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Dear C Span,

I think I have written you several letters Praising your News Programs. I especially like Brian Lamb - his guest Journalists and call in Programs. I have only had C Span for about 14 months - I love it - watch it most of the time - alternating with CNN and Headline News. For a long time I have felt some one (maybe Fed. Government was censoring NBC - ABC and CBS). At least for now, I feel C Span - CNN and Headline News are giving us listeners all the News - not watered down. I paid very little attention to my Federal Government until I retired in 1979 - Please have a Review of all the top News Coverage from the time C Span and CNN started some time in the near future.

FEB 5 ANS'D

The reason I am writing this letter, could you have some of your top Journalists bring us up to date how the U S got us in this Arab Oil War (We all know Oil is the basic reason). I would like to hear the tape of the U S Ambasator to Iraq that was made shortly before the Invassion of Kuwait - All I can remember of that tape is the U S Ambassator told Saddam Hussein that U S had no interest in his invassion of Kuwait. Was Our Government setting a trap for him

I ran accross an Article on Our dependancy on Foreign oil in a 1982 Readers Digest. All this time Our Country has not had a Energy Policy - Pres. Carter attempted Conservation and alternative fuels - but as meager as it was - it was a start but was dropped by Pres. Reagan. Now we have an Oil Guzzling President that dont want an Energy Policy - he is ready to fight for that Foreign Oil - Our Domestic Oil is not being extracted - our Refineries have closed and we have no Policy to Conserve. Why can't we return to Rail Transportation and Rail Freight Hauling - return to local Street cars and Intercity and County Interurbans? Our biggest Gas and oil Guzzlers are 18 Wheelers - Cross Country Buses and City, County, School buses - let Our President fish from a row boat - or off the docks - and walk around the Golf Links - C Span is watched devotedly. You are the one to get Our Energy Policy started. Now is the time while we are killing People for Arab Oil - and it was the U S who started the ball rolling - If - left alone - I think all the Arab Countries could have solved their problems by uniting - after all they are brothers and don't really want to fight each other.

The Program I am asking you to share with your devoted watcher can't hurt and might take Our minds off of this Oil War and get us motivated to do something to make Our Country Domestically Energy efficient - so this Foreign Oil Dependency never occurs again.

Please - you won't be sorry.

Sincerely

[redacted]

Liberty, mo 64068

tions—including the military, the war industry, the national security apparatus, their allies in Congress and the expert camp followers—proved unable, or unwilling, to adapt to what truly is a new world. Instead, they attempted to carry on as they have since World War II.

A case can be made that we are experiencing, as the British did after World War II, the final bluster of decaying empire. But we have something the British didn't—the world's meanest war machine. Having already abandoned economic and technical supremacy to the Far East and a soon-to-be unified Europe, the only role left for the U.S. is that of world policeman.

Unleash those lap dogs

all praise to C Span + CNN for uncensored news

As the Gulf crisis has shown, the corporate media remains closely tethered to Washington's official line. This observation is underscored by a new Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting survey. The New York-based media watch group analyzed the nightly news programs of ABC, NBC and CBS during the period from Aug. 8, 1990, when Bush first publicly committed troops, until Jan. 3, 1991. Out of a total of 2,855 minutes of Gulf coverage by the big three networks—roughly two days of programming—only 29 minutes dealt with popular oppostion to U.S. policy.

In These Times editor James Weinstein put it succinctly in the fundraising letter published in our last issue, "The media are not only the servants of power but also the property of power."

The time has come to begin to question those property rights. There are good precedents. U.S. federal laws recognize the propaganda power of the broadcast media and therefore strive to protect the national interest by prohibiting non-citizens from owning television and radio stations.

In light of that, it is time to ask questions.

In whose interests are corporations such as Capital Cities ABC, General Electric NBC and TIME Warner acting? Yours? Certainly not mine.

Do the Sulzbergers who inherited the *New York Times*, the Grahams who inherited the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* and the Tisches who purchased CBS have an unalienable right to control these major media outlets? Yes, under the law, they, like the above-mentioned corporations, have property rights. But the public has a right too. It is known as eminent domain—the right of the government to take private property for public use.

So why shouldn't the public exercise this right and force purchase of the above-mentioned media outlets? Who would then control these properties? The government? Heaven forbid. The only feasible option would be some form of employee ownership with editorial control firmly vested in the newsroom. If the journalists at ABC, NBC, CBS, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* were free of corporate oversight and able to choose their own editors and news directors, the quality of reporting would undoubtedly improve.

