Dr. Whitcomb:

Your questionnaire reply has been sent to the Office of Technology Assessment.

I assume that you did not wish to give Mr. Coates "names of one to three people....willing to assist us by also replying to our inquiry."

Boswinkle thinks that the world's major problem is people who make noise on Saturday morning.

Agnes Dunkley

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June 27, 1978

Ms. Terry Parsons  
c/o Mr. Joseph F. Coates  
Office of Technology Assessment  
U.S. Congress  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ms. Parsons:

As I mentioned when I spoke with you today, I am enclosing Dr. Richard Whitcomb's response to the questionnaire "Major Issues, Problems, Developments, Opportunities Facing American and World Society." Dr. Whitcomb has identified one problem area.

Sincerely,

Agnes W. Dunkley

Enclosure

cc:  
101/Files  
106/Director  
103A/D. Director  
278/Chief Counsel  
116/DAeronautics  
NASA Code LC-5 (3 copies)  
115/OEA (2 copies)  
359/Dr. Whitcomb

115/AWDunkley.awd 2932 6/27/78
1. Statement of the issue or problem area and background:

New methods for synthesizing liquid hydrocarbon fuels.- It is broadly recognized that the imminent exhaustion of our domestic crude oil and gas reserves will require the development of new energy sources. The most satisfactory alternate energy source for transportation vehicles such as automobiles, trucks, trains, and airplanes would be synthetic liquid hydrocarbon fuel of reasonable cost. Substantial work is now being conducted to develop methods for deriving liquid hydrocarbons from shale and coal. However, the presently available means are costly and have adverse effects on the environment. Therefore, the discovery of new, more satisfactory, methods for synthesizing liquid hydrocarbon fuels would be extremely important.

2. How might the topic be studied if at all (optional):

Grants to the Chemistry Departments of Universities with expertise in this subject.

3. Prior work or citations to people or literature (optional):

4. Users and use of results if a study were done on this topic:

The energy and transportation industries.
Dear Dr. Whitcomb:

I am writing to ask you for your help with a project on current and foreseeable critical developments in American and world society. As you may know, OTA's new Director, Dr. Russell W. Peterson, joined us in the middle of January. He has initiated a project on the identification of major long-range problems and opportunities facing American society which could contribute to an agenda of studies by OTA.

I am asking you to identify three major issues, problems, difficulties, potential developments or opportunities in American or world society of a technological or other nature which might be suitable candidates for study and evaluation to inform, alert, or provide timely information to the Congress.

Attached is a response form for your use. If you have comments in addition to those requested, please feel free to use the reverse side for such addenda. The statement of the proposed issue, opportunity or problem is the item in which we have the most interest. One response of highest concern to you would be a satisfactory yield, but please limit your reply to three items at most. Consider this request without constraint as to what would be an acceptable and appropriate topic. My only request is that you tell me what you think is most important.

As a way of further expanding my network of contacts for this inquiry, I would appreciate your giving me the names of one to three people who you are confident would be willing to assist us by also replying to our inquiry. Please feel free to pass this request directly to other people on your own. I welcome their responses as well as yours.

For our present purposes, a response from you within the next three weeks will be particularly valuable. Since, however, agenda building is continuing process for us, additional suggestions from you at any time will be most welcome.

A brief information sheet about the Office of Technology Assessment is enclosed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Joseph F. Coates
Program Manager
Exploratory Research

NASA-LANGLEY JUN 7 1978
Established by statute (P.L. 92-484) in 1972, the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) is an advisory arm of the U.S. Congress. OTA's basic function is to help legislators anticipate and plan for the long-term consequences of technological applications, and to examine the many ways expected and unexpected, in which technology affects people's lives.

OTA's analyses explore in a holistic way the physical, biological, economic, social, and political impacts which can result from application of scientific knowledge. OTA provides Congress with independent and timely information about the potential effects and side effects—both beneficial and harmful—of technological applications.

The OTA Act provides that assessments may be initiated by committee request, by the OTA Congressional Board, or by the Director in consultation with the Board. OTA presents even-handed, authoritative comprehensive policy analyses and options to Congress, leaving decisions to the elected Members. OTA reports are also made available to the public through the U.S. Government Printing Office and the National Technical Information Service.

OTA consists of a unique bipartisan Congressional Board "which shall formulate and promulgate the policies of the Office and a Director who shall carry out such policies and administer the operations of the Office." The Board is assisted by an Advisory Council comprised of 10 citizens from the private sector and, ex officio, the Comptroller General of the United States and the Director of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress.

OTA is governed by its Congressional Board, which consists of six Senators and six Representatives, evenly divided by party, and the Director. The Chairman of the Congressional Board is Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.). The Vice Chairman is Congressman Larry Winn, Jr. (R-Kans.). The chairmanship and vice-chairmanship rotate between the two Houses with successive Congresses.

The Director of OTA is Gov. Russell W. Peterson. Before taking the OTA directorship in January 1978, Peterson worked 26 years in the chemical industry as a research scientist and senior executive, was Governor of Delaware (1969-73), served as Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (1973-76) and organized and led a national citizens lobby, New Directions (1976-77).

The Deputy Director of OTA is Daniel De Simone, an engineer and a lawyer with extensive experience in science and technology policy matters in the Department of Commerce and the White House.

The Chairman of the Advisory Council is Jerome B. Wiesner, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former science advisor to the President. The Vice Chairman is Frederick C. Robbins, Dean, Case Western Reserve Medical School and Nobel Laureate.

Reflecting both congressional concerns and priorities established by the OTA Board, the Office currently operates programs in the fields of energy, food, health, materials, national R&D policies and priorities, oceans, technology and world trade, and transportation. A planning and exploratory group conducts preliminary studies and carries out special analysis projects. Operating with a budget of $8.9 million for fiscal year 1978, the Office typically has under way some 30 projects at any given time. OTA complements its staff with the aid of hundreds of technical or business experts and public-interest spokespersons, who reflect a wide variety of labor, management, consumer, governmental, environmental, and geographic points of view.

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Updated 4/18/78