

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Next Wednesday will be Sun Day. It will be the first time in history that there've been two Sundays in one week. Month after month, year after year, we've had one Sunday in each week, but on May 3rd we'll experience the first Sun Day to fall on a Wednesday.

Cape Cod may be blessed with rain on that day. It may be cloudy. It might even snow. Stranger things have happened. Without a doubt, somewhere in the world, skies will be overcast, the day dark and dreary. In spite of the weather, Sun Day will be celebrated internationally.

Mark May 3rd on your calendar, for Sun Day will usher in the Solar Age.

In 1970 we celebrated Earth Day. Countless thousands of citizens throughout the country generated a new national commitment to environmental quality. Remember the demonstrations, the "teach-ins", the litter pickups, the hikes and bicycle trips?

Remember, too, how effectively Earth Day raised America's environmental consciousness, and how that observance touched off the movement that has done so much in less than one decade to improve the quality of our lives?

Just as vital to our future healthy existence is the movement to develop non-polluting sources of energy.

Why?

Conservative estimators of world population growth forecast that in less than fifty years this planet will be supporting approximately eight billion people instead of the four billion of us now here.

Even if Americans then consume only one-third of the energy we use today, if we are still dependent on fossil fuels

and nuclear energy sources, the resulting carbon dioxide emissions added to the atmosphere will retard the radiation of the earth's heat into space, and will raise the earth's temperature.

If that happens, take to the hills, for the polar caps will melt, the water level of the oceans will rise, the lowlands, the coastal plains, and the great plains that lie between mountain ranges will flood.

If instead we rely upon nuclear fission, we must build 15,000 reactors and annually recycle 20 million kilograms of plutonium -- enough to build four million Hiroshima-size bombs.

Petroleum? By the year 2025 it won't be a significant factor. Nuclear fusion? Scores of scientists have been trying for years to make it work. So far, they haven't succeeded.

Direct sunlight is but one of our solar options. Wind power is actually solar energy in disguise; so are falling water, and rising and falling tides.

There's nothing exotic about solar technology. It's working right now for every living thing on earth, growing food, washing impurities from the soil, cleaning wastes from air and water. For some thousands of people, it's providing heat and hot water.

Coming, for millions and perhaps billions of us, is solar power harnessed to supply unlimited clean energy to the entire world.

Sun Day events in this country will include teach-ins, demonstrations, energy conferences, and fairs at schools, colleges and communities across the nation.

In San Francisco the Fort Mason Foundation is sponsoring a solar festival. New Yorkers will begin the day with a sunrise concert at the United Nations. In Washington a solar fair will be held on the Mall, and a public concert and energy conference will take place at George Washington University.

Atop Maine's Cadillac Mountain, at the spot where the sun's rays first strike the United States each day, people will gather to celebrate Sun Day.

Other cities honoring the dawn of solar power on Wednesday, May 3rd, include Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Iowa City, Denver, Albuquerque and Seattle.

The aim of Sun Day proponents is to put solar energy on an equal financial footing with competing energy sources, and clear away institutional obstacles now deterring solar energy

Right now 95% of the federal energy research budget is being spent upon non-renewable energy sources (coal, oil, synthetic fuels, shale, breeder reactors). All are technologies that don't have a future.

We're wasting valuable time and we're wasting money. Every passing year postpones the solution and prolongs the energy establishment's lock on your pocketbook.

Los Angeles Mayor Thomas Bradley said recently, "Making the public aware there's a solution to energy problems will help liberate the technological genius in this country. Building the public support needed to break down the barriers to the rapid development of this environmentally and economically desirable form of energy is the goal of the Sun Day celebration."

Sun Day sponsors believe vested interests want to turn to nuclear and coal power for their personal economic advantage and that citizen concern for safe, renewable energy is growing rapidly.

By creating and supporting a grass roots movement for and awareness of solar energy, the growing interest in solar power can be coordinated. A strong citizen movement can be generated only if the public is knowledgeable about the potential benefits to them as individuals.

Within the memory of people living today have come the "revolutions" of the gasoline engine, of electricity, of the far-reaching communications networks we take for granted.

There are other revolutions looming on the horizon. One is the solar revolution to replace oil, coal and nuclear power with sun power which will bring an end to the energy crisis.

Another is a social revolution to begin creating institutions that are smaller and more humane instead of bigger and more impersonal ones. Many people in our country are fed up with the growing centralization of institutions that control our lives; big business and big government are but two of these.

Solar energy offers a decentralized technology. It is best used when solar collectors serve individual houses or small groups of houses. It makes people energy self-sufficient.

It makes people independent.

The sun's appeal is enormous. Entire civilizations have worshipped the sun. Our local tourist economy depends on the sun.

Sunlight is delivered to your doorstep or rooftop every morning without powerlines or fuel trucks or pipes. It doesn't pollute. It won't run out. It can't be diverted by hi-jackers, terrorists or international cartels.

May the first Wednesday call Sun Day be the beginning of your conversion to solar power. The sun is the people's