



J.W.J.

U.S. is on wrong road with cheap oil

By J.W. JOHNSON

Historically, asking Americans to set self-interest and short-term expediency aside is akin to asking former President Jimmy Carter to stop building houses, and former President Gerald Ford to stop hitting errant golf balls while falling down...or is that falling down while hitting errant...anyway.

Now our very future as a world political and economic power is dependent on Americans doing precisely that: setting aside self-interest and short-term expediency while embracing a notion that Japanese own as a cultural imperative: those who fail to look long-term, indeed, those who fail to plan also plan to fail.

We must, in fact, specifically ask President Bush to stop mortgaging our economic future in championing a need for cheap oil, along with tying the lives of our young men and women, to the short-term expediency of attempting to sabre rattle away an oil price rise...if indeed that's the real objective.

We should, in fact, be paying \$3 per gallon for gasoline...or higher...before you run out to buy me a one-way bus ticket out of town, here's why.

—In the bigger picture, it's not worth one human being bleeding into a Middle Eastern desert to keep oil at \$20 a barrel.

—More to the point, if we continue to establish policy based on cheap gasoline, then we will almost certainly become, and sometime in the next century, a third-rate economic and political power. I recently talked with an oil field engineer who provided some history:

From the beginning of this century, the world's oil supply and its price was controlled by what is known in the oil industry as the Seven Sisters, a loosely knit group of oil companies who received only lip service from those in charge of monitoring monopolies. At the same time, it was perhaps necessary for both supply and price to be controlled by the suppliers, or the world's economies, desperately dependent on the black gold, would fluctuate wildly.

Along came the 1970's and OPEC, an acronym for a chiefly Arab consortium called the Oil Producing Export Countries. Two steep price hikes in the 1970's proved the temporary wisdom of supply and price control as the world, most notably the United States, went into price shock and economic recessions both times oil prices were raised.

We survived, largely through reducing dependence on foreign oil by reducing consumption, by dramatically improving our overall energy usage intelligence through massive education programs, and through experimentation and real world use of alternative energy sources, complete with tax incentives.

I was personally involved in one such use, retrofitting a former home for solar heat and hot water. The system worked quite well, and in four years, heat and hot water were essentially free at my house. What's happened since the

1970's is that, in the 1980's, oil prices have dropped dramatically. This was caused, in part, by reduced consumption from the 1970's, along with a sluggish world economy reducing demand.

Now along comes Saddam Hussein in 1990 and the U.S. decides to become modern day Hessians, hiring out our military forces for the dubious benefit of having our young people die in the Saudi sand when the real solution is implementation of simple market forces.

Remember the \$3 a gallon mentioned earlier. We need to increase the price of gasoline to a point where consumption will be reduced and the rewards of the free enterprise system will rise to discover, manufacture, distribute and promote alternatives, i.e., a viable electric automobile.

At the same time, we need to realistically and with environmental consciousness, examine our own oil resources as yet untapped along our coast lines.

About the only thing Saddam Hussein's invasion has done is prolong the illusion that this country can and should continue its primary economic activity as a military industrial complex while being paid under the thin veil of defense of America here

and freedom abroad when, in fact, it is disguised socialism providing jobs.

The horrible irony is that while we have applauded the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe for its abandonment of communism in favor of free enterprise, we find our economic system glued to the Defense Department for the survival of an inordinate number of American citizens.

Don't kid yourself: our presence in the Middle East has as much to do with keeping profits flowing and defense industry jobs intact as it has to do with trying to maintain stable oil prices.

We proclaim peace and market war.

We shout about the Japanese invasion while buying their cars, selling them our real estate, and not following their example of \$3 per gallon for gasoline.

And unless we're prepared to take on the entire Moslem world, by forcefully taking all the Middle Eastern oil fields, then all current rhetoric by the Bush administration and citizens alike is dust in the hot desert wind...or, as Nikita Krushchev put it:

"Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river."

Seen any rivers in that Saudi sand?

A. Case for conservation

An environmental writer is rediscovered

By ALENE M. CASE

I suppose most folks who pursue a certain line of work admire someone who has been especially successful or influential in that field in the past. Those of you who regularly read this column might surmise that my favorite essayist would be Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau. Or perhaps John Muir. Or even Anne Morrow Lindbergh. But, Aldo Leopold? Who is he?

