

Sunmen

May 2004

We must conserve energy, slow the creation of green house gasses, avoid economic collapse as fossil fuels run out. We hear this all the time. What if some took it seriously? What if honesty prevailed in the solar energy field? Let us imagine Sunmen doing their sun work.

The whole study of sun work is different than mechanical engineering, which acts ashamed of its association with nature. Sunmen study the animate as well as inanimate.

They study animals, their energy budgets and their forms; allometry, the study of scale. Trees, shrubs, grasses and their relationship to climate are important. Sunmen study nature.

Sunmen are outside in the sun and under the night sky among cars and buildings, beside bushes, trees, streams, rocks, and pavement with their IR scanners. A Sunman needs few desks, chairs, schedules or computers. He asks many questions, makes observations, aims at better architecture, better means of heating and cooling, better city planning, improved ways of getting around (back to your feet and your bikes). He aims to improve life, and make the world more beautiful.

Sun work is not a joke, not theater where students express themselves as trees, clouds or rabbits, it is a science that uses mathematics and measures things with rules, tapes, clocks and thermometers. We best first dip ourselves into this New World of engineering by picking up an infrared scanner. This tool, which measures

the temperature of a surface instantly by merely pointing at it, leaves a stream of questions for its user that becomes a Sunman's education.

Sunmen love energy and wealth, without which they couldn't work. Most of all, they love clarity, truth and nature. They admit to love of the wealth from oil wells, coal mines, nuclear power plants, even strip mines. Sunmen are confident that in time the art of sun work will improve and replace all that is ugly, yet are haunted that oil, as strong as it is, won't stand up straight and play fair, and casts an oily spell to defeat them.

Sunmen don't recognize hi-tech and low-tech, only the ugly and the beautiful, and those keep changing, even changing places.

Sunmen celebrate the equinoxes, the solstices and perihelion. Sunmen are embarrassed to participate in contrived events such as Earth Day and Sun Day. False celebrations ease the way to false economics. Sunmen don't want subsidies, solar tax credits, green energy laws or other such influences on their work. One can no more subsidize the sun than heat it up. If the playing field isn't level a Sunman walks uphill, however disagreeable. Eventually he will find fair play. Sunmen rely on business and trade and do not trust bureaucrats, government, non-profit corporations, or politicians. A Btu must always be a Btu, a Watt a Watt, but a dollar? What is a dollar?

Sunmen survive by the sun, not by burning taxpayers. A Sunman loves his tools; his saws, his drill, his tin snips, pipe wrench, crescent wrench, propane torch, silicone sealant, pipe clamp. To even think, he must return to them.

Sunmen love the feel of copper and aluminum; they love to weld, to bend metal, to tighten bolts. They love the sensations of thermal mass, of bottles and tanks of water of stones and cobbles, bricks, slab floors and masonry walls.

A Sunman loves convection, as alive as a heart beating. Sunmen know how to make do with their tools. They gag watching others advance by making seem rather than making do.

Sunmen have become suspicious of the press, environmental celebrities, even of themselves. The real prize for saving money is the money saved; the real prize for saving energy is also the money saved. The homeless sleeping on grates and under bridges still survive only because they earn such prizes every day.

Good architects know this and don't seek special accountings to disguise extravagance but celebrities want every prize, so, they have devised special point systems to flatter themselves.

Sunmen watch solar organizations overtaken by government and bent to serve political purposes and slander the sun. They watch wind generators spun by taxes. They see giant oil companies and their stooges thrive in tax credits. Isn't owning the wonderful oil enough for them? It must be this way the stooges say. Sunmen wonder why so many uses of the sun that make sense must be neglected. Why can't photovoltaic panels go to remote villages and ranches where they are useful?

Why do the troops of solar celebrities and solar stooges forget solar water heaters, day lighting, passive heating, and cooling?

Sunmen know the natural world is becoming dimmer and dimmer to the public. Tax credit engineers work endlessly to disguise reality and promote attention to their symbols, certificates, laws, spells, lies and money.

A Sunman regards a tax credit engineer, who needs no forklifts, hammers, shovels or cement truck, as no better than white collar cannibals who thrive the way all cannibals do.