



Screening at University of Northern British Columbia

Event Report

November 21st, 2012

Introduced by Dr. Belinda Larisch, Renewable Energy Academic Coordinator, the screening of the movie "Switch" was part of an ongoing effort to increase energy literacy at the University of Northern British Columbia, and in the community of Prince George. The screening was combined with an electric car showing prior to the film. There are two electric vehicles in the northern BC town of Prince George, and this event provided an opportunity to show them off to the public. The temperatures dipped to -20°C that evening, offering chilly proof that electric cars are a viable method of transportation in our northern climate.

The post-screening discussion was moderated by Belinda Larisch.

DISCUSSION FACILITATOR

Dr. Belinda Larisch,
Renewable Energy Academic Coordinator,
Environmental Science and Engineering, University of Northern British Columbia

Points raised during open discussion with the audience:

- The film was indeed, as advertised, an unbiased factual presentation of the current energy options. As a result, and not surprisingly, it was naturally depressing.
- The "1-person" (1 Texan!) analysis is not representative of the typical energy footprint of an average human on the planet.
- The western status quo was not addressed as part of the problem and therefore part of the solution (i.e. many of us live in poorly designed cities in large single family dwellings).
- The year 2064 (as the "switch" point where coal, while still a major energy source, is equaled by a combination of other energy sources) is too far out to ward off the temperature rise that will result in catastrophic climate change. One can also argue that a true "switching point" would be even farther in the future, as coal use remained as the single largest source of energy in 2064.
- There is a lack of urgency in the final message.
- New technologies typically require 40-50 years before widespread adoption – that is the reason we haven't yet seen wind and solar uptake increase substantially. Once that happens, the continued slow rate of renewable energy adoption shown by Scott Tinker is likely to significantly under-predict the contribution of renewables to the energy mix.
- Electric car ownership in a northern climate is feasible and rewarding. (This comment resulted from the electric car showing rather than the film.)

- The whole film glosses over the reasons to change our energy habits (this leads to the lack of urgency in the final message).
- The final message is a business as usual case, not what we could achieve.
- The film presented a US perspective, and stayed away from all ethical arguments to change the system.
- Efficiency/conservation was only discussed towards the end of the film.

In spite of the critical nature of many of the points discussed, the comments on the film itself were positive. It was an excellent presentation of the current state of most available energy sources, and provided sufficient information to give the average person a grasp of the magnitude of the challenge we face.