

Opinions

Adding bite to the bark

By Leo Chappelle

On Monday, March 14, 2022, the Police Jury passed an ordinance to punish by a fine of up to \$500 and a sentence of up to 30 days in jail those who are found guilty of stealing our parish road signs. My own has been destroyed three times (being popular has its downside). Others, though, tell me that at most that only ties the record (how disappointing).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that theft and vandalism are already proscribed in the statutes of the great state of Louisiana and the Eighth Commandment of God, it seemed good to the Police Jury to pass an ordinance and so they did.

It can't hurt, one supposes. As one Police Juror suggested, it might make some thieves sufficiently uncomfortable to get rid of the evidence of their ill-gotten trophies and at least that would deprive the guilty of their illicit satisfaction.

Another more peculiar issue arises concerning the awarding of a contract for residential

garbage collection to Hometown Waste of Catahoula Parish. Neither I nor other observers with whom I have discussed this decision recall there being an occasion upon which competitive bids were opened and read in public. Perhaps that will be what happens at 10:00 A.M. on Monday, March 21, 2022, at the special meeting of the Police Jury that has been called for that time. If so, one wonders why only Hometown Waste was mentioned on the agenda this past Monday. If I'm wrong about this, I apologize now for my poor memory and general inattentiveness.

Be that as it may, I have never appreciated the logic behind scheduling a hearing at a time of day when the majority of the public are occupied earning their taxes. I mean, after all, is meeting room 104 in the Harrisonburg Courthouse in such demand that it's usually booked up in the evening after work? Or is the meeting only "special" if it's scheduled for some odd and inconvenient hour? Asking for a friend.

In other news, now that fuel prices are so high, the United States Postal Service's mail carriers will be working from home. They're going to call you up and read your mail to you. In case you miss that phone call, just ring up the Department of Homeland Security or FBI and ask them. They know what's in your mail, too.

With the possibility of an atomic holocaust on the horizon in Ukraine, it may seem trivial to mention that the Harvard Law Review has taken up the issue of the need for multiple partner domestic partnership ordinances. The Review notes that the city of Somerville, Massachusetts has done so, providing accommodations in law for partnerships of three or more persons to be protected and privileged just as are more traditional two-person male / female marriages. Possibly the Catahoula Parish Police Jury will take up that issue as well just as soon as we figure out what to do with the rest of our garbage.



What Putin Knew

Durham's Righteous Investigation

There are forgivable intellectual and policy errors, and then there's the self-delusion that has driven the West into its dependence on Vladimir Putin's oil and gas.

Russia has long been a major supplier of energy to Europe. The depletion of European natural gas reserves has played a role in Russia's increased significance. Moscow has also benefited, though, from a deliberate choice by Europe to attempt a great leap forward into a green-energy future, especially in a Germany that turned its back on both nuclear and coal.

In taking this route, Europe made a holiday-from-history decision to forget the incredible power of oil, gas and coal -- the most reliable and efficient sources of energy the world has ever known -- and ignore the inevitable centrality of energy to geopolitics.

Greta Thunberg, the teenage climate activist who has been elevated into an oracle of all that is good and true, demanded nothing less.

No matter what you've heard, the world hasn't embraced fossil fuels out of hatred of the planet, rather because they are so incredibly useful. If they didn't already exist -- thanks to sunlight and plants that lived millions of years ago -- we would have to invent them and wouldn't be able to.

Oil is a miracle fuel. Alex Epstein of the Center for Industrial Progress writes that it is "almost eerily engineered by natural processes, not just for cheapness, not just for reliability, not just for scalability, but also for another characteristic crucial to a functional civilization: portability." It powers cars, trucks and jets, without which the modern world as we know it wouldn't exist.

Coal, too, Epstein notes, is affordable, abundant and easy to extract and transport. There is a reason that developing nations invariably

use it to power their economic advancement.

So, it's not surprising that fossil fuels are still the leading source of global electricity, with coal accounting for 36.7% and gas 23.5%. The total fossil fuel contribution, at 63.3%, is down only slightly from two decades ago.

In terms of overall energy, fossil fuels are an even larger proportion, 84.3%.

For its part, green energy -- wind, solar and other renewables -- account for around 10% of global electricity, and even less of total energy.

Vladimir Putin knew this and understood the power it gave him, even if European policymakers couldn't be bothered to think a tiny bit strategically.

Did they not notice that coal was the mainstay of Britain's rise to global power in the 19th century?

Did they forget the role of oil in World War I and World War II, let alone subsequent 20th-century history?

Petroleum wasn't particularly useful prior to World War I and, by the end of it, had become a pillar of national power. It fueled the motorized vehicles and airplanes that transformed warfare. British foreign minister Lord Curzon famously said at the war's conclusion that the Allies had "floated to victory upon a wave of oil."

In World War II, the Japanese attacked the United States in part for fear that the American de facto oil embargo would starve its war machine, and one reason the Nazis were defeated was that they ran out of fuel.

Of course, the strategic significance of the Middle East owed almost entirely to its vast oil reserves. The phrase "war for oil" is a cliché and usually a smear, but it is certainly true that no one has ever fought a war for wind.

In light of all of this, Europe still choose to

subjugate itself to an anti-Western authoritarian and, even as Russian opera stars are getting canceled, it hasn't ceased purchases of Russian oil and gas.

Some perspective is necessary. While climate change may indeed prove a serious long-term challenge, it is not reducing parts of European cities to rubble or a threat to use a tactical nuclear weapon.

If this horrifying episode hasn't scared the West straight on energy, nothing will.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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