

It is always a surprise when events which have been anticipated for years are suddenly precipitated on the public within a few months under the headline CRISIS. Such is the situation these days with energy. The facts have been known for quite some time — oil consumption increases as populations and industries increase, and oil is a non-renewable resource. Yet, in this case at least, forewarned was certainly not forearmed. We are caught without a comprehensive energy policy, either national or international. We are caught with only rudimentary research being done on alternate sources of energy. We are living a way of life that seems expressly designed for the waste rather than the conservation of energy.

Several conflicts have been instrumental in bringing us to our immediate problem — shortages of gas and heating oil this winter. The most obvious is the Middle East War, in which the Arab states finally made use of their most powerful weapon in the hopes of alienating the allies of Israel. Cutbacks in the oil production of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries have reached nearly 30 per cent, with total embargoes held against the Netherlands and the United States. Western Europe and Japan suffer far more from such treatment than does North America. Western Canada uses domestic crude oil, eastern Canada imports crude oil mainly from Venezuela, which has increased the price, but not cut back on exports; and the United States still produces over 80 per cent of its required oil supplies. But other countries have been forced to seriously revise their foreign policies concerning the Middle East, often making abrupt changes to placate the Arabs in the hopes of keeping oil exports flowing this winter. Japan, for example, is now calling for a return to the boundaries established in 1967, and a fair deal for the Palestinian refugees. Japan had no choice. Mid East oil makes up 86 per cent of her oil requirements, and the recent call for voluntary restraints received little response from her citizens. Britain and Spain have also modified their foreign policies somewhat, and have been granted a temporary relief from further cutbacks. Despite this, they are still desperately short. Only France, with its obvious Pro-Arab sympathies, is exempt from the general panic now gripping Western Europe.

Each country has reacted to this crisis in a characteristic way. United States President Nixon immediately called for emergency powers to enable him to deal more efficiently with the problem. His programme involves a wide range of proposals, starting with a 15 per cent cutback in heating oil consumption by government, public and industry alike. Gas rationing may be a reality by January 1975, although there are widely divergent opinions on the necessity of such



Photo by Steve Homer

action. Nixon has also suggested cuts in working hours, the implementation of year-round daylight-saving time, a reduction in highway speed limits, and suspension of anti-pollution programmes. Already the lack of fuel has caused a reduction in the number of inter-city flights by most American air lines. Mandatory allocation of oil supplies is now an accomplished fact.

In Canada, Energy Minister Donald MacDonald has outlined a three-stage oil-rationing plan. The first stage is designed to cope with shortages below ten per cent of the present requirements. It involves voluntary conservation by public, government and industry alike. Temperature cuts of three to five degrees, adjustment of air conditioning, and reduced space heating in industrial complexes could cut the present requirements by ten per cent.

If the shortage gets worse, a mandatory allocation programme would be put into effect. Wholesale dealers would be required to reduce deliveries to their retail customers by a percentage equivalent to the supply shortfall. Individual rationing would only be implemented if the shortage exceeded 25 per cent.

Britain reacted by immediately banning all floodlighting and display advertising, and limiting heating in offices and factories. Rationing is also being considered as a serious possibility — and ration cards for gasoline have already been printed. When a "state of emergency" was declared, the London stock market promptly nosedived.

The most unique reaction so far was first taken by the Netherlands government. Sunday driving was banned. Citizens took to the roads on bikes, an almost holiday-like atmosphere prevailed, and the measure was termed a success. West Germany, Denmark and Belgium have also instituted the ban.

Yet all these decisions are rather

we waste it..

like vaccination after the victim has caught the disease. They will only serve to reduce the impact of Mid East export cutbacks. Other conflicts have been going on for several years whose effects will be more far-reaching. Environmentalists versus developers has been a familiar headline — but the outcome has not been fully appreciated until now. These conflicts have resulted in delaying off-shore exploration for oil and gas, halting construction on electric power stations, and prohibiting the use of high-sulphur coal. And as we all know, cars equipped with anti-pollution devices use more gas than ever before.

Politicians simply don't know whose side to take in these battles. Their opinions must please the public, or else they run the risk of going down at the polls. Public reaction, however, is next to impossible to gauge in such a situation. Not unexpectedly, the public wants a nice, clean environment and lots of cheap energy. The person who vigorously protests the Lorneville thermal generating plant would probably laugh in your face if you suggested he buy a small car and not drive it at speeds exceeding 50 m.p.h. This anomaly results in the environmentalist's winning some battles and the developer's winning others, leaving the politicians still unable to formulate a policy to co-ordinate conservation with development.

In Canada, this lack of policy has caused some disastrous events. According to MacDonald, the multi-national corporations, the provinces, the National Energy Board and Ottawa are the four most important decision-makers in the so-called Canadian energy policy. Ottawa's past lack of action on the energy question could have been interpreted as an

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