The only problem I'd have with using more polygons is if you didn't use them efficient enough. I can tell you now that more polygons DOES have an effect on performance. When modeling on my laptop, once a model/scene goes over 5000 polygons, since it's not a very powerful laptop, the strain on it shows after that limit. Every vertical point has to be processed, so more will obviously have an effect.

I have no problem with using more polygons to make a model more detailed. I tend to have a problem going over my limit by adding more detail, but I make sure I can use them as efficiently as possible. I'd rather like to play a game with more detail models than a game with vehicles that look like blocks on wheels. We're now up to computers with 3GHz P4's and 256 MB GFX cards, why not use them well?

Most people now have computers above 1GHz and a Geforce 2, but some still don't. I wouldn't sacrifice detail so those people on older machines can have better performance. That's like saying the next released games shouldn't improve graphics, so it'll run on older machines (although you have settings to select detail levels). Take FarCry for example, it needs something like a 2GHz with 512 MB to run okay with reasonable high detail.