

# The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2007 <http://www.holzerent.com>

## Superlatives

A recent announcement led to an email exchange amongst a few of your more vocal CNY – PCA'ers. Or at least prolific writers. The trigger event was the announcement of the awarding of a Nobel prize to Al Gore for his assertion that the planet is being warmed by us (and by association and implication; US), followed by the notice that he had urged imposition of EU speed limits on all highways, including the German Autobahn, during a speech in Berlin.

I could imagine the throngs of adoring “greenies” hanging on his every word, arms raised in praise and salute for his wondrous insight, and certitude, and willing to accept his vision for the world's future, whatever it might cost. Thankfully, a few more Germans did a little critical review than had seventy years earlier with “brownies” in similar circumstances, so you can still look forward to enjoying the drive in the one last country where they seemingly expect people to be responsible for themselves.

I am not sure which annoys me more; the idea that the Nobel Committee would so reward a guy who added nothing of actual science to the discussion – he's a politician, not a scientist; somebody else did the real work – he merely got published because of his name. Or was it that his opinion of the fix for a global problem was to remove the liberties of drivers who actually do something with TIME and COST efficiency because of the “justice” of reducing the capability of all (note: only DRIVERS) to the lowest common denominator.

I used to believe the Nobel Prize was a meaningful recognition of the advancement of humanity, and awarded only to the best of the best. I am not so sure of that anymore, based on recent awards; not least of which “Big Al”. And this is NOT because of or in spite of my own politics. Whether one agrees with how the 2000 election was ultimately decided, there IS one unarguable fact; he did not even carry his own state, whichever others he did or did not, and whether “chad” voted or stayed home. Not confidence inspiring for a former senator from same. But as for the Nobel, he is far from the most inappropriate in my opinion.

When I think of the Nobel, I think of the transistor, without which we probably couldn't even KNOW about global warming (think about how you get stuff in space to monitor stuff on earth). I think about medical advances which might allow me to be alive long enough to see the planet ruined by me. Sadly, I do NOT think of any automotive achievements, despite the fact that the personal automobile is my single most direct representation of what liberty really looks like – the ability to decide to be somewhere else, doing something other than what I am doing right now, and therefore makes the planet WORTH saving for me. I think about the fact that the personal automobile seems to be viewed as the prime cause of all the world's ills, if legislative activity is any measure. In almost every way we have politicians and bureaucrats trying to impose their definition of automotive expectation, or lack thereof, on our individual choices, rather than setting rules which let us determine our own tradeoffs. So, for example, I would prefer to see gas cost \$10 a gallon (or whatever the fuel would become because that price would justify alternative developments commercially) but let US decide how much to use. That way the person with the micro mini could smugly say “look at that unlucky bastard who has to use so much gas to get his large body through the air” instead of the current guy in the Hummer saying “look at that poor bastard who has to drive that micro mini so GM can average the fuel mileage of it with mine to meet the government's CAFÉ requirements”.

The one CERTAINTY is that people, left alone to make decisions, make the ones which make the most sense to THEM. Which I suppose explains the recipients of Nobels recently. And besides the fact that the conscience of the originator of it led him to create a “Peace” prize, given the killing which resulted from the explosives dear old Alfred (What, ME worry?) developed and made a fortune from, I wonder what else qualifies the Swedes to make the decisions? It certainly doesn't seem to be mainstream thought, at least based on the designs for Volvos & Saabs. And, since neither company seemed able to have survived without the cash infusions from the makers of “cars for the masses”, I wonder at the economic model which is believed to be the basis for their continuance, given the reality of the first sentence in this paragraph.

But that is the point, isn't it? We all do what we do for SOME reason. Perhaps altruistic, like why does a guy who doesn't even OWN a Porsche willingly volunteer both to do the hardest job in any region; newsletter editor, and to suffer the indignities of having to beg from we who simply want to express our opinions, as well as put up with the jokes about his lack of such ownership. And he does a far better than merely good job at it as well. Perhaps because we want to be seen in the same kind of machine that some celebrity drives (if you are reading this and that is your justification, shame on you). Maybe we pay high enough prices that we could buy a third of a VW with the excess, merely so we can get what we believe to be the BEST. And perhaps, as in one specific case I know of, you were merely born into it and don't know any better ;-). Or, perhaps you are like Thakie, (rhymes with... ) Chuckie & Mikie; you still haven't decided what you want to do when you grow up, so you're trying pretty much everything in hopes you never will.

I guess that in the end we all want something to admire, and ourselves be admired for. We hope it is noble, even if not Nobel, quality, but we hope more that we leave to our children something better than we had for ourselves. I don't fault "Big Al" for trying in that way, but I DO hope he will realize that my aspirations for solutions may conflict with his, but are no less worthy of consideration until they are proven unfeasible. That hasn't even been tried yet.

Every week I see another concept which is startling in its ability to move in the desired direction, even as I also see ones which I hope will be seen as absurd. Some are merely idealistic fantasies which have no likelihood of survival in the real world, while others are dangerous attempts by control freaks trying to enact their will in the supposed effort to assure my "safety". No thanks. I believe it is not a difficult task at all to demonstrate why we are where we are; the sum of all benefits vs all costs for all things at the time they were done pretty much made them the ultimate survivors in the Darwinian sense. There are a host of reasons why cars today are largely powered by petroleum distillates rather than electricity, despite the fact that one of the earliest Porsches was an electric all-wheel drive car. And why the dirtiest fuel is the primary source for the most power used on the planet. And it's NOT "a conspiracy, man" ;-)

At their respective decision points, those choices represented the collective determination of "Superlative". Worthy of a Nobel as much as Big Al, and granted the recognition even with the same left-handed compliment which it must seem to a guy who lost the Presidency of the United States even with more than half the popular vote. Because that's the way things are in the real world. TANSTAAFL. There ain't no such thing as a free lunch. Everything has tradeoffs, and NOTHING is perfect, even Porsche.

I will seriously entertain shared sacrifice when it actually exists. But until luxury yachts, personal jets and a host of other unequal consumptions of resources (including my own) are eliminated, selecting of slowing fast drivers as the solution to greenhouse gasses is laughably naïve and criminally discriminatory, and certainly not worthy of a Nobel. A FAR better investment would be to GIVE Asian powerplants coal scrubbers, plant a LOT of trees and water them with waste effluent after growing seaweed used to make bioethanol (as well as absorb CO2 in the process), just as a start.

YOU will decide what kind of world we will leave to our great grandchildren. By what you purchase and what you don't. By what you accept and what you refuse. By what you do and what you fail to do. I am personally optimistic. Not because I believe in people, but because I believe in human nature. We don't always do the right thing. Maybe not even mostly. But we could not have gotten to where we ARE had we made ALL bad decisions. So there is some basis for the good ones. I do not know necessarily what they are. But I am certain they are superlative.

