

## Geothermal Update August 2012

ROB ANNELLS of Greenerth Energy has been doing a bit of media:

On ABC TV's program "7:30," broadcast 15/05/2012, now archived here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3503600.htm>

and on Channel 31's program "The Schtick", broadcast late last year, now podcast here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnUBw6PFKQE&list=UUd9oA0chhe5ymZSIySozmVg>

As I pointed out in "The Suppression of the Solution" (posted on this blog back in 2009), the geothermal exploration licences for the two most promising geothermal sites in Victoria (Angelsea and Lakes Entrance) were sold by the Victorian government to Greenerth Energy back in 2004. But in his Channel 31 interview of December 2011, Mr. Annells (who is not only a board member of Greenerth Energy, but also executive chairman of Lakes Oil NL, chairman of Minotaur Exploration Limited, chairman of Xtract Energy PLC Limited, as well as also being a non-executive director of both Gippsland Offshore Petroleum Limited and Rum Jungle Uranium Limited) said that geothermal will take "4 or 5 years" to get up and running.

But it's already eight years since Greenerth acquired the Geothermal permits for Angelsea and Lakes Entrance, and three years since Greenerth backed out of a federal government grant that would have given Greenerth some 80 million dollars to develop the geothermal resource (Greenerth didn't meet the federal government's deadlines). Not that that has stopped Ted Bailleau giving Greenerth yet another 25 million dollars of state government funding toward the project this last Victorian state budget. So the drilling of pilot Geothermal wells, which was supposed to begin eight years ago, is now going to take "four or five years" once it begins, but it hasn't yet actually begun at all. Yet the interviewer, Shelly Freeman, didn't ask a single question about this. The whole segment was more of an infomercial for the real agenda: mining Victoria's brown coal on an unprecedented scale, and capturing and using the fumes produced in drying and burning that brown coal to produce a liquid fuel.

This is surprising, because Shelly Freeman is no dunce and must have known what it is she is promoting (see <http://www.capitaljewishforum.org/national-board-of-advisors.html> ). Either this interview demonstrates a serious lack of homework on her behalf, or *The Schtick* should for this episode really be called *The Spin*. Why? Because this interview was presented in such a way as to try to make this scheme look "green." There was no mention at all of the fact that all the CO<sub>2</sub> "removed" from the brown coal still ends up in the atmosphere eventually, coming out of car exhausts in dribs and drabs instead of in one huge dump from a brown coal fired power station. So the scheme actually represents absolutely no overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions whatsoever. Yet Rob Annells describes it as a "silver bullet" to solve the world's climate-change problems, while making no mention at all of the Geelong geothermal project, nor of geothermal itself as the *actual* solution to the greenhouse gas emission problem. And the reason is not hard to see: a small number of individuals stand to make massive fortunes digging up Victoria's brown coal, and coal-seam-gas-fracking the hell out of the rest of the State. Here we have a thin green veneer over a very brown substance indeed.

This issue is however embedded in some very sensitive cultural territory, concerning the loaded issue of that faction of the Greens calling for a boycott of Israel as well as the fossil fuel and nuclear energy industry's suppression of the geothermal solution. A look at the ABC 7:30 segment sheds a little more light. For, although you don't really expect investigative journalism of a Channel 31 community program, the ABC operates to a higher journalistic standard, although as we shall

see, this interview is not really much better. Bearing in mind that the geothermal survey of Victoria was actually done in the 1980s, it is flabbergasting to watch the ABC allow Mr. Annells to say with particular emphasis that the problem is that there “just *is* no alternative” to burning coal to generate electricity (adding the disingenuous quip with a sly grin that “its not windy today, so wind turbines would be useless”) without asking so much as a single question concerning the geothermal licences, or the years of inaction by Greenearth, or the withdrawn federal grant, or the fate of the 25 millions of taxpayers' money currently being handed over by the Victorian State Government. The topic of geothermal energy didn't even come up, and Rob Annell's puzzling comment went entirely unchallenged by the ABC. The ABC did however mention one important factor, namely Mr. Annells' link to Les Erdi, the funder of the brown coal drying scheme, and even devoted a few seconds to Mr. Erdi's comments.

