

ENERGY CRISIS: Ford And Diesel Never Intended Cars To Use Gasoline

By [Global Research](#)

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When Henry Ford told a New York Times reporter that ethyl alcohol was “the fuel of the future” in 1925, he was expressing an opinion that was widely shared in the automotive industry. “The fuel of the future is going to come from fruit like that sumach out by the road, or from apples, weeds, sawdust — almost anything,” he said. “There is fuel in every bit of vegetable matter that can be fermented. There’s enough alcohol in one year’s yield of an acre of potatoes to drive the machinery necessary to cultivate the fields for a hundred years.”

Henry Ford’s first Model-T was built to run on hemp gasoline and the CAR ITSELF WAS CONSTRUCTED FROM HEMP! On his large estate, Ford was photographed among his hemp fields. The car, ‘grown from the soil,’ had hemp plastic panels whose impact strength was 10 times stronger than steel; Popular Mechanics, 1941.

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Rudolf Diesel, the inventor of the diesel engine, designed it to run on vegetable and seed oils like hemp; he actually ran the thing on peanut oil for the 1900 World’s Fair. Henry Ford used hemp to not only construct cars but also fuel them.

As an alternative to methanol, hemp has at least one glowing report: the plant produces up to four times more cellulose per acre than trees. And a hemp crop grows a little quicker than a forest.

As for an alternative to petroleum...

Hemp grows like mad from border to border in America; so shortages are unlikely. And, unlike petrol, unless we run out of soil, hemp is renewable.

Growing and harvesting the stuff has much less environmental impact than procuring oil.

Hemp fuel is biodegradable; so oil spills become fertilizer not eco-catastrophes.

Hemp fuel does not contribute to sulfur dioxide air poisoning.

Other noxious emissions like carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons are radically slashed by using “biodiesel.

Hemp fuel is nontoxic and only a mild skin irritant; anybody who,s ever cleaned out an old carburetor with gasoline can confirm the same is not true for petrol.

Growing hemp for fuel would be a tremendous boon for American farmers and the agricultural industry, as opposed to people like, say, the Bush family.

And that's why hemp might not go anywhere as a fuel alternative. Oil interests are big and donate likewise to politicians, and selling a man on an idea that will cost him more than he'll benefit requires an amazingly skilled orator — or a gun. Unfortunately, unless you're the federal government, gunpoint conversions are usually illegal. Ergo, PR is about the best bet right now.

There are many people working hard on this front, including the Hemp Car and its intrepid crew. Currently ginning up for a trans-America evangelism tour, the Hemp Car plans to spread the good word of hemp-fuel viability at stops in both the U.S. and Canada.

For whatever good it will do, they should make sure to stop by Washington, D.C., and have a word with President George W. Bush. The current oil crisis and our nation's dependency on sometimes-persnickety foreign sources might find the new chief executive with an open mind to fuel sources other than Texas tea — regardless of his oily bank accounts. And, while salvaging his dad's legacy is not Goal 1 for Dubya, it might also help him look more forward thinking in terms of energy policy and the environment.

Of course, hemp fuel may never take off. It might dry up like all those hemp crops left unattended after the feds banned their cultivation in the 1930s. One way or the other, Bush should consider freeing up the market to innovate with alternative fuels like hemp oil — it couldn't hurt, and it stands the chance to help. In so doing, he'll end his term with a far better moniker than the "environmental president." For, if other policy decisions he makes go in a similar direction, we can perhaps call him the "free-market president."

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Fuel of the Future

Ford recognized the utility of the hemp plant. He constructed a car of resin stiffened hemp fiber, and even ran the car on ethanol made from hemp. Ford knew that hemp could produce vast economic resources if widely cultivated.

Ford's optimistic appraisal of cellulose and crop based ethyl alcohol fuel can be read in several ways. First, it can be seen as an oblique jab at a competitor. General Motors had come to considerable grief that summer of 1925 over another octane boosting fuel called tetra-ethyl lead, and government officials had been quietly in touch with Ford engineers about alternatives to leaded gasoline additives. Secondly, by 1925 the American farms that Ford loved were facing an economic crisis that would later intensify with the depression. Although the causes of the crisis were complex, one possible solution was seen in creating new markets for farm products. With Ford's financial and political backing, the idea of opening up industrial markets for farmers would be translated into a broad movement for scientific research in agriculture that would be labelled "Farm Chemurgy." 2

Why Henry's plans were delayed for more than a half century:

Ethanol has been known as a fuel for many decades. Indeed, when Henry Ford designed the Model T, it was his expectation that ethanol, made from renewable biological materials, would be a major automobile fuel. However, gasoline emerged as the dominant

transportation fuel in the early twentieth century because of the ease of operation of gasoline engines with the materials then available for engine construction, a growing supply of cheaper petroleum from oil field discoveries, and intense lobbying by petroleum companies for the federal government to maintain steep alcohol taxes. Many bills proposing a National energy program that made use of Americas vast agricultural resources (for fuel production) were killed by smear campaigns launched by vested petroleum interests. One noteworthy claim put forth by petrol companies was that the U.S. government's plans "robbed taxpayers to make farmers rich".

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