P.S. to the NEWS
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WHY WE ARE DEPENDENT ON IMPORTED OIL

We are indebted to Congressman John Ashbrook (R-Oh) for making public a letter from the Bureau of Land Management (a virtual dictator of massive portions of Western lands) which shows that the Federal bureaucrats are more concerned about "sage grouse strutting activities" than about our energy problems. As Ashbrook says, "you have to read this to believe it."

The Davis Oil Company made application for a "variance" in order to drill for oil on Federal lands in Wyoming. The BLM denied the request because the "noise from around-the-clock drilling operations tend to suppress sage grouse strutting activities" and the proposed well "is located within the nesting habitat associated with two strutting grounds."

Is there any hope for future drilling? The letter continues: "Since there is a lack of research data on this problem (noise effects on sage grouse strutting, etc.) the Bureau is proposing a research study to determine these effects. However, ... we do not anticipate starting the field work for at least three years. After this study has been completed, the data may show that variances of this type may be granted."

Congressman Ashbrook compiled a list of the "gauntlet" which industry has to contend with in building or expanding a new plant. The Clean Air Act requires every "major facility" to get a PSD Permit (Prevention of Significant Degradation of Air Quality) issued by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Clean Water Act requires every discharge from a "point source" to get a NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit 180 days in advance. The Rivers and Harbors Act requires every project affecting navigable waters to have a Section 404 Permit (pertaining to dredge and fill material).

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act requires permits in regard to hazardous and non-hazardous waste disposal. The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act requires a permit program for any state that does not establish one.

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The list goes on and on. It includes the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Safe Drinking Water Act, OSHA, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Antiquities Act, and of course the Department of Energy. It is virtually impossible for any oil, gas, nuclear or electric plant to be built or expanded without the expenditure of years in time, brainpower, lawsuits, and capital investment.

Congressman Ashbrook concludes that "excessive Government regulation constitutes the most pernicious threat to the American body politic." No wonder, when Professor Murray Weidenbaum, director of the Center for the Study of American Business at Washington University in St. Louis, was asked, "if you could abolish one federal agency, which would it be?", he aswered, "the Department of Energy would be my first choice; we would have more domestically produced energy than we have today, the resource cost of energy would go down, and the American public would greatly benefit."

The policy of the Department of Energy is to make domestic energy exploration and production unprofitable, and to hamstring its transportation, so that we will remain totally dependent on imported oil for nearly half our needs. Independent U.S. oil producers, who account for 90 percent of all oil and gas exploration in the U.S. and 75 percent of all new wells, believe there are sufficient oil and gas resources to supply domestic needs for the next 82 to 130 years.

But, since oil comes up out of the ground from only one out of eight holes that are drilled, the profits from the one good hole must be enough to pay the costs of the seven dry ones. And that is what President Carter is trying to prevent through his excess profits tax.

On January 17 Carter, at long last, approved the Northern Tier Pipeline Company's proposal to build a $1.6 billion pipeline to transport Alaskan crude oil from Puget Sound, Washington, to Clearbrook, Minnesota. The long delay in his decision greatly increases the costs of the pipeline which ultimately consumers must pay at the pump.

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