

Nervous Politicians Threatened Anew

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By David S. Broder

Washington Post Staff Writer

As energy consultant Jack Bridges tells the story, it was about three months ago that he was briefing a canny upstate New York congressman on the problems facing the United States in meeting its fuel and power needs for the rest of the century.

When Bridges had gone through the analysis and recommended the steps he thought must begin immediately to deal with the crisis, the congressman leaned back in his chair and said: "You're asking me to vote for policies and for spending that won't make any sense to my constituents until six elections from now. And if I do what you say, I'll sit out the last five of them."

That was before the Middle East war and the Arab oil boycott brought home to all Americans—and the politicians who govern them—just how serious the effects of an energy shortage can be.

Suddenly, the stock market is in a tailspin, fuel oil

deliveries have been cut back, driving speeds curtailed and the kind of big car that long symbolized the American dream is a drug on the market. Some business analysts are forecasting an energy-induced recession, with higher unemployment accompanied by shortage-induced inflation. Postal officials are warning they may not be able to move the Christmas mail and businessmen are forecasting that with this month's arrival of the last tanker of Persian Gulf oil, they face disruptive shortages of everything from plastics to fertilizer.

For the men and women in public office, already nervous that the Watergate-fed public cynicism about politics may tar them all with the taint of corruption, this new problem represents a fresh political threat of large but undetermined dimensions.

As far back as last Au-

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gust, some of the incumbents were beginning to get wind of what might be in store. Freshman Rep. Ronald Sarasin (R-Conn.) was a guest on a radio call-in show, where a woman observed:

"I grew up thinking the United States was the greatest country on earth. Now, it seems we're short of oil, short of beef, short of everything. We don't seem to be any better off than anyone else. You're down there in Washington, maybe you can explain to me what happened."

Sarasin, a member of the House Republican Conference's energy task force, gave her a knowledgeable but complex exposition of the world-wide gap in resource supply and demand, and confessed he did not know himself who was to blame.

The constituent said: "Well, I know I shouldn't hold you responsible, you've only been there a short time, but it certainly does seem funny that all of a sudden we're no better off than anyone else. Somebody must have goofed."

Eddie Mahe, political director of the Republican National Committee, pointed out this week that about the time Sarasin was being braced by his constituent, a GOP survey showed only 2 per cent of the voters thought the energy shortage was the biggest problem facing the country.

'Likeliest Losers'

Now, says Mahe, the energy crisis is rapidly becoming more of a "gut issue" than Watergate or the Vietnam war were—but there is as yet no reliable indication of who is going to be blamed for having "goofed."

Mahe says the possible scapegoats, in no particular

order, include the oil companies, the Arabs, Israel, the environmentalists, Congress and the President.

Patrick Caddell, a Democratic pollster, says the oil companies are "the likeliest losers," with second place going to "the governmental apparatus and any official who gets blamed." Caddell says his hunch is that in 1974 the voters' wrath will come down hardest on "Republican incumbents close to Nixon and Democratic incumbents who haven't done anything" visible on the energy front.

