

#62 SOLAR SPRING

Forsythia are dramatically yellow. Daffodils and tulips as well as magnolia and apple trees display the wonder of nature's palate of colors. The animals now walk away from bales of hay in preference for the succulent deep green fresh grasses in field and meadow. Even on cool mornings and days, the sun's warmth and brightness reminds us that there are sources of power that are benign and always available. No trucks and long hoses and shocking bills needed here. Small piles of unused firewood remind us of the stored solar power they provided in this seemingly long winter that has just passed. Birds and streams are singing their especially energetic spring songs. It's a gorgeous time of the year in Sullivan County and we had practically nothing to do with making it so lovely.

On the other hand, fuel and food, now linked together in an intense spiral of out of control price increases, sends a chill and numbness into our lives. Filling up the car is \$50, more than a day's pay for thousands of us. Filling up the truck costs \$100. The cost is \$1200-1500 for one fill-up for the large trucks that we have mistakenly chosen as the vehicle to transport our necessities. When Richard Nixon was in the White House, oil was \$4 a barrel. It cost \$120 a barrel the other day. The newspaper say it may go to \$200 a barrel and some of the richest men in the world who make their money by speculation have reconfigured their investments based on a \$200 price. Such decisions, of course, speed up the arrival of this price.

Two sprigs of broccoli cost \$2.47, a head of cauliflower \$3.40, a small head of lettuce \$1.89. If the grower was getting a better price that would be one thing. That most of this price increase is due to oil-based fertilizer and transportation costs that pollute water, air, soil and animal and human health, is a completely different matter. People were hungry and cold in the winter just passed and the increase of suffering in our local communities is a disgrace and travesty. The very commendable efforts of so many to assist in distributing the supply of necessities more fairly are falling far behind.

Farther away, our \$700,000,000 embassy compound in Iraq and the many billion dollar, so-called green zone where tens of thousands of US troops live, has proven to be a killing zone, an easy target for those in Iraq who do not accept the results of our invasion and occupation of their country. Resistance fighters who have been receiving large sums not to fight our troops for the last year are now better armed and are now returning to the attack, acting as dedicated as you and I would be to defend their country against those who do not share their way of life but insist on breaking into their homes with insult, injury and death any time of the day or night. Even the Department of Defense reports that the greatest national security threat to the United States is climate change, not international terrorism. It is time to conclude that what made us strong now makes us weak.

We do not have to accept this condition at the local level. There is a lot to do to change the world as it is right here in Sullivan County. Renewable energy systems that harness the great power of nature are still expensive and require trained personnel. We need our young men and women and our billions back home.

Solar Spring is here. Every day we are bathed in the power and beauty of this natural power that is a thousands times more plentiful in energy than we can consume in a day. It's clean. It is inexhaustible. It's right here. It provides many very good paying jobs. The whole world wants it more than anything else. It fits our labor force. It represents locally

controlled growth. It will sustain us for generations to come in new levels of prosperity for everyone in our communities.

A Sullivan County Sustainable Energy Commission is being formed. Public hearings have been scheduled. Watch for notice of them in the newspaper and attend. Bring the kids and grandparents. There is good and necessary work for everyone.