

## #146 Starting Points

As it is early in a new year and decade, I thought it might stimulate more exchange with readers to set forth some of the basic understandings that form the prism for each week's entry.

This column always focuses on the current and potential impact of the energy industry on the three sectors of society that govern our lives - the economy, environment and equity.

It is commonly understood (but not sufficiently followed) that the above 3 E's are the only complete basis for determining expenses and revenues or more broadly stated, what really happens. Every day brings confirmation that environmental and social equity are the fastest growing sectors of private and public finance. Insurance companies and government programs are burdened with environmental costs and demand for human service expenses that are not met by funding. The current deficit is in the hundreds of billions and grows at a faster pace each year. The result of this deficit is often catastrophic.

How can we find a way out of financial trap and avoid mounting crises? This column asserts that new energy policy and practices can lead the way from chronic economic, environmental and social failure, do so immediately and that local individual and collective private and public decisions can play a major role in developing the sustainable economy.

Consider the size of the energy sector. It is a \$6 trillion market. Compare that with the \$100 billion internet market which receives so much popular media coverage including the recent announcement by Google that they will become an energy company. Clearly, we are right to assert the importance of the energy sector.

The task of this column then is to identify existing policies and practices in the energy sector that maintain and facilitate failure and describe new local initiatives that provide the path to a new future.

Examples of the former include government policy that declares corporations as "persons" so that government cannot interfere with what they do, followed by government mandates to promote the success of petroleum companies but not allow government agencies to regulate price and transparency parameters, public policy that exempts petroleum companies from most regulations applied in other sectors of the economy and deny sufficient staff to enforce the minimal regulations that are still on the books.

Examples of initiatives that open the path to a better future include local organizations where citizen volunteers are performing the acts of good government by funding and conducting the research, public education and advocacy of good energy, environment and economic policy on the Marcellus Shale. Such groups are part of the greater social movement that still needs to be formed to achieve a much wider set of new policies and practices in the energy field. It is very encouraging to see the demonstrated power of citizen action to correct corporate and government policy. It would be even more encouraging if local government would engage more pro-actively and effectively with these citizen groups.

Examples of the wider social movement that is needed include development of organizations and specific programs that provide large scale creation of good paying

energy jobs in building auditing and retrofit including energy efficiency and renewable energy installations. This local market could double the local economy and efficiently capture the jobs, business and government revenues, environmental and health benefits that amount to a path towards sustainable prosperity on a more fairly shared basis.

Everything is here already except our commit to reorganize to achieve it.

It has to be acknowledged that it is harder to organize the positive alternative and develop it with sufficient capacity, expertise and scale. But, three incentives are available and they are always central to this column.

- 1) The sustainable economy will be very profitable for entrepreneurs and the community.
- 2) The 390ghg world we live in will not support a healthy human future.
- 3) We are running out of time to get to the non-carbon based future.