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Hemphill: Suggestions to ease the energy crunch

If I were King for a Day, I would order nuclear-powered aircraft carriers to Eureka, San Francisco, Oakland and Long Beach; and nuclear submarines up the river as far as Sacramento to supplement electrical power so as to immediately diminish the demand for oil and natural gas. (Similarly, I would order the nuclear fleet to do the same on the East Coast.)

As an emergency matter, I would order all naval in-port ships to generate their own power if the climatic conditions permit. This would take the pressure off the grid, and if we draw down the national reserves to feed the ships, it would decrease the upward pressure on the available oil supply, by making all naval ships draw only from national reserves.

I would order huge reservoirs to be built on high federal ground — use nighttime excess electricity to pump water up to the reservoir at night, then generate hydroelectric power in stages as it returns during the day to sea level.

That is strictly a short-term answer, but it would deliver a message that we are deadly serious.

Then I would: Drill in the Antarctic National Wildlife Reserve; drill off the coasts of California and Florida; get the trillion barrels of oil from the oil shale in the West; build nuclear power plants anywhere there is sufficient water for cooling; build windmills and geothermal where appropriate; build pipelines for natural gas (and water); do all of the above as quickly as possible to free us from Mideast oil and increase the available supply to drive down the price of gasoline by breaking the speculators.

Short-term, medium-term and long-term solutions need to be started simultaneously (tomorrow!) — each will come on line when technology and capital permit.

Forget ideology – develop energy! Whatever works!

I would also require all military bases with large power requirements to “reverse the clocks” and work at night. (Submarines, at least when I served, do this routinely to keep people sleeping during the day and not dropping wrenches, which gives away positions and, more importantly, identifies the passive sonar signal as “not a whale”!)

Similarly, on a rotating basis (three months), all federal employees and manufacturing plants that sell solely to the federal government will “reverse the clock” — that will decrease peak-time freeway traffic and increase non-peak-time electricity. If the system works, consider it a model and extend the concept.

Notice that none of the recommendations have a negative effect except on government workers, government contractors and military organizations. If the model appears to be positive, the government should encourage private

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concerns to follow where it fits their work culture.

We are simply not serious — not because we don't care but because we are a crisis-oriented culture, and we are not (quite) yet in a crisis. You will know we are in a crisis when the federal government bans lawsuits against the exploration, building and development of power from all sources.

We are giants, held captive by red tape and Lilliputian's lawsuit strings.

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