

Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Pushed Around



I admit to the anger I felt, sitting there in front of the TV. On camera was one of the Arab ambassadors to OPEC. He was commenting on the recent increase in the price of oil — and why the Arabs, with all their money, had decided to hit us again.

“It’s time the American people changed their way of living,” he said with what sounded like a sneer. “You’ve had too much for too long. Now you’ll find out how the rest of the world lives.”

I fumed. “What right does some Arab have to change my lifestyle? They’re jealous over our paved streets, working sewers and kitchens with refrigerators and electric stoves. Now that they control the oil, they’re trying to pull us down to their level.”

I was angry that someone else was tampering with my way of living. My right to have a man come and mow my grass. My right to run my air conditioner at 70 degrees. My right to own three cars, a tractor and a pick-up truck. Just because they enjoy sitting cross-legged on the sand floor of a tent and drinking sweet tea is no reason for them to force me into their mold.

But after my anger subsided I sat

and thought. We are a wastrel people. We waste water. Our family throws away enough scraps to feed the average family in the slums of the world. We heat and cool, work and play, with no thought to how much energy it takes — much less to the one who created the energy to begin with.

Yet, as Americans, we don’t like someone pushing us around. We’re cocky. And independent. Especially are we independent. Management doesn’t like being pushed around by organized labor. Working men don’t like being pushed around by bosses. We want every public meeting to be “in the sunshine” — even those where leaders are simply trying to arrive at policy. It’s our “right,” we say. We don’t like being pushed around by the police, the county commissioners or the IRS. We don’t want anyone else to do our thinking for us — or to tell us how to live.

In America if a fellow wants to paint his house blue with pink polka dots — that’s his right. We’re independent. Every man’s home is his castle. And every man is a king.

Independent. Cocky. We do what we please. And to blazes with

anyone who objects or tries to tell us otherwise.

That is, unless it’s a little Arab who just happens to control the world’s oil. And suddenly we don’t have enough fuel to run our power plants which cool our houses and heat our swimming pools. Nor do we have enough gas to take a six-week vacation in our gas-gulping car, pulling a travel trailer and staying at expensive motels. Boats and airplanes, electrical gadgets, everything depends on oil.

And the fellow who owns the oil says he’s going to teach us how to live.

What audacity!

But, I wonder, if God sent folks like the Chaldeans to give his chosen people, the Israelites, a hard time for becoming sloppy and irreverent — is it possible that once again “men from the east” are being sent by God to call us to task for our way of life?

I thought about that for a long time. But finally dismissed it. Impossible. God is too tolerant for that. Besides, doesn’t God want his people to worship in air conditioned comfort?