



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Roger Clark

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Roger E. Clark is an environmental lawyer and self-styled energy geek who works for The Reinvestment Fund (www.trfund.com) and its Sustainable Development Fund in Philadelphia. He provides financing for renewable energy, energy conservation and efficiency and other clean energy technologies and projects and is active in energy policy issues at the state and local level. Roger served as Chief Counsel for the Pennsylvania Energy Office and worked for legal services programs in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Fairbanks, Alaska.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: I believe the old paradigm of jobs-vs-environment is dead and the American people reject the dangerous drill-baby-drill approach to our energy needs. Citizens today are ahead of our political leaders when it comes to energy and environmental issues. This commitment rises and falls a bit with the price of oil, the state of the economy and other international events, but Americans support a clean environment and they want solar and wind and other renewable energy solutions.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: Energy is a very big business and the old fossil fuel industries have huge war chests to spread their self-serving messages. The environmental issues we face are very complex and can be confusing to people. The negative environmental consequences of our actions and inactions are frequently not immediate but are more long term.

At times it seems we the people are losing our capacity to address complex issues. Reshaping our economy and our culture to respect and live within environmental realities requires hard work over an extended time. Many powerful interests are hoping we get distracted and lose our concentration. We all need to step beyond the sound bites and the angry commentators and educate ourselves about these complex issues and think hard about the way forward.

Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?

A: If China and India continue to fuel their economic growth with 1950s coal plants, we are all in trouble. The flip side of this concern is who will develop the clean energy technologies and products that the world will buy. China has its eyes on this prize, but hopefully the U.S. does as well.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: I recently read that people view a home energy audit the same way they think about a colonoscopy. The clean energy folks need to make energy conservation and efficiency exciting and cool. Wasting energy and conspicuous consumption need to be viewed as serious breaches of good manners and form.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: I believe all human beings have three fundamental tasks: to know and love God, to know and love each other and to know and love our planet. All of us need to figure out how each of us individually can best do that work. Fortunately, there are countless ways to choose from for mastering all three tasks.