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ED ESHLEMAN'S WASHINGTON REPORT

The question often being asked these days about the energy crisis is -- why now? Many people, understandably so, are puzzled as to why we are facing present shortages when energy never seemed to be a problem before.

There is no one answer to the question. But there are a series of things that add up to at least a partial explanation of what went wrong.

In this column I would like to list a few possible reasons for the energy emergency we now face.

(1) The cut-off of crude oil from Arab nations. Arab oil accounted for at least 6 percent of our total crude supply.

(2) Although predictions ten years ago showed that we would face an energy crunch by the mid-70s, those predictions were pretty much ignored. Not only that, but the predictions failed to gauge the extent of our actual energy usage, and we ended up using far more fuel than the experts thought possible.

(3) Predicted shortages included the building of facilities that never got built. In other words, we would have run short even with things like the Alaskan pipeline, but without those things the crisis hit harder and came earlier.

(4) We lack enough oil refineries to produce the finished petroleum products we require in the quantities we need. Refineries scheduled to be in operation by now are not even underway. Therefore, even if we got plenty of crude oil, we would not be able to process enough of it to prevent some short supplies from occurring.

(5) Environmental concerns made plants like power generating stations convert from coal to fuel oil. This put a drain of millions of barrels of oil daily on petroleum supplies.

(6) The switch from coal-to oil meant that vital coal mining operations were shut down which now will take several months to get going again as the switch back to coal takes place.

(7) Nuclear power plant construction has not proceeded at the predicted pace to provide additional electrical energy sources. While there is cause for certain safety concerns about these plants when large numbers of them begin to get concentrated in one area, the fact remains that this is the great potential energy source for the immediate future. Other sources of new power like solar energy are in only the experimental stage, and are long-term rather than short-term solutions for the future.

(8) Cutting the oil depletion allowance meant a curtailment of exploration for new oil fields. This, in turn, meant that oil companies began to look to

foreign supplies to meet a growing demand.

(9) Other nations of the world are now in a position to compete with us economically for basic needs like energy and food. This has meant that our supplies of those basic needs are available at only increased prices. With our wage and price control program, American businessmen were not

in a position to pay the higher costs, and the result has added up to shortages.

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