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's...

...a national identity crisis, manifested in part by the "conflict between the romantics who continue to hold onto the myth of Superman and the iconoclasts who insist on destroying the old idols and the illusory images of the country." So writes Luis Rojas Marcos, the director of New York City's mental health-system, who earlier this month published a psychiatric examination of our "young nation" for the Spanish daily *El Pais*.

Rojas writes, in part: "Like an adolescent that has to prove himself with reckless deeds in order to ... discover who he is and what his role is in society, for young America the Gulf War is a dramatic stage on which to act out its identity crisis and thereby find itself.

"The current U.S. identity crisis grows out of the battle between the invincible America of World War II and the vulnerable America of Vietnam. From the end of World War II until its defeat in Vietnam, America enjoyed an self-image that overflowed with power and moral supremacy. Confident, the U.S. saw itself as the defender of the world, like a Superman fighting untiringly for truth, justice and the American way. Democracy, individualism, capitalism and the seemingly unlimited potential of the work ethic were enshrined as the indispensible values to achieve happiness. Like a child who needs to see the world in simple terms, the good and the bad, the U.S. was obsessed with communism, which it categorically judged as the archetype of evil, the No. 1 enemy of humanity, the antithesis of American goodness. ...

"The surprising defeat of communism has given rise to the disappearance of America's historic enemy. This has disrupted the basic idea of good and bad and, as a consequence, increased the social disorientation of U.S. society. After having thought for decades that the enemy was outside, the U.S. has discovered that the enemy is within, that America is its own enemy."

Cracks in the coalition?

U.S. citizens weren't the only ones pleading with Congress to find a peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf crisis. Fifty members of the European Parliament, elected from 12 countries of the European Community, recently sent an appeal to "their colleagues" in Washington for a peaceful resolution, stating that a war would "have unforeseeable consequences for the Middle East, Europe and the U.S." The appeal, reports Diana Johnstone, could represent a potential weakening of the U.N. coalition and signals that "whatever the official positions of the various European governments, public opinion in Europe is not prepared to support the military actions by the U.S. against Iraq."

George, you're no Woody

As the nation prepares for war in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. citizenry will be relieved to know that President Bush hasn't lost his sense of humor. During his last visit to the troops in Saudi Arabia, Lt. Emiciades Alcon, 23, of Fort Benning, Ga., said, "Thank you, sir, for showing up here in the desert." Bush responded, "That's what Woody Allen said, 'Ninety percent of life is showing up.'" What pithy comedian will he quote when the body bags start coming home?

Send Neil

The American Committee to Send Neil Bush & All Congressmen for Active Duty in the Persian Gulf suggests considering the "significance" of the following slogans: "To go the extra mile, we will never nuke Iraq. But if we do, they deserve it"; "We will never reinstate the draft except to give all Americans an equal patriotic opportunity to die for their country" and "If other nations don't want peace, we are always ready for war."

No prudence

We must "follow the dictates of our inner moral compass and stand up for human life," wrote President Bush in an open letter to all U.S. university students earlier this month. Sent to more than 500 campuses across the country, the letter is rife with monosyllabic slogans straight out of a Clint Eastwood movie. The Gulf crisis is "black and white," says the president. "Right vs. wrong. Good vs. evil. ... No concessions. No compromises." The letter was met with both apathy and outrage. "Students are more preoccupied with finals than the Persian Gulf right now," said Joseph Palmore, editor of the *Harvard Crimson*. But four University of Chicago students took Bush to task for the sophomoric missive. "We hold you responsible for what you are doing halfway around the world," they wrote, "and we will not be fooled by your attempt to create the fiction of popular support for this impending genocide."

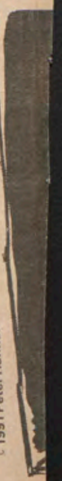
In praise of Saddam

"President Saddam is certainly no saint, but he is the best politician we have ever had to date. ... He is very understanding, polite and generous." So says Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, spiritual head of the Chaldean Catholics, an Eastern-rite church affiliated with Rome. In a December interview with *30 Days*, the patriarch reports that Saddam has given generous support to the Chaldeans and that, despite a Moslem majority in Iraq, there is no discrimination against Christians there. Saddam's detractors, he adds, are "all in the pay of Israel and the U.S."

