

Nixon, Congress blame each other for energy shortages

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The national energy crisis which seemingly hit the American people overnight with the likelihood of acute heating oil shortages and wartime-type gasoline rationing has set off a recriminatory "I told you so" exchange between Congress and the White House.

Congress can point to the warnings of at least 19 months ago from Sen. Thomas J. McIntyre [D., N. H.] and others on Capitol Hill from states plagued by sporadic oil shortages saying that big trouble lay ahead and that the administration was fiddling while the energy situation worsened.

On the other hand, President Nixon declares that Congress has been doing the fiddling. Repeatedly, he says, he has been sending energy messages to Congress since June of 1971, calling for action to deal with short and long-term problems and the appeals have fallen on inattentive ears.

For the record, here is a chronology of congressional and administration responses this year to the developing energy crisis:

- In an energy message to Congress in April the President ended tariffs and suspended mandatory quotas on imports of crude oil and refined petroleum products to increase the

flow of foreign oil on which the United States has become increasingly dependent.

- Later that month Congress voted an amendment to the Economic Stabilization Act giving the President authority to allocate crude oil and all petroleum products.

- In June the President appointed a so-called national energy czar and announced intensified federal efforts to meet the energy shortage. The President named John A. Love, then governor of Colorado, director of the newly-created Energy Policy Office [EPO] in the White House.

- On Aug. 9 EPO announced it was considering a mandatory, government-regulated allocation program for crude oil, refined products, propane gas. Love said the voluntary pro-

gram had not been entirely successful, but he was rejecting mandatory allocation for the time being.

- On Oct. 2 Love announced mandatory allocation programs for propane effective immediately, and for heating oil and diesel and jet plane fuel to go into effect later. He said winter shortages of these fuels were not expected to be "unmanageable."

- On Oct. 12 EPO announced that mandatory allocation of heating oil and diesel and jet fuel would go into effect Nov. 1 at the distributor level.

- On Oct. 18, with the Arab countries shutting off oil shipments to the United States, Sen. Henry M. Jackson [D., Wash.] introduced a bill to give the President broad emergency powers to ration oil and gasoline and impose mandatory conservation measures.

- On Nov. 7 the President told the nation in a television-radio address that it faced a serious energy crisis and belittling was essential. He

said homes, offices, and stores would be allotted 15 per cent less fuel oil compared with last winter.

He asked for emergency powers—provided in the Jackson bill—to reduce highway speed limits, order commercial establishments to restrict their hours of operation, relax air standards, and ration if necessary. He called for year-around daylight saving time.

- Meanwhile with congressional pressure for gasoline rationing mounting, the administration began drafting a variety of contingency plans for curtailing fuel and energy use and rationing gasoline and heating oil. The President and Love made clear their opposition to rationing except as a last resort because of the vast federal-state bureaucracy and administrative difficulties involved.

The rationing plans were discussed by the newly-created cabinet-level Emergency Energy Action Group last Monday, and were to be submitted to the President later in the week.

- Last week the Senate and House approved a bill directing the President to initiate mandatory allocation of crude oil, heating oil, gasoline, and other petroleum products.

The Senate and House Commerce Committees cleared legislation authorizing year-around daylight saving time. Floor action is expected next week.

- Last Monday the Senate approved the emergency energy crisis bill. The emergency legislation has yet to clear the House Commerce Committee. Action is expected next week, when the House returns from its Thanksgiving holiday recess.