

The Red, Blue & Green



Honey! I'm back . . . what was it that you wanted?

For the last four months we have been talking about our trip to the energy supermarket to find electricity for our community over the next 20 years. Well, actually, as it turned out I was talking about it and you were watching television and ignoring me. Maybe I would have gotten a better response if I just shouted out, "Honey, I'm going to the store, want me to pick up anything?" Your silence on this matter was deafening and we are left to assume that anything we pick up at the store will be just fine (or it could just be that what you were watching on television was more interesting than our future energy supply . . . if so that must have been some great show!)



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Poorly planned "growth-for-growth's-sake" has become a self-sustaining vortex of consumption that threatens to destroy our way of life.

All kidding aside, we were a bit disappointed that four months of prodding you for your opinions on what sort of energy future you believe we should plan for got so little in the way of a response (and, for the six folks who did have suggestions, thank you very much). On the other hand, it is a dark and daunting subject and it is not terribly surprising that you did not actively respond to it. In fact, your lack of response actually was a response of sorts. We presented the following four paths we might take for our energy future:

Last One Standing - The path of competing with everyone else for remaining resources

Power Down - The path of cooperation, conservation, and sharing

Waiting for a Magic Elixir - The path of wishful thinking, false hopes, and denial

Building Lifeboats - The path of community solidarity and preservation.

In my mind, the overwhelming majority of you chose, by your silence, "Waiting for a Magic Elixir." Most everyone in North America is also choosing that path. Actually, we

hope you are right and that some great inventor is just about to put the finishing touches on the magic elixir, but we are making some alternative plans that spread our bets across the other three options, just in case that does not happen.

Since you did not tell us much about what you believe about our energy future, let me tell you a bit about what we believe and how we are putting those beliefs into action for Glasgow. First of all, when we read things like *Global Temperature Change*, a study done by NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, led by James Hansen, we believe it. That study says that Earth's temperature is reaching a level not seen in thousands of years and approaching a level not seen in a million years. Warmer temperatures mean warmer oceans, and warmer oceans breed more severe weather. Thus, we are planning for many more episodes of severe weather for Glasgow. That is why you see the new Jama M. Young Technology Center being constructed behind our building. It will house all of the critical components of our power dispatch, cable television, internet, and telephone systems, in a building designed to withstand a direct hit by a tornado. So that building is a bit of a life boat for our community.

Of course continued rises in our temperature will also result in the need for more capacity in the electric power network which serves Glasgow. Warmer temperatures mean more air conditioning and hotter transmission lines, so we need to prepare for that. No matter from whom we ultimately purchase our power, we will need to upgrade our electric system so that it can carry more power to homes and businesses, and we are already working on that. Very soon, major upgrades to our power delivery network will start taking place with the objective of doubling our present capacity. So, we are already involved in the process of *Building Lifeboats*. But that process alone will not guarantee us a comfortable energy future.

Sure, we can double the capacity of our system here in Glasgow, but that does not mean that twice as much power will be available from the outside world to inject into our local network. Perhaps it might be available for a while and if we put all of our belief in the *Last One Standing* philosophy, we might not have to worry about it for ten years or so, but we really think blind devotion to this path is not advisable.

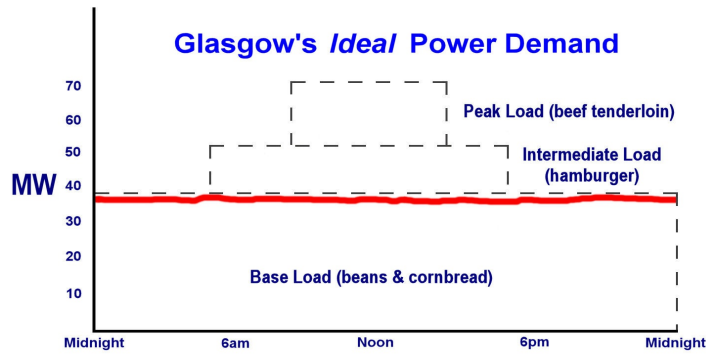
You see we have a chicken-or-egg problem. If we just devote our energy future to throwing back in with TVA (or another very large energy provider) because of their size and ability to successfully compete for our dwindling resources, we will actually be making the problem worse. Here's where this discussion really gets dicey. As we explained before, TVA's present rate structure is designed upon the mistaken assumption that our fuel resources are unlimited. It promotes, in fact *coerces*, distributors like Glasgow EPB to find ways to sell more and more energy, without any incentive for efficiency. This philosophy permeates every part of TVA, just like it seems to permeate every segment of our society. We are a society convinced that the only way to happiness and success is through constant growth. TVA employs electric rates that urge us to use more energy so that they need to build more power plants and burn more coal. They ply the world with "Economic Development" folks looking for more industry to build in the region so that they can sell even more energy. It thus becomes a vicious circle wherein the overwhelming urge to attract more electrical load results in the overloading of the existing resources and the need to build more, and burn more, which results in more greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere which results in more warming, resulting in more energy use. Poorly planned "growth for growth's sake" has become a self-sustaining vortex of consumption that threatens to destroy our way of life. Meanwhile, no one seems willing to suggest that it just might be that the growth we have all been clamoring for might be hastening our demise.

No one, that is, since the apostle Matthew wrote, "For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his life?" Even though we will continue our discussions with TVA and other large power suppliers, the *Last Man Standing* philosophy simply cannot be our only choice.

Even though I pretty thoroughly dismissed the final path, *Power Down*, in a previous edition of this newsletter, it is a path that would be very good for us to follow if we could get our fellow man to cooperate. This is probably the most difficult path to negotiate, but it is the one which is most



likely to lead to long term stability of our way of life and we are working hard to make progress along this path. Every discussion we have with TVA or any other possible supplier of electric power for Glasgow's future includes our requirement that they offer us a wholesale rate structure which will reward us if we are able to convince you to smooth out your electric power usage in pursuit of a flat daily demand curve. Remember this graphic from an earlier newsletter?



It is a lofty goal, and no community has ever been able to achieve a load shape this perfect, but we are going to start trying. But first we must arrange a deal with a power supplier who will give us wholesale power rates that will encourage this kind of improvement.

When we can arrange such a deal, you will start seeing new

ways to save money on your EPB services in return for improvements in the demand shape for your individual homes and businesses. We will be talking about this a lot over the next few months, but right now we are developing a system for our customers who buy their electricity and internet service from us to see their electrical consumption on their computer screen in much the same fashion as you see the pertinent information about your car on its dashboard.

So, with this newsletter we end the five-month discussion of our energy shopping trip. Next month we will get back to stuff that really interests you, like new cable channels and such. Meanwhile, if you think of anything you need from the energy market, let me know.

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Feel free to use any of these means to contact me with any questions or comments!

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