In a way, things are a bit clearer over at Channel 31, although this clarity really only allows us too see just how complicated this issue is. *The Schtick* introduced Rob Annells by mentioning calls from the Marrickville Greens to boycott Israel for its treatment of Palestine (presumably in order to court the Moslem vote?). As I've pointed out in a previous posting on this blog, I think this boycott call is misguided, and that the Australian Greens are right not to adopt this stance as a national policy. This is not to condone Israel's treatment of Palestine, nor Palestine's treatment of Israel, nor in any way to take sides in this protracted conflict. It is rather to say that this war is none of Australia's business. It is not the place of Australia to start taking sides in conflicts around the world. What's special about Australia is not that we can presumptuously claim to be able to solve the world's problems by “taking sides” but only that we can provide a working model on a small scale of a functioning multicultural society. Australia's multicultural fabric has included both Jewish and Moslem threads ever since the first fleet, and just as Jewish shop-owners traded with Afghani camel drivers in the Australia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish and Moslem communities today live side by side in a multicultural Australia, tolerating one another's ways. Feuds from the old countries have no place here in Australia.

So the really dangerous thing about Rob Annells saying that he and Les Erdi want to dig up Victoria's brown coal “for the sake of Israel” as he does on the Channel 31 show is that this could lead to anti-semites (Green, Red or Blue) saying anti-semitic things about international capital and world domination and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and other such paranoid racist drivel. Let's be frank: Rob Annells and Les Erdi want to dig up Victoria's brown coal for their own profit. They are capitalists, and that's what capitalist's do: make profits. No further information is required to understand the situation, and to attempt to muddy the issue with nationalist or racist parameters is utterly unnecessary, and completely dubious. Muddying the waters like this is only necessary if there is something to hide, some distraction or diversion or dissimulation underway. The requirement to assert Mr Erdi's “nobility” arises only where there is an unconscious anxiety that something distinctly ignoble is going on here.

And the picture is indeed considerably bigger than Mr. Erdi's and Mr. Annells' plans. Some 8 billion dollars is about to be sunk into mining Victoria's brown coal, and naturally the Victorian Liberal Government is rubbing its hands at the thought of taxing all that cash:

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/07/17/1026898866373.html>

But the whole set of schemes is entirely dependent upon there being “simply no feasible alternative” to either burning fossil fuels or going nuclear (this segment on Radio National's “Counterpoint” program being a perfect case in point). This is why the geothermal issue is both urgent and truly global in its proportions. Once again we ask: will Victoria seize the opportunity to become a true world leader in clean electricity generation, and part of the solution, or will the short-sighted greed of the fossil fuel industry win out, and ensure that Victoria remains a coal-fired state of the past, and very much part of the problem? Now before your inner pessimist hijacks your hope and steers you towards the nearest pub to join the other drunks in their nihilistic sentiment of “stuff

the future,” take a moment to follow these two links which lead in a surprising direction:

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2011/07/28/3279677.htm>

<http://vicmps.greens.org.au/content/greens-and-otways-brown-coal-victory>

Hooray for democracy of the grass-roots variety, and hooray for those elements of the Victorian State Public Service who want to see geothermal up and running:

<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/earth-resources/investment-and-trade/rediscover-victorias-investment-potential/victoria---geothermal-fact-sheet>

Interestingly, it's the Government who appear to be trying to stop what the Public Service are doing:

<http://environmentvictoria.org.au/media/plan-head-protests-coal>

Maybe if this mob got off their arses and realised with the right kind of social-media campaign that they could become the most talked-about organisation in Australia, the geothermal issue might move from its current obscurity into the front-and-center limelight it ought by rights to occupy.

So there you have it: one of the biggest can of worms in the world today – you might say a huge can of giant Gippsland earthworms, ( *Megascolides australis* ) which, believe it or not, grow to an incredible 3 meters in length. These amazing animals are already on the endangered species list, and are directly threatened by these proposed mining developments:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/infosheets/giant-gippsland-earthworm/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant\\_Gippsland\\_earthworm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_Gippsland_earthworm)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxeT\\_GDKv9g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxeT_GDKv9g)

As if all the other reasons weren't enough, Gippsland's subterranean inhabitants are one hell of a reason to stop these insane brown-coal projects in their tracks, and to devote all our ingenuity to geothermal development *immediately*.