



AN EAST ROOM ROUNDTABLE *on* GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

The White House

Washington, D.C.

July 24, 1997

Proceedings

INTRODUCTION BY THE VICE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the President and the First Lady, it is my pleasure and honor to welcome all of you to the White House.

Today we hear about the concerns of scientists. This Administration has always worked on the simple principle that science must inform policy decisions. Scientists are by nature a cautious group, but the world's scientific community is clearly telling us that they believe we are disrupting the balance of the world's climate. In the words of the 2,000 scientists who participated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "There is a discernible human

"Scientists are by nature a cautious group, but the world's scientific community is clearly telling us that they believe we are disrupting the balance of the world's climate."

Vice President Al Gore

influence on global climate." Moreover, recently more than 2,600 scientists signed a letter about global climatic disruption that we'll be hearing more about later.

And now I would like to introduce the person who is leading our country, and the world, toward recognition of what must be done to deal with this issue. It is my honor, ladies and gentlemen, to present the President of the United States, President Bill Clinton.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. The whole issue of climate change must be looked at in terms of our deepest obligations to future generations. I have spent most of my time in the last 4½ years trying to prepare the American people for a new century and a new millennium. We must also protect the Earth for that new millennium, to ensure that the American people will benefit from the opportunities we are trying to create. We can not fulfill our responsibilities to

future generations unless we deal responsibly with the challenge of climate change.

The overwhelming balance of evidence and scientific opinion is that it is no longer a theory, but a fact, that global warming is for real. The world's scientists believe that if we don't cut our emissions of greenhouse gases, we will disrupt the global climate.

In the face of this, the United States must confront a challenge that in some ways is the most difficult of all democracy's challenges. We have the evidence, we see the train com-

"We have the evidence, we see the train coming, but most ordinary Americans in their day-to-day lives can't hear the whistle blowing"

President Bill Clinton

ing, but most ordinary Americans in their day-to-day lives can't hear the whistle blowing. Unless they have lived in a place where they have experienced severe and completely atypical weather in the last five years or so, the degree of the challenge is inconsistent with the actual perceived experience of most ordinary Americans.

A democracy is premised on the proposition that, if the American people or any people in any democracy know what the facts are and believe them, way more than half the time they will do the right thing. So what we are doing today is beginning a process in which we ask the American people to listen to the evidence, to measure it against their own experience, but not to discount the weight of scientific authority if their own experience does not yet confirm what the overwhelming percentage of scientists believes to be fact today.

I do want to say that I am convinced that, when the nations of the world meet in Kyoto, Japan in December on this issue, the United States has got to be committed to realistic and binding limits on our emissions of greenhouse gases. Between

now and then we have to work with the American people to get them to share that commitment. We have to emphasize flexible, market-based approaches. We have to embrace research and development efforts in technology that will help us to improve the environment while permitting our economy to grow. We have to ask all nations, both industrial and developing, to participate in this process. If we do this together, we can defuse this threat, and we can make the 21st century what it ought to be, not only for our children, but for all the children of the world.

I believe the science demands that we face this challenge now. I'm positive that we owe it to our children. And I hope that we can find the wisdom and the skill to do democracy's work in the next few months to build the consensus necessary to actually make action, as opposed to rhetoric, possible. To all of you, for your commitment to that, I thank you.

And now I'd like to ask Dr. Rowland to be the first of our distinguished scientists to lead off.

DR. ROWLAND: Mr. President and Mr. Vice President, global climatic change is underway. Carbon dioxide from the combustion of coal, oil, and natural gas has risen 15 percent

*"Mr. President and
Mr. Vice President, global climatic
change is underway."*

F. Sherwood Rowland

in the atmosphere since 1958. Methane, some of which is emitted from cattle and rice paddies, has increased 16 percent since 1978. The air now holds four times as much chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) as it did 25 years ago. The amount of ozone in the stratosphere over the United States is 6 to 10 percent lower than it was in the 1960s.

Many other changes are occurring as well. The global average surface temperature has risen about 1 degree Fahrenheit during the past century, and sea level has risen from 4 to 10 inches.

Land use patterns have been greatly altered as forests are burned for use as agricultural land. Many of the species formerly in these forests are disappearing. The geographical ranges of tropical diseases are moving northward. Human activities are the chief cause of many of these changes. The

last century saw tremendous growth in the global population, from about 1½ billion in 1900 to 6 billion in the year 2,000 and 8 billion in the year 2025. Much of the world is now moving as fast as possible into a more affluent, energy-intensive era.

