

TIME TO KICK THE HABIT

In one decisive act, the US government could save more than 50m gallons of petrol a day - that's more than a billion barrels a year, which is more than the US imports annually from the Persian Gulf. A collateral effect would be thousands of lives saved, not only on the roads but in catastrophic oil-protecting wars. Another would be a big reduction in pollution and its impact on global warming.

Australia could take exactly the same action. All with the stroke of a pen.

The magic solution? Lower the national speed limit to 55 miles per hour, writes Francis Slakey in the *New Scientist* (13 05 06). Slakey, a lecturer in physics and biology at Georgetown University in Washington DC, calculates that for the average car, cutting the speed from 75 mph to 55mph (88.5 kph) improves fuel efficiency by roughly 25 per cent through increased efficiency.

So why don't we do it? Jimmy Carter tried. He endorsed a 55 mph limit when upheaval in the Middle East led to an oil crisis in the 1970s.

"The public groaned, then kicked him out of office, along with the policy. Lowering the speed limit did reduce demand and it did help cut gasoline prices. For policy-makers the key question has always been: at what point does the benefit outweigh the pain?" writes Slakey.

Since the 1970s, however, we have seen massive social and cultural change. Sustainability is at last on the agenda, not just for greens,



not just for individuals, but for mainstream corporations. Global warming has hit the front page of *Time*, not a left-wing radical rag.

The slow movement, meanwhile, is reminding us of the pleasures of leisure, and thousands of young Americans, and Australians, are making different life choices - downshifting, sea changing, becoming what Ray and Anderson called "cultural creatives".

It's a classic example of the reason for future-ing. We have choices - now - that can change the future. All it takes is a change of mind, in the direction we were heading anyway. How about some grassroots leadership? Could the Australian people show their leaders what a wise decision looks like? Or are we happy to keep wasting billions of dollars and thousands of lives to protect our addiction?

More at www.futuresfoundation.org.au.

What's wrong with the official future?

Declining quality of life is apparent in people's perceptions of life today - the heart of the case against the official future, writes Richard Eckersley in a book to be published in June. There is growing concern that the state of Australian society - rougher, tougher, more competitive, less compassionate - is producing stress, edginess and a sense of personal vulnerability.

Eckersley lays this at the door of official obsession with economic growth: "We need to think less in terms of a 'wealth-producing economy' and more about a 'health-creating society'....integrating different priorities by allowing them to be measured against a common goal or benchmark: improving human wellbeing."

See story p5

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CAN WE RESCUE THE FUTURE?



Perhaps the most compelling reason for being interested in the future is that some really powerful forces seem to be conspiring to deny us one, said Futures Foundation chairman Charles Brass when he opened the biennial conference of the Western Australian Council of Social Services in Perth this month.

"It took the universe 15 billion years to create you and me. And there's good reason to believe that our personal future is under threat within our lifetime."

Brass opened with the famous picture of Earth taken from Apollo 17 in the 1960s,

noting it was one of many words and images created around that time which encouraged ordinary people to become more interested in the future. "Seeing this beautiful little blue and white ball hanging in the blackness of space jolted many people into coming to terms with just how fragile was our existence here on Spaceship Earth.

"Prior to the 1970s most people's interest in the future was limited to thinking about their personal and family futures, but images like this one made many more people realise just how small and interconnected our world is, and how even small actions in one place can have profound implications somewhere else.

"The profession of futurist didn't even exist before 1970, and now we are regularly invited to open important conferences such as this."

Charles Brass chose to focus on four trends: the ageing population, the information revolution, globalization and climate change, with its accompanying extinction of biodiversity.

"The percentage of Australians aged less than 15 has halved since 1870, and the percentage aged over 65 has increased by 600 per cent. The absolute number of 15 year olds in Australia hasn't changed since 1961, and won't change before 2031 - but the number of 65+ year olds will increase sharply.

"This effect has profound social and ethical consequences - not the least of which will be in the way it changes how people die. We have already begun to see the tension which arises as elderly people seek to claim some control over how and when they die - and this will only increase in the future.

"But it is not on how we will die that I wish to focus. The question of how the ageing population will live is much more important, and contentious.

"We have yet to move beyond the myth that a well-lived adult life consists of working for someone else for up to 40 years, and then living out your remaining years in a largely self-indulgent retirement. Especially for women, this particular life course has mostly been a myth."

