

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON says



JULY
7
2008



By Si Frumkin

SPECIAL 3-E ISSUE

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY

DO IT AT NIGHT! or ***HOW TO AVOID BLACKOUTS THIS YEAR***

THE SUMMER IS UPON US AND, YOU CAN BET, THERE WILL BE POWER OUTAGES AGAIN IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. OUR POPULATION IS growing, our power network is aging and there will be heat waves this year, just like in the years past and in the foreseeable future. Air conditioners will be going full blast, there will be overloads and hundreds of thousands of Southern Californians will be faced with melting ice and spoiled food in the refrigerators, air conditioning that isn't conditioning, closing of stores whose electronic cash registers do not work and spending the night by candlelight for unpredictable time periods and locations.

I have a suggestion that would help eliminate power failures in the summer. It is simple, costs nothing and would reduce the cost of electricity to the consumer.

Most of us know that electric power is not used equally during the 24-hours period. Much more power is used during the day by the various industries, offices, air conditioners and the like, while at night there is less demand and a surplus of electricity. The power companies are constantly trying to increase power use at night and decrease it during the day. One of the more successful programs in Southern California is a cheaper electricity rate that is offered to industries that start their working day at, say, 4 or 5 in the morning, rather than at 8 or 9. And there is also the vigorous and familiar advertising and marketing push for appliances that need less electricity and for better insulation of buildings that would reduce power consumption by air conditioners and heaters.

Most of us have flown into Los Angeles during the day. If you had a window seat,

you probably saw the landscape slowly changing from desert to the hundreds of houses and apartment buildings. You certainly couldn't help noticing the hundreds of thousands of oval, square or circular light blue dots all over the suburban landscape. Those are the swimming pools that are so ubiquitous wherever the 32 million Californians live – our swimming pools are an integral part of our culture; we appreciate them, we are proud of them, we brag about them, and sometimes we even swim in them. The swimming pool represents California living more than anything else except, maybe, the beaches and surfing.

As much as I love my swimming pool I recognize its major shortcoming: it guzzles electricity. Mine has two electric motors – one pumps the water through the filtering system, the other powers the underwater vacuum cleaner that sweeps the leaves and stuff from the bottom and the walls of the pool. I also have an above-ground spa which has its own motor to heat and circulate the water. The three motors work many hours each day, in winter or summer, and the hundreds of thousands of pools like mine are consuming millions of watts of electricity.

Don't get nervous, I am not suggesting



that you should give up your pool. I am simply suggesting that the pool motors should do their business at night. The motors are on a timer that goes on in the morning and switches off in the evening or late afternoon – it is just as easy to have them work at night; they don't need light to do their job. And if you have someone service the pool – or do it yourself – you can flip a switch when you need to sweep and clean the pool and the filter.

Since our electric company already has a two tier billing system for commercial accounts that are given a discount to work at night, it wouldn't be too difficult to offer a discount to the home or apartment owners who would save real money for running pool motors during the nocturnal power surplus hours.

The only pool owners who could not switch to running their motors at night are those who have eliminated the gas pool heaters and installed roof mounted solar panels that warm the water that is pumped up by the pool filter and return it to the pool. Obviously, the solar heaters would not work at night. I would suggest that in the interest of energy conservation the owners of solar panels be granted the same discount as those who run the motors at night. I think that this is only fair and, furthermore, for complete disclosure, I have a selfish reason: I have had solar panels and have used them to heat my pool for the last 25 or so years, long before the church of St. Al Gore was established! Ω

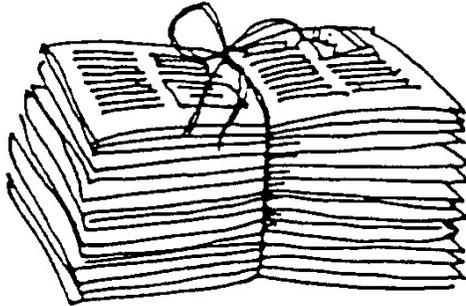


THE TIMBER GENOCIDE

By Si Frumkin

THE FIRST THING I DO ON SUNDAYS AFTER PICKING UP THE HEAVY BUNDLE OF LOS ANGELES TIMES IS sort it. I pull out all of the glossy announcements of incredible bargains, lay aside the magazines and the sections that brag of amazing deals on cars, TVs and furniture, make a stack of the sections I have no interest in and dump it all in the garbage, unread. I am then left with the news, the calendar section, the opinion section and one or two more that interest me.

This ritual always leaves me feeling a little guilty – I have always liked trees. I can't help thinking that I – and 900,000 others who get the Sunday Times – are collaborating in the murder of trees that have been converted into newsprint. I also can't help thinking that I am not alone in sorting out and rejecting most of what the Times prepares for us every Sunday. And so, I went to the Internet to find out just how many trees I am dumping in my garbage every Sunday. The results were fascinating.



