

Let's regulate, not tax

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The environment and what needs to be done about it has been in the news a lot lately. Except there's really nothing new here.

Anyone who's been on the planet for more than 20 years knows that keeping the environment clean is a big concern and it has always been in the news to varying degrees.

However, judging by the garbage tossed along rural roads, people talk, but don't walk the walk. Everything from beer cans and water bottles to Tim Hortons cups and Monster energy drink cans line the roads surrounding our town. Apparently a lot of people think nothing about knocking back a Bud Light while behind the wheel and tossing the can out the window.

Environmental concerns are a reality, however I question the modern methods of keeping things clean.

When I was a kid and it snowed, within a couple of days that white snow looked like someone had taken a pepper shaker and sprinkled it over our yard. I asked my dad one day why the snow always turns black.

It turns out the big factory in town, which at the time produced fertilizer and was only a couple of miles from our house, would belch out huge amounts of exhaust through its giant smokestack. The particles from that smokestack would settle on the city.

Nearby Lake Erie in the 60's and early 70's was a dying lake. It was overloaded with phosphorus from farm and sewage treatment plants as well all sorts of contaminants from nearby factories in Ohio and incoming sewage from the upper Great Lakes. It was a mess.

The fact that Lake Erie was labeled a 'dead lake' made international news. It also spawned a new era of environmental awareness.

You may remember the crying Indian commercials where someone tosses litter from a car and Iron Eyes Cody sheds a tear. Turns out Iron Eyes wasn't even native, he was Italian, but the commercial worked very well to bring awareness to the cesspool the environment had become.

As a result of the Lake Erie disaster, the U.S. Congress passed the Clean Water Act and the U.S. and Canadian governments signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

It worked. Within a few years the Lake was once again a vibrant waterway.

Big polluters were required to take action with their giant smokestacks and get their industry's waste treatment under control.

At the time, the government went after the polluters to get things done. They didn't hammer ordinary citizens for the crimes of others.

The latest big thing when it comes to environmental concerns is the push to switch to electric vehicles.

I've driven one and I was impressed by its performance. More people will probably be interested in the switch to an electric vehicle once they can produce one that has a decent range and it doesn't take hours to charge the battery.

There is a new government program that is designed to encourage people to buy electric vehicles by offering a rebate to purchasers.

Let's first point out that modern gas-driven vehicles are not the big polluters they once were. They no longer emit all the dangerous chemicals they once did. That's why the Drive Clean program is actually going away ? almost no vehicles failed the test.

It used to be fairly common to hear of a person dying after being poisoned in a closed garage with the engine running, but modern engines turn out such a low amount of CO now, that's almost a thing of the past.

As far as electric vehicles go, the environmentalists never talk about what goes into producing a car battery. That's another story.

The government's iZEV electric car rebate program offers purchasers of an electric vehicle up to \$5000 back on vehicles costing up to \$55,000.

Here is where the problem is: If you can afford to spend \$55,000 on a expensive electric car, the government rewards by giving you cash rebates ? which these people don't need because they are already making enough to afford the car.

But if you are single mother, struggling in a low income job and can only afford an inexpensive compact car with a regular engine, your 'reward' is to be punished by paying more for gas through the new federal carbon tax ? thus taking even more away from from your paycheck and paying extra for food for those children because the carbon tax is passed on to the grocery stores.

I'm all for protecting the environment, however taxing your citizens to death is not the solution.

They did it in the 70s without extra taxes ? they can do it now.