JeSa to the NEWS

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PHONES AND WHALE OIL

Amidst the gloom and doom of the present recession, it is good to remember that, whatever the shortcomings of our American economic system, it is still better than any other system in the world.

For example, take our privately-owned telephone system which we consider almost as basic to our way of life as indoor plumbing. Any American who tries to conduct business in other countries is dismayed by the comparative ine ficiency of state-olrll.ed foreign phone systems.

Even when there are no technical difficulties, there are inter minable delays in the completion of telephone calls. It is a common thing, when placing a phone call from a hotel, to be told by the operator that there will be a one-hour wait.

"111ereas new telephone service in the United States costs between $10 and $35, new phone service costs up to $1,720 in France, $500 in Japan, and $93 in England. There is a long waiting period to have a new phone installed and no guarantee that it will work after it is installed.

Whereas 95 Americans out of every 100 have telephones, in Russia only five out of 100 have have telephones. Even though there are l,000,000 telephones in Moscow, the Soviet government published only 50,000 telephone directories, and sold them for $16 each on a first come, first-served basis.

If the U.S. Government had been running the telephone business for the last century, it probably would have given us the same poor service and increasing costs as the Post Office.

It is a puzzlement why, in the face of government failures in running businesses, so many Americans seem to think it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to pull us out of our present energy crisis.

In the 19th century, whale oil was the principal fuel used for home lighting. As the population grew, the demand for whale oil rose. Whalers had to fish farther out into the seas, and prices quadrupled.

Fortunately, our government did not ration the scarce supply of whale oil or impose a heavy tax to discourage its use. Instead, some entrepreneurs went out and discovered an entirely new way to light the lamps of America: the more efficient, less costly kerosene.

And, incidentally, the discovery by private industry that kero sene and gasoline can be distilled from crude oil produced our giant oil industry which has created so many jobs and so many useful products.

Thirty years ago, geologists predicted that the world's oil supply would be consumed before the year 2000. Then American ingenuity invented and perfected the offshore rigs which discovered 35 billion barrels of oil reserves in the North Sea, plus many more barrels in the Gulf of Mexico and other waters.

The truth is, there is no ceiling on man's resourcefulness so long as it:is allowed to flourish in a climate of freedom.