



A Time to Choose: America's Energy Future

Final report by the Energy Policy Project of the Ford Foundation, published in 1974.

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From the Foreword to *A Time to Choose*

If energy questions were urgent and in some degree divisive in 1971, they have burned still more brightly, and engaged feelings more strongly than ever, in the last twelve months. The Project staff and many members of the Advisory Board brought long experience and strong prior convictions to the work of the Project, and the reader of the report and of the supplementary comments will see that beliefs reflecting the perspectives of the businessman, the conservationist, the professor, or the public servant are not readily abandoned even after repeated exchanges in committee meetings.

But careful readers will also discern, I think, something that I myself have observed in following the evolution of the Project and in watching the changes from one draft of this report to another: that men and women of intelligence and goodwill, when they have sensitive and honorable leadership, can help each other more than their initial differences would lead them to expect, and can work their way to agreements that may be at least as important as their differences. The report itself owes much to the advice and criticism offered along the way, and the remaining differences, though sometimes sharp, seem in their own way to underline the central message of the study—that it is truly Time to Choose. The measure of this agreement is accurately registered in the general statement of the Advisory Board on “Major Issues.” There is an energy crisis. It did not come and go in 1973-74. It will last a long time. Conservation is as important as supply. We do need “an integrated national policy.” This report constitutes a major contribution to the understanding of these quite fundamental propositions.



No one connected with this effort has ever supposed that a single private Project could be definitive. While important gaps have been at least partly filled by its special studies, the Project did not, and could not, cover all matters with equal care. In spite of the solidity of its central argument, this final report itself is, perhaps inevitably, somewhat uneven. I believe that the international energy scene, for example, and the political and economic role of the large energy corporation are subjects too complex and demanding to yield to the somewhat cursory treatment they receive in this report. Moreover, the report often reflects the tensions which inevitably exist when one is dealing with subjects on which convictions are strong while the available evidence is incomplete.

Yet it is important to remember that precisely because this is a Time to Choose we shall not always be able to wait for “all” the evidence before we act. For this reason among others I supported the recommendation of the Advisory Board that our initial plans for this final report should be modified to permit the inclusion of a statement of the Conclusions and recommendations of Mr. Freeman and his colleagues. The Ford Foundation neither endorses nor rejects their judgments, but we do think it is right to have them clearly set forth. These are men and women whose study and analysis have made a major contribution to understanding of the fundamental fact that choices must be made. They have earned the right to say what choices they themselves would recommend, and their recommendations deserve attention.

For ourselves, we accept the shared view of the staff and the Advisory Board that this Project, with all its substantial achievements, should be viewed more as a beginning than as an end. The Foundation, through the work of its Office of Resources and the Environment, will maintain its own concern for this great range of subjects, and we will be alert for further opportunities for the encouragement of expert, disinterested, and relevant analysis. I close by repeating our grateful acknowledgment of indebtedness to all who have helped this Project try to meet that standard.

McGeorge Bundy

President, The Ford Foundation