

EDITORIAL

The Cost Of Consumption

by Patrick Lalley

We are in Saudi Arabia for the wrong reasons.

Despite all the rhetoric about protecting human rights and protecting the small countries against the large and powerful, the United States will soon have more than 400,000 troops in the Persian Gulf to protect our right to suck oil.

The fact is, Americans use way too much gas. Not because we have to but because we want to. The technology exists to cut our oil consumption appreciably.

Efficiency and conservation could save countless barrels of crude.

In the late 70's we had cut the level of imported oil to under 30%, but after eight years of Reaganomics free-wheeling consumption we are up over 50% once again. The term cheap foreign oil no longer applies when you factor in the enormous cost of keeping an invasion strength army in the desert.

Instead of countering difficulties in oil imports with increased desecration of our oceans and wildlife refuges, we need to raise the average mileage of the American automobile fleet and fervently pursue alternative fuels. Raising the average mileage of new cars to over 30 m.p.g. will save more oil than any oil reserve we are likely to find and ethanol is a very real fuel source for the future. You would think that a government with the public interest in mind would encourage and assist in conservation of a dwindling fuel source, such is not the case.

There are other areas of industrial and domestic energy use that could be reduced

with more efficient machinery and building methods. Homes can be built that require substantially less energy and appliances could be more efficient.

The technology exists to make the American machine less energy dependent but the federal government, over the past ten years, has chosen instead to invest in military buildup rather than energy research and development.

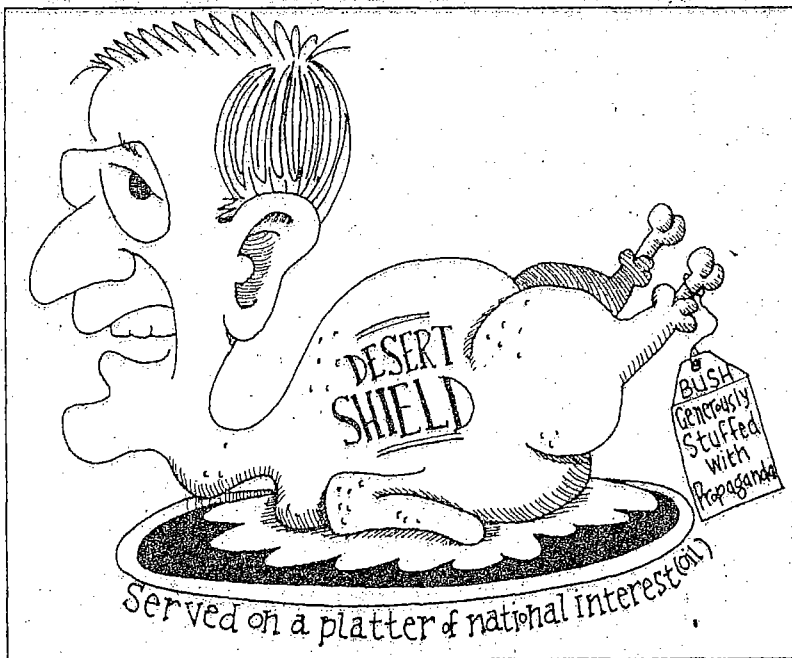
We have wasted the last decade on consumption and now we are paying the price. Not only are reservists being called up for the first time since the Vietnam War, but the earth continues to grow warmer because of the byproducts of fossil fuel consumption. The world, not just the United States, must curb its appetite or it will die by its own hand.

It really seems strange that we will fight a war on drugs to battle Americans' addiction to chemical stimulants and at the same time we fight to maintain our addiction to fossil fuels. George Bush's world must be a tumult with all the hypocrisy and contradiction. He's a smart man; how could he not see these obvious discrepancies in policy?

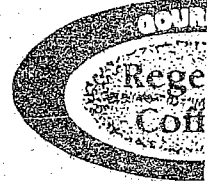
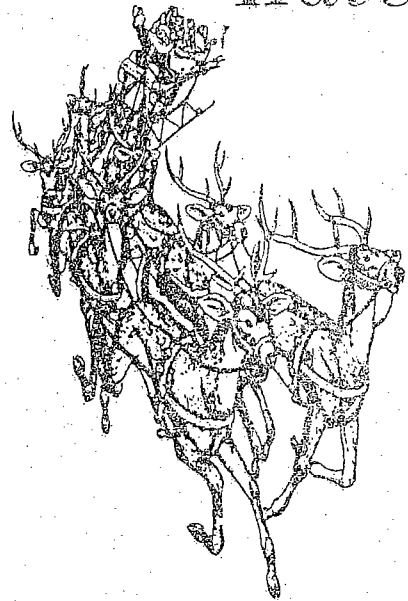
Even putting the oil issue aside, how long are we going to be the world's police force? Unilateral action to stop aggression is a short term and costly solution. The United Nations is the world's tool for decision making and diplomacy and the only way it will work is if the participants act as one.

Why does it always have to be us? □

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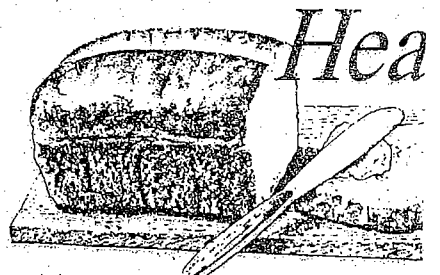


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