

## THE PROGRESS REPORT

### **Mourning Becomes Electron**

By Fred E. Foldvary

In the summer of 2001 much of California faces blackouts of several hours per day with no electricity, while the price of electricity soars. During the past ten years, the government of California has strictly prohibited the production of large new power plants to generate more electricity, and also imposed price controls, creating a severe shortage that will soon plunge California into a depression more horrible than that of the 1930s.

Just as the prohibition of alcohol during the 1920s created a vast underground market for liquor, and the prohibition of drugs creates huge profit opportunities for an illegal market, so too is the ban on producing electricity, and the high prices, creating a tremendous underground market for electricity. Much of this has so far gone unreported, but I have uncovered the shocking facts.

Many businesses face a huge loss of business and high costs when the electricity gets shut off. Many have been secretly building underground electricity generators. Many shopping centers and industrial parks have installed microturbines to provide power for them when the electricity is shut off. Since they are unable to obtain permits for this construction, they have done it secretly.

Many people have also installed small generators in their basements and garages. Many are illegally obtaining electricity from their generators instead of the electrical grid, to avoid being a victim of a blackout.

The government of California is well aware of this illegal kilowatt production. A spokesman for the Attorney General, Buzz "Sparky" Rolling, has declared that the law will be rigorously enforced. "Electrical outlaws will go to prison," he stated.

State police are now patrolling the streets in vans which detect electricity generation. The law strictly prohibits any generation of electricity without a permit, and the State is issuing very few permits due to local opposition, environmental rules, and a shortage of bureaucrats to process the applications.

Many households and enterprises have stopped applying for permits, because the very application puts them on a list of places that the State vans will inspect to detect illegal electricity. Because of so many violations of the electricity ban, the State police are not putting the violators on trial, but simply confiscating their generators and houses and businesses by civil asset forfeiture.

In a press release, Mr. Rolling reminded Californians that the official policy is conservation and a reduction of electricity consumption. "Those outlaws who generate electricity illegally are flouting the law and defeating the call for conservation," he said.

A critical editorial in the Electric Times Journal pointed out that every motor vehicle in California has a generator that produces electricity that is stored in the battery. Buzz "Sparky" Rolling stated that technically, all California drivers are violating the ban on electrical production unless they get permits to generate electricity. Even though no procedure has been set up to obtain permits, since the cars are violating State law, the highway patrol are now stopping cars at random and issuing tickets of \$131 each.

In the small town of Watson in northern California, a police officer drove by and spotted a boy rubbing a cat's fur the wrong way, creating static electricity. The policeman realized that the child was violating State law, even though the static electricity was not being used, and the boy was taken away from the parents and placed in a foster home. "The parents were negligent in allowing their child to generate illegal electricity," stated Rolling. "We have a zero-tolerance policy, and we will enforce it!"

Several large ships have been stationed just beyond the three-mile limit off the coast of California. They are equipped with large electricity generators and stores selling food, clothing, and hardware. Many Californians have started shopping at these offshore floating shopping malls, which also do not charge any sales tax. But Buzz "Sparky" Rolling has declared that this amounts to an evasion of the State's conservation policy. "If people can just go to a ship and get electricity, it violates the whole concept of cutting back on electricity usage." He warned the ship owners to leave, or else the ships will be sunk costs.

There are reports of illegal underground electricity grids being constructed in several California cities. An illegal grid serving several thousand customers was discovered in San Francisco, which provided electricity at half the legal rate. "We can detect and destroy these grids," said Sparky, "since they give off magnetic signals that our sophisticated equipment can detect."

So the State of California is vigorously cracking down on the underground production and consumption of electricity. Large batteries are soon going to be banned so that people will no longer be able to legally store electricity. "We can't just allow anyone to produce electricity," said Sparky. "California has a plan, and the plan requires us to control the production, transmission, and consumption of electricity. If private parties generate electricity on their own, it creates chaos, and it wrecks havoc with the State plan."