# *ED ESHLEMAN'S*

energy conservation ideas being circulated Washington involves rationing. There is a lot of talk that rationing would be better than higher gas and

One of the alternative would be more equitable than higher prices that tend in to favor the rich.

But before you get sold on rationing, take a close look. First, consider the fact that those talking about it loudest oil prices. Another point are providing you with no stressed is that rationing details. Would everyone be

allocated five gallons, or ten gallons or fifteen gallons a week? We do not know because no one wants to get that specific.

Rather they prefer to talk about giving the President stand-by rationing authority, or, in other words, put the monkey of coming up with details on his back. That way, these politicans will say that they have dealt with the energy problem by instituting a rationing policy, but will take no responsibility for the hardships that the precise regulations connected with the program might cause.

If these lawmakers want rationing, let them come up with a specific program, not a stand-by program. Let them spell out the details of what they are proposing so that everyone has a chance to evaluate their plan before they consider it as a reasonable alternative.

Why aren't details being spelled out? The answer is because the specifics make rationing far less attractive. What if the upward limit per consumer turned out to be as low as five gallons per week? How many families could get by on that?

Also, there is considerable question whether it is all that equitable. There is a built-in assumption that some people are going to get more gas than others - those who use their car to make their living, those who need their car to obtain medical care, the farmer to run his machinery and many others who for good reason would qualify for an extra ration.

Another major consideration must be the of blackpossibility marketeering. The black market was very much a factor in the gas rationing efforts during World War II and can be expected because black market fuel would be most available to those most able to pay for it and the result would be dwindling supplies of fuel for those citizens who stayed legitimate.

Finally, there is the question of price. Rationing does not guarantee a stable price. Therefore, you have to assume that any such program must also involve price controls. Such controls and rationing combine to establish the need for a huge government new bureaucracy to police the programs locally and ad-

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them minister Washington. That raises another question - who paysfor this expansion of government? Obviously, the same taxpayer.

Critics may be right that the President's plan to conserve fuel with higher prices is not the right one. but the case for rationing as a better plan has not yet been made.

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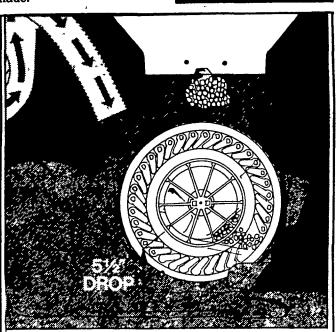


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