

Global Warming update. April 2008.

By Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The Next President's First Task [A Manifesto]

Vanity Fair

May 2008. A "TRUTHOUT" file to help broaden our view of the global warming situation! Underlining added and small deletions for clarity and emphasis: Ed.

Quote: "Last November, Lord (David) Puttnam debated before Parliament an important bill to tackle global warming.

"Addressing industry and government warnings that we must proceed slowly to avoid economic ruin, Lord Puttnam recalled that precisely 200 years ago Parliament heard identical caveats during the debate over abolition of the slave trade.

At that time slave commerce re-presented one-fourth of Britain's G.D.P. and provided its primary source of cheap, abundant energy. Vested interests warned that financial apocalypse would succeed its prohibition.

"That debate lasted roughly a year, and Parliament, in the end, made the moral choice, abolishing the trade outright. Instead of collapsing, as slavery's proponents had predicted, Britain's economy accelerated.

"Slavery's abolition exposed the debilitating inefficiencies associated with zero-cost labor; slavery had been a ball and chain not only for the slaves but also for the British economy, hobbling productivity and stifling growth.

Now creativity and productivity surged.

"Entrepreneurs seeking new sources of energy launched the Industrial Revolution and inaugurated the greatest era of wealth production in human history.

"Today, we don't need to abolish carbon as an energy source in order to see its inefficiencies or to understand that this addiction is the principal drag on American capitalism. The evidence is before our eyes.

"The practice of borrowing a billion dollars each day to buy foreign oil has caused the American dollar to implode. More than a trillion dollars in annual subsidies to coal and oil producers have beggared a nation that four decades ago owned half the globe's wealth.

"Carbon dependence has eroded our economic power, destroyed our moral authority, diminished our international influence and prestige, endangered our national security, and damaged our health and landscapes. It is subverting everything we value.

"We know that nations that "decarbonize" their economies reap immediate rewards. Sweden announced in 2006 the phase out of all fossil fuels (and nuclear energy) by 2020. In 1991 the Swedes enacted a carbon tax - now up to \$150 a ton - and as a result thousands of entrepreneurs rushed to develop new ways of generating energy from wind, the sun, and the tides, and

from woodchips, agricultural waste, and garbage. Growth rates climbed to upwards of three times those of the U.S.

"Iceland was 80 percent dependent on imported coal and oil in the 1970s and was among the poorest economies in Europe. Today, Iceland is 100 percent energy-independent, with 90 percent of the nation's homes heated by geothermal and its remaining electrical needs met by hydro.

"The International Monetary Fund now ranks Iceland the fourth most affluent nation on earth. The country, which previously had to beg for corporate investment, now has companies lined up to relocate there to take advantage of its low-cost clean energy.

"It should come as no surprise that California, America's most energy-efficient state, also possesses its strongest economy.

"The United States has far greater domestic energy resources than Iceland or Sweden does. We sit atop the second-largest geothermal resources in the world. The American Midwest is the Saudi Arabia of wind; indeed, North Dakota, Kansas, and Texas alone produce enough harnessable wind to meet all of the nation's electricity demand.

As for solar, according to a study in Scientific American, photo-voltaic and solar-thermal installations, across just 19 percent of the most barren desert land in the Southwest, could supply nearly all of our nation's electricity needs without any rooftop installation, even assuming every American owned a plug-in hybrid.

"In America, several obstacles impede the kind of entrepreneurial revolution we need. To begin with: that trillion dollars in annual coal-and-oil subsidies gives the carbon industry a decisive market advantage. Meanwhile, an overstressed and inefficient national electrical grid can't accommodate new kinds of power. At the same time, a Byzantine array of local rules impede access by innovators to national markets.

"There are a number of things the new president should immediately do to hasten the approaching boom in energy innovation. A carbon cap-and-trade system designed to put downward pressure on carbon emissions ... Already endorsed by Senators McCain, Clinton, and Obama, such a system would measure national carbon emissions and create a market to auction emissions credits.

"The supply of credits is then reduced each year to meet pre-determined carbon-reduction targets. As supply tightens, credit value increases, providing rich monetary rewards for innovators who reduce carbon. Since it is precisely targeted, cap-and-trade is more effective than a carbon tax. ... Industry likes the system's clear goals. This market-based approach has a proven track record."

[Editor: This is a rare and important comment in that it offers realistic answers to genuine problems. My concern, mainly with the part in red below, is that it is too broad for efficiency and some of these problems can be better left until development clarifies situations. We need clarify our best, most immediate and most urgent goals and restrict duplicating production.

