



Kent Environmental Council

Newsletter

September/October 2003

KENT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL FALL FORUM 2003

7PM Monday October 13, 2003

Stanton Middle School Community Room

GOT POWER?

CURSING THE BLACKOUT — LIGHTING CANDLES

Electric energy issues and how a neighboring community deals with them

KEC invites everyone to join us in exploring how our electric energy systems work — and don't work — and what options we have to make them work better. Highlight of the program will be a presentation of the programs for conservation and efficiency of electric energy by

Rebecca McCleary, Consumer Advocate

Jay Myers, Assistant

CUYAHOGAFALLS ELECTRIC SYSTEM

In addition, there will be displays, materials and demonstrations about:

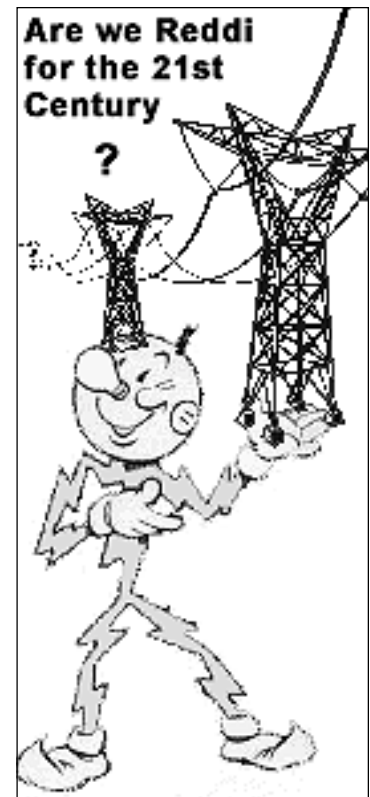
TECHNOLOGY & TERMINOLOGY — what are we talking about?

ECONOMICS — who pays for electric power, and how?

CONSERVATION & EFFICIENCY — how can we practice it, in our homes, schools and communities?

No need to bring candles. Energy, in the form of electricity (light) and carbohydrates (refreshments) will be provided.

Do bring your curiosity and concerns, and your kids and your neighbors, and help us generate energy toward managing the challenges of electric energy in our community and our world.





BICENTENNIAL PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

FINAL ROUND OF VISIONING TO BEGIN

Residents of Kent can see the results of three rounds of citizen discussions of the qualities of our city when the final round of neighborhood meetings begins October 2. (The full schedule of meetings is available at the City website www.kentohio.org) Interpretations of the citizen input will be presented. Participants will be asked to verify that the interpretations are on target in terms of what is valued about life in Kent now and into the future. Agreement on assets to be maintained and goals to be achieved are being incorporated into the revised comprehensive plan for the City.

The comprehensive plan is being built upon a base of sustainability planning. Sustainability can mean several things. In this context it means maintaining a balance among three key sectors that impact the viability of a community - the economic, the socio/cultural, and the ecological. Sustainability means giving all three factors careful consideration as community planning and development go forward. An example, drawing from the prior neighborhood meetings, might go as follows (in italics are major assets and goals agreed upon): There is city-wide consensus on a desire to maintain, and further develop, the "small town" flavor and feel of Kent. One component requires maintaining the viability of the "downtown." Economically, this relates to a desire to "encourage and support diverse, locally owned, independent businesses." But economic viability requires customers and clients, and attracting such to downtown requires an attractive mix of stores and services. Having nothing but drug stores, for example, does not sustain downtown viability.

Generating store traffic requires more than just knowing and meeting the economic needs of residents. There should be other reasons as well to "go downtown," The area should be attractive, and urban ecology is an essential component here. Resident desires to "preserve natural resources, particularly trees" should be incorporated into

downtown development. Assets such as the river and its associated aesthetic and recreational opportunities should be protected and further developed. Related to this is the desire of residents to "preserve Kent's unique history," including the natural and the built environments. Since downtown includes part of the historic district, economic development should be tempered by historical preservation.

