

Allow me to commend, as well as criticize, your excellent editorial, "Better nothing than something?"

I am in complete agreement with the underlying major premise of the editorial, that it is absolutely imperative that the likelihood of atomic war be eliminated. Whether the building of shelters under private or public auspices would contribute to the general awareness of the utter destructiveness of such a war is a delicate question. As one of the 285 faculty members of the Chicago area who signed an open letter protesting

against the shelter program on the ground that it created a false sense of security and predisposed the public to underestimate the tragic futility of nuclear warfare, I took a position different from that of your editorial. If your editorial has left me unconvinced that I was wrong (one can never be sure that one is right in such matters), it was mainly for the following reason.

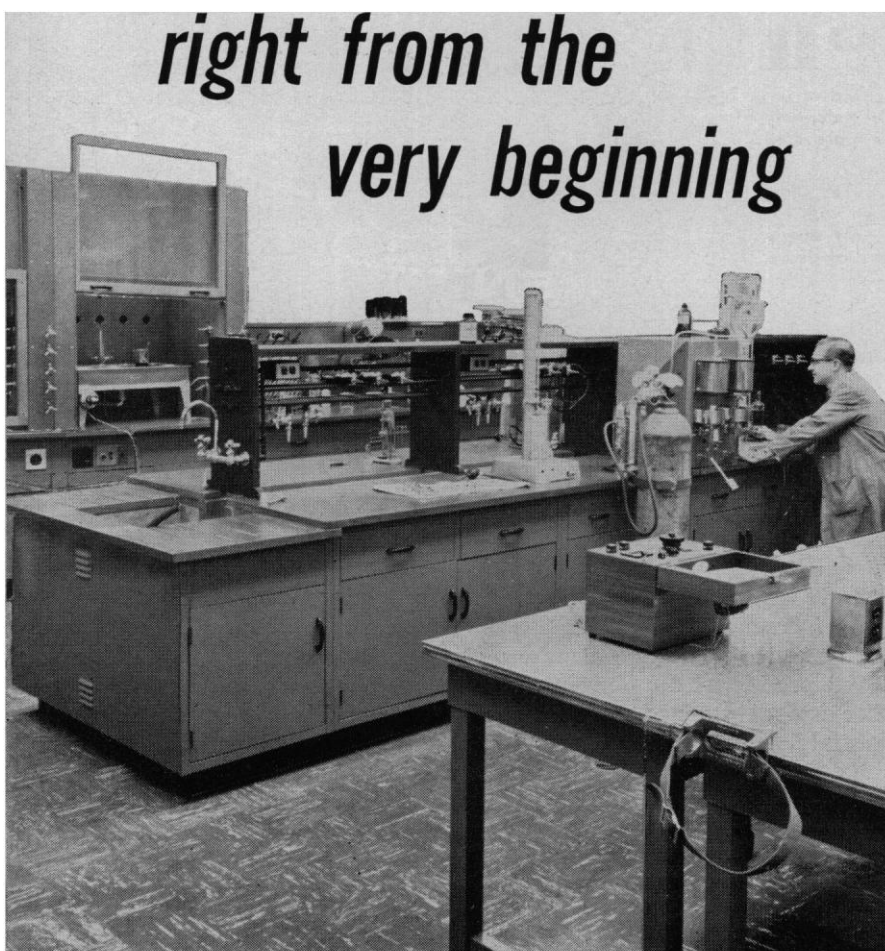
The editorial cited the President's distinction between deterrence and insurance and then proceeded to argue as if the two were entirely independent,

as if insurance never weakened caution against risk-taking. Simply because the shelter program, like accident policies, may spell out the dangers and enumerate excluded risks, is there any good reason to expect that this will predispose the public to discountenance adventures in "brinkmanship"? Do not accident policies frequently undermine the motorist's sense of personal responsibility, a sense that would otherwise deter him from driving recklessly? The very analogy your editorial drew, leads, I should say, to the conclusion (the very opposite of your own) that the shelter program would not preclude taking fearful risks.

Forgive me if I write less as a fellow of the AAAS than as a grandfather of five pretty babes and as a teacher of more than 30 years' standing, who rebels at the thought of exposing the youth of the world to annihilation or to the prospect of begetting generations of crippled progeny.

WILLIAM JAFFE

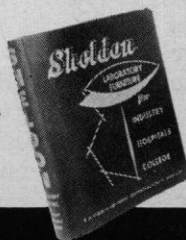
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Isosceles Triangles and the Center of Population

Walter Crosby Eell, in a recent letter [*Science* 134, 797 (1961)], pointed out that the center of population is not necessarily the point at which the population can convene with minimum travel mileage, and he proceeded to show this with two simple examples.

While there can be no doubt about the soundness of his basic contention, we would like to point out that his second example of three persons living at the vertices of an isosceles triangle is not entirely correct. Speaking of the distance from the base AB of the triangle to the vertex C , he states, "regardless of that distance, the point of minimum travel for the three [people] to convene will be a fixed point, the center of the equilateral triangle of which AB is one side."

This is true whenever the distance from the vertex C to the base AB of the isosceles triangle is greater than the distance from the center of the equilateral triangle to the base AB . But if we have a "short" isosceles triangle, the point of minimum travel is the vertex C itself.

CURTIS E. MILLER

JOHN B. OPFELL

*Dynamic Science Corporation,
South Pasadena, California*