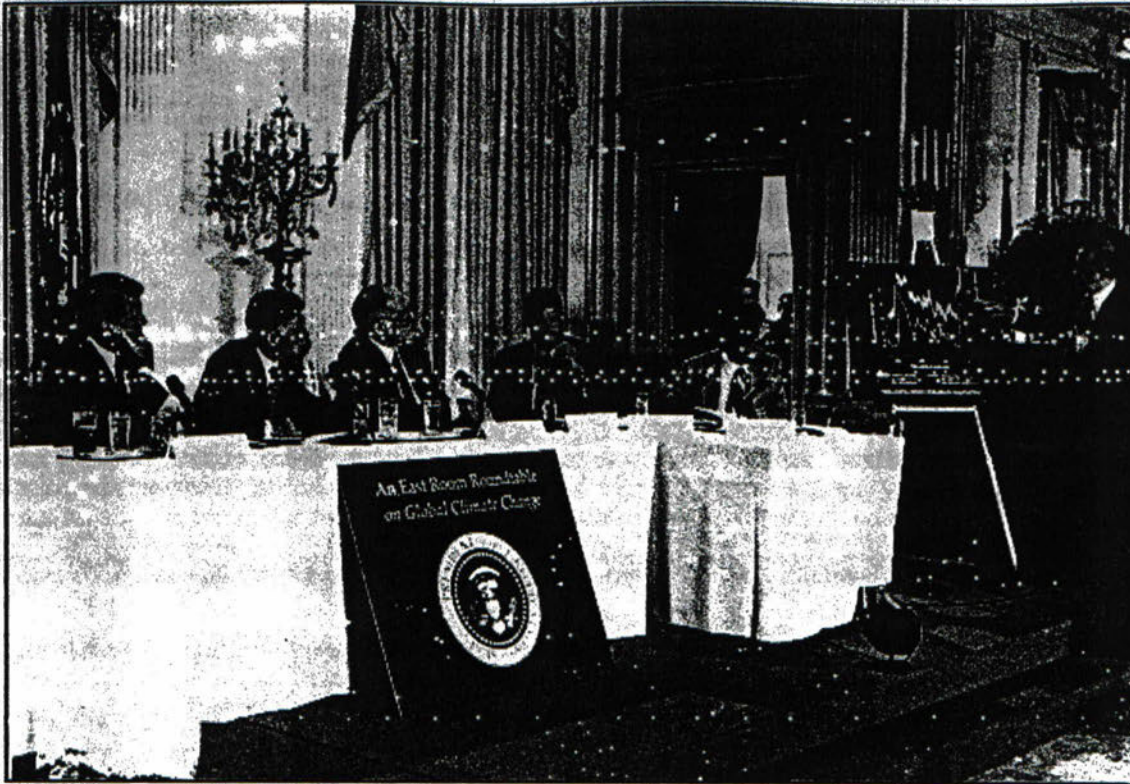
The combination of a rapidly growing world population with an increase in per capita use of energy carries with it great pressures on the environment and the atmosphere. Because the wind circles the earth within a few weeks, greenhouse gases emitted from each country quickly become a global

*More than 2600 scientists have now
signed a statement on global climatic
disruption in which, as scientists and as
concerned citizens, we ask that the
United States demonstrate strong leader-
ship in the global effort with a firm pro-
posal for reducing U.S. emissions of
greenhouse gases.*

F. Sherwood Rowland

problem requiring a global solution. During the 1990s, the world called upon its scientists to evaluate the question of global warming from the accumulation of greenhouse gases. The authoritative IPCC has estimated a probable increase in global surface air temperature of about 3½ degrees F by the year 2100, with a possible range from 2 to 6½ degrees F. They further stated that the balance of the evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate, and warned that the average rate of warming will probably be greater than any experienced in the past 10,000 years. The variation in estimated outcomes depends upon what the countries of the world do to control the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the intervening years. More than 2600 scientists have now signed a statement on global climatic disruption in which, as scientists and as concerned citizens, we ask that the United States demonstrate strong leadership in the global effort with a firm proposal for reducing U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Now I'd like to ask Dr. Mario Molina to give us an overview of the science of climate change.



DR. MOLINA: I'd be pleased to do that, Mr. Vice President. The "greenhouse effect" is a process that affects the heat patterns of our planet. The earth receives energy from the sun, which passes relatively freely through the atmosphere. But the energy that the earth emits back to outer space is actually trapped by certain gases in the earth's atmosphere, which affects the earth's heat patterns. One of these gases is carbon dioxide, which is the most important greenhouse gas. And what we have in the figure is a representation of the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere going back in time 160,000 years. The levels of carbon dioxide range between about 190 and 280 parts per million. We know this from measuring the composition of air bubbles trapped in ice cores from Antarctica and Greenland. The lower curve in the figure is a similar record of temperature going from the present back 160,000 years. There is a remarkably large correlation between these two curves. You can see that the preindustrial amounts of CO₂ are below 300 parts per million. The current concentration of CO₂ is roughly 365 parts per million. What is striking is that this is a level that we haven't seen before, certainly not in the past 160,000 years, and we got there very fast.

