



The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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Green Coal?

I receive a lot of information telling me how to go green. The concept of environmentalism has become synonymous with the green movement. But as you look at a picture of planet earth from space, you see a lot of blue for the oceans, but most of the land mass is brown, with vastly decreased amounts of green.

This new green desire is really just a non godly or atheistic man centered attempt to establish the Garden of Eden while living in Babel. All the while truly ignoring the reality of created natural law and common grace. In other words, the Green Revolution is attempting to establish a green world without any input from truly green reality or truth. God created mankind as gardeners and stewards of the earth, too bad that has been lost both in and out of the church.

As I moved back to eastern Washington, many of the miles of highway travel have been spent contemplating how I got

to where I am from where I began. Those roots stretch back long before ecology and the environment meant much to anyone but a handful of wealthy eastern well educated sportsmen, who had time and resources to travel around the world hunting and fishing and I suppose communing with nature. From that group grew what was called the conservation movement.

Those folks were several generations removed and across the continent from a boy growing up in the sticks around Kettle Falls, Washington. My introduction to these conservationists came from some friends of my parents and both families commuted from Kettle Falls to Colville to church. The man of the house was a timber cruiser by profession, but his father was one of the founders of the National Wildlife Federation.

Anyway, being much more intellectually inclined than most of the local population, they had



this strange habit of giving books of all things for gifts. Those books were stories about or by these conservation genre of people. Those books set the stage for my life, even though I had no idea of their effect at the time. One of my favorites was "We Like it Wild," by Bradford Angier. The story tells how a newspaper man and his wife from Boston moved to northern British Columbia near the hamlet of Hudson Hope to live in the woods. That location is now under water from one of the dams built a number of years after they moved and stayed north.

Most of his friends from the city thought that he was terribly demented if not completely insane to attempt such an undertaking. I have gotten many similar statements from people in Seattle, as I have moved from the city. However, none of them will be welcomed back by a Bald Eagle in the tree across the river, when I returned last evening from a family reunion in Spokane.

To put this in some sort of context, there is no type of green energy that will support the energy infrastructure that modern inhabitants of planet earth have come to expect and expect to continue, without a drastic change in lifestyle. Furthermore, to really begin that so called carbon neutral concept will still require that we turn a whole lot more of the real green earth into the brown variety. That is reality, not the wishful thinking, human beings are so good at creating from their illusions of grandeur.

We have discussed Peak Oil in this column. There are still those who believe that if the United States will just build more oil refineries the oil will come. The facts are that other than some parts of Iraq, we generally know where all the oil is on earth and roughly how much it will cost, both financially and environmentally to get it out. This time is coming, maybe in my lifetime, were oil will become too valuable of a resource to burn in infernal combustion engines.

From the estimates I have read, there is about 25 years worth of uranium in the world for nuclear power. That concept was squandered in the United States, because bigger is always better engineering and construction firms proved that bigger is always better is not a natural law.

Practical fusion power has been 50 or more years out for 50 years.

All the reasonable hydroelectric facilities have pretty much been built everywhere in the world. That does not mean that more huge projects won't be built, but they will come with extensive environmental and human displacement costs. There is a possibility of developing small scale truly run of the river, or creek hydro projects, that were the source of electricity in the United States a century ago, until Thomas Edison's direct current lost out to big is better AC. However, small river run hydro would truly require a reevaluation of energy independence into an individual or a community concept.

Wind energy works where and when the wind blows. Solar voltaic cells work where and when the sun shines. Modern commerce and industry demand electricity 24/7. Line losses from the electrical grid waste more energy than we use. Nimbys continue to demand not in my back yard or anywhere close to where I live, or might some day visit .

This leaves only coal. The United States has the most proven reserves of coal of any nation on the earth. Today, outside the direct hydro and natural gas areas, most electricity is generated by coal. That means over 50% of the United States electricity is generated by coal fired power plants. The vast majority of the electricity produced in those areas where those old conservationists lived, is produced by coal fired utilities.

My only experience with coal, comes from shoveling the stuff. In high school just before fall football practice began, a coal car would pull into the local railroad yard from Utah, perhaps from the mine where the recent mine accident occurred. The job was to shovel the coal from the car into a small dump truck and haul it to the elementary school where we would shovel it into the coal bin, to heat the school during the winter. For about a week it was a good job four three or so of us to get more into shape to pound heads and get beat up on the football field.

