

©bservations



Thanks but no thanks. That's what lots of Americans seem now to be saying to the vocal minority who regard economic growth as a dirty word and consider so-called "hard" energy sources like oil, gas, coal, and nuclear to be the tools of the devil. To rural electrification expert Gene W. Porter, for example, those back-to-nature alternatives like burning wood, trapping sunshine, and harnessing breezes and little waterfalls can't begin to do the energy jobs of a civilization as vast and complex as ours... not with present technology. Mr. Porter reminds us that "the so-called 'soft path' energy route being advanced by the no-growth people was rejected... by the farmers who had 'enjoyed' quite enough of... paths to the outhouse, windpower... and a marginal economy dependent on mule and man for energy... If we had to farm like we did in 1900, a loaf of bread would cost \$5."

Beware of false labels. The press, Mr. Porter notes, "has done the no-growth people a tremendous favor by referring to them as 'environmentalists' forcing those of us who disagree into the uncomfortable role of 'anti-environmentalist.'" Good point, Mr. Porter. Almost no one is against making the air and water cleaner. But how far we go, and how fast, must consider the cost to the consumer... and the effect on jobs. Most people—the vast majority, we think—want a sensible balance to be struck: protection against serious health hazards, but with enough energy to keep the economy growing and living standards rising.



*"Granted it produces heat and light,
 but what about its long-term effects on the environment?"*

Paradise or elliam? It pays to look at the kind of world the anti-growth, anti-nuke, anti-oil people are trying to lead us to. Consider this gem, for example, from Paul R. Ehrlich, biologist and nuclear opponent: "Giving society cheap, abundant energy... would be the moral equivalent of giving an idiot child a machine gun." Aside from the slurs on the average American's intelligence—"idiot child" Indeed—we don't think that an elite class should decide what's good for us. A lot of people don't have it made yet, and need energy to climb the ladder.

Politics as usual. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan puts it, "... the supply and the price of energy is becoming politicized... It seems to me we are going to waste a lot of energy (sic) on mutual recrimination unless we learn to think a bit more clearly about this subject, and even to be a bit more honest."



It's a fact: Mobil is working to develop energy alternatives to oil and gas—including a \$30-million research commitment to making solar electricity economic.

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