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THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 1977

Snags on energy

First came the Arab oil embargo of 1973-1974, forcing Americans to line up at the gas pumps. Then came the "deep freeze" of this past winter, forcing a reallocation of natural gas and fuel oil. What, one wonders, will it take to educate the American public — and Congress — to the seriousness of the energy problem? Polls show that the majority of citizens do not even know that the U.S. is an importer of oil.

Yet the cold, hard facts should shatter the nation's complacency. Not only do oil imports now comprise almost 50 percent of the available petroleum supply. They are growing, and more and more they are shifting to Arab sources, making the United States increasingly vulnerable to an embargo or production cutback. Canada is phasing out its exports to the U.S. and other non-Arab supplies either are operating at top capacity or have begun to reduce their exports also. Of the more than 9 million barrels of petroleum imported daily in the first quarter of 1977, over 3 million came from Arab members of OPEC, and the Arab share is growing.

In the face of such figures — not to mention forecasts showing that demand for oil will begin to outstrip supply in the 1980s — it is hard to understand why a sense of urgency still has not gripped the country. President Carter himself has downgraded the crisis aspect of the situation and not followed up on his energy program forcefully after his initial clarion call for action. It is not surprising the public remains unconvinced an energy problem exists.

The lawmakers in Congress, meanwhile, who need no convincing, nonetheless have taken some steps that weaken the administration's comprehensive plan, which was not all that strong to begin with. In committee the standby gasoline tax appears to be dropped altogether (out of fear of voter wrath). The rebate for the purchase of higher-mileage cars has been rejected (out of inability to figure out what to do about foreign cars). Fortunately, the proposed graduated tax to discourage the purchase of "gas guzzlers" has won support, but its implementation has been delayed a year and more than half the 1979 models the President would have liked to tax will be exempted.

As for the much-talked-about Department of Energy, this, too, is less than Mr. Carter sought. Congress will make it possible to scoop into one department all the separate commissions and agencies dealing with the energy question. But there is unwillingness to give the new department authority to regulate natural gas, oil and bulk electricity prices. While valid argument exists for not giving the secretary of such a department too much power, he at least should have an input into price decisions. Hence it is hoped that the Senate version of the bill, which would establish a three-member commission to set prices subject to the secretary's recommendations and presidential veto, prevails.

The congressional opposition to the Carter program does not of course mean that Congress will not or cannot come up with its own tough energy program. Senate majority leader Robert Byrd says the President has suffered setbacks because his program contains bad ideas and vague plans (and because the White House has failed to lobby effectively for what it wants). And Senator Henry Jackson suggests Congress will redo the Carter plan to accomplish through strong new laws what the President seeks to do with taxes and rebates. Splendid — if this means a better program.

In any case, as Congress works piecemeal on various aspects of the energy package, President Carter has an educational task before him. We already see glimmers of an administration countereffort to enjoin Congress to treat the Carter plan more seriously. But the legislators may not feel under pressure to pass rigorous laws until it is perceived that the public will go along. Mr. Carter must therefore persuade the man-in-the-street of the facts.

The problem is that there is simply no evidence to the naked eye that a shortage of fuel looms. Everyone has adjusted to higher fuel prices and, as long as supplies are abundant (as they are now), consumption continues to grow. When the President himself backs off from exhorting Americans to change their way of life, the incentive to conserve is all the more ephemeral.

One thing seems clear. Unless the President dispels the public's ignorance about energy and marshals its support, the nation will make progress by inches rather than the needed seven-league strides. Mr. Carter made a good beginning on the energy front. He needs to keep the momentum going. —The Christian Science Monitor

Hedged bet

"Is Gambling Making Your Life Unhappy?" That question has now been posted in, of all places, New York City's off-track betting parlors. Customers who answer "Yes" are directed to dial the number of the National Council on Compulsive Gambling. Those who call are invited to attend meetings of Gamblers Anonymous. It is all very much like those New Year's Eve messages from whisky merchants urging merrymakers to drink in moderation and drive with care. We doubt that such gestures can restrain the intemperate, but they obviously soothe the civic and commercial conscience. Warnings about gambling by an enterprise that exists to encourage gambling create the kind of anomaly that keeps an open society spinning. —The New York Times

Friendly handshake



The Christian Science Monitor

by Marty Vega

The Cat In The Hat

Ken McNeill, who is an acknowledged fashion leader and trend setter, has introduced a new style of hat which is quickly becoming a fad. The parosol hat.

