

Commoner: Oil companies foster dependence

By Kim Hachiya
and Beth Headrick

The United States' creeping dependence on foreign oil is caused by the U.S. oil companies, environmentalist Barry Commoner said Thursday night.

Commoner, who has written several books on energy and politics and was the Citizen's Party 1980 presidential candidate, spoke to about 800 persons in the Nebraska Union for a UPC Talks and Topics lecture.



Photo by Jon Natvig

Barry Commoner

He said American oil companies shifted oil exploration efforts abroad in the 1950s after they had fixed the cost of oil in the United States.

He said it became increasingly expensive to drill for domestic oil and this decreased the profits made from the oil once it reached the market.

Each time a barrel of oil is taken out of the ground, the next barrel of oil will be more difficult (more expensive) to drill for, he explained. Soon the energy it takes to extract the oil will exceed its value.

In the 1920s and '30s there was a glut of oil on the market, he said. The oil companies were upset by this, so the Texas legislature set quotas on oil production so it would equal the demand. With the prices fixed by the oil companies, Commoner explained, and as oil production became more expensive, the companies' profits decreased.

U.S. oil companies then went abroad where, once again, it cost pennies to drill for oil, which was sold at the fixed high prices, Commoner said this information is from the National Petroleum Council's report, *U.S. Energy Outlook*.

Commoner said the reason the cost of oil production escalates, which is the essence of energy crisis, is that oil is a nonrenewable energy source.

The United States needs to find a source of renewable energy now, in order to prevent further inflation caused by the cost of energy production, he said.

"When former President Jimmy Carter said, 'We're running out of oil' that's true. It's also irrelevant. We've been running out of oil since 1859 when the first hole was drilled," Commoner said.

By "renewable energy" Commoner said he refers to solar energy (which includes wind, sun, hydroelectric power and grain alcohol) or breeder reaction (fission) nuclear energy.

But breeder reactors are a long way off, he said. The United States could be manufacturing ethyl alcohol, something that Brazil is doing now. By 1984 Brazil will produce enough ethyl alcohol to run all of its cars, he said.

"But we're not doing this because maximum profit for the stockholder's investments is the criteria for the decision makers," Commoner said.

At a press conference earlier in the day, Commoner suggested that the United States wipe out its whole military budget and divert the money to mass transportation and urban development.

"Just think of the insanity of putting billions of dollars into a rail system to carry MX missiles around the southwest desert for no constructive purpose when that money could be used to run cities and keep them from deteriorating," he said.

Commoner asked reporters if Reagan won in Nebraska.

"He did? You'll regret it. You'll regret it when he guts the agricultural programs and when he guts alcohol

(fuel) programs. If I were a Nebraska farmer, I'd want to take my vote back. Nebraska will regret electing Reagan. So will the rest of us."

Commoner said research done at his Center for the Biology of Natural Systems has shown that alcohol production can be done in ways which will not cut into the use of grain for food but will give agriculture full use of feed grains and offer a surplus for alcohol synthesis.

At a lecture given as part of the Architectural College's Hyde Speaker Series, Commoner predicted drastic changes would be made to incorporate solar energy, but he said it must come as an organized effort, not the "helter skelter plan we now have."

"The economy ought to be run for the benefit of the people rather than for the benefit of those who are wealthy."

"Reagan's philosophy is that the economy grows by macho male entrepreneurs taking economic 'risks' by taking dollars from the poor, giving it back to these macho types so they can rebuild the economy and give jobs back to the poor."

"That won't work. What this is is anarchy for the rich. We've elected an anarchist who's dismantling the parts of the government which get in his way."



Photo by Mitch Hrdlicka

The Lincoln High bench agonizes as the final seconds tick away in a 64-56 double overtime loss to Omaha Benson in the opening round Class A game of the state basketball tournament. Seated left to right:

John Matzke (12), Assistant Coach Kevin Albers, Head Coach Alden Johnson, and Assistant Coach Bill Zuspan.

Run-off election results threatened by complaints

By D. Eric Kircher

Two complaints that could invalidate some results of the March 11 run-off election will be ruled on by the Student Court on April 1.

Tom Higgins and Steve McMahon, both of whom were presidential candidates, complained that Rick Mockler and Dan Wedekind, the ASUN president-elect and first vice president-elect, respectively, violated an act passed by ASUN that prohibits the use of "ASUN facilities" for campaign purposes.

Mockler and Wedekind are alleged to have used an ASUN copier for campaign purposes. In the complaint, McMahon wrote that Mark Hirschfeld, the ASUN first vice president, observed the alleged violation.

The complaint asks the court to require the electoral commission to declare Mockler and Wedekind ineligible to hold office or any appointed position in ASUN for one year.

Higgins, McMahon and Tom Vergith filed the same complaint with the Electoral Commission on March 9, but the commis-

sion decided it lacked jurisdiction to rule on the complaint. The commission advised Higgins and McMahon to take the complaint to the Student Court.

"I guess I don't have any other purpose than to see justice upheld," Higgins said. "We're just following through to get the truth out."

Higgins didn't know whether another election would be required if the court ruled there was a violation.

"I really don't have any comment on the thing," McMahon said. Vergith may place his name on the complaint, he said.

In the other complaint, Willie Watters, McMahon's former campaign manager, complained that the electoral commission acted wrongly when it declined to rule on the "use of ASUN facilities" complaint.

Watters said that, after the commission's action, he studied ASUN bylaws and decided it should have acted on the complaint.

"My suit, really and in fact, is against Kim Weiland," Watters said. Weiland is the ASUN electoral commissioner.

"She is the election commission," Watters said. "When she snaps her fingers,

most of the others line up."

Watters' complaint asks that the commission apologize publicly, that the run-off election be declared "null and void," and that the future commission members be aware of their duties and "possess a desire to fulfill their responsibilities."

Watters said he didn't know if a ruling in his favor would require another run-off or if ASUN would have to hold another general election.

"I'm trying to encourage them to tell the electoral commission to be more prudent," Watters said.

The electoral commission has three days to reply to the complaint, but Weiland said it probably would ask for an extension.

"We still stand by the decision that we made," she said. "It looks really obvious that it's just an attempt to call the election."

"We thought it was not in our jurisdiction," Glenn Poppert, an electoral commission member, said.

The court dismissed on March 11 requests to temporarily restrain the commission from counting the votes and releasing the results.

Another complaint to be heard April 1 involves Dan Renn's charge that Mike Kratville illegally removed campaign posters. After Renn presented the complaint to the commission, the commission brought the charge to the student court.

The complaint asks that Kratville not be allowed to hold any ASUN office or position for one year.

Mockler and Wedekind were not available for comment.

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