



PETER AKTE CASTBERG

When we arrived in Copenhagen on Monday afternoon, we went on a tour of the city with “Redtop,” a leader in the Danish Deaf Community. He focused on the life of Dr. Castberg, the “father” of Deaf Education in Denmark.

Peter Castberg was born on 3rd of August, 1779. He attended medical school and as a doctor, he specialised in women’s health. Many prostitutes worked at the shipyard and sexual infections increased in Denmark so Dr. Castberg worked on curing and preventing infections.

One day, Castberg went to a theatre and watched a play about Abbé Charles Michel De L’Epée and a Deaf boy. He saw for the first time the use of sign language. He reflected about Deaf people and sign language and wanted to probe that issue. At the time Denmark had no school for the Deaf.

Dr. Castberg implored the government for grants in two areas: deafness and women’s health, which was given. He left for Germany to visit a Deaf school but only saw the oral method being used without any sign language. One German teacher explained to him about an electronic device that would help the Deaf hear. So Castberg brought the device back to Denmark and tested 8 Deaf children with 25 volts every day. The children cried and cried out; Castberg became worried and thought that there must be a better way. He went to back Germany to enquire about the unworkable electronic device But he was answered to continue using it but to raise the voltage to 70! Castberg disagreed with the high voltage, he argued that it could damage the children’s mind. Although he didn’t like it, eventually he agreed to increase the voltage to a maximum of 40 volts. Again, the children screamed in agony; one child ran away. Trying to find an alternative method of teaching, Castberg visited Austria, Italy and Switzerland but all these schools used the oral method. He often enquired about the Deaf signing school in Paris, France, but was advised against it. Castberg decided to ignore their advice and rode to France. To his surprise, ALL children in the signing school looked happy, unlike the children in oral environments. Castberg studied at the signing school for a year, learning about how to teach the Deaf and about sign language.

Back in Denmark, Castberg started teaching Deaf children using the sign language method. He was very successful and demonstrated his students’ skills to the government who thought the Deaf were unable to read and write. The government officials were very surprised that the Deaf children could read and write! They agreed to give funds and start a Deaf school in 1807.

Castberg worked at the Deaf school during the daytime and in the evenings, he worked at the hospital to help earn more money for the school. He was married with a child, but it resulted in a divorce because he gave his life completely to the Deaf school. Castberg became more weak from all the hard work. One day, he looked outside and saw the Deaf children playing happily. They saw him as a



very fragile man; they exchanged waves, knowing that the time is coming soon. Peter Atke Castberg died of burnout at the age of 43 years old on 30th April, 1823.

TEGNSPROG NU

On Monday night, we attended a meeting at the Deaf Club about **Tegnsprog Nu**, an activist group supporting the preservation of Sign Language in Denmark. A member of this group gave a presentation about the aims of Tegnsprog Nu and about the organization. Although not many people attended the meeting, I found it positive that they were of various ages. It was nice to see both the older and younger generation working together for an important cause.

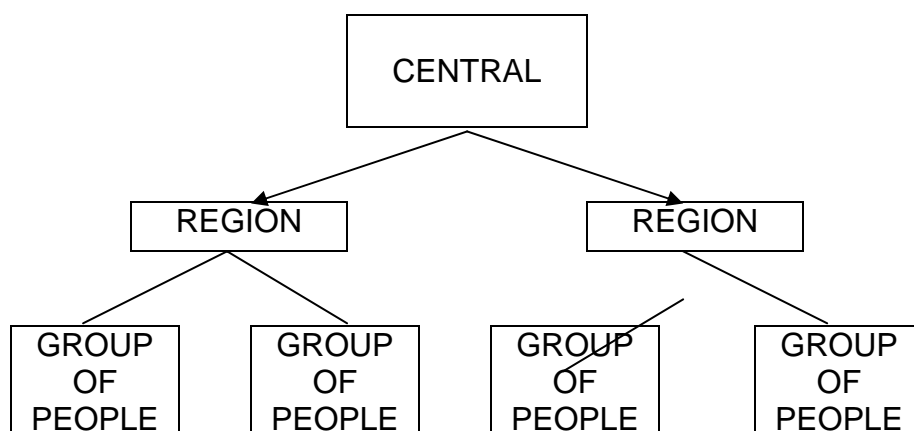
Tegnsprog Nu was created following another activist cause in Denmark: Stop Nu. (www.sig-stop.nu) This group was formed because of problems with class size in Danish classrooms and actively used the media in their campaign. Tegnsprog Nu uses similar methods and follows the structure of the Stop Nu campaign.

