

## **A letter about Associate Professor Olle Johansson at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, to the activists abroad supporting him**

There are just now on-going activities internationally supporting Associate Professor Olle Johansson in the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. This last campaign is the third large one during a period of approximately ten years. The campaigns always begin with a cry for help from Olle Johansson. Between the big campaigns there has been smaller ones in Facebook and in other social media. The theme has mostly been lack of money.

The campaign just now began with a petition written by an unknown person in Sweden called Grace I, who claims that the Karolinska Institute "wants to reduce the space allocated to the brilliant Olle Johansson".

But there are no plans to reduce the space for him, according to an answer sent from the Karolinska Institute to Mona Nilsson at the Swedish Radiation Protection Foundation. Olle Johansson has today a space of 87.8 m<sup>2</sup>. He is, according to information from the Karolinska Institute, the only person in the Department of Experimental Dermatology. He was so already during 2010-2012 when there was a worldwide campaign abroad because of a reduction of his more than 100 m<sup>2</sup> space at that time, according to information I got then.

Also in 2010 it was difficult to get a picture of the real situation. Olle Johansson then informed about 18 persons he called "current employees" and he wrote: "We work with humans as guinea pigs, this implies a completely different activity, with completely different needs than for mice and rats." Among the "employees" he mentioned was the researcher Magda Havas in Canada and several researchers from a university in Serbia. His list of employees included also five persons from the firm Oral Care in Stockholm, working with a nursing project concerning teeth of elderly people. The activists Vidar Skipenes, Bente Tilstet and Sissel Halmøy from Norway were also mentioned as employees. Örjan Hallberg, a former engineer from Ericsson, was also mentioned as a member of the staff.

### **"Grace" unknown in Sweden**

Today the situation is again very unclear. Who is for example this "Grace I" who has sent out the petition some months ago? There is no other campaign going on in Sweden to help Olle Johansson than just the letter from "Grace", directed to activists abroad. The words "Grace" is using are the same as in many other messages from and about Olle Johansson.

The discussion about electrohypersensitivity began in Sweden in 1985, some years after the first computer screens had been introduced in the offices and many people got sick. Since 1987 there is an organization in Sweden for people suffering from electrohypersensitivity – why are they not engaged in Olle

Johansson's alleged problems?

The simple answer is that people in Sweden, especially most of those who suffer from electrohypersensitivity, are tired of Olle Johansson's never ending complaints about money. The debate about electrohypersensitivity is dead in Sweden, to a big extent because of the way Olle Johansson is working, according to many of my informants.

Perhaps somebody remembers my book *Invisible disease* from 2004. When the book, with a chapter about Olle Johansson, already was written and the book near distribution I got information about some odd activities by Olle Johansson, unknown for me since before. But I didn't stop the book and take out the chapter on him. That is something I will regret as long as I live. Since 1998 I'm a retired journalist and have to read about how Olle Johansson is acting all around the world, giving information about his own role in a history I have followed since 1985. I feel that I have a responsibility to at least write this: Everything is not as it seems to be when Olle Johansson describes the history.

### **Last application**

The years 2001/2002 were the last time Olle Johansson officially wrote an application for money to Swedish authorities for work with microscope analyses of skin biopsies from electrohypersensitive persons. He then wanted 16 million Swedish crowns to confirm his former, preliminary studies. His intention was to also include the impact of radiation from mobile phones on skin, not only the electromagnetic fields from computer screens as before. His application was directed to FAS, Forskningsrådet för arbetsliv och socialvetenskap, Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare.

He got no money from the council and the reason was that he hadn't explained sufficiently the radiation exposure he had used before and intended to use now. The biological methods were well described but there was no exact description about the radiation. Bertil Persson, Professor in radiation physics at Lund University in Sweden, wrote in a comment to the application that if Olle Johansson wanted to include microwaves it was necessary for him to co-operate with experts with competence in this area.

Did Olle Johansson try to find these experts? No, from what I know he didn't. At least there has not been any new official application. But I have noticed that Olle Johansson's supporters abroad believe he is one of the most famous researchers in the world regarding electromagnetic radiation, microwaves included. I have not seen that he has denied that himself.

