

## Superficially green images



Carbon footprint, recycling, sustainability, alternative energy, work-at-home day – the media is awash with green issues and related commentary as governments, countries, companies and individuals are increasingly keen to promote their green credentials.

At the government/country level, for example, we have the EU's recent proposal to eliminate the traditional incandescent bulb in favour of low energy types. A good idea, but so simple you wonder why it took so long.

A rather more grand statement has been made by Norway. This Nordic country has declared it will be a carbon neutral economy by 2050. Great, but it's an interesting statement from a nation that pumps oil out of the ground for others to burn – the number three oil exporter in 2005 (behind Saudi Arabia followed by Russia) as measured by millions of barrels/day, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

And that's the trouble; among all this green talk there is a need to disassemble and look for the humbug, hype or selective blindness. Individual suspects here include high profile media stars who on the one hand boast about owning a Toyota Prius while neglecting to mention that their other car is a Ferrari or Porsche. Or there's US green campaigner Al Gore's much reported personal energy consumption, which sits uncomfortably alongside his "save the planet" sermonising.

On the company front there's global oil giant BP which has rebranded itself 'Beyond Petroleum' – "a summation of our brand promise and values", it explains. On the subject of oil and beyond, I also hear that not all biofuels are equal and not always better than oil in terms of energy input versus subsequent energy output.

But the prize for saying one thing and appearing to do another goes to Shell. Just last month a magazine that I take came complete with a DVD from the oil company. It contained a nine-minute clip about the company's chief engineer who is "passionate about saving the world's energy resources".

I couldn't help but see an irony here in the amount of energy/oil the company had used to manufacture and package its energy saving message on DVD for my benefit. And where will that DVD [unviewed] end up? In the ground, almost certainly.

Now *Machinery* is all for energy efficiency, recycling and green initiatives, indeed, we are launching our own *Environment Matters* event this September (see page 50), but sleight of hand, vacuous image makeovers, contradictory actions or marketing dressed up as green concern is another matter. □

Beware the hype, humbug and selective blindness used in green image manipulation

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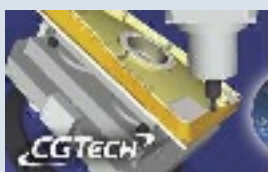
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