People want to go where other people want to go. People like to be with people. This brings the socio-cultural sector into play. The downtown needs a base of residents of its own. But attracting residents requires suitable housing infrastructure, and support services. Cooperation between the city government and the university can result in increasing the population density between downtown and the campus. Downtown should provide opportunities for residents to spend time as well as money: time in a coffee shop, bookstore, library, ice cream parlor, restaurant, beauty/barber shop, etc. Time for a range of services. Time for movies, stage shows, and art galleries. This can develop from residents' desire to build upon "an economy strengthened by and diversified by the arts and related businesses."

"Traffic management" is a general concern of residents. For downtown, this means balancing economic (route more traffic through downtown with short

stays), ecological (calm auto traffic and encourage pedestrian/cycle traffic), and socio/cultural (provide for residential parking and permit residents to linger downtown).

Alerting citizens to diverse needs and involving them in developing balanced ways of meeting those needs is a fundamental principle of sustainability planning. Attend your neighborhood meeting. See what is important for the city and for our neighborhoods. Give your reactions. Take part in shaping the future of Kent.

Gene Wenninger, vice-chairperson

Quote from League of Conservation Voters President Deb Callahan

"The League of Conservation Voters frequently issues a report card on the performance of the incumbent president on environmental issues. This summer, the league gave Bush an "F" for his administration's record — the first time a president has earned a failing grade. Bush's record is dominated by one clear and disturbing fact: On issue after issue, his administration has favored the narrow financial interests of large corporations and polluters over the public's interest in a healthy environment."



PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING US

Dues categories: Sustaining, \$45; Family, \$35; Individual, \$25; Golden Buckeye, \$15; Student, \$10.

To current members: Your newsletter mailing label identifies the status of your dues. "OK" means in good standing and "REN" means it's time to renew (an envelope will be attached for your convenience).

Dues may be mailed to Kent Environmental Council, P. O. Box 395, Kent, OH 44240.



CUYAHOGA CLEANUP

The July storms delayed the start of construction around the Kent dam, but work is now under way. Take a look as you walk along Riveredge Park or the Main Street bridge. Debris has been cleared out of the gates so the river is flowing freely. That is what it needs to meet water quality standards and keep the fish happy and healthy (anglers too).

Construction is to be finished by fall of 2004, so they might keep on schedule. They will rebuild one wall of the historic canal lock, next to the dam, using the original stones that are still in the bottom of the river. Whatever stones are left will be used to rebuild the lock wall on the railroad side of the river, plus a retaining wall to keep the railroad tracks in place. Next will be a narrow pool behind the dam, with a pump to fill it with water from below, for a waterfall. Then grading the sediments and plantings will turn the park area above the dam into a beautiful riparian area, just as it is now below the dam.

The Draft Lower Cuyahoga TMDL Plan has now been completed by the Ohio EPA-Twinsburg and has been sent to Ohio EPA in Columbus, for sign off prior to submission to USEPA.

The lower 50 miles of the Cuyahoga River and most of its tributaries do not meet Ohio's chemical and biological water quality standards. Major causes are organic enrichment, toxicity, low dissolved oxygen, and flow alteration. These problems stem from municipal discharges, combined sewer overflows, urban runoff, and industrial discharges.

Restoration options include long term control plans for combined sewer overflows in both the Akron and Cleveland areas. Additional measures needed will be urban storm water runoff controls, habitat protection and restoration, septic system improvements, point source controls, and public education. The SR 82 dam is now being studied for removal or modification. The remaining dams in this stretch of the river will also be evaluated. Wetlands protection and riparian protection measures will also be important for improving water quality.

Streetsboro is already working with the Ohio EPA-Twinsburg staff on cleaning up Tinkers Creek headwaters.

Benefits include improved recreational opportunities, improved property values, reduced waste treatment costs, economic development opportunities, and

quality of life for all area residents. This is particularly important for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and for Lake Erie and their ability to serve area residents and attract visitors.

Edith Chase

I Am a Special Case

Spiders spin webs and humans create social selves. Members in both species act out their genetically inherited instinctual natures, following the programming embedded in their structural neurology. Spiders have been spinning webs for millions of years, but humans predisposed to creating culture, social context and the cognitive category of selfhood are a new arrival on the scene. Humans with egos spun out of social learning are macro environment makers. Needs are created and environments are created to satisfy them.

