

# Energy crisis not a one-time phenomenon

It should be obvious by now, regardless of what people may have thought during the Arab oil boycott, that the so-called "energy crisis" is not a temporary, isolated or one-time phenomenon.

The very lifeblood of American industrial society has always been a seemingly inexhaustible supply of low-cost energy. Now, despite repeated, long-term warnings from conservationists, environmentalists and others on the alarmist fringe, we find ourselves "suddenly" in a period of shortage.

The problem of matching an ever-increasing rate of energy consumption with rapidly decreasing reserves is not one that is likely to disappear soon, even though energy supplies are more than adequate at the present.

Clearly we are not at the end of our energy reserves, but are reaching the bottom of our richest and most easily recovered sources. We have skimmed the cream off and now seem ready to put less accessible energy sources into production.

It should not be surprising, then, that surviving the Nixon Administration is something at least as infamous and fanciful: Project Independence.

On the surface, the prospect of becoming totally self-sufficient in energy needs by 1980 seems to offer welcome relief from the problem of unpredictable foreign suppliers, but in actuality such an attempt will not solve our energy problems and will make our problems worse.

A recent report by the National Academy of Engineering pointed out that the capital, material and labor needed to make a legitimate attempt to reach self-sufficiency would be enormous. The report estimated that the capital needs alone for Project Independence would exceed \$600 billion.

Such a staggering outlay is clearly economically impossible. Astronomical rates of inflation, the strangulation of even basic social programs and the extinction of the American consumer would be only part of the legacy of Project Independence, however.

If America were ever to be truly energy self-sufficient, previously untapped coal and oil deposits would have to be made productive. Prior to

now such deposits have not been producing because the economic and environmental costs involved in their development were thought to be prohibitive. In view of the sky-rocketing cost of imported oil, however, the economic question becomes academic, and as everyone knows, environmental concerns can be sacrificed.

Thus Project Independence is serving as an effective rationale for increased offshore drilling, strip mining and oil shale development.

If Project Independence were to have any hope of success the economic disaster described previously would be coupled with environmental disaster.

rick johnson

## rhymes and reasons

Priceless natural beauty (as well as economically important rangelands) in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado and North Dakota would be totally destroyed by the massive strip-mining of coal that self-sufficiency would require. In addition, areas of Colorado are already being strip-mined to develop oil shale deposits. Increased offshore oil drilling will mean the loss of more coastal wet-lands, more oil-soaked seagulls and more dead fish.

I grow increasingly bitter as I listen to President Ford continue to talk of a Project Independence which was a fraud from the beginning.

Total independence, as I pointed out, is economically unattainable given the present rates of U.S. energy consumption. Further, it is doubtful whether some of the much talked about domestic energy sources will ever be significant contributors. Making domestic reserves such as oil shale and some coal deposits productive may consume almost as much energy as they will provide. Continued

dependence on foreign oil, at least to some extent, is unavoidable unless there are drastic reductions in the levels of U.S. energy consumption.

Thus far, however, rather than making a strong commitment to curtailing energy consumption, the emphasis of Ford's energy policy has been on increasing production.

Heat saving standards for buildings and higher fuel prices to discourage consumption obviously are a minor part of a program that otherwise includes: opening more Alaskan oil reserves to drilling, gutting the Clean Air Act, vetoing legislation to require strip-miners to restore mined land, encouraging more coal production, 150 new coal-fired power plants, 30 new refineries and 20 new synthetic fuel plants. Project Independence and the Ford energy policy in general is clearly slanted towards maximizing production rather than minimizing consumption.

The dream of U.S. energy self-sufficiency will remain only a dream as long as the White House (and Congress) assumes that *demand* is the same thing as *need*. There is a world of difference between America's energy demands and what is actually needed to maintain the country's activities.

Depending on the source one reads, it is estimated that between 40 and 80 per cent of all energy consumed in America's urban areas is wasted! Massive electrical signs, over lighted buildings, lights left burning unnecessarily, inefficient fuel use, unnecessary driving, energy wasting urban sprawl—all contribute to the senseless waste.

Of course we do not make the connection between driving six miles for a loaf of bread and birds floundering in an oil slick. Nor do we comprehend that leaving an unused light burning is an action that when multiplied in millions of homes may translate into strip-mined land. Yet we are all guilty of waste.

The Administration apparently doesn't make the connection either, since it ignores strong proposals to curtail energy waste, while offering a handkerchief to energy companies who cry that they can't meet energy demand. No doubt they're crying all the way to the bank, too.

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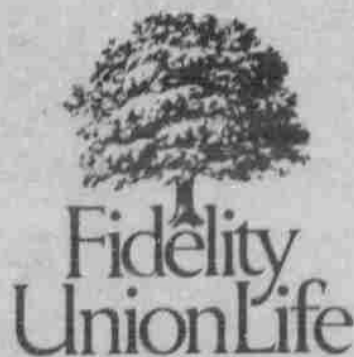
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