

Demos Blast

Nixon on
Gas Views

GAS POLICY

Washington

Democratic senators Mike Mansfield and William Proxmire, taking sharp issue with President Nixon, said yesterday that gasoline rationing is inevitable if the nation is to meet its energy needs this winter.

Mansfield, the Senate majority leader, and Proxmire, vice chairman of the Joint Congressional Economic Committee, also threw the blame back at the President for letting the energy situation reach crisis proportions.

The President, in his nationally televised session with Associated Press managing editors in Orlando, Fla., Saturday, said he would resist rationing as unneeded if Congress and the American people comply with "the things that I recommended" in his special energy message a week ago.

But Proxmire said: "Gasoline rationing is essential, we have to have it no matter what happens. As it looks now we're going to have to have gasoline rationing for at least a year or so."

Mansfield said rationing is "the only way that I can see, hard though it may be."

Mansfield said the alternative to rationing was the imposition of an additional tax of 30 to 40 cents on the gallon, but he said this would fall mostly on low and middle income groups.

As for Mr. Nixon's assessment of the situation, Mansfield said: "he will, as he said last night, consider it only as a last resort, but in the meantime, the economy will burn, and people will

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freeze and industries will close down, unemployment will increase, inflation will go up and we're just paving the way to a recession next year."

Mansfield was interviewed on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press." Proxmire appeared on the CBS program "Face the Nation."

The call for gas rationing was echoed by David Rockefeller, chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank.

Rockefeller said he preferred rationing to the imposition of a high tax on gasoline to discourage its use.

The reaction to Mr. Nixon's plans and his criticism of Congress for allegedly delaying energy legislation, came as the Senate headed for a final vote today on emergency legislation to give the President broad powers to deal with the crisis, including discretionary authority to impose rationing.

Mr. Nixon complained in his session with the editors that although he requested seven pieces of energy legislation last April, only the Alaskan pipeline bill had arrived on his desk for signature.

"The President warned about it and the Congress did nothing about it," he said, "even though they were warned two years ago."

Proxmire said the President's statement was "very hard to understand, in view of the record," adding: "The Congress has consistently urged that we improve our energy position . . . pushed for years for the elimination of oil import quotas. We have got no assistance on that from the White House."

Mansfield said, "I would point out that the President has power under the Emergency Defense Act of 1950, I believe, to impose rationing if he wants to do so, but he doesn't want to do it."

United Press

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