THE BIBLIOPHILES BOOK CLUB

On March 7th about 20 persistent readers gathered at the Venice Inn for sharing and consideration of a book that addresses many of the greatest potential problems and opportunities of our age – the Energy-Climate Era – E.C.E.

Thomas Friedman’s HOT, FLAT & CROWDED portrays the role of energy (especially that derived from fossil fuels) in the march of civilization from the Industrial Revolution (beginning in the 18th century) to the present. Very few of us are accustomed to thinking in such an historic framework about the growth and expansion of human life on earth. Society’s universal expectation dictated that mankind could prosper and improve his fate through untrammeled exploitation of the inexhaustible natural, animal, material and energy resources of the planet.

The effects of this mindset of natural plenitude, coupled with private and public privilege, has raised perplexing new questions regarding the sustainability of life as we know it. Within the last decade, such complex questions have become increasingly muddied, as political forces confront alarming new scientific findings, which challenge age-old beliefs about mankind’s limited role and effects upon the earth’s ecosystems.

Friedman performs yeoman service in summarizing the mounting scientific evidence for climate change, and its growing importance for biodiversity, economic policy, “petro-dictatorship”, and our energy future. Our discussion” of these broad issues, aided by retired OPPD electrical engineer, Ron Mortensen, focused mainly upon possible means for the production of “cheap electrons”.

There was general agreement that HOT, FLAT & CROWDED correctly described the fundamental questions of the E.C.E, but several readers found the narrative overly long, and in some cases, redundant. It also raises provocative questions, such as “Are the required changes in human values, as well as political behavior and technological innovation, really possible and effective?” or in other words, “Can we do this?” Friedman believes we can.

There was general support for lightening up the reading agenda with a novel for our next meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, June 2nd,
again at 11:30 at the Caniglia’s Venice Inn. The title selected (available at the Book Worm, Countryside Village at 20% discount) is SUITE FRANCAISE by Irene Nemirovsky.

Check out this article from the London Times: “How a Book Club Changed My Life.”

http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/books_group/article7050368.ece