The next question is where are we heading? What happens in the future depends on what we do. If we continue with the so-called "business-as-usual" scenario, we can predict that we

"If we continue with the so-called 'business-as-usual' scenario, we can predict that we are going to reach levels of about 700 parts per million. And what is remarkable is how fast this would occur—in only the blink of an eye on the geological or evolutionary time scale."

Mario Molina

are going to reach levels of about 700 parts per million. And what is remarkable is how fast this would occur—in only the blink of an eye on the geological or evolutionary time scale. I should point out that the earth has actually seen such high levels of carbon dioxide in the past, but that was some 50 mil-

lion years ago when the earth was a very different place from what it is now.

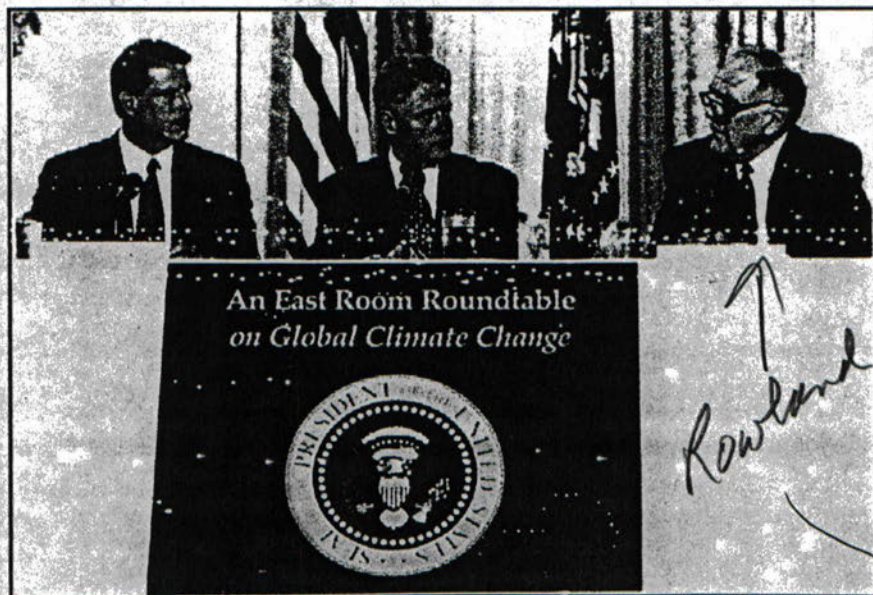
This is the sort of evidence that makes the scientific community consider this to be a serious problem. The magnitude and the pace of change are what make us really worry.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Now, I'd like to call on Jane Lubchenco, our expert on ecology, and see what such significant changes in greenhouse gas levels might mean for natural resources.

DR. LUBCHENCO: Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, as both of you are aware, the ecological systems of the world—the forests, wetlands, coral reefs—provide the life support systems for all of life on earth. Important ecosystem functions, including flood control, purification of air and water, and the creation of beautiful places for recreation and inspiration can only be provided by intact ecological systems, and when those systems are disrupted or lost, then we lose the goods and services they provide. To provide a few vignettes of the ecological consequences of climate change, in the optimistic scenario of a doubled CO₂ world, let me invite you on a brief field trip to different parts of our country:

- Let's begin in the forests of New England, which like probably a third of the forests around the globe, will undergo major changes. For example, we would probably lose sugar maples from the New England forests.

- Let's move to the southern part of our country. Salt marshes in Louisiana are already being submerged. Climatic change would exacerbate this problem as sea level rises between six inches and three feet. The loss of salt marshes would result in the loss of nursery areas, which are the natural hatcheries for important fish and shellfish. We would also lose the system's ability to detoxify pollutants, trap sediments, create a habitat for unique plants and animals, and protect the shores against the battering of waves.
- Now let's move to the Midwest. Drought is no stranger to this region. The heat wave in 1988 resulted in a one third drop in U.S. agricultural production. While these highly managed agricultural systems are thought to be quite adaptable, climate change is likely to increase demands on available water to ameliorate soil drying, and on pesticide use to combat increased incidences of pests and diseases.
- Flying up to Glacier National Park in Montana we would be dismayed to find out that fully 73 percent of the glacial areas have already been lost since 1850 because of climate warming. In fact, climate change is predicted to result in loss of all of the glaciers in the park by the year 2030, well within many of our children's lifetimes.