Some ignorant types who have seen this new hat call it the umbrella hat, but it's really not. It has no handle so any fool can see it can't be an umbrella hat.

This latest rage is an imported design, we understand, and can't currently be bought locally. Ken confided he bought his hat at the beach.

Actually, there are only two of these hats in existence here in Raeford. McNeill has got one and this writer has the other. The hats are almost identical, except one is used and the other is almost brand new. The second one was tried on only.

Like all avant garde fashion, the parosol hat is something you have to practice with. It doesn't go with casual attire, the look just isn't right. It should be worn only to formal occasions.

Above all, never, never wear the hat as (a) a sunburn preventive (b) a pigeon protective guard or (c) a rain repellent. To do so would be utterly tacky and an admission of your total lack of fashion consciousness.

And, above all else, remember -- Do not attempt to walk through any narrow passageways while wearing The Hat. Do not attempt

to drink any beer, except through the use of a straw, while wearing The Hat. Do not approach any stranger and ask for directions while wearing The Hat.

If you're wondering how this writer was lucky enough to acquire one of these rare hats, the answer is McNeill made a gift of it.

If you're wondering why one of the first official acts of the new Democratic party chairman was to give a new hat to a Republican, well, it beats the hell out of me, too.

Now that county commissioners are going to be getting more pay, the public will probably demand more work out of them. No more tabling of important matters, no more decisions put off, etc. Immediate results will be expected.

Monday night, the commissioners discussed action on massage parlors, garbage pickup and a mental health clinic, yet failed to take positive action on any of these three matters, preferring to put them off until another meeting.

This unnecessary delay could be very wasteful, some citizens might feel, and a solution could have been reached Monday night.

The commissioners could have disposed of the whole business by establishing a combination massage parlor - mental health clinic - wasted disposal site where citizens could conveniently take advantage of all these services at one central point.

And, if there was extra room at the place, the commissioners might want to set up offices for themselves, too, so they can get unwanted advice, get rubbed the wrong way and hear some garbage all at the same time. Just like the taxpayers do.

Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor,

In reference to your article in *The News-Journal*, dated June 16, 1977, concerning the recommended salaries for the tax listing supervisor and the tax collector, the county commissioners gave the poorest reason for rejecting the recommendation that could be used. The reason for cutting the recommended salary of one and raising the salary of the other is so that they both would receive the same salary as one is a woman and the other is a man.

The reason to me is saying that the tax collector is getting a raise, not for the outstanding job she is doing or the responsibility that her job carries, but only because she is a woman.

On the other hand, the tax listing supervisor is being penalized, not because he is doing a poor job, but because he is a man.

I think it is time that all public officials be paid for the responsibility and performance that they do, regardless of whether they are male or female, black or white or any other reason.

Thanks,
 Ralph Plummer



Report To The People

by Senator Robert Morgan

In the mythology of ancient Greece, there was a huge monster called the Hydra which was exceedingly difficult to deal with because it had several heads, and if one of the heads were cut off, two appeared in its place. Hercules was given the task of killing it, and he did so by getting a friend to burn the stump as he cut off each head, preventing any more heads from appearing.

What this has to do with the Federal Government is that the paperwork created by the various federal agencies is a great deal like the Hydra. You stop it in one place and it appears in greater volume in another. Let me give you an example of what I am talking about.

In late 1975, my office began to get numerous complaints about the Real Estate Procedures Act (RESPA), which was creating enough paperwork and delay in the sale of homes to frustrate both the buyer and the seller.

Everybody was talking about reviving the housing industry to help us out of the recession we were going through in 1975, but government red tape and paperwork caused by some parts of RESPA were acting as a real hindrance to that goal. Nobody, including home builders, real estate agents, lending institution and those wanting to buy or sell a house, was happy with what was going on under RESPA.

I co-sponsored a bill to repeal the worst sections and it was passed by the Congress. Everybody connected with the housing industry seemed happy that we had gotten rid of all that paperwork and red tape.

But Washington feeds on paper in the shape of government forms to be filled out, and if you stop it in one place, it will break loose in another.

So when the Housing Bill of 1977 came to the floor of the Senate, it brought demands for more paperwork. One provision would require that federal agencies that supervise financial institutions make an on-going assessment as to whether an institution is meeting the credit needs of its primary savings deposit area.

