

IN RESPONDING TO the piece I co-authored ("Recycling Nuclear Waste") in the March/April issue, Dr. Edwin Lyman makes many mistakes.

THE FAST REACTORS built in the past were one-of-a-kind demonstration units, and quite different from the new variety. The old ones were very safe, and the new designs are even safer and easier to operate. The startup costs will be appreciable, of course—but still far less than the alternative, which is more and more repositories like Yucca Mountain.

Superphénix did have initial problems, but in 1996, the last year of operation, its capacity factor was 95 percent. Then it was shut down for political reasons.

Only a head in the sand could fail to see that nuclear power is here to stay and grow. We must manage it as best we can.

The once-through fuel cycle (using, as



it does, less than a hundredth of uranium's energy) has been utterly unrealistic for more than a few decades—the nuclear industry would strangle on its own waste. Moreover, the spot price of uranium has quadrupled in the last three years, and will soon rise even faster, with China, India, and others becoming big users. If the United States were to forgo recycling and fast reactors, the effect would be to hasten and worsen the coming energy crisis. It would bring on economic stagnation in this country, while other nations forge ahead with energy from nuclear fission and recycling—without U.S. input as to how the process is managed.

**George S. Stanford**  
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REGARDING THE SUPERPHÉNIX fast reactor in France, it must be said that this was a first-of-a-kind demonstration plant, and as such it faced numerous teething problems.

During their five years in France's Socialist coalition, the Greens succeeded in making their mark on nuclear policy, obtaining shutdown of the Superphenix breeder reactor. By orchestrating the government-decreed shutdown of Superphénix following a year of excellent operation, they also ensured that the lifetime capacity factor would remain low, so that deceptive revisionism of history would stick.

**Jaro Franta**  
Montreal

THE ARGONNE NATIONAL laboratory pyroprocess that scientists claim cannot be used to produce pure plutonium was developed by Los Alamos National Laboratory to produce pure plutonium from plutonium scrap generated during fabrication of nuclear

weapons' components. Good nuclear material safeguards would be virtually impossible. This, combined with high material losses, would permit undetected diversion of significant quantities of weapons usable materials. Pyroprocessing is not proliferation-resistant, but would be a serious proliferation threat.

**Clinton Bastin**  
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THE ARTICLE BY William H. Hannum et al. outlines a feasible and practical strategy for providing energy on a large scale in the future, long after our fossil fuel reserves are depleted. The authors make an excellent case for introduction of fast-neutron reactors of a new type.

I hope that the American people have the good sense to embark on the energy strategy recommended in the article. The future of our societies depends on it.

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