Goals:

- Make DSL an official language of Denmark
- Increase awareness about DSL and the Danish Deaf Community
- Increase events relating to DSL and the Deaf community
- Increase media about DSL and the Deaf community

Structure:

Tegnsprog Nu has a coordinator and groups of people for documentation, webpage, production and economics. It is their aim to develop a structure in the Deaf community where everyone can have a part in this activist cause.





Ideas for TEGNSPROG and its future:

The people attending the meeting brainstormed different ideas about the group and what they should do to increase awareness and to achieve success. Using public figures was one idea. With their support, it would be easy to spread awareness about the Deaf community throughout the country and to receive support from the general population. Everyone agreed that using the media was important. People depend heavily on the media in their daily lives and are influenced by what they see and hear. Fundraising is also important for Tegnsprog Nu's future. Money is needed for the webpage, materials, merchandise and traveling expenses.

Tegnsprog Nu will continue to meet and develop a plans to make progress toward their goals. They also will have events relating to sign language and increasing awareness about the Deaf community. It will be interesting to follow this group and see what happens in the future!

www.tegnsprognu.dk

GENTOFTE COUNTY HOSPITAL

We were welcomed by the audiologist Jane Lignel, who has 10 years of working experience as audiologist. We were informed about the Danish system of PPR support to Deaf and hearing impaired. PPR means Pedagogical Psychological Counseling, and is a complete system for those who need it.

Only three places in Denmark offer cochlear implantation, Gentofte County Hospital, Odense University Hospital and Århus University Hospital.

258 people in Denmark have a CI, hereof 140 children according Jane Lignel. 5 of those have bilateral CI, which means one implant for each cochlea. But according Danish newspaper Politiken there is around 500 people with CI in Denmark, in an article published in the Sunday edition 30th October 2005.

Around 98% of Deaf born babies are eligible candidates to CI, and most parents accept to let their babies being implanted. Those babies having Usher or meningitis are usually offered bilateral CI, which is only given to those with need for it. Early 2005 all babies are offered neonatal hearing screening in Denmark, which means Deaf babies are found much earlier and they will be offered CI immediately. The parents are themselves responsible of getting information on the alternatives for their Deaf baby. It seems most parents choose the CI for their baby. Even Deaf families decided to let their Deaf babies having CI. We were



informed about a Deaf couple giving their three Deaf children CI and about another family with 2 Deaf children.

The total estimated cost of offering CI to a Deaf person is DKK 500,000 which means EUR 67,200. This includes 5-6 tunings of the receiver. The cochlear implant itself cost DKK 65,000 or EUR 8,700. Denmark only uses **Nucleus Freedom™** implants from the Australian manufacturer **Cochlear Corporation**.

It seems to the Danish experiences from CI is very successful, Jane Lignel only mentioned one failed operation of a woman which got her right face nerves cut, but she is recovering and is able to do facial expressions, but not completely.

Jane Lignel told us about the succesful results of the CI, she mentioned if the baby learns to speech and hears it will have very good writing skills. Look up at www.ear-hearing.com for the linguistic and perceptual statistics of children with CI. In Denmark most children with CI are does not receive any signed support, because the official recommendations prefer speech only and a few signs if needed.

