

VILLAGE VIEW

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Everyone's getting on the bandwagon for energy conservation, and that's a great step forward for us all. The thing that's amazing is how long it's taken the majority of people to accept their individual responsibility for saving. It's finally sunk in, but only because all of us have come up squarely against the economic consequences of profligacy. Now there are signs and reports of progress everywhere.

One sobering situation resulting from our recent rejection of gas-guzzling automobiles, of course, is the threatened financial collapse of Chrysler Corporation, and taxpayers will probably be required to rescue the company. Ford, too, has taken a financial beating. General Motors, although still viable, recently announced a steep \$100,000,000 reduction in profits.

G.M.'s biggest problem seems to be producing enough small cars to fill orders now on their books; once they get those babies rolling off the assembly lines in numbers adequate to fill demand, their profit picture should improve rapidly.

It appears the American Public is about to be squeezed to help Chrysler survive, but the real reasons behind the government's consideration of financial assistance to the ailing car-maker are that were Chrysler to declare bankruptcy, over a hundred thousand employees would be thrown out of work; government (read taxpayers) expenses would then not only run to billions of dollars, but the productive capacity of the plants would be lost completely. The international situation points up the necessity for keeping Chrysler afloat.

Over the long haul, we as taxpayers and we as a nation stand to gain more by rescuing Chrysler now than by letting it go down the drain.

Recently we were supplied, free of charge, with a booklet published by the Department of Energy (DOE), entitled "LOW COST NO COST," together with a little red hat-shaped plastic gadget to install in our showerhead to conserve hot water. The booklet, if it's read and its recommendations followed, could save the average homeowner hundreds of dollars a year at minimum outlay of cash.

The DOE has been two years getting this information to the public; to my knowledge it's the only visible accomplishment of the DOE to date; yet that department cost the taxpayers in the neighborhood of ten billion dollars during its first year and is expected to cost fifteen billion in its second year of operations. Administration, you know.

Without any assistance from the DOE, Americans have already begun to change their wasteful ways; they might have done so sooner had the government's powers been exercised sooner to impress the public with the necessity for conservation. The average family would have saved considerably more annually if the DOE didn't exist.

Conservation would have been taken seriously six or seven years ago had oil prices been decontrolled at the first hint of oil and gas shortages in 1973. Not until recent sharp increases in prices of fossil fuels, however, were most people clearly impressed with the urgent need to use as little gaso-

line, oil and other energy-related commodities as could be reasonably managed.

Even now we'd be far ahead of the game if the DOE were shut off at the spigot, so to speak, and its operating funds permitted to remain in the pockets of our citizenry to enable us to pay whatever fuel actually costs to purchase, refine and deliver to American consumers.

If, in 1973, we had started paying full prices reflecting full costs, double digit inflation could have been avoided; the dollar's value, both at home and abroad, wouldn't have dropped to its present all-time low; the country would by now have made the difficult adjustment to smaller cars for everyone, lower temperatures and better insulation in homes, offices and public buildings; we might have experienced a longer and deeper recession in the mid-70's, but we'd have accepted the changes more easily than now, for our money, five years ago, had considerably greater buying power than it does today.

No amount of jaw-boning will ever have the salutary effect the price tag will always have. We can hear and read about the distant day when finite supplies of fossil fuels will be exhausted, but as long as there's a relatively inexpensive supply available, we'll continue to burn it with abandon. As is now clearly apparent, only when it costs lots of cash does the public believe demand is greater than supply and realize fuel is too valuable to burn carelessly for pleasure or even for convenience.

Although the DOE booklet seems an incredibly small return for our investment in that particular segment of government bureaucracy, it does present some useful statistics. It estimates a family of four uses 65 gallons of hot water daily at an annual cost (at present prices) ranging from \$200 to \$300 and suggests ways to cut that cost by half.

The DOE recommends use of flow-control devices to decrease the quantity of water used; the red hat-shaped plastic gadget is just such a device. It also suggests lower settings on hot water heaters, blanketing hot water tanks with insulation, and using cool or cold water to wash clothes. These are all excellent energy-saving suggestions; all of them have been recommended in magazine and newspaper articles, time and again, during the past several years.

One suggestion the DOE omits deserves consideration: tankless hot water heaters located in close proximity to faucets thus eliminating many feet of piping and heat-loss from piping. Both Kitchen Aide and Insinkerator market the product; similar ones have been used in Europe for decades. They operate only when hot water is called for rather than storing heated water in quantity.

Also available is the Thorn Instant Tankless Heater made by the Kiley Company, 25 Valley Drive, Greenwich, CT 06830 which is powered by bottled or natural gas or electricity. Promising "a never-ending flow of hot water, no complicated plumbing requirements, and as much as a 60 percent saving to operate compared to tank-type heaters," the Thorn may be for you.

The initial investment may be considerably greater than the gizmo you stick in the showerhead, but the pay-back may be worth it. The higher prices go for conventional fuels, the sooner you will start actually saving money; energy savings are realized from Day One.

Another company marketing tankless water heaters is Chronomite Labs, Inc., 21911 South Figaro, Carson, CA 90745. This product is electrically operated.

You might drop postcards to these companies asking for specifications and names of local dealers, or you might have a chat with your plumber.

Your hot water tank power source works constantly to keep 50, 75 or 100 gallons of water at temperatures close to 140°. All night while you're sleeping, all week while you're working and the kids are in school, all weekend while you go off skiing or beachcombing or whatever you do on weekends, that water is kept heated so you can draw a kettleful of hot water for breakfast coffee, so you can take a quick shower when you feel like it, so you can wash dishes and clothes in water too hot to touch. How often do you need 75 gallons of very hot water?

Sure, it's nice to know it's there if you need it, especially if it costs next-to-nothing to keep it on tap. Now, however, it's costing plenty to maintain that much hot water at that temperature, night and day, every day, year-in and year-out. If a small tankless heater can be just as convenient and save up to 60 percent of your present day hot water heating expenses, isn't it worth investigating? Sixty percent of \$300 is \$180, and that will buy a lot of groceries.