### **His début in 1987**

Olle Johansson became known in this connection in 1987. He heard a radio program where a trade union woman asked for help from researchers to solve the problem why so many people in the offices became sick in front of the computer screens of that time. He phoned the woman and offered his help to study skin biopsies under the microscope.

At that time TCO, the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees, had worked nearly ten years for better computer screens. It resulted, as many of you know, in the TCO Label for computers. I can hear in videos on Internet that Olle Johansson claims that he was the pioneer who has had an impact on the industry to create better computer screens. But nobody in TCO or in Sweden had heard his name in this connection before my colleague and I interviewed him 1988 in TCO's journal. He then told us that he in a preliminary study had found some changes in skin biopsies from electrohypersensitive persons, changes he wanted to follow up. He talked about two million Swedish crowns necessary for further studies. A large amount of money at that time.

He got money from official bodies, not so large sums but enough to work with. From the beginning the official donors blamed him for not giving them necessary documentation about how the money had been used. Olle Johansson told us journalists that he was persecuted and misunderstood. Many of us believed him. And of course, it has not been easy for any researcher to get money in this field. But a better investigative journalism about Olle Johansson's problems could perhaps already at that time have been necessary.

He got money from Finnish Nokia so he could buy an electron microscope. In the year 1995 he also got 100,000 Swedish crowns from the industry trade union SIF, belonging to the central organization TCO for white colour workers. He then wanted to get the trade union money directly to his private bank account and the union transformed the money to a prize. He could do as he wanted with the money.

### **More money**

In the year 2003 Olle Johansson sent out an alarm that he did not have money for his laboratory rent in the Karolinska Institutet. Then the SIF union reacted again together with TCO Development. Olle Johansson got immediately 300,000 Swedish crowns for the rent to the Karolinska Institute for his laboratory, but he forgot to tell the union people that he already had got more than two million Swedish crowns from the Cancer and Allergy Foundation in Sweden since the year 2001.

Olle Johansson never asked the Cancer and Allergy Foundation to give him money for studies about electrohypersensitivity or radiation in any form. But he got large sums from this foundation during the years to follow, many millions only in the period 2004-2010. Everybody interested in this can ask for

information from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm how much money Olle Johansson got from the foundation.

I have asked the Cancer and Allergy Foundation if Olle Johansson has given them any documentation about how the money has been used. I got the answer that there is no direct documentation, but the former research secretary Lennart Sparell told me that Olle Johansson had done some public relation work for the foundation.

The name “the Karolinska Institute”, was worth gold for the foundation, and Olle Johansson had his laboratory saved so he could show pictures from the institute when he travelled around the world giving lectures. Apparently the Karolinska Institute never asked about the background, if there were some research projects why the money was paid for the laboratory from the foundation.

In 2010 Olle Johansson got 800,000 Norwegian crowns (corresponding to more than a million Swedish crowns) from the big firm Rasmussen in Norway. The sum was meant for a follow-up of research done by Associate Professor Magda Havas in the Trent University in Canada on for example heart rate variability associated with microwave exposure. Such a study has not been performed. Instead, Magda Havas was forced to do the follow-up herself. A mystery is how the 800,000 Norwegian crowns have been spent. Olle Johansson has been the co-writer in some scientific articles, for example one from Finland where only Olle Johansson’s early findings from the beginning of the 1990’s are used as information although Rasmussen is mentioned as a donor.

## **Not a pioneer**

Olle Johansson has built up a picture of himself as a pioneer in research about health risks associated with non-ionising radiation from electrical devices. But the real pioneer in Sweden was the dermatologist and histopathologist Björn Lagerholm at the Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm. Already in the beginning of the 1980’s he studied skin biopsies from electrohypersensitive persons under the microscope. He was the first to find a large number of mast cells in the skin of this patient group and he declared that the mast cells could explain the various symptoms the patients suffered from.

