



Women's Energy Matters Newsletter

November 2005

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WELCOME to WEM's Newsletter

Every day we use energy in countless ways and depend on others who use it in ways we don't even realize — until it's gone.

Those who control energy also control the economy and many other aspects of our lives. The system is in trouble, but they are trying to keep it going a little longer and make the people pay, so they keep people ignorant and confused.

A lot of what is being put out on the TV is creating fear among the people, that they can't afford and won't have access to resources. The goal of WEM's literature is to ease that pain, to let people know there is an alternative.

There is a whole new world of energy arising right in front of us – though most people have no clue. WEM seeks to lift the level of awareness as to what exists and what else is possible — so that we can participate in creating it and enjoying the benefits.

Women didn't build the current energy system but we

can have more of a say in what happens next.

Women have a special point of view, because we have always had to deal with the consequences of energy and its connection to the economy, as we try to maintain our homes, put food on the table, raise our children, nurse the sick, take care of the elders — and also go to work.

Women are resourceful, we find all sorts of ways to cope and have fun while we're at it. Think what our future could be if we all got enlightened and become involved.

About Women's Energy Matters

WEM is a network of women who celebrate all the ways women use their energy, especially for social change. We work for more efficient, clean energy to strengthen our communities.

WEM's Accomplishments

- Worked with women to get in touch with their own energy and help their families and communities
- Provided clear information and hands-on experiences for

people to learn what is going on with energy

- Trained community members how to have an impact at State and local agencies
- Preserved \$100 million/yr. for independent (non-utility) energy efficiency
- Worked with other groups including Community First Coalition and GreenAction to make PG&E provide energy efficiency for the Bayview Hunters Point community instead of spending \$16 million all downtown
- Urged clean alternatives to gas-fired power plants in SF
- Promoted Community Choice of Energy and Public Power

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*Contributors to this issue:
Theresa Coleman, Barbara George, Charles Cooper, Cleveland Jones, Bridgette Welles*

Call WEM or send an email to get involved.

SOME FACTS ABOUT ENERGY

What Is Global Warming?

On a sunny day you get in a car and it's hotter than outside — you are experiencing the "Greenhouse effect." The sunlight comes in the windows and the heat can't get out.

Greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere trap heat just like the car window. The main one is carbon dioxide, which is created by burning fossil fuels.

How Does Global Warming Affect the Earth today?

Global warming is heating up the land and the ocean, creating stronger winds and hurricanes. It brings heavy rains in some places and droughts in others. Plants, animals and sea life are all affected because their natural habitat is changing.

What Are Fossil Fuels and Natural Gases?

All living things have carbon compounds in their makeup and will burn. Under pressure deep in the earth, ancient living things (fossils) have turned into oil, gas and coal. That's why they're called *fossil fuels*.

The chemical in natural gas (methane) is the same thing as a fart! Manure from dairy farms is now used sometimes to produce power, and people on the prairie used to burn dried cow pies for heat. When there were fires in Parcel E at the shipyard, it was methane from

things decaying in the landfill that was burning.

When Did Humans First Come to Use Fossil Fuels?

Six thousand years ago people around the world collected oil that seeped to the surface and used it for lubrication and skin balm. Around 300 BC, the Chinese used it for oil lamps and cooking, and sometimes built ovens where natural gas came out of the ground. Coal was also used as early as 1000 BC.

However, most fires were made with trees and other dried plants, until the **Industrial Revolution** (starting in the 1700s in England and 1800s in the U.S.) Factories with power-driven machinery were taking over production from small shops and peoples' homes. They soon ran short of wood, and turned to coal, water power, steam and ultimately oil and natural gas to make bigger and stronger machines.

The book, *Indian Givers, How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*, by Jack Weatherford, traces the origins of the factory to the conquest of the Americas by Spanish and then English pirates. Gold they stole from the Americas created enormous wealth in Europe, fueling demand for plantation products from the West Indies: sugar, cotton, rice and tobacco.

The Europeans enslaved Indians for the mines and plantations, then brought in African slaves when the

Indians died. Partners back in England established factories to make finished products. Modeled on the plantation system, working and living conditions were not much better than slavery.

Economies based on exploitation of human energy and fossil fuels for mass production of food and other goods led to a rapid rise in population and pollution, disrespecting the limits of Mother Earth.