Caption for picture goes here, Caption for picture
goes here, Caption for picture goes here, Caption
for picture goes here, Caption for picture goes
here, Caption for picture goes here, Caption for
picture goes here, Caption for picture goes here,
Caption for picture goes here, Caption for picture
goes here, Caption for picture goes here, Caption
for picture goes hereCaption for picture goes here,
Caption for picture goes here, Caption for picture
goes here,

should this picture
be here?

by global warming or remain at their natural levels, they'll be causing flooding from a higher sea-level base. As a result of that, the damages would go further inland.

What about the hydrologic extremes? Well, we all saw pictures of the 1988 drought. We know about the seemingly endless stories of floods now. And the question is, Has nature

"What about the hydrologic extremes? Well, we all saw pictures of the 1988 drought. We know about the seemingly endless stories of floods now. And the question is, Has nature rolled us double snake eyes, or have we started to load the dice?"

Stephen Schneider

rolled us a double snake eyes, or have we started to load the dice? Again, physics says if you increase the heating of something that has water in it, more water will evaporate. So, what that suggests is that more water in the air means ~~when~~ that when it does rain, the rainfall can be more intense. When it's dry, you can have more evaporation.

The question is, What's happening? A line that we have often in science is, well, in God we trust, but for the rest of us please show data. Dr. Tom Karl and his colleagues in North

"So, while no one event certainly could be laid to the doorstep of global warming, the increasing frequency and magnitude of severe storms could very well be the first signs of the canary in the cage starting to quiver."

Stephen Schneider

Carolina, for example, have concluded that there has been about a 10-percent increase in precipitation across the United States since 1910. The interesting part, as Tom says, is, "The

increase in precipitation is reflected primarily in the heavy and extreme daily events." Translate that: Gully washers. The bulk of the rainfall increase has been in those kinds of damaging, extreme events. A pattern is emerging, and the pattern is consistent with the expectations from our models. So, while no one event certainly could be laid to the doorstep of global warming, the increasing frequency and magnitude of severe storms could very well be the first signs of the canary in the cage starting to quiver.

The IPCC concluded with a paragraph I know well as a lead IPCC author, and I'll quote what it said in its last paragraph of the summary for policy makers. "When rapidly forced, nonlinear systems are especially subject to unexpected behavior." In my words that means reducing the pressures humans put on nature is insurance against potential nasty surprises.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Now, I'd like to ask Dr. Robert Shope, who studies infectious diseases extensively, to discuss how human health might be affected by climate change.

DR. SHOPE: Thank you, Mr. President. Health and the environment are closely linked. If there is a 6 degree F warming, the heat alone in North American cities, such as Washington, D.C., will result in an excess of deaths, especially in elderly people who do not adapt well to severe warmth. We had an example in July of 1995 in Chicago, Illinois. There the temperature exceeded 90 degrees F night and day for a prolonged period, and there were 465 deaths recorded in Chicago related to the heat.

My own personal experience is with diseases transmitted by ticks, mosquitoes, and other biting insects. Let me talk about dengue virus. This causes a disease in people which typically gives them high fever, headache, muscle aches and pains, and sometimes a rash. There is a more severe form of dengue, dengue-hemorrhagic fever, in which the case mortality rate is about 40 percent. This virus is transmitted by a mosquito that lives in and around homes in warm climates. The mosquito is killed by a hard freeze; therefore, it's northern limit is about Memphis, Tennessee at the present time. In the last decade, we've seen a steady increase in the numbers of cases of dengue in tropical America, including Mexico. This disease is now literally on our southern border. I cannot tell you whether dengue epidemics will occur in the United States, but with climate change and warming, the mosquito will thrive further north.

The fourth point is that scientific uncertainties are not grounds for complacency in spite of what many people think about that. There are uncertainties about many of the details of timing and magnitude and regional variation in the consequences of climate change, but there is no uncertainty at all that humans have significantly altered the global atmospheric concentrations of gases we know to be critical in controlling climate. And there's a solid consensus among the scientists who have studied these matters seriously that the chances of significant impacts on human well being from climate change over the next few decades are substantial.

The fifth reason that people underrate the problem is that the time lags between cause and effect and between effect and remedy are longer than most people think. Those time lags and above all the several decades that it will take to substantially successfully transform the world's fossil fuel-dependent energy supply system mean that doing nothing is a very dangerous course of action. The world's energy-economic system is a lot like a supertanker, very hard to steer and with very bad brakes, and we know from the science that has been reviewed here today that that supertanker is heading for a reef. Even though we can't say exactly when we're going to get to the point where that reef rips the bottom out of the supertanker, it's a bad idea in these circumstances to keep on a course of full speed ahead.

"The world's energy-economic system is a lot like a supertanker, very hard to steer and with very bad brakes, and we know from the science that has been reviewed here today that that supertanker is heading for a reef."

