

Half Measures in The Fuel Crisis



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PRESIDENT Nixon simply hasn't leveled with his fellow Americans about the fuel crisis. He has adopted half measures, put out misinformation and made Pollyana-like promises. Here are resulting scandals that have already developed:

- The President misled the nation when he claimed heavy duty trucks and highway buses are more efficient at 55 miles per hour and should be permitted, therefore, to travel five miles faster than cars.

It's not the trucks but the trucking lobby which is more efficient. Cummins Engine Company, the diesel engine manufacturer, has found that its engines will operate more efficiently at 50 mph.

An interoffice teletype, intended for the eyes only of the corporate bosses, states that a speed reduction from 60 to 55 mph will bring a seven per cent fuel savings but that a further reduction to 50 mph would push the fuel savings to 10 per cent.

This is substantiated by the Transportation Department's private estimates, which show the highway dreadnaughts could save 47,000 barrels of fuel a day by slowing from 55 to 50 mph.

- Sources close to the oil industry tell us some suppliers are holding back fuel until prices go up. Then they will be able to sell the same fuel for higher profits. Other profiteers are diverting oil intended

for the United States to foreign ports where prices already are higher.

This suppressing and siphoning of America's scarce fuel, say our sources, has been encouraged by the President's pricing and priorities policies

- The President's fuel policies appear to be fashioned of, by and for the oil-gas industry. Most of the policymaking bodies, such as the American Petroleum Institute, National Petroleum Council, and the Interior Department's oil and gas office, are dominated by industry people.

Now Interior Secretary Rogers Morton is bringing in 250 oil executives to help handle fuel allocation.

Not surprisingly, Interior has granted terms that will permit the oil barons to reap a bonanza from shale oil.

- The President told the Seafarers Union that the oil crunch shouldn't last much longer than a year. He also promised the nation that his "project independence" could bring self-sufficiency in energy by 1980.

This is quite different from what his energy experts have been telling him privately. Our policies since World War II, they tell us, have made us so dependent upon foreign oil that the 1980 goal is completely unrealistic.

They say sadly that President Nixon still hasn't come to grips with the oil crisis.