

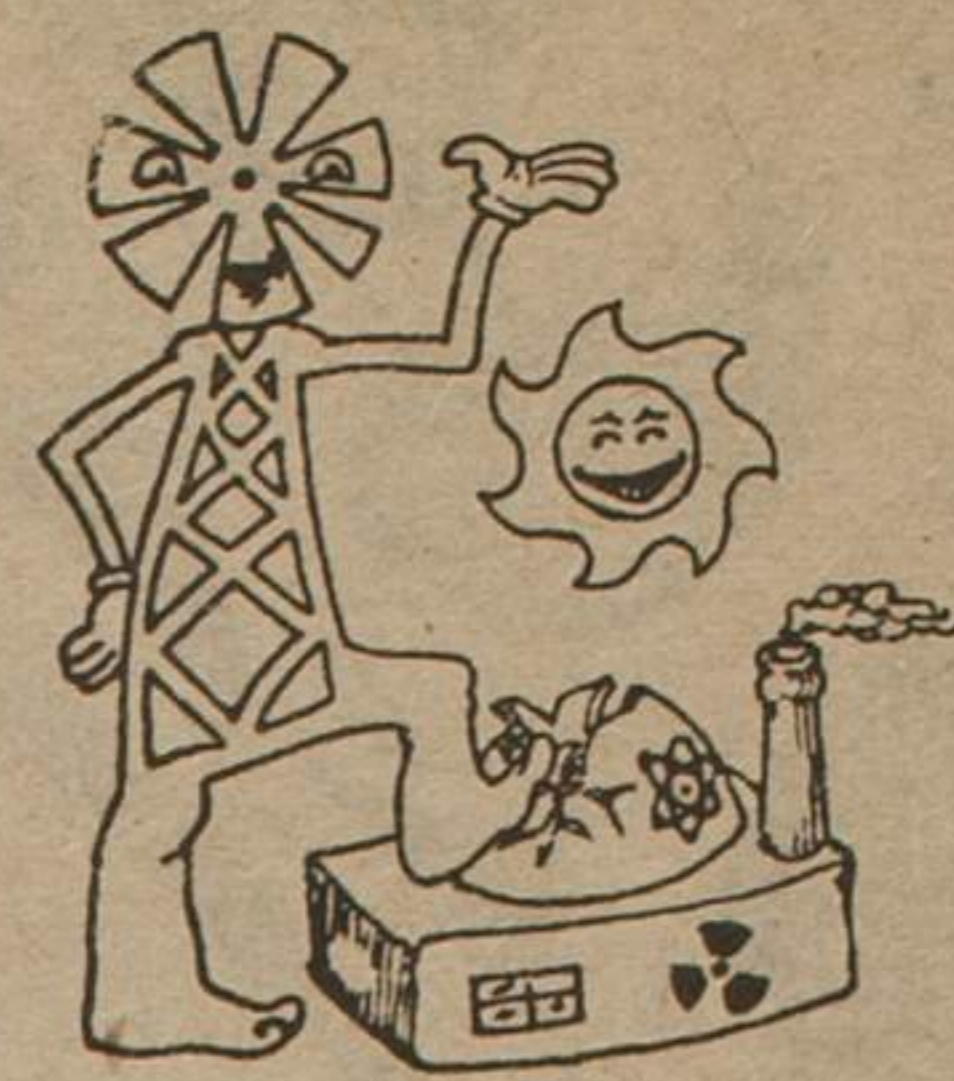


# People's Energy Project

POWER FOR PEOPLE, NOT PROFIT!

VOLUME IV, No. 1

February, 1978



## SETTING AN ENERGY TONE

By Paul Johnson

A state department of energy has been proposed by Rep. Don Mainey, Dem-Topeka. The central idea is to pull together all energy related functions of the state under one autonomous organization. The reasons are fairly self-evident. First, the only state energy office we have now is directly under the partisan thumb of the governor. While this energy football is tossed between the governor and the legislature, our energy future looks more and more bleak. Secondly, we need a strong advocate for energy conservation and the introduction of solar and other alternative technologies. We already are well aware of the immense political power which the utilities and the oil/gas interests have. While they sing the "Freeze in the Dark" chorus of unlimited power plant construction, someone needs to strongly support the more sensible, economic opportunity in conservation. Finally, we need some mandatory future planning regarding the need for major energy production plants.



