



Winter 1976

## **In Command of Tomorrow, by Sterling Brubaker**

Paul B. Sears

### **Recommended Citation**

Paul B. Sears, *In Command of Tomorrow, by Sterling Brubaker*, 16 Nat. Resources J. (1976).  
Available at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nrj/vol16/iss1/15>

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# In Command of Tomorrow

by  
STERLING BRUBAKER

Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press  
1975, 177 pp., \$7.95.

This is the second book by Sterling Brubaker to be reviewed here. Both are sponsored by Resources for the Future, where the author is a senior research associate. *To Live On Earth* (1972)<sup>1</sup> deals with "man and his environment in perspective." *In Command of Tomorrow* discusses "resource and environmental strategies for Americans." Both volumes are consistent with the stance of Resources for the Future—to serve as a counterpoise to environmental Jeremiads and to emphasize what our present culture regards as economic imperatives.

The first book is one of appraisal, the second a consideration of ways and means; but inevitably these themes intermingle in both. Nowhere is there any attempt to play down the grave effects of human impact, through technology and population growth, on a finite environment.

*In Command of Tomorrow* reflects current interest in urbanization, energy and mineral shortages, land use policies, and world responsibilities. It recognizes the importance of conditions that will not merely permit survival, but make possible the good life through amenities.

The author, who has done his homework admirably, is concerned chiefly with long-range strategy and only incidentally with more immediate policy. He is quite clear about the fact that social choices are involved. He is equally clear that his own preference is for "technical advance that permits continuation of high income based on the exploitation of inexhaustible energy and common materials" rather than "reversion to the very modest scale that could be accommodated by renewable resources."

This faith in the possibilities of more, not less, technology is an interesting echo of Brown, Bonner, and Weir.<sup>2</sup> These authors were perhaps more concerned that a breakdown in an increasingly elaborate technology might throw mankind back into an agrarian economy than with the need to reconcile the profit motive with the general good in guiding the future course of technology.

This latter is an issue faced directly by Mr. Brubaker. His judgments are summarized in a final section of some 27 pages on policy choices and their implementation, better read than reviewed. In essence he assumes the possibility of enough social consensus to bring about rational environmental measures. Population control,

continuing research, prudent land use, and promotion of self-interest by subsidies, grants, and special taxation, rather than regulation to minimize environmental abuse are among the ideas he advances. At best this genuinely conservative individual sees no escape from an increasing role of government.

One of the dilemmas of our times is the discrepancy between those who flaunt the banner of conservatism and those who are truly conservative in their wish to preserve the human adventure as far as possible into the future. *In Command of Tomorrow* gives both groups a challenge voiced by the storied drill sergeant who, disgusted by his lot of recruits, bawled "For the love of God, step out and take a look at yourselves."

PAUL B. SEARS\*

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\*Professor emeritus of biology, Yale University.

1. Reviewed in 13 Nat. Res. J. 391 (1973).

2. H. Brown, J. Bonner, & J. Weir, *The Next Hundred Years*, 151-52 (1957).