

Kieran Waltner
Mrs. Ortman
MCC Essay
Nov. 21, 2008

World Energy Crisis

Energy consumption grew 2.4 percent in the year 2007. This is above the ten year average growth of 2.2 percent (“Primary Energy Consumption”). The world’s rising energy prices have also had an impact on our natural gas production. It grew 3.1 percent in 2007 (“Natural Gas Consumption”). Coal consumption has also increased in the last few years. In 2006, it had increased by 4.5 percent (“Coal Consumption”). These statistics show how our country is demanding more energy from non-renewable resources. As our country grows, we are using more energy that comes from fossil fuels; therefore, we need environmentally-friendly energy to protect our environment and to help prevent further global warming. As Christians we need to fulfill our responsibility of protecting and keeping the earth clean.

Energy costs are rising steadily. Since 2001, energy costs for the average household have more than doubled. Sharply rising gas prices are also putting a pinch on families. The average household, in the year 2008, will spend more than twelve percent of their total family budget on energy (“New Study Confirms”). As energy costs have risen, only electricity has maintained a stable price while all of our other consumer products have risen in price. Joe Lucas, the vice president of American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE), states: “Rising energy costs are disproportionately impacting minority families. We know that lower-income families are more vulnerable to

rising energy costs than higher-income families because energy represents a larger portion of their family budget” (“New Study Confirms”). He goes on to say how the amount of money we are spending on energy is consuming what was once used for health and food purposes.

Global warming is another result of pollution. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) reports that the hottest years on record were 1998 and 2005; the two hottest years occurring in one decade (Wong). The global temperature right now is one degree warmer than it was in the 1990s. The temperatures have been steadily increasing since then and the increase in carbon dioxide emissions contributes to this increase. The levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere have risen thirty-one percent between the years 1800 to 2000 (Wong). Another alarming fact is that 400,000 square miles of the Arctic sea ice have melted in thirty years, according to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. The amount of ice lost is roughly the size of Texas (Wong). If that much has been lost in thirty years, imagine what could happen in the next thirty years. The United States is the number one global warming polluter, among large nations. We contribute twenty-five percent of emissions even though we only make up about five percent of the world’s population (Wong). This shows that our country needs to do much more in fighting global warming.

There are many costs and benefits to the type of energy we use. Coal and oil are some of our most important resources. One problem is that they are both non-renewable resources. In the last four years our coal use has grown twenty-two percent. This is a major factor behind our rise of carbon dioxide levels. There is a three percent rise in our

carbon dioxide emissions as well (World Wildlife Fund). According to the International Energy Agency, carbon dioxide emissions may rise up to ninety percent by the year 2030 (World Wildlife Fund). “Coal is an extremely dirty source of power, and imposes huge costs on people’s health, the environment and the economy,” states Keith Allott, head of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), United Kingdom’s climate change programme (World Wildlife Fund). Allot goes on to say that coal will remain our fuel of choice, and that governments should invest in pollution reduction technologies. By 2030, the cost of coal is expected to double. The WWF comments on this by stating, “...there are a series of steps that need to be taken to reduce the global coal dependency and move toward a future where energy supply is both reasonably priced, sustainable and is not contributing to the climate change” (World Wildlife Fund). Because of such environment and economic instabilities from using fossil fuels, such as coal, we need to look into nonrenewable resources.

Oil is another source of energy that puts an economic and environmental strain on our world. The rising oil prices show that oil demand is growing far faster than the supply is (“Striking Home”). In 2004, oil prices reached forty dollars a barrel. After that, oil prices steadily started to rise, reaching one-hundred twenty dollars a barrel in May of 2008 (S. Brown). Global oil consumption rose from 82.6 million barrels a day in 2004 to 85.6 million barrels a day in 2007 (S. Brown). If oil prices keep rising, our country is going to be in an economic crisis.

We should look into solar and wind energy as options of replacing some of our nonrenewable resources. These clean energy resources are not only good for our

environment, but are good for us economically as well. John Podesta, the president of the Center for American Progress, says: “By investing one-hundred billion dollars in the green economy, we can create 2 million good jobs in the next two years” (L. Brown). Podesta comments that even switching from incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent light bulbs would help decrease greenhouse gas emissions as well as reduce light energy by almost forty percent. (L. Brown). “By 2030, these savings would add up to 16.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide--more than twice the amount released in the United States ever year,” Podesta says (L. Brown). The Company, Beyond Petroleum (BP) invested eight billion dollars in solar, wind, natural gas, and hydrogen to supply low carbon electricity. By the year 2015, they hope to eliminate carbon dioxide emissions by twenty-four million metric tons a year (Beyond Petroleum). We have made a start, but we need to keep moving in this direction.

Ethanol is a renewable source of energy that would decrease our dependence on oil. Iowa State University political scientist Steffen Schmidt states: “Ethanol is morally better than oil” (Lavelle). So why aren't we using more of it? There are consequences of using ethanol such as the amount of corn it takes to make it. Twenty percent of the U.S. corn crop was used last year for ethanol. This can put a strain on the supply and prices of corn on the marketplace (Lavelle). But the benefits of ethanol outweigh the consequences. Ethanol is good for the environment. It lowers the emissions of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide (West). It also lowers the levels of hydrocarbon and oxides of nitrogen emissions, which are not good for the environment. Ethanol is also good for

the economy. It can support farmers and create more domestic jobs. Also, because it is made here in the U.S., we can decrease our reliance on foreign oil (West).