Such a bureau could establish an up-to-date comprehensive list of insulation producers and suppliers; work to lower local shortages by keeping all cities in touch with the potential state-side supply and set standards to insure the highest quality, lowest cost product.

For low income residents the bureau could initiate the organization of a cellulose (shredded and treated newspaper) insulation business. In this way, the state could insure itself a high quality/low cost supply. By selling such insulation on an income-based scale, this project could be self-supporting.

In addition, the bureau could monitor new developments in the conservation materials field, keeping the state aware of such changes.

### EDUCATION TEAM

After decades of energy consumption information bombarding us, there is a real need to have conservation material so available. At this point in time, we can save energy more cheaply and definitely more safely than any other energy option. The savings for Kansans could be substantial.

This group could co-ordinate a state-wide dissemination of relevant materials. Activities could include holding town meetings and speaking to all interested civic clubs as well as working with local units of government. Information available from the group would be of value to such groups in several ways. For example, it would contribute to the content and nature of building codes, offering energy-saving construction tips.

Another important task would be to develop an energy conservation curriculum for the school systems.

### CONSUMER ADVOCACY UNIT

With increasing frequency, the state utility companies have been rushing to the KCC for more rate increase demands. The interests of consumers are poorly represented, and with each increase the consumer's lobbying power diminishes.

This unit would consist of economists, rate engineers, future planners and attorneys. They would speak at any state regulatory body which has power over utility operations.

One key area in need of further investigation is co-generation. This is the process by which buildings are heated from the waste heat in making electricity from steam. The efficiency of the fuel increases from 40% to 70%. Many industries could generate their own power if they could negotiate with the utility companies.

Many folks ask why we can't generate electricity from the water power in the spillways at our reservoirs. Once again, the utilities have fought such ideas; no one is organized to oppose the utilities.

Another option for this group is to work with cities to generate power from their garbage; for example, assisting farmers with methanol or bioconversion.



