

Watt's Happening? #107

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THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

Renewable energy is better energy.



*Free energy for your home and free "fuel" for your vehicle from sunlight.
The new renewable energy world will be a better energy world, plain and simple.*

Many of you may know that I write this column primarily to counteract the deluge of energy misinformation.

They're doing to climate change and clean energy what they did with tobacco: introduce doubt into the science to delay and confuse. I'm not too sure who "they" are, and I don't really care, because they are quickly being shown to be as silly as they most certainly are. Renewable energy is better energy, plain and simple.

So rather than address the critics directly, I tend to simply relate "Watt's Happening" in this new world of advanced energy. The proof, as they say, is in the pudding.

GOOGLE GOES CLEAN

Google is on a global wind and solar buying spree, intending to be powered entirely by clean energy by the end of this year. They're investing in and snapping up the power from wind and solar facilities in the U.S., South America and around the world.

The computer systems that make Google possible use about the same amount of energy as a large city like Toronto, some 5.7 terra-watt-hours. That's a lot and a big expense.

Google's head of energy policy says there are sound business reasons for going big on renewables: the cost of wind has come down 60% and the cost of solar has come down 80% over the last six years,

making renewables cost competitive with conventional energy, and since there are no fuel costs, energy costs are stable over the long term.

“Climate change is an urgent global imperative that we all must solve. Clean energy benefits everybody and the planet.”

ENERGY DEMAND SET TO DECLINE

The World Energy Council’s new global study predicts that per capital energy demand will peak before 2030. Unlike the old energy world, where expanding economies and increasing living standards mean more and more energy consumption without end, in the new energy reality global energy needs peak and then decline.

Why? Remarkable advances in energy efficiency through technological innovation; hundreds of millions of individuals, communities, cities and businesses generating their own electricity on site, needing little or nothing from the grid; and the rapid perfection of energy storage technologies, increasing grid independence.

“It is clear that we are undergoing a Grand Transition, which will create a fundamentally new world for the energy industry. Historically people have talked about Peak Oil, but now disruptive trends are leading energy experts to consider the implications of Peak Demand . . . We are entering a world where the concern is no longer just about stranded assets but also the impact of stranded resources on nations.”

BIG FOSSIL BRACES FOR TRANSITION

Meet the Energy Transitions Commission, made up of leaders from Shell, BHP Billiton and General Electric

With just a handful of moving parts, electric cars are essentially maintenance free and can run on free “fuel” made from sunlight. And this ain’t some futuristic dream. It’s Watts Happening.

Oil and Gas (big players here!) with one unambiguous agenda: deep decarbonization.

“We must reduce carbon emissions by half by 2040 (compared to the business as usual scenario) with further cuts thereafter to achieve the Paris climate objective – limiting global warming to well below 2 C.”

And they’re not alone. Major oil producer Total SA states that electric cars will represent up to a third of new car sales by 2030. That’s about 20 million a year. To put that in context, there are about one billion cars on the road right now, and the world makes 100 million new ones each year.

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Following the exponential curve of electric car growth, that means all new vehicles will be electric by about 2050.

That’s a good thing for the planet, since about a third of all carbon emissions come from transportation.

Plus it’s a good thing for car owners, since the electric fuel to run these vehicles will be essentially free (Tesla, for instance, provides free “fill ups” to Tesla owners at its solar powered charging stations, or you can make your own “fuel” at home with a modest solar array).

Electric cars, with only a handful of moving parts, will be essentially maintenance free as well. Free fuel for life and spare change to maintain. Humm, sounds pretty good to me.

So don’t worry about the naysayers. They’ll be left behind where they belong. The new energy world will be a better energy world. That’s GOOD news.