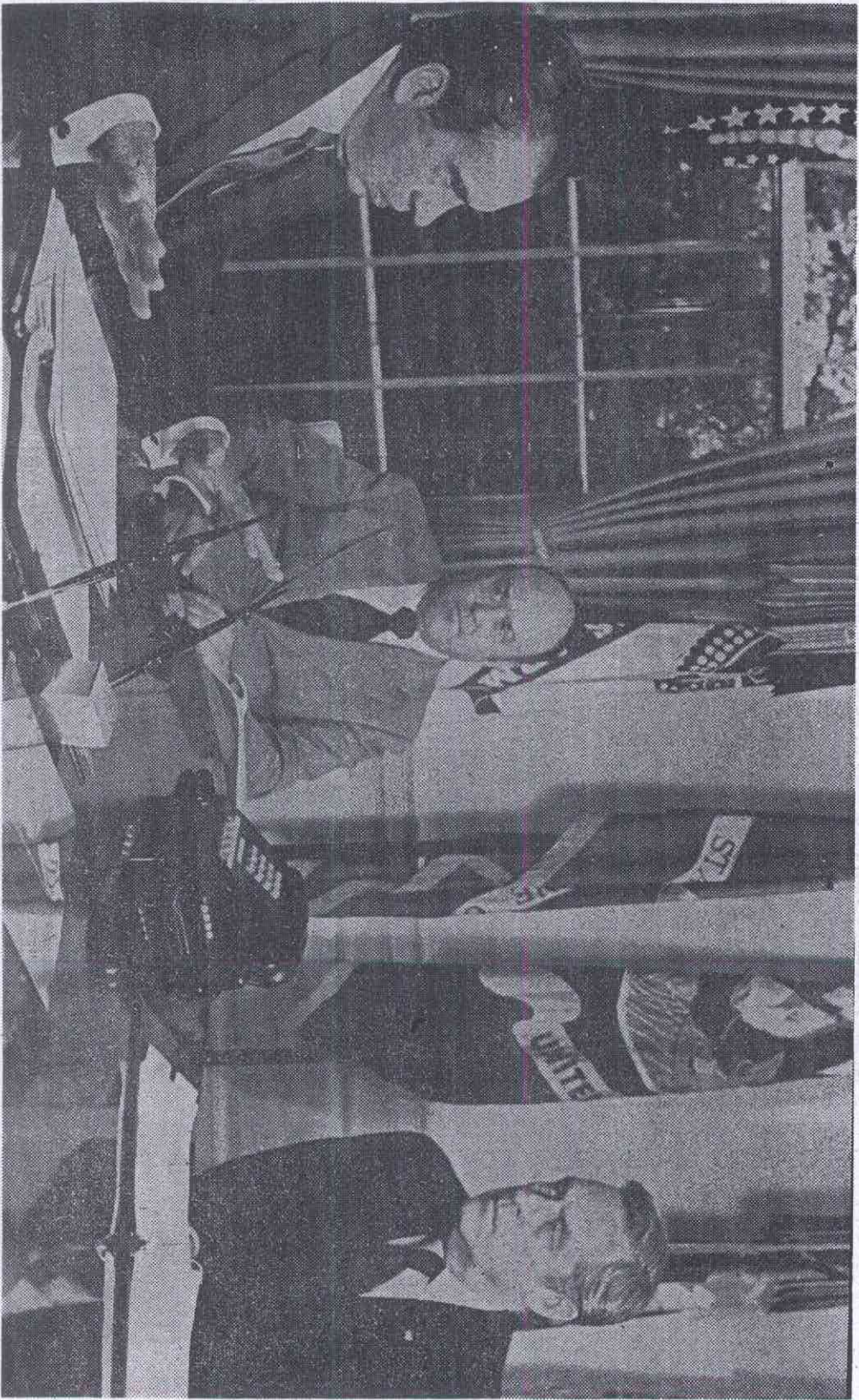
John Deardourff, a Republican campaign consultant, says that if the economic results are severe, "it will probably hurt all incumbents, but particularly Republicans, by demonstrating the lack of foresight and the impotence of the Nixon administration."

Among those apparently most sensitive to the political dangers of the energy problem is one man who knows he will not face the voters again — Richard Nixon.

In his Nov. 7 radio-television address on the "serious national problem" of energy, he called for a "bipartisan response" to a "bipartisan concern," but then complained that two years after he had sent Congress his first energy message, "not one (of the seven) major energy bill(s) I have asked for has been enacted" by the Democratic lawmakers.

A week later, the first of those bills, the Alaska pipeline legislation, reached Mr. Nixon, but he told a convention of realtors that Congress had delayed its passage "unconscionably" for "what I thought were rather fatuous reasons."

On Nov. 17, in his appearance before the Associated Press managing editors, Mr.



President Nixon meets with domestic counselor Melvin R. Laird, center, and energy director John Love in the White House yesterday.

By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post

The TV footage accompanying this story was so amateurish I am confident it was not made by the nets but was supplied by the WH. Lights reflected from the windows in the background, etc. What Nixon said was almost infantile. It was awkward, meaningless, self-serving and it was anything but the kind of conversation any President would have with any of his advisers on any subject. Kid stuff.

Nixon made an even sharper attack.

"The President warned about it," he said of the energy crisis, "and the Congress did not act, even though he warned them two years ago. The President warned again in April; the Congress did not act, and now it is time for the Congress to get away from some of these other diversions, if they have time, and get on to this energy crisis."

Draws Quick Response

The exercise in presidential finger-pointing drew a quick and angry reaction from Capitol Hill Democrats. Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Interior Committee and a man who hopes to make his energy legislation leadership part of his credentials for the White House in 1976, assailed the President for "injecting an element of partisanship in an area where, at least as far as Congress is concerned, bipartisan cooperation has been the order of the day."

Although Mr. Nixon had exempted Jackson, by name, from his blanket criticism of Congress, the Washington Democrat laid down a detailed 10-page indictment of the administration's record. He concluded, more in sorrow than anger that because Mr. Nixon "has never been willing to face up to the realities of the situation, Congress, at every turn, has had to force the administration to act, either by proposing, enacting or threatening to enact appropriate legislation."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), normally the mildest of men, snapped on "Meet the Press" that the President "is wrong."

