

**THE BLOG**

# Prof. Harold Hill Hits the Road

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By Marty Kaplan

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This is energy week for the White House. Last week, in case you missed it, was health week, but something seemed to have stepped on, or shot at, their message. No matter - W's Presidents Day plan is to fuel up Air Force One and zip from photo op to photo op attempting to convince the nation that he has an energy plan that will free us oil junkies from our addiction.

The White House hopes that flooding the media with images of W peering at solar panels and expelling impressive amounts of geothermal energy from his mouth will prove that he truly has what his marketing geniuses will stencil into the background of every picture taken of him: an Advanced Energy Initiative.

His actual energy strategy, of course, is exactly what you'd expect from a Texas oilman, and whose Svengali VP long ago declared that conservation is for pantywaists. (For an analysis of the Bush energy policy, look here.)

Bush's energy "plan" is the policy equivalent of "the think system" — the con run by *The Music Man's* Prof. Harold Hill. If you just *think* you can play an instrument, you will. If we Americans just *think* we can wean ourselves from those OPEC meanies, we will. Shared sacrifice? You gotta be nuts. Higher mileage standards? Big Government is so Jimmy Carter. Global warming? You must not have gotten the memo.

It was thrilling when those Iowa kids who couldn't read a note nevertheless managed to march down Main Street playing "Seventy-Six Trumbones." That's the feel-good finale that the Republicans want us to believe in. For the cost of less than a week of war in Iraq, the're telling us, we're going to research ourselves into energy independence.

How hard will the media push back on this gutless swindle?

At best, it'll be he-said/she-said. The panpoly of the visiting President will be counterposed by some Washington politician (whose substantive critique will be framed and undermined by its putatively partisan motives), or by some think tanker (who will look as though the manly cry, "It's a gusher!" has never passed his lips).

Far be it from the press actually to explain to the country that it's being conned. These days, the tyranny of false equivalence rules journalism. It's phony parity — putting your thumb on the scale, so that lies and truths weigh the same. After all, who wants to be accused of raining on the River City Boys Band parade? No, it looks like the weather report for W's energy week is fair, and balanced.