



A plan clear as soot

Eagerness to rid Norway of coal investments while backing Store Norske called 'completely insane'

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's always amusing hearing politicians referred to as "cuckoo" and "completely insane," but the characterizations may have been more appreciated than usual by Svalbard residents whose livelihoods depend on coal.

A debate in Parliament this week about whether Norway should rid its oil fund of investments in coal producers suggests there is enough support to approve the policy. Norway has already halved such investments during the past two years for environmental and political reasons.

But Progress Party member Øyvind Korsberg, in an interview with *Finansavisen*, questioned with the denouncing phrases how politicians can approve such a restriction while continuing to support a long-term future for Svalbard's coal mining. Other party members said his sentiment, if a bit overheated, is something they share.

"It is not the word I would have used, but I relate to the issue," said Harald T. Nesvik, the

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A four-class group of 72 racers, above, starts the eight-kilometer round trip from Nybyen to Trollsteinen during the fifth annual Spitsbergen Up and Down on Saturday. A record 96 racers were required to complete the course by any non-motorized means. At right, participants warm up and fuel up in a Lavvu tent shortly before the race. A disco ball greeted racers returning to the tent for the post-race bash featuring traditional and novel awards. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.



Any means necessary

Spitsbergen Up and Down celebrates its freewheeling fifth year

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's an "anything goes" race, but most of the out-of-the-box thinking during its big anniversary came during events other than the competition itself.

A record 96 participants mostly on skis, plus a sizable minority on foot, made the eight-kilometer trek from Nybyen to Trollsteinen and back Saturday evening during the fifth annual Spitsbergen Up and Down. While

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Finally, a Polarjazz for purists

Festival features nearly all-jazz lineup after years of relying on 'popular' bands for survival

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

For everyone frustrated by jazz festivals booking mostly non-jazz musicians in order to lure a viable crowd, this year's for you.

The 16th annual Polarjazz festival, which begins Feb. 5, features a nearly all-jazz lineup for the first time since its inaugural years. Lasse Hansen, the festival's director, said at the

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ULLA C. BINDER / MEZZOFORTE

Mezzoforte, an Icelandic funk-fusion band formed in 1977, will perform Feb. 6 at Polarjazz.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Thinking about potatoes at a time like this?



KÅRE HOLTER SOLHJELL / HOPEN METEOROLOGICAL STATION

The Northern Lights provide a respite from the polar night to residents at the Hopen Meteorological Station this week. Kåre Holter Solhjell, who filmed a video of the solar activity (available at <http://hopenmeteo.no/?p=1410>) noted at the station's blog that January was an active month for the aurora borealis. On, the other hand, it's "bad with polar bears. We saw fresh tracks the other day, that's all."

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Take a look at the photo above. Now take a look at the folks inside that station to the right **stressing out because they're down to their last potato, forcing them to eat unfamiliar foods like pasta and rice.** This is the definitive example of "First-World Problems." The crew at the Hopen Meteorological Station, in addition to posting a video of a gorgeous northern lights show this week on their blog (<http://hopenmeteo.no>), also made sure the world knew of their hardships. "The potato's significance for experienced trappers in Svalbard should not be underestimated," an entry by Kåre Holter Solhjell notes. "Fish (meaning cod) without potatoes is impossible to imagine." They squeezed maximum starch satiation out of the final spud by cooking it in a stew consisting of lamb, peas, sauerkraut and gravy. But mercifully, after 18 agonizing hours of losing touch with their roots, the Coast Guard ship *Nordkapp* sailed to the rescue with a load of cargo that included 60 kilograms of potatoes. Normally supplies are brought by helicopter, but conditions forced the boat trip and the station's crew was forced to haul their goodies 200 meters over the sea ice by sled. "Heavy work, but thus the potatoes tasted all the better," Solhjell wrote ... Also in the small wine category this week is "Norway's Best Wine Lists" by *Vinforum's* Nils Are Økland.

Thanks a lot for second billing, guys:

You do know I'm what allowed those precious potatoes of yours to grow? Sigh... well, at least the blessed children still appreciate me.



KÅRE HOLTER SOLHJELL / HOPEN MS

My cod, why hast thou forsaken me? If a loaf could feed 5,000, why can't you make this potato feed a piddling few meteorologists?