"He is great on messages, he is great on rhetoric," Mansfield, "but when it

comes to legislation, he is wanting... The administration has been very backward in doing anything about the crisis which confronts this country today, and the administration knows it."

The rising heat of this partisan debate reflects an awareness on both sides that there are enormous political dangers in being saddled with blame for the crisis and its economic consequences. Like the New York congressman in Jack Bridges' story, a lot of officeholders have figured out that their constituents may retire the politicians they hold responsible for this problem.

No one knows that better than John A. Love, who gave up a secure post a governor of Colorado last summer to become Mr. Nixon's energy adviser. Asked in an interview last week if he saw any way to avoid political scapegoating, Love shook his head, and said, "I've been running down these alleys since I've been here, and I always find a brick wall."

Love speaks of the politics of the energy problem with the detachment of a man who realizes his own political career is behind him. "I see no way in which I can win in this situation," he said.

He concedes that "the whole posture of the administration—being beleaguered on Watergate and other things—and the way in which the administration has been structured have made it a problem to push" energy issues to the point of decision.

"But, basically," he continued, "the Hill didn't foresee this any more than the administration did, and their response has been impeded by jurisdictional problems, as it always seems to be."

As Love points out, on both Capitol Hill and in the White House, there has been a reluctance to take responsibility for the hard decisions that will be unpopular with the voters.

Jackson blames Mr. Nixon for indulging an "ideological hang-up" in delaying gasoline rationing, while he dwells in public on the "horror stories" he recalls from his days as a World War II tire-rationing bu-

reaucrat.

But Jackson concedes that it is also "a proper question whether Congress will stand up and be responsible in these things. I'm confident it will," he told an interviewer, but then admitted his disappointment at the refusal of the Senate last week to order mandatory gasoline rationing.

The decision to duck that issue by giving the President discretionary authority to order rationing on his own say-so "was one of our lesser moments," Jackson said. "I felt Congress ought to share the unpleasant decision-making."

The politics of that vote are evident when the roll call is analyzed. The amendment to make gas rationing mandatory next Jan. 15 was defeated, 48 to 40. If only those senators whose terms continue until 1976 or 1978 had voted, rationing would have passed, 30 to 29. But those who must face the voters next year were peculiarly reluctant to vote for

rationing, and their 19-to-10 lineup against the amendment sent it down to defeat.

The same day on which the Senate voted, Rep. Wayne Hays of Ohio, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, stood up on the House floor to give his colleagues some advice.

"I am saying... that any member who votes for rationing of gasoline is asking to stay home after the next election," Hays said. "I just challenge anybody to vote for it and see what happens to them. I know how I am going to vote."

Whether it was delaying the decision on gas rationing, blaming others in government for inaction, or promising quick-fix solutions, the political reaction so far has been aimed primarily at avoiding blame—not taking responsibility.

There is, understandably, some partisan difference over where that blame will ultimately lodge. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, says, "I don't think Mr. Nixon can sell that"—the idea that Congress is at fault. "A President can always take credit for what goes right, but he has trouble shifting

the blame when things go wrong, especially when his own credibility is low," Bentsen said.

But the Republican senator from Texas, John G. Tower, takes a different view. Tower, who promised his oil and gas industry supporters in his last campaign that legislation to end federal regulation of wellhead prices would be enacted this year, says he thinks Mr. Nixon can prove that "Congress has dragged its feet" on such bills.

"I think Ted Kennedy and those like him are in an untenable position," Tower said. "They have fought the incentives for oil and gas production and have tried to dismantle those we've had."

In the general flight from political responsibility, John Love has a fanciful solution that may outdo all the others. "If I'd seen the depths of this problem," he says, with a grin, "I would have stayed as governor of Colorado, developed our oil shale, seceded from the union, and become the King Faisal of North America."

These days, almost everyone in office would rather be King Faisal than holding his present job.

Albert Pins Blame on President

House Speaker Carl Albert joined the partisan debate on the energy crisis yesterday, with a 22-page white paper charging that "the American people are now being asked to pay with their patriotism the price exacted by the misguided policies and negligence of the Nixon administration."

In an unusually strongly worded statement, the Oklahoma Democrat said that the administration had failed to foresee the fuel problem and is now trying to "rewrite history" to shift the blame to Congress.

Assailing the "incompetence of the Nixon administration," Albert said that impoundments of research funds, maintenance of oil import quotas, and delays in implementing stock-piling and allocation programs had brought on a situation that can mean anything from "serious inconvenience" to "massive disruption of our nation's life and economy."