Interesting is that the researcher Gunnar Heuser in USA has found that the patients suffering from multiple chemical sensitivity also have a large amount of mast cells. Heuser came to Sweden many years ago to see Olle Johansson for an eventual co-operation, but Olle Johansson was not interested.

Already in 1996-1997 when Olle Johansson was a consultant to SIF’s ombudsman Bruno Hagi he tried to stop SIF from giving research money to some of the best chemists in Sweden. This is what Bruno Hagi has told me.

The chemists could perhaps have contributed to an explanation why so many people became sick in front of computers and other electronic devices containing new chemicals, as for example the big group of brominated flame retardants. In connection with heat and radiation the emissions from these chemicals have dangerous effects, for example by disturbing the hormone systems. That was known already at that time, thanks to Professor Åke Bergman at Stockholm University. Also Professor Lennart Hardell at Örebro University in Sweden had raised the alarm about the modern chemicals. Today we all know how important their message has been.

But the chemical industry has been able to lean back for many years and laugh at the discussion in Sweden and elsewhere, so concentrated only on one factor - the electromagnetic fields. And the electronic industry could do the same, thanks to prophets acting in a way that did not create credibility.

### **”No” to offered help**

When the cry for help in 2003 came from Olle Johansson, see above, he told that he didn't have money for the rent of his laboratory in the Karolinska Institute. A working group of persons from the trade unions SIF and TCO Development was organized. As mentioned above, these Swedish organizations arranged at once 300,000 Swedish crowns of union money to the laboratory rent. They also planned for further actions to help Olle Johansson to perform the research he spoke about.

But they found that Olle Johansson was not at all interested in their help, he denied to give them facts they needed about his economic situation and he was not ready to write any research application they waited for to be able to turn to the Swedish authorities and give him support.

His hope was that the trade unions would give him the money he wanted without any applications and actions from his side. At that time he himself told he had not done any research about electrohypersensitivity during the last 5-6 years.

The trade union group stopped their work for him in January 2004. After that Olle Johansson has no credibility in the trade unions in Sweden. Those who suffer from this are the trade union members who are electrohypersensitive: the shadow of Olle Johansson has an impact on them.

A member of the trade union group, Ingvar Tägtström, sent a letter to the Karolinska Institute in the autumn of 2004. In this letter he tells the story why the trade union lost confidence in Olle Johansson. It has been claimed that the letter is written by some anonymous person. It is not at all anonymous. Unfortunately Ingvar Tägtström is no longer alive.

He was a man with a good reputation and he sent copies of his letter to some members of the Swedish Parliament and also to me because I had written about

him as journalist. Also some other persons got copies. The direct reason why he wrote the letter was rumours, spread by Olle Johansson that the trade union people tried to direct his research.

There have been attempts from Olle Johansson to declare that the letter is written by an anonymous person, but he forgets that he sent Ingvar Tägtström a short answer, which also is available in some archives.

### **Money from the patients**

In the year 2003, at the same time as the trade union intended to help Olle Johansson, the Swedish organization for the people suffering from electrohypersensitivity had started a campaign among their members to collect money for Olle Johansson so that he could stay at the Karolinska Institute and go on with his claimed work. He was very interested in this type of direct help, but he demanded to get the money to his private bank account. He got 226,000 Swedish crowns in May 2004, collected among people with small incomes, many of them had only sick leaves or pensions. Their hope was that Olle Johansson could do something for them. But there came no new scientific reports from him. Olle Johansson told me in 2004 that he planned to sell some of his equipment. I do not know what happened to the electron microscope he had got from Nokia.

It must also be said that the money from the electrohypersensitive people was given to Olle Johansson in a form of a prize, as an award for work he had done earlier. Juridically it was a smart solution for Olle Johansson.

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As a trade union journalist I have followed many persons who have become sick in modern offices where they have worked with the new technologies. I know that their problems are real. But I am very suspicious against some of those who claim they are helping these people. There are too many persons using these sick persons in various ways for their own purposes. There has also been some anonymous letters with smearing messages in relation to these incidents. However, the real author of these letters still remains to be proven with 100 percent.

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