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Natural gas drilling is a 'no-brainer'

Daily Star

A short time ago, we read a letter from an old soldier. I don't remember his exact words, but it went something like this.

"In World Wars I and II, the combatants destroyed villages, towns, cities and entire countries. The continent of Europe was demolished twice and vast sections of the Pacific were devastated. The destruction was epic.

"In the Great War, heavy artillery leveled villages, vast trenches crisscrossed Europe, and poison gas killed or maimed hundreds of thousands. It was 'the war to end all wars.'

"Sadly, this was not the case. Less than a generation later, the worst conflict in history began. World War II was Armageddon. Vast armies faced each other in Europe, the Pacific and Africa.

"The entire populations of towns and villages were killed. Cities were engulfed by the inferno of incendiary bombing. Untold millions of tons of high explosives were dropped on Berlin, Stalingrad, Dresden, London, Tokyo ...

"At sea, thousands of ships were sunk. A great many were tankers. Their loss makes the Exxon Valdez and the gulf oil spill look like a runny nose.

"As armies advanced, the retreating forces blew up bridges and destroyed factories and food supplies. When the course of war turned, the invaders left a 'scorched earth' during their retreat. Over and over, there was destruction and death on a scale never before seen.

"With thousands of Sherman, Panzer and T34 tanks and with bombers, heavy artillery and fighter planes totaling in the hundreds of thousands, the war raged for more than four long years. Billions of gallons of fuel were used, and countless fuel dumps destroyed. The oil fields of Europe were set ablaze. Two large cities in Japan were nuked and virtually erased from the map.

"The destruction was immense. Approximately 70 million people were killed, and thousands of towns and villages ruined. Billions of tons of bombs and artillery were spent. But surprisingly, the 'environment' was not really damaged. Water systems were rebuilt quickly, bridges reconstructed for the umpteenth time, crops were grown the following spring, and cattle once again grazed peacefully on the hillsides. Even Nagasaki and

Hiroshima were soon alive and well."

He ended his letter by simply saying, "Now you are worried about pollution from my SUV?"

Our old soldier is not a scientist and other than his Chevy Suburban, he "doesn't have a dog in the fight." He has intelligence and common sense. I like this guy!!!

Today, we have a no-brainer called gas drilling, but as Scotty would say, "We got a problem, Capt'n!"

Lo and behold, our "environment" is at peril. This "fragile" ecosystem, which survived Armageddon twice in the 20th century alone, will succumb to fracking. Our wells may be poisoned, and drilling rigs will visually pollute our landscape.

Now, let me get this straight. We are sitting on billions of dollars of clean-burning natural gas, but for fear of potentially poisoning someone's well, we are afraid to act. Is there no testosterone left in 21st century America?

The "quarter-acre club" and the herd of sheep that follow lockstep to the altar of the environment are in a snit.

Many have nothing to gain and envy their neighbors who do. Others are sheep and can be alarmed by junk science or their own shadow.

You know, I'm a little tired of the "sainthood" that environmentalists drape themselves in. They are so very concerned, they are only looking out for our children's future, and after all, they just want clean air and water. So do I, but let's not destroy economies and industries because of some improbable disaster or bogus scientific theory based on a political agenda. Remember global warming?

Note the following. It is an e-mail from a local farmer, responding to one of our columns: "As a dairy farmer on the northernmost part of the county, I am glad to see some common sense.

Our battle here is not only about gas wells. It is about property rights, too. I have a 9-year-old daughter with major medical problems, and we are at the mercy of insurance companies. I need all the resources possible."

Where is the concern over her? Where is the concern for land owners, who pay mortgages and taxes on their property?

I've always thought that the rights of the individual outweigh the rights of the many, for without individual rights, we have no freedom. Ah, freedom? Now, there is something truly "fragile."

Drilling is safe. If one compares the safety record of this multibillion-dollar industry, it is sound. Less property damage, accidents, sickness and pollution occur than in other comparable-size businesses like mining, agriculture, railroading and automobile manufacturing.

Someone once said, "Are we not men?"

Let's act like it.

Chuck Pinkey is the owner of River Valley New Holland Inc. in Otego. He can be reached at chuck.rvnewholland@gmail.com.