

Oil

A Poem on the Nationalization of the Oil and Gas Industry

—Edward Sanders

Argument

It came to pass that the United States Congress passed a bill to nationalize foreign and domestic oil and natural gas enterprises. The president immediately signed the bill, and troops were dispatched in the United States to carry out the nationalization. Foreign entities owned or controlled by U.S. oil companies were also taken over.

Prologue

(a chorus of upset citizens standing in front of oil tanks and gas tanks,
holding signs, and chanting)

O Universe! O America! Deliver us from
the cruel depredations of the greedy capitalists & oil-hoarders
who strive to steal every quarter from our pockets!
Use the army! Use the Secret Service! Send all your operatives
to drive these greed-heads into the Muck of Destiny!
Gather, o Voting Booths, to manifest our Angry Will

Arrogance & Greed are Thumbs in the Eye of God!
Freedom from Greed! Freedom from Greed! Freedom from Greed!

Voice of Ancient Aeschylus

I come, I Aeschylus from the vales of Acheron
to urge the strands of the populace to stand together, for
I chant for you the truth from my own play *Agamemnon*
“Powerful is the voice of the people stirred with anger
It has the strength of a whole nation bound as one.”
(see lines 456-457)

The House then the Senate

First the House then the Senate
passed the bills of nationalization

It had the fervor of the Constitutional Convention
or the summer of '76

They was spontaneous singing of hymns during the votes,
and also mass singing of John Lennon's "Imagine" by
several million supporters gathered by the Washington Monument

President Signs Bill

When the bill came out of the conference committee
U.S. troops lined both sides of the avenue as
it was brought from the Capitol in an armored vehicle
to a viewing stand on the White House lawn
where the president signed it
then addressed the nation

"This afternoon, I have ordered troops into Dallas, Houston,
Boston and New York City. There will be a temporary disruption of
the New York Mercantile Exchange and the stock exchanges as well,
to be followed in quick order by a return to normal trading."

As he spoke he signed a decree sending an
American Energy Control Strike Force to oversee
and enforce the orderly nationalization

At once a stream of footage showing soldiers, sailors, marines,
coastal patrol boats, and special cadres of secret service agents
was sent out to the national media.

The quick deployment of troops took the oil-co's by surprise
since many newspapers and television pundits also
had predicted the bills would never pass

Congressional leaders had given interviews the night before
assuring that the nationalization bills were no longer "on the table"

It was a simple but effective ruse
to keep the oil-co's from bringing out missile launchers

so that even as the president's pen was still scratching
helicopters and armored vehicles
spilled forth into Dallas and Houston.

True to most military attacks, his one had a code name:
Operation Immediate Public Ownership, or Op-Own
as it was soon known in newspaper accounts

Op-Own was led by Col. Bill Mulholland
who was in the vanguard of the line of armored vehicles
surrounding the Dallas Petroleum Club

while the helicopters overhead
lowered troops on waving and trembling ladders
onto the roofs

Inside, the sound of smashing glass
as hidden compartments were searched for

stashes of cash were stuffed into duffel bags
and bars of gold were loaded onto dollies

Hard-drives were marked as evidence
and carefully prepared for removal.

I never thought it would come in my lifetime
and the tears welled up
to splash down my grating face

Sounds of gunfire spat out like splinters
in many an oil center
One executive killed himself

and a few confused it with the Alamo
as they battled the Op-Own Strike Force

until they lay in stacks of death
on their carpets

Thousands escaped to hunting preserves
where they were rounded up
after enough of them lay dead and wounded
in hastily organized bunkers

Bill Mulholland Rises Forth

Colonel Mulholland loved the project,
caught the president's eye
and was soon reporting directly & daily

The media sniffed him out also
and soon he was their controversial darling

however much he was despised by the oil-co's

The people also, that vast and pulsing proposal
so often so fragmented
united in love and respect for Bill Mulholland

who returned that respect
with the passion he spent on the details of Op-Own

Taking the Oil Companies

Mulholland's troops brought key oil-co personnel
into temporary holding areas
which wags in their columns called Camp Enrons

There was the soon-legendary Bowling Alley round-up
where oil execs were captured during a right wing fundraiser
at the aptly named Empire Valley Bowl
and handcuffed to a cage where they stored bowling balls.

Rounded up or no, most of the oil exec soon accepted
good-paying jobs with the nationalized oil & gas apparatus.

Shutting the Stock Market

Troops holding machine guns to make a point
entered the New York Stock Exchange and
stopped all trading in oil and gas stocks.

Shutting Down Speculation

Troops also cordoned off the New York Mercantile Exchange to halt
futures trading and to seize all hard drives.

Next, a hundred or so specially deputized Secret Service agents
put an end to back-door trading in oil futures by bankers after
American investment banks were discovered to own most of the natural gas.

When troops entered Morgan Stanley to seize the paperwork,
it was discerned they owned all the American heating oil
east of the Ohio Valley.

A Seisachtheia on oil bills

Gasoline was declared free to all Americans for 90 days, while the National
Energy System could be established

Then, the president signed an Executive Order
that all past-due debts for oil deliveries be erased.

Chorus of Americans Sing the “Hymn to Seisachtheia”

In ancient days, great Solon
erased the debts of Athenians by decree

It was called the “Seisachtheia”
the lifting off of burdens

O, Forgiveness of Debts,
so Ancient, so New, so Now!

O, Seisachtheia in the Redemption of the Human!
O, Seisachtheia in the Ultimate Decency!

The aroused citizenry urged the president
to declare a seisachtheia on mortgages & credit cards too!

O, shake off the mortgages! Shake off the usurious credit card debts!
O Ghost of Solon, shake it! shake that seisachtheia thing!

Op-Own Around the World

American Embassies around the world went into action
Op-Own forces arrived to assume control over

American companies
 in the oil business
 everywhere on the planet

Crushing the Oil Resistance

There were pockets of cruel resistance
 including various Militias
 who rumbled out of garages in the Midwest
 with barrels of fertilizer and cyanide

but fearlessly the American Energy Control Strike Force
 gained sway around the world

and thus was concluded the nationalization
 of the oil and gas industries
 in the United States & its foreign satellites

It was a marvelous moment for
 human freedom,
 the destruction of plutocracy
 and the regulation of money-hunger

though we knew that the next fifty years & maybe beyond
 the forces of imperial greed would seethe to re-privatize
 the methods & systems of energy.

Meanwhile a lone banjo player
 in Dealey Plaza
 was singing
 “Down by the Riverside”

Ahhh, Wide Fields of Wild Flowers! What a time of Glory!

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