Energy Oblivia and mini-Consciousness

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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The dominant culture reaches deep inside us like a hidden, secret implant, limiting our behavior and even our ability to think. Fortunately, it can be excised. I have experienced days on end without it, but some people are more prepared than others to appreciate its existence. Leaving the United Paved Precincts of America (a.k.a. the USA) helps a lot. But the ingrained myths of modern society -- especially technology's infallibility in uplifting and amazing us onward to an artificial paradise -- help to close minds.

Thus, mini-consciousness prevails on many fronts. As to energy, even with the lessons of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster, the prevailing condition is Oblivia. (That's a state adjacent to its sister state named after that famous river in Egypt.)

Too many people believe that expensive gasoline is the extent of potential energy problems. But no-one gives a thought to the fact that there is more asphalt-pavement and road surface in the U.S. than officially designated wilderness.

With petrocollapse our problems just begin: with climate change we will see our food supply in the fields pounded by extreme rainfall, alternately dried up by heat waves. Washington, D.C. has just had its hottest spring in its history, but no one is doing anything about it except to make it worse by continuing their energy intensive lifestyle. Instead, military madness takes its turn at the forefront by giving us the McChrystal disloyalty episode.

It's so tempting to believe in a technological fix for the problem of dwindling supply of cheap oil. Electric cars have been promised for everyone for decades, but the deeper problem beyond somehow financing a consumer conversion from the internal combustion engine is the unthinking notion of a supply-side solution to the energy crisis. Ignorance of energy issues is prevalent. For example, the popular focus on someday enjoying primarily renewable energy, nuclear and coal -- instead of that nasty BP product out of the sea floor -- neglects the fact that these alternative fuels only supply electricity, not the myriad products obtained from petroleum. Among other things, petroleum feeds a major portion of the world's population (for now).

Solar and wind technologies can only be brought to bear for the present economy on a global scale by 2050 for many trillions of dollars. But that still would not cover replacing the new infrastructure's worn out components once it was somehow implemented. In his new article
Can the world run on renewables, nuclear energy and geo-sequestration? The negative case on Culture Change, Ted Trainer points out

"About 60% of transport could be run on electricity, i.e., not trucks, ships and aircraft... only 25% of all energy needed is in the form of electricity, and almost all renewable sources, plus nuclear and geo-sequestration provide only electricity, and biomass cannot make up the shortfall..."

Biomass is the main hope for renewable liquid fuels. As it happens we received a press release today from the National Biodiesel Board that
trumpeted "Governors' Coalition Chair determined to help pass biodiesel
tax incentive," sent by Michael Frohlich (michael.frohlich "at" biodiesel.org).
This is what I could not refrain from telling him:

Dear Michael,

The world's energy dilemma cannot be solved from the supply side; it's all demand side.

Biofuels are low in net energy, compared to the cheap oil that's basically depleted, and would still depend on petroleum for the infrastructure. So with petrocollapse, fuggettaboutit.

Check out the article "Peak Soil" on our website so you can understand how impossible major biofuels production really would be.
Trying to produce ethanol out of food crops is unconscionable on a large scale.

Biofuels can never begin to substitute significantly for petroleum fuels.
The tax incentive you seek is really more subsidy.

Growing the economy can't happen without truly cheap energy in "unlimited" supply. The ecosystem has already indicated its inability to tolerate more growth. And there are plenty of consumers on the planet. Too many?

Peace, and ride a bike,

Jan Lundberg

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http://culturechange.org

The original release I responded to:

Governors' Biofuels Coalition Chair determined to help pass biodiesel tax incentive

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Governors' Biofuels Coalition Chair Determined to Help Pass Biodiesel Tax Incentive

Chet Culver tells nation’s struggling biodiesel industry to keep pushing
"energy revolution"

WASHINGTON, DC - Iowa Governor Chet Culver, who is Chair of the Governors’ Biofuels Coalition, yesterday told the nation’s biodiesel
industry that he is more determined than ever to help get the extension of the
federal biodiesel tax incentive passed in Congress.