Primal urges

The following quote from philosopher Richard Rorty recently appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*: "The way to overcome the urge to domination is to realize that everybody has and always will have this urge but to insist that nobody is more or less justified in having it than anybody else. Nobody stands for the Truth, or for Being, or for Thinking. Nobody stands for anything Other or Higher. We all stand for ourselves, equal inhabitants of a paradise of individuals in which everybody has the right to be understood but nobody has the right to rule."

Please send timely news about local activities, follow-ups on stories we've run or other interesting bits of information—including your address and phone number—to: Kira Jones, In These Times, *2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.*



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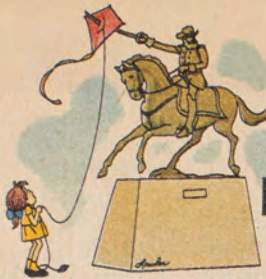

LIFE IN THESE UNITED STATES®

Chico, our Chihuahua, was constantly climbing over our four-foot, chain-link fence. After exhausting all possibilities, I finally called our veterinarian, who suggested neutering him. We were informed that it would take a few months after the operation for the dog to calm down completely.

Four weeks after the operation my 16-year-old son and I were sitting in the yard watching Chico run around, fully healed, but not going near the fence. I said, "Isn't it strange he hasn't tried to climb the fence?"

Without a second's hesitation my son said, "He's probably afraid it's going to be his hind legs next."

—Eileen L. Stevens *(Colorado Springs, Colo.)*

One day, on an auto trip, my family noticed a great number of personalized license plates such as "LIL JOE," "MY CAR" and "BIG MAMA." My mother asked my father if she could get a license plate with her name on it. He asked how much it would cost. "Eighteen dollars and fifty cents a plate," said my mother.

My father turned and said, "At eighteen-fifty a plate, it would be cheaper to change your name to '519 SFJ.'" —Bryan Warshofsky *(Staten Island, N.Y.)*

I play bridge regularly with seven other women, most of whom are seventy or older. Recently we celebrated the birthday of our oldest member by taking her out to lunch. When the waitress came to take our order, one of the women said to her, "This is a very special occasion. It's Elsie's ninety-second birthday."

The waitress made seven instant enemies—and one fast friend—by asking, "Which one is Elsie?"

—Helen Bagby *(Bridgeton, Mo.)*

In the manner of all new mothers, I spent a lot of time inspecting my first-born, and I reveled in his delicate perfection. When he was almost a month old, I noticed a curious dimple on his bottom. With each diaper change and bath I became more concerned. What if the boys in the locker room found it funny and teased him about it; or, even worse, what if some future spouse thought it strange?

One evening I approached my husband, naked babe in arms. "Look at this," I cried, waving the small bottom about. "Do you think it'll embarrass him when he grows up? Do you think it's strange?"

My husband listened patiently to my outburst, then said, "No, I don't think it is strange, dear. I've always thought it pretty cute on you!"

—Noreen Daly *(Cheltenham, Pa.)*

In the small Tennessee town where I grew up, there lived a dour matron whose outspoken, irascible manner was known to all and feared by most. A farmer who had just run over one of her prize roosters timidly approached the woman and was greeted by a gruff, "Well, what do you want?"

The farmer apologetically ex-

Have We Won the Oil War?

Are the facts trying to tell us something? When the federal government imposed price controls on domestic oil, we were plagued by energy shortages. Now price controls have been lifted, conservation has increased, and petroleum is plentiful

Condensed from Harper's Magazine

William Tucker

On January 28, 1981, after only a week in office, President Reagan lifted the price controls on American oil. Several months later when he asked for a review of the nation's energy situation, his advisers told him that his decision to scrap price controls had effectively ended the oil crisis of the 1970s. Consumption was declining, domestic drilling was skyrocketing, imports were down, and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was starting to fall apart. His response was reported to be: "Why doesn't anybody tell me these things?"

It was a legitimate question. Apart from a few economists, very few people have yet realized that the collapse of soaring world oil prices is the result of the American people's decision finally to face reality. We swallowed the bitter medicine, and the cure is working.

The decision to remove oil price controls was hardly greeted by applause. Consumer groups put up a howl, and for a few weeks oil prices did rise. Then strange things started to happen.

