

## Industrial wind, corporate vandalism

Joanna Lake, March 30, 2005

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Many well intentioned people champion industrial wind power, but it baffles me when those who label themselves "environmentalist" or "green," or who otherwise consider themselves to be politically progressive, seem so eager to do business with the same huge profit-driven corporations that have already done so much to destroy the planet. GE, one of the biggest manufacturers of military weapons and nuclear power plants, is also the US manufacturer of industrial-size wind turbines. GE got into the business by buying the wind division of the Enron corporation. War profiteer Halliburton is involved in the construction of off-shore wind facilities in Britain. Investment banks such as Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan Chase own wind energy companies, as reported by the New York Times on March 22. Citizens for Tax Justice, a labor and consumer rights group, has noted that FPL Group, the parent company of the biggest wind energy company in America, paid no federal income tax in 2002 and 2003 on more than 2 billion dollars of profit, thanks in large part to the tax evasion schemes of industrial wind.

Blasting Vermont's lovely ridgelines to ram monstrous turbine assemblies into the earth, along with clearcut wide strong roads through wild areas and ever more power lines strung about, is a violent assault, despoiling all life around it. There seems remarkably little concern from the pro-industrial wind crowd regarding the further loss of habitat for other species and the inevitable deaths of many birds and bats. It seems that the big-wind supporters have bought into the rapacious corporate mindset of "think big." The US government is granting subsidies for industrial wind not because it gives a damn about green energy but because it benefits corporate America, as always. It is the same mentality, ironically, that applauds drilling for oil in the pristine Alaskan wilderness.

What ever happened to "small is beautiful"? Vermont is a small state. Why not instead promote small windmills, such as at the Danville School? We could advocate for and more generously subsidize even smaller windmills for home use along with solar panels, microhydro, and insulation to save heating fuel, as the purchase and installation of most of these things are beyond the means of many Vermonters. What about the use of biodiesel from non-genetically modified crops? Why aren't unnecessary recreational gas-guzzlers and polluters heavily taxed instead of relentlessly encouraged? Why are SUVs not required to be more environmentally friendly? Conservation would save much more energy than giant wind facilities could ever generate. Alas, none of this will happen easily, if at all, because it won't benefit big business.

We have made a dire mess of this planet, and trashing and industrializing Vermont's mountains is simply adding to it. And the saddest part is that industrial wind facilities won't close down one fossil or nuclear fueled power plant after all that "necessary" destruction of Vermont's most valuable resource. The gargantuan turbines will be only an empty symbol for those people who need to easily assuage their consumerist guilt, most of whom will probably not be living anywhere near the noisy brightly lit monsters.

I sometimes wonder if the "progressive" supporters of big wind realize exactly what they are opening the door to and who will be profiting from the further industrialization of Vermont. Though there are no easy answers or quick fixes, we need to step back from the abyss of this high-testosterone approach and try to create more peaceful, imaginative, harmonious, and decentralized ways of employing renewable energy in Vermont.