

**American Association for the Advancement of Science**  
*Science* serves its readers as a forum for the presentation and discussion of important issues related to the advancement of science, including the presentation of minority or conflicting points of view, rather than by publishing only material on which a consensus has been reached. Accordingly, all articles published in *Science*—including editorials, news and comment, and book reviews—are signed and reflect the individual views of the authors and not official points of view adopted by the AAAS or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

**Publisher:** Richard S. Nicholson  
**Editor:** Daniel E. Koshland, Jr.  
**Deputy Editor:** Ellis Rubinstein  
**Managing Editor:** Monica M. Bradford  
**International Editor:** Alun Anderson  
**Deputy Editors:** Philip H. Abelson (*Engineering and Applied Sciences*); John I. Brauman (*Physical Sciences*); Thomas R. Cech (*Biological Sciences*)

**EDITORIAL STAFF**  
**Assistant Managing Editor:** Dawn Bennett  
**Senior Editors:** Eleanore Butz, Martha Coleman, Barbara Jasny, Katrina L. Kerner, Phillip D. Szuroni, David F. Voss  
**Associate Editors:** R. Brooks Hanson, Pamela J. Hines, Kelly LaMarco, Linda J. Miller, L. Bryan Ray  
**Letters:** Christine Gilbert, *Editor*; Steven S. Lapham  
**Book Reviews:** Katherine Livingston, *Editor*  
**Contributing Editor:** Lawrence I. Grossman  
**Chief Production Editor:** Ellen E. Murphy  
**Editing Department:** Lois Schmitt, *Head*; Julie W. Albers, Denise Gipson, Steven Powell  
**Copy Desk:** Douglas B. Casey, Joi S. Granger, Beverly Shields  
**Production:** James Landry, *Director*; Wendy K. Shank, Manager; Catherine S. Siskos, *Assistant Manager*; Scherraine Mack, *Associate*; Linda C. Owens, *Macintosh Operator*  
**Art:** Amy Decker Henry, *Director*; Julie Cherry, *Assistant Director*; Diana DeFrancesco, *Associate*; Holly Bishop, *Graphics Assistant*  
**Systems Analyst:** William Carter

**NEWS STAFF**  
**Managing News Editor:** Colin Norman  
**Deputy News Editors:** Tim Appenzeller, John M. Benditt, Jean Marx  
**News and Comment/Research News:** Ivan Amato, Faye Flam, Troy Gately (copy), Ann Gibbons, David P. Hamilton, Constance Holden, Richard A. Kerr, Eliot Marshall, Joseph Palca, Leslie Roberts, Richard Stone  
**Bureaus:** Marcia Barinaga (West Coast), Michelle Hoffman (Northeast), Anne Simon Moffat (Midwest)  
**Contributing Correspondents:** Joseph Alper, Jeremy Chertas, Barry A. Cipra, Robert Crease, Elizabeth Culotta, M. Mitchell Waldrop

**BUSINESS STAFF**  
**Marketing Director:** Beth Rosner  
**Circulation Director:** Michael Spinella  
**Fulfillment Manager:** Marlene Zedell  
**Financial:** Deborah Rivera-Wienhold, *Manager*; Julie Eastland, *Senior Analyst*; Josephine Megbolugbe, *Junior Analyst*  
**Reprints Manager:** Corrine Harris  
**Permissions Manager:** Arlene Ennis

**ADVERTISING**  
**Advertising Sales Manager:** Susan A. Meredith  
**Display Recruitment Sales Manager:** Janis Crowley  
**Traffic Manager:** Tina Turano  
**Traffic Manager (Display Recruitment):** Daniel Moran  
**Line Recruitment:** Michele Pearl, *Manager*; Brian Wallace, *Assistant*  
**Advertising Assistant:** Allison Pritchard  
Send materials to Science Advertising, 1333 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, or FAX 202-682-0816.

