

burning power plants. Technology has already alleviated some of those concerns and, given the realistic range of alternatives, coal is likely to remain a significant factor in our energy future.

“An obvious major alternative to coal in electric power generation is nuclear power. Low prices for competing fuels and concerns about safety have been a drag on this industry. Still, its share of electricity production in the United States has increased from less than 5 percent in 1973 to about 20 percent in 2000. Given the steps that have been taken over the years to make nuclear energy safer and the obvious environmental advantages it has in terms of reducing emissions, the time may have come to consider whether we can overcome the impediments to tapping its potential more fully. Up front, of course, is the challenge of finding an acceptable way to store spent fuel and radioactive waste. If this problem can be resolved and if some of the long-deferred research and developments to make nuclear power more economical were to bear fruit, the potential for nuclear power could doubtless be enlarged.

“The remainder of our domestic energy production comes from a variety of renewable energy sources, the most prominent of which are hydroelectric power from dams and the energy generated by recycling of waste and byproducts from industry and agriculture. Solar and wind power have proved economical in some small-scale and specialized uses, but together they count for only a tiny fraction of renewable energy...

“To be sure, energy issues present policymakers and citizens with difficult decisions and tradeoffs to make outside the market process. As always, national security and environmental concerns need to be addressed in setting policy. But those concerns should be addressed in a manner that, to the greatest extent possible, does not distort or stifle the meaningful functioning of our markets. We must remember that the same price signals that are so critical for the allocative process in the short run also signal profit opportunities for long-term supply expansion. Moreover, they stimulate the

research and development that will unlock new approaches to energy production and use that we can now only scarcely envision. I look forward to a future that is bright in more ways than one.”

**Catherine Bertini:  
Afghanistan, A Turning Point?**

*Catherine Bertini, executive director of the United Nation's World Food Programme, addressed The Economic Club of Chicago on December 16, 2001, on Afghanistan.*



“Afghanistan’s people are desperately poor. It is second to last in the list of all the countries in the world, for instance, in its rate of child mortality. It is one of the lowest, has one of the lowest levels of literacy for women, and even for men, in the world. Not only are the people poor, but they have been ravaged by war for decades. In the World Food Programme’s perspective, we’ve built many projects. Many of these are food-for-projects, where we exchange food for people’s labor. And by the Summer 2001, we were the largest employer in Afghanistan, employing, with food as payment, 2 million people. And they were about half of the 3.8 million people that we were reaching with food in this country.

“When the Taliban took over five years ago they said that women can’t work, girls can’t go to school, women can’t leave the house, unless they’re in the company of a male blood relative, women and men can’t talk to each other unless they’re in their homes and they’re related. Our first reaction, of course, was that we thought this was a joke. But then, unfortunately, we found out that it was very real. And we had the first problem of having food for children in school and not being able to reach girls anymore at school. So, we informed the Taliban that this was not a life-saving

measure. It was critically important. We wouldn't be able to feed only boys. We would find, and we found, some of the small schools that women had set up illegally and feed the girls in those schools. So that we would feed some boys, but that otherwise, we couldn't, as the United Nations, support this kind of approach.

"We then had a problem with our own staff. The women's staff of the World Food Programme couldn't work anymore. We sent computers to their homes. And we'd send drivers every day, in the morning and the afternoon to pick up work, so that they could continue to work. These women were very brave. They went to the Taliban and they said, 'Look, if women can't work, what happens to widows? How are they going to survive? How are their families going to survive?' And these brave women, Afghan women staff members, convinced the Taliban that we should be allowed to set up bakeries for the women, for the widows. We had already been sending food to commercial bakeries, with an understanding that they would distribute it. Of course, they would sell some of their food. But with the food we were giving them, with the flour and the wheat we were giving them, they would be selling food to a list of beneficiaries, poor beneficiaries, at 10 percent of the cost. And we already had that program going. So, these women convinced the Taliban to let us have widows open bakeries. Those bakeries continue today, and they've been operating over the last five years. When those widows make bread, they then give it to other widows who aren't able to work.

