

Climate change on the right. *Issues in Science and Technology* 30:11-12 (2014).

Steven E. Hayward claims that the best framework for addressing large-scale disruptions, including climate change, is building adaptive resiliency. If so, why does he not present some examples of what he has in mind, after dismissing building seawalls, moving elsewhere, or installing more air conditioners as defeatist? What is truly defeatist is prioritizing adaptation over prevention, i.e., the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Others concerned with climate change have a different view. As economist William Nordhaus has pointed out (*The Climate Casino*, Yale University Press, 2013), in areas heavily managed by humans, such as health care and agriculture, adaptation can be effective and is necessary, but some of the most serious dangers, such as ocean acidification and losses of biodiversity, are unmanageable and require mitigation of emissions if humanity is to avoid catastrophe. This two-pronged response combines cutting back emissions with reactively adapting to those we fail to cut back.

Hayward does admit that our capacity to respond to likely “tipping points” is doubtful. Why then does he not see that mitigation is vital and must

be pursued far more vigorously than in the past? Nordhaus has estimated that the cost of not exceeding a temperature increase of 2°C might be 1 to 2% of world income if worldwide cooperation could be assured. Surely that is not too high a price for insuring the continuance of human society as we know it!

Hayward states that “Conservative skepticism is less about science per se than its claims to usefulness in the policy realm.” But climate change is a policy issue that science has placed before the nations of the world, and science clearly has a useful role in the policy response, both through the technologies of emissions control and by adaptive agriculture and public health measures. To rely chiefly on “adaptive resiliency” and not have a major role for emissions control is to tie one hand behind one’s back.

EVILLE GORHAM
Regents’ Professor of Ecology Emeritus
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota