



## Tomorrow Is Within Reach!

Once upon a time, everything was possible. Even the Moon was within reach — and the stars were next.

Those days of hope and progress are not gone.

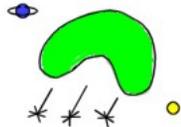
We still can have the glorious future that we once foresaw — if we are willing to make it happen!



**Progress!** The word stirs up mental pictures of a better tomorrow — of a future world in which human ingenuity, through technological innovation and social betterment, has overcome the limits of the human condition.

The twentieth century was a century of progress. During those hundred years, humanity progressed from a world without airplanes, computers, or modern medicine to a new era in which these technological miracles were commonplace. These technical achievements were not the only accomplishments of that fateful century. There also were vast changes in social thought, with great steps forward toward human equality and freedom — the struggle for racial equality, the recognition of women's rights, and the defeat of the new, unprecedented menaces of Nazism and, in many places, of Communism.

The story of the twentieth century showed, beyond a doubt, that real progress is possible. We knew this from the previous history of the world — but the achievements of the twentieth century confirmed it once again.



In the 1950s, America was filled with a spirit of optimism. This attitude was neither excessive nor unreasonable. The facts of progress in the first half of the twentieth century justified this optimism. So did the steady march of progress throughout the previous history of the world.

During the 1960s, faith in progress began to fade. Historians and social scientists have debated the causes of this decline, but one fact is clear: **the loss of the spirit of optimism was entirely unnecessary.**

It is true that some terrible things happened during the sixties. That decade was the time of the Vietnam War, of the peak of the Cold War, and of the growth of the drug culture. But positive changes also happened during the sixties. There were medical breakthroughs and civil rights advances. In 1969 came the first human landing on the Moon. Progress did not stop! The foes of progress may have slowed down progress, but they could not stop it. The spirit of progress was alive and well during the sixties, even though that spirit was partly hidden behind the gloomy pronouncements of the pessimists.

Near the end of the twentieth century, progress had gone far, but much work remained to be done. Humanity's technological conquest of illness and of other natural and artificial threats was far from complete. In the social and political realm, many serious injustices and unnecessary limits on freedom still existed. Menaces to the environment posed new challenges, as did new threats of war. Yet hope always was in sight, because it was obvious that progress could go much farther. We knew that progress was possible, and that progress was good.

Today we are at a point of decision. Arrayed on one side are the antiprogress forces. There are the postmodernists, who ignore the facts and preach that progress is an illusion. There are the left-wing extremists, who use the discrimination that still existed in the fifties to argue that the good aspects of the fifties were not real. There are the right-wing extremists of all lands, who long for an imagined era of religious oppression and who want to revive only the worst parts of the past. Finally, there are the doomsayers, who believe that human resolve and ingenuity cannot overcome today's real threats and challenges. All of these factions oppose or doubt progress. On the other side are the friends of progress, who know that the forward movement of the world has not stopped, and that the best of the past is worth preserving as the planet Earth moves into its potentially brilliant future.



The optimistic age of the fifties was not the high noon of progress, but only its morning. The friends of progress, united in a vision of the future, know that the optimism of the mid-twentieth century was not an idle dream. The wonders yet to come are even greater than those we once imagined.

We must go forward! Our future demands it. We who look toward tomorrow, and who have the courage to dream cosmic dreams, will settle for nothing less.

- *Mark F. Sharlow*

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