Leopold was an expert forester and a college professor during the first half of this century. His first book of essays was accepted by the publisher a few days prior to his death in 1948. Although he was personally influential among conservationists, Leopold's writings were not popular until the 1960's when they began to be rediscovered. And although he was one of the founding members of the Wilderness Society, his writings on that topic were not collected into one book until 1990. So, if you've never heard of Aldo Leopold, don't feel left out. Today is a great time to begin reading the works of a man who declared "there are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other, and the relation of people to land."

Aldo's first writings were letters from boarding school. His frequent letters home to Iowa were not those of a typical teenager - he recounted in exquisite detail the discoveries made while on his daily "tramp" into the woods, fields, and swamps near Lawrenceville, NJ. Throughout his life, bird-watching, fishing, canoeing, hunting, camping, and hiking were much more than idle diversions. He and his family eventually bought a tired farm in Wisconsin and spent weekends there planting thousands of trees and enjoying communion with nature. He wrote about all of these pursuits and about his philosophy or "land ethic." I respect Leopold most for his willingness to grow - to give up an idea when it no longer made sense.

"There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot." With those simple words, Aldo Leopold begins *A Sand County Almanac* - one of the most remarkable little books you could ever read, or reread. A few more quotations should whet your appetite.

On being marooned by a spring flood: "I see our road dipping gently into the waters, and I conclude

(with inner glee but external detachment) that the question of traffic, in or out, is for this day at least, debatable only among carp."

On listening to a wolf: "Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf."

On the loss of wilderness: "Relegating grizzlies to Alaska is about like relegating happiness to heaven; one may never get there."

On the advantages of owning a farm: "There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace...if one has cut, split, hauled and piled his own good oak, and let his mind work the while, he will remember much about where the heat comes from, and with a wealth of detail denied to those who spend the weekend in town astride a radiator."

Intrigued? Well, you should be able to find this treasure at the local library. Or, if you need a gift for your favorite hunter, see if the bookstore has a copy of *Round River*, which discusses the social assets of "Goose Music" and other topics.

Library news

Mrs. Crump honored on her 97th birthday

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library Book Club members and staff were privileged to honor a very special lady on her 97th birthday. Mrs. Florence Crump celebrated her big day on Monday, December 2, by spending an hour and a half in one of her most favorite places, the library. At noon on that same day, a few staff members were honored to have lunch with her at her favorite fast food restaurant for a good cheeseburger and were able to sing happy birthday to her. She is one very special lady and this library has always been so very important to her.

We also had a special birthday cake at the November Book Club meeting and sang happy birthday to her then. Book club members, guests and staff also enjoyed that party. We feel so honored to share

time with this lady and are very appreciative of her devotion to the library. Happy Birthday, Mrs. Crump!

At this Christmas season, we invite interested community members to attend the Book Club Christmas Party on Monday, Dec. 16, at 1:30 in the reading room at the library. Mary Ann Ostrowski of Forty Fort will present a special musical Christmas program with vocal selections accompanied by an auto harp. There will be group carol singing followed by cookies, candies, coffee, tea and hot cider. All are invited to attend.

The library will have a Christmas open house on Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 17 and 18 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the reading room at the library. Refreshments will be served. This is our way of saying Merry Christmas to our many patrons and friends. Come on in. Everyone is welcome to join in the

Christmas festivities.

New books at the library: "Franchising and Licensing" by Andrew J. Sherman is a book that includes two ways to build your business. The book explains in plain English how to successfully and safely build a franchise operation or licensing program. It explores the key structural, management and operational issues involved before the launch and how to sustain the program after. The book is filled with practical help to keep you on track, including checklists to follow, case studies to examine and sample contracts.

"The Waste Lands" by Stephen King is Book III in the epic saga 'The Dark Tower'. We again enter the realm of the mightiest imagination of our time. Roland moves ever closer to the Dark Tower of his dreams and nightmares—as he crosses a desert of damnation in a macabre world that is a twisted mirror image of our own. A novelistic mastery.

Hasay honored for attendance

Rep. George C. Hasay was recognized recently by the House Republican Policy Committee for his perfect attendance during the 1991 session of the Legislature.

Hasay has been recorded on all 66 master roll calls, according to the House Journal, the official record of House proceedings.

"Rep. Hasay has been one of the most dedicated, conscientious legislators in the House and is a valuable member of our caucus," said Rep. John Perzel, House Republican Policy Committee chairman.

"Not only has he been a hard-working legislator in Harrisburg, he maintains a convenient, accessible constituent office in the district to better serve the people of the 117th District," Perzel said.

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