

## 6. Conclusion

**The Ultimate Resource** No food, one problem. Much food, many problems. (Anonymous) The humour of blaming the present, and admiring the past, is strongly rooted in human nature, and has an influence even on persons endowed with the profoundest judgment and most extensive learning. (David Hume, "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," in 1777/1987) RAW MATERIALS and energy are getting less scarce. The world's food supply is improving. Pollution in the developed countries has been decreasing. Population growth has long-term benefits, though added people are a burden in the short run. Most important, fewer people are dying young. These assertions, publicly stated in 1970 and then in the first edition of this book in 1981, have stood the test of time. The benign trends have continued until this edition. Our species is better off in just about every measurable material way. (The introduction lists others among the more dramatic findings of the book. Each chapter ends with a summary on its particular topic.) And there is stronger reason than ever to believe that these progressive trends will continue indefinitely. Indeed, the trends toward greater cleanliness and less pollution of our air and water are even sharper than before, and cover a longer historical period and more countries (though the environmental disaster in Eastern Europe has only recently become public knowledge). The increase in availability and the decrease in raw materials scarcity have continued unabated, and have even speeded up. None of the catastrophes in food supply and famine that were forecast by the doomsayers have occurred; rather, the world's people are eating better than ever. The conventional beliefs of the doomsayers have been entirely falsified by events during past decades. When we widen our scope beyond the physical matters of mortality, natural resources, and the environment covered in this book—to the standard of living, freedom, housing, and the like—we find that all the trends pertaining to economic welfare are heartening, also. Perhaps most exciting, the quantities of education that people obtain all over the world are sharply increasing, which means less tragic waste of human talent and ambition. (The evidence for those matters is found in Simon 1995.)