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**Floundering in
Jerry Ford's
Oil Slick**

Washington

REPRESENTATIVE Andrew Young (Dem-Ga.) calls the President's plan to raise the price of oil "the Persian Gulf resolution." In one of the few enlightening moments of a four-hour discussion in the House Rules Committee, Young suggested that what the President was really trying to do was to let the OPEC countries dictate the cost of domestic energy.

"It's like the Tonkin Gulf resolution" he explained later. "Lyndon Johnson nailed the congress into his war policies with that. Now Gerald Ford is trying to implicate us in raising oil prices at home, so when the consumers begin to scream, he can just say that a Democratic congress concurred."

The House is terribly defensive about its seven-months' floundering in the oil slick dumped on them by an administration which has been using the threat of another Arab boycott — hardly necessary in view of their skyrocketing prices — to insist on "energy independence."

This is a national goal which may prove as mindless and as expensive as putting a man on the moon, but it has the virtue of making the oil barons smile, and Ford keeps saying if we don't enrich them further, they will strike their rigs and stop drilling and the country will go dark and cold.

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THE DEMOCRATS might be able to perceive the political realities of the situation if they could master the fearsome complexities of "old and new oil" and roll-backs and if they were not caught on the brink of yet another recess — this one to last a month and scheduled to begin this weekend.

That means that they will be at beach or mountain when the present controls on "old" oil run out on August 31. So they are frantically grappling with compromises and capitulations to convince the country they are doing something, when in point of fact they might be better off doing nothing.

If the President, who may be as nervous as they are, lifts the controls, which he has the authority to do, he would certainly be hauled into court, where he could hardly justify the increase on grounds of added producer costs. He would also face the wrath of consumers in an election year.



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LAST WEEK, the House turned down a proposal by Representative Bob Eckhardt, a Texas Democrat who bravely votes against oil, which would have set the price of all oil at \$7.50. Now he is trying to get the House to vote its disapproval of the President's plan, which is coming back as the amendment of Representative Robert Krueger, another Texas Democrat whose district is one large oil field.

Eckhardt drawled that the Krueger amendment represented "abject surrender." He was reminded of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, who pleaded that his men be allowed to keep their horses for the spring ploughing. "Lord knows," he sighed, "we'll need horses. We won't be able to afford gasoline."

The House Rule Committee, a group much given to bypaths and joshing, illustrates lavishly the limitations of congressional government. Chairman Al Ullman, of the Ways and Means Committee, illustrates it even more.

It was clear that Ullman had no better idea of what to do than anyone else, and finally Representative James Quillen (Rep-Tenn.) in the best Rules Committee tradition, asked him, "Would you tell us why you are here?"

Ullman replied in the uninhibited baronial style of the House Committee Chairman, "Because you are transgressing on my jurisdiction, and I want to see you don't do it again."

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TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE has played its part in congress' scandalous failure to turn up its trumpeted "own energy program." And the fear of Gerald Ford should not be underestimated. Last week, the House rose up and bucked him on aid to Turkey. Now it is cowering in its bunker as Turkey predictably has taken over the bases, and Ford castigates them from castles on the Rhine.

As Young said, "When we refused arms for Turkey, no attempt was made to bring Turkey into line. Now congress becomes the enemy in the energy problem — not OPEC, which is causing it."