

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fairness and Fuel Efficiency

(Optical Scan. Washington Post)

(11/14/91 Op-Ed, Page A 22)

Hobart Rowen's Nov. 7 attack on the domestic auto industry [op-ed] is so dripping with bias against American companies that any expectation of a reasonable airing of the fuel economy issue was rendered impossible. Mr. Rowen, of course, could have contacted any of our companies or our association for a response. but that would have blown gaping holes through his onesided arguments. In the interest of fairness, let me offer the following:

* General Motors and the entire auto industry-domestic and import alike-are opposed to Sen. Richard Bryan's (D-NEV.) bill because requiring a 40-miles per gallon average by 2001 would give manufacturers little choice but to downsize cars and trucks. That would all but eliminate today's family cars, vans and pickups. What's worse, it would place the government in control of deciding what kinds of cars and trucks customers can purchase.

GM, for example, offers only one car that meets the Bryan 40-mpg average-the Geo Metro, rated at 53 mpg by the Environmental Protection Agency. It's a great car, but only about one percent of our customers buy it. Why! Because they need cargo space, passenger roominess and performance it can't provide. American consumers should have the right to choose the vehicle they want.

* Mr. Rowen says "safety is a red herring." It is not. All other things-being equal, a larger car is safer than a smaller car, a fact that no amount of political rhetoric can change. This has been irrefutably supported by findings of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Brookings Institution, Harvard's School of Public Health, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Consumer Reports. Even Ralph Nader, Joan Claybrook and Clarence Ditlow have at one time or another acknowledged that fact.

* Mr. Rowen says U.S.; companies want to "produce a greater percentage of bigger and less efficient cars." For the record, the domestic industry has increased its average fuel efficien-

cy by more than 100 percent (GM's is up nearly 125 percent) since the mid-'70s while nearly eliminating tailpipe emissions. Can Mr. Rowen name another industry that has made that kind of progress in energy efficiency and environmental cleanup?

GM and the other domestic-companies are committed to the continued search for better fuel economy. What concerns us-and we're joined in this concern by every automaker who sells vehicles in the United States- is a government mandate like the Bryan bill, which would force manufacturers to offer products our customers may not want.

Customer satisfaction has always been the name of our game. What really drives us are millions of consumers who want full-size cars, sporty cars, vans, pickup trucks and other vehicles. Our objective at GM-even in the midst of this debate on Corporate Average Fuel Economy-is to attract those people to our products and keep them coming back.

WILLIAM H. NOACK

Director of communications, Washington Office

General Motors Corp. Washington

If his Nov. 7 column, "Detroit's Detour on Fuel Efficiency" is representative. Hobart Rowen clearly has an aversion to checking facts or investigating the other side of the issue. But, then, why should he when he can rely on Joan Claybrook and Clarence Ditlow for his misinformation-two Naderites who have built their Careers on Detroit-bashing?

If Mr. Rowen had checked, he would have found that "when it comes to hypocrisy." it is Joan Claybrook and Clarence Ditlow who are "hard to beat"-not Detroit. Both these self-proclaimed safety advocates are on record in the '70s and '80s as acknowledging that small cars are less safe than large cars in collisions between the two. They have changed their story because it doesn't suit their current political agenda.

With all respect to the lean engine Honda is putting in one of its 1992

Civic models, Mr. Rowen again missed several significant facts. First, the engine does not meet the 1994-and-beyond federal standard for nitrogen oxide emissions or the nitrogen oxide standard now in effect in California. Second, the lean-burn engine concept is limited to small cars, and its potential application to mid-size and larger models remains a question. Finally, even Honda says that its lean-burn engine is not the breakthrough that will enable it to meet Sen. Bryan's proposed gas-mileage requirements.

The reason for the last reservation is obvious. A number of car models available in the U.S. market already get 40 mpg or more than 50 mpg. But those models represent only 2 percent of annual sales because they are too small to meet the needs of most Americans.

Mr. Rowen's assertion that Detroit is doing little in the way of research on fuel economy technology is silly. Chrysler, Ford and GM are investing billions in advanced engine design, research on alternative fuels, the use of lightweight aerospace materials and many other areas to ensure that improvements in fuel economy will continue. That research has been productive. U.S.-built cars and trucks are at least as fuel efficient as their foreign competitors, if not more so.

But Mr. Rowen's most egregious error is his reliance on Joan Claybrook as his authority on the commitment of U.S. companies to fuel economy improvements, versus that of the German and the Japanese. Again, had he checked his facts, Mr. Rowen would have found that the Corporate Average Fuel Economy of the Japanese "Big Three. (Honda, Nissan and - Toyota) peaked in 1983 and has declined by 11.5 percent since then. In contrast, Detroit's "Big Three" have increased their CAFE by 11.9 percent since 1983. Mr. Rowen's parting shot at Detroit, that it "can either get with it or continue to slip backward," is clearly misdirected.

