

Advertising by Power Suppliers

Apparently some electricity and gas suppliers still believe that our non-renewable energy sources will last indefinitely, even though there has been growing national and worldwide concern for some time over energy shortages.

Although a shortage of energy is not foreseeable in the near future for our own use in North Dakota, many conservation-conscious citizens have expressed concern for the need of long-range planning for local energy needs, as well as for the possibility that in the not too distant future we may have to help provide energy for some of our highly populated and industrialized neighboring states.

One example of this concern is the energy meeting held in Bismarck in December 1971, at which representatives from business, conservation groups, and power suppliers discussed energy demands, energy sources, and environment. At this meeting a North Dakota Committee for Energy and Environment was created to continue the study of energy demands on resources in North Dakota and their effect on the environment.

In spite of this concern and action, some area power companies are still encouraging, in their advertising, new uses and greater consumption of electrical power. Very recently a power supplier for eastern North Dakota enclosed a pamphlet with monthly bills to customers, blatantly encouraging increased use of electric power. In the pamphlet the supplier states that only a small fraction of the available lignite power source will provide "an ample supply of fuel for our generating plants for the foreseeable future." The pamphlet further states, "Therefore, we promote, for example, air conditioning and dehumidifying during warm weather *to help fill the electric usage between the summer valleys and the winter peaks.*" (Italics added for emphasis.) In other words, consumers are advised to use conditioners and dehumidifiers not because of any need, but to help use up all the available power the supplier is able to produce.

Granted, many electric companies, especially those serving densely populated areas, have curtailed their promotion of electric usage, not primarily because of depleting energy sources, but because numerous brownouts have resulted from greater power demands than their facilities could provide.

Do we want to find ourselves in similar situations, with depleted resources and power brownouts? We will—unless our power suppliers encourage conservation of power for essential use rather than a self-serving promotion of maximum use.

—WILLIAM A. BURESH