"For the people of Afghanistan, as if poverty wasn't enough, war wasn't enough, the Taliban wasn't enough. Now, they've had a drought for the last three years – devastating drought. And whatever agricultural products they normally are able to raise, they are unable to do so this year. So, the World Food Programme already was planning this summer to increase the number of people we would reach, from 3.8 million to 5.5 million people. After September 11th, when the United Nations did a new survey to find out the needs, the needs were 6

million people. So, you can see that we already had plans in place to reach almost that amount, and already had food coming in. And if you recall seeing some of the pictures in the first days of the press about what was happening in Afghanistan, you saw big bags of U.S.A. wheat carried by people in Pakistan. Going, destined for people in Afghanistan. That was because the World Food Programme already had a lot of food in place, ready to move into Afghanistan from Pakistan. And because the U.S. had already been generous. And then, and now, the U.S. contribution was over 50%. It's about 52% of the food needs for these 6 million people in Afghanistan...

"What happens next in Afghanistan? There's no infrastructure whatsoever. The government needs all the political, moral and financial support that it can get. The community involvement is critical. And the decision-making by the communities about how to use our aid, and the aid of other agencies, is critical as well. We need to help them to build schools. To build health centers. To feed children at school. Perhaps even to feed teachers, and medical personnel before the civil service system gets set up and there's actual cash to feed people. We need to be able to provide food for pregnant women and women who are breast feeding their children. There are so many things we can do with food. And of course, so many things that need to be done in Afghanistan, throughout the country...

"Well, what does this mean for us? For the United States? The United States is at war, still. But, every American is more and more aware of the poverty and the needs of the people of Afghanistan. Aware of the challenges that face them. Aware of the hopes and the aspirations of those people...

"The 99% of the rest of the people who are desperately hungry are like those in Afghanistan. People without food...

"And what people say to me is, 'O.K., well those people are poor. But does it work? When you get them some food, does it work?' Well, I can tell you

so many things that work with food. Training women works with food. Women who are illiterate, women who come into a center knowing nothing except that they know they're going to get some food. And then learning how to read and write. And learning then how to talk to somebody about paying their rent. About buying something for their family, for their household. I once visited some women in Bangladesh who had been training in all different steps along the way to raise chickens. And one woman had the eggs. And she knew how to raise the eggs, and take care of the eggs until they hatched. And then she sold them to the woman who took care of the chicks. And then she sold them to the woman that raised them to adulthood, who sold them to the woman who brought them to market. The most important woman, by the way, to all of them was the doctor. Because she was the chicken doctor. She kept them healthy. This was done with food aid. They were trained with food aid. Because while they were learning how to do this, they had to have something to eat. Rather than whatever way they used to find food, they were fed in food aid while they did this...

“So, does food aid work? Yes, it works. Does it get there? Yes, it gets there. We have very detailed accounts of how our food is managed. Of the programs it's going to. And any country where there's a 2% loss or more, we take remedial action. Including holding back food and making the country pay back. And does it work overall? Yes...

“But, then people say, ‘well we do a lot already. The U.S. does so much already.’ Well, I'd like to give you a few statistics about this. These are from OECD. The U.S. gives approximately, through the government, \$34 per capita. Denmark gives \$312 per capita. Japan \$106. The UK \$75. Canada \$52. There's another thing they look at, the official development assistance as a percentage of GNP. And the goal that we've all agreed to, all the rich countries in the world is .7%. The U.S. is at .1 %. And of the 22 wealthy countries in the world, the U.S. is ranked 22. For food aid, the U.S. gave

about \$1.7 billion worldwide. That's a lot. It's about 80% of the total. About 50% of what WFP received...

“So, will Afghanistan become a turning point for America? There are many, many Afghanistans. And the question is, will we make a commitment to help all of those Afghanistans? All those other countries around the world, as we are helping Afghanistan?

“We could ignore them. As I believe, we have generally, for the past. And the next phase will come by after the war is over, and we'll think about the next celebrity issue that's coming by. We could be repulsed by the activities. And I hope not. Remember when the tragedy of those soldiers who were pulled through the mud, dragged through the mud by their feet in Somalia? And after all that, American public opinion was not interested in doing this kind of work around the world. We have to steel ourselves to say, we're fighting now. And we may be fighting, as the president says, for a long time. And that means there's going to be some tough times, too. And when they happen, we have to continue. We have to persevere. Because unless we do, we've learned already, that we ignore all this at our own peril. When we talk about globalization, it no longer means business in trade, it also refers to humanity. All politics is local. All politics is global...”