Se to the NEWS

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IS THERE AN ENERGY CRISIS?

The American people are a stubborn lot. There are some things that they simply will not believe, despite enormous efforts to persuade them by prominent Americans, official reports, and a steady avalanche of reporting by the mass media.

One example is the way most Americans remain unconvinced that Lee Harvey Oswald was the only person involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. A second, I suspect, is that despite President Carter's most enthusiastic efforts, Americans will not accept his arguments that we should give away the U.S. Canal in Panama.

Likewise, all the Administration's dire warnings have simply not persuaded the American people that our nation is running out of energy.

Based on the fact that 45 percent of our oil now comes from the Middle East, the Carter Administration has warned of a coming energy crisis and of the need for a Federal Energy Administrator to control and even to ration scarce oil and gas.

However, there is growing evidence to s:upport the public's intuition rather than the gloom-and-doom forecasts- of th_e Federal Government. The world's proven petroleum reserves today are twice as large as they were in 1967 and three times as large as in 1957.

A top petroleum expert, Profes.sor Morrts Adelman of MIT, says "the energy crisis is a fiction. Each year the government has been telling us about a future gap and each_ year the gap moves a few years out into the future. It is like the horizon, always receding as you go toward it."

Stanford scholar Stefan Possony·stated recently that enough deposits of methane have been found underground to supply the United States with gas for 4,000 years. "If we can get only half of it," he said, "we still have 2,000 years to play with."

Geologist Paul Jones of Louisiana State University supports this view, although he is more conservative in his estimates. He says that we have enough methane "to go 500 to 1,000 years from now." To use the methane as natural gas, it must be separated from the. water, but Jones says the technology is available to do it.

There have been charges made in the media that the big oil and gas companies are withholding large supplies of energy from the Ameri.can people. But Warren Brookes, economics writer for the BOSTON HERALD AMERICAN, says that the biggest withholder of all is the Federal Government.

Ninety-eight percent of the Outer Continental Shelf lease areas have never been offered for sale or bid to anyone. The Carter Administration is slowing down, rather than speeding up, the sale of offshore development leases. Last February, Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus cancelled six major offshore lease sales which had been proposed by the preceding Administration.

In June during a confidential briefing of the House Ways and Means Committee, President Carter referred to "a great national treasure" of untapped_ oil and gas reserves in the United States. In July the WASHINGTON POST reported that top Administration economic officials said that "high priced oil from OPEC is a good thing."

Of the several possible explanations for why Federal bureaucrats keep talking energy crisis while refusing to allow untapped energy sources to be developed, the most probable is their overpowering desire to control our economy.

Carter's Number 2 energy adviser, S. David Freeman, has often been quoted as saying that energy should "go public." Translated, that means he wants energy to be run by the Federal Government as a nat;onalized industry.

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