

Proper energy forecast emphasized at PennAg

CAMP HILL - "There is no crystal ball for the energy future" said William B. Murray in his speech titled "A Look Ahead - At Energy" at Wednesday's PennAg Convention in Camp Hill.

"It may be useful to consider some yardsticks for assessing the energy forecasts with which we are bombarded daily" said Murray who is vice-president of communications for the GUP Service Corp., N.J. He suggested that as recent forecasts on energy are read, their validity be tested by assessing who is making

the forecast, what his or her special interest may be and what is being said along with the validity of the information.

Murray advised you know the interests of the forecaster because they may conflict with your own interests. "It is essential as you look at their utterings that you know where their hearts lie" he said. He urged conventioners to watch for a technique for devising titles which some organizations use. "Many end up sounding like prestigious academic organizations or formal government agencies when,

in fact, they are nothing resembling that." Murray urged caution and skepticism in automatically linking names and titles with forecasting accuracy or objectivity.

Murray advocated when measuring what is being said, you treat it like an insurance policy and read the fine print. "Headline writers are not noted for accuracy. Their aim is to catch your eye. Maybe in a divorce case or murder trial that's okay but in something as complex as our energy future the potential for error is horrendous." Murray urged the audience to dig for

the behind-the-scenes details.

As a final measure of the validity of projections, Murray recommended that the responsibilities of the forecaster be determined. "If one is not going to be held accountable for the consequences of a forecast, I would be wary" he said.

Having given some criteria for assessing energy forecasts, Murray offered a few projections of his own while asking the assembly to evaluate them with the yardsticks he had outlined.

Murray prescribed the use of electrical energy will more than double in the New Jersey and Pennsylvania area by the year 2000, even though conservation programs have been in effect.

"Often overlooked is the energy need of those citizens still near the bottom rung of the economic ladder. If these people are to have a chance of improving their lot, we must have more energy" he said. Murray felt that Americans who live comfortably today, do so because of the technology and jobs made possible by an adequate supply of elec-

tricity. Denying the less fortunate the chance of establishing a higher standard of living would have a potentially dangerous social impact. We are not to doubt the growing need for electricity, this Summer showed record peak loads in the Pennsylvania and New Jersey areas.

Murray raised the question of what fuels can be used to satisfy the growing demand for electricity. Supplies of oil and natural gas are limited. "Oil", he said, "has far too many other valuable uses to be burned to generate electricity. You in the Agribusiness know this better than I. Fertilizers and pesticides, along with the production of medicine, plastics and lubricants, must be the future priority uses for oil and natural gas."

"This leaves us with coal and nuclear power as our only realistic fuel sources for the generation of electricity over the next several decades" he stated. "It would be foolhardy to rely on only one of these to meet our needs", said Murray as he gave last Winter's coal strike as an example to

appreciate the fallacy of a one-fuel economy.

Murray recommended a better way must be found to balance our growing need for energy and our desire to protect the environment. Obstacles must be overcome. Progress has been unbearably slow in passing current legislation for the licensing and construction of nuclear power plants. "Nuclear power should not be underestimated. A third of the GPU system's electrical output, serving some 4 million people in Pennsylvania and New Jersey is nuclear-based today.

Murray looked further into the picture, summarizing that solar energy will be an energy source of the future, but at this time more research is needed to make it an economically feasible energy source.

He concluded by saying "The only realistic course is to move forcefully in overcoming the obstacles to increased energy from today's fuels, primarily coal and nuclear, so we will have the time to commercialize the new energy sources for tomorrow."

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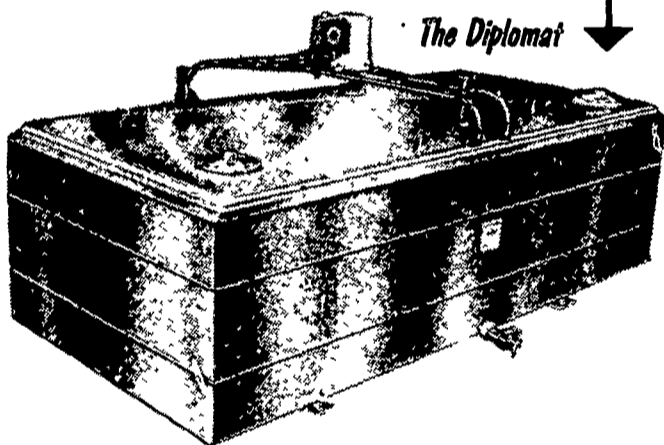
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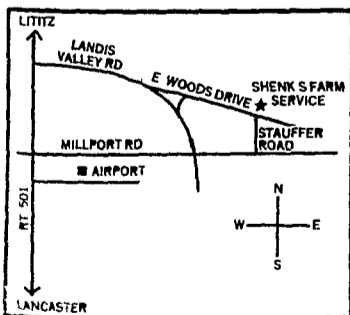
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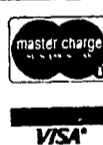
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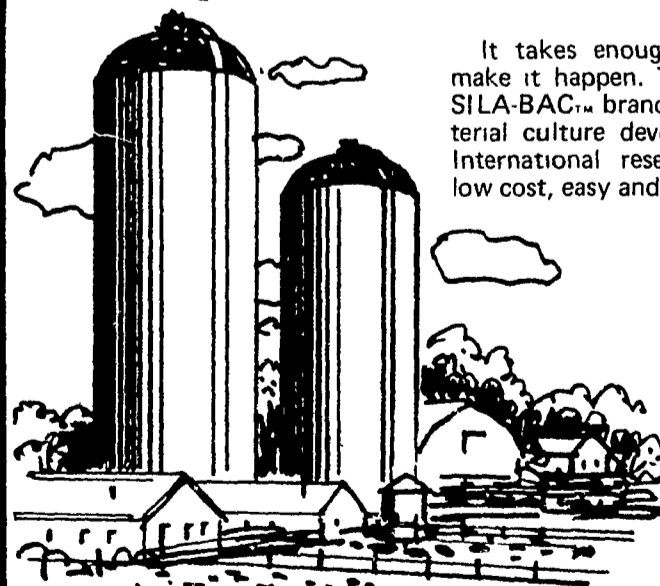


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