Who are the Owners of the Utilities?

- PG&E Corp. owns PG&E Company, the utility
 - Edison International owns Southern California Edison
 - Sempra owns So. Cal. Gas and San Diego Gas & Electric
- All these corporations are owned by "shareholders" who invest money to make a profit.
- Forty California cities own their own utilities. Their power is 20-40% cheaper. These include Sacramento, Palo Alto, Alameda and L.A.

When Was the First Use of Solar Energy?

Historian John Perlin writes:

During the fifth century BC., the Greeks faced severe fuel shortages. Fortunately, an alternative source of energy was available - the sun. Archaeological evidence shows that a standard house plan evolved during the fifth century so that every house, whether rural or urban, could make maximum use of the sun's warm rays during winter. Those

living in ancient Greece confirm what archaeologists have found. Aristotle noted, builders made sure to shelter the north side of the house to keep out the cold winter winds. Socrates described his solar-heated house.

American solar architecture began with its indigenous heritage. Acoma, built by the Pueblo Indians in the 12th century AD and continuously inhabited since then, serves as an excellent example of their sensitivity to building with the climate in mind.

The "Sky City," built atop a plateau, consists of three long rows of dwelling units running east to west. Each dwelling unit has two or three tiers stacked one behind the other as to allow each one full exposure to the winter sun. Most doors and windows open to the south to catch the warm solar rays of winter. The walls are built of adobe.

The sun strikes these heat-absorbing south walls more directly in winter than during summer time. The sun's heat travels through the adobe slow enough to reach the interior as night falls, heating the house through the night. Insulating the ceiling with straw keeps the horizontal roof, vulnerable to the rays of the high summer sun, from allowing too much heat to enter the house.

Read more of John Perlin's solar history at the library or www.californiasolarcenter.org

THE UNITY OF WOMEN

Rosa Parks

Feb. 14, 1913-Oct. 24, 2005

A seamstress and long-time activist with the Montgomery, Ala., NAACP, Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a city bus to a white man on Dec. 1, 1955, sparked the Montgomery bus boycott.

This successful year-long protest marked the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr., as a national civil-rights leader and was a model for non-violent movement actions.

In 1957, Parks moved to Detroit, where she remained active in the civil-rights movement. She was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress's highest honor, and many are now calling for a national holiday in her name.

May she rest in peace.

Learn to Love Ourselves

Sisters learn to practice the seven virtues of the woman: generosity, patience, strength, kindness, trustworthiness, and honorableness.

Family Preservation

Assuming full responsibility for our offspring (children): Families can make their own toys, games and educational materials. Also, teach children very early to work at home. Children develop character by developing willingness to work.

Children should help with household tasks and be taught

that they are part of the human team and it only works if they do their best.

Mother Goose Home Childcare

For an application or more info contact Lavisia Bonner at 29 Harbor or 285-4032. Lavisia can also be contacted at the gym in the kitchen Monday-Friday from 5-7pm.

Support Services for People with Disabilities

Eligibility for services: an individual must be disabled within the meaning of any state or federal law. We offer sliding scale for attorneys fees. No one is declined based on inability to pay. Contact information: 507 Polk St., 2nd Floor San Francisco, CA 941021 415-931-3070 or 415-931-2828 email info@pwwdf.org www.peoplewithdisabilities.org

This Could Soon Be Us

As we follow the reports, phone calls and written correspondence from along the Gulf Coast and other areas hard hit by the Hurricanes, many of us are mad at the government and our elected leadership for revealing their true regards about us.

On the other side, are we preparing for the natural disaster that we will face one day, the Earthquake for California? Scary issue, but someone must urge us to prepare now or pay later.

Each neighbor/ community should take the time and create a plan, please include the

children, family members, friends and pets. Stock up on life saving supplies. Have emergency contact phone numbers. Identify a safe place to take shelter. Folks should prepare for not having running water or power for 144 hours. (Consider how a windmill or solar generator would have helped after Katrina!)

For the mothers

Everybody knows it but we're afraid to communicate it to one another. We're not part of their economic plan. We're in the way. It's like New Orleans.

We're not responsible for those guns and drugs getting into our community, or the piss-poor education, recreation, nutrition and health care. All these are ways to minimize our population on planet earth.

