

CHAPTER 4

DARKER VISIONS OF OUR ENERGY FUTURE

The world produced 72,477,000 barrels per day of oil in 2004.¹ Half of that oil typically becomes engine fuel, which means we burned 555,536,205,000 gallons—over 500 billion gallons—in 2004 to fuel the world's internal combustion engines.

In 2005, the budget for the U.S. Department of Defense topped \$500 billion. By mid-2006, the total expenditures for the occupation of Iraq also totaled over \$500 billion.²

What is the connection between these figures? The cost of building an alcohol fuel plant conveniently comes to about \$1 per gallon of annual production capacity; as more plants are built, the cost will decline. So, we can build enough alcohol plants to replace all the world's use of petroleum fuel with alcohol, essentially permanently—with less than one year's defense spending.

Building those plants around the globe would substantially reduce pollution, begin to reverse global warming, fully employ rural communities, guarantee an end to world hunger, and spread wealth based on solar energy collected and soil properly conserved. Would we need a defense budget if the world were fed, employed, and permanently supplied with locally grown energy and food? What would be left to fight over?

You'd think all of us would want all of this. But we live in a world of skewed priorities. Our system runs on privatizing profits for the few while socializing the costs for the rest of us.

As the state of the planet makes clear, we can no longer afford the fantasy that there is a river, an air-space, or a landfill in which to dump inconvenient filth; we can no longer deny that proper disposal is a cost of production. We are all downwind of each other; there is no anonymous fence over which we can pitch our wastes without them coming back to haunt us.

Corporations can no longer be allowed to have the rights of persons without the responsibilities. We need to look squarely at big ideas that expand

MEGAOILRON'S VISION OF NONRENEWABLE RESOURCES FOR THOSE WHO CAN PAY HAS BEEN CATASTROPHIC FOR ALL OF US TO DATE AND WILL GET FAR WORSE. IF WE WANT A FUTURE POWERED BY RENEWABLE FUELS AND DEMOCRATICALLY GOVERNED PEOPLE, WE HAVE TO WORK TO MAKE IT SO.

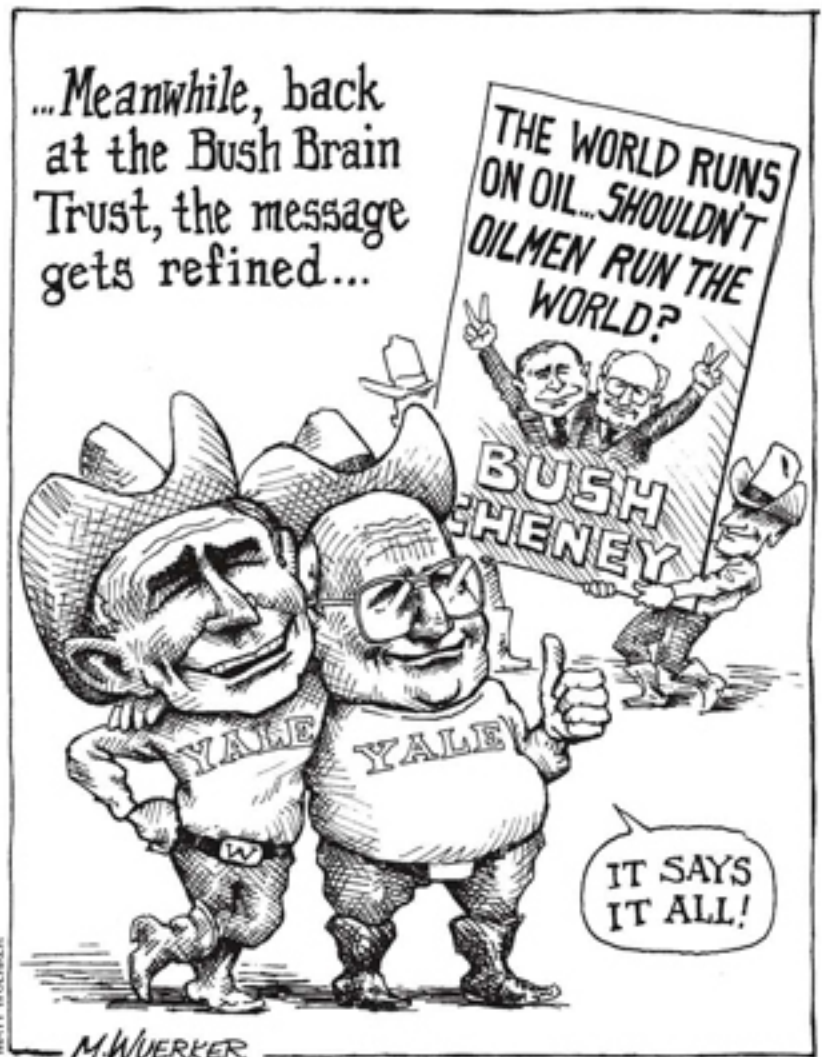


Fig. 4-1