

# U.S. at Mercy of Mineral Holders

WHILE our country is struggling with problems and costs of larger imports of petroleum each year, warnings are being sounded that a similar crisis is developing in minerals.

Authorities say we now import more than half our mineral needs, including most of the "Vital Thirteen." Some of these come from the Soviet Union; others from unsettled "Third World" nations.

Three years ago, the National Commission on Minerals Policy estimated annual per capita needs of new minerals by Americans. Hardly anybody would use these amounts as individuals, but this is what our total needs come to on the average:

1,300 lb. iron and steel; 65 lb. aluminum; 25 lb. copper; 15 lb. zinc; 15 lb. lead; 35 lb. other metals; 8,000 lb. petroleum; 5,150 lb. coal; 4,700 lb. natural gas; 1/10 lb. uranium.

For years, fears have been expressed that foreign mineral sources could shut off our supplies, just as petroleum exporting countries have done or threatened to do.

Although alternate sources may be available for some minerals, political pressures could be applied to compel us to pay whatever prices might be asked or to make other concessions.

We depend entirely on other nations for certain minerals and materials, including natural rubber, manganese, cobalt, chromium and platinum.

Chromium and cobalt are used in manufacturing jet engines, automobiles, electric generating plants and computers. Minerals are used in numerous manufacturing processes and products. A shutdown of foreign supplies could seriously affect our economy and our comfort.

Our situation also may be perilous for some minerals this country has in abundance, because foreign supplies are being imported to undercut domestic producers and prices.

Forty years ago, Congress enacted a law providing for stockpiling materials critical to industry or military and which were in short

supply in the United States.

On the list were aluminum, copper, lead, tin and zinc. A recent report by General Services Administration showed that of these five, only the tin inventory met stockpile goals.

Estimates show that 90 per cent of non-fuel minerals produced in the United States come from public lands in western states. The government owns one-third of the nation's land, mostly in these same states, and millions of acres have been declared "out of bounds" for mineral exploration and development.

Environmental groups are demanding additional vast tracts be restricted to recreational, scenic and wildlife purposes. Others call this a federal "no growth" policy. Surely, there are ways to utilize the resources we need without destroying the environment.

Where would the oil industry be if a federal Department of Energy had existed when Oklahoma became a state 72 years ago?