

PROFILE □ Enercon Movement

'The energy crisis is real'

An impending increase in oil prices is threatening our economy again. Like the sword of Damocles, the oil crisis hangs up above our heads poised to spawn disaster anytime *unless we do something*. Unlike the sword, however, the crisis that oil can create cannot be avoided by simply moving out of its sphere of influence. By its very nature as the main energy source of the world, oil indeed has an unavoidable grip on the state of a nation.

The Philippines, in particular, obtains more than 90 percent of its power requirements from oil. Our development program, now being formulated and implemented in unprecedented scope and speed, has compelled the government to look for alternative energy sources. As President Marcos pointed out when he launched the Energy Conservation Program (Enercon) in October 1975, the multiplying oil prices have cost our government P7.2 billion yearly, a rather significant increase from the pre-1973 crisis price of only P2.2 billion.

The economic reality that we have to contend with is that we cannot do without oil for the time being. Our government planners, however, are vigorously exploring ways and means of tapping our own alternatives to the energy crisis—a crisis that will inevitably go on and on for as long as there are oil-dependent nations.

The national goal is for our nation to be thoroughly self-sufficient in energy by the year 2000. Of course, this goal is targeted not without some apprehension by our planners. It can be very expensive and frustrating for the search for the "black gold" has been historically much like looking for the needle in the haystack.

Our only immediate alternative to minimize the effects of the oil crisis is to vigorously pursue an energy conservation program. Last December, the Ener-

con movement was launched with no less than President Marcos presiding over the ceremonies. On that occasion, the President underscored the necessity for a successful campaign because "every barrel of oil saved means \$12 in import savings and every percentage of consumption that is saved means \$9 million for the country."

"Whether it is in oil, uranium, or even the machinery for geothermal units, for hydroelectric power, the production of energy is going up. Across this broad terrain of escalating prices, therefore, the logic of conservation becomes more valid and urgent," he added.

The Enercon movement is spearheaded by Meralco chairman Emilio Abello, and directly supervised by the Enercon Council of the Energy Development Board. This board is headed by Geronimo Velasco, who is also the president-chairman of the state-owned Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC).

The Enercon campaign is an integrated operation which involves four major sectors of fuel consumers; namely, transportation (utility vehicles, airplanes, ships, trains); industries (plants, factories, offices, buildings); electric and power-generating companies (Meralco, NEA, NPC); and government and private sectors. According to Enercon Council statistics the energy consumption pattern shows that the transportation, industry and power-generating sectors collectively account for 87 percent of petroleum used in the country. The government-private sectors account for only 13 percent.

PNOC Public Affairs Manager Jose Burgos, Jr. explained that the Enercon campaign "seeks to unite the broad spectrum of Philippine society to wage a cohesive and collective effort to make energy conservation a way of life." He added that conservation, a constant factor in day-to-day living, does not mean

non-use. "It is simply the correct use of energy, the nonwaste of available fuel," so that every drop of oil must pay for itself in terms of more and better production.

Enercon slogans have been so omnipresent that a fuel-user would think twice before he would even start using up gas. Slogans such as "Save energy, save yourself" can be heard on radio, seen in television, newspapers, billboards, posters, decals and even cartons (Asyong Aksaya) that one would conclude: "indeed the energy crisis is real."

"Enercon sense is common sense," goes another Enercon slogan. But the fact remains that not all fuel-consumers have the sense of cooperation; thus the slogans succeeded in appealing only to certain sectors. Enercon head Abello reported last month that the campaign has not permeated our population and suggested to President Marcos the adoption of more drastic measures if the citizenry remain indifferent to the conservation drive. Among such measures are:

- A street ban on heavy cars which require displacement of 2500 cc and above, except diplomatic or tourist cars, starting 10:00 a.m. Friday to 6:00 a.m. Monday every week;

- Prohibition of car and motorcycle racing, rallies and motorcades;

- Organization of car pools in schools and business firms;

- Closure of service stations from 6:00 p.m. until 6:00 the following morning, except those in strategic areas and those within initial jeepney routes;

- Creation of a government-private study group to consider possible energy conservation steps; and

- Stop all lighted advertisements after 10:00 p.m. Enercon suggests that the proposed study-group discuss the following measures:

1. Restriction of certain zones and streets to small vehicles during peak

traffic periods;

2. More effective means of clearing main streets of traffic obstacles by the police forces;

3. Additional ten percent reduction in the electric power and gasoline consumption of government agencies.

Objectives of Enercon

THE Enercon's four-fold objectives are as follows:

- Promotion of general awareness on the need for energy conservation and the efficient use of fuel;

- Promotion of sustained involvement by all energy-users, specifically the four sectors named earlier;

- Establishment of energy conservation guidelines and standards in achieving maximum efficiency for machines; and

- Encouragement of energy conservation among industrial firms through a system of incentives that will provide government assistance in importation of energy conservation systems.

These objectives have been applied in such Enercon-sponsored projects as auditing of more than 300 industries and consumers using at least P1 million worth of electricity and fuel annually. A carless day program has also been launched to persuade car owners to voluntarily refrain from using their cars at least one day in a week. Furthermore, the Enercon Council is authorized by LOI 328 to oversee and monitor plant conservation programs of industrial firms. These firms are required to report their monthly fuel consumption and productivity figures to the Council.

There is no doubt that the success of the energy conservation drive depends primarily on the citizenry. Between December last year and this month, several programs of conservation were launched by Enercon. While support was encouraging at the start, this dissipated as the months went by. Angays un- happily ~~was not~~ as militant as they started to be. Even government agencies, which began by religiously recording their fuel consumption—some even had fuel conservation units—waned in their enthusiasm. A suggestion has been made that government agencies must be the first observer of LOI 328.

The fear of gas rationing seems to be the motivating force in participating in the conservation drive. This was reported at the start of the 1973 crisis and everyone knew how this drastic alternative inconvenienced the population, especially those who own fuel-operated shops. At that time, many factories were shut down, employees were laid off, and prices of essential commodities multiplied.

To be sure that the conservation drive seeps to the local levels, Enercon organized directorates in the area. These are headed by responsible, civic-minded citizens. The Enercon Council continuously conducts researches and seminars involving students, teachers and the general public. To sustain its information program, Enercon coordinates with the Department of Public Information, Asyong Aksaya of the Bureau of National and Foreign Information (BNFI) is one product of this joint endeavor. Recently, an agreement was concluded with the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) to include energy conservation subjects in curricula for elementary and secondary private schools in Metro Manila. The agreement was based on the following: 1) everybody needs energy and thus it is vital to modern life; 2) fuel energy is exhaustible—therefore, it must be conserved; and 3) correct energy use is related to better living.

For its part, the Department of Finance is willing to grant tariff and tax incentives for the importation of energy-saving machineries provided these are proven to be "critical variables" in pursuing the conservation projects among industrial firms. According to Atty. Rey Palmieri of the Department, the government can provide additional incentives in terms of priority loans from lending institutions such as the Development Bank of the Philippines. —G. J. Baylon

