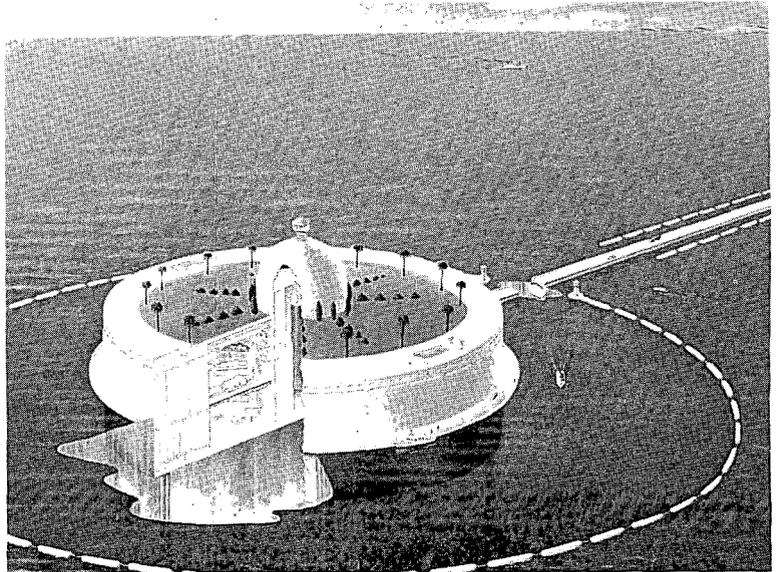


“ ‘Solving today’s social and economic problems with tomorrow’s technology is risky,’ Weinberg lamented.”

East sponsored by private funds funneled through the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The desalination bubble burst as quickly as it had formed. By 1968, the costs of nuclear plants had escalated so rapidly that desalination plants no longer seemed economically feasible. As nuclear power costs skyrocketed and the country’s social and environmental concerns moved to the forefront, the media and political leaders lost interest in nuplexes. None was ever built, and funds for desalination research dried up as new grain varieties that could be grown with little water staved off famine.

“Solving today’s social and economic problems with tomorrow’s technology is risky,” Weinberg lamented near the close of this Laboratory effort to become more “balanced.” Yet, the information obtained from desalination research later proved valuable for



Artist's sketch of a proposed island "nuplex" using nuclear energy to generate electricity and desalt seawater for irrigating crops.

Laboratory technologies developed to treat contaminated water and sewage. Furthermore, a desalination pilot plant planned for a power station near Los Angeles draws extensively on ORNL evaporator tube technology.

Big Biology

Alexander Hollaender’s Biology Division prospered enormously during Laboratory efforts to “balance” its research programs. Staffed by experts who studied the genetic and physical effects of radiation on living organisms, the division also hoped to shed light on radiation’s impact on the environment.

When Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* was published in 1962, it stimulated intense public concern about the role chemical agents might play in biological and environmental degradation. This widespread worry prompted increased research funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), whose managers soon received visits from Hollaender, Weinberg, and other Laboratory staff. The discussions—and subsequent funding—bore fruit during the 1960s in the form of increased



Congressman Gerald Ford and Alvin Weinberg examine a sketch of a coastal "nuplex."