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HYDROGEN, A CLEANER FUTURE WORLD PREMIERE: THE BMW H7

INTERVIEWS "An Inconvenient Truth"

BMW SPARTANBURG Green manufacturing

ENGINES Can faster be cleaner?





THE CONVERT ON GLOBAL WARMING

Text: Jim Pinkerton Photos: Imke Lass

From a skeptic to a firm believer, Congressman Bob Inglis expects the Hydrogen Economy will bring America to higher levels of prosperity in the near future.

The view from the BMW Zentrum in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is delightful: long swards of green grass, blue water in still pools punctuated by quiet fountains, geese freely clucking and strutting. And connected to the Zentrum – a glass-walled gallery and museum-like reception area – is a huge factory: 2.5 million square feet, where 4500 workers produce more than 100,000 BMW vehicles a year. The entire complex is not only bright, but hushed; it hums with quiet efficiency, underneath an unsullied sky.

On a bright spring day in April, Representative Bob Inglis (R-SC) is here on a visit. As the Congressman for the Fourth District, he has seen, up close, all the good that BMW has done for the Palmetto State since the plant's groundbreaking, back in 1992. And yet in his own remarkable way, Inglis, too, is looking ahead – far ahead.

“I see a triple play for the 21st century: cleaning up the air, creating jobs, and improving our national security,” he says as a sudden breeze whips his necktie over his shoulder. Inglis, the ranking member of the Energy & Environment Subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee, sees new technological advancement – specifically, the Hydrogen Economy – as carrying America to higher plateaus of sustainability and prosperity. The inevitable “H Economy,” he believes, will have three effects: first, it will dramat-

ically reduce air pollution; second, it will ramp up employment, as new hydrogen-related industries are established; and third, it will reduce America's reliance on oil imported from volatile regions. “And that's not only good for our national security,” Inglis concludes, “it's also good for the national security of all our key allies.”

Inglis concedes that his initial response to global warming was “skepticism.” But now he sees it as a threat – and as a spur to action. His turnaround came during a 2006 trip to Antarctica, where he saw ice-core samples dating back hundreds of thousands of years, each showing beyond any doubt that CO₂ levels have risen rapidly in the last few centuries. “Human beings are a substantial cause of global warming,” he says with finality.

The South Carolina Congressman has seen former Vice President Al Gore's Academy Award-winning documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth,” and regards the film as “compelling.” He was present in the hearing room on March 21, when Gore made his return to Capitol Hill. Like Gore, he is determined to leave a positive legacy on behalf of the environment in the decades ahead.

“Environmental stewardship is an ancient ethical concept,” he declares. Pollution, for him, is an obvious disregard for the rights of future generations. “I shouldn't be able to do something on my land

Congressman Bob Inglis (R-SC) stands by BMW while they help lead the way to a healthy, clean Hydrogen Future.



The Zentrum, in Spartanburg, South Carolina, houses historical displays, including the new BMW Hydrogen 7.

“WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM THE WAY WE LIVE AND DRIVE, AND TO DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE LIFE ON THE PLANET.”

EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABILITY

Following the world premiere of the BMW Hydrogen 7 luxury performance sedan at the Los Angeles Auto Show, BMW hosted a “Sustainability Talk” at the California Science Center. Held before an audience of more than 70 journalists, the topic of discussion was sustainability, and the issues involved in the ongoing search for alternative fuels. Moderated by FOX News Channel’s Jim Pinkerton, participants in the panel discussion included Congressman Bob Inglis (R-SC); Jason Mark, Clean Vehicles Program Director for the Union of Concerned Scientists; and Hollywood film producer Lawrence Bender. An outgrowth from the panel discussion was a commitment by BMW of North America to expand the dialogue on sustainability by making copies of Mr. Bender’s Oscar-winning film, “An Inconvenient Truth,” available to owners. Please see the enclosed postage-paid Reply Card to take advantage of this offer.

that can do harm to my neighbor’s land.” Yet for too long, he adds, polluters have been able to simply dump their waste into global commons, at no immediate cost to themselves.

Such dumping offends Inglis on an ethical level, and it bothers him on a practical economic level, as well. Markets only work, he observes, when the true costs of everything are properly factored in: “The market can only evaluate a product if all the externalities are internalized.” In economics, an “externality” is something that’s outside the economic transaction; pollution is a perfect example. For example, if A makes something and sells it to B, both A and B might be happy enough – but if that economic process also causes pollution that adversely affects C (and probably, ultimately, A and B, too), then the benefits of the original economic process must be reconsidered in light of the real costs imposed by the pollution externality.