For instance 'Geothermal' is quite capable of supplying commercial needs of electricity in many countries; 'Solar' power (especially in light of new developments in nano-technology and other home generation in late stage development in Australia) will easily handle domestic power and motoring needs with 'left-overs' to feed into the present electricity system. With every home able to be energy independent the needs of power transmission will change.

More attention should be given to cutting waste of conversion; there could be a really worthwhile saving of production waste by replacing petrol engines with electric?

Put up with a little design imperfection and save replacement of all those perfectly good car bodies until this problem is under control.

For efficient transfer we have to override the waste producing commercial system and to do this we have to introduce true democracy. If we are now too dumbed-down to see the difference between choosing and electing our own representatives to our parliaments and just electing people chosen for us by special interests, then I fear that in one hundred years the population of earth will be halved and the remainder going the same way.

(See books and articles on this site.)
Read more at Global Warming in "Forum" file.)

Quote continues:

"There's a second thing the next president should do, and it would be a strategic masterstroke: push to revamp the nation's antiquated high-voltage

power-transmission system so that it can deliver solar, wind, geothermal, and other renewable energy across the country. Right now, a Texas wind-farm manager who wants to get his electrons to market faces two huge impediments. First, our regional power grids are overstressed and misaligned. The biggest renewable-energy opportunities - for instance, Southwest solar and Midwest wind - are outside the grids' reach.

"Furthermore, traveling via alternating-current (AC) lines, too much of that wind farmer's energy would dissipate before it crossed the country. The nation urgently needs more investment in its backbone transmission grid, including new direct-current (DC) power lines for efficient long-haul transmission. Even more important, we need to build in "smart" features, including storage points and computerized management overlays, allowing the new grid to intelligently deploy the energy along the way.

"Construction of this new grid will create a marketplace where utilities, established businesses, and entrepreneurs can sell energy and efficiency.

"The other obstacle is the web of arcane and conflicting state rules that currently restrict access to the grid. The federal government needs to work with state authorities to open up the grids, allowing clean-energy innovators to fairly compete for investment, space, and customers. We need open markets where hundreds of local and national power producers can scramble to deliver economic and environmental solutions at the lowest possible price. The energy sector, in other words, needs an initiative analogous to the 1996 Telecommunicat-

ions Act, which required open access to all the nation's telephone lines. Market-place competition among national and local phone companies instantly precipitated the historic explosion in telecom activity.

"Construction of efficient open transmission marketplaces and green-power-plant infrastructure would require green electrons. Businesses and homes will become power plants as individuals cash in by installing solar panels and wind turbines on their buildings, and by selling the stored energy in their plug-in hybrids back to the grid at peak hours. about a trillion dollars over the next 15 years.

"For roughly a third of the projected cost of the Iraq war we could wean the country from carbon. And the good news is that the government doesn't actually have to pay for all of this. If the president works with governors to lift constraints and encourage investment, utilities and private entrepreneurs will quickly step in to revitalize the grid and recover their investment through royalties collected for transporting. [Ed. But of course this is not what present government wants.]

"Energy expert and former CIA director R. James Woolsey predicts: "With rational market incentives and a smart backbone, you'll see capital and entrepreneurs flooding this field with lightning speed." Ten percent of venture-capital dollars are already deployed in the clean-tech sector, and the world's biggest companies are crowding the space with capital and scrambling for position.

"The president's final priority must be to connect a much smarter power grid to

vastly more efficient buildings and machines. We have barely scratched the surface here. Washington is a decade behind its obligation, first set by Ronald Reagan, to set cost-minimizing efficiency standards for all major appliances. With the conspicuous exception of Arnold Schwarzenegger's California, the states aren't doing much better. And Congress keeps setting ludicrously tight expiration dates for its energy-efficiency tax credits, frustrating both planning and investment. The new president must take all of this in hand at once.

"The benefits to America are beyond measure. We will cut annual trade and budget deficits by hundreds of billions, improve public health and farm production, diminish global warming, and create millions of good jobs. And for the first time in half a century we will live free from Middle East wars and entanglements with petty tyrants who despise democracy ... " End Q.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is president of the Waterkeeper Alliance, a non-government organization that promotes clean water throughout the world.

Read On: at: www.gniebxbeing.org.uk

For "Global Warming", "Your Life" and other small files go to "Forum" from Home Page. Education today gives no broad understanding of modern technology, its potential or dangers.

For 5-book series: these Books are meant to be read in numbered order for easier understanding.

**Associate sites:
www.themindweb.com**

www.lifetruth.org.au