



Tony Blair on the Energy Challenge

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On Tuesday 27 June 2006 Prime Minister Tony Blair met with a selection of magazine editors for a special question and answer session in the State Dining Room of Number 10. This particular question and more specifically Blair's answer deserves far more exposure that the media seems to have given it (Hat tip [Postman Patel](#)).



Question:

I would focus on my title of European business, but I am aware that all of the energy provision of Rotterdam city is from a decentralised source, and 50% of Denmark's energy is from a decentralised source. Why is the government moving towards a nuclear solution for Britain's energy production when there is ample evidence to suggest that the challenge of global warming and fossil fuel shortages can be better met through a decentralised energy production infrastructure embracing renewable fuels and energy sources?

Tony Blair:

Well I think the answer to that is you are going to have to do everything if you want to deal with the energy security issues and climate change. But when we publish the Energy Review it will not simply focus on nuclear, it will focus on renewables and a big expansion of renewables, energy efficiency, there is combined heat and power which of course is very much the solution in Denmark.

There are a whole series of things that we will be focusing on, but there is a simple stark fact that I would just like to put in front of people, which is we are going to go over the next 15 or 20 years to a situation where: one, the 20% that we get of our electricity from nuclear is going to decline to virtually zero; and two, where we are going to go from being 80 or 90% self-sufficient in oil and gas, to 80 or 90% importing it.

And I think what that means is if we want to safeguard our energy supply, as well as deal with climate change, we have got to put everything in the mix and have a balanced policy. And I am talking about whether we replace the existing nuclear power component of our electricity, but if we are not going to replace it we are going to have to, well what is going to happen on renewables is going to have to be absolutely massive.

So there we have it, Blair is living in the real world, he is aware that nuclear and North Sea oil and gas are on the way out. It's clear that the forthcoming Energy Review will broadly support nuclear the uncertainty is over how much State support will be offered (or even is able to be offered under EU legislation). Perhaps the nuclear issue has taken too much of the attention though, at expense of other areas the Energy Review will report on.

New nuclear build can't be expected to do any more than replace the decommissioned fleet (even

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that's is probably too optimistic within the 15-20 year time frame) yet here we have the Prime Minister talking of the rapid shift to imported oil and gas. The very fact he's mentioned it suggests it's a concern.

Critical will be the demand side response - will actions be taken to reduce our electricity demand by a third within a decade? Will 20mpg cars still be marketed in the UK in 2010? Also what new policies will be needed to get to the aspirational target of 20% electricity supply from renewables by 2020?

Full transcript available here: [Q and A with The British Society of Magazine Editors](#)



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