~~Henry Kendall~~ John Holdren

The last reason that people tend to underrate this problem is because the fate of industrialized and less developed countries is a lot more interconnected than most people think. We all live on this planet under one atmosphere. We all live on the shores of one global ocean. Our countries are linked by flows of people, money, goods, ideas, images, drugs, and weapons. If we in the industrialized countries are to enjoy a stable and sustainable prosperity, we are only going to be able to man-

age that if we can achieve for the rest of the world now less fortunate a stable and sustainable prosperity as well. And the only way to do that is going to include addressing the danger of global climate disruption in a cooperative way.

"We all live on the shores of one global ocean. Our countries are linked by flows of people, money, goods, ideas, images, drugs, and weapons. If we in the industrialized countries are to enjoy a stable and sustainable prosperity, we are only going to be able to manage that if we can achieve for the rest of the world now less fortunate a stable and sustainable prosperity as well. And the only way to do that is going to include addressing the danger of global climate disruption in a cooperative way."

~~Robert Shope~~ John Holdren

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish every American could hear what we've heard today. This is the beginning of a consistent, long-term effort that we all have to make to involve the people of this country in this decision. And I thank you all for the points you've made because in different ways each of them will resonate with citizens of this country in a way that I believe will give us the support we need to take the action that has to be taken. In the weeks and months ahead, the Vice President, the Cabinet, other members of the Administration, and I will be out in the country discussing this. We'll be working with the American people; we'll be talking about solutions as well as problems.

Biographies

✓ **Dr. F. Sherwood Rowland** (NOBEL)
(Professor at UC Irvine, Foreign Secretary for the NAS, Past President of AAAS)

in 1995, Sherry Rowland, along with two of his colleagues, won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their pioneering research in atmospheric chemistry of the destruction of the ozone layer. Since receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1952, he has climbed the academic ranks in Chemistry, and is currently the Donald Bren Research Professor of Chemistry and Earth System Science at the University of California at Irvine. He also currently serves as the Foreign Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences, and is a former President and Chairman of the Board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

✓ **Dr. Mario Molina** (NOBEL)
(Professor at MIT, PCAST - President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology)

Dr. Mario Molina was awarded the Nobel Prize along with Sherry Rowland, for their research on the thinning of the ozone layer. Molina and colleagues demonstrated experimentally how ozone-destroying chlorine functioned in the atmosphere. He is currently the Lee and Geraldine Martin Professor of Environmental Science at MIT, and was formerly at the University of California at Berkeley. He has received many awards including being elected to the National Academy of Sciences, and awarded the Pew Scholar on Conservation and the Environment. He has also served as an advisor to NASA, NSF, and NIH.

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
(Oregon State University, Past President of AAAS and Ecological Society of America)

Jane Lubchenco is truly a remarkable scientist. She is currently the Wayne and Gladys Valley Professor of Marine Biology and a Distinguished Professor of Zoology at Oregon State University, and has been awarded a litany of prestigious honors. She has been selected as a Pew Scholar in Conservation and the Environment, a MacArthur Fellow, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a member of the National Science Board. She is also an American Academy of Arts and Sciences Fellow, a Fellow to the

American Association for the Advancement of Science, and has received numerous teaching awards. She has accomplished all of this, as well as devoting much of her attention to her two sons, since receiving her Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1975.

Dr. Stephen Schneider
(Professor at Stanford University, MacArthur Fellowship, AAAS Westinghouse Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology)

After receiving his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering and Plasma Physics from Columbia University in 1971, Stephen Schneider focused on the influence of greenhouse gases and suspended particles on the earth's climate as a postdoctoral researcher at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, and later the National Center for Atmospheric Research, where he remained until 1996. In 1992, Dr. Schneider was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship for his admirable ability to integrate and interpret the results of global climate research through public lectures, seminars, media appearances, and research. He was also honored with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Westinghouse Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology for his ability to express environmental science and its implication for public policy to the general public. Currently he is a Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, a Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Studies at Stanford University.

Dr. Robert Shope
(Professor at University of Texas, Director of the Yale Arbovirus Research Unit for 24 years)

Robert Shope has devoted his career to the study of viruses carried by mosquitoes, ticks, and other biting insects. These viruses can cause life-threatening diseases in humans such as malaria, dengue and yellow fever, and encephalitis. Dr. Shope received his medical degree in 1954 from Cornell University. Since then, he spent many years in Malaysia, Brazil, and other tropical sites studying these insect-borne diseases. He has been a Professor of Epidemiology at Yale University's School of Medicine from 1975-1995, and served as the Director of the Yale Arbovirus Research Unit for much of that time. During that time he was awarded

many honors, including the Walter Reed Award from the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. He is presently a Professor in the Departments of Pathology and Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

Dr. Henry Kendall (NOBEL)
(Professor at MIT, Chairman of the Board of the Union for Concerned Scientists)

