

UNL officials: Carter plan faces slow acceptance

By John Minnick

President Jimmy Carter's speech to Congress Wednesday outlining the details of his energy program was timely and needed, but it will take awhile for the American people to accept the proposals, according to several university officials contacted after the speech.

Don Edwards, director of the Engineering Research Center, said something had to be done with the energy crisis and Americans must change the way they are using their energy supplies.

"The energy we use today is gone forever," Edwards said. "We are going to have to use renewable resources, such as solar and wind energy, because our natural gas supplies are depleting fast."

Vincent Dreeszen, director of the Conservation and Survey Division, said Carter's program allows flexibility for energy conservation. He said the program brings out the need for awareness that there is a definite energy problem because petroleum resources are finite.

Dreeszen said that as a geologist, he has known for years that energy sources would become scarce.

Disagrees with proposal

Tom Nycum, assistant to the director of the UNL physical plant, said Carter's speech Wednesday was just what he expected, but he disagreed with Carter's proposals to restructure electricity rates.

Nycum said he does not like taxes on gas-guzzling cars, and Americans should force Detroit to make smaller cars.

"What we really need are economic incentives for more oil production and finding new energy sources," Nycum said. "Supply and demand should find itself in the oil market."

Dreeszen said there should be some government decontrol of oil prices, but he does not like the idea of totally decontrolling oil prices.

"The present image of the oil companies is not fair and blaming our energy crisis on the oil companies is ridiculous," he said. "But it's popular and easy to place the blame on them."

Edwards said he favors placing oil prices on the free market and making Americans realize the days of cheap, plentiful energy sources are over.

May need restraints

"It may mean getting rough with the American people," Edwards said. "We may need some restraints, some disincentive for people from being so wasteful."



Edwards said Americans were conscious of saving energy during the Arab Oil embargo in 1973-74, but now have gone back to their wasteful ways.

"In the first quarter of 1976, big cars outsold little cars, and today, the need for big cars in the United States is few and far between, and there is no reason Americans need their large cars," he said.

Dreeszen said any energy program must be flexible because the easily accessible oil and gas supplies already have been supplied. He said if offshore drilling is encouraged, the country must choose between scarce energy supplies and environmental concerns.

"We do have reserves, and will find them if the price is right," Dreeszen said. "I don't think Carter's program makes it very clear on how these reserves will be developed."

Dreeszen said Carter's speech gives the public a choice to handle the energy crisis and it was a good psychological and political move.

Patience needed

"I don't think the idea of energy conservation has soaked in with the American public yet," he said. "You have to have patience when you deal with people. They

have been alerted to the crisis for many years and this may start an awareness of the crisis."

Dreeszen said the public's acceptance of Carter's program will take longer than Carter expects, but Americans are adaptable and will respond to a crisis.

Edwards said from the figures he has seen, he sees no way the United States can keep on wasting energy without serious consequences.

"Unless we make changes now, we've got many problems ahead of us and the lessons will become more frequent and more harsh," he said. "We need to get going today on conserving energy and President Carter has given the public a chance to straighten up without accepting anything too-harsh."

Edwards said Americans can keep their present lifestyle, and even improve it, if they are willing to use less energy and be concerned with energy conservation.

Nycum said he does not expect great social change because of the energy shortage.

Better insulation

He said the biggest way the university can save money and prevent energy loss is through better insulation in buildings. The university is working in many areas to save energy, he said.

"We are doing basically inexpensive things, such as refitting windows, fixing roofs and making sure mechanical systems in every building are working properly to save energy," he said.

Nycum said the physical plant is doing a campus lighting survey to determine how much lighting is necessary. Students survey the existing lighting and determine its function, and check the lighting level required for the room during the day and night.

"Lighting can be readily seen as a conservation source," Nycum said. "Any time someone turns lights off, it will help. We need the students and the professors to be aware of lighting waste. We have to have everyone's help."

Edwards said the public will have to be more energy conscious, and because Nebraska imports 95 per cent of its energy, everyone must work as a team to solve the energy problem.

"President Carter has given us a long-term commitment to conserving energy," Edwards said. "It's not just for this summer and then we forget it. We're all going to have to do things differently."

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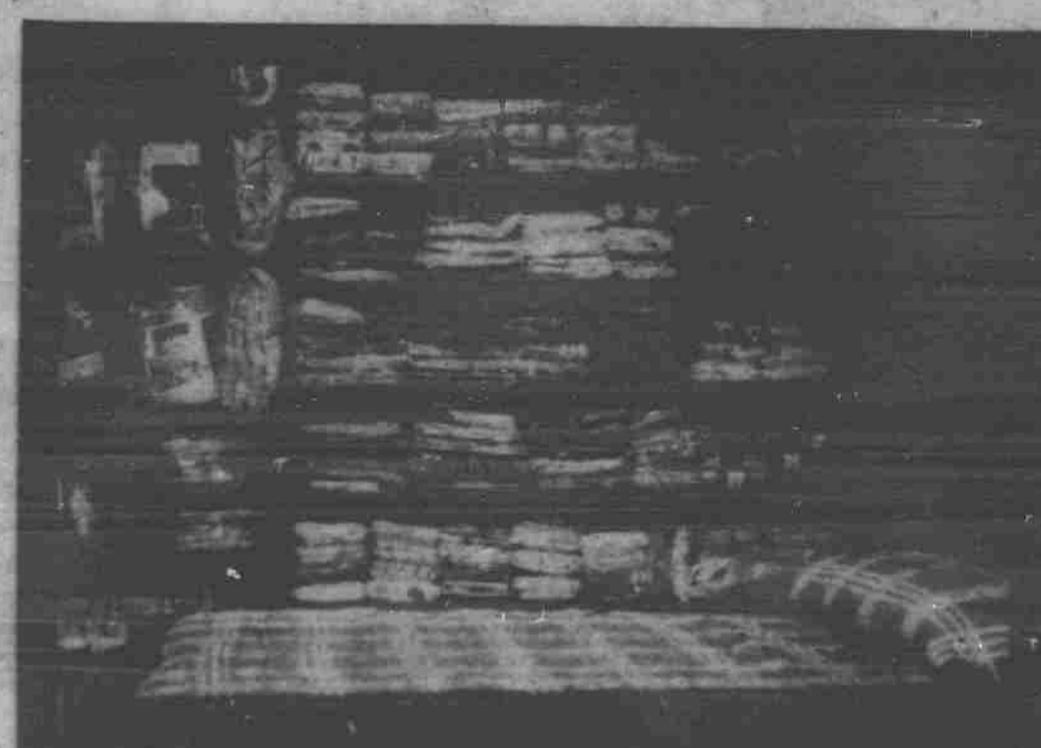
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