

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

# Affordable energy

by Congressman Ron Wyden

## Light your candle

On Christmas Eve, all over the United States, candles burned in the windows to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Poland who are now suffering under economic hardships and military rule.

This symbol was announced by President Reagan along with an economic boycott that will only add to the deprivation. The move by Reagan, possibly to lure the vast Polish-American community into his political corner, was readily accepted by the American people. First, it is easy for most Americans to identify with Poland's northern European heritage; and, second, the Polish problem is interpreted as the failure of Soviet-style socialism.

The food shortage in Poland—and it has reached the dimensions of true hunger and starvation—has several roots: the enormous loan payments and interest due western banks which take money that should be put into food and industrial production; industrial dislocation caused by repeated strikes and work stoppages; bureaucratization and unresponsiveness of the government. These and other factors have combined to bring economic disaster and loss of civil rights to the Polish people—at least temporarily.

While candles burn for Poland, Americans should stop to consider those around the world who suffer torture, imprisonment and death at the hands of their own governments—often governments supported financially and militarily by U.S. tax dollars.

In El Salvador, when thousands of people have been killed by the government in the last two years, the murders are aided by American advisors, U.S. supplied helicopters, arms and communication equipment. Daily, men, women and children are found decapitated, or their throats cut, for no reason except they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The nation's young men are being systematically murdered—reminiscent of the days of King Herod?

Guatemala, Honduras, Columbia and other Latin American nations—all with U.S. support

—are engaging in terror against their citizens. In Chile, which will soon receive renewed U.S. military aid, the destruction of human life is so vast that it has become the world's pariah. Starving Haitians are leaving their country in greater numbers than ever before—only to be captured in the high seas by the U.S. Coast Guard to be returned to sure imprisonment or death.

In South Africa shanty huts of thousands of Blacks who have nowhere to live were destroyed by the South African government right before the very eyes of U.S. Congressmen visiting that country. Killing and imprisonment of those who desire the simplest of human rights continues. While South African troops march into Angola, leaving death and destruction behind, U.S. officials meet with the leaders of UNITA—U.S. supported opposition to the legal government of Angola.

Elsewhere in Africa, millions starve as they attempt to escape war and famine in the horn of Africa. The U.S. response is to enhance military aid to the area—expanding bases or providing military equipment to Egypt, North Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, etc.

The poorest of nations—where starvation is routine—are located in Asia where the U.S. military might destroyed vast areas of the country as well as the social and political structure, and in Africa, long the basis of U.S. and European wealth. What did President Reagan offer at the recent Cancun Conference—a conference called to discuss ways the developed nations, which had enriched their economies in large part through theft of the natural resources of the underdeveloped third world nations, can now assist the economies of those nations? He promised only "self-help" through "free enterprise" and the U.S. based multi-national corporations.

So when you light your candles for Poland, also remember the people of South America, Africa and Asia, who suffer and starve. And then count your tax dollars that go to perpetuate that suffering and starvation.

With temperatures dropping almost daily, it seems appropriate to take time to discuss one of the greatest needs of Oregon's (and America's) elderly—affordable energy.

Energy costs, in general, have shot up out of sight. Between 1973 and 1981, household fuel costs increased by 279 per cent—compared to a 185 per cent rise in the cost of other consumer items.

Not surprisingly, low-income and elderly people are the hardest hit by these escalating costs.

Low-income individuals spend some 25-30 per cent of their income to cover energy costs—compared to only 5 per cent of income for the average household.

And the elderly—many of whom live on fixed incomes—are especially vulnerable. Even cost-of-living adjustments in programs such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) have not kept pace with the rise in energy costs. Between 1979 and 1981, the cost of

home heating oil outdistanced cost-of-living adjustments in the two programs by some 500 per cent.

This year, things promise to be even grimmer. Unemployment has soared. Welfare assistance has been cut back. Community support programs have been trimmed—or in some cases—closed down. And although energy costs generally have continued to rise, low-income energy assistance funds have not. State officials predict an average drop this winter of \$42 (from \$192 to \$150) in energy assistance for the needy.

Unable to stretch their meager dollars to cover these increased costs, many elderly people will be left with a cruel choice—either to heat their homes or buy food to eat. That is a situation we should not—and must not—tolerate.

There is no easy solution to the problem. But we must begin by re-ordering our priorities—by taking our budget cutting bites out of some

of the sacred cow programs that up until now have been untouched, instead of out of worthwhile and cost-effective programs such as energy assistance. Some of those sacred cow programs we should cut include military cost-overruns, tobacco subsidies and billion dollar handouts to oil companies for synthetic fuels.

But we must do more. To address our long-range energy needs, we must emphasize development of conservation and renewable energy programs. By doing this, we can assure a safe and affordable energy future for the elderly—and for the entire Pacific Northwest.

People who need energy assistance should call Tri County Community Council (222-5555) and ask for the energy assistance number serving their neighborhood. Appointments are made on a first come first serve basis. If you have other questions, feel free to call my office at 231-2300.

## Libya today . . .

Libya is a young country with an ancient past. From the days of Herodotus through the early 20th century "Lybia" was the term applied to most of North Africa. The Lybia of today—the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya—occupies a strategic location on the Mediterranean coast, the fourth largest nation in Africa. Its long Mediterranean coast line and its strategic location have made it a national gateway to central Africa.

