

# Another side of the nuclear coin

Nuclear war and its horrors have been frightening the world since the Second World War. On this page, Political Perspectives columnist Richard Hutchins

gives his thoughts on the film "The Day After," and in a dialogue from Access To Energy (May 1982), the editors give their bid to surviving in the nuclear age.

## Political Perspectives

By R. HUTCHINS

In this age of technological mastery it is a fateful irony to be facing the unprecedented nuclear destruction of our world. This article is designed to be a commentary on the movie "The Day After", and as such will contain opinions and ideas unacceptable to many.

Why in a world that is suffering from mass inequality and environmental decay must we deliberately create a fatalistic hysteria to justify the madness of nuclear weapons? I speak of this idea as hysteria since it thrives on man's "fear".

Fear has always been the most effective propagandistic tool and the movie "The Day After" is no exception. It offers a fatalistic interpretation of a very real situation. It concentrates on the mechanics of nuclear holocaust and offers no solution or hope to the populace. The mechanism that is concentrated on is the weapons themselves and not the people in control of those weapons. By this I mean that we live in an ideologically split world that is suffering more from a human problem and not a weapons problem. By concentrating all our energies on arms reduction we are concentrating on the mechanism of destruction. The quality of our leadership is the true measure of threat. We have governments that are motivated by fear and thus cannot comprehend the concept of humanity. I am by no means belittling the extent of nuclear escalation but am trying to emphasize it as the final stage of madness motivated by governments unwillingness to compromise their ideologies for the sake of humanity.

I felt fear after viewing this movie interpretation of the possible nuclear confrontation. My fear was for the individuals in society who could only see the destruction and horrors of war. They are the ones who have begun to think like our governments, the ones who fear the enemy, the ones who have become convinced that it is the bombs and not our fatalism that must be eliminated. If you can remember "The war to end all wars" was thought to be such because of its horrors and incredible devastation. We all know that war is something that man can create no matter how much destruction will occur and as I said the weapons of war although they have become horrific beyond all reason are "material", they cannot reason their destruction only the minds of man can alter this phenomenon. We must concentrate all our energies on the leaders of government to reason with humanity and alter the course of "fatalism".

After reading this you may understand my distaste for such a propagandistic movie as "The Day After", the same impact could be felt by watching re-runs from World War II which really did happen! If we continue to build fear in ourselves we will surely lose sight of a viable solution to this problem. Man is not a communist or a capitalist so much as he is human, we all have the capability for reason and compassion if we allow ourselves to accept compromise as a more instinctual route than war. As a final aside if the more instilled fear in you then translate that fear into action and stop accepting "fatalism" as an inevitability, join a movement, read a book, educate yourself so that you can rationalize alternatives and most importantly commit yourself to humanity.

"The only thing man has to fear is fear itself."

Is it not true that each superpower has enough nuclear weapons to kill all members of mankind several times over?

Yes, and the same is true for kitchen knives.

But a single nuclear bomb can wipe out a whole city.

No, it can't. You would need 438 megaton bombs (the power of 22,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs) to destroy Los Angeles, and none of them could be "wasted" on pulverizing the rubble, or you would need more.

Then how come Hiroshima and Nagasaki were each destroyed by a single bomb?

They weren't. Earth-covered backyard shelters were undamaged at 100 yards from ground zero, and the photo shows a wood-frame house at exactly 1 mile from ground zero at Hiroshima. The day after the blast the bridges were open to traffic, the second day trains were operating, and the third day some streetcars resumed service. The people in the two cities had neither warning nor basements; yet in Dresden, where they had both, about as many were killed in the air raid of 13 February 1945 as in Nagasaki.

But the Hiroshima bomb was 1,000 times less powerful than the H-bombs used in today's warheads.

The distance of equal destruction varies as the third root of the released energy; 1000 times more powerful means the same destruction at 10 times the distance. An earth-covered shelter would be undamaged at 1000 yards from ground zero, and a wooden house as above would be comparably damaged at a distance of 10 miles rather than 1 mile. Grim, but not the end of the world.

But the radiation from nuclear bombs would leave the earth a radioactive inferno for decades, and the survivors would die of cancer, leaving genetically damaged offspring.

This, paradoxically, is wishful thinking: if it were so, no one would contemplate nuclear war. In fact, only a few hundred of Hiroshima's 70,000 dead were victims of radioactivity, and no genetic damage could be detected against the normal background

among the survivors, though they (and even their chromosomes) have been examined with extraordinary thoroughness for decades. This is not surprising, since ordinarily only those who suffer unprotected exposure to the initial radiation will receive a dose high enough to be lethal (400 rems will kill half the exposed victims, 1000 rems virtually all of them).

But the fall-out will eventually kill everybody.

No, it won't. In essence, the highly radioactive isotopes will soon spend themselves, while the long-lived isotopes do not radiate intensely (though some can be long-lived isotopes do not radiate intensely though some can be dangerous if they get into the body). Shelters can protect from early fall-out and filtration can prevent ingestion of radionuclides such as strontium and iodine. Iodine is typical for the scaremongering: the defeatists fan hysteria for levels one thousand times lower than those at which radiiodine is given to healthy patients for diagnostic purposes.

But that would mean spending years in shelters.

No, it wouldn't. Use the rule of seven: For every sevenfold increase in time, the radioactive level due to fall-out decreases by an

order of 10. If the level 1 hour after detonation was 1000 units hour, it will decline to 100 units hr in 7 hours, and to 10 in  $7 \times 7 = 49$  hours, or about two days. The level measured 1 day after detonation will decline to 1/10 in a week, to 1/100 in 7 weeks, and to 1/1000 in less than a year ( $7^7 = 343$  days).

And how does one live without food or water for 343 days?

One does not have to. Food and water are not contaminated by fall-out radiation, only by the fall-out particles themselves. Dust-proof packed food remains uncontaminated, and radioactive particles can be filtered from contaminated water. For details, see Kearney's Nuclear Survival Skills.

But instead of all these gruesome details, is it not better to keep the peace by the "balance of terror" via "Mutually Assured Destruction"?

There is nothing balanced or mutual about this doctrine; it is the root of America's present predicament. Under the MAD strategy of unilateral self-deterrence, the US dismantled its anti-aircraft missile defense, cancelled its anti-ballistic missile

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Beaver Foods Ltd. will host a Nutrition Week, Nov. 28 - Dec. 1, 1983. Debbie Durant, Staff Dietitian will be displaying a booth in each cafeteria. Come by and visit with Debbie and 'Get Nutri-Fit'.

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