

willmotts and why-nots

David J. Willmott, Editor

Subsidized Fares

For six months now the daily newspapers have been filled with copy on keeping New York City subway, bus, and rail fares subsidized. We sympathize with our brethren in the metropolitan area, but for the life of us, we can't figure out why we should subsidize the cost of their riding a mass transit system. We have to get to work and travel to and from places too. The cost of driving has gone up roughly 25 percent in six months with the increased cost of gas. No one is subsidizing those of us who must use - out of necessity - our own cars. When we buy a car, we must pay the full market price; we pay a tax in the form of license plates each year to enable us to drive this car; we pay the full market value of insurance; we pay a road tax with our gas purchases, plus a sales tax on top of this.

Pay your own way

A car in suburbia is as necessary as a roof over your head. You can't exist without this means of transportation. There are no subways; there are no meaningful bus lines, and the Long Island Railroad is a joke. We have to pay our way. Why shouldn't those who use the mass transit system in New York pay their way? If these fares are subsidized, as our legislators and government leaders have indicated, this subsidy will be paid for, not only by city folk, but by those of us who must drive a car out of necessity. If the cost of a subway ride is actually 50 cents, this is what the rider in the city should pay. No one is subsidizing us when we pay 44.9 cents per gallon of gas. We pay this and don't ask for help. Why should someone who has mass transit at his disposal be entitled to our help? And why not?

Have You Wondered?

We are told there is an alleged oil shortage. Most of us wonder why. We wonder why this has happened and how it could happen. We wonder why we had enough oil to fight a war. We wonder why our government imposed pollution controls on cars, which increased gas consumption by 50 per cent. We wonder why our government, with all its employees, did not foresee this happening a long time ago. We wonder why an alternate energy source has not been developed. We wonder if it has not.

Where does power come from?

During our thinking about this problem, we turn to our space exploration. We understand it is rocket fuel that propels the capsule into space, but once there, we wonder how the astronauts are able to power this projectile. Where does the energy come from? Where does the electricity come from to run their electric razors, their radio equipment, their air conditioners, their heaters, their refrigeration, and all the rest of the energy consuming devices they have aboard. Is this capsule using a new method of energy that could be converted economically for domestic use?

We wonder what would happen if this could be done. What would happen to the power lines, the generating stations, the gas stations, the tank farms, the refineries, the pipe lines, the oil tankers, the oil wells? Of what value then would oil be? What would be the effect on the economy if, instantly, a new low-cost self-contained energy source was developed?

Placing blame

Looking back at our current problem of oil -- or the supposed lack of it -- we understand the Arabs export only two per cent of our total need into the United States -- not an awful lot, but this amount has been blamed for causing the chaotic condition which has resulted in our turning down our thermostats, driving 50 miles an hour, being threatened with brown-outs, and other conditions. This alleged crisis has pushed the consumers' price of gasoline from 32 cents to 44.9 cents here in the east while the price of gas in Phoenix, Arizona, has remained constant over the last six months at 32.9 cents (according to friends with whom we were talking over Thanksgiving). Heating oil, which most of us can't do without, has gone up better than 25 per cent, and we are being told there may not be enough to meet this winter's demands at any cost.

"Tell me a story?"

We have yet to see any cold hard facts presented by an independent agency which clearly indicates there is a real oil shortage. We have listened to a lot of propaganda from the oil companies about this alleged oil shortage, just as we listened to their publicity and advertising campaigns over the last two years, selling us on the idea of what wonderful people they are and how great they are to the area in which they are doing their drilling


and exploration. When you consider the fact that the oil companies are controlled by a handful of corporate giants, from oil fields to distribution, it does seem possible these men, out of their greed, could withhold oil unilaterally, creating a false shortage that would increase prices and create the economic instability we have right now. It is almost awesome that we do not hear of any governmental investigation into this possibility.

Government blocks


Last year we were discussing the oil companies' desire to tap the rich oil sources in the Atlantic off Long Island with Congressman Pike. He said he was doing what he could, but many of his fellow Congressmen and Senators were politically indebted to oil interests -- and the oil interests made up an enormous block in the federal government. No longer are we talking about the interest of the people in Alaska and a pipeline. No longer are we talking about the interest of the people along the Atlantic shoreline. We are now talking about an alleged shortage that affects the entire nation.

Investigate the facts

The President and Congress must institute proper and thorough investigation into our actual oil resources and ability to produce, refine and distribute. This investigation must be independent and cannot be based on oil company supplied data. As we have seen in the past, they will tell us what they want us to hear and nothing more. This investigation will require leadership. Hopefully, there is still independent leadership left in our federal government to perform this service. And why not?

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Norman Hirsch - Director of Sales
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M. Victoria Randolph - News Manager
Bill Johnson - Circulation Manager - Phone 288 - 4100

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