The Devil’s Advocate: Rise in gas prices is a lesson for U.S.

“Keep ‘em rising.” That’s what I have to say about gasoline prices. The problem with the prices is not that they’re too high, but rather that they have been too low for the past two decades. Americans need to be educated on both the status of gasoline and its limited quantity.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), cars, SUVS and light trucks consume 8.7 million barrels of oil every day. Unfortunately, politicians and businessmen have disillusioned us with lies as they point fingers at each other.

Escalating gasoline prices is not something new to America. In 1977, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised oil prices up to more than $20 a barrel due to gasoline’s increased demand and limited supply. Thus, drivers first experienced waiting in long lines for gasoline as they paid about $1 per gallon. Since then, the government should have continued to increase taxes on gasoline in order to keep the prices up and consumption low.

The recent rise of gasoline prices has done one thing right: it has raised the awareness that crude oil is a limited resource that needs to be preserved. Four vital changes will, hope fully, occur if the prices of gasoline continue to increase.

First, something that will make me much happier is the decrease of “soccer moms” on the road driving SUVs. The “S” for “sports” does not refer to the recreational activity your child enjoys. And, the “U” for utility refers to its capabilities of handling rough terrain and power to carry heavy objects. The average American will not realize the full potential of what an SUV may do. Although most may argue that SUVs are safer when in an accident, that’s really a load of crap. SUVs have poor rear visibility, large blind spots and a high risk of rollovers.

Secondly, America needs to reduce its dependence on foreign oil. According to NRDC, the United States spends nearly $300,000 per minute overseas to buy foreign oil, much of it coming from parts of the world controlled by unstable or less-than-friendly governments. Not long ago, from 1990-1991, many American soldiers died fighting the Gulf War. The basis of the war was to protect our foreign oil supply. Now the war on Iraq is President Bush’s attempt to maintain economic interest in foreign oil.

Thirdly, high gasoline prices will force our government to establish better energy policies. We should raise oil prices gradually until they match what other countries, such as those within the European Union, are paying. Money from the increase of oil taxes may be used for research on energy efficiency and alternative methods of fueling such as homes and automobiles that will not further exacerbate pollution and global warming.

Finally, similar to governmental research, the auto industry will continue to develop hybrid cars that both require less gasoline and use fuel more efficiently. According to NRDC, today’s autos use less than one-third the energy contained in a gallon of gas, wasting the rest. Keep those gas-guzzlers off the roads!

When oil consumption shatters OPEC’s monopoly, Americans will no longer be heading toward a self-righteous suicide, behaving as if cheap gasoline will last forever.

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