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Most of our readers will know that things are stirring on the other side of the Atlantic, even if the manner of that stirring seems slow and somewhat chaotic, let alone mired in endless litigation.

This is the first of a monthly series of articles that we will be published that are written by Doug Faulkner, who lives on in the American state of Virginia. Things do not look the same over there and we would not share all of Doug's perceptions, but his article is deliberately printed as sent, without editorial interference. Debate can follow later. Our French readers will sometimes find the raw capitalism unpalatable, red in tooth and claw, and worse, far worse, than perfidious Albion just over the little ditch known as the Channel.

From a young de Tocqueville to an older Alistair Cooke, Europeans have interpreted the New World for the Old. But, with the advent of this column, we will try to do that for the fledgling maritime renewables industries from an American perspective. We hope to demystify for our European readers in particular the confusing and tangled American experience as it unfolds from month-to-month in the full unvarnished glory of its successes and failures; of the interplay between science, politics, culture and business; of the many individuals and organizations involved; and, of course, of potential business opportunities.

#### OUR BIAS: MARKETS WILL PREVAIL AND SUSTAINABILITY RULES

Americans are watching and learning from Europe's lessons in market building for marine and other renewables through massive subsidies, broad government mandates and soaring electricity bills - - and will hopefully avoid those costly mistakes. While starting small and moving slowly at first, we believe American entrepreneurs will eventually build a much stronger base through our own version of private-public partnerships.

Our bias as a green conservative is that business needs to take the lead in finding and exploiting new electricity options, not the heavy hand of central government manipulation of the marketplace, as you find in Europe. Hand-in-hand with our emphasis on markets will be a deep-seated belief in the power of sustainability - - or resource efficiency by another label - - to cement public support for new approaches. But, that means not only environmental sustainability narrowly interpreted, but social and economic sustainability, too. And, it all needs to be backed by solid science, not shrill emotionalism, with closely-measured metrics, completely open to the court of public opinion.

#### LET FIFTY FLOWERS BLOOM: FEDERALISM'S IMPACT

The most confusing aspect for European readers may be the role of the states and territories versus that of the federal government. And, in many ways, it has always been thus, since de Tocqueville's commentaries on the early Republic. One cannot understand the full picture of the American energy sector without understanding the push-me, pull-you built-in tensions between and among the various levels of government. Yes, there are some similarities with the E.U. and its member nations, but the roots of American federalism run deeper and are more entangled with U.S. history, politics, business and culture.

Our two main political parties engage in bitter partisan wrangling in Washington, D.C., with much national policy, including energy, stalemated. There is no federal mandate for renewable electricity and there is unlikely to be one anytime soon. Ditto for any kind of a carbon tax or major climate change legislation. National tax incentives for new renewable electricity projects have expired, but even if they are eventually reinstated may have a limited shelf-life.

There are dozens of different recipes in the "laboratories" of our states and territories for promoting renewable electricity, depending

largely on which party controls the levers of power and the level of fiscal solvency. This column for example will examine examples of success in different states and territories, looking for lessons applicable to other locales.

The growing of an offshore wind industry with a full supply chain in eastern coastal waters will be of particular interest, drawn from the author's perch on the [Virginia Offshore Wind Development Authority](#). The Commonwealth's methodical step-by-step approach in concert with [Dominion Virginia Power](#); extensive maritime capabilities; environmentalists; as well as the federal civilian and military authorities may eventually show the rest of the states the path forward. Virginia's demonstration project recently won one of three U.S. Department of Energy awards for up to \$47 million each (the other two were from New Jersey and Oregon.)

The two ends of our political spectrum with their non-profit and private sector allies see energy issues through very different lenses, with very different solutions. But, that's the beauty of the American federal system in giving flexibility for adaptation to peculiar local conditions. And, that's also the reality of our federal government's terrible fiscal straits, as the nation's debt explodes with no political agreement in sight to fix the mess.

#### AN AMERICAN POLITICAL KALEIDOSCOPE

The changing faces of the two main political parties - - and their many warring factions - - is part of the canvas we will paint, too. In one of the oddest cases of strange political bedfellows, the Tea Party is starting to ally with the home solar industry against large utilities; the latest episode occurred in Oklahoma as Republican Governor Mary Fallin went against big power interests and her state legislature, due to pressure from activists. Watch that space for potential lapping over into the marine renewables world.

Meanwhile, an even stranger story with a truly American twist is unfolding in a multitude of state capitals as some conservatives try to unravel a number of environmental laws and regulations, including the many Renewable Portfolio Standards (mandates for renewable electricity production passed by state legislatures.) These efforts are so far largely unsuccessful, because of the new political forces and economic interests put into play by these emerging markets.

#### OPPORTUNITIES YES BUT CHALLENGES GALORE TOO

The globe's transition away from the fossil-fueled present to other energy sources and processes will take much longer; require uncommon patience with multitudes of failures; and cost much, much more than many expected. And, that is certainly true in America. Despite sloganeering from both the right and the left, challenging embedded legacy systems was always going to be a huge challenge, but coupled with lingering economic weaknesses after the '08 Crash, protracted legal delays and the completely unanticipated gushing of new American oil and gas production, marine renewables face huge challenges indeed.

The path ahead will be full of ironies, paradoxes and surprises, fertile territories for the print observer. One angle this column will return to often will be the pull of markets in the developing world, which could ultimately help with the creation of new supply and demand in the developed countries. American businesses may see greener pastures in those countries eager to power rapid modernization and offering faster routes to commercialization for their technologies and products. [Verdant Power](#) has installed its tidal turbines in New York City's East River as a unique grid-connected array and conducted world-leading environmental testing, but it is also exploring markets in other states and overseas. American entrepreneurs may well have to "go out" to "win in".

The news on American marine renewables is hiding in plain sight: one just has to find the pieces of the puzzle and put it together for you readers. Like Alistair Cooke's memorable expositions, we will give unique perspective to breaking news stories. We are optimistic about the eventual success of this industry and are eager to tell its many stories.

From Arlington, Virginia, Doug Faulkner