

## Gas Too High? Burn Coal!

We are truly conflicted about energy. Everyone agrees gasoline prices are far too high, but:

- Congress claims the oil industry is manipulating gas prices, while not allowing drilling.
- President Bush's corn ethanol mandate has nearly doubled the world's food prices, while producing a tiny amount of low-grade auto fuel.
- The Senate is meanwhile debating the Lieberman-Warner bill, which would deliberately tax gasoline and every other fossil fuel more and more heavily until we stop using them. That's to "save us" from global warming.

The most foolish "solution" of all—the new law that lets us sue Arabs (we have zero jurisdiction) to force them to produce more oil while we sit on billions of gallons of oil and thousands of American jobs, refusing to drill in our own backyard.

The most logical answer to high gasoline prices has to be coal. We have centuries' worth of coal, and we have clean-burning systems such as fluidized bed combustion. But we've been retiring the old coal-fired power plants, and burning scarcer oil and natural gas in our power plants. That has driven up both gas and gasoline prices. Hybrid cars conserve a little oil, but shifting the power plants to "clean coal" would conserve a lot of it.

Instead, the Eco-Department of Kansas has just forbidden the construction of two new coal-fired power plants because they would emit greenhouse gases. Governor Sibelius has backed up the environmental regulators. Texas has been forced to drop plans for several new coal-fired plants as well.

Kansas and Texas are naïve. In Europe, they're openly burning more coal already. German coal burning was up 3.5 percent last year, never mind Kyoto. Britain is building a whole generation of new coal-fired plants to keep the lights on with a minimum of Middle East oil and Russian natural gas.

California wins the Hypocrisy Medal as it brags about its small carbon footprint while letting Arizona and New Mexico burn California's coal just over the border, and paying the transmission costs back to California.

In the longer run, when we come to our senses, nuclear power will be a big player; but it will take a long time to get new nuclear plants on line. Nor is it clear what they will cost, even if we can rein in the Green lawsuits that seem to have paralyzed both the courts and congress.

Don't blame Big Oil. Countries own their oil—and the U.S. won't let U.S. workers produce it in this country. Don't blame the Arabs for the Greenpeace plan to scuttle "clean coal," along with every other viable energy source. Don't even blame Congress, which foolishly tries to represent

our own ambivalence about cars, energy, and “conservation.” Is leaving coal in the ground part of conservation? And what are we conserving it for if we refuse to use it as energy?

The crowning irony is that NASA now says the Pacific Ocean has entered a 25–30 year cooling phase. The last time this happened was from 1940–1975, when we had moderate, erratic global cooling. The climate science shows a 79 percent correlation between our temperatures and sunspots but no correlation with CO<sub>2</sub>. This means CO<sub>2</sub> cannot be the dominant factor in our climate. So the high gas prices, the reliance on foreign oil, the loss of American jobs in the oil and coal and potential jobs in the nuclear fields are all for naught

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