

Renewable Energy: Alternative Consumption and the consumption of alternatives

Henry O'Mad

Here's a question for all those genetic engineers out there: What do you get if you cross new-age greenie hippies with corporate greed?...

Biodiesel of course!

Apparently loads of plants produce oils that the lazy have discovered can be used to save them having to walk or cycle anywhere. Renewable energy is the term used to describe energy sources that haven't been conclusively shown not to be renewable.

Dr. T. N. B. Kaimal of IICT, Hyderabad, has said that many plants will provide oil, listing a variety of plants that produce it. As many 25 families of plants have been catalogued for their oil richness. As Dr. Kaimal says with respect to castor seed oil: "if 100 million hectares is brought under cultivation we can get castor seeds of 150 million tonnes out of which we can get 50 million tonnes of oil".

A hundred million hectares is a very large size. Indeed, it is four times the size of the entire United Kingdom. Thus in order to get 50 million tonnes of fuel oil we need to plant the whole of the UK, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, with no room for *anything* else! If it was possible to get two crops per year out of this, we would have 100 million tonnes of oil per year. This would provide **one third** of the USA's annual imports, ignoring the amount they consume of their own production. This kind of calculation really brings home the scale of our profligate use of earth's energy.

This level of production, inadequate though it is, would necessitate a monoculture with an incredibly high input of bioicides and fertilisers. All in all not very green. The proponents of this 'solution' fall into two groups: desperate business leaders and stupid professional environmentalists. It seems very few people are willing to actually change their lazy habits in order to allow life to continue. If you suggest that a small amount of self-discipline is an essential part of any viable solution, you will come up against the full indignant wrath of the human rights lobby.

According to Stanford University's Paul Ehrlich, humankind has co-opted for its use about 40 per cent of the net primary productivity on the planet — that is, of the energy fixed by photosynthesis each year. The earth is straining to its photosynthetic limits just to provide the rich "First World" with all the wasteful packaged crap that the food adulteration industry has foisted upon us, and now the ravaged fields must provide fuel for a billion lazy entities who will do anything

rather than use their own energy to get around. (That's five billion if we are aiming for social justice, but it seems the new age will be just as bad as the old on that score.)

This is by no means a new phenomenon; the idle races have been insinuating themselves into the human genome since before history began. This is just the latest advancement in the process that probably started with the enslavement of the dog and the horse. Paul Shepherd described this latter unfortunate soul as "that domestic animal which, more than any other symbolised and energised the worldwide pastoral débacle of the skinning of the earth... No wonder the horse is the end-of-the-world mount of Vishnu and Christ. As famine, death and pestilence, it was the apocalyptic beast who carried Middle East sky-worship and the sword to thousands of hapless tribal peoples and farmers from India to Mexico."¹

Along with hydro-electricity, wind power and tidal energy, plant fuels are the latest attempt by technocracy to stay in business. On the bright side, this does at least show that the corporations are slowly becoming aware that even they will have big problems very soon. All these so-called 'solutions' overlook the fact that energy sources are not the problem. The people who live in the third world — and that is most people — do not have anything like the amount of energy consumption that we do. Their low life expectancy and ill health is due to the fact that all the good land is taken up by western corporations to overfeed us, not because of a lack of televisions or electric toothbrushes. These people are living proof that the power consumption of the rich world is totally unnecessary. All these 'renewable' energy sources are not solutions at all, they are irrelevant to the problem.

The major problem that this planet has today is the incredible capacity a minority of humans has to consume ever increasing quantities of everything. This is the problem, yet it is never addressed; never even recognised. Instead the problem is seen as one of continuing to consume as much as possible; of finding alternative things to consume when the current consumables run out. The green gurus keep parroting out the same old crap about treading lightly on the earth, and their followers keep lapping it all up, sending in their subscriptions, buying the videos, going to the meetings, writing their letters, recycling their ideologies and reciting their platitudes — anything rather than face up to the fact that the party is over and hard times are on the way.

