

Boiling Oil

Next time you give your credit card to the gas guy and sign away another \$60 or so, consider that both political parties have sold you out. For decades, no President or Congress would confront that fact that corrupt third-world countries control most of the world's oil supply and those nations are definitely not looking out for us.

In the 1970s, when poverty-stricken Brazil began a massive investment in sugar-based ethanol, the United States shrugged and did little research into alternative fuel.

But when OPEC choked the Carter administration, leading to long gas lines, plenty was said about weaning the USA off foreign oil. Nothing was done.

Presidents Reagan, Bush the Elder, Clinton and Bush the Younger, all did little. There was no big push to conserve oil or to find another way to fuel the nation.

So now we're paying for their sins and, truth be told, some of our own as well. American liberals still don't want to drill in the Arctic Circle, still don't want more nuclear power (something that saves France and Sweden), and still oppose expanding refining capacity.

Conservatives still won't support government-mandated vehicle fuel efficiency, tighter controls on commodity speculators, and stricter oversight on American oil companies that are exploiting world tension.

And, sadly, we the people are not cutting down on our energy consumption.

With that kind of performance, expect more pain ahead. The oil companies will continue to make more profit than any business in the history of mankind, OPEC will continue to raise the

price of oil, and China and India will continue to buy cartel oil at almost any price.

Both John McCain and Barack Obama promise to convene a kind of Manhattan Project to fast track alternative energy development. Since the situation is now desperate, I believe those guys. But economically viable alternative energy is years away and fraught with danger.

Just a year ago, some of us thought corn-based ethanol was the answer. But be careful what you wish for. Converting corn to fuel has caused food prices to rocket. You see, corn is used to feed livestock, so when the price of corn goes up, so does the cost of meat and poultry.

Meanwhile, Brazil would like to sell us some of their sugar-based ethanol. But Congress has imposed a tariff on it in order to help American farmers who, of course, are now paying record prices for oil. Is this a mess or what?

Here is the tough love solution:

- All American made vehicles must get 30MPG by 2010 or pay a major tax surcharge to the government.
- Oil and commodity speculators must put up 50% of their transactions in cash. That would weed out some of the gamblers who are manipulating the market.
- American oil companies must supply the federal government with a written explanation every time they raise the price of gas and oil.
- Americans would be asked to cut back at least 10% on leisure driving and not to buy gas at all on Mondays.

There is little we can do about OPEC as long as China, India and others are willing to pay what the traffic will bear. But here at home we can send powerful messages to the auto, gas, and commodities industries. If we don't get tough, our enemies, along with greedy Americans, will drive oil prices so high a worldwide depression will ensue.

Which, by the way, is exactly what the terrorists want.