I was told that 500 sheets of paper use up 6% of a tree. I then weighed the part of the paper that I read – 18 oz. - and the part I threw away – 72 oz. In other words, there was four times as much garbage as reading materials. Then I counted the pages of the part that I read: there were 118 pages of text and ads printed on both sides of 59

900,000 and so there were 25,470 trees sacrificed every Sunday. To be fair, I was also told by the Internet that about 60% of the paper was produced through recycling so that only 40% - or about 10,000 trees each week -

about half a million trees a year - were used to tell us about the "going out of business" sales and the gorgeous cars that can be leased for no money down.

Yes, I know that advertising is what a newspaper needs to stay alive and the entire newspaper industry is not doing all that well lately – the Sunday Times circulation used to be about 1,200,000 not so long ago and is now down to slightly below 900,000, still – 520,000 trees are killed each year! And by a newspaper that is always peddling environmental concerns and liberal causes! I suppose that money trumps idealism, especially in large corporations like Times-Mirror which is always supportive of labor and the working class causes but whose employees are not unionized!

I don't think that it would be an insurmountable task in this computer age to create 7 or 8 packages at various prices – similar to cable TV – that would give the subscriber the opportunity to select or omit certain sections, advertisements or inserts. I admit that this would be a bold step, a break with a tradition going back a century, one that mandates an overweight Sunday edition that is crammed full of superfluous and unnecessary materials. In addition to saving trees, it would result in less garbage as well as a saving on energy that is now wasted on printing, transportation and distribution of 900,000 six-pound bundles.

The newspaper that has the largest circulation in America is "USA Today". It doesn't have a Sunday edition and its weight is never more than a small fraction of the Los Angeles and the other traditional

newspapers. In spite of this – maybe even because of this – it is a serious money maker and proof that even in an old traditional industry there is a niche and a profit for boldness and innovation.

I will end with a suggestion I have for the Times that might easily make up for the possible loss of income from reducing the bulk of its Sunday edition:

Offer your advertisers the opportunity to



be linked and presented through Google and/or other search engines to have their ads displayed when a product or a service is searched for. For example, if someone is looking for refrigerators or patio furniture and clicks these items on Google, one of the sites offered would show the Los Angeles Times ads for the refrigerators or patio furniture. This is already being done by a San Diego newspaper and, as I understand



it, it is a great success.

So, L.A. Times, stop the timber genocide and make the lives of squirrels, spotted owls and Sunday Times subscribers more pleasant! \$\$



pages of paper. I already knew, by weighing, that there were four sheets of garbage to one sheet of what I wanted to read – 236 paper sheets.

Simple arithmetic showed that if 500 sheets equaled 6% of a tree, then 236 sheets equaled 2.83% of that same tree. This didn't seem all that terrible until I realized that I wasn't alone in tree extermination – the Sunday Times circulation is around

Two facts about climate change have become increasingly clear: New efforts to constrain global greenhouse gas emissions are likely within the next few years -- and their effect on the climate will be modest at best.

Rapidly rising emissions in the developing world will swamp whatever reductions the United States, Europe and Japan may make. Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases will continue to rise for decades to come, and warming will continue well into the next century.

What will happen? We may hope that the effects will be modest, but there is real risk that they will be very serious, at least for the most vulnerable nations. Some scientists warn of the possibility of abrupt climate change, with unpredictable but conceivably catastrophic consequences. Most troubling, by the time there are unmistakable signs of disaster, even a crash course of emissions reductions will be too late.

Policymakers have only considered two responses to climate change: cutting emissions, and adaptation -- that is, learning to live with a warmer planet. There is, however, a third possible strategy, one that could be fast, effective and affordable -- but that is being ignored. This idea is commonly known as geo-engineering.

The Earth is warmed by two forces: solar radiation, which enters the atmosphere, and the greenhouse gases that trap it there. There are two ways to cool the planet: reduce greenhouse gases or reduce the amount of solar radiation that reaches the Earth's surface. Or both. If we cannot do enough of the first, we must consider whether the second option -- geo-engineering -- is feasible.

In fact, geo-engineering could be surprisingly simple. Scientists noted that the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines cooled the planet for two to three years by roughly half a degree Celsius. There are various ways of artificially reproducing this effect. A small amount of ultra-fine sulfur particles injected into the upper atmosphere could deflect 1% or 2% of incoming sunlight -- almost unnoticeable, but enough to cancel out the warming expected to occur this century. Or a fleet of ships spraying seawater into the air might achieve the same general effect by increasing the density of (and thereby the reflectivity of) low-altitude marine clouds. Even painting the roofs of buildings white would be a low-tech way of reflecting a little sunlight.

A growing number of leading scientists and environmental economists take the

idea of geo-engineering very seriously. The National Academy of Sciences, NASA and the Department of Energy have concluded that geo-engineering could be, in the words of the National Academy, "feasible, economical and capable."

The question for policymakers is not whether to deploy a geo-engineering system immediately or to make it the primary focus of climate policy. Rather, it is whether to make a serious investment in the research and development needed to accu-

unchecked emissions forever. Within the last two years, three high-level conferences have explored geo-engineering; each was held behind closed doors. One premier university was too frightened to even do that. There have been calls for boycotts of the research or, failing that, strict international regulations.

