

Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament · Environmental Protection · Social Justice · Economic Sustainability

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September 15, 2009

Dear Study Group friends –

First, we wanted to send a reminder about **this Saturday's (9/19) house concert featuring Bill Oliver** ("Mr. Habitat") at the lovely home and gardens of Peter Neils and Sue Chavez, near Tijeras Canyon. It starts at 4:00 pm; there will be food; the minimum suggested donation is \$10. Bill's brand of enviromusical humor is infectious and fun. If you (and your friends!) can come, **please RSVP to Peter at <peasegrn@swcp.com>**. Ask Peter for directions.

Second, **we want your help** – basically, help to pull money from Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons programs and put that money in DOE renewable energy and energy efficiency programs and incentives. We need to make jobs, lots of good jobs producing and saving energy, if we want to cushion what amounts to the decline and fall of the neoliberal economy.

We want your help arranging conversations with you and your friends about this.

(Please note we are not asking for something as fruitless as writing your congressperson. And I am not sending you a load of propaganda or enlisting anyone's teensy effort in what amounts to some ill-considered Astroturf campaign. I get them almost every day.)

Our elected leaders mostly don't grasp the extent of the problem – or the scale of positive opportunities available. Not yet. "Green jobs" is mostly just an appealing slogan so far. Sooner or later they will understand, but in the meantime we can help them, directly and indirectly. "Later" will be too late.

It starts with mutual education, and the personal realization that yes, we *can* change things for the better. **And we want to.**

We won't get sustainable communities if we don't engage in real political conversations. Nobody is going to ride to our rescue. Quite the opposite, I'm afraid.

It has to start somewhere, even if it seems impossible. *It isn't impossible – that's just the despair we have willy-nilly internalized from our decaying culture that's talking.* Events are swinging – horribly, but they are swinging – in our favor. We can help each other get ready; the time is right to get active. *Very* active, if possible. Many ears which were closed are being forced open by events. What those ears hear, however, is the question. The answer is substantially up to us.

Look: \$2 billion dollars is about to be thrown, one pallet of money at a time, into a three-acre-or-so hole in the ground at Los Alamos. If this spending is allowed it will build a new factory for weapons of mass destruction. Just what we need.

That money could be used to subsidize renewable energy, in the same bill and by the same congressional committees. Wind turbines, let's say. If it were so used, at say 20% of total cost (which is plenty of incentive in today's market), it would build 6.7 gigawatts of installed wind capacity (4,467 1.5 megawatt turbines), producing power at an average of about 2 gigawatts around the clock and creating as many as 10,000 jobs for a decade (that's the European rate; ours would be less until we get smart about our manufacturing

jobs). It would save 197 train cars of coal every day, and using the results of one study, would prevent more than 250 early deaths each year from air pollution. Holy non-smokes! This would cost taxpayers nothing more than they pay today.

What could sell that transformation (and others like it in the solar industry and elsewhere) are the jobs. Building wind turbines delivers, prior to correction for our crappy industrial policies, about 30 times as many jobs as LANL nuclear construction (current cost: \$89,000 per sq. ft.) can deliver with the same money.

Given the great and growing U.S. wealth disparity, the peaking supply of liquid transportation fuels worldwide and for us, and widespread environmental degradation, it will not be possible to restart economic growth in the old ways even if we wanted to. There is no available asset bubble of sufficient magnitude, or the resources to support one, or any stable and infinitely-forgiving climate and environment on which to inflict such a deadly economy. This is good news for the planet but it does involve considerable tragic suffering. Nobody can escape it, no matter how wealthy.

This letter is not going out to our main email list. It is going to a relatively small list, to people we can count on. **We don't know the people you know, and we can't do what you can do.** That's why we need your help.

Please think carefully about this – then act if you can. Call (505-265-1200) or [write](#).

And if you can and have not yet done so, please [donate](#) to support this work – about which you can hear much more if you contact us. We are burning not just to provide information but to conspire together with you.

Sincerely,

Greg Mello

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