



Information and disinformation

Posted by [Yankee](#) on July 18, 2005 - 2:00pm

I intended to examine "internet coverage" of the psychology behind why people aren't so concerned with rising gas prices today. I didn't get very far. I'm not sure if this is because the topic isn't being covered in so much depth (but see the [CS Monitor article](#) that we discussed recently) or because I'm a poor googler (horrifying thought!) Still, I did come across a couple of interesting pieces on the web today, mostly from more than 6 months ago, which is interesting in and of itself.

1. [Why high oil prices haven't cut demand](#). OK, well, this article from 11/2004 isn't anything we haven't discussed before. But I did find the "The Economics of Energy Conservation" chart about halfway down the article pretty interesting. For example, while I've known that passenger vehicles constitute most of the energy use in the transportation section, I didn't realize it was 4x as much as the next category, freight trucks. This makes me hopeful that if we target passenger cars as the biggest area for efficiency standards, we can make some big changes.

2. [Fly Me to the Moon](#), by Thomas L. Friedman. This article by Friedman (from 12/2004, preserved on a blog, sorry I don't have the original link) leaves quite a bit to be desired. And it worries me that so many people read Friedman's op-eds, without access to the research which would let them know that Friedman's idea about energy independence, which comes across as very simple, isn't at all. Friedman writes:

You give me an America that is energy-independent and I will give you sharply reduced oil revenues for the worst governments in the world. I will give you political reform from Moscow to Riyadh to Tehran. Yes, deprive these regimes of the huge oil windfalls on which they depend and you will force them to reform by having to tap their people instead of oil wells. These regimes won't change when we tell them they should. They will change only when they tell themselves they must.

Please. Those governments may take a hit, but China and India will keep them afloat. And Friedman doesn't address those pesky issues like the fact that the peak in the US was in the 1970s, or that we're exceedingly far behind on the development of hydrogen, if the infrastructure can even be scaled to the degree that we'd need it. I'm not saying I know what the right thing to do is, and I do agree that scaling back on foreign oil inputs would be wise, but I'm just annoyed at Friedman for making it sound like energy independence is *so easy*.

(Oh, and another note to Friedman: comparing the sacrifice that energy independence will entail to JFK's speech about the work necessary to get to the moon is utterly absurd.)

3. [Are you worried about rising oil prices?](#) The comments from BBC readers from August 2004 are kind of interesting. They run the gamut from

Well if our greedy governments didn't add 60-70% tax on the 82p per litre we spend at the pump then perhaps the whole price issue wouldn't be such a big one!

to

I don't care about rising oil prices. I don't own a car and I think those who do should be paying even more for the privilege of polluting our atmosphere. The next revolution will be electric. Let's get started...

(This kind of comment makes me shudder. The public ignorance about how widespread petroleum is in our food chain, manufacturing materials, cosmetics/toiletries, etc. is alarming. We need to be doing a better job on this.)

to

We could grow all the oil we ever need, we're just too stupid to legalise cannabis and use the oil extracts from that to run our cars. The idiotic "war on drugs" will mean never ending American "liberation" of the oil from oil-rich nations.

There's the answer, everyone! Oil from pot! Let's get started.

Technorati Tags: [peak oil](#), [oil](#), [energy independence](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).