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How Not to Prevent Oil Crises: Challenge for an Education President

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Title: How Not to Prevent Oil Crises: Challenge for an Education President

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Abstract. This article describes several problematic approaches that are components of lay psychology.

Various interest groups focus on portions of a comprehensive list of factors that might prevent oil crises in a manner that sheds more light on their pet ideologies, political shibboleths, and preferred life styles than solutions to a future problem. What follows are several of these factors along with surplus meanings for their respective advocates in the United States (US).

Buy American. By only buying American, some advocates reason that oil consumption will be cut way down because of dwindling US oil resources. US styles of life will necessarily be radically modified in an austere fashion--a consequence that may be the hidden agenda. Other advocates may be closet isolationists whose hidden agenda may be to lessen international interaction across the board. Confronted with dwindling domestic oil assets, these advocates may encourage ever more domestic exploration or attack the bearers of bad tidings--e.g., that ever more domestic exploration is not cost-effective--as blinded by peculiar ideologies.

Keep the Dollar High. By increasing the value of the dollar against other currencies, more and more imported oil can be obtained at less and less cost. That US exporters will have increasing difficulty in selling their non-oil products often is discounted. So is the resulting transfer of higher and higher valued US currency and other financial instruments to nation-states that may then have greater influence on US fiscal and monetary viability. So is the concurrent political acrimony raised among US allies, neutrals, and adversaries as to (1) the competition for eventually depleted imported oil assets and (2) the potential for the US to buy more and more non-oil assets in other countries and to energize both benign and malignant nationalism. As can be seen over the last few years in Mexico and Thailand, once the US currency becomes significantly overvalued an unwinnable conflict with currency speculators may ensue.

Limit Economic Growth. Since oil consumption seems to often rise with greater economic growth, an oil crisis can be prevented by limiting growth, perhaps even inducing a recession. Besides wreaking havoc on many citizens' quality of life, an important component of US security would be seriously weakened.

Energy conservation together with economic growth--President Clinton's public position--seems to be the more adaptive belief system not only for preventing an oil crisis, but also resolving other environmental issues such as global warming. However, his stated resolve to educate US citizens about options and consequences will be sorely tested by people who believe weird things. (See Forgas, J.P., & Jolliffe, C.D. (1994.) How conservative are Greenies? Environmental attitudes, conservatism, and traditional morality among university students. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 46, 123-130; Larson, D.W. (1994.) The role of belief systems and schemas in foreign policy decisionmaking. *Political Psychology*, 15, 17-33; Milbrath, L.W. (1995.) Psychological, cultural, and informational barriers to sustainability. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51, 101-120.) (Keywords: Belief Systems, Energy Conservation, Oil Crisis, Economics, President Clinton.)