



A Destructive Clash

Dear Reader,

Battery electric vehicles are not becoming cleaner and more attractive only because of the deception behind the mileage and emissions claims made for internal combustion engines. It is the courts that will adjudicate the cases of deception – and not the automobile manufacturers and politicians. While stakeholders in the automobile industry and decision makers working in environmental-protection, transportation and energy departments are to focus on constructive short and long-term solutions.

I see the current clash between the proponents of the two types of cars as destructive and not constructive, a clash between two fronts that shouldn't even exist given their common aims, but which is regrettably very real for emotional reasons and fears of losing out in the battle for market share. Those taking up the cause of conventional car technology are quick to criticise the heavy carbon footprint of today's e-cars. Although their criticism is on the mark, they neglect to mention that they have nothing better to offer. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

E-vehicles are not necessarily environmental friendly. Their carbon footprint depends on how electricity is produced. The share of renewable energy in the energy mix is to continue to increase. The owners of e-vehicles today do have the option of drawing their power from renewable sources. In contrast, diesel and gasoline can't be produced by tapping the energy of the sun and the wind. That being said, we've seen successful efforts to make internal combustion engines cleaner and more efficient for decades. Natural gas and liquid petroleum gas would eliminate the need to implement elaborate exhaust aftertreatment systems in gasoline-powered vehi-

cles. The idea was disparaged on account of a lack of appropriate fueling stations.

The development of synthetic fuels began with a roar, only to collapse with a whimper. Now there are attempts at resuscitation. The energy-intensive production of synthetic fuels will need to be taken into account. Yes, producing batteries is also energy-intensive – like producing the 3000 or so parts that are installed in diesel and gasoline-powered vehicles, 2000 more than are needed in electric vehicles. Comparisons should be fair.

While the arguments and counterarguments can be expanded using sound data, the clash is taking a toll. The introduction of electric motors is connected to transforming our transport and energy supply systems. It follows that both parties need to fight next to one another for the best solutions and not against one another. This is a difficult task for established automobile manufacturers as they find themselves confronted by three options: staying the course, scaling back or retooling.



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