

## **All-Electric America**

A Climate Solution and the Hopeful Future

S. David Freeman and Leah Y. Parks

Solar Flare Press, 215 pp.

This book is the result of a collaboration between Freeman, a pioneer in energy policy and certainly well-known to environmental advocates of all stripes. Parks is an associate editor for ElectricityPolicy.com, a journal and newsletter that examines current events and the state of the electricity industry. She is a Stanford and University of Wisconsin graduate and serves on numerous energy policy advisory committees.

Freeman was the first energy policy administrator in the federal government dating back to 1968. He helped to craft the EPA under Richard Nixon. Later, he became chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority under Jimmy Carter. His local service is exemplary, having served as CEO at major public utilities including the New York Power Authority and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. While in those posts, Freeman was noteworthy as both a visionary administrator and a man more than willing to speak truth to power.

*All Electric America* is a narrative blueprint for how this country can approach the kind of diminished use of fossil fuel already seen in Europe and elsewhere. Renewable sources are the answer, say the authors.

And certainly the examples of low cost energy sources such as solar and wind highlight the book. The authors deal with contentious issues such as cost and argue that the continual lowering of the price of solar and wind power should be a mitigating factor in widespread adoption of those technologies.

Freeman draws upon his direct experience to cite precedents such as the enormous payoffs that occurred when dams were erected that yielded electricity costs lower than one cent per kilowatt per hour. The authors argue the case that if investments were based on the life cycle costs of power plants, then all new power plants would be renewable regardless of whether or not there is climate change.

One of Freeman and Parks' central underlying messages is that Americans should be open to strategies that are new to them, especially those that have been employed for many years elsewhere. He cites the commonplace presence of electric trains throughout the world that are demonstrably more efficient than diesel-powered ones. Likewise, energy efficiency is now a common element in so many consumer products, the authors note. LED lights abound. Heat pumps, a renewable heating and cooling resource, can readily replace natural gas and oil furnaces.

While the authors are very optimistic in their assessment of renewable and low cost energy resources, they also offer caveats. The chapter on nuclear energy, for example, is entitled "Nuclear Energy: Spare Us the Cure". According to the authors, atomic energy

was produced as a nationwide “guilt trip” after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II and supported by President Harry Truman.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago said that atomic energy could be used to melt snow as it falls. Others, such as a writer for the Scripps-Howard syndicate noted that atomic fuel would enable planes then limited to cross-country flights to be able to cross the Atlantic. As Freeman and Parks opine, “there is no such thing as a peaceful atom”.

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