He bitches about Norway's overall scene, asserting most restaurants are perfectly happy selling overpriced swill to plebes who are too stupid to appreciate the real stuff. He then notes "there are several places with great wine lists in Norway, but few places with attractive wine prices," and **names Huset among his first three due to its extensive wine cellar.** **Unfortunately, "prices are not as low as they were,** but it is still possible to make bargains." Just for the record, we reported last week Svalbard's CPI for alcohol and tobacco was lower than everything but travel (thanks to competition from Norwegian Air) and mail/communications (which has been dropping for years as technology advances) ... Finally, **a warm and sarcasm-free congratulations to Nikolas Ottemo, 6, for drawing the winning design for this year's Solfestuka festival in March.** A total of 88 elementary students at Longyearbyen School submitted sun drawings for the contest, with the winning design to be plastered on t-shirts, buttons, ads and a bunch of other stuff. All of the drawings will be displayed outside the library in Lompensenteret from Feb. 28 to March 11.



ARCTIC FRONTIERS

Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg delivers a speech at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø in late January, where about 1,000 participants from 30 countries discussed future policy for the north.

Ditching coal may heat up tensions

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party's parliamentary leader.

The proposal by the opposition Labor party has the support of a majority of parties in Parliament, but not the ruling Conservative party that heads the minority ruling coalition. While the fund avoids investments such as tobacco for ethical reasons, supporters are citing climate change as the primary reason for eliminating coal holdings.

But political tensions also are a factor at a time when a multitude of nations are eyeing the Arctic because of its vast natural resources.

Most of Norway's remaining coal investments are in China and some Parliament members said eliminating them could worsen already shaky relations with a country that's among the most aggressive in trying to expand its reach into the Far North.

"The technical and practical consequences of pulling out, we have to think about," Rasmus Hansson, a Green Party member, told Reuters. "But not because one is afraid of bullying Chinese leaders."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Up and Down race turns a frivolous five

TROLLSTEINEN, from page 1

a few snowshoers have been spotted during previous years with more snow, there seems to be little inclination to use toboggans or some unique non-motorized contraption.

The most unique mode at this year's race was by splitboard (skis that attach to make a snowboard), including one guided by Vetle Stene, 23, an Arctic technology student at The University Centre in Svalbard. But the first-time racer definitely wasn't hoping it'd allow him to win the race.

"My plan is to follow the other people," he said.

His friend, Sam Eglund Newby, who came to watch the race, offered perhaps the most unique suggestion to date.

"If there was more ice you could ice skate down," he said.

Stene was among the 72 "tour-class" participants who started at 5 p.m., while the remaining competitive-class racers started an hour later. Vegar Skildheim, 35, won the race with a time of slightly more than 44 minutes, beating the previous record of 47:41 by Trond Espen Haug

Signe Dahlberg came closest to what organizers set as the "ideal" tour class time of two hours, 34 minutes and 12 seconds, winning the grand prize of a day trip for two aboard the *Langøysund*.

Several extra events commemorated the race's anniversary, including a beachside sauna/swim party the night before, an ice cave expedition at midday Saturday and an afternoon of children's snow activities.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Excessive billing by hospital since 2002, agency finds

Patients at Longyearbyen Hospital have been paying more for the same services from a surgeon compared to a regular doctor for the past 12 years. Nobody at the hospital has an explanation why, but the Norwegian Directorate of Health is ordering an end to the policy. "Deductible payments should reflect the service received by the patient," the agency wrote in a letter to the hospital. A medical consultation, for example, costs 186 kroner from a family practitioner versus 315 kroner from a surgeon. The directorate is now investigating if the hospital received excessive government reimbursement for services covered by the national health care plan. There are also questions about whether individuals who made payments will be reimbursed.

New Lompensenteret owner impresses tenants at meeting

Shop owners at Lompensenteret said they are optimistic about changes that will modernize the shopping center after meeting with officials from Amfi Drift AS, whose purchase of the mall became official Jan. 1. Improvements in the common areas will occur "reasonably quickly" and, if the Longyearbyen Municipal Council approves, exterior changes including the color scheme are likely, said Marit Kristine Melby, head of the Lompensenteret tenants' association. "Now we can see some of the long-term future and eventually benefit from the things that are going to happen," she said. She said the meeting also reassured her the new owner won't interfere in the operation of shops in the center. Aksel Bilicz, department leader for the hospital's doctors, said he was told when he began working there "it has always been done this way and have to take it on my mantle that I have not researched more."

