Editorial

Go nuclear now

If a society is not to suffer a series of crises as it depletes its resource base, it must develop a succession of new technologies. This implies the necessity of real economic growth—measurable by gains in productivity—which can only occur with increases in the amount of energy per capita and energy-flux densities at the point of production.

This is a necessary, but not yet a sufficient condition for the health of an economy. If we are to have revolutions in technology, then first and foremost we need to use more advanced sources of energy, and indeed such a substitution—from biomass, to fossil fuels, to the potentials of nuclear energy—has characterized the growth of Western civilization.

We should now be on the verge of entering the plasma age, which would revolutionize all production by combining the stages of refining and processing materials. Coupled with the use of directed energy—lasers and electron beams—we would have incredible advances in productivity.

The misery of so many people alive today is completely unnecessary; it has occurred because of the calculated efforts of an influential anti-technology lobby, bent on sabotaging all technological development.

Fifty years ago, nuclear energy was discovered, but it has yet to be adequately exploited today. Indeed, we have gone backward since the 1970s, particularly in the United States, where even nuclear plants already constructed are not permitted to function.

In 1982, a study by the Fusion Energy Foundation determined that 115 million people had died unnecessarily, as a result of the United States' failure to implement the Atoms for Peace policy, first formulated during in the second Eisenhower administration.

The calculations were based upon the well-accepted correlation between expansion in electrical capacity and economic growth. For example, a country such as Bangladesh, with a population of 100 million people, has only 46 kilowatt-hours of electricity available per person per year, compared to the United States, which uses 11,000 kilowatt-hours per person per year.

In the last decade, the environmentalist movement has succeeded through a number of subterfuges in stalling—and indeed reversing—the use of nuclear power in the advanced sector as well. Indeed, United States use of electrical energy per capita has decreased. As we saw over the past summer, major cities in the United States suffered repeated brownouts, because capacity has not kept up with demand.

While the situation in the advanced sector is not yet life-threatening—as it is in Bangladesh—it can become so in cities which depend upon electricity for the maintenance of vital services.

Now, ironically, the environmentalists are "discovering" that the emission of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels, into the atmosphere presents a "grave danger" to the biosphere. They are using scare stories about the "greenhouse effect" to attempt to close down a substantial portion of heavy industry.

Of course, the fact that nuclear energy is a nonpolluting fuel, which leaves minimal waste to be handled, is of little concern to these cynical malthusian propagandists.

It is well documented that the environmentalist movment in the West is handsomely funded by the Soviets, who welcome anything which will diminish Western industrial capabilities and so, weaken our military logistical capacity. At a recent meeting of the American Nuclear Society which was held in Washington, Dixy Lee Ray, the former governor of the state of Washington and former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, lambasted the leaders of the U.S. nuclear industry for acting like "doormats" to anti-nuclear activists.

She called for the formation of a new organization composed of all the existing scientific and engineering societies, that would be a "voice for technology." We welcome her call for renewed activism on behalf of nuclear power.