

**[EDITOR'S NOTE: A Letter To Lucy From Oliver will be published from time to time to encourage open discussion of alternate viewpoints. Readers may agree or disagree with Oliver's notions, as may the management of this paper; it is hoped, however, his ideas will stimulate reader-thought and even reader-response. To insure that Oliver's comments may continue to be expressed, unhampered by public opinion (and/or retaliation) the identities of Lucy and Oliver will not be revealed.]**

Dear Lucy:

Before you rush out and buy a Moped you'd better do some cost comparisons, and you'd better think about how you'll like driving a Moped in the wintertime. Since you've already got a small car and are getting good mileage, I think you could drive it 15,000 miles on \$500 worth of gas (at a dollar a gallon) and be much safer. I can see bicycles, but not Mopeds. It takes too long to get back the initial cost if you already own a car.

Electric vehicles, on the other hand, may have a future; especially for such things as postal delivery, telephone vans, and meter readers. Technology is closing in on getting them to go 100 miles at highway speeds and much further at lower speeds. They're good for stop and go work, or for heavy slow traffic. An electric car that could go 100 miles and be used to commute to Boston from the Cape. During the day it could be plugged in and re-charged for the drive home. Fuel cost would be much less than for gas. A car the size of yours, I estimate, would use 25 kilowatts to go to Boston. Electricity should run about 5 cents a kilowatt or \$1.25 for the one-way trip. At \$1 a gallon for gas, it would cost you about \$1.50 each way, in your car. That gives you a basis for a rough comparison.

I'm very concerned about the United States being so dependent on foreign oil, especially Moslem oil. Oil nations of the Middle East-- Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, the Saudis, Kuwait, Iran and others around the Persian Gulf, plus oil from Indonesia (also Moslem)-- are angry about our preferential treatment in Israel; we've alienated all of them. All they have to do is put in the plug and we grind to a halt.

We need more electric trains, electric trolley-type buses like those we used to see in Providence, electric delivery trucks and service vehicles, as well as electric automobiles.

And we should forget about rural "industrial parks" where everything must come and go by truck and where employees must come to work in private cars. Urban tax regulations should be revised to draw people back into the cities. Lots of young people are moving back into town, as you know.

How ironic it is to deplete the "Nayal Oil Reserve" and at the same time be stockpiling crude in salt mines-- that are not equipped with pumps to get it out again. It's even worse than paying farmers to withdraw land from food production and at the same time spending money to irrigate and "reclaim" land in the Southwest deserts. Did you know some of the electric generating turbines in the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River are never used because the water is being diverted to irrigate Southern California deserts? And then they burn oil out there to generate electricity! What a mess! Politics and big government at work! And everyone out there who owns a private home will defend an American's God-given right to a green lawn-- in an area where it seldom rains.

I notice Boston is beginning to overdraw the Quabbin Reservoir and wants to divert part of the Connecticut River waters. Incredible! But water meters are political poison! Water-- like oil-- has limited growth potential. Wasting it (and people who aren't metered have no incentive not to waste it) is criminal. Just think about Hyannis: sewages charges there should be based on water usage, but are not. Hyannis doesn't meter its water. It's profligate.

The President has been closeted at Camp David for almost a week now; wonder what idiotic scheme is being hatched. People are blaming the big oil companies for the gas shortage, and just can't be convinced it's an international political situation rather than a plot to increase the price of

gasoline. In some ways you can't blame them; there's fuel enough for the Presidential party to fly to Korea-- to conduct interviews that might just as well have been held by telephone as far as I can determine. There's fuel enough for pleasure boats. Permits are being issued to people in the Town of Barnstable who can afford to have gasoline tanks installed on their private estates; those people will be able to get deliveries for those tanks because they've got the political and social muscle, the contacts, to get them filled, and they've got the dollars to pay for gasoline in huge quantities.

Even so, those people who can afford to do that are well-enough informed about what the future holds so that they're making that investment. They know what's coming; they're taking action now to protect themselves against the day when the pumps you and I must use run dry. Completely dry. Watch what the smart money is doing and you can see the handwriting on the wall.

And still, Cape-bound Friday night traffic is heavy and plenty of cars, nicely tanked up over the weekend on Cape Cod, leave every Sunday afternoon. Rationing gas would help conserve our supply but it's still finite. People aren't going to accept that fact until they can't get to work or they can't get delivery of home heating oil. When that happens there'll be plenty of screaming. It could happen this coming winter in some parts of the northeast. The midwest depends more heavily on natural gas, but even though it's piped, it, too, is finite.

One answer may be solar heating systems; they're becoming economically more attractive every day; solar hot water heaters are already paying off for those who can afford the initial installation. Pay-back for insulating older homes is only two or three years at the present price of home heating fuels, and fuel prices are bound to rise as increases in OPEC oil is reflected. But the public refuses to see the relationships between cause and effect; they are like ostriches with their heads in the sand. They won't look at the facts because the facts are unpleasant; but when the facts are forced on them in the shape of no heat and inoperable cars, they will behave as though they'd had no warning of impending disaster.

Keep in touch. Always good to hear from you.

Love,

Oliver