

Inside the Cartesian Corridor of Congress

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Echoing what Lyndon LaRouche has described as an intrinsically incompetent approach to economics,¹ a wave of propaganda is now being dumped on the U.S. Congress and the American public, to divert attention from the necessity of actual technological progress. Congressmen are being disorganized as if, while conferring on economic recovery, including the advancement of nuclear power, a swarm of dung flies is interfering, buzzing bullshit in the ears of the would-be patriots.

This nuisance manifested itself at a Jan. 10 Senate Agriculture Committee Hearing, on “Rural America’s Role in Enhancing National Energy Security.” Nine panelists, including the chief economist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), a co-chair of 25 × ’25 steering committee, a number of research directors, and representatives from farming, livestock, energy, and environmental associations, offered their input on the 2007 Farm Bill. Each of them prepared statements for the committee supportive of the call to reduce our nation’s dependence on imported oil, and each was optimistic about the future of biomass’s role in achieving that end. Each testimony was bounded by the assumption that *nuclear power is not to be mentioned*. Without reluctance, Chairman Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Ia.) proudly forecast, “Energy is going to be the engine of the Farm Bill.”

Just how much chicken spoil must be scooped before Congress admits that the solution lies not in the poop, but in themselves? We must turn ourselves consciously toward the subject of method, focussing on a proposal very popular among Congress and the people.

Smelly Statistical Sophistry

According to J. Read Smith, the co-chair of its steering committee, the 25 × ’25 Renewable Energy Alliance is a group of dozens of current and former governors, Senators, and Representatives, and almost 400 business, labor, and environmental organizations. It was formed by a group of farmers with the influence of the Energy Future Coalition, which set the goal of having the agriculture, forestry, and ranching industries provide 25% of the nation’s energy by 2025. To back up the forecasted benefits of such an agro-energy policy,

1. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “What the Congress Needs To Learn: The Lost Art of the Capital Budget,” *EIR*, Jan. 12, 2007.

Smith cited a major analytical study by researchers at the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA), funded by the Energy Future Coalition and Energy Foundation.² By what method were the conclusions reached, that “25 × ’25 is achievable,” and, “reaching the goal would have extremely favorable impacts on rural America and the nation as a whole”? More than likely, millions of Americans believe in the UTIA’s conclusions, without ever being challenged to uncover the method that has shaped their opinion.

Insert your nose-plugs and glove your hands, because this stuff stinks.

“The goal of this study,” states the report, “was to provide an economic analysis of agriculture’s ability to contribute to the goal of supplying 25 percent of America’s energy needs with renewable energy by the year 2025, while continuing to produce safe, abundant, and affordable food, feed, and fiber. The first objective of the study was to evaluate the ability of production agriculture to contribute to this goal, and the impacts on the economics of the agricultural sector associated with this effort. The second objective was to estimate the overall economic impact of production agriculture and other agro-forest sources on the nation’s economy. These impacts involve not only the conversion of bioenergy feedstocks, but also the impacts of bioenergy feedstocks from food processing industries and forestry residues and mill wastes.”

Only the first objective will be discussed here in detail; the second will be the subject of a future article. Because the second objective is modelled as an extension of the first objective, it depends upon the same axiomatic structure as the first. It is this axiomatic system that quickly needs to be abandoned, if the scent of our nation were to remain attractive to others.

To proceed with the first objective, UTIA researchers used POLYSYS, which is, nominally, “a dynamic agricultural sector model . . . to estimate the quantity and type of energy to be produced from agriculture, as well as the price, income and other economic impacts deriving from producing such a level of energy production.” The 2006 *Annual Energy Outlook* of the Energy Information Administration (EIA) of the Department of Energy, and a RAND Corp. study were used to determine the quantity of energy to be consumed by the United States through the year 2025, expressed both in total energy and in electricity and automotive fuel energy.³ Of the 117.7 quads (quadrillion BTUs) projected by the EIA for total U.S. energy consumption, 29.42 quads made 25%, and thus this figure became the established quantity to be produced by

2. Burton English, Daniel G. de la Torre Ugarte, et al., *25% Renewable Energy for the United States by 2025: Agricultural and Economic Impacts* (The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics, November 2006).

3. *Annual Energy Outlook 2006* (Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, February 2006).



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“Green People” rally in Washington for alternative fuel vehicles. The last thing Congress needs, is more chicken shit.

renewable resources. Of this portion, it was projected that 15.45 quads would need to come from new farm and forest production, as already existing biomass and other renewable resources accounted for the remaining 13.97 quads.

Thus, the projected figure 117.7 quads of total U.S. energy consumption by 2025 was assumed to be accurate by the UTIA researchers. *How could one predict the quantity of energy that the nation will consume almost 20 years from now?*

The 2006 *Annual Energy Outlook* is a report of results computed via the National Energy Modeling System (NEMS). According to the EIA, “Overall, NEMS represents the behavior of energy markets and their interactions with the U.S. economy . . . the system reflects market economics, industry structure, and existing energy policies and regulations that influence market behavior.” The *Outlook* does acknowledge a plethora of assumptions and conditionalities, but it does not make explicit the axiom upon which the NEMS has been created.

The following passage from the UTIA report demonstrates the hoax that is being perpetrated:

“A few technical improvements are assumed for the extension through 2025. Conversion coefficients of cellulose to ethanol were increased linearly for stover [stalks and leaves of the corn plant], straw and switchgrass from 2015 to 2025 to final coefficients of 87.9, 83.2 and 90.2 gals per ton respectively. The conversion of corn grain to ethanol is assumed to

increase from 2.7 gals per bushel in 2014 to 3.0 gals per bushel in 2019, and thereafter remain steady. Biodiesel is also assumed to increase from 1.4 gals per bushel in 2014 to 1.5 gals per bushel in 2019 and thereafter remain steady.”

Not only do researchers assume steady progress in the efficiency of converting cellulose to ethanol, but they also assume that cellulose-to-ethanol conversion will be feasible in the first place. They assume that conversion methods that do not exist today will exist in the future, will steadily improve in the future, and will help achieve the 25 × ’25 goal that prescribed just how much energy would have to come from renewable resources.

To state the fallacy of composition more clearly: The researchers first postulated the quantity of energy that must be produced by renewable resources to meet 25% of the defined energy consumption quantity for 2025. Then, to generate this postulated portion of the defined U.S. energy consumption by 2025, the means of converting cellulose to ethanol were assumed to exist. The conversion efficiency necessary to convert the assumed supply of feedstock was assumed to increase to quantities in accord with the requirements to meet the postulated portion of energy.

What would be the effect of continuing to operate within this set of assumptions? Perhaps another study will define the quantity of production jobs to be discarded, so that manufacturers can “remain competitive,” then assume that productivity will increase over time as a smaller supply of jobs will spur competition among laborers, and finally assume that the postulated productivity levels reached will make the manufacturer more competitive abroad. Continue to act on this set of assumptions and watch the nation, including its “competitive manufactures,” collapse into a dark age.

One should ask oneself, “What kind of joke is this? Who would commission such a study? Who would permit such fraudulence to justify a policy proposal?”

Defining a Nation

Were human beings mere creatures in a jungle, avoiding pain and satiating pleasure, it were not likely that more than several million of us would be roaming the planet today. It would also be impossible to unleash the benefits of nuclear power throughout the world. How we act upon the currently reigning popular delusions will determine the conditions of the world for billions of human beings in the future. The Congress has the power to intervene, on behalf of the people, to craft policy in the pursuit of happiness. The 25 × ’25 initiative, and sundry other “bio-fool” proposals, ought to be considered dead on arrival: Bullshit does not belong in the halls of Congress.