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Stop the turbines

By J Dwight , Populist Economics

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"You begin to feel like you're being used," a long-time Maine Audubon supporter and state legislator told me about the wind power movement in Maine. "There seems to be no real benefit to the people or communities of Maine."

What? We are being used? No benefit to the people of Maine? Won't wind power decrease carbon dioxide emissions and fossil fuel use, increase employment, while sending millions of dollars to the state government in taxes?

Nope. Nope. Nope. And, well, nope. Here's why: Not one of those high-minded objectives has been achieved by installation of over 35,000 wind-turbines in Europe.

Why do we think it will work any better here?

For Maine, wind turbines are imported from other states and countries, financed by shadowy hedge funds and private equity firms, and buoyed by national debt financing. If turbine farms were solely privately funded projects, they wouldn't be so bad.

Instead, they are built on the backs of the taxpayers, to benefit wealthy corporate interests.

There are four subsidies for the wind power industry: 1. direct grants (of which already $1 billion has been awarded this year alone); tax credits (30 percent to developers when the wind farm is 'turned on'); a subsidy of 13 cents per kilowatt-hour produced from federal government in the form of direct cash payments and carbon offsets; and 'First in line' status for every kilowatt-hour produced.

The immense subsidies more than offset any public financial benefit from their existence. So turbines offer the prospect of receiving little or no return, while destroying scenery and killing tens of thousands of migratory birds. To me, this sounds like corruption.

Why is the combined power of environmental groups, lobbyists and financiers coming to bear on the citizens of Maine without so much as a "by your leave?"

Money. Lots of it.

I want to prosper just like the next guy, but not on the backs of the workers and teachers, or our children and grandchildren. Getting rich from subsidies given away by politicians to save us from "climate change" or to create "energy independence" just doesn't seem honest to me.

Former governor Angus King has been involved in this from the beginning. His company, Independence Wind, has received a permit to install 22 turbines in Roxbury. King has said he wants to leave a "legacy to the people of Maine" in the form of dozens of wind turbines and farms.

Opponents are saying that King's company stands to generate almost $100 million from this project alone. Yet given the subsidies, this and other wind farms will contribute little or nothing to the revenues of the communities in which they are placed, or the depleted coffers of the state of Maine.

All the benefits are mitigated by the giveaways.

The only tangible benefit, Independence Energy's offer of subsidized electricity to residents of Roxbury, amounts to nothing more than a bribe.
Why should Mainers pay for the electricity produced by wind farms at all? We should get it for free, and the state should get royalties from wind farms.After all, we are paying through our taxes and the additional debt issued by the federal government to pay the subsidies to these projects.

Why should we pay twice?

Worse, a report was filed in August with the Ocean Energy Task Force, a state committee that advised the Legislature and governor on offshore projects like wind, on the subject of instituting lease fees and royalties to site offshore wind projects, but our elected officials, bureaucrats, and environmental groups seem keen on giving away this potential revenue.

Other states do not. Why should Maine?

Too many questions still linger on wind power. No wonder people in Maine are questioning motives of wind power advocates, including environmental groups who now support it, after years of opposition. Even prominent Maine ornithologists are willing to accept the slaughter of tens or hundreds of thousands of birds to spare us climate change.

Is the premise behind wind power development even valid?

The sky will not fall. The seas will not rise to strike the unfaithful. Neither will the earth crumble beneath the feet of the unbelievers, nor, for that matter, the believers, if we do not

build windmills.

Maine, and every state in the Northeast, should put a moratorium on granting new permits until the details of wind power are worked out.

J. Dwight is a SEC registered investment adviser and an advisory board member of the Maine Heritage Policy Center. He lives in Wilton. E-mail jdwight@gwi.net.