Don't blame each other, don't play into that. How could a people who have been isolated for five generations in planned poverty stricken projects be suddenly supplied with automatic weapons?

We don't have to lie down and die. But we really have to fight, if we're going to live. We need to put down our petty differences and mobilize, become one big powerful voice. Women!

VOTERS EDUCATION

For those of us who participate, are curious, or don't have a clue, to vote should be considered an honor. Even if we know that certain candidates have always bought

and paid for their elected positions all over the world. There was a time when voting was reserved for the designated few. Many people challenged this way of pretending to offer democracy. Lives were taken just because the past and present power structure felt threatened. They felt threatened simply because their way of conducting voting business was not and is not just.

On the other hand, many of us make up excuses why not to vote, not even looking at the changes that have come over the years. Women could not vote back in the day. African American women gained the right to vote before peach-skinned women. Hmmm. Just imagine if we began to get involved, study politics, vote, basically step up to the plate. Wonder what we could achieve.

Be careful when voting the November 2005 election. Change is good, once researched, studied, shared, refined and agreed upon, but has this been the process of the Governor for his proposed changes?

Prop 80, the energy initiative, limits clean energy and may harm Community Choice. It is opposed by the solar industry. It claims to reregulate utilities, but this is misleading. It does nothing to control their unregulated parent companies.

Be mindful when you vote.

Videos Show Ohio Vote Fraud Investigation

Several new videos dig deep into 2004 election fraud, and explain how to prevent it from happening again. In Ohio they got sworn affidavits from over 600 people — many low-income African Americans whose communities were heavily disenfranchised. This resulted in historic hearings in Congress.

This was an even greater victory because most Democrats are no more willing than Republicans to take on this issue — only the Green Party, Libertarians, and ordinary people who said let it stop here with me.

Vote Fraud/Energy Videos

- ***Vote-Rigging 101*** (3 DVD set) \$30 An all-day conference in Oakland featured major figures investigating 2004 vote fraud in Ohio, Florida etc.
- ***Got Democracy?*** \$20 45-min. version of the same conference.
- ***A Little Light'll Do Ya*** \$20 Inspiring story of four California women traveling to Ohio and DC for vote fraud hearings last January.
- ***Community Choice: The Movement for Local Energy Independence*** \$20 Introduces the concept and documents its development in dozens of cities and counties from SF, Oakland and Marin to San Diego and Chula Vista. Order from Ecological Options Network, P.O. Box 1047, Bolinas 94924 eon3@earthlink.net

See Something?

If you witness election fraud or you are asked to participate, you should say something, like the brave brothers at SLUG who told the Chronicle about being forced to campaign and vote for Newsom or lose their jobs.

You might feel discouraged because they lost their jobs while some of the alleged perpetrators still have theirs. But don't let anybody tell you election fraud isn't hurting anybody and elections don't matter. There are strong links between vote fraud and communities being overrun by drugs and violence, black businesses squelched, gentrifiers pouring in and poor people being run out.

At the very least, if you see something, do what they did in Ohio. Write down what happened so you can remember later and give testimony.

ENERGY NEWS

People Get Ready — Utility bills up \$40/month or more this winter

Gas and electricity bills are going up and nobody knows if or when they will come back down. The hurricanes caused enormous damage to natural gas drilling and pipelines in the Gulf. But even before that, U.S. wells were producing less gas. Electricity that is made from natural gas is affected too.

Conservation Tips

Water heating uses more energy than any appliance

except a furnace — it could be \$30/mo. this year for a large family. Turn down the temperature and wrap it in a quilt for insulation. Use a 2.0 gpm “low flow” showerhead (saves money on water too).

Compact Fluorescents are as low as \$2 at some stores. Look for curlicue “CFLs” equivalent to 75 watts and put them in the sockets you use the most. You'll save energy and need fewer replacement bulbs.

If you qualify as low income, call PG&E and get signed up for “CARE” to reduce your bills.

Tax Credits for Solar

If you own your home, a **solar water heater** is a great investment. You can make 80% of your hot water every year with the sun. The federal energy bill has tax credits paying 30%, up to \$2000, for solar energy. A solar water heater costs about \$2500. (You can build one from recycled materials for much less.)

