowledge accessible and the small and trustful society makes a distinct dynamic possible through a unique networking. Together with an extreme growth in educational level, the Faroese are ready for the world. Being small means being dependent on

the outside world and being a fishery nation means dependency on a balanced nature, two of the most crucial pillars of the future world society.

The Faroes belong to the richer parts of the world, but the next two decades might just see the Faroes rise to the very top. The inborn societal conscience creates a will to create. The rise of educational level demands development. The geographic remoteness requires a very interesting society in order to attract our young and educated people back, and it is evolving. You might say that the change from remote to finally having opportunities like the rest of the world has demanded and created a fast and willing capacity building. The Faroes is now a part of the world.

Research

One of the most crucial mechanism of the planet's oceans is in Faroese waters where the Gulf Stream has its turning point. This makes the Faroes a very interesting place to study the stability and changes of the current and we have one of the most respected scientists in the field, Bogi Hansen, here in the Faroes. Maybe this is where the question of climate changes can get answers.

In May the world's leading experts in the field of fetal programming and developmental toxicity met in the Faroes for the first international conference on the subject. It was in the Faroes because one of the leading experts in the field and organizer of the conference, Mr. Pál Weihe is Faroese and his study are based here.

As the Faroes are a homogeneous, isolated population with a lot of data going many years back in time, it might become very interesting for genetic projects, and maybe especially in the newer field of epigenetics.

Development is connected with resources and in the modern society the access and use of energy is crucial. Here these islands have developed electricity from water and wind. These green sources make around 40% of the produced electrical power. The great opportunity seems to be in utilizing the power from the sea. The idea is to use the power waves give when they reach the shore, a process the company Sewave is working hard on being the world leader in. If it turns out to be a success, the Faroes will have all the energy needed supplied from this green source.

Globalization

In the last years we have seen Faroese companies grow and develop internationally. The fishery has always been international, but now we see the internationalisation in other fields too. The two main banks have gone abroad, the IT company Formula has proven to have a good strong concept for the Nordic market and is going for Europe. We see smaller niche solutions in the IT field as well with Simprentis being a world provider of educative simulation for the oil industry. The fishing industry is also developing fast with both traceability, utilization of all the fish resources and effectivity.

The aim is to develop the Faroes to a knowledge society and in this environment where the country is, at may well be a process that makes the Faroes bring solutions to the world in these areas mentioned above.

Culture

We also see a strong culture with especially the musical scene showing great world potential. Faroes has over the last three decades grown from being at small remote polity close to the North Pole into being a strong,

dynamic polity in the middle of the North Atlantic taking the advantage of the new opportunities

The task for the Faroes is to bring home the Faroese brainware. Most of the Faroese go abroad to study. It has its benefits as people see other societies, but also needs to get them back home.

Small societies

The Faroes has a lot to give the world in how to manage remote and small societies and could in the future use this knowledge as development aid. The Faroes also has experiences of being a non-sovereign political entity. We see a lot of places around the world today with similar problems, and thus this knowledge could be used in diplomacy and in intrastate conflict research.

I believe the Faroese audience today will learn much from the two world personalities Mr. Clinton and Mr. Blix. Clinton can through his work with the Clinton Foundation show how you can help around the world and with his focus on energy give the positive Faroese development an extra inspiration. He, as the former president of the USA, of course knows the name of the game.

Blix has a very qualified inside information on energy policy and diplomatic crises and as Swedish he also knows a lot about the Nordic countries. Today his focus is mostly on weapon of mass destruction and knowledge. I have had the privilege of speaking to Mr. Hans Blix and his presence is always giving.

The two speakers are heroes of today and what they have given in the past and are still giving today with great enthusiasm emphasizes their world personalities and endless struggle to reach their goals. They have as others made their mistakes but they are heroes of today.