

December 2011

To: The Science, Innovation and Further Education Committee
Danish Parliament (Folketinget)

We members of the United States scientific and research community are dismayed to learn that the Parliament is contemplating closure of Teknologirådet (the Danish Board of Technology, or DBT). The DBT is an important, experimental research organization. DBT is the world's leading innovator in developing new methods for understanding the informed views of everyday citizens from all walks of life about emerging developments in science and technology. The information that DBT has assembled has given the Danish Parliament and the Danish nation a unique advantage in being able to guide the Danish science-and-technology innovation system toward economically, socially, and environmentally improved outcomes.

It is difficult for any research organization anywhere in the world to comprehensively document the economic and social value of its output. For instance, in our country the National Science Foundation's semi-annual publication *Science and Engineering Indicators* aspires to do this for the U.S. research system, but in reality it has made little headway in being able to do so. However, in the case of DBT there is an objective stand-in indicator of the value of DBT's research output to Danish society, government and the economy: the revealed preferences of institutions and countries around the world that adopt DBT's practices.

Denmark is a small nation. It is not often that small nations are consistently able to prove influential on the world stage. Yet participatory technology assessment methodologies invented by the DBT have been tested or adopted in at least 42 nations on every continent. As only one example, the enormously influential United States *21st Century Nanotechnology R&D Act of 2003* includes a provision mandating "public input and outreach to be integrated into the Program by the convening of regular and ongoing public discussions, through mechanisms such as . . . consensus conferences." The legislative record shows that this is a direct reference to a research method developed by the DBT. *DBT research methods have become so influential and emulated around the world because other institutions wish to secure for their own nations the unmistakable and unique benefits that DBT has provided to the Danish Parliament, economy, society, and environment.*

In the United States articles in *Science* magazine and the National Academy of Science's *Issues in Science and Technology*, as well as a major report from our National Research Council, have advocated adoption of research methods invented by the DBT. DBT procedures have been adapted in the U.S. at least 16 times, in most cases funded by grants from our most prestigious research sponsors – the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

We believe that it would be starkly counterproductive and imprudent to abolish DBT in the name of advancing the Danish research system. DBT is, after all, a uniquely valuable component of the Danish research system. First, it is itself a pioneering research unit. Second, it provides information – available from no other source – that allows other major actors in the Danish research system (including Parliament, the Ministry of Research, Danish industry, and Danish universities) to improve their efficiency and better adapt their decisions, including their research programs, to the evolving needs of Danish society.

If Members of Parliament imagine that it might be possible to develop the same research insights that DBT provides through any other mechanism, we anticipate that Denmark will promptly and to its regret discover a simple lesson: DBT is a relatively small, remarkably efficient, and cost-effective research innovator, respected on this basis around the entire world. Any nation or institution anywhere in the world that is interested in learning how to make its research system more socially responsive and responsible turns first to the DBT for insights on how to proceed. When Denmark already has the world's foremost participatory technology assessment research and advisory unit within its boundaries, it is hard to understand that Parliament would consider abolishing that unit on the implausible theory that research of the same quality can be obtained as cost-effectively in any other manner.

Respectfully submitted,

Professor Anne Petersen
University of Michigan
Former Deputy Director
National Science Foundation

Professor Martin Chalfie*
Columbia University
Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2008

Professor Frank von Hippel
Princeton University
Former Assistant Director
White House Office of Science &
Technology Policy

Professor Archon Fung
Harvard University

Professor Joshua Cohen*
Stanford University

Paul C. Stern, Ph.D.
Senior Scholar
National Research Council of the National
Academies

Professor Peter H. von Hippel*
University of Oregon
Member, National Academy of Sciences

David Rejeski
Director
Science & Technology Innovation Program
Woodrow Wilson International Center for
Scholars

Professor Eugene A. Rosa
Washington State University
Retiring Chair, Social, Economic & Political
Sciences
American Association for the
Advancement of Science

Professor Fred Turner
Stanford University

Winston Langley
Provost
University of Massachusetts – Boston

Professor Wenda Bauchspies*
Georgia Institute of Technology

Professor Deborah Blizzard
Rochester Institute of Technology

Professor Lawrence Blum
University of Massachusetts – Boston

Professor Steve Breyman
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Professor Linnda Caporael
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Darlene Cavalier
Science Cheerleader

Professor Jason Delborne*
Colorado School of Mines

Professor Ron Eglash
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Frank Emspak, Professor Emeritus
University of Wisconsin – Extension

Mikkel Herholdt Jensen
Boston University

Professor Daniel Lee Kleinman*
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Professor Abby J. Kinchy
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Professor William J. Kinsella
North Carolina State University

Natalie Kuldell*
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Professor Todd M. La Porte
George Mason University

Max Mankin
Harvard University

Professor Carl Mitcham
Colorado School of Mines

Professor Tara McPherson
University of Southern California

Professor Sharon Moran
State University of New York

Eliza Morris
Harvard University

Professor Pat Munday
Montana Tech of the University of
Montana

Professor Shobita Parthasarathy
University of Michigan

Sebastian M. Pfotenhauer, Ph.D.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Harvard University

Professor Susanna Priest
George Mason University

Professor Chad Raphael
Santa Clara University

Professor Sal Restivo
Independent Scholar

Professor Steven Rudnick
University of Massachusetts - Boston

Martin Samuels*
Harvard University

Professor Daniel Sarewitz
Arizona State University

Rebecca Saunders
University of Massachusetts – Boston

Professor Jen Schneider
Colorado School of Mines

Richard Sclove, Ph.D.
The Loka Institute
Fellow, American Association for the
Advancement of Science

Professor Peter Taylor
University of Massachusetts – Boston

Professor Seth Tuler
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Morgan Thompson
Harvard University

Thomas Webler, Ph.D.
Social & Environmental Research Institute

Professor Langdon Winner
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Professor Edward J. Woodhouse
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Professor Richard Worthington
Pomona College

*Institutional affiliations of persons with an asterisk after their names are included for identification purposes only.

Please direct any inquiries concerning this letter to Professor Richard Worthington,
RWorthington@Pomona.edu.