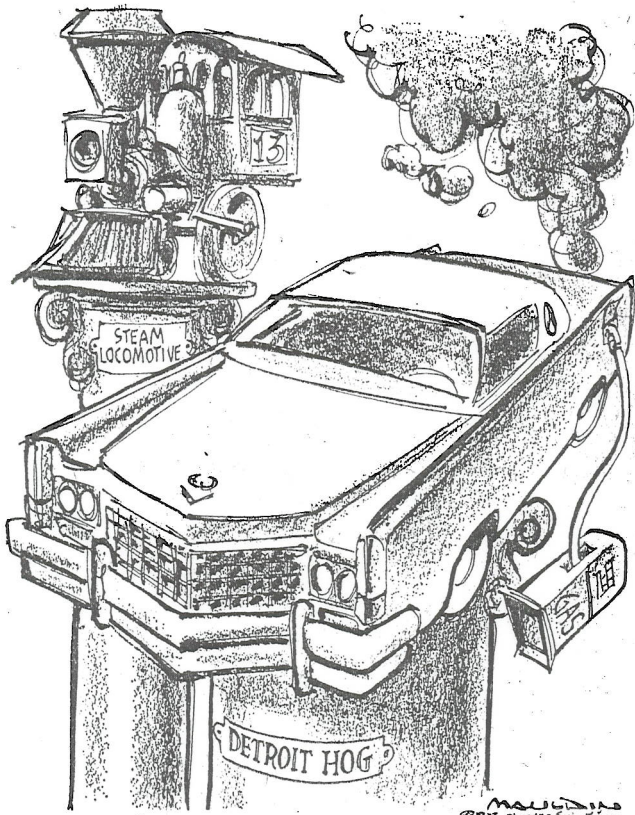


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# Nixon Sidesteps Bold



Relics

PRESIDENT NIXON'S latest stab at an energy program is a step beyond his previous inadequate efforts, but it still falls far short of the mark.

It is nearly unbelievable, at this stage of the crisis, that the President could not find the authority to make a nationwide speed limit of 50 miles per hour mandatory.

Would that the President had been so circumspect in seeking out legal authority when he set up the plumbers' group in the White House!

As Gov. John Love admitted to reporters, a speed limit—which would save more energy than any other single step—"needs a national push." It can't be left to the states or to voluntary compliance by citizens.

Well-informed sources indicate that it was only in response to insistent demands by many state governors that the President, at the last minute, agreed to ask for congressional approval for the use of daylight savings time throughout the year.



IT IS CLEAR to everyone who has studied the energy problem that in the short run, the most hopeful prospect of reducing wasteful consumption of energy is in the curtailment of the private use of automobiles.

This requires much more than appeals to the public to use car pools and mass transit. It requires tough measures to force the auto industry and the buying

## Measures on Energy

public toward producing and using smaller and lighter cars.

Yet, the administration steadfastly refuses to consider a tax on high-horsepower cars and, according to Gov. John Love at the White House press briefing Wednesday night, a substantial additional tax on gasoline itself.

It perpetuates the notion that somehow gasoline rationing may yet be avoided. The reaction by Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) is more realistic: gasoline

### Economic Impact

rationing is inevitable—and so are some industrial shutdowns that will have painful economic implications.

The Nixon administration's rationale for staying away from higher gasoline taxes is that they are regressive—they would hit lower-income people harder than the wealthy. But there are ways to solve that problem. And there certainly can be no worry about the regressivity of a penalty tax on the huge gas guzzlers.

The point is that bold ways have to be pursued to cut down on the 50 per cent of U.S. oil refinery production that is now devoted to the production of gasoline, mostly for autos. This would permit higher refinery runs for heating oils, and for the special fuels used by railroads and airlines.

The halfway measures outlined in the President's

speech suggest that some policy makers must be clinging to the hope that Kissinger's magic touch in Mideast diplomacy will soon have Arab oil flowing again.

BUT IF there is more than rhetoric in the President's call for a "Manhattan Project" sense of urgency, if he really intends for the nation to be independent of Mideast oil needs, there is a distressing lack of commitment so far to development of alternative sources of energy.

Prof. Ernest Frankel of M.I.T. points out that production of petroleum from either coal or oil shale in a "socially acceptable way" would come to about \$6 a barrel in the early 1980s, compared to median predictions of around \$7 a barrel for petroleum by that time. (Some estimates for Mideast and South American oil run much higher.)

As the technology improves, oil from shale or coal would probably become cheaper. Thus, says Frankel, "There is not only an alternative but an economically and politically attractive solution," since U.S. coal and shale deposits are larger than the world's total oil reserves.

Beyond that, there is nuclear and solar energy. Is Mr. Nixon giving enough attention to their potential? A concerted effort should seriously be made to look into microbiological sources of energy. Many scientists suggest that this is an unplowed field: for example,

## IMPACT, From M1

methane can be produced from animal waste and urban sewage. Hydrogen and ethyl alcohol can also be produced from microbiological sources.

The kind of commitment that would demand every possible conservation measure in the short run, and every possible exploration of alternative sources for the long haul, is still lacking.

THE NATION shouldn't wait until next summer to ration gas: it ought to cut back sharply on gasoline supplies now, and get more out of the refineries for home heating and essential industry.

The nation must also be assured that in its drive to boost energy supplies, it will prevent the oil companies from making windfall profits. Some price increases will be inevitable, but this is not the time to throw controls out the window, making the consumer the scapegoat for short-sighted planning by industry and government over the past several years.

It is also not a time for the Western world to allow itself to become divided by the Arab strategy of embargo. Appeasement, as Leonard Silk pointed out in the New York Times the other day, won't work any better in the Mideast than it did at Munich.

One can understand the concerns in Western Europe and Japan, which get the bulk of their oil supplies from the Arab countries. But this country, Europe and Japan badly need to come together, share existing resources and develop new ones. If they don't, the Arab countries will pick off one consuming country after the other, and \$12 oil will look cheap.