As late as one month before the Reagan decision, the Department of Energy had been predicting that world oil supplies would remain

William Tucker, a contributing editor of *Harper's Magazine,* writes frequently on energy-related topics.

tight "indefinitely," and that world oil prices might soon be moving from an average price of about $36 per barrel to as much as $50 per barrel. But two months after the President's decision the major oil companies suddenly found themselves with growing inventories, and they were starting to worry about storage problems at their refineries. So the oil companies did the only sensible thing: they started to cut prices.

Within a matter of months gasoline and heating-oil prices were dropping throughout the country. Soon there were repercussions on the world market. By early summer every major OPEC nation found itself with growing stockpiles. Libya, the most militant OPEC member, lost 50 percent of its oil-export revenue between April and August because it refused to lower prices. Nigeria voluntarily lowered its price from $40 to $36 per barrel, the largest price reduction an OPEC nation had ever made.

How did all this occur? Some argue that Saudi Arabia has deliberately created the oil glut in order to "discipline" its fellow OPEC members. Yet other observers are skeptical. Saudi Arabia has already committed most of its oil revenues, and will not find it easy to cut back sharply on production again.

Actually it is now possible to see that the "oil crisis" was nothing more than a self-inflicted wound. With the exception of five months in 1973-74 when the Arab states stopped sending oil to the West in retaliation for U.S. support of Israel in the Yom Kippur War, the oil crisis was, to a large extent, due to America's refusal to pay the market price for its own oil.

Here is the way it happened.

Homemade Shortages. By the late 1960s politically powerful consumer and environmental groups had decided that fuel refined from newly discovered low-sulfur oils in countries such as Libya was just what was needed to help in the fight against air pollution. Before Lyndon Johnson left office, they had wrung concessions out of his Administration that permitted more of this inexpensive oil to be imported as a substitute for using coal to fire utility boilers.

In 1970 our domestic oil production peaked at 9.6 million barrels a day. After a century of steady increases we were running out of "easy oil." Americans either had to accept a steep rise in American oil prices—to pay for the higher costs of drilling for new oil and encourage more prudent use—or we had to open our doors to still more imported oil.

Then in August 1971 the Nixon Administration imposed an across-the-board temporary wage-and-price freeze. Instead of prices climbing rapidly as they should have because of our peaked production, the artificially low price of oil allowed consumers to go on guzzling it as if nothing had happened. In order to make up for this grow-

ing gap between domestic supply and demand, we turned to the solution that was to become the characteristic pattern of the entire decade. We imported more oil. By 1973 we were importing some 30 percent of our oil, an unprecedented foreign dependence. Throughout the 1960s we had never exceeded 24 percent. Without noticing it, we had placed ourselves at the mercy of world events.

Creating a Monster. As President Nixon's 1971 price freeze remained in place, a series of shortages developed. The market price of a commodity is nothing more than a reflection of its scarcity relative to demand. When goods become harder to obtain, the price goes up. But we assume that by artificially lowering the price—asking the government to intervene with price controls—we can make something less scarce. Instead, the opposite results. With prices artificially low, consumers try to buy more of the commodity, while suppliers reduce production because they cannot recover their costs. The result is an artificial shortage, where goods are scarcer than they were at the beginning.

By 1973 steel, concrete, aluminum and dozens of other basic commodities were becoming unobtainable on the market. *Newsweek* ran a cover story showing Uncle Sam holding up an empty horn of plenty under the caption "Running Out of Everything?" But by the middle of 1973 price controls had been phased out, and these shortages were quickly resolved. Oil, however, was the one exception to the general abandonment of price controls; Congress became afraid to let the market go where it would and protection was extended through August 31, 1975.

Meanwhile, certain barely noticed events in the Middle East were beginning to indicate that "cheap foreign oil" wasn't going to remain cheap for very long. A colonels' revolt in Libya had overthrown the pro-Western monarchy. The new military regime, under Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, imposed a healthy price increase on its oil customers. In October 1973 OPEC met in Kuwait and agreed on across-the-board price increases in the hope of matching Libya's success.

All the while American consumers remained oblivious. Blinded by the continuing price controls—and the still relatively low OPEC prices—we went on using gasoline in ever greater amounts. Some Americans were unaware that we were importing *any* of our oil, let alone 30 percent. What happened next, of course, is history. The Arabs realized their growing market leverage and exercised it in the 1973-74 oil boycott. The result was the first of the "gas shortages."