In 1990, Dr. Kendall won the Nobel Prize in Physics, along with two colleagues for his insightful work in particle physics. Henry Kendall is currently the J.A. Stratton Professor of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has also served as the Chairman of the Board of the Union of Concerned Scientists, an organization of which he was a founding member. Throughout his impressive career, Dr. Kendall has focused on US energy and defense issues such as the nuclear arms race, nuclear power, and renewable energy. He has many other awards and honors including being elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. John Holdren
(Professor at Harvard University, PCAST)

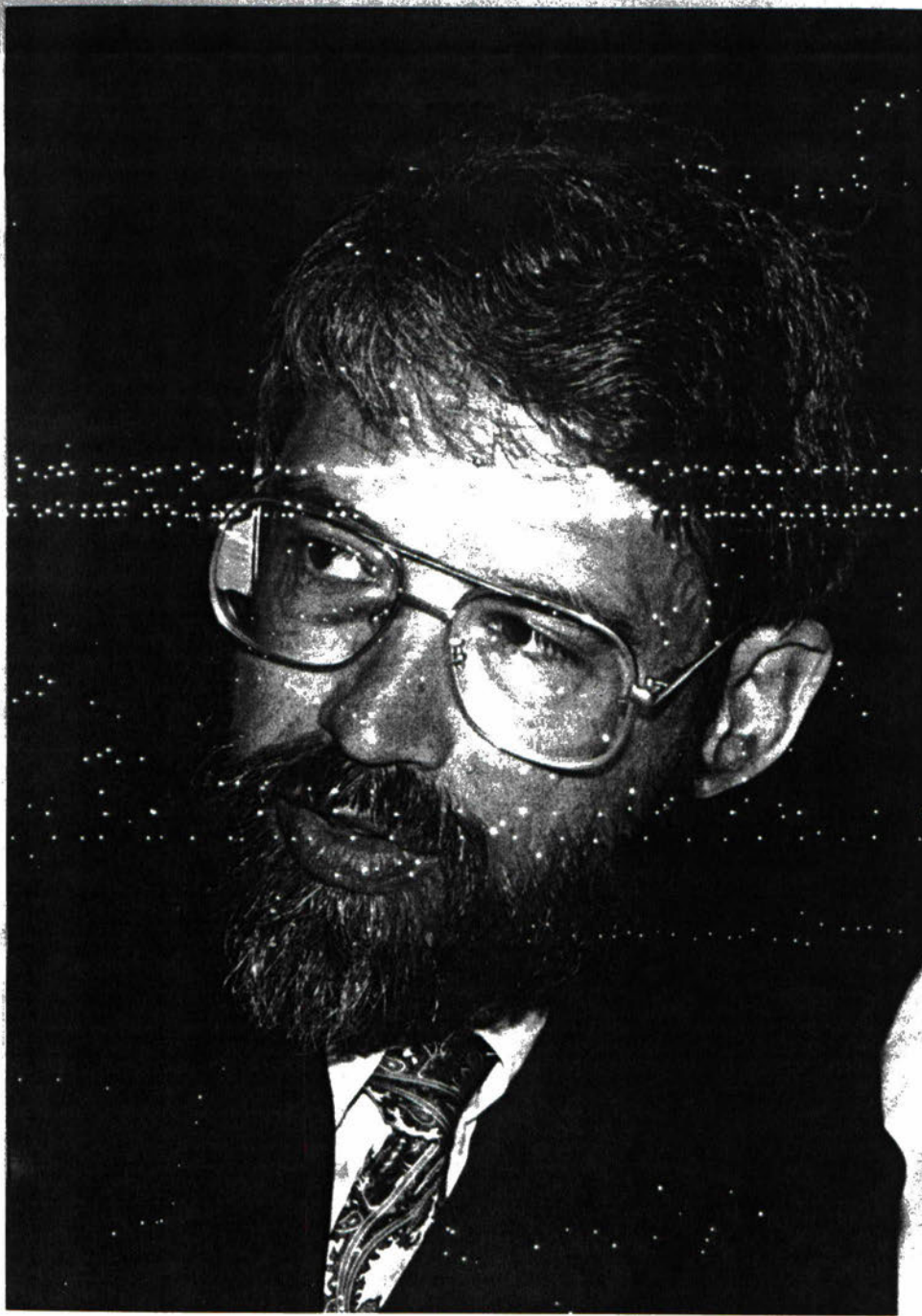
John Holdren is a world-renowned expert on energy and environmental science. In 1995, he delivered the Nobel Peace Prize acceptance lecture on behalf of the Pugwash Conferences, on the occasion of that organization's sharing of the 1995 prize. He is currently the Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy and Director of the Program on Science, Technology, and Public Policy in the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Professor of Environmental Science and Public Policy in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Harvard University. From 1973 until 1996, he was a Professor of Energy and Resources at the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Holdren is also a Distinguished Visiting Scientist at the Woods Hole Research Center. He has been elected to be a Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Physical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, the California Academy of Sciences, and the American Academy of Sciences. He was also awarded the MacArthur Foundation Prize. He is currently chairing the Presidential Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology Study of the entire U.S. energy R&D portfolio in relation to the economic, environmental, and security challenges of the next century. Dr. Holdren received his Ph.D. from Stanford University in aeronautics, astronautics and theoretical plasma physics in 1970.

