



Comment

Power of communication

and other musings for the new year

'What we got here, is failure to communicate.' This great line is from the classic Paul Newman movie *Cool Hand Luke*, which, as you may remember, is about a non-conformist who refuses to give in to the system. In many ways it could also be the mantra of the DE industry.

Even though the world worries about an energy crisis, we continue to produce power in wasteful, dirty and inefficient ways because of the system in place and our inability to reach a tipping point for change. Industry is partly to blame because of its failure to communicate the advantages of DE at the grassroots and grasstops levels to those who have the power to serve as agents for change.

You may be aware of a recent film about decentralized energy, *What are we Waiting for?*, which was produced by Greenpeace and offers a great leap forward in communicating the DE message to a broad audience (you can view the film on the WADE website at www.localpower.org). The DE industry now needs to pick up the ball and advance it by creating a message of its own – what are WE waiting for?

At the recent WADE meeting in Prague various speakers discussed options and tools for harnessing the power of communications and developing and delivering the message. Using a camera crew and a green screen we captured interviews with leaders in the DE sector from government, industry and the greater public. The footage from Prague can serve as a starting point for a broader communications effort. A WADE committee was also established to focus even greater attention to this communications deficit.

If this campaign is to be successful in moving the needle of opinion and leading to action it will take the coordinated efforts of all within the DE industry. Please get in touch with us and find out how we can work together to remedy our 'failure to communicate.'

I'M DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS

As I write this column, Christmas is but a short time away, the weather in Washington is still perfect for a round of golf and there is hardly a drop of snow to be found in northern Europe. The climate has also changed drastically in Washington in another way, not because of global warming, but because of the Democratic control of the House and Senate.

The next two years are likely to see global discussion about climate issues in Congress, but probably not much global action. However, last minute passage in 2006 of legislation that provides greater access to offshore natural gas resources offers, perhaps a glimmer of hope, that bipartisan solutions can be found on energy and environmental issues. In the UK, the fact that DTI included distributed energy in its Energy Review also offers some hope for the new year that the public sector is starting to listen.

Finally, hope for the new year arrives from New York City where officials passed a groundbreaking law banning the use of dirty oil. Interestingly, the banned oil is trans fat used for cooking because it is believed to raise the risk of heart disease.

A leading law professor remarked 'fat is the next tobacco...there's lots of liability to go around.' If only we can get dirty central generators classified as a food group.

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