

from our viewpoint...

Clean power comes with higher price

Clean power. What does that mean?
Depends on the tenor of the times. Fifteen to 20 years ago, for instance, environmentalists were protesting anything to do with nuclear power. Development of nuclear plants stopped cold.
Nuke plants created the worst type of pollution, opponents said, radioactive wastes that we had no plans to deal with. State after state rejected plans to build storage sites for material that would be “hot” for centuries. None has been built yet, though nuclear wastes remain in storage, the containers rotting way.
Coal, the once and future king of energy, returned to the fore. Hundreds of steam plants were built. Giant cranes stripped away the soil of central Wyoming. Dozens of trains left the coal fields each day to feed hungry power plants.
Then someone decided that it was carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse gasses” that we had to fear. Suddenly, coal was the enemy and nuclear plants were back in vogue. We’ll figure out a way to hide those wastes, just you see.
In Europe, nuclear plants are already under development. In the U.S., the administration is pushing for a resumption of design and construction. Nothing has happened yet. No waste disposal site is being built.
Some coal plants, under pressure from environmentalists, will convert to natural gas, which burns cleaner, producing mostly water and less carbon dioxide in the exhaust. Wind, solar and geothermal plants will add to the mix, and coal will be dethroned.
Such is the way things are when we follow our emotions. The “best science” of the day has a way of morphing into yesterday’s old news.
But can we really depend on nuclear plants to supply the power we need? Or wind? Or the sun?
No one really knows. The truth is, we need to consume less energy. Americans are just energy hogs, but no one wants to be without things our grandparents never dreamed of, air conditioning and big cars and huge houses.
But nuke plants do produce waste, and someone will have to provide a place to bury it. Even natural gas produces carbon dioxide. Any energy plant produces heat. Any transfer to energy from one place to another moves that heat, affecting weather and eventually, climate, at both ends.
“Clean” coal plants are far better than older coal plants, but still dirty. That may be progress, but ... any kind of plant has its own impact. We know not what that may be today, and care less if the new plant is “cleaner.” But someday, we will have to pay the price. It won’t be cheap.
Someday, too, advancing technology will give us better ways to use nuclear fuel, wind, the sun, and yes, even coal. Maybe that will save us, or maybe just add to our doom.
And we’ll still not have a place to take the nuclear wastes. Who wants it?
This energy problem has no easy answers. - Steve Haynes



What we get into when helping our kids

We do the darndest things for our kids.
I have a friend who just got out of the hospital. She had spent five days in the heat and humidity helping her children with their 4-H projects during the county fair.
She said she really, really tried to drink plenty of water, but her two busy boys have livestock and other projects that required a lot of work. She just got dehydrated.
She acknowledged that she knew what was happening, so the day after the end of the fair, she went into the emergency room and told them she was a couple of quarts low.
Two liters of normal saline later, she was ready to go again.
The next week, this same friend got a present from a co-worker - a nice grasshopper.
She was ecstatic. She said she would take it right home and put it in the freezer.
This brought up a less-than-Martha-Stewart moment in my mind as I saw her taking a package of pork chops and a side of grasshoppers



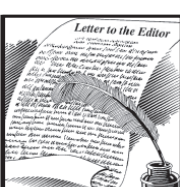
cynthia haynes
• open season

out of the freezer for supper.
No, she explained, the grasshopper is part of next year’s entomology project for her sons’ 4-H work.
You’ve got to get going in the fall on collecting bugs, she explained, because some of them are just not available until the autumn, and by then the fair is over. So, she continued, as the little monsters show up - the bugs that is - they are popped into plastic containers and stored in the freezer.
I mentioned this to my friend May, whose children were all in 4-H, and she nodded wisely, noting that she used carbon tetrachloride on her insect collection, but those days are gone.