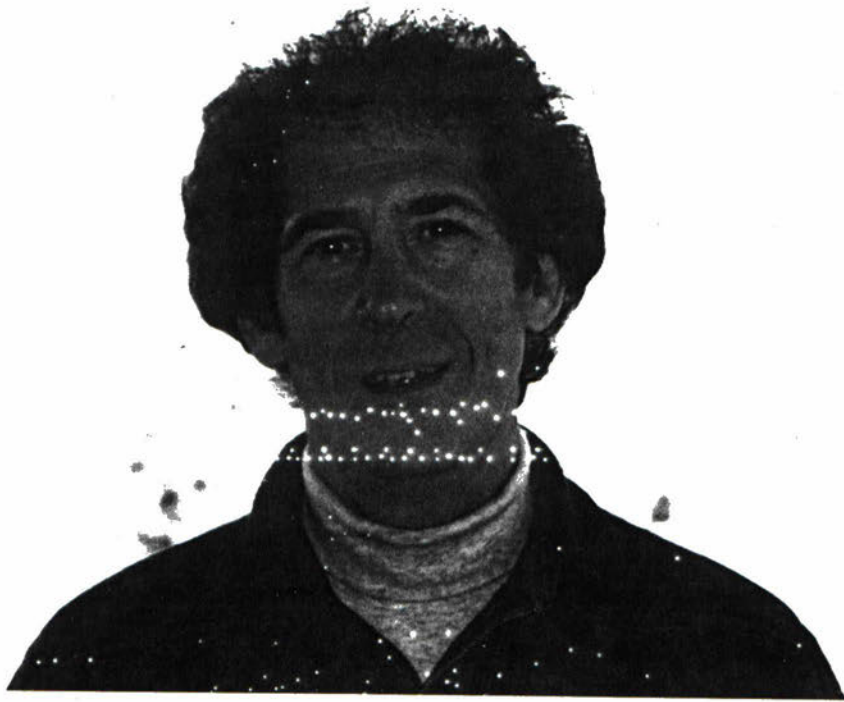


DR. MARIO J. MOLINA

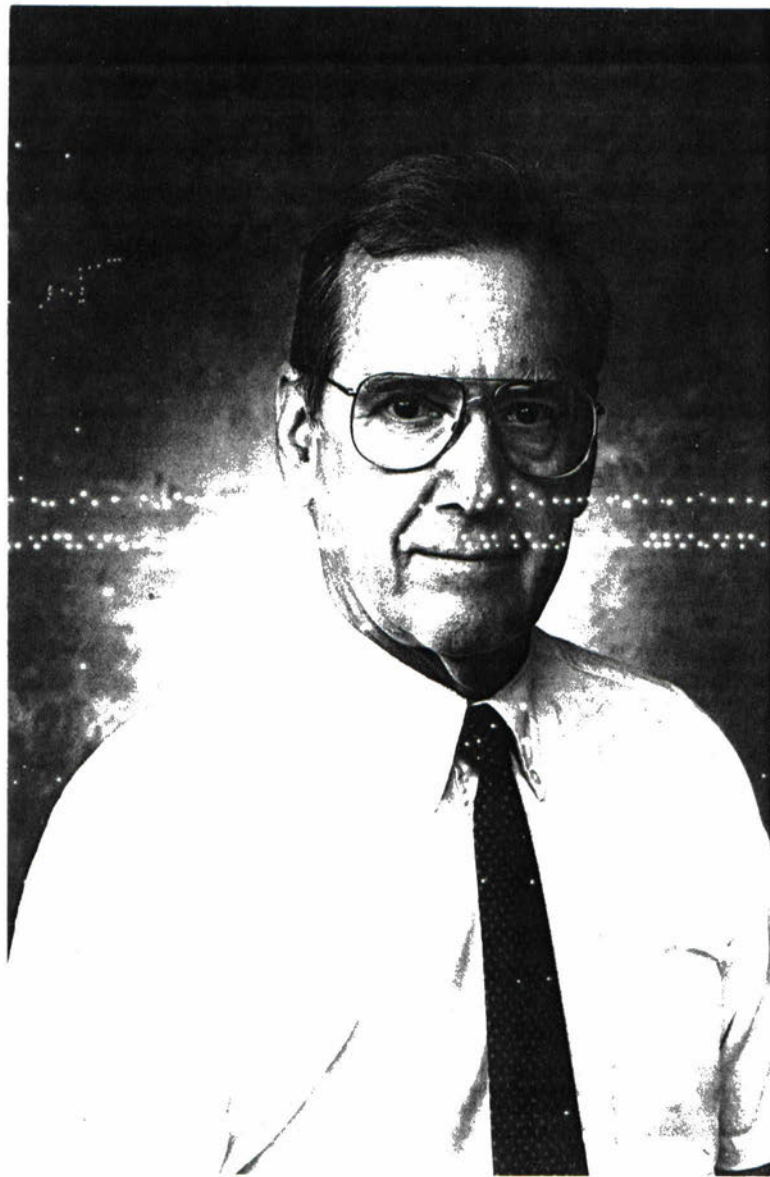
Todd —
we can also
intersperse
these
photos in
text

