

Germany's new "renewable" energy policy

Dr. Kelvin Kemm has written another article about economic development, renewable energy, sustainability and environmental activism. As a South African, physicist, business strategy consultant and advocate for better living standards for all Africans, he understands better than most how futile ... and ultimately harmful ... the quest for hydrocarbon-free "green" energy actually is – and how hypocritical Al Gore, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other eco activists are, when they tell the rest of the world how to live.

Wind and solar power + soaring electricity prices = outsourced jobs + more coal burning

Meanwhile, eco activists demand "sustainable lifestyles" – for other people

By Dr Kelvin Kemm* 28 August 2012

It is amazing how biased the international media is when it comes to reporting on energy generation, specifically electricity.

In mid-August, Germany opened a new 2200MW coal-fired power station near Cologne, and virtually not a word has been said about it. This dearth of reporting is even more surprising when one considers that Germany has said building new coal plants is necessary because electricity produced by wind and solar has turned out to be unaffordably expensive and unreliable.

In a deteriorating economic situation, Germany's new environment minister, Peter Altmaier, who is as politically close to Chancellor Angela Merkel as it gets, has underlined time and again the importance of not further harming Europe's – and Germany's – economy by increasing the cost of electricity.

He is also worried that his country could become dependent on foreign imports of electricity, the mainstay of its industrial sector. To avoid that risk, Altmaier has given the green light to build twenty-three new coal-fired plants, which are currently under construction.

Yes, you read that correctly, twenty three-new coal-fired power plants are under construction in Germany, because Germany is worried about the increasing cost of electricity, and because they can't afford to be in the strategic position of importing too much electricity.

Just recently, German figures were released on the actual productivity of the country's wind power over the last ten years. The figure is 16.3 percent!

Due to the inherent intermittent nature of wind, their wind power system was designed for an assumed 30% load factor in the first place. That means that they hoped to get a mere 30% of the installed capacity – versus some 85-90% for coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydroelectric facilities. That means that, when they build 3,000MW of wind power, they expect to actually get merely 900MW, because the wind does not always blow at the required speeds. But in reality, after ten years, they have discovered that they are actually getting only half of what they had optimistically, and irrationally, hoped for: a measly 16.3 percent.

Even worse, after spending billions of Euros on subsidies, Germany's total combined solar facilities have contributed a miserly, imperceptible 0.084% of Germany's electricity over the last 22 years. That is not even one-tenth of one percent.

Moreover, the actual cost of Germany's wind and solar electricity is far and away higher than its cost of coal and nuclear power. So much for "free" solar and wind. So much for all the German jobs that depend on reliable access to plentiful and affordable electricity.

As to natural gas produced via hydraulic fracturing, that too is prohibited, even if it is required to back up undependable wind and solar facilities. No wonder Germany's natural gas and electricity prices are practically unaffordable.

Meantime the extreme greens continue to preach about the wonders of life based on solar and wind power. They also talk constantly about “sustainable living,” a “sustainable future,” and an otherwise hydrocarbon-free and “decarbonized” tomorrow. Be warned! What these vacuous exhortations mean is that people must not enjoy the lifestyles and living standards of a modern world.

They mean the First World must cut back significantly on its living standards, and the developing world must give up its aspirations for achieving the lifestyle of the First World.

Believe me, African small-scale farmers all dream of becoming like the large commercial-scale farmers they see next door. They do not wish to plough their fields with oxen, when their neighbours have tractors and automated grain handling machines. The same is true of small-scale commercial and industrial operations in which an affordable and reliable supply of electricity is essential. It is likewise true of virtually every office, shop, hospital, school and family on the entire African continent.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, an organisation calling itself “Green Truth” has distributed a notice about a newly released movie titled simply “Fuel.” Here is part of the promotional notice:

“FUEL is a comprehensive and entertaining look at energy: A history of where we have been, our present predicament, and a solution to our dependence on foreign oil. Rousing and reactionary, FUEL is an amazing, in-depth, personal journey by eco-evangelist Josh Tickell, of oil use and abuse, as it examines wide-ranging energy solutions other than oil; the faltering US auto and petroleum industries; and the latest stirrings toward alternative energy.

“The film includes interviews with a wide range of policy makers, educators and activists such as Woody Harrelson, Neil Young and Willie Nelson. Tickell knew he just couldn’t idly stand by any longer. He decided to make a film, focusing on the knowledge and insight he discovered, but also giving hope that solutions are at reach. A ‘regular guy’ who felt he could make a difference, he spent 11 years making this movie, showing himself – and others – that an individual can indeed make a difference. Stirring, radical and multi-award winning energy documentary! FUEL features experts and eco-celebrities such as: Sheryl Crow, Larry David, Richard Branson and Robert Kennedy, Jr.”

The notice frequently emphasizes “sustainable living” and “a hopeful future.” And the singers, actors, activists and other energy “experts” featured in the film are all extremely wealthy, and not at all likely to adopt the “sustainable” lifestyle that they and Tickell advocate so passionately.

Does this film have anything to do with “truth” about energy? Or is it simply a propaganda film for the producers’ and activists’ version of “sustainable lives,” for others, though not for themselves? It takes but a fleeting moment to realize that it is just like Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth” – leagues removed from truth, and laden with scientific errors, personal biases, and the hypocrisies of affluent partisans who own big houses and fly private jets to events where they tell *other people* how to live “more sustainably.”

I’m sure “eco-evangelist” Josh Tickell is just “a regular guy,” just as his movie promo says he is. But I would much rather have my country’s electricity future planned by electrical engineers and scientists, and by citizens and politicians who actually live here – rather than by a “regular guy” environmental activist and his self-proclaimed “experts” on energy and “sustainable” lifestyles.

As formerly eco-evangelist Germany has demonstrated, countries cannot afford to have national energy policy moulded by movies like “Fuel” and “An Inconvenient Truth.” Their policies – and their future – need to be based on genuine truth and honest reality.

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