

## The oil crisis was just about all England needed

By DAVID WILLINGS

The oil crisis was just about all England needed. It pulled some of the pressure off the government but it didn't help the voter; still less the visitor. As I came in from London Airport there were long lines of cars outside every service station and supplies were being limited to one pound worth of gas per car. I finally located a taxi (the first time I have had any problem over getting a taxi in London and I lived there for several years).

The stoical humour of London taxi drivers is almost legendary. My driver told me that the railways were on a go slow (a disruptive alternative to a strike), the miners were on a go slow (which is chaotic since most generators rely on coal for power) and the Electricity Board (the equivalent to the Power Commission here) were working to rule. It is a ludicrous situation where an organization follows the rule book to the letter and reduces itself, and in this case the country, to chaos. Ludicrous or not that was the situation England was faced with. Television finished promptly at ten thirty. Electricity supplies were being cut off for periods. The price of candles were rocketing. There would have been no Christmas lights in London anyway. With galloping inflation it had been decided well before the crisis not to mount a display because it was too expensive. The Trade Union Congress was not in support of the go slow but there were fears that Mr. Heath's refusal to give way might sooner or later provoke an all out strike. There had been a real blow to the festive season. Because of the fuel shortage and the rail chaos the Post Office stopped accepting parcels on December 17th. Industry was being asked to close down for eleven days around Christmas and many shops were working a three day week to conserve energy. Shop assistants were being laid off.

"Well gov'nor" my taxi driver declared "I've told you all the bad news, now for the good" and he looked at me without saying a word. Every crisis brings out the best in some people and the worst in others. A doctor told me he already had several cases in hospital of people who had tried to siphon petrol out of someone else's car and swallowed it.

Everyone was waiting to hear what the Chancellor of the

Exchequer had in store. He was due to announce in the House of Commons stringent economy measures on the afternoon of December 17th. Speculation was rife. It was predicted that he would restrict the amount of money that could be taken out of the country by any one person in any calendar year. Increases in direct taxation were also anticipated. But what I found alarming was the general attitude of the people. They are flatly refusing to be squeezed out of the prosperous standard of living they enjoyed in the late 1950's. England continues to live like a major economic power and seemed to me determined to ignore the cold hard facts.

"We've survived worse than this" I was frequently told. "We'll come through somehow"

Queen Victoria is reputed to have said in the 1890's "We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist". The trouble is that this is the mid 1970's and the possibilities of total economic disaster do exist and the majority of Englishmen are anything but interested.

The Chancellor's economy measures proved to be a damp squib. All he announced was substantial cuts in public spending on roads, schools and other utilities. Since there was a massive upsurge in public spending in these areas last year this will not bite too hard. In the Daily Express a cartoon showed a wife saying to her husband "But I thought there was a crisis on!"

After the new year industry was working a three day week to conserve power. By that time nearly half a million people had been laid off. When I left England on January 5th the total out of work was nearing 750,000 and it was predicted that more than a million would be jobless before long. A director of a large travel agency told me that bookings were being cancelled in rising numbers. The reason customers usually gave was the uncertainty about air travel. He was quite sure that the real reason was that money was getting tight and people were not all that sure they could afford the holidays they had booked.

Shops and even banks were doing business in reduced lighting. A Bank Manager told me his staff were decidedly jumpy. The illumination was ideal for a bank robbery. Some streets were without lighting and the police

(who have been woefully undermanned for years) were asking the public especially young girls to keep off those streets after dark. The 50 mph speed limit was being rigidly enforced. Indeed the police caught a man driving at 55. When they checked up on him they found he was a wanted criminal they had been on the look out for for months.

I think one of the most gloomy sights was at Gatwick Airport. A large Christmas tree in the main concourse had elaborate ornamental lights all around it and none of them were lit—a drab reminder of what Christmas could have been.

On January 2nd talks with the Miners' Union and the Coal Board broke down and so did talks with the Railway Board. With that among some people an attitude of depressed resignation seemed to replace the atmosphere of false security I found when I first arrived in England. I say some people because a couple of stenographers assured me that all that was needed was for the government to put more money into circulation. Their boss was resigned to the fact that by the end of the year the standard of living will be at a lower level than during the war. On one thing most people seem to agree. There will not be an election this year. On this I refuse to comment. There are three things on which I never place bets — horses, juries and politicians.



