

A Glorious Spring Day – Alan Betts (Text only)

Commentators Brunch, June 4th 2011 - theme: “Imagine This”

It is a glorious spring day in 2031, and some students are playing games in the school wood, which their parents had the foresight to plant twenty years before. The turbine overhead spins quietly in the wind, and the solar trackers follow the sun as it climbs in the sky.

The teachers’ electric vehicles are plugged into the local grid – most of them are sleek enclosed tricycles. Every county now has its own secure mix of local electricity.

Two sixth-graders are collecting wind and solar data and making cloud observations for the afternoon science class; while two fifth-graders are updating the climate records for the day. It is a central part of life to look for clues for what this spring may bring in comparison with springs past.

On the south side of the school the winter greenhouse is now fully open on warm days. A group of older kids are showing fourth graders how to harvest six kinds of leafy greens for the kitchen, while a teacher watches attentively. Some younger ones are having fun leaning on the long handle that slowly spins a compost bin.

For several weeks now the community has been setting out seedlings - every year trying some new varieties - looking for ones that will do best as the summers get longer and hotter, the rains heavier and the dry spells longer.

Thank goodness all the parking lots and pathways are now made from permeable block, so the precious rainwater refills the soil and slowly flows down towards the gardens.

Everyone stops for a moment to hear the excited chatter of a flock of migrating birds, which rests for a moment in the tops of the trees. Are they new birds we have never seen before, or old favorites that we thought might be gone for ever?

In the late summer, we will plant the next forest looking ahead to the needs of another generation. What trees will flourish as their children grow up into a new world?