

Nature's Road Less Traveled

Tall. Majestic. Proud: the caribou. Hooves pounding the snowy terrain, spurring a liquid flight of grace and liveness, the caribou soars throughout the Alaskan landscape. Majestic, a thing of myths. Like the fall of Icarus, the caribou loses its sense of flight and immortality as we plunder its majestic home for black gold. Opening its home, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, in our search for more oil, we sacrifice its life for our life of comfort; oil hails far more powerful than the mighty caribou.

Thus a question is posed: shall we continue opening up the caribou's haven in order to drill for our oil, or shall we traverse the road less traveled – the road where nature is our queen and we her humble servants? Shall we designate the Arctic Refuge as nature's place, or shall we steal it as our own? The answer is apparent. We must take the road less traveled; we must put nature above our desire to live a life of comfort.

Drilling for petroleum in the Arctic's last frontier is deleterious to all forms of life. The calving areas of caribou are threatened on the coastal plains, where drilling is expected to take place. Left to provide for themselves, caribou need a haven of protection to grow up safely. If drilling were to encroach upon the calving areas, caribou would find themselves without a home, threatened by a force they cannot fight. The coastal plains also provide polar bears with denning areas so that they may hibernate for the winter and raise their young. If drilling took place in the coastal plains, polar bears would be homeless, left to face the Arctic chill without a shelter. Over 250 animal species flourish in the Reserve of 1.5 million acres – is our desire for oil so great that we justify endangering these lives?

We have become so reliant on nature's black blood that we justify murder and destruction. Nature has become our slave; we beat her and her offspring so that we may live comfortably. Instead of working harmoniously with our environment, we instead have become her master. After nurturing us and providing for us, this is the toxin we feed her. Imagine a world where reindeer truly are just fairy tale creatures. Imagine a world where polar bears are only spectacles at zoos instead of glorious free beasts. This is the world of the future if we do not plot a new path.

There is an alternative to our Machiavellian ways, a way that will promote harmony between us and our world. It is a path overgrown with weeds that only our caring hands can pull, weeds that will require money, effort, and time to eradicate. It is a path that has us work with nature instead of against it; it is accord in its purest form. It is an abandonment of petroleum for biofuel.

Biofuel, fuel made from biological materials, is a renewable energy source: it allows our earth to help us while we help her. We would never risk a fuel shortage if we turned to biofuel; we would never have to dirty a pristine natural area. If we create biofuel from waste, we can abandon the raping of our world through the process of drilling for petroleum. Second generation biofuels – not biofuels made from plant product, but from biomass such as in landfills – provide an amity between us and the earth. Biofuels reduce greenhouse emissions by harvesting carbon before it can escape into the ozone. They are biodegradable so that if spilled, the environment will simply assimilate them instead of choking on them. Oil spills would become a thing of the past if we switched to biofuels, and marine life would cheer in tribulation. Biofuels also reduce pollution, lightening the load off the earth's shoulders: if organic material can be turned

into fuel, we reduce our waste and make our own fuel. We can become as self-sustaining as the earth once was.

This process requires us to abandon all our comfortable ways. We would have to redesign our cars to run on biofuel instead of gasoline. We would have to begin recycling organic material, lest we run out of fuel. The petroleum business would end. Its lobbyists are powerful; they will not give in without a dirty fight. It is nature and her advocates versus the advocates of consumerism and uncapped capitalism. It is an uphill struggle to protect our kind and giving earth.

In our quest for luxury and convenience, we have forgotten to respect our universal mother: mother nature. The future generation must live in this world, pristine or not. It is our duty to preserve it for them, us, and nature's sons and daughters: the animals. We must take the road less traveled; it will make all the difference.