Early residents included the Lebu, Tehno and Mishwash tribes referred to in 3,000 B.C. as the "Old Kingdom of Egypt." They were joined by migrating Arabs, sea-faring Phoenicians, the Romans, the Greeks and later the Turks. Islam arrived in Lybia in 642 A.D.

Libya was an Italian possession from 1911 to 1942 and half of the population died in the struggle for liberation. The United Nations gave Lybia independence in 1951, making it a federal monarchy under King Idris with a constitutional stipulation that succession pass to his heirs.

In 1969 a group of army officers led by Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, in a bloodless coup, overthrew the monarchy and established the Republic. The new government moved quickly to redirect the country's political, economic and socio-economic resources to meet the aspirations of the people and the rising tide of Arab nationalism.

### The government

The "Jamahiriya," or People's Authority, is based on Qaddafi's "Third Universal Theory" as described in the "Green Book." The Green Book rejects both capitalism and communism and returns political and economic power to the people. The government is comprised of a series of People's Committees at the zone and municipal levels that deal with administrative affairs, so that every citizen has access to the political process and governing mechanism.

The declaration of March 2, 1977, establishes the Quran as the basic law of society and creates direct democracy with the authority of the people exercised through the people's congresses, the People's Committee, and the Professional Unions. All citizens register with the People's Congress of their area and choose a People's Committee to administer services. Professional Unions take care of professional rights. The national governing body, the General Peoples' Council, is composed of delegates from the People's Congresses, People's Committees and Professional Unions. The GPC selects a Secretary General and Secretaries to administer the government.

The judicial system is divided into four levels with the Supreme Court at the highest level. Islamic law is official state law.

Libya is a member of the League of Arab States, the United Nations and its affiliates, the Organization of African Unity, OPEC, and the Organization of Non-Aligned Nations.

### The people

Ninety per cent of the Libyans are Arab, the others being Berbers, Blacks, and small numbers of Greeks, Maltese and Armenians. The official language is Arabic and the population is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. In 1975 over half of the citizens were under 15 years of age.

### Economy

When Lybia became independent in 1951 it was considered perhaps the poorest nation in the world. Two per cent of the land was cultivable; there was a severe water shortage; the vast desert was considered a wasteland. There were no known mineral resources and no trained, skilled, or technical labor force. Ninety per cent of the population was illiterate; only 14 Libyans had received a college education.

In 1958 oil was discovered. Large subterranean water reserves were discovered. Together these transformed Lybia into one of the world's richest nations.

Rapid economic development is aimed at building a stable economy after oil reserves are gone. This meant providing new communication and transportation projects, raising standards of housing, dividing income more equitably, and emphasizing development of industrial and agricultural resources.

Agriculture employs 50 per cent of the work force and remains the first priority. In the mid-1970s Italian owned land was nationalized and distributed to Libyan farmers. Large scale irrigation and land reclamation projects, fertilizer, seed and equipment are provided. Modern production methods are taught, farmland reorganized, and banks provide interest-free loans, grants and technical assistance.

Agricultural production is evenly divided between livestock and produce as the nation strives to become

self-sufficient in meat, poultry and dairy products. Major crops are barley, olives, citrus, vegetables, wheat and dates.

Libyan oil is light crude with little sulfur content. By 1977 all oil producing facilities were nationalized, with private companies receiving compensation for their properties. Foreign companies still operate in the petroleum industry. One of the world's largest iron ore deposits has been discovered. Other minerals are salt and sulfur.

The Five Year Plan for 1976-1980 included an annual increase of 11 per cent GNP and 5.6 per cent per capita income. Along with industrial development, priorities include agriculture, electricity, housing and urban development. A primary goal is to increase economic independence and modernization through income redistribution.

### Health, welfare

Education is mandatory through the sixth grade, and education is available through the university level. Because of the education disparity between the young and their parents, literary projects for adults are underway. Breaking down the tradition against women receiving university training is a current goal.

All health services are free. Today there is a doctor for every 769 persons and 5 hospital beds for every 1,000 persons. Attention is given to prenatal care, health care in schools, and hygiene. Preventive medicine and compulsory vaccination have eradicated many communicable diseases. Lybia is now malaria free.

In addition to free health care all citizens are entitled to extensive financial, national and social services. These include craft training centers, rehabilitation centers for sick and injured, special facilities for the disabled.

The Womens' General Union works in the fields of hygiene, nutrition and adult education and attempts to bridge the social gap created by rapid change.

Every family has the right to own a home. Most Libyans who were primarily tenants have become owners; landlords were compensated for their property, which was sold to tenants at low, subsidized prices.

## No civil rights violation?

The U.S. Department of Justice has determined that throwing of dead possums in front of a Black-owned restaurant by on-duty police officers was not a violation of the civil rights of the restaurant owners. This incident -- passed off by the police officers involved as a joke to relieve tension within their group -- was clearly an intimidation of the owners and their customers.

What evidence does the government need to determine a violation of civil rights. Is not the incident-itself enough proof? What possible motive could uniformed police officers have to kill animals and leave their carcasses in front of a business except to intimidate?

The City's claim that the act was not racially motivated did much to defuse the investigation. Clearly racial in context and meaning, a statement to that effect by the appropriate public officials would have done much to establish the intentions and the results of the act.

Meanwhile, the FBI and other agents of government continue to harass and intimidate Blacks, Indians and other groups who seek their civil and human rights. FBI violations of constitutional rights and of the nation's laws are well documented -- and they continue.

We must wonder when and if the powers of the nation will be used to protect its citizens.



## New Year Greetings

from the  
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