Utilities Take \$1/2 Billion Profit on Energy Efficiency

Sky-high utility bills will be even higher because the Calif. Public Utilities Commission ruled that we have to bribe utilities to do energy efficiency. Oct. 27, CPUC awarded \$315 million to the utilities, (over \$100 to PG&E) for “shareholders incentives” for 1994-2001 energy efficiency. This is on top of \$165 they got earlier.

CPUC said we have to pay this obscene 27% profit to overcome utilities' obvious



Our energy system is vulnerable. Are we ready for the changes we face?

conflict of interest. But the conflict remained.

They spent \$2B of public funds, with many wasteful, ineffective programs, and huge sums to greenwash their image and undermine public power. Their efficiency programs had as little effect as possible on reducing our bills or the need for more energy supplies.

Utility-reported savings had little credibility because they were in charge of measuring their own savings, and CPUC oversight was very weak.

WEM pointed out that “incentives” are unnecessary; independent programs would be a better solution. Non-utility energy efficiency providers saved more energy per dollar in CA's 2002-2005 experiment — in Texas they save 40% more!

As a public interest party in these proceedings WEM has been fighting shareholders incentives since 2001. PG&E grudgingly acknowledged that WEM “contributed to a four-year delay” in the settlement.

Will San Francisco get Community Choice?

A new State law allows California cities to decide what kind of energy they use. San Francisco has been considering Community Choice for months, and the Board of Supervisors may vote on it soon.

Studies show Community Choice cities could get much more solar and wind energy than utilities, at the same or lower rates. Costs are lower because the system is non-profit and eligible for long-term public financing. The resources are community owned, so low income renters are included.

PG&E currently gets its power from natural gas plants including Hunters Point and Potrero, two huge nuclear power plants sitting on an earthquake fault at Diablo Canyon, and a lot of old dams in the Sierras. It has less than 1% solar/wind.

With Community Choice, SF could get lots of power from solar panels on flat rooftops in the Bayview, and also explore

local wind and tidal power. Building renewables and energy efficiency would provide many good jobs for community residents.

SFPUC wants control of Community Choice, but an independent system would be better. SFPUC is insensitive to Southeast communities — it wants more gas-fired peaker plants and it has not supported large local solar and wind projects. It also has serious management problems.

WEM hopes San Francisco will take advantage of this historic opportunity for community control, clean energy, and good jobs. We need to free up the City from PG&E's greedy grip on our future.

SFPUC's "peakers" still moving towards licensing

Despite huge increases in natural gas prices, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission is still trying to site three gas fired "peakers" on port land just across Islais Creek from Bayview Hunters

Point. They can produce as much electricity as the Hunters Point Power Plant, but they would pollute more because they would run 11 hrs./day to repay the City's investment.

The plants were offered "free" to the City as part of a settlement with Williams Co. that gouged California during the energy crisis. However the City would have to issue \$240 m. in bonds to set them up and connect them to PG&E's wires.

WEM, Community First Coalition, CARE, GreenAction and others have been fighting the peakers for three years. The City should take them to some other neighborhood if it thinks it needs them so much. But first it should invest the money in clean energy instead. If the City spends \$240 million on peakers and there's plenty of power, it's unlikely that they will build much solar and wind energy.

SFPUC now claims that the peakers will help close Potrero, but that all depends on getting an agreement with Mirant Corp., which has never been cooperative. The Supervisors say they won't let the peakers run if Potrero doesn't close — but once the \$240 m is spent, the City will be forced to run them no matter what. The City should pull the plug now.

Residents can influence the outcome on the peakers and Community Choice by calling the Mayor and Supervisors and attending hearings.

KIDS CORNER: HEAT WATER WITH THE SUN!

1. Put some water in a black plastic bag.
2. Close it with a thick rubber band — make a fat pillow.
3. Lay it outside in the morning in full sun (put scrunched up newspaper underneath if it's cold). Wrap loosely in clear plastic for a "greenhouse". It should be hot in a few hours.
4. Now you and your Grandma can keep your feet warm while doing homework or watching TV.
5. For a solar shower: Tie a long string around the bag and ask a tall person to hang it above the tub. (Close the curtain so you don't get the floor all wet.) Poke little holes in the bag — and enjoy your shower.

