

Carter's strategy for energy independence

On July 15 and 16, President Jimmy Carter outlined his "line of defense ... on the battlefield of energy." His program hinges on passage of the windfall profits tax, which the White House expects to yield from \$146 billion to \$270 billion over the next ten years, depending on the price of oil. Carter would spend a total of \$142.2 billion (six times the price of the Apollo project) as follows:

- \$88 billion for an Energy Security Corporation — an outside federal bureaucracy to develop and produce 2.5 million barrels a day of alternative fuels over the next decade.

- \$1.6 billion for improved mass transit,
- \$1 billion each in tax credits for refining oil shale and for unconventional (deep) natural gas,

- \$5 billion to reduce oil used by utilities (1.5 million barrels per day) by half by 1990,

- \$2 billion to fund energy conservation in buildings, saving 500,000 barrels of oil per day by 1990,

- \$24 billion for energy assistance to low-income families,

- and \$1.2 billion for previously announced plans such as the Solar Development Bank, so that 20 percent of U.S. power will be solar power by the year 2000.

Carter further declared a limit on 1979 oil imports of 8.2 million barrels per day, 300,000 barrels below the level promised at the Tokyo summit three weeks ago. He also proposed a three-member Energy Mobilization Board to fix binding timetables to federal and local energy programs and to "slash through red tape and bureaucratic obstacles" to increased energy production. He announced immediate decontrol of the price of heavy crude oil (see p. 42), which should triple the going price of \$6 a barrel, making it more profitable to drill for. Carter called nuclear power "vital," but is reportedly holding off on any decisions until his Three Mile Island commission completes its report (see p. 45).

Some of these initiatives resemble proposals already moving through Congress, although Carter's proposed budget for synfuels (alternative fuels) dwarfs similar proposals now in the House and Senate, which ask for \$2 billion to \$5 billion to develop synfuels (SN: 6/30/79, p. 421). The Energy Mobilization Board, modeled on the War Production Board of World War II, would be similar to a board proposed by Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) in a bill introduced last month. Jackson's bill also would require utilities to convert from oil to coal, but without federal aid. The Senate has also passed a bill giving the President authority to draft an emergency conservation plan, and a House subcommittee has



Jimmy Carter goes to church. Later that day he set forth his energy plans.

tacked on a standby gas rationing plan to that bill, which went before the full committee July 17 and passed. The legislative details of Carter's plan are not expected to be ready until the end of July, which may delay action on the existing congressional proposals.

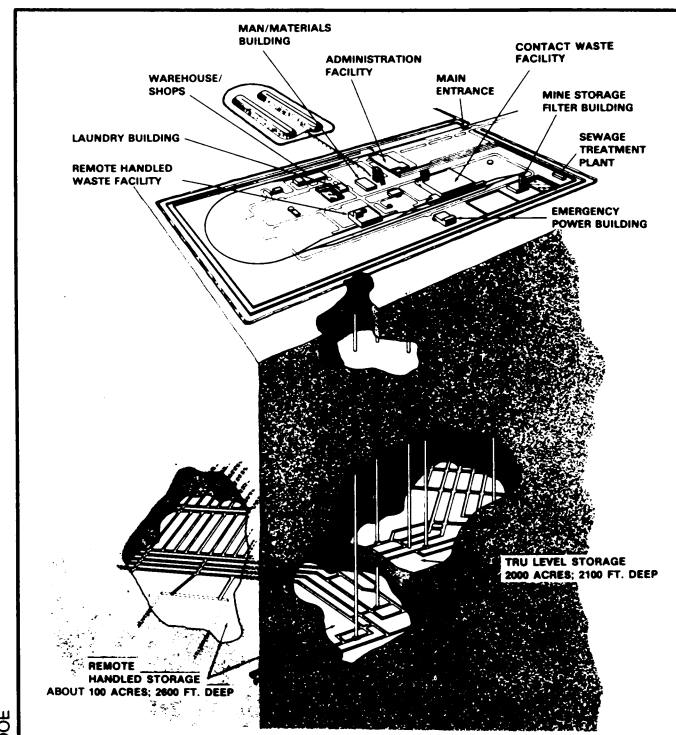
Conspicuously absent from the Carter scheme was any mention of environmental measures that might be necessary be-

cause of fuel production increases. "We will protect our environment. But when this nation critically needs a refinery or a pipeline, we will build it," Carter said Sunday night. Earlier last week, the White House's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released a report warning that increased production of synthetic fuels would increase carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere and create an accelerated "greenhouse effect" (SN: 2/25/78, p. 116). The CO₂ traps warm air and raises the earth's surface temperature, perhaps by as much as 5°C, and may eventually melt the polar icecaps. While the greenhouse effect is reportedly already underway, CEQ scientists warn that synfuel production, especially from coal, will accelerate the process. Coal combustion alone releases 2.5 grams of CO₂ per Btu of heat produced. Coal converted to gas or oil (synfuels) produces 3.4 grams, the report says; or about 1.7 times as much as oil and 2.3 times as much as natural gas. But neither the Environmental Protection Agency nor the Department of Energy restrict CO₂ pollution. In a recently released DOE study on the environmental effects of synfuel refining, CO₂ pollution "is just not raised as a tremendous problem," as Jan Cool of DOE's Office of the Environment told SCIENCE NEWS. □

Carter given nuclear waste options

An interagency memorandum recently sent to President Jimmy Carter on the subject of nuclear waste management leaves unresolved two major issues: the timetable and strategy for site selection of the first national commercial high-level waste (HLW) repository and the fate of present

plans for a controversial waste isolation pilot plant (WIPP) for defense wastes. The memo summarizes the findings and recommendations of the 14-agency federal review group commissioned by Carter last year to help create a nuclear waste management policy (SN: 3/24/79, p. 183).



The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), planned by the Department of Energy in underground salt caverns near Carlsbad, N.M., is one subject of a recent memo to President Jimmy Carter on nuclear waste policy. Originally intended for defense nuclear wastes, more recently proposed to include commercial wastes, it has met public and political criticism for its scientific planning as well as its perceived political mismanagement.