It’s been banned by the government.
Another friend told me the story of her 4-H disaster. Her children do photography, she explained.
Since it’s the digital age, she got a nice printer for their art. It works great, she said, but the pictures must be sprayed with a fixer so the image won’t yellow or fade.
The first time she tried helping a child with a picture, she got fixer on her hands and then got stuck to the print.
Since the fixer was so good at sticking things, she figured she could use it to fix the 20-year-old headliner of her car, which was coming down.
She sprayed and pushed, she said, and parts of the liner stuck to the top of the car. The rest just disintegrated or stuck to her fingers.
That was the last time she tried to use the fixer to fix anything but photos, she said. Seems she had bits of grey fabric stuck to her fingers for days.

Women’s equality and climate change

We commemorate Women’s Equality Day on Thursday, Aug. 26, (90th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote) and reflect on the true meaning of equality. The day is important, not just to evaluate where women are in terms of representation and equal pay for equal work, but to consider the ramifications of what would happen should half of the world’s population be left out of decision-making – particularly in the dialogue that will shape our collective future, the dialogue on climate change, the green economy and sustainability.
Our leaders and the world’s heads of state have failed to solve the climate crisis or to shift into a green economy – all while everyone knows the path we tread will exhaust the world’s food, water and energy. Public opinion strongly favors action; nonetheless, progress is stalled.
It’s no coincidence female participation is dismal in the U.N.’s climate negotiations, in the halls of our government and in corporate board meetings. Meanwhile, climate change is disproportionately affecting women. Heat and extreme weather already impede the work that falls on women worldwide, e.g. collecting water and growing crops. Not only are women responsible for as much as 80 percent of farming in the developing world, they’re much more vulnerable to natural disasters than men.
But women need not be victims of the climate crisis. A new generation of women entrepreneurs, leaders and artists, have demonstrated the potential for being the solution to the climate crisis – yes, imagine that. But they must be mobilized and given an opportunity to influence government and business.
An influx of female leadership might solve the climate crisis. Studies have shown successful female entrepreneurs take different



from other pens
• commentary

risks than their male counterparts. Female entrepreneurs risk their own personal capital – their time, their finances. Male risk-taking, on the other hand, seems to involve the wealth of others. Just look at the recent financial crisis and the mostly male Wall Street bankers who invented bizarre investment products in testosterone-fueled high-rises.
Politically powerful women in the U.S. and abroad want to find solutions to the climate-change dilemma. They want to champion women’s roles in establishing a green economy. From Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, who created a new office for women at the State Department, to Amina Benkhadra, Morocco’s Minister of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment, to Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the U.N. framework on Climate Change, women are beginning to play key roles in the climate and renewable-energy discussion. They’re making their voices heard.
Investing in the strength of women seems to be a no-brainer, especially in these difficult times. We must invest in this level-headed and hard-working half of the population while raising our collective female voices, because women exemplify fresh perspectives, long-term considerations and sane risk-taking.
Our leadership must include more female entrepreneurs who consider long-term costs while honoring debts to lenders and to future generations. Did you know women are less likely to file for bankruptcy, or the most successful micro lending projects in the developing world are those loaning exclusively to

women?
In 1992, as the global community gathered at the first U.N. Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, it agreed to a set of principles on sustainable development. One of these principles was that: “Women have a vital role in environmental management. ... Their full participation is therefore essential.” Almost 20 years later, we have yet to see full participation. Why the slow-going? Before the Rio Earth Summit of 2012, we’d like to change that.
What we need to do is to convene female leaders to re-examine the climate crisis through a different lens. These leaders would mobilize women all over the world to promote innovative solutions, all while promoting participation of women in green technology. This effort would include women political and business leaders, as well as top minds from the creative world.
Our leaders’ approach to climate change has brought no progress. We need fresh ideas, and we need new leadership; we need a different perspective. As we shift into a new green economic model, we need women to be front and center as entrepreneurs and technical workers. And, with targeted training, education and mentorship, we can make the girls of today leaders of the new green economy of tomorrow. When it comes to the world’s future, we can’t afford to take risks with the wealth of others nor the wealth and well being of future generations.
The author is Kathleen Rogers, president of Earth Day Network. She can be reached at (202) 518-0044 (in Washington, DC). The American Forum, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational organization, provides the media with the views of state experts on major public concerns in order to stimulate informed discussion.

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