

*Earth Hour - we need to celebrate*  
**Coal not Candles**

*By Viv Forbes  
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A print-ready copy of this issue of "Carbon Sense" can be downloaded from:  
<http://carbon-sense.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/earth-hour.pdf>

*Please Spread Carbon Sense*

Coal not candles should be the symbol of Earth Hour.



It was coal that produced clean electric power which cleared the smog produced by dirty combustion and open fires in big cities like London and Pittsburgh. Much of the third world still suffers choking fumes and smog because they do not have clean electric power and burn wood, cardboard, unwashed coal and cow dung for home heat.

It was coal that saved the forests being felled to fuel the first steam engines and produce charcoal for the first iron smelters.

It was coal that powered the light bulbs and saved the whales being slaughtered for whale oil lamps.

It was coal that produced the steel that replaced shingles on the roof, timber props in the mines, wooden fence posts on the farms and the bark on the old bark hut.

In Australia today, coal provides at least 75% of our lighting, cooking, heating, refrigeration, rail transport and steel. Without it, we would be back in the dark days of candles, wood stoves, chip heaters, open fires, smoky cities, hills bare of trees and streets knee deep in horse manure.

Coal is fossil sunshine as clean as the green plants it came from, and often less damaging to the environment than its green energy alternatives.

Earth Hour candles are green tokenism for rich status-seekers and nostalgic dreamers.

We should spend Earth Hour saluting the real people who produce the coal on which most people on earth depend.

### *The Real Agenda of Earth Hour*

"We must make this place an insecure and inhospitable place for Capitalists and their projects - we must reclaim the roads and plowed lands, halt dam construction, tear down existing dams, free shackled rivers, and return to the wilderness millions and tens of millions of acres of presently settled land."

– Dave Foreman, "Earth First"

For those who would like to read more:

*Clearing the smog of Beijing with "Coal by Wire":*

<http://carbon-sense.com/2008/08/04/clearing-the-smog/>

*Return to the caves:*

<http://carbon-sense.com/2010/05/06/earth-day-blackout-night/>

*Hail to Electricity:*

<http://carbon-sense.com/2010/04/01/hail-to-electricity/>

*The Road to more Blackout nights:*

<http://carbon-sense.com/2010/03/26/earth-hour-2010/>

*Earth Hour – a Dissent*

<http://carbon-sense.com/2011/03/25/mckitrick-earth-hour/>

Authorised by Viv Forbes

153 Schneiders Road, Rosevale via

Rosewood Qld Australia

0754 640 533 [forbes@carbon-sense.com](mailto:forbes@carbon-sense.com)

**Disclosure:** Viv Forbes has had a long love affair with electricity.

"It started many decades ago when the candles and kerosene lights of my childhood were replaced by a 32 volt DC electricity system powered by the diesel engine that also ran the new milking machines on our dairy farm. The generator charged 16 large 2 volt batteries sitting on the veranda. These batteries powered a couple of room lights and the new-fangled radio (His Master's Voice). If Mum wanted to use her new electric iron, Dad had to start the engine in the milking shed. We still made do with a wood stove and an evaporative cooling safe.

"It was magic to just flick a switch to get bright clean light to every corner of the room. And no wick trimming, no getting into trouble for spilling kerosene on the kitchen table while filling the lights, no smoky lamp globes to clean (and occasionally break), and no candle setting fire to the curtains when I tried to read in bed. I have never longed to return to the era of candles.

"I learned about electricity networks by constructing roads for my toy truck with real street lights made from two torch bulbs mounted on poles made from wooden meat skewers. The power station was a discarded torch battery.

"Then I grew up and had a long adventure with coal – learning about where and how it was formed; observing evidence of the massive climate changes that have occurred since the great coal forests covered the globe; learning how coal properties were related to the type of plant material that formed that coal; marvelling at the extent of the earth upheavals and volcanic eruptions that have sometimes destroyed the coal seams; and observing how government policies can foster our resource industries or drive them overseas. I still hold shares and earn income from a small Australian coal exploration company.

"None of that knowledge and experience changes the truth or relevance of the above comments about coal and candles."

If you would like to read more on the romance of the story of coal, get this book:

Barbara Freese, ***Coal, a Human History*** Published by Arrow Books, UK, 2006.

Barbara Freese is no patsy for the coal industry. She was Assistant District Attorney in Minnesota for 12 years, responsible for enforcing air pollution laws. Her book is a marvellous story of King Coal and the Big Smoke (London). Just ignore her misguided lapse into climate alarmism at the end (remember, she was a government lawyer).

"Coal has transformed societies and shaped the fate of nations. It launched empires and triggered wars. Above all, it fuelled the Industrial Revolution in Britain, propelling the rise of a small rural kingdom into the greatest commercial empire in the world."

Another reviewer says "Barbara Freese has a nose for the links between things, technology and culture. I can think of no substance that has played so important a role in shaping industrial technology and the relative fortunes of competing economies. And while its role has been somewhat reduced by growing recourse to petroleum, we may yet find it desirable or necessary to return to coal, whether as a fuel or as a source of electric power."

**Try holding a candle to that.**

*"Carbon Sense" is a newsletter produced by the Carbon Sense Coalition, an Australian based organisation which opposes waste of resources, opposes pollution, and promotes the rational and sustainable use of carbon energy and carbon food.*

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