



In this issue of *Nuclear Applications and Technology*, Hetrick has reviewed the book "Perils of the Peaceful Atom" by Richard Curtis and Elizabeth Hogan. Hilberry and Beckerley<sup>1</sup> have also reviewed the book for the Atomic Industrial Forum. I am exercising my prerogative as an editor to call your attention to these reviews because of the seriousness of the problem which the book represents. The problem I speak of is not the control of radioactivity or the disturbance of our environment but one of honesty in reporting.

We are faced today with resolving serious conflicts between enjoyment of the material benefits of our technology and disturbance of the "natural" environment. Resolution of these questions is difficult enough when the best and most accurate data are presented. When there is deliberate distortion or omission and misrepresentation of either the benefits or the costs of various technological advances, the probability of the public reaching a near optimum solution is vanishingly small.

I have no solution to the problem and can contribute only to the extent of pointing out to you the danger of these propaganda techniques to obtaining a realistic solution for our problems of social benefit and environmental disturbance. These problems must be solved not only in nuclear power but in all areas of man's works in building dams, using insecticides, generating power, and harvesting natural resources. Clearly, maintenance of our living standards requires exploitation of nature's abundance. Certainly no one wants to change the environment any more than the minimum necessary. How much more we are willing to pay in further reducing this minimum for preserving natural beauty, saving natural resources, and conserving flora and fauna, by more costly construction, lack of power reserves, more costly construction, lack of power reserves, more costly food, and other less efficient operations is a general societal decision. As engineers and scientists we can only provide the data on the prices to be paid, not the worth of the price. The question of the price we are willing to pay in disturbance or consumption of the natural environment can best be resolved only in an atmosphere of reason and truth. No man, whether he be scientist or politician, can recognize and evaluate all of the technical, political, economic, and aesthetic factors by himself, yet each must contribute to the solution.

---

1. J. G. BECKERLEY and N. E. HILBERRY, *INFO*, Special Issue (July 1969); see reprint, *Nuclear News*, **12**, 9, 59 (September 1969).