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ENERGY RACE TO SAVE THE PLANET

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ENSC 230

Billy is an eight-year-old kid. Billy's parents grant him the opportunity to buy all the food for their upcoming camping trip to the mountains. With 200 dollars in hand, Billy sets off to buy the family some food. Once the family is high in the mountains, Billy reveals the two packages of beef jerky he bought along with the biggest and baddest Nerf gun 190 bucks can buy. Stranded in the mountains, the family faces starvation.

If you consider Billy's parents as our very own Mother Nature then that would leave the United States to be Billy. That big and bad Nerf gun just happens to be the abundant reservoir of petroleum beneath our feet. Mankind sees this organic substance as a perfect substitute to fuel our energy addiction. We are destroying the only planet that we know to bear life.

Think about where our energy is coming from. If we want to get to someplace easy, burn some gas. What about if we want fry an egg; simple, just burn some gas. Even the electricity we use to power our lights is produced using inefficient systems that burn natural gas and coal. In fact, electricity generation accounts for 33 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Our society has invested so much time and money into technology but we still rely on fossil aged fuel. We are venturing into an expanding energy market powered by combustibles.

We had a space race in the 60's and during that time, the world accomplished some amazing things. We advanced missiles previously used in the arms race of World War II and sent humans into space. The world held their breath when Neil took that first step... amazing right? Can't you see, energy is our next chapter- this is the next global race.

President Obama stated that, "The countries that lead the clean energy economy will be the countries that lead the 21st century global economy." It's true, radical steps into this field will separate countries and influence the globe. Look at what other countries have already done- Germany set a milestone by creating 74% of their power needs by renewable sources and China is developing a cleaner country that challenges our unstable market.

The U.S. has made progress in energy efficiency. Germany may use 48% of the world's solar panels, but it was the United States that invented these photovoltaic panels. Have we lost the will to compete? Despite falling behind in our energy development, the U.S. is still an influential country. Some of the most creative citizens stem from our nation; we have to hone that characteristic in order to convert our energy consumption. If we advance clean technology, the rest of the world will follow suite.

So, what can *you* do? Get out and vote! Vote for clean energy. Vote for representatives that care about our education. Choose to support educational institutions and organizations such as NASA. If you are a parent or teacher, inspire your children to enjoy science. The biggest concern I see in our country is not a lack of intelligence but a lack of motivation. Question and try to understand how we get our energy. There is no perfect way of generating energy, but there are cleaner ways than just burning gas.

Don't get me wrong, petroleum is an amazing substance. It can be transported easily and is packed full of energy. It revolutionized industry and developed our nation to what we are today, but this substance is dated. It has been exploited and abused. We have invested so much into drilling, mining, and fracking this material. In North America, we are blessed with an abundant amount of petroleum, but we have got to be more responsible with that power. Bill Nye has been quoted, "we need to do more with less"; something everyone should be conscientious about when it comes to oil.

There are things wrong with our nation's energy methods. In the US our government gives tax breaks to large oil companies. These subsidies (15% of oil income is tax exempt) are hindering our young scientists and engineers developing clean green technology. Instead of limiting our intake of this volatile fuel we are promoting the use of it! We do this because this fuel is easy and cheap to produce. We do this because we feel entitled to this fuel because we have an abundance of it. We are acting like Billy. Our dependence on fossil fuels will not last forever.

The best move this nation could take to ensure global leadership is to use that cheap petroleum energy to create sustainable power. With the recent drop in gas prices, now would be a perfect time to tax this commodity. The revenue from the tax could be used to develop clean energy and save this dying planet.

We will not be like Billy; we can sustain ourselves from destructive ways. Leaders, freethinkers, and innovators created this nation and now we must gain our global standing once again. Use this article to fuel your creative thoughts because we are entering a new era and the clean energy race has just begun.

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