This concern is badly misplaced. Geo-engineering is a remarkable idea with tremendous potential, but it is neither a permanent nor a perfect solution to warming.

There are risks to and, more important, limitations on what it can do. Even among its most enthusiastic advocates, no one calls for a policy of "geo-engineering forever, emissions reductions never." Geo-engineering would be a complement to, rather than a substitute for, a long-term program to transition to a zero-emissions economy.

What geo-engineering could do is buy us time to make that transition while protecting us from the worst potential effects of warming. It may be possible to find ways to phase out fossil fuels or capture their green-

house gases -- but it will take a very long time. Tom Wigley of the National Center for Atmospheric Research believes that geo-engineering, coupled with a long-term effort to reduce emissions, could stabilize the climate, while doing so through emissions reductions alone would be "virtually impossible." When warming begins to have severe effects on, say, India, it is likely that attention will turn to geo-engineering. The sooner we begin to study this idea seriously, the more we will know when decisions about deployment have to be made.

The idea of "engineering" the climate may strike people as horrifying or absurd; in fact, we are changing the global climate now -- in a massive, unintentional and uncontrolled experiment. There is no other public policy problem of comparable importance for which the potential harm is so large and the proposed solutions are so clearly inadequate -- while a potentially effective, affordable and practical approach to the issue is being ignored.

Samuel Thernstrom is co-director of an American Enterprise Institute project to study the policy implications of geo-engineering.



ately evaluate its risks and rewards. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has declined to pursue such research, although it would cost only a small fraction of the \$3 billion the federal government spends annually on developing new technologies to reduce emissions.

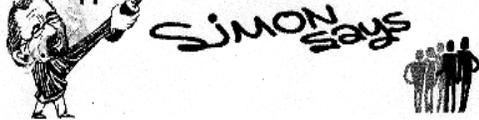
Why the reluctance to study this idea? Fear. Fear that geo-engineering would not work, and fear that it would.

There are two concerns about geo-engineering. One is the risk of unintended consequences. Scientists note that sulfur particles could cause stratospheric ozone depletion, although the evidence from Pinatubo suggests that this effect would be modest. Others fear possible disruption of regional climates, such as the Asian monsoon. Most scientists studying geo-engineering believe that these side effects are not likely to be nearly as dangerous as uncontrolled warming, but much more research is needed.

Fear that geo-engineering might work, however, is the reason some people reject, or are reluctant to even openly discuss, this idea. Critics worry that geo-engineering could be used as an excuse to continue



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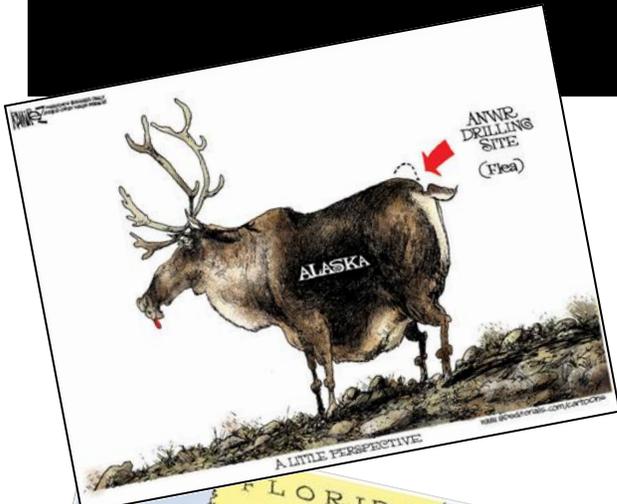
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IF ONE PICTURE IS WORTH 1000 WORDS THEN HERE ARE 5000 WORDS FROM THE PEN OF THE PULITZER PRIZE WINNING (REPEATEDLY!) ARTISTIC GENIUS (MY OPINION), **MICHAEL RAMIREZ, ON THE ENERGY CRISIS**



COME AND LISTEN TO A STORY 'BOU' A MAN NAMED JED POOR MOUNTAINEER, BARELY KEPT HIS FAMILY FED THEN ONE DAY HE WAS SHOOTING AT SOME FOOD AND UP THROUGH THE MUD CAME A BUBBLIN CRUDE (OIL THAT IS, BLACK GOLD, TEXAS TEA)

WELL THE FIRST THING YOU KNOW JED THINKS HE'S A MILLIONAIRE BUT THEN CONGRESS SMD, 'HEY GET AWAY FROM THERE!' SAID CUEN'S THE ONLY PLACE WHERE DRILLING OUGHT TO BE SO THEY PUT HIM IN A TRUCK BOND FOR THE PENITENTIARY (JAIL THAT IS, FEDERAL PEN, WITH OIL COMPANY GEOS)

WELL NOW IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO JED AND ALL HIS KIN THEY RAN OUT OF GAS AND STARVED TO DEATH, CUEN CONGRESS DID THEM IN YOU'RE ALL INVITED BACK TO THIS LOCALITY BUT ONLY IF YOU'RE A CARIBOU OR YOU WANT TO PLANT A TREE (DONT COME BACK NOW, YA HEAR?)