

Watt's Happening? #156

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NEEDED: a 21st Century Space Race

“We choose *to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”*

You might recognize these historic words from US President John F. Kennedy, spoken in 1962. At the time, only one person had been launched briefly into outer space, the Russian Yuri Gagarin, and US rockets were regularly blowing up on the launch pad. Just eight years later, humans were walking on the moon.

A NEW SPACE RACE

The space race began as a matter of national security and national prestige. Today, the same motivations could inspire a new “space race”, but this race will be the one that preserves our garden planet and our remarkable global civilization.



Going to the moon and back gave us this first view of our entire planet surrounded by the emptiness of space. This is the most viewed photograph in history, and arguably the most important photograph ever taken – just one of the countless hidden benefits of taking on a seemingly impossible challenge.

We need a great leader who will inspire not just one nation but many, with words like these:

“We choose to save our planet and our many nations and their diverse cultures and economies, we choose to stabilize our climate and bring health and

prosperity to all humankind and all living things in this decade, not because these things are easy, but because they are hard, because the goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because the challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone any longer, and one which we intend to win."

NO SUCH LEADER... YET

No such leader has yet appeared (with possible exception of 16-year old Greta Thunberg!). But in spite of widespread government inertia, both here in Canada and around the world, the inevitable transition to clean energy is happening anyway. Much more slowly than it should be, and much more slowly than it could be, but happening.

Energy transitions are never easy, and come with both pros and cons. The good news is that this latest transition to the clean energies of sun, wind, geothermal, etc. comes with some pretty cool benefits that would have been only a dream just a decade ago.

Electric vehicles (EVs) and solar power for instance. The new EVs are just plain amazing: powerful, hi-tech and cheap to run. No oil changes or muffler replacements here! Everybody who tries one can't go back to regular internal combustion vehicles, that now seem overly complex, expensive to run, noisy and polluting. The benefits and performance of an EV are just too obvious once you experience them firsthand.

That's why EV sales are skyrocketing around the world.

ELECTRIC LIVING NOW

With the price of grid electricity continuing to increase and expected to soar, it is now a smart move to invest in a solar power system for your home, wiping out your electrical bills and keeping your EV charged up too, another dream that has now become a reality.

Both the solar array and the EV are likely to last longer than a lifetime, benefitting your children and their children too. Meanwhile you get the pure pleasure of driving by gas stations for the rest of your life!

Your annual savings from your own solar power system and EV are greater than any bank can offer, and they're tax-free! So as the price of gasoline and grid electricity continue their inevitable climb, and angry consumers protest and complain, you can just smile and enjoy your new low-cost electric lifestyle.

No, not a pipe dream. This is the new reality, and many folks are eagerly making this energy transition in their own lives right now, even up here in northeast British Columbia.

What his country would gain from this great effort of putting a man on the moon in less than a decade, Kennedy could not clearly predict, but one of the greatest values, he suggested, was in our willingness to try.

Many of us are trying. The big question is, can we convince our governments to join us?

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