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Alternative Fuel



IT IS A debate that probably should have been going on when Henry Ford started mass producing motor vehicles and when Thomas Edison invented the light bulb around the early 1900s.

Given that we have a growing number of people owning cars in more places around the world and a finite resource in oil, it was inevitable that crises of various forms would eventuate.

Of all the technological challenges facing our world that affect our daily lives, this energy source dilemma along with maybe cancer treatment could be the biggest.

The question is: are there alternatives to things like oil and coal and then how advanced are we in finding a viable alternative? The short answer is "yes" there are alternatives but how far we are down the track of making them a reality is dependent on who you ask.

Hydrogen Fuel Cell

One of the major options in regards to alternative fuel for powering things like cars is a hydrogen fuel cell. A fuel cell converts the chemicals hydrogen and oxygen into water, and in the process it produces electricity.

So essentially you are producing energy in the form of electricity and the only by product is water which is good for the environment.

This process has the potential to be up to 80% efficient meaning 80% of the resource chemicals initially are able to be converted into energy. Compare this with petrol for your car which is only about 20% efficient.

Apollo 11

Hydrogen fuel cells were one of the energy sources for Apollo 11 reaching the moon in 1969 so it is not a new concept but it was expensive.

Also as hydrogen and oxygen are not limited to one or a few regions of the world like crude oil, political conflicts over this important resource can also be eliminated.

What are the current issues with fuel cells? Well, while 90% of our universe is made up of Hydrogen, it is not readily available in any sort of useful way currently for this technology.

Also current methods employed to extract hydrogen don't give a pure form meaning the energy efficiency drops to about 30-40%. This also increases the cost of the cell. Oxygen is of course readily available in our atmosphere.

Saturn

A recent discovery on the rings of Saturn of all places could be the major breakthrough for this technology. Scientists have discovered that as water comes off the rings, the hydrogen is lost from it, leaving the oxygen.

The method is called electromagnetic bipolar separation; a method used in the laboratories and can be employed deep in earth's core using the earth's own electromagnetic field. If the method can be perfected, it can separate hydrogen from water almost free.

If Hydrogen can be obtained free of cost, we can have abundance of energy with almost no cost and then the resultant water or steam is totally pollution free.

In short we could have very cheap energy, remove fossil fuels like oil as a source of global political and social conflicts and clean up our environment. If this is the end result then we should all want something to happen now.

Chris Jacob is a director of Computer Troubleshooters Bayside (www.ctsbayside.com.au).

Adrian Jackson's Column



Liberal Mind Speak

Treasurer, Peter Costello, speaking on ABC Radio (8:05am, 01 July 05) said "... one of the rules of the Liberal Party is you can speak your mind - you can speak your mind..." What rubbish, I did that in opposing the Iraq invasion and supporting the Palestinians and was hounded out of that party, as have many others, by the fascist neo-cons that now control it in Victoria.

If anything, joining any political party restricts your ability to "speak your mind" when it suits the factional wankers - just read the restrictive Liberal Constitution which incidentally, is ignored with immunity by many of the so called "power brokers".

Nuke 'Em

In the June Metro News I said that nuclear power will be needed when the petrol runs out. Since then Federal and State Governments have been talking up the nuke power issue.

Rex Connor was Gough Whitlams Energy Minister and he wanted to mine our uranium and set up a national nuclear power grid.

The Kemlani loan fiasco put pay to that and successive ALP and Liberal government abandoned the idea after whinging for the green lobby and red leg journalists in the larger papers.

This lack of action had held, Australian's cheap and clean energy production, back 30 years. As for the trendy, red wine quaffing, red/green lobby - it's time to nuke 'em politically.

Political Compass

I found a web page, via ariontheweb.blogspot.com called politicalcompass.org in which after you answer a survey you can be rated on your political leanings - left to right (economic) & totalitarian to libertarian (social). I rated slightly left of centre and slightly libertarian from the centre line which confirms I am a small "I" liberal as I thought. Ari Sharp is a Melbournean and his site contains interesting stuff on local politics like Melbourne Ports Federal Electorate during the last election.

A Sorry Lizard

The problem with insider trading, besides being unethical and illegal, is that while the insider usually makes a profit; the mug non-insiders always make a loss - it's called theft Mr Lizard "now go to your room".

Olympics 2012

The BBC televised the London victory and played some familiar music whilst showing the Trafalgar Square crowd. It was the score from the film "Henry V" when this great "pommy" King whipped the "frogs" at the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

While the Henry's long bowmen and ground tactics contributed to the victory, another factor was that the over confident French, with a 3:1 superiority, apparently spent much of the night before the battle quaffing fine wine and superior cuisine. Sound familiar President Chirac. Britannia rules OK. God Save the Queen.