

## WAPA AND THE STATE OF DENIAL

For the past eight years the Mitchell Larsen Studios on St. Croix have spent much of their time and resources to promote a path away from using fossil fuels for generation of electricity as well as being used for transportation.

Like President Obama, we firmly believe that terminating our dependence on imported oil and fossil fuels will solve a large part of our socio-economic problems in the process.

We know many people have listened, but the USVI government has never responded. In spite of the lesson we should have learned in 2008 when oil hit \$140/barrel, we have seen no action that will prevent the same situation from repeating itself.

At the Mitchell Larsen Studios we are optimistic and we believe that real economic recovery will get traction by 2011. At that time we'll once again see oil prices at \$100/barrel and beyond, and while the rest of the world slowly recovers the U.S. Virgin Islands will be locked in a permanent recession.

The token steps taken by WAPA to comply with Federal guidelines are pitiful at best and expose a growing conflict of interest in our little society: Energy savings and private investments in alternative energy collide with the economic interest of WAPA. As a result we have an ongoing standoff where we find our Governor and Hugo Hodge on one side, and on the other side, by definition, the Energy Office whose primary task it is to promote energy savings and a conversion to clean energy. The Energy Office is backed by the Federal Government.

### WAPA AND ACT 7075 (The Hill Bill)

When Senator Hill asked us for ideas to improve the original draft of the bill we were more than happy to comply. It was important for us to ease the path for USVI residents who wanted to spend their hard earned money on renewable energy like solar and wind, not just to lower their energy bill years down the road but also because of their concern for the environment. Several of these provisions never made it into the final act for one simple reason: WAPA wouldn't allow it because it would hurt the already cash strapped utility.

It was, however, still a good bill until Governor deJongh worked it over with his veto pen and took out ALL financial incentives for alternative energy.

And so the Hill Bill, according to some, was turned into a mere Bill of Good Intentions.

That leaves us with the VI Energy Office as the only option for those who need help to 'go green', and it will be the Energy Office, under Governor deJongh, who will be in charge of spending 31 million Federal Recovery Dollars earmarked for energy savings and clean energy devices like photovoltaic and wind generators.

How our Governor will handle that without hurting WAPA needs to be seen.

But where there is a will there is a way...

### The Tutu Park Mall Case

The two 50KW wind generators at Tutu Park Mall were installed seven months ago, and to this date they have not produced a single watt. They have become a sad monument for the VI government's failure to understand the bigger issue of energy – and act upon it.

WAPA's refusal to comply with PSC's mandate to connect the two wind generators to the grid reveals a fundamental problem for WAPA, and the Territory as a whole. For fear of losing revenue WAPA is quietly attempting to undermine attempts for privately funded power generation to go on line.

Act 7075 (The Hill Bill) opens up the possibility for the two wind generators to apply for a net metering hookup to



the grid. Businesses are now allowed up to 100KW. Are we happy now? Not quite! We have learned that WAPA CEO Hugo Hodge has found yet another legal objection to this arrangement, and if his objective is to send a message to anyone who would like to copy the Tutu Park Mall purchase agreement, we will have to give him high marks for the effort.

Mr. Hodge is doing what he is hired to do, and he is getting good help from



Photo courtesy of Douglas Canton

Governor deJongh who has stayed on the sideline in this debacle. When you are a politician there is never a good time to interfere with WAPA. It should be noted that in the seven months these two wind generators have stood idle, an estimated 125000KW (25% average output) of clean wind energy has been lost and subsequently substituted by burning off carbon rich imported fuel oil.

We don't think that any of WAPA's board members are losing sleep over this issue. They all have WAPA's best interest in mind.

### OUR HOUSE

Our house has served as a demo house for alternative energy since we built it on the South Shore of St. Croix in 2002.

Several educational and promotional video projects have used our house as a backdrop, and we have always welcomed school classes and environmental associations who wanted to see first-hand how sun and wind can be turned into abundance of electrical power. From the very beginning we developed a good relationship with the Energy Office. We campaigned long and hard for establishing a net metering program that only now is getting traction in the Territory.

Our latest group of visitors were WAPA employees from customer service, accounting and meter reader departments and we very much enjoyed their company.

Presently, we have a credit surplus of more than 3MW stored with WAPA. This is power that eventually will be given to WAPA if we don't use it before the end of the year.

The list of people who never took us up on our invitation includes Governors Turnbull and deJongh, Bruno Vega, Hugo Hodge and board members, past and present, from WAPA.

### IN CONCLUSION

At the Mitchell Larsen Studios we are mostly calm and collected, but time is running short and we have already wasted more than two years.

We have made ourselves 100% dependant on events that happen in places beyond our control. Places like the Middle East, Central Africa and South America. Our self - determination as a Territory – and as a Nation – is an illusion and will remain so, as long as the price of a loaf of bread is determined on the other side of the Globe.

For more than two years we have patiently waited for Governor deJongh to present an energy policy that is based on these facts and, of course, takes the environment into consideration, too.

We no longer think this is going to happen, because any Energy Policy that makes sense and follows minimum Federal guidelines will also mean an end to WAPA as we know it.

We need a WAPA that works in the best interest of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the many talented and skilled people who work there now need not fear for their livelihood.

You will hear many objections, explanations and excuses from people who prefer to live in a state of denial. We would love to be proven wrong, and we take no joy in saying: **"We told you so!"**

**Jan Mitchell & Steffen Larsen**  
Mitchell-Larsen Studios