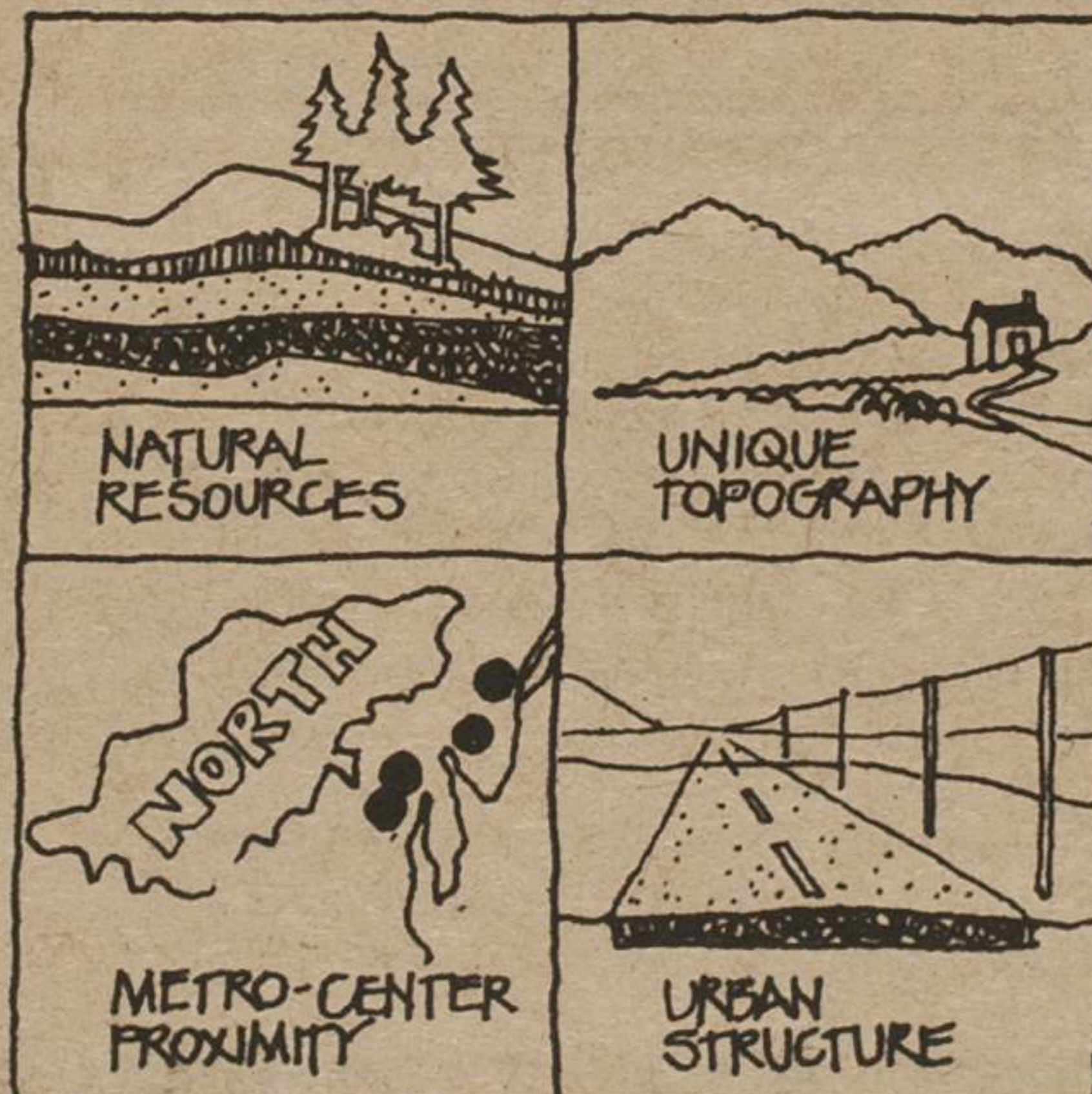
### SOLAR SUPPORTERS

All agree that solar energy must be our long term answer. The question is, of course, "how soon?" Advocacy is necessary to dispel myths and create new options.

It is important to make available an up-to-date list of solar hardware. Costs, expectations of longevity and sources are the type of information which should be given to all contractors as well as government units.

This group would keep informed on new solar breakthroughs and make such information publicly available. For example, photovoltaic cells (solar electricity) are quickly becoming cheaper and must be watched closely.

