

# OBSERVATION POINT

## Energy Crisis Marks End Of Era

By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

About the only thing that can be said with certainty about the energy crisis is that things will get worse before they get better.

In a very real way, the President's speech last week marked the end of an era that began way back in the late 1940's. It was at that time that people began - without really realizing it - to assume that sources of energy (and the gizmos to expend it) were essentially endless. We moved into the age of the two car family (at least, one of which was the gas-guzzling behemoth eight), the shirt sleeve in the grease office, the multiple electric appliance home, the effulgent neon sign advertising economy.

Now we know better.

THE ENERGY crunch will be particularly bothersome here in the suburbs, mostly because the suburban life style is in many ways a direct byproduct of the energy - gobbling society of the last decade.

The typical suburban family lives in a free standing home, which is less efficient to heat per unit of cubic volume than an apartment or even a semi-detached house.

Dad drives to work, either downtown in Detroit or elsewhere in the suburbs, usually alone in his car. It isn't his fault that there is no mass transit available, but it's an inefficient use of gas.

Mom puts the kids on the bus to school, because with the spread out housing pattern in the suburbs it is deemed too far for them to walk. But buses use gas.

Mom then drives here and there to do her shopping and errands, because even though centers take up some of the slack, there are very few old fashioned, concentrated downtowns here in the suburbs.

Having put another 15 gallons in her car, mom drives home and turns on the dishwasher while she cleans house with the electric vacuum sweeper. More kilowatts.

When dad gets back from work, dinner is simmering in the electric skillet and the kids are playing the stereo. Then the TV set is turned on for an evening's viewing.

And so it goes. We have created in our suburbs a whole pattern of life which uses energy more profusely than any ever developed in the history of the human race.

MAYBE THE energy shortage isn't all that bad, come to think about it.

Doctors say we'll have fewer colds and sniffles if we aren't constantly walking from 75 degree homes out into the winter's cold.

If we all do a little more walking, maybe we'll have better luck coping with the two diseases which seem to accompany our present life-style: obesity and heart disease.

If the energy cost of manufacturing things goes up, maybe we'll be less inclined to accept an economy in which you buy something like a transistor radio for 10 bucks, and then wind up throwing it away after it breaks because you can't get it fixed for anything under \$25.

If we get gas rationing and are forced into car pools, maybe we'll all get to know about the other guy down the street and how he feels when your kids trample through his rose garden.

I have the old-fashioned feeling that we've all grown too fat and too soft in our energy-rich society. Maybe we'll all be better off with a leaner approach to life that the energy crunch will bring.

"THIS MODEL DOESN'T COME WITH A LIFETIME GUARANTEE"



## Prepare For Changes In Living

Jim Richard writes:

Usually, poor folks and city dwellers get hit by such social problems as unemployment, crime in the streets, air pollution.

This year, however, we in the affluent suburbs might get hurt relatively harder by the energy crisis." Consider the very real prospect of gasoline rationing.

The inner city dweller needs a few things from the store, so he hoofts it down the block to the corner grocery.

For the suburban resident, there is no corner grocery; everything is in a shopping

center with a giant parking lot, and that "center" may be two or three or more miles away.

The walk to the shopping center is longer in part because suburban lots are nearly twice as big as city lots. If you walk to the shopping center takes you across that parking lot, the winter wind has more clear space to knife into you.

For many suburbanites, the walk home is all the better because there are no sidewalks. Indeed, many suburbanites oppose sidewalks

because they seek a "rural environment."

Do you begin to see the point? The point is that most of our suburbs were designed for automobiles - often for two-car families - rather than for people.

If you ration motor fuel, you reduce the availability of autos. If you need an auto to go everywhere - school, church, library, bank, store, post office, doctor's office, movies, YMCA, political meeting, hospital, social call, sewing lesson - then the lack

of fuel puts a severe crimp into your standard of living. Those weekend trips to the north country for snowmobiling? Better settle for Hines or Kenington park and tobogganing with the common herd.

Do Scott and Kevin like their mini-bikes? Great, Dad, but you may need that fuel to get to work.

Good thing you won't need that power mower and power rake until spring.

Oh, but you will need some fuel for that power snowshovel. Hmmm. Well, you

can just shovel the driveway and not the main walk. (By the way, have you ever noticed that most suburbanites shovel their driveways first and the sidewalk either second or not at all? That's REALLY worshipping the car!)

One good thing about being a suburbanite: Many of us have fireplaces, so we can turn down the thermostat and keep the family room warm with a fire. Trouble is, the price of firewood has gone up this year - and not any 5.5 per cent either, pal.

There are also a number of other factors which have nothing to do with the house itself, like whether it is in a school district part of a federal court plan for school integration.

