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[Editorial in magazine found on page 10]

Editorial: Technology and the Future of Our Civilization

By: John Kraus

Our technological civilization has brought about tremendous advances in medicine, food production, communication, computers and transportation. But with it have come the hazards and problems of nuclear annihilation, environmental pollution and rapid depletion of our natural resources.

Technology, we are coming to realize, can be both a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde that must be approached and assessed with an attitude of both optimism and pessimism. How can we maximize its good features while minimizing its bad ones? The answers will be both difficult and complex and will require a much higher level of technical awareness on the part of the public in general and the decision-makers in particular.

The future of mankind lies in space. It offers new goals and challenges for mankind's energy and pioneering spirit. Promoting space may at present be difficult but when it has been demonstrated, for example, that an asteroid can be mined at a profit using solar power, everyone will want to get out there and strike it rich. Easterners didn't think much of California until gold was discovered; then there was a mad rush. The same will be the case in space; but this can come only after a first-phase build-up which the space-shuttle "Enterprise" can initiate.

Once started, the exploitation of space in our solar system could become a self-sustaining, wealth-producing enterprise that could completely dominate the earth's economy. The job opportunities are enormous. To get this enterprise going will need more "Enterprises" at a cost of no more than a few nuclear submarines. Spending these dollars on ships in the sky instead of ships beneath the sea can open a whole new, virtually limitless frontier for all mankind.

After the solar system the movement can continue to the stars and the galaxy. But will we be the first or will we find the galaxy already occupied by other civilizations? We do not know and this is where our present and continuing searches will be of the greatest value.

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Designed by Jerry Ehman.

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