

There has been such an enormous amount of attention given to the production of Bio-Diesel, Ethanol and other forms of alternative energy. You can drive out in the Midwest or Texas and see windmills twirling all over the scenery. How much of a difference has this made to our carbon "foot print"? The answer is disappointing. There hasn't been much of a dent made. In fact, there may have been more harm than good.

Windmills are not rocket science. People have been using windmills for water power since the 16th century. Energy tycoon T. Boone Pickens invested many millions of dollars and reached a firm conclusion: It is not the answer. He has decided not to build another single windmill. Besides that, virtually all of the parts that go into a windmill are made in China. There is no significant impact on American jobs or energy output.

The most interesting alternative is Ethanol or bio fuel. This too is an old technology. The history of it goes back to George Washington Carver, the great scientist of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Dr. Carver did an overwhelming amount of development with peanuts. Much of this was due to a contractual arrangement he had with automobile magnate Henry Ford. The auto industry was booming and the demand for oil was growing at an exponential rate. Ford wanted Dr. Carver to come up with a bio fuel to replace the need for oil. The Rockefeller Family and others had the lock on oil and he didn't want to become overly dependent on them. After years of experimentation on the Tuskegee campus, Dr. Carver and Henry Ford came to this conclusion: It is not feasible to develop bio fuel.

That was over one hundred years ago. The fact still applies yet, environmentalists and politicians have pushed hard to further the development of bio-fuel. It works but not on an economical basis. The less bio fuel you have the more gasoline you will need. However, there is plenty of oil in the world and we just have to develop a cleaner way of using it. That is the better alternative. Food should be eaten as hunger still prevails in many parts of the world.

The rapid expansion of the bio fuel industry has put a big strain on the supply of food crops such as corn, sugar, palm oil and wheat. Not only are these crops directly consumed by humans they are also key ingredients in feed for livestock such as cattle, sheep, chickens, turkeys, etc. In addition to livestock, nearly thirty percent of edible items found in a supermarket have such ingredients in them. Thus, the increased demand for bio fuels has significantly increased the price of groceries which has a terrible affect on the consumer price index and inflation. We all feel this every time we buy food.

Lobbyists and fiscally liberal politicians have been pushing for subsidies as incentives to those manufacturing these bio fuels. Fortunately, the annual subsidies that were given to producers of the bio fuels have ended. This thirty year ridiculous program has now ended and hopefully our grocery prices will start to decrease. Supplies of bio fuel start to decrease. The largest foreign producer of it, Brazil, has started cutting back on its sugar cane to ethanol program as the margins in the production do not justify much of a future. Another, ethanol giant, China, has also started to decrease its activity for the same reason. Gasoline prices alone should drop about 95 cents per gallon as a result of this stupid program's demise.

Actually, the future of energy stewardship will rely on the great engineering capacity found in energy giants such as Chevron, Shell, Exxon and others. They have the engineers and have invested many millions of dollars in finding ways to produce energy in a cleaner, safer and more economical fashion. It won't be environmental groups, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Sierra Club, Greenpeace or any other entity that will provide breakthroughs in the economic efficiency and cleanliness in the energy industry. It will be our corporate giants who will lead the way.

This experiment with ethanol has been nothing but a "flash from the past". It can work in a limited way to replace oil but it comes at a very expensive price. It is imprudent to go down the same road that Dr. George Washington Carver and Henry Ford journeyed more than a hundred years ago. They showed us that it doesn't work and nothing has changed. Energy efficiency will come as experimentation and research continues. There is no need to fake it as such folly can bring economic harm to all of us.

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