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Letters

Waste watchers

As a proponent of nuclear power, I found "The Compleat Breeder?" (SN: 1/26/85, p. 60) very interesting. I feel that this particular analysis of the future of nuclear power has missed the mark, however. With acid rain stoking red dollar signs for coal-fired plants juxtaposed against the existing safety record of nuclear power, the fulcrum on which the industry balances is neither cost nor operational safety, but rather waste disposal.

While trying to minimize neither the importance of operational safety nor skyrocketing plant costs, the future for nuclear power clearly lies in the hands of waste disposal researchers. When individual states are drafting legislation to block the construction of nuclear power plants pending a permanent solution to the central issues of waste disposal methods and sites in response to the justifiable concern of the

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Cover: Carcasses left behind by lions on a modern African savanna are providing clues to how human ancestors may have scavenged for food up to 2 million years ago. (Photo by Jorie Butler Kent/Abercrombie & Kent)

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general public over radioactive waste, it is clear that these are the issues that make the future of this industry uncertain.

M. D. Conley
Kansas City, Mo.

Supermarket hunter-gatherers?

The article "Of berries and bison: Stone Age standards for modern diets" (SN: 2/9/85, p. 90), juxtaposing Paleolithic diets with 20th century diets, leaves out one of the main ingredients—namely, that hunter-gatherer populations expended more energy in their daily lives than modern-day populations. A diet that was high in two food groups, meat and fruits/vegetables, may be unacceptable by today's standards due to the relatively inactive lifestyles of today's society. Modern man certainly does not have to travel miles on foot each day and hunt for food and subsequently fend for shelter. All we have to do is take a trip to the supermarket once a week, usually by car.

It would seem that a balanced diet should be directly proportional to the amount of work or energy one expends on a daily basis. Modern-day man certainly consumes a greater variety of food groups, and probably in larger portions, than did our ancient predecessors. We also don't work the body parts in quite the same way as our ancestors did. Although many populations in today's world are undernourished, much of modern society lives at a creative level. We work for more than just food; we work for aesthetic values and material goods.

John M. Olden-Stahl
Germantown, Md.

Comparison of energy expenditures in modern and Paleolithic humans was not addressed in the study reported. The Emory researchers are, however, now studying that very topic as part of a broader study on lifestyle differences between modern and ancient humans. Look for the results of the second study in about six months.

—D.D. Bennett

MARCH 9, 1985

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