But a \$20,000 house in one city may sell for \$25,000 in another city and \$35,000 a few miles away.

"True market value" is a bad way to set property assessments but that's the way it's done.

EDITOR:

I am a resident of Kimberly Oaks Subdivision. Recently I received a citation for failure to observe a stop sign. This I admit I was guilty of. I stop for this sign every day, but for some reason I neglected to this once.

Incidentally, this was the first ticket I have received since 1962 which was issued in Redford Township because I didn't have a light on my rear license plate. Since I drive over 25,000 miles a year, I think it shows that I try to obey the laws.

I have noticed in the past that the officers lurk on side streets and ticket our local residents for minor offenses such as five miles over the speed limit, stop signs, etc.

After "writing up" three or four of our citizens, they return to the station. This practice is all right, but where are these officers on Friday and Saturday nights when the young fellows go through these stop streets at 70 miles and more per hour?

What are they waiting for? Must someone get killed first?

I am a taxpaying citizen, and I am fed up with the way cars and motorcycles are allowed to operate from midnight till about 4 in the morning on Friday and Saturday nights.

Where are the Livonia police officers? Why is nothing done about these things? I have called the station and reported speeding through the neighborhood on several occasions, but no officers appeared on the scene.

M. H. BAKER  
Livonia

## Let's Trap Bike Thieves

EDITOR:

It's frustrating to experience the loss of a 1968 bicycle, especially when it's stolen off public property with security guards patrolling the area.

On Oct. 25 at 4 p.m., my daughter and her friend took their bikes and went shopping to Wonderland. They parked two new bikes next to the bike rack in back of Ward's and chained them together around a post with a lock. Both bikes were less than a year, more or less 10-speed Schwinn's; each cost over \$100. The bikes were stolen while the girls were shopping.

I learned later from the security guard at Wonderland that many bikes are stolen there regularly.

Why isn't the public advised? I wouldn't permit my daughter to leave her bike unattended had I known this. Why can't the police set up a trap or decoy and flush the robbers out. If that many bikes are stolen, then a ring must be involved. The losses to the public must be substantial.

Maybe the newspaper can help out by publicizing these facts. Especially if a list of stolen bikes and serial numbers were published, this would alert people to be aware of that particular bike

## READERS' FORUM

Please type (or write clearly) and limit letters to 300 words.

- Letters must be signed, with the writer's address. Names will be withheld only at the writer's request and for good cause.
- The editor reserves the right to reject unsuitable letters.

they are purchasing could be stolen.

If preventive measures aren't taken, then tomorrow it will be someone else's child reporting a stolen bike.

ARTHUR A. GUTOWSKI  
Redford Township

## Don't Call Him 'Gullible'

EDITOR:

Re: Articles on transcendental meditation appearing Oct. 17.

It is not my favorite thing to be called "gullible" especially when the accusers are ill-informed and have apparently done little to alleviate their ignorance. Your Messrs. Kinsolving and Richards obviously don't know what transcendental meditation is all about, haven't devoted financial or personal time resources to find out, yet have taken the position as experts to be negatively critical.

I would suggest that if you really want to inform your readers on TM that you go to an authority in the field of psycho-physiology who has experience with TM and get his professional opinion.

In the interim, why not have Rev. Kinsolving stick to expounding opinions in his field of expertise, religion. As for Mr. Richards, an assignment on the buses rising at the local bakery would be in order.

JAMES H. KARPICKE  
Plymouth

## Student Likes Mod Schedule

EDITOR:

I am a senior attending Plymouth High School, planning to graduate in June 1974. Modular scheduling began in our high school when I was a sophomore and was planned as an experiment to graduate our class under the modular scheduling program.

As of yet, no plans about shifting the modular scheduling program for next year have been made. I have attended past school board meetings about the program and understand that plans for education in the high school next year may not include the program.

As an individual participating in MS, I believe I have benefited highly in the majority of subjects I studied. At first, the system seemed a bit awkward, but after further knowledge of the program, the advantages soon took place, making full use of the program.

SHIRLEY WALL  
President, Southfield-Lathrup League of Women Voters

At board meetings last year I heard many opinions on the subject of MS and concluded that many parents don't really have enough knowledge of the program to have the power to abolish it. Also, many of those who complained were parents of freshmen students, and I agree MS is not to the freshmen's advantage.

A compromise could be made by having the program set up in such a way that it would only be offered to sophomores, juniors and seniors, and traditional scheduling would be offered to all students wishing not to participate in MS.

Modular scheduling is a very accurate and highly developed form of education which, as a whole, extends more views to students participating. The two schools, Salem and Canton, are both designed for use of MS, and many materials and rooms would be wasted if the program were discontinued.

