

## letters

energy supply methods can be estimated by such a committee, all analyses admit to unforeseen factors that at a later date could alter the conclusions reached. As a result, while priorities are recommended, the door tends to remain open for essentially all approaches. The second reason is that the committee's recommendations are easily lost in the largely self-serving debate that is indiscriminately reported by the media.

It is discouraging to contemplate, but there appears no way to overcome this impasse, given our political system and our business-as-usual attitude. Each year the economy is becoming more vulnerable from foreign dependence on critical energy supplies. It is not unlikely that this could lead to a real crisis, and drawing a parallel to the experience of Pearl Harbor, attitudes would quickly change. Cost and environmental factors relating to energy supply would probably become secondary. In such an eventuality, it is likely government decisions would be made, and actually carried out, to develop and implement certain selected methods for supplying the nation's basic energy requirements. Here our scientific leadership could play an effective role in identifying the technical approaches deserving of a concentrated effort. It is probable that in this hypothetical situation of severe national stress, as was true for the numerous new developments vital to the World War II effort, our scientific leadership would receive and deserve the respect and support of the government and the public in providing the necessary guidance.

## References

1. "Report of the Cornell Workshops on the Major Issues of a National Energy Research and Development Program," published by The College of Engineering of Cornell University, 1973.
2. "Energy in Transition: 1985-2010," published by the National Academy of Sciences, 1979.

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4/21/80

## Correction

May 1980, page 82—In the second paragraph of the letter by Lance Kethley entitled "Suppressing amateurs" the sentence reading "Also during the recent meeting of the AAS in San Francisco, we were denied the opportunity of presentation" contained an unfortunate printing error—AAS should read AAAS. Our apologies to the American Astronomical Society for this mistake in identity. □

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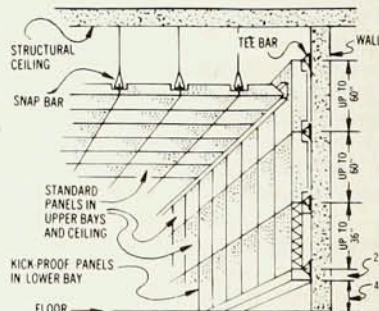
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