

Energy Insider by William Engdahl

For the birds

Audubon's energy plan uses the projected collapse of energy demand as self-fulfilling prophecy.

That aristocratic enclave of bird watchers known as the Audubon Society has just made its bid as an authority on energy and economic growth with publication of "The Audubon Energy Plan." It is worth reviewing because of who is involved and the fallacies it disguises with scientific rhetoric.

The report's conclusions, briefly stated, are that we should plan for zero energy growth for the United States by the year 2000. With pedantic detail, Audubon cites study after study, from the Princeton Center for Energy and Environmental Studies to the Carnegie-Mellon Institute, to the Department of Energy's Solar Energy Research Institute, and Harvard University. This group has even come up with a definition of their hokum: "The Least Cost Energy Strategy."

Using British Thermal Units (BTUs) as a measure of energy consumption, the Audubon people project as the most desirable goal a domestic consumption of 80 quads per year (quadrillion BTU). One quad is roughly the energy consumed by a city of 3 million people, or 500,000 barrels of oil daily for one year. In 1980, a year of deep economic recession, we consumed exactly this: 80 quads.

Reading on through the Audubon study, if the world's most advanced industrial nations agree to stop energy growth over the next two decades, and invest some \$700 billion in energy conservation, we

are promised, "the goods and services of a traditional 122 quad economy will be achieved with an expenditure of only 80 quads."

Of course, there *will* be some who will object to a freeze and phaseout of advanced nuclear technology in favor of a reversion to 16th-century woodburning and windmills. They admit that to attain their goal of economic stagnation for 20 years (something no society in recorded history has ever done and survived), they will have to produce 25 percent of the total energy by deforestation (termed "biomass") and dropping about 50,000 wind turbines across the Western plains states.

"The Audubon Plan will require," we are told, "massive investment in equipment and processes that use energy more efficiently and in solar energy over the next 20 years." But somehow, a \$700 billion investment in inefficient wood, wind, and solar generation is deemed preferable to spending the same money to build an additional 700 nuclear reactors.

The Audubon study was headed by Nixon's former Council on Environmental Quality chairman, Russell Peterson, Carter administration former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture environmentalist honcho M. Ruppert Cutler, and Jan Beyea, an anti-energy ideologue who came out of the Princeton cesspool.

The Audubon planners quietly circumscribe and hermeticize the

U.S. economy, eliminating exports of American technology and capital goods needed to industrialize and modernize the developing world. The last economy of a large industrial nation to try sustained hermetic economic existence—autarky—was Germany in 1933. Within six years Panzer divisions rolled into Poland, France, and Scandinavia.

The problem is that top levels of the electric utility industry have become confused and more than slightly demoralized with study after study coming from the likes of Amory Lovins, SERI, DOE, Audubon, Princeton, Harvard, Carnegie-Mellon and anyone else who hustled a government grant. As a result, they have accepted as valid vastly lower "demand growth" projections. These numbers have been used by utilities to halt all power plant construction plans.

According to a recent GAO report, in the 1974-1978 period, 184 electric generating plants, including 80 nuclear and 84 coal-fired plants have been canceled. Seven additional nuclear plants were canceled in 1979 and eight more as of September 1980 with not one new reactor ordered since 1978. To date, the Reagan administration has done nothing fundamental to reverse this. So long as we are hostage to the usury of the current Federal Reserve's 20 percent-plus interest rates, the situation will converge on the Audubon goal.

By then, it may be too late to realize that reports such as Audubon's are nothing but statements of certain top policy strategists who have decided that the United States and therefore the rest of the world will have a permanent and accelerating economic depression.