



An offer for Governor Schwarzenegger

How to make California the world's first 100 percent solar-powered state.

❄️ By Boudewijn Poelmann

THE REQUEST TO WRITE THIS COLUMN reached me while I was with my wife, Annemiek, in California. We were visiting our friend Bill Gross in Pasadena. Bill is a nice and charming person. Above all, he is brilliant on technology issues and, for this reason, is impatient. He couldn't wait to build a solar power plant once he developed the idea in his mind, so he founded a company called Idealab in Pasadena. He showed us around his electricity power plant in the desert, an hour from Los Angeles.

There were the mirrors, reflecting the sunlight back to a tower. The tower heats water to steam at about 930 degrees Fahrenheit (500 degrees Celsius), after which the steam is transported to a turbine. There, the electricity is produced to serve 4,000 homes around the plant. Not a single fossil fuel is used—no coal, no gas, no oil. Bill told us his 24,000 mirrors follow the sun, all independently. That was the striking innovation that makes his solar power plant so unique and so effective.

This technique is totally safe. However, the Lancaster fire brigade forced him to install a sprinkler system. Bill responded, "Gentlemen, there is nothing that can burn here. There is not a drop of oil on this whole complex, no explosives, nothing." Still, they wanted him to install the sprinkler system. In order not to delay the building process, Bill installed it. So now, the power plant has a sprinkler system that will never be used. Alas, small barriers to a bright future for solar electricity. It made us think of what German philosopher Arthur

Schopenhauer once said about truth: "All truth passes through three stages: First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

We asked Bill what such a plant costs. This one cost \$20 million, but that's because eSolar (another of Bill's companies) wanted to conduct experiments here. If the components were manufactured in larger quantities, the price would come down to \$8 million. We couldn't believe it. For \$2,000 per household, the beautiful sunshine state of California could have green electricity forever—cheap, zero CO₂, no dependency on foreign oil, employment for tens of thousands of people (at a time when unemployment in California is at 12 percent). What are Californians waiting for? "Money," was Bill's answer. No bank wants to invest. They are all afraid, because it's new.

So, it's time to suggest another ridiculous idea to overcome this.

Governor Schwarzenegger, if you would be so kind as to grant the Postcode Lottery a lottery license in California, the Lottery—together with Bill's eSolar—promises to use the net proceeds to make California the first solar-powered state in the world. You have the solar technology; you have the demonstration power plant built and functioning (including sprinkler system); and you have the sunshine.



POELMANN AT THE ESOLAR PLANT IN CALIFORNIA.

A quick calculation shows how it works. Suppose the Lottery's yearly revenue is comparable to what it is in the Netherlands and Sweden and to its growth path in Scotland and England. Its revenue in California will soon be \$1 billion a year. Forty percent is for prizes; 40 percent is for good causes—in this case, building solar plants in California.

And here is the really big thing: Once the power plants are built, we will hand them over to you, dear governor, so the state has a source of income forever—the most green and clean income you can wish. California will make history (again). So, here's our solution. We're ready to start.

There are other climate solutions in this special issue of *Ode*. If you think we can help by involving the Postcode Lottery, please let us know. We have assisted organizations with their ideals for 20 years to the tune of \$4.5 billion, an amount that is growing by \$440 million per year. ●●

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