We are running out of slaves. There is a world shortage of slave material and the rich idle West is too deeply habituated to the 'good' life to see that it is time to face up to that reality. Never mind all the other species, we don't even provide the whole human population with this level of consumption, most of the rest of humanity are slaves of the west too! The clever slave driver will not drive the slaves too hard; they are no use to him dead. We have not even been clever. Now we are scraping the bottom of the barrel. We have used up most of the earth's available stored energy, and are laying into the latest deliveries. The soon-to-come shift into large scale plundering of this energy will further accelerate the already alarming rate of devastation. That these 'solutions' are being touted as 'green' is the ultimate example of Orwellian doublespeak. These people claim to be looking towards a new future — as indeed they are, with the same rapacious eye that the first colonialists viewed the 'new' world of 500 years ago.

So what is the solution then? All we need to do is to look at the problem: Consumption. It is very, very simple. We must reduce consumption. Now. Not in 2002 when the UN sets some kind of target. Not next year when the government raises some kind of tax a bit. What kind of

¹ Shepherd, Paul; "A Post-Historic Primitivism" from the collection "The Wilderness Condition" ed. Max Oelschlaeger. Island Press, 1992

lifeworlds are we who need some kind of financial incentive to save ourselves from oblivion? Are we really so powerless that we can't stop buying things until the government tells us we have to? Is it really the government's fault that millions of supposedly free-thinking individuals go shopping in vast depersonalised hypermarkets miles from their homes on new bypasses built specially for that purpose? (an average of 75% of traffic on UK bypasses is local.)

I hear people whinge about how they just don't have the time, or the local shops are too expensive... or some other feeble excuse. The worst excuse, and the most difficult one to overcome is the one about freedom of choice: "but people have the right to choose..." they whine, "you can't tell people what to do." Well, leaving aside their total blindness to the existence of all other life forms, what about the people in other parts of the world, who, to provide land for food to fill these supermarkets and tins to put it in, are forcibly removed from their homes to live in filthy shanty towns watching their children starve or go into prostitution? What about all the families devastated by war fought on their land over resources they will never see or even benefit from; wars to ensure the free flow of oil so that these pathetic mollycoddled perversions of humanity can exercise their 'right' to shop where they choose? Do these people really give a shit about anybody's rights other than their own?

They claim not to know about all this, they say that they don't boycott (old example this, sorry!) South African goods because (wait for it, mindless zombie statement no.1) "You can't boycott *everything*, can you?"

So they don't boycott anything!

Brilliant!

Blank smile, blank eyes, blank brain.

And then there are those who do their bit... "I do my bit for the environment." they say. God, yes, perhaps I should do my bit for my dog, I won't kick him on Thursday afternoons! They are just a load of pathetic sheep (sheep have been bred to be pathetic over thousands of years... just like a lot of humans) who can't even be bothered to take responsibility for their own actions. If I buy a tin of food, who is responsible for the open cast mine where the tin was extracted from? Who is responsible for the pesticides used in producing the contents, or the transport infrastructure involved in getting it through the convoluted route from field to me? The government? Bill Gates?

Of course not. I must stop buying these things. I can't extricate myself from the sick parasitic system overnight – the grip is too tight, real alternatives either don't exist or are on the way out and very fragile. So this must be my priority. I may seek out those places, co-ops, small grocers etc and support them, find other people and work with them in the hope that we will enhance each other's efforts. The alternatives may be difficult to get but this is of no relevance, if an alternative exists it is the thing to do, regardless of inconvenience. If no alternative exists this is usually a non-essential item.

(It is said that the main reason that community supported agriculture has not taken off is because the corporations are opposed to it. Could it perhaps be because the vast majority of the population are too apathetic to get up and find out about these things?)

I must stop working for the system, regardless of the personal hardship this may seem to entail. This is a personal thing. There is no set course, we must all find our own and help each other. No leader will be needed, we must take back our self-respect and stop relying on cult figures and green gurus, who are obviously not up to the task. We don't need any experts to tell us what to do, we pretend that we need them because we don't really want to do it.

Stop consuming.

It seems bad, but if we do it, maybe we will start living again.

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