

The Oil Drum: Campfire

Discussions about Energy and Our Future

Fibber McGee, Molly, and Your Energy Future

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Topic: [Sociology/Psychology](#)

Tags: [energy transition](#), [future](#), [propaganda](#), [rationing](#) [[list all tags](#)]

This is a post by [Debbie Cook](#); Debbie is the former Mayor of Huntington Beach and a former congressional candidate. She currently serves as a board member of ASPO-USA and Post Carbon Institute.

Several weeks ago at the Harmony Festival in Santa Rosa, California, [Richard Heinberg](#) told a audience member not to hold her vision of the future too tightly. Sound advice that I wrote on a scrap of paper and put in my pocket. This past week his words came back to me as I found myself in a two hour conversation with two peak oil aware friends who wanted to discuss the future. One friend had decided he was going to immigrate with his sister to New Zealand. Having recently returned from New Zealand I could certainly understand the attraction. But I (who am often accused of being a doomer) suggested he consider many scenarios when thinking about the energy transition and reminded him of Mark Twain's words, *there's so much people know that ain't so*.

We tend to seek information that confirms our beliefs rather than looking for that which contradicts it. It is our tendency to be more sure the less we know, and less sure, the more we know.

During a recent "peak oil" weekend in Northern California I had the luxury of catching up on my podcast listening while driving up from Huntington Beach. In addition to my typical consumption of energy related podcasts, (including an interesting [interview](#) by Jason Bradford of [Michael Bomford](#)), I sprinkled in some lighter fare.

I love the old time radio programs and keep hundreds on my ipod for long drives or sleepless nights. One of my favorites is [Fibber McGee and Molly](#), a popular 30-minute comedy that entertained America from 1935 to 1956. During the war years, propaganda (I imply no value judgment here) was used by all governments; radio provided a perfect venue for this important component of the war effort. For those of us who did not grow up during that era, the war time radio programs give us a glimpse at the saturation of the messages and also an idea of the efforts that might be enlisted in the future to deal with our energy transition.

From an unlikely source, I found the following episode of *Fibber McGee and Molly*, entitled *Gas Rationing*, to cause me to adjust my grasp of my vision of the future. I thought it might make a good Campfire discussion on TOD. There are a number of interesting jumping off points. Here are a few that came to my mind, feel free to suggest your own:

1. Is fuel rationing likely (check out the link to Leon Henderson)
2. How would propaganda play out in a world where media comes in many forms and everyone is a journalist

3. Numerous frames of the issue are presented throughout the program, which are unpersuasive to Fibber until the final one. How might energy transition be framed to get the greatest buy-in.
4. Fibber expresses many of the opinions of the day regarding Government. How similar/dissimilar are ours from those of that era.

I have transcribed the first five minutes of the program below, but I encourage you to listen to the entire program. If nothing else, you are likely to fall in love with Fibber McGee and Molly.

Title: [Gas Rationing](#)

Download or listen here: <http://www.archive.org/details/FibberMcGeeandMolly1942>

Announcer: Mileage rationing has just come to Wistful Vista and in spite of it being a meatless day, get a load of the beef being put up by an average citizen as we meet Fibber McGee and Molly.

FM: I tell ya it ain't fair Molly. They can't do this to me. Four gallons a week. Why that's ridiculous.

Molly: I think so too.

FM: You do?

Molly: Yes, you don't need four gallons.

FM: Doggone it, I do too. Four gallons is outrageous. Where can I go on four gallons of gas.

Molly: Where do you wanna go, Dearie.

FM: Well gee whiz, what if I did want to go some place...in an emergency or some place.

Molly: You mean like running out of cigars.

FM: Yes....No! Running out of cigars ain't an emergency.

Molly: You never spoke a truer word McGee.

FM: Huh?

Molly: When I get a whiff of those poison Panatellas of yours, I know why tobacco auctioneers talk that way.

FM:: Whatcha mean?

Molly: Those fellas are hysterical.

FM: Aah, forget my cigars. I'm talking about this mileage rationing. I think it's a dirty deal. The whole thing is silly. Gonna make everybody stay at home. Why in two years a guy from Indiana won't know what a guy from Kansas is talking about.

Molly: Where you from?

FM: Illinois

Molly: Then it's happened already, I don't even know what you're talking about.

FM: I'm talking about giving all the car owners a measly little medicine dropper full of gasoline. It's an infringement on private rights, that's what it is.

Molly: Look Dearie, the main reason their rationing gasoline is to save tires. Don't you know if we continue driving like we have been a majority of automobiles will be off the road next year?

FM: Good! There's too much traffic anyway. Too crowded. Get the cars off the road. That'll be fine. That's swell.

Molly: Well I'm glad you feel that way because yours will probably be one of them.

FM: What, me give up my car?! Oh, no you don't. I paid for my tires and by the left hind leg of [Leon Henderson](#) I've got a right to... I'm gonna write to my Congressman this very minute.

Molly: Who is our Congressman?

FM: Why it's ole...I don't know. Who is he?

Molly: Oh just send it to the Congressman from this District.

FM: OK, that's exactly what I'll do. What District is this?

Molly: Maybe you ought to write it to our Senator.

FM: That's better yet. I'll tell him I'm not gonna stand for any such...who's our Senators?

Molly: Look Dearie, our government has asked us to take less gasoline so we'll drive less and save the country's rubber. And if you haven't got enough interest in your government to know who your representatives are, you haven't got any right to stand around and stomach ache.

FM: Not stomach ache, the word is...

Molly: I know what the word is.

FM: Well, gee whiz, the idea of giving an important citizen like me just an A book...save rubber my clavicle. What happened to that sympathetic rubber that inventor made out of milkweed. Or was it milk he made out of a rubber plant. Any way why don't...

Doorbell rings...



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