

Policy issue paper



1 Policy: Energy Security One of the most applauded parts of President George W. Bush's speech in his of the Union Address in late January of this year is the energy security issue. A total of seven rounds of applause interrupted his eleven-sentence talk on energy security, roughly, a round of applause for every two sentences. This is not surprising considering the alarm the energy issue brought the oil per barrel price recently hit briefly the \$100 mark in early January this year after fiddling in the \$90 plus level late last year (Boily 1). A more important reason however for the warm reception could be the environmental significance that oil issue carries with it.

The energy security is a very vital issue and deserving of its inclusion in the State of the Union address because it is concerned with the most valuable component of American life, - the energy which fuels the entire US nation, from the west to the east coast, to life. Without this energy source, life in America and everywhere in the world will virtually halt to a standstill. Oil is the chief energy source of the United States and not surprisingly, US is the top oil user in the world, guzzling 20, 588, 000 barrels of oil per day according to a 2006 statistic (EIA 1).

The problem however with this valuable fossil fuel is that not only is it a potential powerful political tool but that its very availability is now in question. There are claims that oil world resources are dwindling although some quarters like the Cambridge Energy Research Associates are disputing this (CERA 2006). It can be fairly said however that the issue of global warming is by now beyond dispute although largely still unacknowledged. Recent scientific studies has established that the burning of fossil fuel emits carbon dioxide to the atmosphere and, along with other greenhouse gases, prevents sunlight from being reflected out of the earth's atmosphere causing

global warming. A hot planet in turn, disturbs climate cycles, melts the ice in the north and south poles altering the water-land ratio, and changes ecosystems (NRDC 2007).

2

With these problems, it shouldn't be a surprise therefore that the President, in talking about energy security, primarily focused on reducing oil consumption and specifically suggested alternatives like the "funding of technologies that can generate coal power while capturing carbon emissions", increasing "the use of renewable power and emission-free nuclear power," "investing in advanced battery technology and renewable fuels," creating a "new international technology fund," and "an international agreement" that will be effective in slowing, halting, and if possible reversing the "growth of greenhouse gases."

Indeed, global warming is not an environmental issue of the US nation alone. Once it fully rears its ugly head, it will affect every living thing on the planet, it will alter life not only for the American people but for the rest of the world. However, despite its inclusion in the President's speech, a real concerted effort and a specific approach in solving the problem at the behest of the government has yet to be seen and felt. The US government has refused to be a part of the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement among nations to stop global warming, for fear that it will damage the economy (Wallace 2003) yet it has not so far, implemented a valid alternative solution to the said agreement. Whatever is hindering the Bush administration to go all out in the fight against global warming should be soon resolved because time may be running out. There is a lesson to be learned in procrastinating in public management. In the 1989 MOVE Disaster of Philadelphia, the mayor, acting

totally out of character, held off resolving a public nuisance issue for six months until the problem grew out of proportion. The subsequent hasty and belated response of the Philadelphia government resulted in the loss of homes of hundreds of people as a result of the burning of three blocks and the loss of eleven lives including five children. Psychological factors driving a person to deny the existence of a problem was said to be the culprit that caused the debacle. Let us hope this is not the case at hand.

3

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