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AUTO REGULATIONS WASTE ENERGY

Why does the same automobile get 43 miles per gallon in Europe, 33 miles per gallon in Canada, and only 25 miles per gallon in the United States? The answer is because America's exhaust emission standards were established without any regard to their cost in lost dollars and wasted crude oil.

The policies imposed on us by the environmentalists also penalize us by requiring U.S. cars to be catalytically equipped. This, in turn, compels automobiles to use unleaded gasoline, which requires far more crude oil to produce than leaded gasoline.

Our country has spent tens of billions of dollars on catalytic converters. But that cost was only the beginning. We now waste between 12 and 17 percent of our crude oil in making unleaded gasoline in order that we can continue to use these converters.

We started down the slide to these unreasonable costs and waste of precious energy in the late 1960s when the environmental extremists began demanding zero pollution. "Which do you want," they asked the Congressmen, "zero pollution or emphysema?" Intimidated by this new political-propaganda attack, Congress dutifully passed the Muskie Clean Air Act and established the Environmental Protection Administration.

The Muskie Act set impossible goals and the EPA set ridiculously unreasonable standards. Both responded to the rhetoric of the extremists rather than to common sense from scientific, engineering and medical sources.

The dollar cost of these artificial and unreasonable requirements is more than ten percent of our Gross National Product. More important, they waste precious energy in the neighborhood of four million barrels of oil equivalent energy each day.

The question that should be addressed is: Does the social benefit justify the tremendous expense, aggravation to the public, and increase in federal regulatory power? There is little public understanding of what we are trying to protect ourselves against, and there is no accepted method of measuring the hazards.

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We all want clean air, but zero pollution is an impossibility and it should not be a function of government to spend money to attain the impossible. When it comes to pollution, we should balance the general risks against the costs of the alleged benefits.

In the last 20 years, a million people have been killed by motor vehicles and more than 80 million have been injured. Yet there is no popular movement to ban the auto.

We cannot have zero pollution because nature itself puts contaminants into the air and has been doing so for millions of years: 55% of the particulates, 65% of the sulphur dioxide, 70% of the hydrocarbons, 78% of the carbon dioxide, 90% of the ozone, 93% of the carbon monoxide, and 99% of the total oxides of nitrogen. Yet catalytic converters on automobiles are designed to remove the hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides so they will not form ozone!

The danger to the quality of life we enjoy in America is vastly greater from the threat of a severe cutback in energy sources than it is from leaded gasoline. A graph prepared by Professor John J. McKetta of the University of Texas proves the inescapable correlation of energy use with Gross National Product and jobs.

In this era when about half of our liquid energy comes from outside our shores, at a tremendous and ever-accelerating cost, we can no longer afford to allow federal bureaucrats and judges to waste our energy supplies on nonproductive purposes.

Dr. McKetta recommends, for starters, that we begin conservation by cutting out forced busing, which wastes 300,000 barrels of oil a day. Secondly, we should cut out catalytic converters for automobiles except in Los Angeles, New York and Chicago. And third, we should put lead back into gasoline.

The more important task is to encourage energy producers to produce more energy so we will not be dependent on foreign oil. We should triple coal consumption by 1990; have 1,000 nuclear reactors by 2000; bring back the breeder reactor program; discover and produce 10-15 percent more oil and gas by 1990; open the continental shelf to find more oil and gas; open more federal lands for oil, gas, and coal mining; encourage shale, and tar sands development; and support research and development in new areas.

Dr. McKetta believes that our failure to solve the energy problem could give us a depression by 1985 as bad as the one in the 1930s. We should face up to the hard truth now.

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