

Kommunikasjonsdirektør Paal Alme, Norges forskningsråd:

Velkomsttale til åpningen av Forskningsdagene 2004

Dato: 17.09.2004

Your Majesties, Madam Minister, Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that everyone in this wonderful venue is well aware that (more or less) everything you see here at this rostrum is based on research.

My glasses, the frames, that is, are a product of advanced research on metals and plastics. Thanks to sophisticated lens grinding techniques, the vision adjustment these glasses offer makes it possible for even the most astigmatic among us to enjoy almost normal eyesight?

As for my clothes, the intricate process used on the cotton means that ironing is no longer the chore it once was.

Then there is this suit, which is made of a blend of fabrics that can stand up to the aggravation of commuter traffic followed by an all-day conference. Hopefully, it will look more or less the same at the end of the day as it does now?

My watch, a marvellous product, tells the time so accurately that I can actually amuse myself by counting down to the seven o'clock news.

And how about cell phones? Loved and hated by everyone, this product has turned the concept of communication upside down and inside out.

The other day, I got a text message accompanied by a picture from my son who was vacationing on Cyprus. I got it in seconds, literally, while the postcard I sent to my aging mother from Spain a few months earlier arrived in Norway two weeks after I did! (Mind you, there is still the question of which of the two greetings brought the greatest joy!)

I had knee surgery last summer. It was performed using the keyhole technique to reduce invasiveness and it incorporated some of the latest developments in medical science. Having that type of surgery allowed me to go home from the hospital far more quickly than if I had been subjected to procedures common even a few short years ago.

Only my own body is not based on research - at least not yet. Believe me, I am the first to admit that I hope it will stay that way for as long as I live. After that, I would be honoured to give something back to research for all it has given me?

The memory of Dolly the sheep remains fresh in our minds, and we are all familiar with the ethical issues raised by this kind of research. Tempers ran high when the news of the world's first cloned mammal hit the airwaves. Naturally, many could not help but draw parallels to the possible cloning of human beings.

Each and every person here today is affected by research, probably on far more levels than I have outlined in this brief introduction. Given the fact that research affects our lives in so many ways, what is more natural than to keep up on the latest developments?

That, in a nutshell, was the reason for establishing Research Week ten years ago. Research Week is a national 'festival of science', a potluck where all Norwegian universities, research institutions, university colleges, enterprises and individual researchers are invited to present or demonstrate their research to the general public.

In other words, the goal of Research Week is to present the full range of research performed in Norway - to you and to me.

We hope that Research Week will:

- lead to a better understanding of why Norway, as a nation, must support and promote research;
- help people accept the fact that research costs money, sometimes a lot of money;
- pave the way for the realisation that research does not always lead to rapid results. We often have to begin with research at the most basic level to gain the knowledge and insight we need into various issues;
- and, not least, we hope that research per se will stand out as a profession that will attract more young people (not least those of the female persuasion). The sciences in particular appear constantly to be losing ground in relation to other subjects, despite the fact that we need science and scientists to provide the foundation for the future we hope to build.

In the face of this, we are exceptionally proud today, on the tenth anniversary of 'Research Week', to see that the event has become a massive, nation-wide 'happening', a product of the collective efforts of nearly every research institution in Norway. The event has actually managed to grow year by year, not unlike other things with which we are far too familiar?

Considering there are no fewer than one thousand different events taking place in just one short week, I think we have every reason to congratulate ourselves on the status this event has achieved so far.

I sincerely hope that each of you will experience something new and wonderful today, and that you will take pleasure in and perhaps even learn something from the myriad of other events we have on the programme for the upcoming week.

On behalf of the Research Council of Norway, enjoy your day today and thank you for your time and attention!