DØVE FILM CENTRE

Fleming Pless - Introduced himself and told us about the Døve Film Centre.
- Been working as director of Døve Film Centre for 2years

Sign of Time was founded in 1963. Sign of Time was released to the public in 1972 in the form of VHS cassettes posting to individual homes.

They started broadcasting on television in 1992.

- They aim for a wide audience from children to adults.
- They have 18 staff
 - 50/50 staff are hearing/deaf
- 40 hours viewing time per year. -1 hour per week
- 10 minutes signed news per day during Monday to Friday
- 1 full time interpreter
- Idea sharing between staff during meetings 2 times per week

- Funds from
 - 70% funds budget receiving from government
 - 30% from National Budget

They have a variety of programs;-

- Children's programme (What is Didi?)
- Teenage programme (Beebs)
- Young adult programme (Swap)
- Adults – Viften - 30 minutes



They also aim to campaign for 100% subtitle service on TV programmes by 2007. They also want to broadcast digital interpreting on TV for Deaf people.

After that we had an interview on the young adult programme- Swap about our experience being in Frontrunners. We also got a tour of the Døve Film Centre.

If you want to know more about Døve Film Centre, check out www.deaftv.dk

DANISH DEAF ASSOCIATION

On Wednesday morning, we went to DDL (Danish Deaf Association). DDL is a non-profit organisation that works for the 5,000 Danish deaf people who use Sign Language. DDL was founded in 1935 but the history goes way back to 1866. It started with a club for deaf-mutes and progressed through the years. In 1898 they took residence in Brohusgade 17, at Nørrebro in Copenhagen. The Deaf club is still houses there today.

In 1922 the Deaf-mute Council was established. The work of the council was of great importance for deaf people. It dealt with matters such as inheritance, interpreting, police matters, subtitles, deafness awareness, debts and divorce. At the 4th Congress of the Deaf-Mutes in 1935, they decided to establish a 'real' association. DDL was founded on the 18th of May, 1935 as the Danish Deaf-mute Association and the deaf club remained as a social club. The organisation was reorganised in 1956, the deaf-mute part was closed down and it was renamed Danish Deaf Association.

DDL's objective is that deaf people enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, opportunities and quality of life as everyone. DDL is affiliated with many organisations such as Center for the Deaf, Center for Sign Language and Sign Supported Communication (KC), Castberggaard (Folk High School of the Deaf), Døvefilm Video, World Federation of the Deaf, European Union of the Deaf and Nordic Council of the Deaf.

DDL is divided in a variety of groups. Their day to day work includes:

- Political work promoting deaf people's interests
- Information about deafness
- Fundraising and Public Relations
- Sale of books and information about deafness and Sign Language
- Publication of the membership magazine and newsletters
- Servicing the members
- Projects
 - The current projects are:
 - Parents' Counselling for the Deaf



- The Project Elder counsellor for the Deaf
- The Sign Language Project
- The Social Interpretation Project
- The Uganda Project

More information about the projects can be found on the website. (www.deaf.dk)

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Videncenteret for Døve, Døvblevne og Hørehemmede (Knowledge Centre for Deaf, late deafened and Hearing Impaired)

The Knowledge Centre is a private owned institution, which is sponsored by the Copenhagen region and Fredriksberg commune. The centre collects information about deafness and the hearing process and makes brochures, books, educational materials and other information materials. They also provide education, courses and workshops about different themes with deafness and the hearing process.

The aim of the centre is to develop better interchange of knowledge about deafness and hearing between sectors, professional groups and regions in Denmark. This helps improve the quality of what local and regional services offer for deaf, late deafened and hearing impaired people. The information is provided for administrations, institutions, educational institutions, work places, hearing professionals, hearing professionals working in deaf fields and organisations for the deaf, late deafened and hearing impaired.

For more information: www.vcddh.dk (only in Danish)

KC

We visited KC (Center for Tegnsprog og Tegnstøttet Kommunikations hjemmeside) and we were warmly welcomed by Eva Abildgaard. Our visit was divided in two parts. The first part was with Eva and she explained KC's history and what they did.