Culver addressed members of the National Biodiesel Board at their June member meeting. He noted that the renewable energy industry is one of the best opportunities to grow the economy.

"Unfortunately a lot of people have not had the chance to understand what we
are already doing, much less what is possible," Culver said. "I can’t think of a better alternative than biofuels and biodiesel. It is homegrown, cleaner, and energy efficient. Plus it is a great way Americans can say
no to imported foreign oil.”

Culver went on to say that it “makes no sense” that the biodiesel incentive has not been extended yet.

"If we can’t extend the biodiesel tax credit, how can we even think
about anything beyond that relating to renewable energy?" he said.

"Biodiesel is the only commercially available advanced biofuel in the U.S.," said Joe Jobe, CEO of the National Biodiesel Board. "We applaud
Governor Culver and the Governors' Biofuels Coalition for calling on Congress
to pass this important biodiesel tax incentive. Biodiesel must be on a level playing field with petroleum, which has had decades of substantial subsidies."

The federal biodiesel tax credit expired in December. In the five years since it

was enacted, the energy legislation has been highly effective, leading to:

- More than 150 biodiesel plants sprouting throughout the country
- 53,000 green jobs added to the economy
- Successful commercialization of the first advanced biofuel in the U.S., made from a variety of agricultural byproducts and co-products

NBB members from around the country spent yesterday visiting with their Congressional leaders in Washington. Among them were several member producers of the Iowa Biodiesel Board, who invited the Governor to speak to the industry.

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The National Biodiesel Board is the national trade association of the biodiesel industry and is the coordinating body for biodiesel research and development in the U.S. NBB's membership is comprised of state, national, and international feedstock and feedstock processor organizations, biodiesel producers, fuel marketers and distributors, and technology providers.

Additional information about biodiesel is available online at www.biodiesel.org.

KCE Public Affairs, for National Biodiesel Board

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In our final instance of energy oblivia and mini-consciousness, we find the Washington Post is comfortable with the government's total lack of leadership: at this historic juncture of petroleum disaster, there is no sign of any policy shift toward curtailment of energy consumption to address oil addiction.

The Post kindly responded to my follow-up inquiry on my letter-to-the-editor: "We were unable to use it." A few days later, June 19th, the Post published two letters under the heading "Missed chances to press for energy reform". One of them pointed out that the Boycott BP movement "lacked the same thing that was missing in President Obama's Oval Office address: a call to use less energy... we could do more carpooling, use more public transportation, turn off electricity and be a little less comfortable. As consumers, we wouldn't do that. As U.S. citizens, we should. It's time to wake up and realize our lifestyles are part of the problem in the energy crisis." - Dee Naquin Shafer, Sarasota, Fla.

My inquiry: "Was this read? "Mitigating the Gulf oil disaster - poll critique"

Greetings,

I have been featured in interviews twice in the Post, with photo both times, and hope that my independent oil analysis might help readers understand what's going on and the possibilities for action.

I received the automatic acknowledgment for my letter, but wonder if an editor actually saw and read my letter. Could you please let me know?

Thanks,

Jan Lundberg

My original letter Subject heading: "Mitigating the Gulf oil disaster - poll critique"

Dear Editor,

The poll on BP and offshore oil drilling conducted by the Post and ABC News neglected to tap into sentiment for real solutions to the Gulf oil disaster. For example, there was no question asked in the poll about curtailing energy use. Such as: "Do you believe that oil consumption is the basic problem with oil pollution (of the sea and the atmosphere), so that you would like to see disincentives for energy waste and incentives for using less oil and energy?"

The continuing focus on blaming BP and/or the government, while relying on questionable eventual cleanup, does nothing to mitigate the extra presence of polluting oil into the global environment today in the Gulf. We have to face the fact that all oil, even if obtained without mishap, is burned or spilled.

President Obama could lead the way to emancipation from oil dependence by accomplishing an immediate reduction of national and global oil extraction, refining and consumption equal to the amount being spewed into the environment by the BP blowout. The Holy Grail of renewable and alternative energy sources is alluring but cannot really replace oil when they basically produce just electricity.

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