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Smaller Faster Lighter Denser Cheaper: How Innovation Keeps Proving The Catastrophists Wrong



Synopsis

In the face of today's environmental and economic challenges, doomsayers preach that the only way to stave off disaster is for humans to reverse course: to de-industrialize, re-localize, ban the use of modern energy sources, and forswear prosperity. But in this provocative and optimistic rebuke to the catastrophists, Robert Bryce shows how innovation and the inexorable human desire to make things Smaller Faster Lighter Denser Cheaper is providing consumers with Cheaper and more abundant energy, Faster computing, Lighter vehicles, and myriad other goods. That same desire is fostering unprecedented prosperity, greater liberty, and yes, better environmental protection. Utilizing on-the-ground reporting from Ottawa to Panama City and Pittsburgh to Bakersfield, Bryce shows how we have, for centuries, been pushing for Smaller Faster solutions to our problems. From the vacuum tube, mass-produced fertilizer, and the printing press to mobile phones, nanotech, and advanced drill rigs, Bryce demonstrates how cutting-edge companies and breakthrough technologies have created a world in which people are living longer, freer, healthier, lives than at any time in human history. The push toward Smaller Faster Lighter Denser Cheaper is happening across multiple sectors. Bryce profiles innovative individuals and companies, from long-established ones like Ford and Intel to upstarts like Aquion Energy and Khan Academy. And he zeroes in on the energy industry, proving that the future belongs to the high power density sources that can provide the enormous quantities of energy the world demands. The tools we need to save the planet aren't to be found in the technologies or lifestyles of the past. Nor must we sacrifice prosperity and human progress to ensure our survival. The catastrophists have been wrong since the days of Thomas Malthus. This is the time to embrace the innovators and businesses all over the world who are making things Smaller Faster Lighter Denser Cheaper.

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Customer Reviews

Back in 2008 I read and reviewed another of Robert Bryce's books, *Gusher of Lies: The Dangerous Delusions of "Energy Independence"*. While I thought that book was well researched and well written, I also thought he went too far with his language. "Gusher of lies" and "dangerous delusions" are strong words, and I did not think Robert Bryce made his case for using them. *Power Hungry: The Myths of "Green" Energy and the Real Fuels of the Future* too seemed a little too much hyperbole and a little too little balance. This new book is better. More balanced, more measured, but still with Robert Bryce's journalist eye for the issues, and his research and writing skills. This time around, he makes the argument that people are innovative, and that while we face some stiff challenges as humans, we also have proven in the past that we have the capability to solve problems just as thorny as those we face now. So he gives more of a nod to the arguments made by those who predict catastrophe, while still not accepting their forebodings of darkest doom. Take energy, for example, which is the main topic Robert Bryce discusses in this book. In the previous books I read, Robert Bryce was quite dismissive of solar power. He told about how he had solar panels on his own roof, but they did not live up to their promise. In this book, by contrast, he is a little bullish on solar power, saying that its costs have dropped so dramatically that what did not make sense before now has a future.

Robert Bryce has an important message that is lost on many commentators in the media today – that the world has gotten much better. Instead of accepting this – collapse anxiety, – he provides a full-throated defense of human ingenuity and innovation. Getting back to nature – à la Rousseau, Thoreau, and Carson by embracing renewable energy and decreased standards of living is not the way of the future. To continue the advancement of the developed and non-developed world, policymakers need to stop inhibiting progress and embrace the world's master resource – energy. Natural gas and nuclear power offer low-carbon solutions to the world's increasing appetite for growth. Natural gas emits about half as much CO₂ as coal does during electricity generation. The growth in U.S. natural gas production has done more to decrease CO₂ emissions than every green energy government-mandated program in Europe. Nuclear power plants

have 2,100 times as much power density as wind energy. As Bryce repeatedly points out, density is green. Nuclear energy remains expensive and there are important safety risks to mitigate, but it is still in its infancy. Nuclear is the future, not renewable energy. As Bryce says, "We humans have been relying on renewable energy for thousands of years. And what did we learn in all that time? We found that renewable energy stinks." Bryce writes that if someone is anti-carbon and anti-nuclear, they are anti-growth and pro-blackout. Being against these two forms of energy is far from humanitarian since "growth" will return a large portion of the world to short lives of mere substance. The right question to ask is not why we have poverty "it is why we have wealth.

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