THOMAS H. HANNA

President and Chief Executive Officer
Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association
Washington

November 14, 1991

Letters to the Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th Street
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor,

This letter is in response to the "Fairness and Efficiency" letters of Mr. Noack and Mr. Hanna.

I can not understand how decades old facts concerning very high MPG automobiles were not brought to the attention of Mr. Noack and Mr. Hanna before now. For example, these facts:

* The 1977 Shell Oil Book "Fuel Economy of the Gasoline Engine" (ISBN 0-470-99132-1) states; "No less a person than Charles Kettering when General Motors President in 1929 predicted '80 mile/gal by 1939" (Page 42). Additionally, pages 222 and 223 have photographs of a 149.95 MPG 1947 Studebaker, a 244.35 MPG Fiat and a 376.59 MPG Opel. The MPG results are from Shell Oil mileage marathons in 1949, 1968 and 1973. Page 223 also contains this statement; "Driving style was not restricted, but the extent to which a normal production car could tuned was limited to changes in carburation and ignition timing. The event was run on a closed airfield circuit with a minimum average speed of 30 mile/h (48 km/h) enforced."

* The book "Secrets of the 200 MPG Carburetor" has photocopies of three 1936 test by Ford Motor Co. of Canada on eight-cylinder engines. The cars were equipped with a gasoline vaporizing carburetor patented (#2,026,798) by Charles Pogue. The worst case test produced 25.7 miles on a pint of gasoline.

* A 1900 book "Gas Engine Construction" (Lindsey reprint ISBN 0-917914-46-5) contains this statement concerning engine fuel; " Gasoline will be found to answer this purpose admirably, but some apparatus is necessary- to convert the gasoline into a gas before it can be used for combustion in the gas engine cylinder."

* Tom Olge patented (#4,177,779) a vaporizing device, this statement is on his patent; "I have been able to obtain extremely high gas mileages with the system of the present invention installed on a V-8 engine of a conventional 1971 American made automobile. In fact, mileage rates in excess of one hundred miles per gallon have been achieved with the present invention." Argosy Magazine, August 1977, published a five page article concerning the media witnessed test of the Ogle device on a 4,600 pound vehicle.

* The U.S. Government, NASA, also was granted a patent (# 3,640,256) for a vaporizing carburetor. Additional vaporizing carburetor patents were granted, General Electric Co. (#3,926,150), and at least 250 more patents to other inventors.

* The Steven R. Reed Automobile Manufacturing Corp., New Port Beach, CA, displayed a 200 MPG, two passenger, Diesel electric automobile in February 1983.

* Several patents have been granted for completely sealed engines with no inlet or exhaust. A Papp 1968 patent (3,670,494) contains this information; "2. to provide a two cycle reciprocating engine which does not use fuel intake valves or exhaust valves, does not require an air supply and does not emit exhaust gases. 3. To provide a precharged engine of the character stated in item 2 capable of generating power for a period of from 2,000 to over 10,000 hours continuously or until mechanical breakdown) without the addition of fuel, injection of air or discharge of gases." The test engine, as I recall the patent application file, was a modified VOLVO that produced 70 HP, another Papp patent is #4,428,193. Mr. Britt patented (#3,977,191) a similar device in 1976.

* At least 11 patents exist for devices that break-down water into the two gases, Hydrogen and Oxygen for use as an engine fuel. Mr. Horvath's 1976 patent, #3,980,053, contains this statement; "This invention relates to internal combustion engines. More particularly it is concerned with a fuel supply apparatus by means of which an internal combustion engine can be run on a fuel comprised of hydrogen and oxygen gases generated on demand by electrolysis of water." A French patent, # 75 06619 (1976) also exist for this process.

There are many other devices that could be applied to automobiles, such as a permanent magnetic motor, U.S. patent # 4,151,431. Tom Moray produced a device in the late 1920's that could sit on a kitchen table and produced 50,000 Watts of electrical power from an energy field surrounding the earth. Mr. Moray's son published a book, The Sea of Energy in which the Earth Floats, concerning his fathers work.

Gentlemen, I suggest that some of your staff members visit the U.S. Patent Office or any public library for additional information on how to increase MPG without "downsizing" an automobile. I hope that copies of the Shell Oil book, Argosy Magazine and the Sea of Energy can be found. Unfortunately those references were "missing from the files" at the Library of Congress.

Byron S. Wine III
Manassas, VA.

{The Post did not publish this registered letter. 95 pages of documentation were sent with the letter.}