Happily, innovation can turn “negative” externalities into “positive” externalities. For example, more than half the power that the BMW plant uses to operate comes from methane generated at a nearby waste dump. Inglis is admiring of this ingenuity. “Turning trash into treasure – BMW leads the way.” Citing all the efforts that BMW has made toward total sustainability, from the manufacturing of a car through to the ultimate recycling of that same car, Inglis concludes, “They make an excellent product, excellently.”

For Inglis, who makes his home in Travelers Rest (pop. 4100) at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the environment is up close

and personal. He and his wife, Anne, and their five children enjoy biking, hiking and whitewater rafting amid the natural splendor of such places as Table Rock State Park in Pickens. He recalls a remark by one of his children: “We are close to everything that matters in life.”

And while global warming is still a bit avant-garde in the minds of some of his constituents, Inglis sees evidence of greater awareness and concern across the entirety of his district. The Spartanburg Wildlife Federation, for instance, recently told him that just a one-degree increase in temperature could jeopardize the trout population in the local mountain streams.

But for those not so moved by environmental concerns, Inglis is ready to talk about another kind of green: the kind that comes from economic development. Speaking animatedly inside the Zentrum – home to a collection of classic BMW cars – Inglis reflects on the enormous contribution that the company has made to the economy of his state over the past 15 years. “The most important thing that the plant did,” he says, “has been to bring a symbol of world-class quality to South Carolina, enabling us to demonstrate to the world that we could produce a product to BMW standards.”

Inside the Zentrum, Inglis admires a new Hydrogen 7 “dual-fuel” vehicle that made its debut at the Los Angeles Auto Show last November – a fully road-ready BMW, able to run on either liquid hydrogen or gasoline. The BMW Hydrogen 7 inspires Inglis to

expand further on the twinned topics of technological innovation and economic development. “There’s no better corporate citizen than BMW,” he maintains, pointing not only to the plant but also to the International Center for Automotive Research (ICAR) at nearby Clemson University. BMW helped raise a total investment of \$50 million for ICAR (BMW gave \$10 million, asked the State to allocate \$15 million from BMW’s use to Clemson University, and persuaded the State to invest an additional \$25 million).

ICAR bids to be a hub of new development, creating jobs, profits and also tax revenue – for South Carolina and for America. The key, Inglis says, is continuous technological improvement. He points to the computer industry, which has remade itself every few years for decades now, each time improving the lives of consumers, as well as generating new jobs for workers and more wealth for the country. Now, he adds, “We need a similar quantum leap for cars. We must reinvent the automobile.” But when such reinvention occurs – and Inglis has no doubt that it will occur – the macroeconomic benefits of the new breakthroughs will be considerable. “If we ever want to balance the budget,” he reminds fiscal-minded audiences, “we had better figure out a way to accelerate clean growth.”

And if the goal is clean growth, then the Hydrogen Economy must be at the top of the national agenda. Inglis is a founding member of the House Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Caucus; as he puts it, “We’ve got to find something to replace oil.” The Congressman sees his home state as uniquely suited to take the lead: The Savannah River National Laboratory, in Aiken, is part of a cluster of public and private institutions that have been working on hydrogen production and storage issues for more than half a century. More recently, the University of South Carolina has established a Cooperative Research for Fuel Cells. These are the cutting-edge outfits that will work with companies such as BMW to drive the Hydrogen Future.

So for Inglis, the Hydrogen Future takes him back to his visionary “triple play” – clean the environment, create jobs, improve national security.

The Congressman is confident that both parties will do more in the future to advance sustainable economic growth, maximizing both consumer satisfaction and environmental protection. He knows that the task won’t be easy; many people cannot yet envision an alternative to the energy status quo. But as Inglis observes, “Following people where they’ve already been – that’s not leadership.” True leadership is “delivering value” to people, changing the equations of their lives: “Figuring out how to project the future, and then getting everyone there.”

That’s what Bob Inglis intends to do. He is realistic and sober-minded about the challenges ahead, but at the same time, he is optimistic, even confident. As he sees it, the future is bright – and it’s also cool and green. “We have the opportunity to transform the way we live and drive, and to dramatically improve life on the planet.”

Inglis concludes with a gleam in his eye, “It’s just around the corner.”