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Out in California, for one place, the government has been helping private companies install big windmills to generate electricity. According to a story on the back page of the Wall Street Journal, windy spots like Hawaii might someday be able to produce 10 percent of their energy needs from the winds.

The National Space and Aeronautic Administration, so it said, was in charge of the program. President Carter's budget had left 80 million bucks to run the show. The drift I got was that NASA had a head windmill man to direct the project.

I didn't recognize his name as being related to any of the greasy table mechanics that service the windmills in the Shortgrass Country. However, other parts of the ranching country use windmill men besides here. I did jot his name down in case we had a mill break down and needed a man of that caliber. I figure that a fellow would have to be plenty handy with a pipe wrench to be able to hold down a job the involved space ships and windmill motors at the same time.

Without knowing a thing about space travel, taking over the windmill department is bound to be a demotion for that fellow. The only time windmill men are respected is in emergencies, and in our business slightly less than 98 percent of the breakdowns are critical.

What I'm saying is that failure of the Aermotors and Samson's that I've seen were in the windless months of the summer when cattle are most thirsty. I'm going to guess that unless that chief government man doesn't have a better setup that we have, his phone is going to be burning off the hook about the time his customers want to turn on their Christmas tree lights, or want to wash out some diapers during a big calm on the coast.

We haven't saved any energy or money at the ranch by using windmills. By the time we've underwritten the cost of the gasoline and labor on a rod or pipe job, a pipeline from the Canadian border would be cheaper.

I think of sundials when I think of energy saving devices. As a matter of fact, I gave Child Who Sits in the Sun one for Christmas. She wanted a wristwatch like her white-eyed partners flash around town. But when I learned that the sundials were tax deductible and unbreakable, I dropped her case. Whoever heard of an Indian that couldn't tell time with or without a fancy watch? It's not everyday that you can be patriotic and save taxes, too. I do wish she'd quit throwing it back in my closet, because all that cast iron is bad for my boots.

Once the Feds get into windmills, we are going to know the strength of our nation. I want to see the program work. Blabbermouth scribes and smooth tongued newscasters have been saying that we were no longer a major power. We'll just see about that. If we come up number one in windmills, we'll show OPEC who controls the price of oil. The thing to do now is buy and borrow the best set of windmill tools available and hope the month of August isn't too still to turn the wheels.