

## **A Proposal: Connecting U.S. consumption with the need to go to war -- and learning what skillful changes we each can make in our lifestyles.**

**Goals:** SNOW was founded to oppose war: this is a proposal for SNOW to educate about how the U.S. government is encouraged to go to war to sustain “the American lifestyle.” Groups exist to educate about how Americans could be happier if we consumed less (Voluntary Simplicity) and about how our planet can’t sustain the level of consumption Americans are used to (Earth Day). This proposal is for SNOW to educate about how – if we make wise, effective changes in our lifestyle – we will also work to prevent war.

**Strategy:** On average each American consumes the equivalent of 7 gallons of gasoline in fossil fuels; the world average is 1! Where does all of this energy go? How much is for personal transportation? How much for manufacturing goods we consume -- and for transporting them? How much for the food we consume? We must learn the answers to these questions – and similar ones about other resources – to know how to act skillfully.

**Activities:** We think a good start would be a kickoff event with a known speaker who can help teach us the answers we need to know. Dr. David Suzuki (of British Columbia) could be a good choice. The event should be citywide and – following a Garfield model – would break up into groups based first on topic (energy, water, food, etc.) and then by neighborhoods. Each neighborhood group can discuss ideas they come up with – an Energy Fair, a saving kilowatt competition, sister villages in poor countries – and then a report back to the entire assembly for final brainstorming and coalition forming.

**Time Frame:** As envisioned above, the kickoff event would require significant planning, publicity and volunteer work. Sometime after November seems the earliest possible date. If neighborhood groups get excited with this idea, activities can continue for a long time. But even if they don’t, the educational, media value of the kickoff event can be worth it.

**Resources:** There will be significant cost around publicity and printing for the kickoff event, as well as significant volunteer and SNOW personnel time to make it happen. (There might also be a significant cost for the kickoff speaker, though not necessarily.) After that, it’s imagined it will largely be up to the neighborhood groups to carry on. It’s also likely that coalitions will be formed between SNOW and other groups on this issue.

**Background:** In 1948, U.S. presidential policy adviser George F. Kennan wrote: “We have about 50 per cent of the world's wealth, but only 6 per cent of its population. ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task is to maintain this position of disparity without detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming. We should cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.”

In 1953 the CIA overthrew Mossadegh, the democratically-elected leader of Iran, to control Iranian oil, setting in motion the Iranian revolution of 1979. (*All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*” by Stephen Kinzer.) In 2003 the U.S. invaded Iraq to control the most oil-rich region of the world. Any end in sight?