

Is fuel conservation justified in Jordan?

By Fahed Fanek

NEWSPAPER COMMENTATORS are busy debating the myth and reality in the levels of Jordanian consumption of energy.

On Sept. 30, the Jordan Times printed an article I wrote about fuel consumption in Jordan, compared to the international standards. Using figures and statistics I demonstrated the fact that, on average, the Jordanian citizen consumes five barrels of oil for each \$1000 of annual gross domestic product in 1981 dollars, against 1.74 barrels world-wide or 3.98 barrels in the United States of America.

I also highlighted the fact that the average per capita consumption of fuel in Jordan dur-

ing 1983 was around nine barrels against the world-wide average consumption of 4.4 barrels only.

I clearly noted in my article that the Jordanian figures were my own calculation, based on available information, while the international figures were quoted from "State of the World-1984", a World-watch Institute report on progress towards a sustained society. My express purpose was to call for the application of certain policies and methods to conserve fuel consumption.

However, our friend Mr. Mousa Keilani hastily read my figures and wrote another article in Al Shaab newspaper citing international reports dis-

closing that the Jordanian citizen consumes more oil than his American counterpart, an exaggeration which — despite the good intention — is not convincing, because we, in Jordan, do not have the extensive heavy industries; land, air and sea transport activity and the cooling and heating systems to the extent available to the American people, who have the high income that allows all that fuel burn.

Commentators Jamil Barakat in Al Shaab newspaper and Mohammad Saleh Jaber in Al Rai' newspaper rightly objected to Mr. Keilani's exaggeration, which weakened my points in showing that our energy consumption is too high

and must be curbed, although he meant to support this thesis!

It is a fact that Jordanian per capita consumption of energy in 1981 was no more than 9.4 per cent of the American per capita consumption, but it is also a fact that the Jordanian per capita gross domestic product is less than eight per cent of the American per capita income. Therefore, our per capita consumption (relative to the size of our economy and production) is more than the American consumption, but it is much less in absolute figures if we do not relate it to the income, economic activity or size of domestic product.

We have sufficient reasons to justify a vigorous scheme of

conservation: The Jordanian citizen consumes more than double the international average as an absolute per capita share, we also consume three times the international average for each \$1000 of gross national product, and four times the American oil consumption as a ratio to commodity exports, which in 1981 was 101 per cent in Jordan (the highest in the world) against 26 per cent in America, 48 per cent in Japan, 36 per cent in Israel, and 27 per cent in the set of countries described as high average income countries of which Jordan is one.

I further consulted the annual report of the International Bank for Development (1984)

to find that average growth in energy consumption during the period 1974-1981 was 16.1 per cent in Jordan against 7.8 per cent only in the set of countries similar to Jordan in its level of economic development. Among 126 countries covered by the report, Jordan's growth rate in yearly energy consumption was not exceeded except by four countries, of which three are oil-producing ones.

We are pleased that the government has at last worked out a national energy programme to be announced soon, and we hope that this programme will spell the answer to our problem of too much energy consumption beyond our means.