SOLFEST!

A Trip to the Solar Living Center

In August, WEM brought several community members to Hopland (two hrs. north of San Francisco) to Solfest, an annual event sponsored by Real Goods, a store that supplies clean energy and other products. Its Solar Living Institute provides year-round classes such as how to build a strawbale house or wire a solar electric system. They offered to help WEM provide more learning opportunities for the community.

Report from Bridgette Wells, Charles Cooper and Cleveland Jones

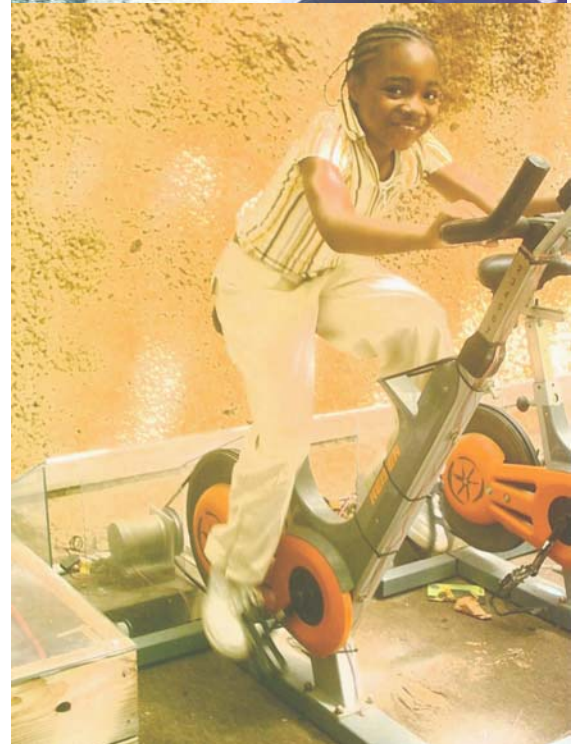
“How did those people in Hopland build the Real Goods community?” says Charles and Bridgette. They run a community store in Bayview Hunters Point. “How can we build something like that in our community?”

Bridgette separates and decides to attend workshops on the basics of solar electricity, gathering literature on solar access laws, and solar hot water heaters. Astonished these alternative things exist. Charles says he’s fascinated with this green building stuff. “I want to know how I can buy a catering truck that is built from these resources to house my community store.”

Cleveland is just amazed. “Do you need anything Theresa, cause if not, I’m going to go help. The people here need more volunteers here to keep water going at the fest.”

Bridgette and Charles are excited to learn how the natives developed their housing and that there was a purpose behind the way they designed their homes and the materials they used. [See Solar History, p. 3.] They had a special concept. They used sun along with heat transfer mechanisms of convection, conduction and radiation to provide comfort. Passive solar basic housing.

Bridgette says, “Is it possible for us to build communities like the Indians out of this material? Will the government or the powerful people let us do this? Why do we need the type of housing that we have that is no good? Theresa, what are we going do with this information?”



Chances Gomez generates power. (above) (top) Windmills — old and new — are on display, also biodiesel cars and strawbale buildings.

(left) Solar panels and windmills produce more than enough electricity for the Solar Living Center.



(left) Theresa Coleman and granddaughter Chanses Gomez enjoy a cooling mist in between events at the festival.

(above) Theresa's granddaughter Aajai Jones is fascinated by the fountains, which are powered by solar pumps.

(below) Cleveland Jones discusses the possibilities of a green energy future with Theresa. Photos by Barbara George

Alternative Lifestyles

By Cleveland Jones, 58-year old African America male, martial artist and homeless advocate.

It truly amazed me at the concept of communal lifestyle. Upon my arrival I immediately knew this is the way I wanted to die. I have never seen anything so beautiful. The environment was so peaceful. The people were so caring. The only thing it lacked was a speckle of brown people.

I wondered why Ms. Coleman and her employer selected us to go on this quest, but now that I have arrived I understand it was the Gods above that made them do this. Instead of fighting to preserve our inadequate homes in San Francisco, we now can seek to acquire land and build our own. It's not as hard as we think it is.

I am keeping in contact with Real Goods on a regular basis. I will be attending and organizing to participate in next year's event and I invite all of you to come see what can really be done by people.

Love, Cleveland

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