

I could be wrong and I hope I am. The noises I'm hearing sound like rattling sabers. They've rattled before. Back in the late thirties there was a chattering and clattering of weapons, a rumbling, and undercurrent of tension, of hostility. And then we had World War II.

Those of us who remember living through that war recall its beginning came, for us as well as for Europeans, when Hitler's troupes moved into Czechoslovakia. We weren't involved, as a nation at war, for another couple of years; but we were involved. Even though not in the battlefields, we were supplying arms, ammunition and supplies to our allies. We were committed from Day One.

Again, in the fifties, we at first euphemistically described our part as an "advisory" in the so-called Korean Conflict. That turned into our war, too. Our men, equipment and supplies were eventually pitched against those of North Korea (which was similarly assisted by Communist China) in support of the South Korean cause. Youthful American males were drafted to serve, fight and die in Korea. Many veterans of World War II soldiered again in Korea.

Now, nearly thirty years later, Americans seem to have forgotten the Korean War. It was eclipsed by the Vietnamese Conflict. There, too, American youth was sent to fight a war that had nothing to do with the security of the United States of America. We lost it. And we seem to have survived.

That conflict, it is true, was seen by many as a responsibility of America because our government had made commitments and promises, had treated to protect and defend South Vietnam against aggression.

The sounds of rattling sabers and hostility are again growing louder and stronger. They are familiar noises now. It's disturbing because no matter how small a community ours may be, we're no more immune to the effects of our country's going to war than larger places. We're just as vulnerable individually, and anyone else living in our country.

The possible reasons for permitting ourselves to be drawn into a conflict are perhaps as justifiable today, maybe more justifiable today, than they appeared to be in the fifties and sixties. They seem almost as justifiable and our participation in World War II.

In the present international situation there exists a threat to the life-style to which Americans are accustomed. Because of the unrest, schisms, upheaval in Iran and the final overthrow of the shah, our oil sources are drying up. Because of our recent normalization of relations with Red China, and its even more recent aggression against Hanoi, we are now assuming responsibility for attempting to restore peace in the Far East.

Why? Because gasoline may be rationed? Because we may be unable to maintain accustomed temperatures in our homes? Because we may be forced to restrict the use of our automobiles, may even need to walk, ride a bicycle, or stay

home? Because there may be other shortages or rationing?

We're already adjusting to prices we'd have considered totally outrageous only twelve short months ago. In the interim, of course, we've been conditioned to these anticipated price increases. The advance warnings have made them more acceptable. Today's American is resigned rather than rebellious; give him a bit of leadtime, and he'll swallow almost anything. And that scares me, too.

Even war?

It doesn't scare me to perceive there'll be oil shortages, gas shortage, or even minor food shortages. Americans can hack that all right; most waste more than they use efficiently. Each of us could cut oil and gasoline consumption by 25%, or even 50%, without suffering. We could also live well, and perhaps become a healthier nation, if we consumed



less food. Raising prices of these products won't endanger the health and welfare of Americans (except possibly the poor who already use a minimal quantity of necessities). It will but inconvenience the majority of us.

If severe oil shortages develop and continue, Americans will learn a valuable lesson: that they are capable of getting along with less. This discovery will strengthen them, enhance their self-esteem and sharpen awarenesses of their ability to cope with adversity. That's something Americans can benefit from learning.

It does scare me to contemplate our country's leadership may be intemperate enough to risk war in order to attempt to assure that this nation can continue to fill its unreasonable demands for fossil fuel products.

On two fronts, at this time, we are dabbling dangerously in international affairs where we would be better advised to mind our own business and concentrate our efforts to develop alternate energy sources.

Consider the price of WAR. The lives, the suffering, the expense of converting plants from peacetime use to meet military demands, and when it's over, reconversion to peacetime production.

Furthermore, if a relatively small percentage of the monetary expenditure of war were committed to develop and produce alternate energy, war would be unnecessary. Our independence from foreign oil could be assured, and the benefits therefrom could improve conditions globally. If other nations chose to participate in open hostility, ostensibly over oil or gas, or, in the case of Red China, to punish its neighbor for invading another neighbor, let them have it.

Let The Red Chinese and the Vietnamese scrap among themselves. Let the Orientals settle their disputes in their own fashion.

Our business, even though the world is now small enough so that anything that happens in our country does affect every other, remains the best good for the greatest number of American citizens. It does not extend to the best good of Cambodians, Saudi Arabians, Vietnamese, Iranians, Chinese, Egyptians, Turks, Israelites, Thais, or even Greeks and Romans.

Is this a pacifistic position? It seems so, perhaps; let's ask ourselves some questions. Suppose a feud develops between two of your neighbors. Is it up to you to intervene and try to settle the dispute? Or should they be left to work it out between themselves?

Suppose the Towns of Bourne and Falmouth lock horns. Is it up to Barnstable to mediate? In the situation between Sandwich and Barnstable regarding Sandy Neck, is it up to Mashpee to stick in its oar?

If Vermont and New Hampshire get into a hassle, should Massachusetts butt in?

What, then, is the justification for the United States to take a defensive position regarding Middle or Far East affairs? All we need do is tend our own knitting and let those people negotiate their own settlements in their own ways. Almost certainly there will be bloodshed; there is already bloodshed. Are we, however, responsible for policing the world when getting mixed up in their quarrels results in American blood being shed?

The rattling sabers do scare me. We now depend on foreign oil; but we can and must manage without it. There are other sources. No, it won't be convenient; yes, our country must adjust to reduced availability of fossil fuels. That won't send us down the drain.

More important than negotiating peace between nations half the world away, may be the establishment of optimal connections with our own neighbor, Mexico, where vast new oil supplies have recently been discovered.

And while battles rage on the other side of the earth, we may best put our efforts to work freeing ourselves from dependence on any and all foreign energy sources.