

The NEW BERN

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Yesterday was when the only use you had for electricity in your home was to illuminate the few light bulbs of low wattage you figured you could afford. Before that you relied on gas fixtures, or oil lamps.

Today, we can't get along without washers, dryers, stoves, toasters, vacuum cleaners, furnaces, air conditioners, razors, radios, television, stereos, blenders, can openers, refrigerators, freezers, and water heaters.

All of which is nice until a hurricane, an ice storm or some other calamity disrupts your flow of power, and reminds you that your insatiable craving for comfort and convenience has its disadvantages.

Yesterday was when you complained that the meter reader was either blind or crooked, or both, and the city was robbing you, if your light bill was almost two dollars for just one month.

Today, the United States is consuming six times as much electricity as it did twenty five years ago. Power plants, in 1970, produced 1.5 trillion kilowatt hours of the stuff.

That's more than one-third of the total world production last year, and as much as the next five industrial countries combined. Our consumption is expected to double each decade until the year 2000.

The price that you and other Americans have already paid, and will continue to pay, involves more than your monthly bill from City Hall. Damming and pollution of rivers and streams, fouling of the air we need for survival, and the ever-present danger of radiation from nuclear power plants are on the debit side.

Yesterday was when a student who broke a window at the school he attended could be sure of a thorough thrashing, and then he was expelled. Today, in desperation, one northern city has appropriated well over \$2 million dollars to replace glass windows in school buildings with plastic.

At one new elementary school, not long ago, a 12 year old boy and a 14 year old boy forced entry on a Sunday afternoon. Going from room to room, they destroyed a closed-circuit TV camera, movie projectors, aquariums and other equipment. Damage totaled \$100,000. Is it any wonder school bond proposals fair badly in most elections these days?

Admittedly, a single vandalism loss amounting to \$100,000 is an exception, but the annual overall loss in America's public school systems, year in and year out, amounts to approximately \$100 million.

Here in New Bern, the destruction isn't publicized, but senseless damage to plumbing fixtures alone is considerable. Such equipment doesn't come cheap, and destroying it is hardly a harmless prank.

Yesterday was when students in the public schools here weren't blessed with good facilities. Rest rooms were



HELLO SPRING—Pamela Lyn Minschew, who won't be three until Independence Day, is enjoying her third April as enthusiastically as a robin on the wing. Daughter of Erick and Pat Arant Minschew, two of the friendliest people anywhere, she loves everything and everybody, even elderly and overbearing newspaper editors, but reserves special affection for her daschund, Dutch. His prime objective is to keep up with her, which isn't

easy since nature wasn't exactly liberal when Dutch was measured for legs. Although Erick, who happens to be president of New Bern's Jaycees, has to be at work early, the Minschews have no alarm clock. Pamela always wakes him up on the mornings that he is on the verge of oversleeping. Her maternal grandparents are the Durwood Arants of New Bern, and the W. E. Minschews of Wilson are the paternal grandparents.