America's natural wealth is both a blessing and a curse. In the northwest this is true with hydropower. With the building of the great Grand Coulee Dam this region was changed both naturally and economically forever. To help promote this

and similar projects along the Columbia, the government hired Woodie Guthrie to write a number of songs that are now available in his Columbia River Collection. The most famous is "Roll on Columbia." However, when you listen to the songs today you find it fascinating just how naïve some of the lyrics were, in light of more than a half a century of reality.

In that similar naïve light, we think that we can power an economy the size of the United States with strip mined coal, as a possibility. However, to call it green is the absolute absurdity. In the global perspective, if we don't do it here then they will do it in China, Indonesia, Russia, or elsewhere. All in the name of self indulgence for more stuff.

Globalism says that we should build those new coal power plants using clean technology and carbon sequestering in those other regions of the earth. It is the green thing to do. Well it really isn't green at all, just environmental imperialism spun to be politically correct and profitable to global enterprise. "Free enterprise" that really never intends to pay the full cost of its freedom.

They make the stuff, global transportation ships it and we will buy it, and wake again tomorrow and go to the aimless service job to repeat the cycle. Perhaps the real answer related to this increasing demand for stuff and electricity to power it is to just chill. That chilling will do more to deal with any possible effect of human produced green house gases than any governmental or institutional program can ever do.

Chilling means society will have to realistically look at the future and take a step towards, not energy independence, but personal responsibility to understand that self indulgent stuff is not the answer. The true answer lies closer to having that Bald Eagle welcome you home in the evening.

So can we create a garden of eden from a condo and an office in Babel? If we were all evolving towards a better society where contemporary education and a truly enlightened elite really had some answers, perhaps. However, total depravity and self indulgence says we all

seek comfort over commitment, real truth always tells a different story than our idol conjecture.

To say you believe in the possibilities of only human civilization making this world a better place, denies the reality that this planet we call home was once truly green and blue. It was people that brought about the brown, and I might add, this discussion of fossil fuels was once the green that we destroyed, not all that long ago.

So is it all hopeless? Evolutionarily yes!

However, if man was created in the image of God, no. Evolution has no reason for art and music. Created in the image of God all humanity is directly wired for art and music, where we find that deep ultimate pleasure.

A few weeks ago I posted an Oikos Thought in which coal became an icon for our self indulgent society. A week later came the thought that diamonds are really just a lump of coal, subject to enough heat and pressure to change something worth dollars per ton, into thousands of dollars per carat.

Pressure is external in the conversion of coal to diamonds naturally. The same is true as the human metaphor. What makes that metamorphosis possible is the understanding that there is a God, and you and I are not Him. That is the beginning of wisdom.

Secondly, all paths do not lead to God, even if we would desire that all would make it to heaven. "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6 That is what Jesus claimed for His own heritage. Either that is ultimate truth, or He was a lunatic. There really is no true middle ground for a good moral teacher or someone similar.

Writers with proper vision can bring about positive change over extended periods of time and slowly as culture adjusts.

However, we are programmed for music like no other source of inspiration. With all human movements and situations, music is an integral part. It makes the heat and the pressure of life bearable. It also communicates those situations that we may understand without actually having to live it out. With such power music can change the church, but it can also change society in the larger sense.

By its very nature music is best expressed when shared or given away. In that respect just as with love, it works best from a deficit position, hoping through the melody and the lyrics to change the world in a short period of time.

In that regard, music, all music, is worship to God. Some of it might be common, bad worship, but it is still worship none the less.

Our modern world stands at a cross roads, coal and our usage there of, doesn't make us human. We have been created as mankind absolutely. Coal stands as an icon of our future, diamonds, or electricity and carbon dioxide. As stark as those realities are, life and death are truth.

There is a song about a bird with red on his wings in the interview I referenced with Kathy Mattea in the Resource section . That red symbolizes the blood shed by a miner giving his life for his coal mining job and his family. In similar light that bird's red wing covers the blackness of the human soul, that changed a blue and green world in which brown continues to increase, as the true diverse living green disappears, and a hyped green truly says we are fools of our own destruction.