So as a student in MS, I ask you as voters, students and board members to please think twice and support our system rather than abolishing it.

Remember: You can't always be sure of a judgment until you have actually been involved with the subject. The subject is modular scheduling, which I have been deeply involved with as long as anybody and longer than most. I believe in continuing the program for the benefit of future education in our high schools.

BEVERLY CHLOPAN  
Plymouth-Salem High School

## 'Watergate' At Home

EDITOR:

For those of us involved in promoting and improving citizen participation in government, this last election was especially disheartening. "Watergate" should have served as a very potent lesson in the calamities that can occur when citizens abdicate their responsibilities. Everyone claims the freedoms that our system of government affords, but few accept the responsibility implicit in that system.

The act of voting is the initial, and easiest, step in this accountability. It would be most interesting to hear of the approximately 30,000 excuses for not voting in Southfield and Lathrup Village on Nov. 6.

SHIRLEY WALL  
President, Southfield-Lathrup League of Women Voters

## What Is True Market Value?

No one really likes property taxes.

They account for up to one-third of a homeowner's monthly house payment.

For senior citizens, property taxes robbed them of a substantial amount of their fixed income before a new tax rebate plan was approved recently to take effect next year.

School officials want property taxes deleted or substantially reduced because the tax distorts the quality of educational opportunities from one district to another based on the local dependence of such taxes for local support.

But a major reason for getting rid of property taxes is the basic administration of the system.

The key to the argument is just what constitutes "true market value" of a home.

The Wayne County Bureau of Taxation, which determines if the local assessor has set values based on the actual market, uses records of home sales of the past year to determine if the assessor is doing his job.

But the problem is sales records aren't an accurate barometer of what a home is worth.

For example, two homes of identical size, age, location,

and design can sell for as much as \$5,000 more or less.

The reason is simple. One home could have carpeting in good shape, usable refrigerator, range, and laundry room washing machine and dryer. Aside from the home, the seller is offering the home on the open market through a real estate firm and may be forced to pay mortgage "points."

Both the real estate agent's commission and the mortgage "points" are included in the purchase price.

A similar home, sold by the owner who was fortunate enough to find a buyer with a large down payment that may avoid paying the real estate agent's fee and the mortgage points, which drops the potential selling price by several thousand dollars.

But a \$20,000 house in one city may sell for \$25,000 in another city and \$35,000 a few miles away.

"True market value" is a bad way to set property assessments but that's the way it's done.

## Who Benefits In Local Units Sales?

The State Legislature ought to enact a law, regulating land transactions between governmental units, particularly the sale of right-of-way for public roadway or sidewalks.

As things stand, a govern-

mental unit needing right-of-way from another must negotiate a purchase price. The selling unit calls in an appraiser and makes an offer based on current market value.

For instance, a school

board might have purchased land 10 years ago at \$1,500 per acre. The city government, within the school district, needs right-of-way for road widening.

The district appraises the land and offers to sell for \$7,000 an acre. If one acre is needed, the city pays \$7,000 and the school district realizes a \$5,500 gain.

Or, a community college which, a decade ago, buys land at \$5,000 an acre offers to sell right-of-way to the county road commission for \$10,000 an acre. On the surface, a \$7,000 gain for the college sounds all right.

Or it could be the city government negotiating with the State Highway Commission, offering to sell right-of-way at \$8,000 an acre for land it purchased a decade ago for \$2,000 an acre.

In one case, the city is paying \$7,000 to the school district which profits by \$5,500; in the other, a county pays \$10,000 to the college which profits by \$7,000; and in the third, the state pays \$8,000 to the city which profits by \$6,000.

But what really happened is, that 10 years ago taxpayers paid a total of \$5,500 for land purchased by each governmental unit. A decade later, the taxpayer pays another \$25,000 to buy that

same land for a road or sidewalk. In essence, the taxpayer pays a total of \$30,500 to help the three governmental units realize a total "profit" of \$18,500.

It doesn't help the taxpayer living in (say) Southfield to have the school district profit \$5,500 from a land sale if the City of Southfield must contribute \$7,000 to its budget to acquire the land.

The law should require governmental units to sell right-of-way to each other at cost, instead of current market value.

If land is being purchased, or sold to, a private developer, then market value must be used. But when government holds land on behalf of taxpayers and, when selling to another governmental unit, should sell at cost.

Maybe the newspaper can help out by publicizing these facts. Especially if a list of stolen bikes and serial numbers were published, this would alert people to be aware of that particular bike

Gerald Ford may well become the first man in history to have come a heartbeat away from the vice-presidency.

## Editorial & Opinion

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