It seems in ordinary consciousness, there is a self, there is a social setting in which it is embedded, and it seems to the individual so compellingly real, and engaging, as to be a special case in the nature of the Universe, as it unfolds. The social self not only appears to itself to be a special case, but that its domain of action seems rightfully absolute, for the composition of human experience is fed such stuff as to justify any action this huge machine of social self foists upon all else on this planet.

Managed technology through business process came about with the industrial revolution. In the blink of these three hundred years, the social self operates within this business process and as a product consumer to wantonly take from the common ground of natural multifarious self-sustaining cycles. Of the billions or trillions of feedback loops operating in this system, the social self has been snipping away, one by one, each unnoticed, until bigger and bigger cycles begin to noticeably fail. From the inside of the social self, it looks so microscopically gradual and incremental, that no harm, no moral or ethical action could possibly be at stake.

If only the planet's systems were fully continuous and reversible there would be no need for pause. Unfortunately, there are very few examples of fully end to end continuous and reversible processes in nature. There is an utterly complex planetary system that is in all likelihood built upon interdependent processes with the presence of discrete phases, many of which are irreversible. So little is known of it, the power of rational digitally simulated modeling cannot encompass it, for we don't fully know what the variables are. Yet, these social selves, lost in the unrelated manufactured reality of social learning unknowingly destroy the material ground that gave birth to such consciousness—the irony of the age.

So what is environmental education to do? How do we entice the browns (vs. greens) to raise their heads above the clouds of self interest to see the wide horizon of the larger reality, the mother of their existence? And how can we sustain our personal energy to keep up the work, hoping to spawn the necessary sea change of consciousness that now seems so impossibly stuck? Rich Patterson

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Book Review

Mary E. Clark, *In Search of Human Nature*. London & New York: Routledge, 2002.

Why do human beings persist in destroying the resources and the natural environment on which all life on this planet subsists? Why is there so much conflict and violence in the world? Why do wealthy people, corporations, and nations run rough-shod over those who are weaker than themselves?

There are people, usually the ones in power, who claim that this is simply human nature, and cite as evidence a hypothetical "selfish gene." This inherited tendency toward aggression supposedly was the product of humankind's evolution, governed by "survival of the fittest."

Mary E. Clark, former professor of biology and expert on conflict resolution, says these arguments are based on a misinterpretation of evidence from such various fields as biology, psychology, anthropology, and history. Instead, she cites a vast array of studies that suggests that the human animal survived on this planet only because it developed cultural and biological tendencies toward bonding with others, sharing in the care of children, and minimizing conflict within the group. Moreover, she cites examples of small communities, both in the present and in the past, where group harmony, compassion, and sharing are the norm, not the exception. She even cites the remarkable phenomenon of deliberate attempts at conciliation and forgiveness among the people of South Africa, after decades of brutal violence among the groups living in that unfortunate land.

But community bonding may become oppressive if it is not

balanced with adequate individual freedom. Clark identifies this second major human need as autonomy. Societies continue to search for a reasonable balance between individual freedom and community bonding. In this process they are guided by what Clark calls the third essential human need, some grand scheme or idea that gives life meaning. Many religions and philosophies have evolved to provide this over-all answer to the perennial question, "What are we here for?"

If you are depressed at the seeming depravity of contemporary Western culture, you need to read this book. It requires some effort (400 pages of text, almost 150 pages of notes, bibliography, and index!). But the evidence is powerful and the implications are the most hopeful message I have heard in a long time. Anyone who despairs about the future of mankind on this planet may find solace in this concept. But it is urgent that the message be shared widely to counter the rationalizations and outright lies being spread by those who profit from an ugly and inaccurate view of human nature.

Reviewed by Gordon F. Vars, 22 August 2002

FRIDAY BREAKFAST FORUMS KEC members, friends, rivals, doubters, believers, petitioners, hangers-on, and indeed, city officials, meet every Friday at 8 AM at the University Inn Coffee Shop. You buy your own breakfast but talk is free, varied, frank, sometimes rowdy, sometimes abstruse, always lively and engaging.

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