This would require an endless amount of paperwork on the part of lenders, at great expense; and the cost, of course, would eventually be borne by the consumer.

This despite the fact that there are already regulations to cover this and that supervisory agencies are watching very closely to see that the credit needs of communities are being met.

Lending institutions from all over the country have protested this section of the bill as useless duplication, and I co-sponsored an amendment to strike out this section. Although this was defeated by a vote of 40 to 31 in the Senate, I was able to help get the sponsors of the proposal to agree to a year's delay in implementing it, and I plan to fight to see that this delay becomes a reality.

This whole matter, however, from RESPA in 1975 to the Omnibus Housing Act of 1977, shows Washington's preoccupation with paperwork, although I am sure that every member of Congress is getting hundreds of complaints from harassed businessmen, just as I am.

It's a lot like the mythical Hydra. Cut it off in one place and it will appear in another.

But the only remedy I can see is to keep on chopping.

CLIFF BLUE ... People & Issues



CONGRESSMAN HEFNER?...

Democrats are scurrying around hoping to find and center on a candidate who can defeat Jesse Helms for the United States Senate in 1978. Many of the Democrats who would like to oust Helms are not satisfied that either of those being mentioned can win over Jesse who was elected with the help of dissident Democrats in 1972. They seem to realize that you seldom hear criticism of Helms by the Democrats who helped elect him in 1972, and this is what disturbs the "party regulars."

Nine are being mentioned as possible candidates, although hardly half are expected to file when decision day arrives, they being, Hugh Cannon, a prominent member of the Terry Sanford administration; State Senator Lawrence Davis of Winston-Salem, Attorney General Rufus Edmisten, Superior Court Judge Sam J. Ervin III, former Congressman Nick Galifianakis, who lost out to Helms in 1972; Luther H. Hodges, Jr., State Senator McNeill Smith of Greensboro, Dave McKnight of Fayetteville and Lt. Governor Jimmy Green.

Now, we have heard of another possibility -- Congressman Bill Hefner of the Eighth Congressional District. Hefner, of Cabarrus County, is now serving his second term in Congress, having defeated incumbent Congressman Earl B. Ruth in 1974 in a landslide victory, carrying every county in the district except Yadkin by a total district vote of 61,591 to 46,500 for Ruth. In 1976, it is pointed out that Hefner carried every county in the district which comprises Anson, Cabarrus, Davie, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond, Rowan, Scotland, Stanly, Union and Yadkin. It has also been pointed out that Hefner led all Democrats on the State ticket including Hunt and Green in the 8th district.

Hefner is an unusual campaigner. In fact, his campaign rallies are more like old-fashion gospel song services which appeal to many who otherwise take little interest in political campaigns. We are told that when the subject was first mentioned Hefner was very cool towards the idea, but we understand that now he may be warming up a tiny bit.

CONSUMER PROTECTION... We believe in good, solid "consumer protection" but like many others, we are a little fearful of the new Consumer Protection Agency being proposed by President Carter and a number of the congressmen. North Carolina has a good consum-

er protection law administered by the Attorney General's department. There is just so much that can be done to protect the consumers, who most of all need to be schooled and educated in consumer protection. What many are most afraid of is that if the Consumer Agency is set up it will grow like "topsy" into a huge bureaucracy similar to the welfare department.

ELECTRIC CARS... Will the little electric autos be able to help out in the program to serve gasoline? It would certainly seem that with gasoline prices likely to rise, that the electric cars might well become more popular for short trips of less than 50 miles, for the housewife to use on local shopping trips and for the students who ride to school and for close-in driving in particular.

BENSON SING... The 57th State Annual Singing Convention will be held in Benson June 24-25-26. The sing is conducted in the Benson City Park, which consists of one block shaded by oak trees. Located in the center of the park is the elevated stage on which the singers perform. The admission is free and the public is invited.

I shall always remember one Benson Sing which took place several years ago. I was invited to be one of the judges and I got the date mixed up and went ahead of the sing. That Sunday I noticed people in cars continually riding up and down the street. The cars were so close together that it was hard to get across the street. With nothing to do, having arrived a week early, I dropped in at the Benson newspaper office where a fellow publisher happened to be in his office. I inquired about the up and down auto parade and was told it was a customary pastime on Sunday afternoons in Benson.

A week later, I went back and enjoyed the sing very much.

For A Brighter Future

