

Editor:
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Wind electricity is a contentious and complicated issue – but there is one goal that most agree on: we want to leave our environment in the best shape possible for the next generation.

Since decisions made today will impact and be judged by those who follow us, it is important to look at the costs and benefits of many energy policies and to learn from the actual experience of others before we act.

The Wind Forum, held at the Unitarian Church in Montpelier, and hosted by the group Building for Social Responsibility (BSR) was a big disappointment for those of us who came with questions and who expected an informed discussion. Since we, from Windham and South Londonderry, had a two hour drive, we carefully checked the agenda of the forum on the BSR web site before deciding to attend.

BSR advertised the forum as an attempt to “Separate facts from hype” and to “Take a serious look at the advantages and limitations of wind energy.”

What actually happened was that a wind developer gave a lecture on the benefits of wind. The audience was not allowed to ask questions during the presentation. The presenter quickly dismissed existing power sources: coal was dirty, nuclear “killed millions” etc. implying that wind electricity was the only viable source of electricity. There was no mention that industrial wind development will not enable Vermont to close a single conventional power plant.

The Forum was supposed to answer questions and concerns about environmental impacts. Although there was a presentation on industrial wind’s impacts on wild life, there was no discussion of impacts on water quality, of the potential for erosion, noise, or of the potential contamination by oil leakage from turbines and transformers.

Many believe that wind turbines will reduce CO₂ emissions in VT. There was no mention that in both Denmark and Germany, countries with many industrial wind installations, the CO₂ emission levels are rising.

Most people had left by 9:40 p.m. when a few questions were finally allowed.

The presenter was asked how he could say that Vermont would be able to glean 22% of its energy from wind when the experience in other countries shows that as more wind plants are built, (because there is a need for more conventional power to cover when the wind is not blowing) the total power contributed by wind declines. For instance, Germany used to derive 8% of its power from wind but expects the contribution from wind to drop to 4% when all the planned turbines are built. The presenter did not offer an explanation for the difference between his projections and what is actually happening in other countries.

The forum moderator was quoted by the Times Argus as saying “Our purpose is not to change people’s minds.” That goal, at least, was accomplished. Without finding any answers to our questions we are all the more entrenched in our opposition to industrial wind. We left feeling deceived and manipulated.

If the people of Vermont are serious about public discussions of energy issues, “forums” such as this one do the process a big disservice.

Yours truly,

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