There are many ways in which we can start to clean up our environment and reduce energy in our own home and community. Changing incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent light bulbs (cfl) is one way to start (“Reduce Your Impact”). Replacing just one incandescent bulb with a compact fluorescent bulb will save 150 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. CFLs also use sixty percent less energy than an incandescent bulb (“Reduce Your Impact”). Driving less and car pooling are obvious ways to reduce our carbon dioxide levels. For every mile that we do not drive, we will save one pound of carbon dioxide (“Reduce Your Impact”). Recycling is another step we can take is reducing our energy and carbon dioxide levels. If we were to recycle half of our household items, we could save up to 2,400 pounds of carbon dioxide a year (“Reduce Your Impact”). Unplugging electronic devices such as DVD players, TV’s, and computers, can save energy. Five percent of our energy consumption is used to keep these devices lit, so by unplugging them we can save big amounts of energy (“Reduce Your Impact”). Another way we can conserve energy is by buying locally produced and grown foods. That is easier to do here in the Midwest than in big cities, so we have an advantage here. This will cut down on fuel costs and keep the money in our communities (“Reduce Your Impact”).

As Christians, we are to fulfill God’s commandment to keep our earth healthy (“Bible Reflection”). As global warming and pollution are plaguing our environment, we should remember how God gave us this earth so we have a place to live and prosper. In

Genesis 1:29-30, it says, “Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food....I give every green plant for food, and it was so” (NIV Study Bible, Ge. 1:29-30). We are to be caretakers of His creation. We can make decisions to care for the earth by making decisions that are better for our environment. Recycling, consuming less, and buying locally are just a few options that will help our environment. We can also support policies that promote energy conservation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency (“Bible Reflection”).

Statistics show that our country is using more energy and fossil fuels. It’s hard to deny this when the evidence is right before our eyes. As a country we need to take steps to limit our energy use; not only for our benefits, but for the generations to come. Also as Christians, how can we allow our earth to slowly deteriorate? We need to preserve it for His sake and for generations to come. What excuse do we have to present to God about why we are polluting the earth? He made us as intelligent human beings. He knows we have the resources and skills to limit and stop some of this pollution, so what are we waiting for?

Works Cited

"Bible Reflection: The Environment." Environment MCC U.S. 5 Nov 2008.

<http://www.mcc.org/us/washington/issues/environment/enviro_guide_reflection.html>.

Brown, Lester. "The New U.S. Energy Economy." New Energy Economy Emerging in the United States. 21 Oct. 2008. Earth Policy Institute. 5 Nov 2008.

<<http://us.oneworld.net/article/358081-wind-solar-and-geothermal-the-new-energy-economy-us>>.

Brown, Stephen P.A., Raghav Virmani, and Richard Alm. "Crude Awakening: Behind the Surge in Oil Prices." Economic Letter—Insights from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. May 2008 Vol. 3, No.5. 23 Oct. 2008.

<<http://www.dallasfed.org/research/eclett/2008/el0805.html>>

Beyond Petroleum . "Energy." BP Products North America Inc. , 2007.

"Coal Consumption." 1996-2008. Beyond Petroleum. 5 Nov 2008.

<<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9023766&contentId=7044197>>.

Lavelle, Marianne, and Bret Schulte. "Is Ethanol the Answer." U.S. News and World Report (2006).

"Natural Gas Consumption." 1996-2008. 4 November 2008.

<<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9023781&contentId=7044478>>.

“New Study Confirms Rising Energy Costs Disproportionately Impacting Minority

Households.” 25 July 2008. 5 November 2008.

<<http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS178012+25-Jul-2008+PRN20080725>>.

NIV Study Bible. Kenneth L. Barker: Zondervan, 2002.

"Primary Energy Consumption." 1996-2008. Beyond Petroleum. 5 Nov 2008.

<<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9023766&contentId=7044197>>.

"Reduce Your Impact At Home." What Can You Do. We Can Solve The Climate Crisis;

Takepart. 5 Nov 2008 <<http://climatecrisis.org/>>.

"Striking Home - The Impacts of High Energy Prices on Families, Communities, and

Businesses." The White House. 5 Nov 2008.

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/energy/Chapter2.pdf>>.

West, Larry. "What Are The Benefits Of Using Ethanol." Environmental Issues. 5 Nov

2008. <http://environment.about.com/od/ethanolfaq/f/ethanol_benefit.htm

Wong, Bryan. "Alarming Global Warming Statistics." Global Warming. 30 Oct. 2008. 5

Nov 2008 <<http://markschlarbaumblog.com/alarming-global-warming-statistics/>>.

World Wildlife Fund. "The Cost Of Coal On The Environment." Science Daily 6 May

2007. 5 November 2008 <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070504151722.htm>>.