

Friday, October 12, 1990

## Gulf crisis, pollution fuel research

By JOE FERGUSON  
Of The Battalion Staff

The combination of U.S. dependence on Persian Gulf oil and escalating air pollution problems is causing a renewed interest in alternative fuel sources, a Texas A&M professor says.

A serious, economically driven concern about alternative fuels has not existed since OPEC refused to sell oil to the United States and oil prices were driven up in the 1970s, Dr. Richard Davison, a chemical engineering professor, says.

Once again, a situation in the Middle East has driven gas prices up in the United States and, once again, interest in alternative fuels is on the rise.

Davison, however, says any immediate increased interest in alternative fuel would be for environmental reasons, not because of an oil shortage.

"I think everyone knows the present cost of oil is based on fear," Davison says. "Everyone is running out bidding for this oil to keep their (reserve) tanks full in case something happens in Saudi Arabia. And bidding drives the price up."

Davison says he expects the price hike to be short-term only.

"There's really only a slight shortage and unless (a major) one develops, (the higher prices) won't last

long. This is only temporary."

But due to the nature of oil, a real shortage is coming, Davison says.

"Of course oil is not a renewable resource," he says. "We are consuming. But most people feel a true shortage is still decades away."

He says possible alternative fuels are natural gas, synthetic gas, propane, butane, methyl alcohol and ethyl alcohol. All are used already on a limited basis.

Davison says natural gas would be good economically, but a loss of power and inconvenient refueling make it unattractive to some people.

Wade Thomason, program administrator of environmental health for the American Lung Association of Texas, says the substitution of compressed natural gas for gasoline would provide the following benefits:

- total elimination of hydrocarbon evaporate emissions
- 50 percent reduction of carbon monoxide
- 40 percent reduction of hydrocarbons
- virtual elimination of particulates, like soot

Compressed natural gas as a vehicular fuel will be exhibited Thursday in the first floor student lounge of the MSC from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The ALA is sponsoring the exhibit-

tion. Davison says economics is the basis for converting to alternative fuels.

"I believe (economics) is finally what pushes everything," he says. "You can never pass laws (forcing the use of alternative fuels) if the economics are too bad. If the economics are far apart, people will scream because it will make them poor."

"We are not going to burn a fuel equivalent to \$50 to \$100 per barrel if we can buy oil from the Arabs or anyone else for, say, \$20 or \$25 per barrel," he says.

"It's going to be very hard for an alternative fuel industry to develop when everyone figures that in a few years, the price of oil will come back down," he continues.

Davison says just as technological advances like horizontal drilling have allowed for more oil production, they also could make alternative fuel production cheaper.

But lower production costs for alternative fuels is not the only delay to conversion.

"The reason people (in the petroleum market) want to stay with gasoline is because of a multi-billion dollar gasoline infrastructure," Davison says. "We've got millions of gasoline-run motorvehicles, millions of filling

stations designed to pump gasoline or diesel, tanks designed to hold gasoline, refineries designed to produce gasoline.

"In order to start replacing that infrastructure, there has to be a really heavy economic incentive," he continues. "It's not enough for an alternate fuel to sell for about the same. It's got to be significantly cheaper to justify replacing that infrastructure."

But environmental concerns such as the greenhouse effect, acid rain and smog could force the issue of alternative fuels.

And it already has, at least on the state level, Thomason says.

He referred to a state law which requires state agencies to convert their vehicles by 1998 to alternative fuels.

Thomason lists the percentage of vehicles required to be converted by date as 30 percent by 1994, 50 percent by 1996 and 90 percent by 1998.

Metropolitan transit authorities not meeting health standards and school districts with more than 50 buses also fall under those requirements, Thomason says.

## BATTIPS

Anyone with story suggestions can call BATTIPS, The Battalion's phone line designed to improve communication between the newspaper and its readers.

The BATTIPS number is 845-3315.

Ideas can include news stories, feature ideas and personality profiles of interesting people.

## Fraternity provides babysitting APO gives parents free time from kids

By SEAN FRERKING  
Of The Battalion Staff

Alpha Phi Omega will give parents at Texas A&M a chance for some free time during Parents' Night Out from 6 until 10:30 tonight in 601 Rudder.

Brad Mudgett, the event's project chairman and a junior psychology major from San Antonio, says the event will give parents an opportunity to participate in some activities at A&M.

"We have Parents' Night Out so parents can actually get out and have some fun without worrying about the cost or hassle of babysitting," Mudgett says. "We try to plan to have three or four of these during a semester."

Mudgett says APO, a national coed service fraternity, tries to plan Parents' Night Out on nights when there are several activities on campus.

But parents have used the free time to do almost anything, he says.

"Some parents will go to the Glaston Ballet or 'Coffee House' at Rumors (the snackbar near the post office in the MSC)," Mudgett says. "But some drop off their kids and go

see a movie, while others go eat dinner at Dudley's."

"It's not too often parents have free time," he continues. "We are just trying to give them some time to enjoy and get away."

Mudgett says there is no cost for Parents' Night Out, but parents must complete a registration card the first time they use the service.

He says APO has various ways of entertaining the children.

"We're going to show a couple of movies," Mudgett says. "We also will have coloring books, Tinker Toys and all sorts of toys for the kids to play with."

He says individual volunteers also will be assigned to care for and entertain each child.

"We've found that most kids usually have the most fun with their own volunteer," Mudgett says.

APO has provided this service for several years, Mudgett says, and hopes to continue this "new Aggie tradition" in the future.

"As a service fraternity, we try to help people in many different ways," Mudgett says. "Parents' Night Out is just one of APO's ways of giving something back to A&M."

He says APO has more than 50 volunteers to help babysit.

## Papers call for debate before election

Associated Press

From Abilene to Waco, Texas newspapers are calling on the gubernatorial candidates to debate one another before the Nov. 6 election.

Despite months of haggling, Democrat Ann Richards and Republican Clayton Williams have so far failed to agree to a face-to-face debate.

Each blames the other. The Houston Chronicle noted that 1990 could be the first year since 1974 in which voters wouldn't

be able to view a debate.

"Neither Williams nor Richards is entitled to be governor," the Chronicle said. "But the voters are entitled to a fair chance to see them together and evaluate them accordingly."

Many other newspapers agree.

"This election shouldn't be decided by campaign ads, headlines and sound bites," the Abilene Reporter News said. "The voters ought to have an opportunity to see the two candidates, face to face, discuss the

issues facing Texas."

"Dear Ann Richards and Clayton Williams: It's high time you two quit playing hide-and-seek with each other on the campaign trail," the Houston Post said. "Get together and give us some real insight into yourselves and how you would serve as Texas' next governor."

Williams has insisted that Richards sign a pledge to run only a "positive" campaign before he will confront her. Richards says that's just an excuse.

## Fort Worth dubbed gang capital

HOUSTON (AP) — The city of Fort Worth has the dubious distinction as the gang capital of Texas, with 154 gangs numbering about 3,000 members, according to a draft study by the state attorney general's office.

The study, obtained by the Houston Chronicle, shows Dallas No. 2 in the state, with more gangs but fewer gang members than its neighboring city.

Kelly Fero, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said the re-

port, the first attempt to measure gang activity statewide, is preliminary and said the numbers could change.

With too little jobs and too few youth activities, the report says "urban youth find the social cohesion and cultural bond of gang life alluring."

San Antonio and Harlingen came third and fourth in the rankings. Houston, the state's largest city, was fifth.

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PRESENTS

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**Strange Brew**  
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Midnight

**Dracula**  
Saturday -- 3:00PM  
Rudder Theatre  
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Children 13 & under - \$1.00