

Energy Autonomy

Published in December 2006, Earthscan/James & James, 300 pages, ISBN 1-84407-355-6

The Economic, Social and Technological Case for Renewable Energy For 200 years industrial civilization has relied on the combustion of abundant and cheap carbon fuels. But continued reliance has had perilous consequences. On the one hand there is the insecurity of relying on the world's most unstable region – the Middle East – compounded by the imminence of peak oil, growing scarcity and mounting prices. On the other, the potentially cataclysmic consequences of continuing to burn fossil fuels, as the evidence of accelerating climate change shows. Yet there is a solution: to make the transition to renewable sources of energy and distributed, decentralized energy generation. It is a model that has been proven, technologically, commercially and politically, as Scheer comprehensively demonstrates here. The alternative of a return to nuclear power – again being widely advocated – he shows to be compromised and illusory. The advantages of renewable energy are so clear and so overwhelming that resistance to them needs diagnosis – which Scheer also provides, showing why and how entrenched interests oppose the transition and what must be done to overcome these obstacles. Leaflet "Energy Autonomy" (pdf) Quotes 'The most important political book of the year.'

Mathias Greffrath 'Hermann Scheer, winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize and author of Germany's Renewable Energy Sources Act, has taken aim against a number of our planet's Goliaths all at once. The world needs pioneers like him.'

Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker 'Germany's Renewable Energy Sources Act would have been inconceivable without the author of Energy Autonomy... This book brings a lot of new energy into old politics.'

Welt am Sonntag 'Since 1980 this SPD politician has made a name for himself as a combative advocate of a "solar energy age"... Where the energy business and energy policy are concerned, Scheer is one of Germany's most knowledgeable politicians.'

Financial Times 'Scheer is an idealistic pragmatist and a practical idealist. (...) Hermann Scheer shows concretely and with the help of many already implemented examples, that and how modern industrialized societies can switch completely within the next fifty years to a renewable energy- and sustainable resource-economy. Constructing new large scale power plants would then be superfluous. The solar world economy with 200 energy-autonomous societies is his vision. Rising energy prices, wars fought over oil and ever-increasing destruction of the natural environment then belong to the past. Utopia or feasible vision? (…) The systemic approach of the author is fascinatingly new: independent availability instead of dependency, political decentralisation instead of globalization, free investment instead of controlled investment, diversity instead of harmonization of the markets, ecological responsibility instead of indifference. This book takes many new ideas into old politics.'

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 'Time will prove him right, but Hermann Scheer does not want to wait that long. He has logic and facts on his side but the atomic-fossil energy system against him. He is calling for its replacement through "a new policy for renewable energy" with well known passion and intellectual force. (…) Renewable energies are no benevolently tolerated supplement to the established supply system but will supersede and replace it. The trained economist Scheer speculates on numerous new jobs. (…) Moreover, the determined conversion to regionally and locally used forms of energy leads, as Scheer argues, to a national and individual energy autonomy. This would result in a liberation from the conventional energy business that considers itself as "fourth state authority" and claims "cultural hegemony". In the end, alone renewable energies immunise against imminent global supply-monopolies. Since everything depends on energy, the struggle over forthcoming energy policies will also have an impact on the future outline of societies. Hermann Scheer is calling for dispute. And that is what he will get with this book.'

Süddeutsche Zeitung 'Scheer's book is a science-based political pamphlet. It demonstrates meticulously the feasibility of the fundamental change in energy. It formulates a belligerent invitation to the agents of the industrial democracy to adamantly defend their "inalienable political duty" against the traditional fossil energy system: to sustainably secure the vital energy supply of the citizens. The return to an economic calculation, which equally takes into account the long-term, ecological effects of the energy system and its impact on the labour market, is imperative. (…) Scheer analyses systematically and with a transboundary perspective those technical, political and economical blockades to action that obstruct a speedy system change: the "liberalised energy markets" and the supply monopoly, the "subsidised and too dearly paid" price advantages of conventional energies and, finally, the "realism" of taking small steps, meaning the half-hearted withdrawal from fossil energy that did not result in the forceful introduction of renewables – a "realism" which is mistaken in the assumption, that two fundamentally different energy systems could be combined and financed. The energy-determined seminal change is not pushed by only a few pioneers, a single technology and extraordinary opportunities for enrichment; it is dependent on numerous separate initiatives and a legislation that leaves enough room – in opposition to a so far "well-functioning" energy economy. Scheer's retrospect points out that whenever there has been progress in energy policy legislation this was due to citizen groups, passionate entrepreneurs – and parliaments. Parliamentarians have implemented the German Renewable Energy Sources act as well as each EU-initiative against the lobby of and legal measures taken by the electricity business. A fundamental change in energy will therefore put the functioning of democratic procedures to the proof – and the commitment of an enlightened public, that augments the pressure on politics instead of denying the simplest physical findings, and losing itself in aesthetic distaste for wind turbines instead of discovering the agitating beauty of a solar cell – "an even greater technical marvel than nuclear technology".'

Die ZeitExtract Article "Solar or nuclear?" Order I would like to order "Energy Autonomy"... Also available in...

- German: Energieautonomie. Eine neue Politik für Erneuerbare Energien. Verlag Antje Kunstmann. 320 pages. ISBN 3-88897-390-2. Order...

- French: L'Autonomie énergétique. Une nouvelle politique pour les énergies renouvelables. Actes Sud 2007. 300 pages. ISBN 978-2-7427-6697-0. Order... - Italian: Autonomia Energetica. Ecologia, tecnologia e sociologia delle risorse rinnovabili. Edizione Ambiente 2006. 254 pages. ISBN 88-89014-38-5. Order...

- Danish: Energiautonomie. En ny politik for vedvarende energi. Forlaget Hovedland 2006. 252 pages. ISBN 87-7739-864-5. Order...

- Korean: Energy Autonomy. God's Win Publishing Co. 2006.

Contents

Introduction

Renewable Energy: The Deceptive Global Consensus 1

Part I

Sun or Atom: The Fundamental Conflict of the 21st Century 29

Part II

Blockades to Action: The Unbroken Power of One-Dimensional Thinking 119

Part III

Energy Autonomy: The Archimedean Point of the Breakthrough to Renewable Energy 229