

2.6.3 NINE CHALLENGES OF ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

DAVID FRIDLEY

The increasing price of gasoline and home heating oil, along with concerns about the security of our country's energy supply and possible climate change from the burning of fossil fuels, have been major topics of discussion in recent years. Along with these factors, the growing energy needs of developing nations and regions has increased interest in alternative energy sources.

In this selection, David Fridley, a fellow of the Post Carbon Institute with thirty years of experience in the energy field, reviews what he sees as the major issues related to a range of alternative energy paths. Fridley argues that focusing solely on the initial costs of substituting a renewable energy system for the current carbon-based one ignores a number of complex and interrelated issues. These include the viability, scalability, feasibility, and sustainability of various alternative energy approaches, as well as political realities, vested interests, and other relevant conditions. These issues suggest that any significant change of energy policy will only come about if the magnitude of our energy problem is recognized by a majority of the population.

Each of the nine alternative energy challenges Fridley discusses are interdependent to varying degrees. They demonstrate the extent of the problem we face in making what many believe is a necessary shift away from an established and entrenched carbon-based economy. Whether we like it or not, the centuries-long era of cheap fossil fuel energy may soon be over. In Fridley's view, a sustainable, post-carbon future demands that we become more attentive to how we use and conserve many different forms of energy.

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