

The Dark Side of Energy
The Problem With Feeding America's Craving for Oil

Chris Atherly

RECEIVED JAN 7 2009

Montana Petroleum Association

Chris Atherly

Ms. Collins

A.P. English

11/21/08

The Dark Side of Energy

Today's oil industry is a large and complicated industry that faces many problems. The world is diminishing its supplies of fossil fuels, oil prices are rising, and our burning of fossil fuels' impact on the environment is becoming greater and greater (EPA, "Climate Change-Science", Par. 5). However, despite the problems associated with it, oil is still a central part of our society and our economy. We use oil to produce power, run our cars, make plastics, and pave our roads. Oil makes all of our lives easier every day (EIA, "What Fuels are Made From Oil?", Par. 2). An immediate and permanent solution may be out of our reach, but progress has begun on reducing our dependency on oil.

Over seventy% of our country's energy is produced by coal, natural gas, or oil. Without these sources we would not enjoy the comfortable life we live today. Oil is also the life blood of our transportation system and we use it to make many of the products we use today (Manhattan Institute, "Energy and the Environment", Par. 2). However, the cost of oil is rising due to developing countries using more oil, politicians in oil exporting nations becoming uneasy, and tropical hurricanes damaging crude oil producers. Companies labeled as "Big Oil" take a lot of the blame for this, but they really only control about five% of the world's oil. Most of the world's oil is controlled by companies located in the Middle East. We are heavily dependent on other countries oil as we can not produce nearly enough here in America to supply our needs (Churchill, "Oil Consumption in North America", par. 2, 4).

While America has only about five% of the world's population, it uses twenty-four percent of the world's oil. We are by far the largest consumer of oil and petroleum products in the world (Bloomberg, Emerging Market Oil Use Exceeds U.S. as Prices Rise, Par. 10). Our demand for oil is also increasing at a rate of two percent per year. Because of this huge demand for oil, experts say that our supply in America may be depleted by as soon as 2040. Right now over half of our oil is being imported from the Middle East, Canada, Venezuela and Mexico (Churchill, "Oil Consumption in North America", par. 1, 3, 4). We have to start conserving as much oil as we possibly can right now. We need to switch to more fuel efficient cars. What would be even better would be alternative energy sources such as hydrogen and producing more cars that are solely electrically powered. Renewable energy sources must be looked into to reduce our dependency on coal and oil, which are running out and becoming more and more expensive to extract. If drastic changes don't start happening soon, we could very well enter the worst energy crisis the world has ever known in only a few decades (EPA, "Alternative Energy", Par. 5, 8).

The most valuable thing that we have is our planet. However, our planet is being pressured by humans. We dump tons and tons of garbage into landfills, throw toxic chemicals and other pollutants into our rivers and lakes, and pollute our air with our exhaust from factories, cars and fires. A big problem the planet faces is global warming. This is caused by carbon dioxide emissions that we are putting into our atmosphere. Burning coal, oil and natural gas produces carbon dioxide. As we put more and more carbon dioxide into the air, we will soon have no choice but to reduce our dependency on these energy sources and find ways to use them more efficiently or use less of them (EPA, "Climate Change-Science"). This does not mean that energy companies have to see reduced profits because of reduced use of coal, oil and natural gas.

While green energy sources may have a high initial cost, the cost of keeping wind powered generators or solar panels running is low compared to coal or oil. In the near future Congress may also impose a tax on carbon emissions to encourage companies to use greener energy (EPA, "Carbon Copy" 4, 8). Our impact on the environment is getting harder and harder to ignore. We have to start making changes to protect the world we live in soon, or it may be too late.

In conclusion, the oil industry is definitely not perfect, but it is a necessary part of our country's way of life right now. Our sources of oil are running out, we are using much more oil and oil is having a greater and greater impact on the environment. Since it is not practical to eliminate oil completely, we need to conserve more energy and explore more sources to get our power from. This shift is already beginning, and new options arising could make the future of energy a little brighter.

Works Cited

Emerging Market Oil Use Exceeds U.S. as Prices Rise. 21 April 2008. Bloomberg. 28 Nov. 2008

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=a_YCEX7do3LQ&refer=home>.

Environmental Protection Agency. 20 Dec. 2007. Environmental Protection Agency. 23 Nov. 2008

<<http://www.epa.gov/>>.

Energy and the Environment. 8 Nov. 2007. The Manhattan Institute. 24 Nov. 2008

<<http://www.manhattan-institute.org/energymyths/myth1.htm>>.

Energy Information Administration. 21 Nov. 2008. Energy Information Administration. 21 Nov. 2008

<<http://www.eia.doe.gov/>>.

Oil Consumption In North America. 13 Nov. 2000. 25 Nov. 2008

<<http://maps.unomaha.edu/Peterson/funda/Sidebar/OilConsumption.html>>.