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Solar Power Advocate Explores Possibilities

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Sunny days. Steven Strong, president of Solar Design Associates, lectures on the sustainability and cost-efficiency of widespread solar power.

Sie Won Kim / Sun Staff

In a dramatic demonstration last night, Steven Strong, president of Solar Design Associates, gave a lecture exploring the sustainability and cost-efficiency of widespread solar power to students, faculty, staff and others.

The most dangerous moment for the U.S., Strong said, is "the point at which cheap oil is over." Long before that, he emphasized that we had to find sustainable technology to replace that non-renewable resource. He offered the alternative of solar power.

Throughout the lecture, Strong explored various uses of solar panels to power the average American home or business. He described the simple installation of such panels on the roofs of homes throughout Europe and pointed out the feasibility of spreading this technology to the general population of the United States. He added that public domains, such as sound barriers on highways or parking lots, could be slightly modified to fit solar panels and in turn could be used to completely power

large-scale operations such as an electric train system.

Strong, however, understood that many audience members were skeptical about the cost-efficiency of solar power. As a response, he showed a video which featured a house in Maine powered entirely from the solar panels on its roof.

In this video, during a particularly cold month, the occupants paid \$42 for their utility bill while each of their neighbors paid over \$600.

Ultimately, Strong said, "we are quickly outgrowing the ability to feed ourselves." He pointed out that the US makes up five percent of the world's population, but we use up 30 percent of the world's energy resources. He argued that conventional technology brings resource depletion, geopolitical conflict, environmental degradation while sustainable technology allows for resource conservation, environmental preservation, and social equity.

Strong showed examples of his company's work throughout the U.S. and the world. Solar Design Associates works on replacing conventional technology -- technology that currently runs on non-renewable resources -- with the sustainable technology of solar power, having installed such technologies on individuals' homes, businesses and universities across the nation.

"Steven Strong brings to light new ways of living, of sustainability and a cleaner future for all. If Cornell University could learn to integrate such technologies into its education programs, it would help promulgate sustainable living in the United States and around the world," said Andre Sehatz '05, a member of Kyoto Now!, one of the organizations that sponsored this event.

"I see a future of highly efficient, ultra reliable solar technology ... a reflection to enhance life, not destroy it," said Strong at the end of his lecture. "Yesterday's generation of dirty industry will be replaced by renewable power and energy," he added.

"People who are passionate about doing things that make a difference need to speak out and be heard. Steven Strong has a business to run, but at the same time he's out there and being visible. He said, 'I put forth to you that what exists can be done.' Many people don't know what exists and don't know what can be done. But this lecture helps change that," said Dan Flerlage, a local high school teacher.

The lecture was sponsored by several student organizations, including Kyoto Now!, Cornell University Renewable Energy Society, and Cornell Solar Decathlon, among others.

According to Abigail Krich '04, a former member of Kyoto Now! and Sun columnist, these organizations meet with administrators at least twice every semester.

"It is our job to make the university pay attention to this issue," she said.

"As Steven Stron mentioned in the lecture, Queens University in Ontario had the foresight to know that a solar-powered building would give them a competitive edge when hiring faculty and attracting students. We can only hope that Cornell will catch this wave of the future before it breaks and ride the crest of solar installments going up throughout the campus," said Tristan Jackson '05, a member of Kyoto Now!

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