

Democracy and Renewable Energy: Why We're So Short on Both

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When first asked to speak at today's event the suggested topic was on wind and solar and conservation alternatives and how these could help make the U.S. more secure by reducing our reliance on foreign oil. I replied that I wasn't interested in talking about the topic directly, but would be glad to address it in a different context.

Our time is brief here today and so I will put this very directly and simply: we don't need more facts. We don't need another truckload of data to convince politicians to do the right thing. What we need is the ability to govern ourselves so we can start making the kind of future we all know we want and need -- one that will let us live in peace with our fellow humans, the Earth and other species.

In case you think it's a bit bold to say we don't need more facts, here are a few examples. [1]

- In 1952 -- fifty years ago -- the Paley Commission reported to President Truman that, "Efforts made to date to harness solar energy economically are infinitesimal. It's time for aggressive research in the whole field of solar energy -- an effort in which the U.S. could make an immense contribution to the welfare of the whole world." The report concluded that solar could play a greater role in energy production than could nuclear power, and that an aggressive effort could heat 13 million homes and offices by 1975.
- One year before that date, in 1974, even the Atomic Energy Commission admitted that by 2000, solar could provide 30% of the nation's energy needs.
- In 1972, the American Institute of Architects published its study called: "A Nation of Energy-Efficient Buildings by 1990." Their study concluded that readily available energy conservation measures installed in old and new buildings would offer an energy supply greater than what we could get from the Alaskan North Slope, or domestic oil production in the continental U.S., or an overly optimistic prediction of nuclear energy output.

And the reports go on, and on . . .

All of these options, of course, create more jobs and are far better for the environment than what we ultimately chose to do.

The big question it seems to me is "why?" And the logical answer seems to be "because we do not govern ourselves in America."

Yes, right here, in the land of the brave, the home of the free; in this fabled American democracy of story and song, officials from oil companies and electric companies write our energy policy -- and our foreign policy in places like Iran and Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

Company officials from General Motors Corp. and the du Pont Corp. and tire companies and paving companies write our transportation policy. How else can you explain the way our clean, efficient, inexpensive, environmentally friendly mass transit systems were sold off to GM-controlled dummy corporations and then systematically destroyed? Replaced first with General Motors buses belching diesel fumes, and then with automobiles and expressways -- killing our downtowns and central cities, filling and paving wetlands and farmlands, replacing the diversity of urban life with the sterility of suburbs?

Would a self-governing people living in a democratic nation do this to themselves?

Would we do this to our Earth, and then unleash our corporations to plunder the rest of the planet; write corporate governance laws disguised as trade agreements (GATT, NAFTA, FTAA); install murderous regimes to guarantee resource extraction and global control of markets?

I don't believe we would. I believe we are much more intelligent and humane than that. The problem is -- fable and song and hype aside -- "we the people" don't call the shots in this nation. We never have. And until we wrestle with that fact and what to do about it, we will repeat the Paley Commission study and the architects' study every generation and never get closer to a renewable energy economy than we are now. Because ultimately it's not about good data and persuasive arguments -- it's about power -- who has it and how it's used.

Is it important to build energy-efficient buildings? Of course it is. Is it important to push for solar energy development? Certainly.

But deep down inside we also know something else. We know that the Earth and all the other species that live here need us to do more than build a nation of energy efficient buildings; develop more solar energy systems than the Paley Commission urged; even more than rebuild our mass transit systems. They need us -- WE need us -- to figure out why we don't govern ourselves now, what we must do to change, and ultimately how to win the power needed to democratically run our government and our economy.

A lengthy task? An arduous task? A revolutionary task? Of course it is -- but what else will we do?

1. All studies as quoted in *Energy, Jobs and the Economy*, Grossman and Daneker, Alyson Publications, Boston, 1979

ratitor's note: concerning the task before us Mike so succinctly lays out, see:

- *Model Amici Curiae* Brief to Eliminate Corporate Rights,
by Richard L. Grossman, Thomas Alan Linzey, & Daniel E. Brannen, 9/23/03
This Legal Brief is historically significant in the evolution of fulfilling the aspirations that drove the American Revolution. To reclaim the unfulfilled promises of that insurrection, including the professed right to self-governance, will require addressing the unfinished business of usurpations enacted through the U.S. Constitution. Prior to World War I, most people understood usurpations to mean the illegitimate seizure of public governing authority by private forces.
- *We're All In Prison, And Most Of Us Don't Know The Door Is Unlocked,*
ratitor's corner, 2003 September Equinox
Many things are not what they appear to be. We Are Not At War -- The 9/11 bombings Are Crimes Against Humanity. The sole case presented against Osama bin Laden & Al Qaeda for those bombings would not stand up in a court of law. Thus, We Do Not Know The Actual Sponsorship of 9/11 . Scrutinizing an extraordinarily detailed timeline of 9/11 leaves any thoughtful person with a bulging list of questions the U.S. government has steadfastly sought to avoid answering. The super-set of this, our world of today gone awry, is the fact that the Constitution of the United States, that we live by and pledge our allegiance to, does not represent the democratic aspirations that drove the American Revolution.
Finding out whose interests were served and how they engineered and directed the 9/11 bombings is critical to the world's well-being. The resultant bid to establish a Pax Americana abroad and further degradation of people's rights inside America must likewise be duly examined. However, unless we understand and acknowledge that the basic founding principles of this country -- especially people's right to and responsibility for self-governance -- were railroaded from the start, then all that is toiled for to address the increasing imbalances generated by 9/11 will be for naught.