Rosina

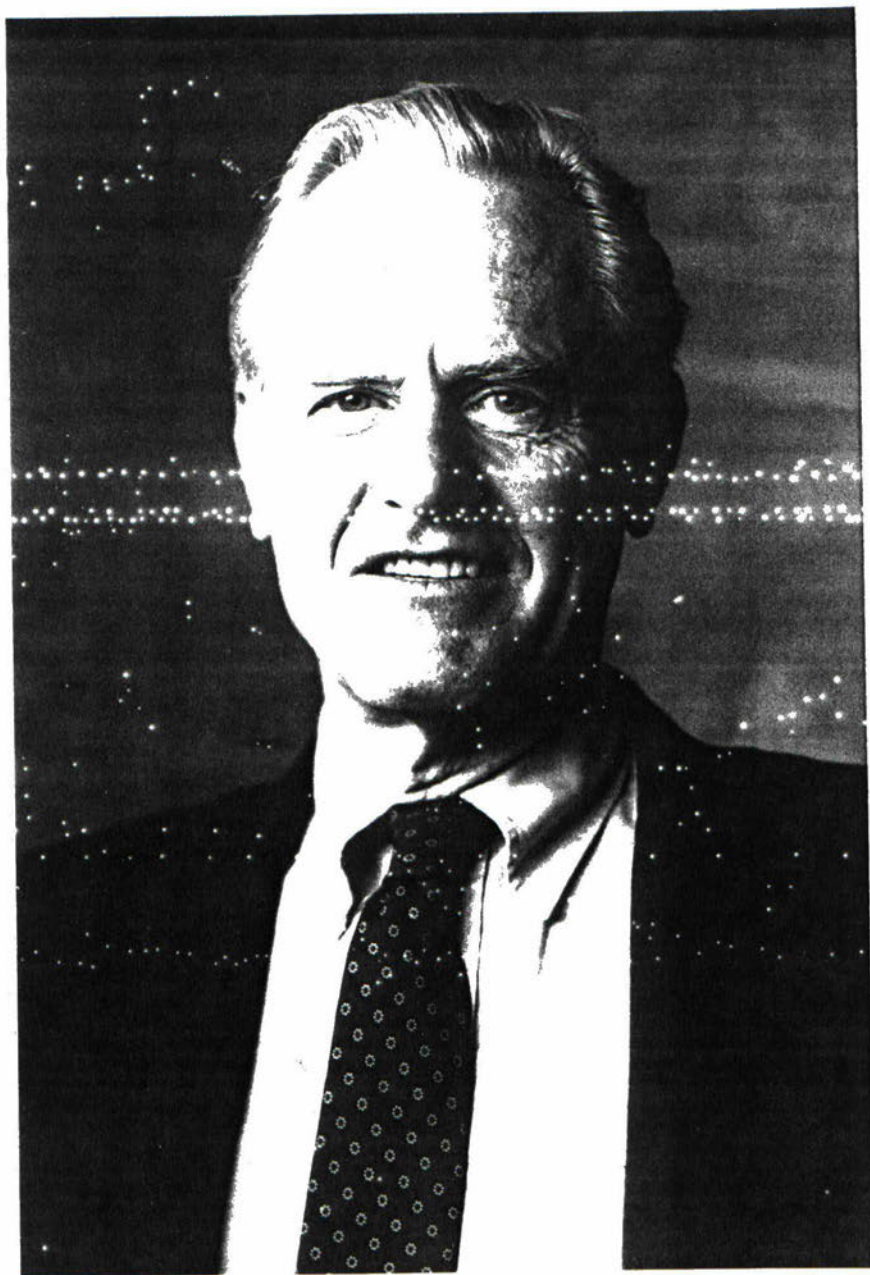




DR. STEPHEN H. SCHNEIDER



DR. ROBERT SHOPE



DR. HENRY KENDALL