



The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude

Andrew Nikiforuk

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By the winner of the Rachel Carson Environment Book Award

Ancient civilizations relied on shackled human muscle. It took the energy of slaves to plant crops, clothe emperors, and build cities. Nineteenth-century slaveholders viewed critics as hostilely as oil companies and governments now regard environmentalists. Yet the abolition movement had an invisible ally: coal and oil. As the world's most versatile workers, fossil fuels replenished slavery's ranks with combustion engines and other labor-saving tools. Since then, cheap oil has transformed politics, economics, science, agriculture, and even our concept of happiness. Many North Americans today live as extravagantly as Caribbean plantation owners. We feel entitled to surplus energy and rationalize inequality, even barbarity, to get it. But endless growth is an illusion.

What we need, **Andrew Nikiforuk** argues in this provocative new book, is a radical emancipation movement that ends our master-and-slave approach to energy. We must learn to use energy on a moral, just, and truly human scale.

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