



Is government support really unthinkable?

Posted by [Yankee](#) on June 13, 2005 - 10:01pm

We've been saying that it's unthinkable under today's president. But there *was* a time when a president talked about the impending energy crisis, saying things that were difficult for the nation to hear, but true. Jerome a Paris, a diarist at [Daily Kos](#), [recently reminded](#) his readers of Jimmy Carter's words from [a 1977 speech](#):

We simply must balance our demand for energy with our rapidly shrinking resources. By acting now, we can control our future instead of letting the future control us.

One choice is to continue doing what we have been doing before. We can drift along for a few more years. Our consumption of oil would keep going up every year. Our cars would continue to be too large and inefficient. Three-quarters of them would continue to carry only one person -- the driver -- while our public transportation system continues to decline. We can delay insulating our houses, and they will continue to lose about 50 percent of their heat in waste.

The problem back then--which we know now--was that Carter's alternatives may not really work out in the practical future. He established government funding for solar power, gasohol, and synfuels, for which there are still tax credits on the books that [companies like Marriott are exploiting](#). It didn't matter, probably for lots of reasons. The programs were inefficiently run, [the technologies are questionably feasible](#), and there were [political factors undermining Carter](#), culminating with the Iran hostage crisis which largely helped sink him.

But what if we were to give Bush the benefit of the doubt? What if the [Hydrogen Economy](#) is the real thing? (Prof Goose has already had his [doubts about this](#) today.) Here on the Oil Drum, we talk a lot about how it's really going to take government intervention to start things a-changing, and Bush is at least making noise, to the tune of \$1.2 billion. Unfortunately--aside from the science of it all--I start out a little pessimistic from the get-go, because we all know that that Bush administration is about making their friends just a little richer, not about developing critically needed services in the most efficient way possible (can we all say [Kellogg, Brown and Root](#)?) (see also [#6 in the Popular Science article](#)). Besides, as Energy Bulletin points out, the hydrogen economy is [really code for a nuclear economy](#) (since hydrogen isn't a fuel all by itself). So, unless the Nuclear Economy is simultaneously developed, Bush's \$1.2 billion and proposed tax cuts may end up being just another synfuel-esque loophole. (Ironically, in *The Long Emergency*, Kunstler points out that Carter was the first one to promote hydrogen, so it's essentially his fault that Americans have the false hope that hydrogen will be our savior.)

But I know that some of you out there have a whole lot of expertise, so go on. Here's your chance to educate us.

I'll leave you with some final words from Jimmy Carter:

We must not be selfish or timid if we hope to have a decent world for our children and grandchildren.

In fact, *this* is what worries me most about George Bush, because I don't believe he cares at all about our children or grandchildren. He just wants to make his friends and family as rich as he can in his lifetime, without any concern for what'll come later. Remember, this is the man who responded, when asked how history will view him, '[History, we don't know. We'll all be dead.](#)'

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