

Thursday, November 29, 1973

THE GAITHERSBURG GAZETTE

WASHINGTON

Merry-Go-Round

by Jack Anderson



To the despair of his advisers, President Nixon still hasn't made the unpopular choice between gas rationing and tax increases. There simply won't be enough gas to keep up with consumption. The President fears, however, the public will never accept rationing in peacetime.

As an alternative, the Treasury Department has pleaded with the President to add a tax of 30 to 40 cents on every gallon of gas. Opponents argue this is indirect rationing, which will keep the poor off the highways and leave pleasure driving only for the wealthy.

The Treasury tried to get around this objection by proposing a tax rebate for the gas that families need for essential driving. In other words, the government would allot each family, say, 8,000 miles a year at 15 miles per gallon. The gas taxes for this amount would be refunded at the end of the year. The Treasury experts argue this would favor the poor who have smaller cars. The rich, who drive Cadillacs and Continentals, would be penalized.

But the President refused to listen to any talk of tax increases. He turned down a half-dozen Treasury proposals for a gas tax. For three years, he has ignored urgent appeals to plan for the energy crisis.

His advisers now warn that he can't put off a decision any longer.

Whether the President decides on rationing or taxing, it will require costly bureaucratic machinery. So his subordinates are gearing up for both possibilities — at considerable expense to the taxpayer — while the President makes up his mind.

Blaming the Jews: Washington officials, meanwhile, fear the Arab oil boycott could cause some ugly repercussions when the public starts to feel the economic impact.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is worried that the

oil squeeze could aggravate anti-Arab feelings and upset his delicate dealings with the Arabs.

But high Treasury officials fear that the economic hardships raised by the oil shortage could produce a nasty anti-Semitic backlash. They expect the professional rabble-rousers to take to the soapbox and blame the Jews for the hardships. Already, the anti-Semitic clique is crying: "Why should the American people suffer to save Israel?"

A prolonged Arab embargo, in the opinion of the experts, will cause plant shutdowns, economic dislocations and, ultimately, a severe recession. The tighter the economic pinch gets, officials fear, the uglier the public mood will become.

An anti-Israeli bias is already growing inside the government. Officials in the State and Treasury departments, in particular, blame Israel more than the Arab countries for America's oil plight. Their secret reports describe Israel as totally lacking in understanding of the U.S. energy problem.

The wrath of the American people may be directed against the Arabs, as Kissinger believes. But most experts fear the Jews will become the scapegoats.

Caught in the Middle: There was skepticism in Washington over the appointment of Leon Jaworski as the special Watergate prosecutor. It was clear that Archibald Cox had been fired for pushing his investigations too vigorously for President Nixon's comfort.

Jaworski, as the replacement chosen by the President, is on the spot. If he pursues the investigations with the same vigor, he may also bump heads with Nixon. But if Jaworski holds back, he will be accused of whitewashing.

The new special prosecutor has now taken over the Watergate investigations. He not only has kept Cox's ag-

gressive young prosecutors, but has directed them to go ahead with their investigation, no holds barred. He also demanded and got from the White House documents about the plumbers operation. From the beginning, the President has tried to conceal this operation on the grounds of national security.

Our White House sources say Nixon was upset over Jaworski's demand. But the public clamor over the Cox firing has inhibited the President. He doesn't want to ap-

pear to be obstructing the new special prosecutor.

Jaworski, meanwhile, has declined to meet directly with the President so there can be no suspicion they are collaborating. His reason for taking the job, he has told friends, is out of respect for the law. He is determined, they say, to restore faith in the American judicial system.

It might just be possible that President Nixon has another Archibald Cox on his hands.