

**June 20, 2008**

LETTERS

## **To Drill or Not to Drill? There's the Rub**

To the Editor:

The headlines of The Times of June 19 are horrifyingly surreal:

¶“Deals With Iraq Are Set to Bring Oil Giants Back.”

¶“Idea of Offshore Drilling Seems to Be Spreading.”

¶“A Hand-to-Hand Struggle With a Raging River.”

¶“Anxiety Grows in West Over Region's Efforts on Firefighting.”

¶“Sea Levels Rose Faster Than Estimated.”

Nature is saying stop, while Oil is saying go. Haven't we learned? For so many reasons, it's time to leave oil in the ground!

Paul R. Epstein

Boston, June 19, 2008

The writer is associate director, Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School.

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To the Editor:

Allowing offshore drilling for gas as a solution to high fuel costs, as President Bush urges Congress to do, is as sensible as growing more food in response to rising levels of obesity or robbing a bank in response to overspending one's budget.

While it is not popular, the clear answer, as it is in the case of overeating and overspending, is to cut back in the consumption of food, in the consumption of one's salary and in the consumption of fuel.

Painful as it is, I applaud the \$4 gallon because it is the one thing that has finally gotten the public to focus on the fact that we need to consume less. For the first time, one hears from every quarter, turn off the lights in rooms you are not in, recycle that paper, drive less and take public transportation or ride your bike. That is the kind of talk political leaders should be encouraging, not new ways to keep up the old habits.

Sheryl E. Reich

New York, June 19, 2008

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To the Editor:

As a 40-year Alaskan, I can tell you that opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the most sensible solution for America's oil problems. Most of the people who are trying to stop drilling in the refuge have never been in our state.

You have no idea how little space they are talking about. Take a regular envelope, pretend that is the refuge ... now where you would put the stamp, that is the area they want to open.

Alyeska Pipeline has worked, the gas pipeline is in the process, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should be. Congress is making this a party fight. How about putting that energy into fighting for all Americans, as oil prices don't care whether you are Republican or Democrat?

K. A. Denman  
Anchorage, June 19, 2008

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To the Editor:

People say we should have a Manhattan Project-style program to develop alternative energy. That is fine, but while the Manhattan Project was continuing, we did not put World War II on hold while we waited for the atom bomb. The conventional war was continually fought throughout that time.

By believing we should hold off on oil exploitation here, we leave ourselves vulnerable while we hope for what might prove to be the equivalent of spinning straw into gold. What we must do is explore for oil here, drill now and pay less while we seek alternative fuels at the same time.

Terence Kane  
Long Beach, N.Y., June 19, 2008

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To the Editor:

Let's see: our entire planet is in danger because of the burning of fossil fuels, our economy is in the tank because of the rising cost of gasoline and diesel while the oil companies are announcing the biggest profits in the history of the planet, and we are going to open the oceans, our biggest source of both oxygen and food, to further offshore drilling. What could possibly be wrong with this picture?

Let's get real. The solution to our energy problems is to find a different source of energy altogether from fossil fuels, not to pollute what's left of the planet to make a select few richer while the rest of us go down with the ship. The limited amount of oil there will only prolong the agony anyway.

Judith Lubner-Narod  
Northboro, Mass., June 19, 2008

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To the Editor:

Using New York Times logic ("The Big Pander to Big Oil," editorial, June 19), a farmer wouldn't plant corn because he wouldn't be able to harvest the next day.

Oil and natural gas exploration and production take time. Planning and investments made today may not pay off for years. But if companies hadn't bought leases years ago, consumers would have even less energy than they have today.

Companies buy leases because they believe that they'll find oil or natural gas there, but they won't know if that's true until they go through the exploration process, which takes months, even years.

A lease that may appear to be idle could well be undergoing active exploration. Other leases simply do not have enough oil or natural gas to make drilling commercially viable.

As risky and time-consuming as exploration is, it is vital to meeting American consumers' energy needs. But it cannot happen if companies don't have access to areas under which the resources are believed to lie.

Red Cavaney  
President and Chief Executive  
American Petroleum Institute  
Washington, June 19, 2008

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To the Editor:

Thank you for bringing some sense to the oil issue. If President Bush cared about the future of his country, he would declare the coastal and wilderness oil a strategic reserve and leave it securely underground.

We'll need it in the future more than we need it now.

Glenn Cheney  
Hanover, Conn., June 19, 2008

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