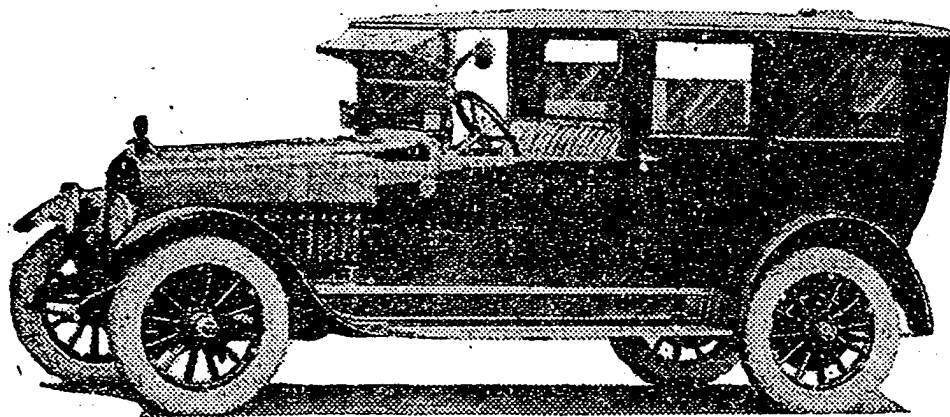


# MOTOR OWNERS PAYING- HIGH GASOLINE PRICES

## No Stability in Retail Rates, Which Range from 31 to 35 Cents a Gallon Since Recent Increase

Since the wholesale price of gasoline advanced 2 cents a gallon ten days ago, making a total increase of 4 cents within two months, motor car owners in and around New York City have been charged all the way from 31 to 35 cents a gallon. It looks very much, as some motorists expressed last week, as though many purveyors of that neces-

At the office of the General Manager of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce, which has been devoting considerable attention to the gasoline problem, it was said that there was no reasonable excuse for such a wide variety in the retail price. Less than a year ago the general price ranged from 27 to 28 cents. An increase of from 4 to 5



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ary fuel were indulging in the popular game of profiteering and, in the language of the street, are getting away with it.

The latest wholesale price for the metropolitan district, as fixed by the Standard Oil Company, is 28½ cents a gallon. Until recently the majority of retailers have been content with 2 cents profit, sometimes 3 cents, but seldom over that figure. The prevailing opinion among the dealers is that 31 cents is a fair retail price. That is what is being charged at some of the service stations and at many of the gasoline supply stations. The manager of the station at Broadway and Sixty-ninth Street is getting 31 cents, and he stated last week that it was the usual rate for the standard grade of fuel. Yet another station at Eighth Avenue, below Fifty-ninth Street, where the same grade of gasoline is supplied, is charging 32 cents. Some of the larger service stations are asking 33 cents, and the majority of the garages are getting 35 cents, this higher rate being excused on the ground that the proprietors are obliged to wait until the end of the month to get their money. Yet these garages charge the same price for a cash sale.

cents within so short a time means a considerable addition, not only in the operation of a passenger car, but particularly so with commercial vehicles, where an extra cent or so in the mileage expense implies a very probable enhanced cost in the transportation of commodities.

Instead of holding out any hope that gasoline prices may return to the level of a year ago, the oil producers are predicting even higher prices. At the National Petroleum Congress in Chicago a few days ago one representative predicted that gasoline would probably be selling at 40 cents retail a year from now, and others said that 50 cents might not be far from the truth. The necessity of protective measures was urged if the country is to escape the condition of an oil famine with almost prohibitive prices.

Gasoline consumption has increased in much greater proportion than its production in recent years. The number of motor cars in the United States was estimated at the close of 1919 at slightly more than 7,500,000, an increase of 23 per cent. during the year. For the same period the gasoline production

only showed an increase of 9 per cent., the total being placed at 92,700,000 barrels. To meet the average increase this year it is estimated that fully 100,000,000 barrels of gasoline will be needed for domestic use while 17,000,000 additional barrels will be needed to take care of the normal export demand and the use for tractor and other purposes.

While conservation in gasoline was strongly urged during the war and was sufficiently adhered to to show appreciable results, it is said that less care has been shown in gasoline economy since the signing of the armistice and a strong plea is being sent out by the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce to prevent waste in every possible way.

For more than a year the leading automobile engineers have been making strenuous efforts to devise improved carburetor and engine adjustments to obtain greater mileage results. Some benefits have been obtained, but nothing commensurate with the actual needs of the situation. That the condition is primarily an engineering problem is thoroughly appreciated by the members of the Society of Automobile Engineers, many of whom have been devoting careful study to the problem. If the mileage capacity of a gallon of gasoline could be doubled, the future of the automobile industry would be immensely relieved, for any material shortage or excessive price in the necessary fuel would have a detrimental effect upon the progress of motor transportation, now opening up such bright prospects of usefulness in many parts of the country. There is also the search for substitute fuels, but for automobile use nothing satisfactory has thus far been forthcoming.

While the higher gasoline prices will make motoring more expensive this season, that is not the only factor which is adding to the higher cost of the automobile. The price of tires has recently been advanced to the rates prevailing a year ago and since the first of the year the prices of about thirty makes of cars

have been increased, with strong possibilities of more to follow before May 1. Among these is the well-known Ford car, and for the first time in many months a Ford car—the sedan—is selling, delivered in New York City, at more than \$1,000, the price with the standard equipment of starter and demountable rims being, including the Government tax, \$1,042.33. The factory price is \$975. The coupe, with similar equipment, costs \$912.10, New York delivery, the factory price being \$850. Both of these closed car types represent an advance of \$100 and the open cars have been advanced \$50, the touring with starter delivered in this city now being \$703.94, or \$650 at the factory.