Huset bouncer suffers broken teeth from attack by patron

A bouncer at Huset suffered at least four damaged teeth when he was assaulted by a male patron in his 50s at about 4:30 a.m. Saturday morning, although details of the incident remain under investigation, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. SE winds to 25 km/h. High -4C (-8C wind chill), low -5C (-10C wind chill).	Snow. S winds to 25 km/h. High -2C (-6C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).	Cloudy. S winds to 29 km/h. High -1C (-5C wind chill), low -5C (-10C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 25 km/h. High -3C (-8C wind chill), low -5C (-10C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -3C (-8C), -3C (-8C), light 0:00h; Monday, snow, -1C (-6C), -3C (-8C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -3C (-7C), -4C (-8C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -3C (-8C), -4C (-9C), light 0:00h

Data provided by storm.no

Last weekend's bullies are this weekend's rivals



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen students perform the musical "Stopp! Ikke Mobb!" ("Stop! Don't Bully") Saturday at Kulturhuset. The play, written by two mainland teachers who are active in anti-bullying campaigns, has been performed at nearly 200 schools in Norway. Local youths will be performing at Kulturhuset again this Sunday in another nationwide arts project during the local stage of the UKM talent competition from 3 to 6 p.m. Sixteen individual and ensemble entries are scheduled in music, dance and visual art categories. Top finishers will advance to the regional competition in Tromsø.

Polarjazz returns to namesake genre

FESTIVAL, from page 1

end of last year's festival he wanted an all-jazz roster this year and believes he fulfilled that goal to the maximum practical extent.

"We could have made it, but there's some give and take," he said, noting organizers also want a full lineup of quality national and international artists "It's not like the old Polarjazz festivals because at the beginning it was all jazz bands, mostly from Tromsø."

Headliners at festivals in recent years, however, have included Norwegian rock star Sivert Høyem, the Cuban funk band Interactivo and an "other" known as the Kaizers Orchestra ("oil drums, gas mask, pump organ and a live band). If people drawn to the festival by those mainstream acts happened to catch and appreciate a bit of jazz from other performers, it was a nice but not necessary plus.

"The main issue is to have a festival," Hansen said. "Maybe get the people out to listen to something different."

Which isn't to say locals are averse to jazz. Among this year's headliners is the Icelandic funk-fusion band Mezzoforte, which Hansen said "started with people up here just asking for them." As with most performers, the next step is selling them on the uniqueness of visiting Svalbard.

"I say to them 'you have to be intensely interested in the Arctic because we can't pay you as much as usually,'" he said.

Headlining the "traditional" jazz performers is a reunion of guitarists Terje Rypdal and Ronni Le Tekrø, who have occasionally performed and recorded together since 1997. Rypdal has been a classical jazz heavyweight for more than 40 years, while Tekrø is widely known for his work with the hard rock group

Polarjazz 2014 schedule

Wed., Feb. 5

- 8 p.m.: Vorspiel by local artists. Kulturhuset.

Thurs., Feb. 6

- 8:30 p.m.: Mezzoforte; Lissie. Kulturhuset.

Fri., Feb. 7

- 4 p.m.: Jazz buffet. Radisson.

- 8:30 p.m.: Stillhouse feat. Steinar Raknes, Unni Wilhelmsen and Paolo Vinaccia; Terje Rypdal and Ronni Le Tekrø. Radisson.

- Night jazz by The New Orleans Collective until 3 a.m. Barentz Pub.

Sat., Feb. 8

- 1 p.m.: Jazz lunch feat. The New Orleans Collective. Kroa.

- 4 p.m.: Dinner music in slippers by Steinar Raknes, Unni Wilhelmsen and Silje Nergaard. Spitsbergen Hotel.

- 4 p.m.: Jazz buffet. Radisson.

- 8 p.m.: Silje Nergaard; Transjoik; Urban Tunélls Klezmerband

- Night jazz until 3 a.m. by The New Orleans Collective. Barentz Pub.

Sun., Feb. 9

- 6 p.m.: Kristin Asbjørnsen. Svalbard Church.

TNT.

Rypdal was among a few top-name artists Hansen said a year ago he was targeting and "it was some work because they don't tour much."

"They had just been on tour and they were very tired," he said. "But they agreed and now they are eager to be here."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Jan. 30

7 p.m.: Concert: "Songs to the Moon," by Julia Novikova og Sergey Osadchuck. Galleri Svalbard.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Feb. 2

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church

Noon: Marking of the July 22 Memorial, in association with the Troms and Finnmark regions. Svalbard Church.

3 p.m.: Local stage of national UKM youth talent competition. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit," U.s: action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 3

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

Feb. 4

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Feb. 5-9

Polarjazz festival. Full schedule on page 3 and at www.polarjazz.no.

Feb. 9

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

Feb. 10

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

Feb. 11

7 p.m.: Candlelight vigil and Confirmations. Svalbard Church.

Feb. 12

6 p.m.: Movie: "Anchorman 2," U.S. comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 15

2 p.m.: Movie: Karsten og Petra på Vinterferie," Norwegian children's film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 16

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "The LEGO Movie" (3D), U.S. animated film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *63 years of climate change in 15 seconds*
- *Winter rain now normal in Arctic Alaska*
- *Greenland gets first living coral reef*
- *World's 1st dog-sled taxi debuts in Norway*