

ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

By Richard Duffee

In 1979 Louis Alvarez proved that a nuclear war could cause a nuclear winter. This has not changed. Estimates from *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment* of the number of nuclear explosions capable of causing a nuclear winter are as low as 400. The existence of only 400 nuclear weapons may be capable of ending all human life. That would be an indefinitely large, if not infinite, loss of years of life. We cannot risk the existence of 400 nuclear weapons, so we must at least get ourselves and the rest of the world below that threshold. We began on this project as the USSR was collapsing, but we aborted it. Completing it will require complex actions, but Jonathan Schell has provided good outlines for what is needed.

In 1996 the International Court of Justice declared nuclear weapons to be illegal except under conditions the US cannot meet. But I do not even believe that an honest Supreme Court would allow them to pass constitutional muster. The Constitution does not say the President has the power to destroy the world.

Though the category of “weapons of mass destruction” was invented to make us ignore the difference between nuclear weapons and whatever Iraq had, we should also pursue complete disarmament of chemical and bacteriological weapons, cluster bombs, land mines, and depleted uranium shells.