The OPEC nations, now aware that they had a stranglehold on the Western oil market, quickly raised prices to almost nine times their 1970 levels, setting in motion what has been called "the greatest transfer of wealth in history." In 1975 some $113 billion flowed out of consumers' pockets into the oil-producing nations.

What should we have done? Obviously, we should have increased domestic production and cut consumption. The formula for this was not really very difficult. Domestic oil price controls were already artificially discouraging production and stimulating consumption. Getting rid of the controls would have been the easiest step of all. Then, had we been really serious, we could have done what the Europeans and Japanese have done for decades, namely taxed consumption, particularly consumption of foreign oil. Congress, however, had its own ideas.

The Real Payoff. In 1975 Congressmen Andrew Maguire (D., N.J.), Richard Ottinger (D., N.Y.), and Toby Moffett (D., Conn.)—all liberals representing affluent districts—began a campaign to extend oil price controls. Joined by such Senators as Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) and Henry Jackson (D., Wash.), these legislators eventually succeeded in extending oil price controls all the way into 1979 and possibly beyond.

Politically, this worked well. Large Democratic majorities were returned to Congress at the end of 1976, with a new Democratic President to lead them. Yet the oil price controls remained a time bomb ticking away in the American economy.

Abroad, the new high price of oil sent geologists scurrying all over the world looking for new reserves. Britain and Norway developed the fields under the North Sea. Mexico stepped up production dramatically. Market forces had caught up, and supply and demand were back in balance, promoting the wise and efficient use of resources.

But Americans, completely misled by price controls, had once again rushed back to their old pre-embargo habits. In the 12 months after Congress extended price controls, luxury cars of the two largest auto companies broke sales records. Small cars were left sitting in the lots, and even huge rebate programs failed to win back the public to conservation.

Oil imports once again took off, climbing to almost 50 percent of total consumption by mid-1979. In fact, it's a good thing the Iranian revolution happened when it did. Had things gone on any longer, the eventual crash, whatever form it took, would have been far worse.

The events in Iran doubled international oil prices and finally convinced President Carter that domestic price controls were a self-defeating policy. He announced in April 1979 that he would phase out controls by the fall of 1981. Then President Reagan accelerated the schedule.

The payoff came almost immediately. Within one year U.S. crude-oil imports fell by nearly 20 percent, back to their 1975 level. Oil drilling

worldwide increased as never before (although oil is still getting harder to find). Domestic production is holding steady, and consumers deprived of the "protection" of Congress finally demonstrated hitherto unsuspected capabilities for conserving energy.

By last fall we were buying 2.2 million barrels of oil a day less than we were in 1979. This was the approximate amount of the world glut. Left to the mercies of supply and demand, OPEC is finding it can do nothing more than set its prices where the market tells it to.

The Final Step. Are we really out of the woods? Not quite. Unfortunately, we still have price controls on natural gas, with the utterly perverse result that no one is fully encouraged to go out and find more.* Most of the gas we have used is the "waste product" now associated with oil deposits. Yet from all indications there are staggering amounts of natural gas—perhaps as much as 200 years' supply at current prices—in different kinds of formations in the earth.

The situation became a crisis during the "natural-gas shortages" of the winter of 1977. These shortages, again, were, to a large extent, due to price controls. And how do we make up the shortfall? *By importing more oil.* It is estimated that between one and two million barrels per day of our current oil imports are the result of our failure to use our own natural gas.

The Carter Administration finally decided on a phased program ending in decontrol by 1985. There are already fears, however, that when 1985 arrives Congress will find decontrolling the price of natural gas intolerable. Yet there is hardly any choice. In fact, removing price controls right now would be even better. There would be another mild period of adjustment between supply and demand, but soon we would be on a firm, stable and innovative energy course.

Then, barring a Middle East catastrophe, we will be home free. And OPEC will be about as important to the American economy as a Turkish bazaar.

*See *"Bonanza!* America Strikes Gas," Reader's Digest, April '81.

Deft Definitions

FARMER: A man who rides across the field on a $50,000 tractor, farms 400 acres of land valued at $1500 an acre and depends upon the whims of the weather to make a buck. —James E. Knowles

NEWS: The same thing happening today that happened yesterday only to different people. —Walter Winchell

ENVIRONMENTALIST: Someone who believes the living owes him a world. —B.B.J. in Graham, Texas, *Rotary "Scandal Sheet"*