

PRIVILEGE SPEECH

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Again... On Oil

By Councilor Pilar C. Braga, PhD

Last weekend, Madam President, the oil price in the world market had shot up to a historic \$138 per barrel.

Experts blame this exorbitant pricing to global demand of fossil fuel. Economist attribute the distortion to opportunities that come with supply and demand. For us, the consumers, pricing oil beyond what is rationally accepted is greed.

Three years ago, an article written by Michael Ruppert for the "Guardian" dissected the impact of oil price to economic recession, which is eroding even the strongest economies of the world, and how it can lead to the extinction of the human race. But the more tantalizing part of the item is not about the future.

He wrote: "Almost every current human endeavor from transportation, to manufacturing, to plastics, and especially food production is inextricably intertwined with oil and natural gas supplies. Commercial food production is oil powered. All pesticides are petroleum based, and all commercial fertilizers are ammonia based. Ammonia is produced from natural gas."

In the last 100 years, Ruppert added. "mankind has used half of all the oil on the planet, oil that took billions of years to produce and is the result of climatic conditions that have existed at only one time in the earth's 4.5-billion-year history.

In response, oil producers, over the years, have grabbed every opportunity to earn precious dollars with each demand for higher oil supply. Pumps were pushed to do overworked production, and estimates for oil reserves were guardedly revealed.

In only a decade, a good part of it engineered by the expansion of oil-based industries and the gas-oriented transport systems, the global supply for fossil fuel has been pushed to the edge.

Oil, being a non-renewable resource, is actually on its final leg of production. Even industry experts have involuntarily declared that global oil supply should be depleted by 2035, which is only a quarter of century away.

Given the demand for fossil fuel is looking endless, the prediction on how long our fuel supply can last can be shortened further. With total dependence on biogas and renewable sources of energy expected to last for two to three decades, the picture of distress looks unsettling.

These are very, very, disturbing news and maybe sometimes we need to be jolted in order to wake up and face a grim reality that is hitting us on the face.

Back home?

Well, back home, the government has been urging citizens to save on oil and electricity, exhorting private persons to institute energy-saving measures in their homes and offices.

But the government itself is acting as if it is swimming in oil, as if prices have not increased, as if there is no oil shortage in the world.

Gas, oil and lubricants (GOL) is a component of the P37 billion proposed budget for supplies and materials for fiscal year 2008.

Of this amount, around P2.2 billion or 6 percent of the total budget for supplies and materials is allocated for oil and gas.

It is high time, in fact long overdue, that government lead the way together with the private sector to put its act together. Thus, tomorrow, a seminar-workshop will be held entitled "Mobilizing Energy Efficiency and Conservation Program for Davao City." This is a joint activity of the Ateneo de Davao University, Energy and Clean Air Project (ECAP), Department of Energy (DE), USAid and the Committee on Energy, Transportation and Communication as part of our on-going advocacy.

By next session, Madam President, I hope to report to this August Body the results of the energy summit.

Thank you.

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City Councilor