What Culture Change learned after 20 years

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02 September 2008

News Release

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Aug 31, 2008, Arcata, Calif. - Former oil-industry analyst Jan Lundberg founded a nonprofit organization twenty years ago, in Washington, D.C. to capitalize on his knowledge of energy issues. As a student at UCLA 16 years before, he had been a happy activist but felt he had to quit when his associates targeted Chevron's pollution and business record. He says, "My father, Dan Lundberg, was working eight days a week and his biggest client was Chevron. Soon I end up joining him and the family business, and 36 years later here I am able to tell people about petrocollapse and how to save the climate, from an unusual perspective."

"I thought it was great that my old firm helped the EPA phase out lead from gasoline, and we predicted the Second Oil Shock. But we are faced with far greater challenges this decade," he said.

He left Lundberg Survey in 1986 after his father died. Jan Lundberg's management was undermined by family health issues and dissension caused by outsiders taking advantage of his sick mother. This unfortunate situation turned into a positive for Jan's career as an activist and for leaving his affluent but sedentary lifestyle in Los Angeles. For example, as soon as he formed Fossil Fuels Policy Action (now Culture Change) in 1988, he learned about peak oil and "Hubbert's curve" regarding depletion trends.

When asked this year what he has learned about the world of energy and environmental activism in the 20 years since founding Culture Change, he listed these lessons and principles:

- As an approach to dealing with pollution, he found that the technological fix and regulatory compromise are far more favored than conservation by professional environmentalists, to the detriment of us all including other species.

- Ecosystem health was taken for granted, as if accumulation of toxic chemicals and greenhouse gases are something to slow down a little -- more by the funded, professional environmentalists, less by the government and industry interests.

- Entropy -- the second law of thermodynamics that holds waste and disorder to be an automatic result of transforming matter with energy -- is ignored or swept under the rug in order to compromise away the urgent need to stop pollution.

- The economy, as it steadily globalized in recent decades, has been beyond criticism when it comes to fundamental change to protect the environment, even though drastic changes to global trade will come with dwindling oil supplies.

- Renewable energy is not awaiting us as a salvation. Not all energy is equal to other forms of energy -- Lundberg suspected that during his oil industry days -- in terms of gain from the extraction process, and only petroleum supplies the many fuels, chemicals and materials we take for granted as essential.

- Transportation policy in the U.S. and at state levels is not about efficiency or safety but rather how to maximize cars, trucks and asphalt. This contributes to war over oil.

- Population growth is generally not to be discussed in government or in environmentalists' campaigns. Besides, the reasoning goes, it is Third World countries that are overpopulated and not the U.S. A U.S. consumer uses many more times the resources than the typical consumer elsewhere does.

"The average person is not aware of these workings and imperatives," Lundberg said. "Many people to this day believe that industrial processes and emissions are regulated safely and that products from corporations must be safe enough if they are on the market. This is one factor in the failure of the population to rise up and take action, such as depriving corporate offenders of our hard-earned dollars."

The biggest sneak attack on our ecosystem and public health has been the growth of plastics. "This is like a giant toxic oil spill that keeps on growing, mostly ending up in the ailing oceans."

Since 2001 Jan's work has gone beyond energy, land use, protecting ancient forests and peace activism. "We began to focus on the bigger picture: what are society's values when the best farmland is paved over, and the family structure is weakened by materialism, elder abuse and isolation?" Hence, Culture Change became the goal and the name. Nevertheless, Jan's work has continued with energy in part because "peak oil" has become well known. His recent essay on Culture Change (excerpted in EnergyBulletin.net), "The fastest way to put the brakes on global heating", targets what he sees as dangerous ignorance surrounding oil issues among "activists and commentators who often misuse the

news media and mislead grassroots activists to further an increasingly discredited world view in service to the failed, unraveling dominant culture. Meanwhile, we are wasting time as we needlessly resist a low-energy-consumption lifestyle that will allow a sustainable culture ahead.""
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For more information, see http://culturechange.org or contact Jan Lundberg at 1-215-243-3144.

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