



The Chamber

JANUARY 10TH 2008

The sessions of the Folketing are open to the public who can follow the debates in the Chamber from the seats in the Public Galleries.

Lay-out and decoration of the Chamber

Except for the electronic voting machine, the microphones, the carpet covering the floors, the paintings and the tapestry, the Chamber looks much as it did when it was inaugurated on 28 May 1918.

There are paintings by Olaf Rude on either side of the door leading from the Chamber to the Hall. The paintings – donated by the Carlsberg Foundation in 1954 – depict the places where the court used to sit at Skejten (at Nysted on the island of Lolland).

Anni Berntsen-Bure, Denmark's first female master joiner carved the rostrum and pieced it together, rather amazingly without the use of nails and screws. The rostrum is made from the trunk of an almost 1000 year-old oak. Formerly, this particular piece of wood constituted the major part of Lendemark post mill near Rødkilde Folk High School on the island of Møn. When the post mill eventually closed down, it was bought by a former Liberal leader, Frede Bojsen. He got the idea that he wanted to present the Folketing with a rostrum made from this very piece of wood. And so he did.

The tapestry behind the rostrum was made by weaver Berit Hjelholt. It is entitled "Like a fleet anxious to weigh anchor" after the old song by Helge Rode and Carl Nielsen. The tapestry was donated to the Folketing by the Augustinus Foundation in 1987.

In the period from 1923 to 1925, sculptor Just Nielsen Sondrup was commissioned to do the sculptures above the rostrum. Starting from the left, they symbolise the four virtues wisdom, alertness, justice and truthfulness.

Likewise, it was Just Nielsen Sondrup who – during the period from 1925 to 1928 – was commissioned to do the sculptures above the door leading from the Chamber to the Hall. Starting from the left, they symbolise the four trades: fishing, commerce, agriculture and craftsmanship. The frame on the ceiling shows the Danish coat of arms. The middle section of the ceiling again depicts various trades: fishing symbolized by Neptune, commerce symbolized by Mercury and agriculture symbolized by Ceres. These figures are sculpted in the ceiling itself.

On either side of the tapestry weaving placed behind the rostrum, you will see a voting board. When votings are in progress, a graphic chart on the boards will show the Members' seats in the Chamber. And a lamp placed at every seat will indicate how the individual Member votes. A vote for a given proposal is indicated by a green light, a vote against a proposal is indicated by a red light and a yellow light indicates an abstention.

"Thingstead" or moot was the designation for the place where a court sat to administer justice – usually a number of big stones on which planks were placed for people to sit on.

The stucco ceiling was created between 1912 and 1918 under the leadership of sculptor Carl Mortensen, who was helped by six Italian craftsmen.

Members' working day

Members of the Folketing have a busy and generally very long working day. Meetings in the various parliamentary committees and groups as well as contacts with the Press and the voters are part of the work which they do outside the Chamber. Members can i. a. by attending committee meetings, meetings in their parliamentary groups and by listening to close circuit radios in their offices - keep up to date with everything which goes on in the Chamber, even though they may not always, for practical reasons, be present during the debates.

Debates of the Folketing

The debates usually take place at the hours stated below and with the said matters on the order paper.

Tuesdays

The session opens at 1.00 p.m.

- 1) Third and second readings
- 2) Eventual interpellation debates
- 3) Eventual debates on accounts
- 4) First readings

Wednesdays

The session opens at 1.00 p.m.

- 1) Question Hour
- 2) Question Time
- 3) Eventual interpellation debates
- 4) First readings

Thursdays

The session opens at 10.00 a.m.

- 1) Third and second readings
- 2) Eventual debates on accounts
- 3) Eventual interpellation debates
- 4) First readings

Usually, there will be a lunch break at 12.00 a.m.

Fridays

The session opens at 10.00 a.m.

- 1) Third and second readings
- 2) Eventual debates on accounts
- 3) First readings

EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO THE WORK IN THE FOLKETING

Interpellation

By means of an interpellation addressed to a Minister, one or more Members can make a matter on a public issue the subject of a debate in the Chamber. After the Folketing has approved the interpellation, a reply to it is given by the Minister during an interpellation debate.

Proposal for Parliamentary Resolution

Such a proposal is typically introduced by the Opposition parties i.e. by the parties which are not part of the Cabinet. A proposal for parliamentary resolution often contains a recommendation to the Government to introduce a Bill according to specific guidelines. A proposal for parliamentary resolution is only read twice. Usually, a committee reading is inserted between the two readings.

Bills

Bills can be introduced either by the Government or by Members of the Opposition parties. In accordance with the Constitutional Act of the Kingdom of Denmark, a Bill shall be read three times before it is adopted.

First reading: At the first reading, the Bill is discussed in general. No amendments may be moved. Normally, the Bill is referred to a committee.

Report: After having read the Bill, the committee may make a report. The report contains recommendations to the Folketing as well as eventual amendments.

Second reading: The Bill is discussed in general and in detail. The individual Sections and eventual amendments to the Bill are put to the vote. Usually, the Bill is passed on directly to the third reading.

Supplementary report: The Bill can also be referred to a new committee reading. Subsequent to this reading, the committee usually makes a supplementary report which may i.a. contain amendments.

Third reading: At the third reading, eventual new amendments are discussed and put to the vote. Subsequently, the Bill is discussed in its entirety and it is put to the final vote.

Accounts

A Minister can give the Folketing an account of a public matter. The account which will, in practice, always be in writing will usually be subjected to a debate during a debate on accounts.

Questions

The Members of the Folketing can put questions to the Ministers regarding a public matter and they can ask to have a written or an oral reply. Replies to the oral questions are given briefly, in the Chamber, during the weekly Question Time on Wednesdays. As from the opening of the sessional year 1997-1998, a weekly Question Hour was introduced. It takes place on Wednesdays at 1.00 p.m. immediately before Question Time. Question Hour differs from Question Time in that the Minister does not have the possibility of preparing his answer beforehand but has to reply to the question on the spot.

Speaking Time

The Standing Orders of the Folketing comprise rules as to how long one may speak during the reading of the various types of cases. The spokesmen are given the floor in an order determined by the size of the parliamentary groups. The Members may be given the floor to make short remarks if the President thinks fit.