



## You decide who's to blame

Posted by [Yankee](#) on April 15, 2006 - 11:21am

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

Tags: [automakers](#), [big oil](#), [chrysler](#), [exxonmobil](#), [jason vines](#) [[list all tags](#)]

I'm a couple days late with this, but on Tuesday, [Gristmill had an amusing post](#) about a blog entry written by Jason Vines, Chrysler's head of PR, on their private "media blog":

Despite a documented history of blowing their exorbitant profits on outlandish executive salaries and stock buybacks, and hoarding their bounty by avoiding technologies, policies and legislation that would protect the population and environment and lower fuel costs, Big Oil insists on transferring all of that responsibility on the auto companies.

Yes, even though the automakers have spent billions developing cleaner, more efficient technologies such as high-feature engines, hybrid powertrains, multi-displacement systems, flexible fuel vehicles, and fuel cells, Big Oil would rather fill the pockets of its executives and shareholders, rather than spend sufficient amounts to reduce the price of fuel, letting consumers, during tough economic times, pick up the tab.

David Roberts explains that Vines' post was in response to a recent full-page Exxon ad that [attacks automakers](#) for the nation's...ahem...gas addiction problem:

Vines also responded to claims that automakers like Chrysler are doing nothing to improve fuel economy. A recent Exxon advertisement reads, "'Every form of transportation-planes, trains and automobiles-now benefits from improved fuels and engine systems. So why is that despite this overall progress, the average fuel economy of American cars is unchanged in two decades?'"

To which Vines responded:

"The auto industry is doing its job by building cleaner, leaner, more efficient vehicles and embracing alternatives to gasoline such as biodiesel and ethanol and hybrids," he concludes. "So while we make these important and responsible strides despite the challenges of global competition and legacy costs, Big Oil is swimming in profits, content to let the nation's drivers drown in rising prices, every time they fill up."

And so, here we are on the eve of \$3/gallon for regular gas again (in NY, anyway, and in [Houston](#), [Miami](#), [Hawaii](#), etc). Is a fight between Big Oil and the automakers really going to [result in some](#)

[beneficial outcomes?](#)

Bonus: In googling around for this post, I came across [this editorial](#) in the Journal-Standard of Freeport, IL. In it, they call for "energy independence", but they don't really define what they mean. Is it independence from *foreign oil*, or independence from our addiction (meaning that we should seriously conserve, regardless of where the oil comes from)?

We need a Marshall Plan for energy independence in America, with an aggressive goal of achieving such independence in 5 to 10 years. Such a plan would also address the problem of global warming and greenhouse gases, two scientific realities that the GOP in Washington continues to assume don't exist.

This sentiment may be in the right direction, and it's good to see that small papers across the country are taking on the topic. But it's troublesome if people believe that it'll only take 5 years to achieve "energy independence". I worry that in fact it will make the public even more complacent, since they will continue to think that "we have plenty of time".



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