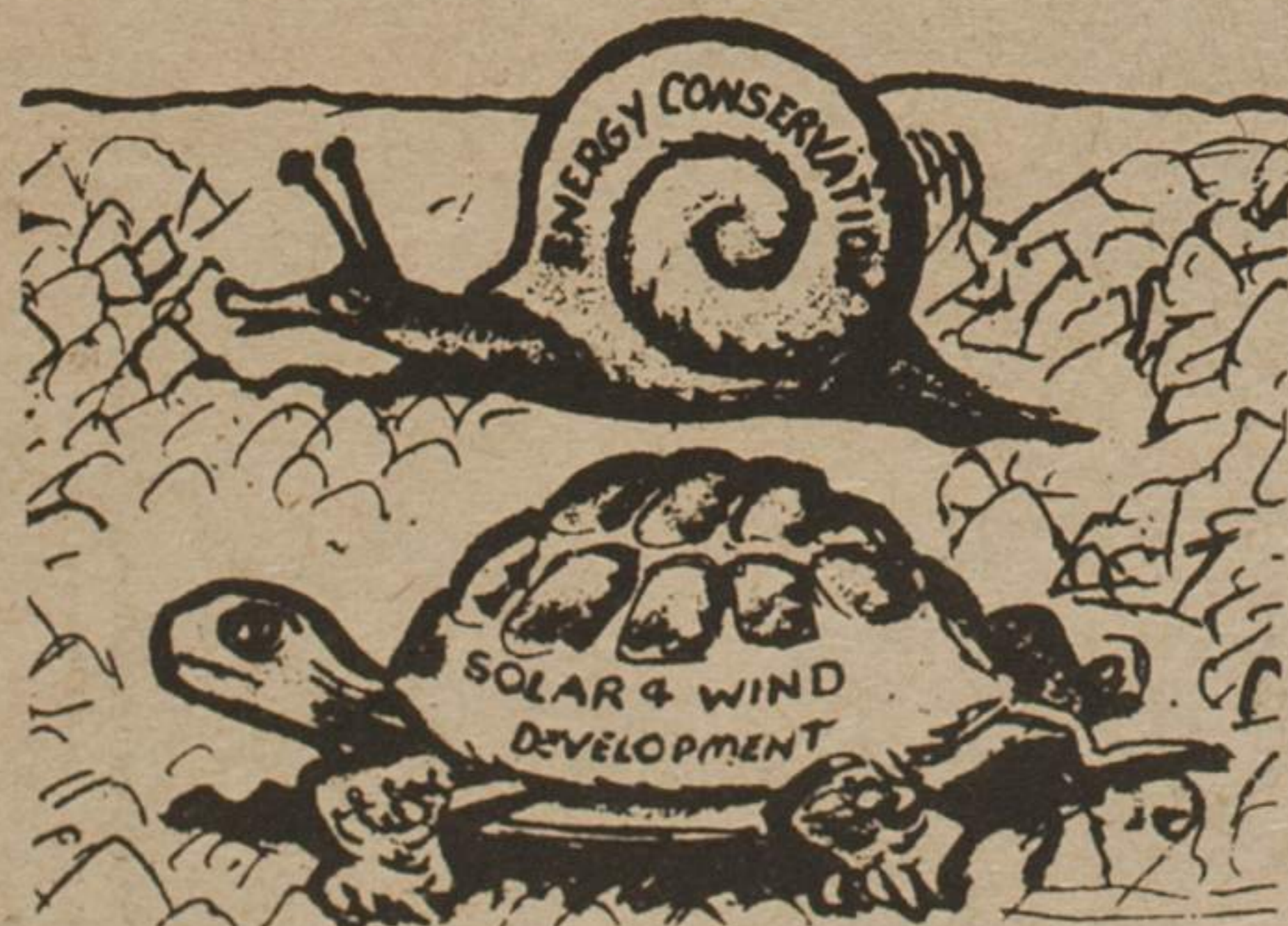
Another option is to advocate for wind energy. Being in a windy locale, Kansas could utilize such a source, becoming more self-sufficient. This would be a great boost to the aerospace industry as well as an intelligent answer to energy for the small rural home.



On a yearly basis, the group would present a detailed statement concerning energy-related plans for Kansas. The statement would be presented and discussed by the state legislature. In this way, the state of Kansas could begin to establish an energy policy.

### TASK FORCE

Currently, in the state of Kansas, there are numerous political barriers to trying new technologies. Energy production and sales have been manipulated by a handful of companies, determined to preserve their privileged position.



A two percent severance tax on oil and gas taken from Kansas soil was introduced recently by State Senator Arnold Berman (D-Lawrence) this session of the legislature and referred to the Senate Transportation and Utilities Committee.

While Kansans now pay severance taxes on most imported oil and gas, Kansas is one of the few major energy producing states without a severance tax. Severance taxes are designed to compensate the public for the loss of the state's irreplaceable energy resources.

Monies gained from the severance tax (SB 590) are to be used to set up a state-sponsored gasohol program, to establish a low-interest loan program for weatherization and insulation,

and to create an energy stamp program that would help elderly and low-income persons pay their ever-increasing utility costs.

The gasohol program (SB 591 and SB 592) would convert excess Kansas grain into ethyl alcohol. Ethyl alcohol would then be mixed with gasoline and burned



in automobiles and other internal combustion engines.

These bills seek to help relieve both the distressed Kansas agricultural situation and the state's increasing dependence on imported oil and gas.

The only Kansas severance tax ever approved by the legislature was struck down by the Kansas Supreme Court in 1958. The Court's decision was based on the technical unconstitutionality of the law due to the form of the bill as approved by the legislature. The case gained fame and friendship in the right places for the little known Russell County Attorney, Bob Dole, who brought the lawsuit.

By Steve Treaster

There is no evidence from experience that the investment policy which is socially advantageous coincides with that which is most profitable." John Maynard Keynes

The following are branches of activity which could be generated out of a state department focusing on energy concerns:

### WEATHERIZATION BUREAU

Two-thirds of the homes as well as many businesses in Kansas are inadequately insulated. A bureau established for the purpose of co-ordinating the availability of energy saving materials and comparing prices would save the government and private sector much money.



**TAX IT BEFORE WE LOSE IT!**