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Exxon and Nixon

Washington

THERE WASN'T MUCH left of the free market in the energy industry before, but this oil company crisis will destroy what there was. As the oilgops' reward for their successful run on the American paycheck, the companies are not only getting an anti-trust exemption but will henceforth be able to run their conspiracy out of President Nixon's new emergency energy office.



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The personnel manning the place will be oil-company executives and we idiots will be thanking them for making this sacrifice for their common good. Their profits are up 50 per cent without a crisis, but while we are expressing our gratitude to the thieves for robbing us, the majors will be getting what they have aspired to for so long: the completion of their control of the oilfields, the pipelines, the tankers and

the gas stations, with the legal power to allocate markets, fix prices and hold back supplies through an office in the White House.

The ending of the free market in coal, oil, natural gas, and atomic power will be rationalized as it always is. They will tell us that this is the only way we can get our fair share of scarcity, and that if the prices are driven up out of sight, there must be an incentive to put money into research and exploration of new energy resources — the same reasons they gave for granting oil-import quotas and the loopholes that resulted in income - tax payments even lower than Nixon's.

They put the money in the bank, not in oil exploration, but this new deal they're blackmailing us out of will allow them to keep us in a state of permanent shortage. Yet, as an added incentive for them to rob again, we are being told we must use public funds to pay for research in such areas as shale oil and atomic fusion, the patent rights, of course, to be turned over to them for more profit.

Under the circumstances, nationalizing the whole shebang is the only sensible thing to do. If we must have a planned economy, then we, not the major oil companies, should do the planning and the profiting.

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NO SOCIALISTIC GOVERNMENT entity will do worse. The majors and the guy they bought with their illegal campaign contributions are already turning our country into a replica of an Iron Curtain society. No lights at Christmas, no gaiety, the joy of constant self - sacrifice for the state, drabness, restriction of travel and movement, cold homes and chronic shortages. Aren't these the features that characterize the Red Utopia, and aren't these what Nixon and Exxon are vouchsaying for us?

Nixon's proposal for energy self - sufficiency by 1980 — Project Independence, he calls it — makes about as much sense as one of Stalin's five-year plans, and it has just about as much chance of success. It assumes that we can continue to increase our oil consumption rates and still not need to buy foreign oil.

One more devaluation of the dollar and we won't have to worry about buying foreign oil. No matter what our position on Israel may be, the Arabs won't sell it to us. Even now the Arab decision to cut us off was probably much influenced by the fact that we encouraged old friends and allies like the Saudi Arabians to convert their oil into dollars, hundreds of millions of which we promptly stole from them overnight by our unilateral devaluation of our currency.

This was an act by Nixon and Kissinger, our twin foreign policy geniuses, that rivaled that brilliant stroke we call the Russian Wheat Deal.

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PROJECT INDEPENDENCE is a public-relations term for a program to denude the country. Piddling sums will be spent developing such things as home solar energy plants that would free us from the thrall of the public utilities. Having refused to make the effort, they will tell us that such schemes are impractical, and that we must either rely on atomic-bomb factories and shale oil, or walk to work and freeze.

If we accede to their demands for shale-oil exploitation and strip mining under the threat of freezing through an inflationary depression, we are also kissing a state like Montana goodbye. We might just as well pluck its star off the flag and send its Congressional delegation home. It will be good for nothing but testing nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, they are saying we must agree or face economic decline or even catastrophe. What they overlook is that we have been in an extended period of decline, that is, our economic growth rates have been flattening out. We are a mature society, we are not a Japan; our economic adolescence was behind us before they created an energy crisis for us.

We are not going to grow as fast as we once did or in the ways we once did, and the Exxon-Nixon solution, which is nothing more than permanently high-priced fuel, will only speed up the slowing down.

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