Centre for Sign Language and Sign Supported Communication (KC) is a nationwide research and teaching institute. There are 2 KC centers: one in Copenhagen and one in Aarhus.

A short history:

1973: An initiative to further communication between deaf and hearing people through theoretical and practical work.



1976: Sign Language becomes more popular and more hearing people want to learn sign language. KC expands.

1986: The interpreters can get an official diploma from the Danish Ministry of Education. The course goes for 2 years.

1997: The course increases from 2 years to 3½ years to ensure better education for Sign Language and MHS-Interpreters.

Today, KC has in total 95 interpreter students at Copenhagen all together.

KC doesn't only provide courses for the interpreters-to-be. There are Sign Language courses for:

- parents of the Deaf children
- grandparents of the Deaf children
- brothers and sisters of the Deaf children

They also offer private tutoring in family homes.

There are various projects; one example would be the communication with DeafBlind people.

Project: Sign Language Dictionary

The second part was about the sign language dictionary by Maja Toft. The last Danish Sign Language dictionary was published in 1979. DDL (Danish Deaf Association) got funding for the 4 year project but the sign language project is housed in KC because it's a strong sign language environment.

What is so unique about this project?

There are 2 different ways to find the word and sign. If you know the sign but you don't know what the word for this sign, you can find out by searching the database of the dictionary and vice versa. The dictionary will be released in 2008.

You can visit virtual KC: www.kc.dk.

CENTRE FOR DØVE

Anne Vikkelso is Deaf, she is working as one of the regional director of Center for the Deaf. She supervises 450 workers. This center was established in 1870 with a primary goal of supporting unmarried Deaf women who were excluded from the society. The center includes a vast space, starting in 1970. But there is a re-



establishment project, which involves the construction of individual rooms with built-in kitchen and bathroom.

The CFD is divided into regions. Each region is responsible for administering sign language interpreters and Deaf consulting services, the Deafblind and the hard-of-hearing.

Furthermore, some regions provide residence accommodations, occupational therapy and other activities.

All activities are based on respect, language understanding and the culture. This is also why the sign language is always at the highest priority.

The Center for the Deaf provides many services :

- ∞ Support in family issues and related issues.
- ∞ Various types of residential services as well as living units and support centers.
- ∞ Sheltered workshops, such as the Deaf Laundry and weaving workshops.

We are impressed of CFD's working atmosphere, so we decided to purchase the Deaf Laundry towels in order to support them.

The CFD is split into three geographic regions and one region specifically in charge of certain 24 hour services-located in Copenhagen. Three regional offices: Aalborg, Århus, and Odense. The Fredericia branch only manages sign language interpretation and consulting.

DEAF CHURCH

We respectively concluded our Copenhagen trip with a humble swing-by visit at the Deaf Church located in Frederiksberg, just a wee stroll from central København. Lise Lotte Kjær, one of the current Deaf priests, met us in the front of the altar, and joyfully requested us to remain seated for her blessed briefing of the Church. Starting off, she humbly gloated, "Did you know that this one is the oldest Deaf Church in the world?" Our heads nodded already in docile impression about this holy dwelling dating way back in 1904. But, in 1900, a man named Johannes Jørgensen, was named to be the first Deaf priest ever. Last year, the Deaf Church finally celebrated the 100 year mark. De Døves Kirke (Deaf Church in Danish) basically offers Sunday services as such as bible-study, religious singing, and et cetera. Numerous marriages of Deaf couples took place there including gay/lesbian as well. Døves Kirke also serves as an activity center for such deaf-related events like theatre, singing, dancing, cultural nights, and et cetera. An interesting tidbit: this is technically a Deaf-friendly church because the sitting rows are lopsided from the altar to the foyer so the attendants could see the recitals without the heads obstructing the holy view!