

# A real energy policy could reinvigorate the American spirit

RON BARTIZEK

A dozen years ago, President Jimmy Carter characterized the drive for energy independence as "the moral equivalent of war." And for a while, just a little while, America's leaders listened and responded. But recently it seems our approach has been reduced simply to war.

President Bush unveiled his administration's "energy policy" a couple of weeks ago, and it is a monument to shortsightedness, a failing that will add to the already horrendous burden the present generation has laid upon those to come.

Mr. Bush justified his limited horizons by asserting that the market, that supposedly fair and just arbiter, can better determine our fate than actions of our own choosing. But would the President argue that the war in the Persian Gulf, in which American and other blood was spilled, is a component of the market mechanism? If it is, is war preferable to taking an active stance on conservation, so that we can finally throw off the chains of dependence on oil from the Mideast, or anywhere else?

The fact is, when asked what they felt was the best means by which to gain control over our energy needs, a majority of Americans responded in favor of higher energy efficiency, not greater production incentives. But the Bush administration chose to ignore that result and the counsel of its own energy experts. Even the heads of major oil companies suggested more conservation than is included in the final proposal.

The whole mess is indicative of a disturbing acceptance of the status quo on the part of our leadership, and perhaps ourselves. It's as though Mr. Bush and his advisers—chief among them John Sununu—believe that America lacks the ability to change with the times. Instead we dig deeper into the quagmire of our present dilemma.

How different that attitude is from the 1960's, when a United States President committed the nation to putting men on the moon within the decade...and we did. As magnificent as that achievement was, the space program accomplished a great deal more. It energized America and produced technologies and products that continue to improve the life of every citizen. It drew young people to the sciences, producing a core group of researchers who continue to work for the good of mankind.

A serious, forward-thinking energy policy could have the same effect. We would not only save some oil, our search for energy independence would open the door to discoveries that would find their way into undreamed of corners of our lives. Imagine if the intelligence and innovation that built the terrible weapons that were used against Iraq could be turned to solving our energy problems. Is there any doubt that the result would be not only successful but a boon to all citizens?

Are great strides in energy efficiency achievable? Judging by other nations' experience, they certainly are. As the result of measures taken after the 1973 oil embargo, Japan, which produces 15 percent of the industrialized world's goods and services, uses only 5 percent of its oil. The United States both produces and consumes about 23 percent. Who is better equipped to face the future?

The politicians in America's driver's seat tell us the "free" market will insure our ability to power our homes and factories. Others know better; they know that only when people—individually and as nations—take action to improve their life will they have a chance at success. And they know that personal sacrifice, perhaps not on the battlefield but in their living rooms and their automobiles, may be required to win a war. But our leaders prefer to take what they see as the path of least resistance by reinforcing the notion that the American public is unable to set aside instant gratification for larger goals. That's an insult to a large percentage of the population.

America could achieve numerous important purposes if the powers that be would simply enact a stiff tax on energy consumption. There would be less need for gas mileage requirements or enforced efficiency standards if the cost of energy became more dear. You can bet that consumer demand would quickly force auto manufacturers to raise their products' mileage, and every appliance and equipment maker would soon follow suit.

What to do with the money? Direct it to building a real mass transit system of short and long distance trains, city trolleys and commuter busses. Improve roads, bridges and traffic controls so that cars and trucks move smoothly and don't waste fuel while stopped in traffic jams. Spur the development of alternative energy sources, electric cars, and energy-saving devices for the home and factory. Restore economy to short range air travel.

By their very nature, many conservation measures also protect the environment, both by curtailing oil production in pristine areas and by eliminating waste.

But even those important achievements would pale by comparison to the restoration of America's self-confidence that would accrue from our having taken control of our energy destiny. For more than a decade we've been told that greed and wastefulness are essential components of the American character, and many of us did our best to prove the point. Under the surface, though, each of us knows that real accomplishment must provide a lasting benefit for others as well as ourselves. The rush of pride at having defeated a weak opponent will soon pass; the results of an ambitious energy policy would compound endlessly.

You say taxes aren't acceptable? What about the tens of billions of dollars we spent to safeguard Mideast oil from Saddam Hussein. Isn't that a tax? And what about the most terrible tax of all, the deaths and injuries that our friends and neighbors suffered? Doesn't that count?

America needs bold leadership that will tap the resources of its population and inspire it to achievement. If the President won't do it, it's time for Congress to step in, develop a program, explain its importance and pass it. Every day we wait will just raise the future cost of our present profligacy, in both dollars and damage to our national psyche.



NEWS ITEM - Jack Wolensky, well-liked director of the Dallas summer recreation program, was let go by Dallas Borough without notice.

## Cafeteria

(continued from page 1)

Ann Sholtis who transferred to another position within the district.

- Increased the hourly pay of school crossing guards for Dallas Township to \$6.55; Kingston Township to \$6.20.

- Appointed William Straitiff assistant track coach at the Dallas Middle School for the 1990-91 school year.

- Reduced daily bus rate from \$2,070 to \$2,050 effective March 1, 1991, rate to be evaluated on a monthly basis.

- Tax collections reported to date were Earned Income Tax \$657,716.85; real estate transfer tax, \$111,896.15; delinquent tax, \$174,985.61 and occupational privilege tax, \$10,308.76 for a total at the end of February of \$954,907.37.

The April meeting of the Dallas School Board will be held Monday, April 8, in the administration board room.

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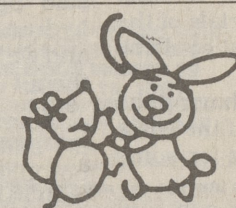
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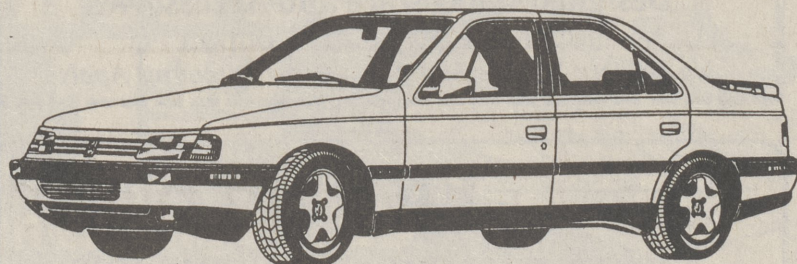
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## Athletes open house at Misericordia

College Misericordia will host its first ever Student-Athlete Open House on Sunday, March 17, according to Coordinator of Athletic Recruiting David Martin. For more information or to make a reservations, contact Dave Martin at 674-6317.

## The DALLAS POST

Published Weekly by Bartsen Media, Inc.  
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612  
Telephone: 717-675-5211

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