The Speaker said Congress recognized the need for cooperation in dealing with the crisis, but added:

"We must choose between cooperating with an administration which is intent on deceiving the American people with regard to both the severity and the causes of our energy shortages, and being honest with the people by telling them that we are living on borrowed time."

"President Nixon has told the nation that the Congress has been dragging its feet on energy matters," Albert said. "In reality, quite the opposite is true."

Nixon to Ban Sunday Sale Of Gasoline

11/25/73 By Thomas O'Toole
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon is to go on television tonight to announce a nationwide ban on Sunday gasoline sales and a curb on display lighting of all kinds across the country.

In a television address to be carried by all three networks at 7 p.m., the President is also expected to declare an allocation program for home heating oil and a 10-gallon limit to Friday night and Saturday gasoline sales, a move the White House hopes will cut gasoline consumption at least 10 per cent.

"Everybody is going to have to do some sacrificing to avoid the energy crisis," Mr. Nixon told newsmen after an hour-long meeting at the White House with domestic affairs counselor Melvin R. Laird and energy policy director John A. Love. "Everybody is going to have to do his part."

The cornerstone of White House strategy in fighting an anticipated fuel shortage of 20 per cent this winter is the weekend restriction on gasoline sales. White House energy advisers say that weekend driving accounts for 25 per cent of gasoline consumption in the United States, that adds up to almost 500 million gallons a week.

One reason the White House is moving so hard against gasoline is that it feels it can force big reductions in gasoline consumption without doing great harm to the economy.

"We think you can take more out of gasoline with less effect on the economy," Eric Zausner, deputy assistant secretary of the interior, told newsmen last week. "That's why we have to make a basic decision about

gasoline vis-a-vis all the other fuels."

The White House hopes the weekend sales restrictions will avoid outright rationing of gasoline, a move the White House sees as politically unthinkable at this time.

In his television address tonight, Mr. Nixon is expected to announce a plan to force refiners to produce less gasoline and more heating oil to meet the winter shortage. Many White House energy advisers feel

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that a reduction in gasoline production at refineries will reach the same goals as rationing.

"Gasoline is going to ration itself if we can get these refineries to switch over," Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton said last week, "because the supply of gasoline is going to be curtailed."

Herbert Stein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers said: "People cannot consume what there isn't."

Morton told a group of 10 newsmen last week that the country will begin to run short of heavy fuel oil for

electric power generation next month, of heating oil, diesel and jet fuel in January and of gasoline in February.

Morton estimated that the country will be short 1.4 million barrels of crude oil a day in December and almost 3.5 million barrels a day through the first three months of 1974, a midwinter average of 2.4 million barrels of oil a day.

"To meet that difference," he said, "you have to reduce the amount of fuel used in automobiles by 30 per cent, the oil consumed in home heating systems by 15 per

cent, in commercial heating systems by 25 per cent and in electrical utilities by 20 per cent."

Presumably, this is what Laird and Love said yesterday to Mr. Nixon, who interrupted his Thanksgiving weekend at Camp David to get his energy briefing at the White House. The President returned by helicopter to Camp David late yesterday, accompanied by his friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo.

Before flying back to Camp David, the President promised a brief message for his Sunday night television address.

"It will be tough, strong action," he said.

The toughest part of the action will be the ban on Sunday gasoline sales, a move some White House aides wanted to take last week to reduce gasoline consumption over the busy Thanksgiving weekend. Other aides argued against that kind of timing, mostly because they felt many people had made their driving plans long in advance.

The curb on display lighting will put a heavy crimp in Christmas lighting plans by stores, but is felt by White House energy aides as a means not only to save electricity but also to symbolize the shortage.

Heavy fuel oil for electric power generation is the first fuel the country will begin to run out of, spot shortages coming as early as next week. The first regions of the country to feel this shortage will be New England, upstate New York and the large metropolitan areas of New York City, Philadelphia and Washington.

Morton said the country uses 3.6 million barrels of heavy fuel oil every day, but by next month will be getting only 2.5 million barrels in supply when the last tanker arrives on the East Coast from the Arab countries that embargoed oil to the U.S.

"That's a nationwide shortfall of over 1 million barrels a day, and the percentage is significantly higher on the East Coast," Morton said. "We may be in the brownout business if we don't cut back on energy consumption."

The other tough part of Mr. Nixon's message tonight is to be a plan to allocate home heating oil, a plan that in effect will ration homes to 15 per cent less oil than they ordinarily burn for heat. This will be done by allocating 15 per cent less heating oil to distributors.