Our janitors are complaining about the way they are being treated and in a letter below a student bitches about his unclean residence.

## Student complains about dirty residence

Dear Sir:

I am writing to you to protest the outrageous lack of dignity and respect not accorded to certain people on this campus, especially those students who are currently living in residence and their janitors.

I returned from my vacation to find my room as dirty as when I left it. The floor hadn't been cleaned let alone waxed and polished as far as I could tell. The hallways were dirty, with small tumbleweeds chasing after my feet as I walked down them.

I returned on Sunday the sixth, some of the boys were back on Thursday and Friday. They told

me stories of the janitors being downstairs playing ping-pong all day, as if they were on some type of holiday. In one instance the janitors were in a room and played a student's stereo for an unspecified amount of time. This room also suffered the indignity of being cleaned out of the sum of \$25.

I couldn't believe that the janitor service had deteriorated from its previous excellence to what it is now in only six months. I found this incredible to my senses, until I realized that it was inevitable.

It was due to a lack of respect for these men.

This company, who shall remain nameless in order to give them a little respect, insisted on working three janitors to two buildings. That is one permanent janitor to a building and the other man taking turns between buildings. This can be very discouraging as the man on the move never has the chance to finish anything at all, and loses his

sense of accomplishment and eventually he doesn't care any more. Also the permanent janitor is unable to keep up with the backlog of work and is also behind. Small wonder that they loaf.

They are also paid only \$2.25 an hour. This is an affront to their dignity as they can make much more working in a factory. A student working at McConnell Hall can make \$1.80 per hour working part time. These men merit at least \$3.00 an hour, in order to make it worth their while to work. They deserve this sum so that the company can hire good men. They deserve this sum so we can live in clean rooms.

I think it's about time we gave some dignity back to a few people around here.

Rick Baston  
Arts II  
Jones House

## Local author rebukes reviewer

Dear Sir:

Although I am inclined to believe that Mr. Martin Singleton's naive review of my recent book *Under the North Star* is hardly worthy of a reply, I am tempted to write because, while I pity his singlerminded display of ignorance, malicious writing no matter how pitiful should not be condoned. At first I had contemplated a verse reply but realizing the singular difficulties of dealing with a simpleton review I decided against it. After all I do not wish to further confound his current confusion.

I do agree with Mr. Singleton who said "...Haiku is not a form which is easily or rapidly

mastered..." and one can understand the rabid difficulties he has experienced in attempting to master the form. However, I fail to comprehend what has whetted his malicious outburst. Perhaps he is unwell; perhaps he is paranoid; as he is singularly mad about my poetry this I venture is a not unreasonable assumption. Nevertheless, since he appears to suffer from nothing between his ears, in so far as I can determine, I would rather conclude that his head is well and dry but not deep.

A quarter of his review strives for wit, which I applaud but do suggest he essay a second quarter and attempt thereby the moronic standard of a half (wit). For indeed

all that his careless concept of my poetry has proven is that his pen is mightier than his muddled mind. In short, his illogical attack based on the principle of the Brownian Movement smells of the misapplication of scientific generalization.

I have not seen any more of Mr. Singleton's work and I have no wish to do so. He is trying here, I think, for criticism which he is in dire need of to be sure. However, I would not recommend that his reviews be taken seriously, at least until Mr. Singleton extends his sense of criticism from form to content.

LeRoy Johnson

## Cover your naked face!

Cover your naked face!  
Grow a beard on us! UNB Winter Carni '74 is holding this campus's first beard growing contest and we want you.  
The contest begins Monday, January 15th with registration being held from 4 - 5:30 p.m. in Room 118 in the SUB. Sorry — no head starts — everyone must be clean shaven.  
Beards are to be grown until February 10th when judging will occur — criteria for choosing winners include length, style and texture.

Think you have a manly beard? Come prove it to us at Room 118 Monday. Interested individuals wanting more information contact Brian Murray through the SRC Office (or 101 Bridges) or any member of the Winter Carnival Committee. Prizes are both liquid and solid....