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Energy

«By the time we (= in Western Europe) have eaten breakfast and got to work, we have consumed more energy than a Nepalese in a whole month. We consume more than a thousand times as much as he does. And what is worse, is that they have to meet their requirements by gathering wood. If this takes the whole day and after the countryside is deforested, the soil is eroded in consequence, and rain does not come, then children remain as the only life insurance and people flee to the cities»...

«One would have to be blind in order not to realize that the few people seeking asylum... are nothing other the first bubbles of steam from a cauldron which is soon going to explode. If we permit ourselves the right to barricade ourselves in our citadels of prosperity, then we should at least do our part to offer those out there a prospect other than poverty or flight, or we should at least recognize that their present way of meeting their energy demand, deforestation and burning wood, is destroying our common environment. Of course, the causes of this development are complex and cannot solely be explained, let alone resolved, by the *relationship between energy consumption, living standard and number of children*.

... But to live decently without any energy is impossible.»

So what? What is this all about?

Is this the journal of a sociological or an ecological society?

What does it have to do with structural engineering?

What you just read comes from an article published in the May 1990 issue of IABSE PERIODICA

«How much desert does a car need?

The case for more intensive research into the utilization of solar energy»

This article – written originally for a German audience by Professor Schlaich, Stuttgart – concerns, in fact, the entire of mankind, but more directly those who feel responsible for the development of our societies in our common world! It is hoped that every member of IABSE feels responsible in this sense. You are kindly invited to read this article, if you have not already done so.

The question for the survival of mankind is: *how to produce a clean, safe source of energy, available everywhere, which is renewable and cheap?*

Prof. Schlaich has been involved in pilot projects and is convinced that solar energy is the answer to the question. He pleads for more political, technical and financial support in this direction.

We would be pleased to have your reactions to the article of Prof. Schlaich, as well as additional information and suggestions.

Alain Golay
Executive Director