**SALES:** Northeast/E. Canada: Fred Dieffenbach, Rt. 30, Dorset, VT 05251; 802-867-5581, FAX 802-867-4464 • Mid-Atlantic: Richard Teeling, 28 Kimberly Place, Wayne, NJ 07470; 201-904-9774, FAX 201-904-9701 • Southeast: Mark Anderson, 1915 Brickell Ave, Suite CC-1, Miami, FL 33129; 305-856-8567, FAX 305-856-1056 • Midwest: Donald Holbrook, 1110 North Harvey, Oak Park, IL 60302; FAX 708-386-6921, 708-386-6950 • West Coast/W. Canada: Neil Boylan, 828 Cowper, Ste. A, Palo Alto, CA 94301; 415-323-3302, FAX 415-323-3312 • Outside USA: Contact Science Advertising; 202-326-6544, FAX 202-682-0816

**Information for contributors** appears on pages 36–38 of the 3 January 1992 issue. Editorial correspondence, including requests for permission to reprint and reprint orders, should be sent to 1333 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: 202-326-6500. London office: 071-494-0062. **Subscription/Member Benefits Questions:** 202-326-6417. **Science:** 202-326-6500. **Other AAAS Programs:** 202-326-6400.

## Achievable New Year's Resolutions

**T**his year I am trying to take a giant step toward a new social contract, the achievable New Year's resolution. In analyzing this new personal relationship, I realize that some of the principles are applicable to bigger social units, such as city, state, and federal governments.

In the past I have taken the more or less conventional approach to such resolutions, realizing that the New Year was an important time to face deficiencies and respond to the urgent need for reform, both personally and professionally. This year, I make the usual resolutions: (I) I hereby solemnly resolve that I shall make shocking inroads into my waistline by giving up desserts, eating between meals, a cocktail before dinner, and maple syrup. (II) I further resolve that since the meek shall inherit the earth, they should be allowed to finish a sentence, even though I know what they are going to say, they are taking an interminable time to say it, and I already know the answer. (III) Furthermore, I resolve that some of my pet beliefs, such as that science needs more funding, that the space station is a colossal waste of money, and that the benefits of science far outweigh the deleterious side effects, will no longer be the subject of interminable tirades. Of course, it is not my fault that I return to these subjects often; rather it is the fault of the politicians, the bureaucrats, and others who do not instantly see the wisdom of my words.

I have previously made such resolutions in deep sincerity with an exalted feeling of self-sacrifice and moral purity, only to have the resolutions broken long before the year is out. That disparity between the ease of stating a high moral ideal and the difficulty of preventing its slow deterioration is the fundamental problem of resolutions. That is why I have decided to reevaluate resolutions on the basis of achievability. The achievability principle is not unlike the uncertainty principle, involving a multiplication of probabilities—that is, the higher the moral standard is set, the quicker the decay to the previous standard of behavior. Therefore, one has a choice between diminishing the moral goal or diminishing the period over which the moral behavior is to be sustained.

I have personally chosen in the current year to maintain the high level of my goals, but have picked 1 January to 15 February as the period of time over which I am likely to maintain this incredible level of achievement. It is my feeling that I will not be likely to starve to death and become morose in the period of one-and-a-half months following Resolution I. Moreover, by eschewing my favorite subjects of discourse (Resolution III), I will probably have very little to say, but on the other hand Resolution II will mean that I will have very little opportunity to say it. Thus considering the weakness of my moral fiber and the lofty idealism of my goals, 15 February sounds like a reasonable date.

In struggling through this catharsis, it strikes me that a similar approach might be worthwhile for governments and citizens. There is a tendency to use the rhetoric of absolute purity in naming civic goals—we must house all the homeless, provide health care to everyone, prevent war, and excel in international trade. The likelihood of implementing solutions to civic problems—raising taxes, working harder, lowering our standard of living—is usually inversely proportional to the loftiness of the goal. Advocates of purity argue that goals must be extremely high in order to make any progress because compromise is inevitable. The danger of such an approach is that an impossible goal induces despair and the feeling that we are getting nowhere. Possibly setting achievable resolutions, ones for which we expect a high level of achievement for a short time (viewed as an educational experiment) or less lofty levels achievable for a longer time, may actually help societies as well as individuals. For example, a health care plan that provides everyone with the same level of coverage is probably not achievable, but one that narrows the currently unacceptable range of coverage between our poor and wealthy citizens is achievable.

It is true that high resolutions of government require cooperation from the other sectors of society and the other nations with which they interact, as they are not completely masters of their fate, no matter what the poet said. I am entering 1992 with the high hope that I can be a better person, and I expect my government to follow suit. I believe we can make it, at least until someone offers me maple syrup or politicians face a primary election.

—DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, JR.