

If we can learn to extract such energy in a highly economic way, or even to make full use of the energy that breeder reactors will bring us, we may in time be able to use incredibly large amounts of this energy to create new matter and to rebuild, reshape, and reuse all matter. This means that our relationship to all our basic needs—food, water, shelter, clothing, a liveable environment—could change drastically. Eventually we might use matter and energy, time and space, like building blocks. A whole new logic would guide our production and distribution of the necessities of life. There would hardly be such a thing as waste; hence there would be relatively little pollution. Almost everything would be recycled and reused or returned to nature in a near-natural form and distributed so as to maintain a balanced environment.

At this point, many of you think that I am talking a lot of theoretical nonsense and that we could never achieve such a world, not by the year 2000 or any year thereafter. To some extent I agree, and I will turn a bit more realistic and specific shortly. However, while we are still thinking theoretically, imagine what we might accomplish today, and in the next thirty years, if all the nations of the world were to work in a constructive and harmonious way toward the common goal of peacefully achieving, not Utopia, but even a limited liveable world.

I think there are very few people who would not agree that under such conditions, with the cooperative application of science and technology, we could solve most of the problems involving the material needs of man, problems that seem apparently unsolvable today. We could stabilize population and bring it into balance with food production, increasing the latter to more than just a subsistence level—to a good healthy diet. We could comfortably house such a population, even though, as has been pointed out, the next thirty years will demand the construction of as much shelter as has been constructed since the beginning of man's history. We could probably see almost all such a population enjoying close to the highest standard of living enjoyed today—and without suffering most of the undesirable side effects I mentioned before.

If all this is possible, why are we not doing it?—to paraphrase the old rejoinder, "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?" If science and technology can make the pie big enough for all of us to have enough all the time, what are we waiting for? The answer to this lies in our finding ways to solve the major social, economic, and political problems involved—to gain what amounts to a consensus of such means to achieve what science and technology have placed within our grasp. All