There are two reasons why an ageing population won't simply retire and disappear when they reach 65, said Brass. We won't be able to afford to (the

median balance in Australian superannuation accounts in 2004 was \$82,000), and we won't want to.

Turning to the second major trend, the information revolution, Charles Brass focused on its capacity to create 'jobless growth'. "Human productivity increased by over four times during the last century, which is another way of saying that four times as much could be produced without requiring any more people.

Addressing the third trend of "globalization", he emphasised that this word means different things in different situations.

"First globalization seems to mean an increase in the scale and scope of industrial production to the point where the whole planet is the marketplace. The second thing which economic globalization has come to mean is that there is somehow one best way to do anything and everything.

"The foolishness of the 'one best way' mantra is pretty obvious really. To believe there is one best way you also have to believe that everyone agrees on what 'best' means."

On climate change and biodiversity extinction: "I take it for granted that the earth's surface temperature is rising, and that this is directly threatening many human communities. I also take it for granted that biodiversity extinction is accelerating and that this poses an even greater threat to the survival of human beings.

"The information revolution threatens to make human beings redundant in our lifetime, replacing us with a superior species. Global warming and biodiversity extinction threaten to make the planet uninhabitable, while the ageing population and jobless growth threaten to completely unravel the economic and social structures we have spent the past few thousand years creating.

"Perhaps there is not a lot that participants at this conference can do about the development of artificial intelligence, or about global warming.

"But you are well placed to critique our existing economic and social structures and to significantly contribute to creating new ones - new structures that will work for all of us, not just some of us.

"It is sometimes hard to believe that 'ordinary people' can really make a difference, especially when the issues seem very large and complex. So, I would like to leave you with a famous quote attributed to Margaret Mead: *'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.'*" ff

Full text of this speech is at www.futuresfoundation.org.au



Sign here for your Woolloomooloo passport

Extracts from an address by Jan Lee Martin to the Royal Society of the Arts at UTS on May 4 2006

Anyone who can call for dual citizenship to be outlawed is walking backwards into the future. Former business leader and prominent Liberal Party supporter Hugh Morgan made the call in a speech at Deakin University last week, claiming that a person with dual citizenship had "at least the beginning of a bipolar disorder". I found it ironic that the call came in a speech about the future, entitled *Can Australia survive the 21st century?*

There's a famous story about the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, who found that school children of a certain age in Geneva could see themselves only as Genevan.... the idea that they could also be Swiss was too hard for them to handle.

When the children were slightly older, they could understand that they could be both Genevan and Swiss. But they still found it hard to understand that they could be both Swiss and European. When that stage was reached, the next was to understand that they could be Genevan, Swiss and European, and that people who were not European were not automatically enemies.

That study was done in the early years of the 20th century. Nearly 100 years of research and development in modern psychology since then have confirmed and enriched this understanding that human development evolves from primitive, childlike ideas of exclusive identity to embracing diversity as a key driver of life and health, from the biological to the social and cultural arenas.

So will somebody please explain to Hugh Morgan? In terms of everything we know about human development and growth, exclusive identification with a single, small tribe is heading backwards into the dark past, and will contribute to more and more conflict.

On the other hand, those of us who work with the future are becoming quite seriously engaged in global conversations about planetary citizenship. Especially since that awesome first photograph from space in the 1960s, more and more people have come to see that we are a single species on a single home planet. In an age where true tribal identity often belongs more to affiliations with social or professional or sporting groups, as well as a host of online communities, how can we possibly expect to put people in a single box and call them Australian? Exclusively Australian? How long before "Australian" will come to

**people who work with the future are
"engaged in global conversations about
planetary citizenship..."**

mean people with fair hair and blue eyes?

And how long will it be before we need a passport as a travel document when we want to enter or leave Sydney? If I'm commuting, should I have a city passport or a Gosford one? Will I need a Roseville passport if I'm to demonstrate my loyalty to Ku-Ring-Gai Council?

This very topical example makes the perfect introduction to my subject tonight - though it may take a minute or two for me to close the loop. Because the talk that I had planned for you was entitled: "Lessons from the past: can they save the future?"

Of course, I argue that lessons from the past can help us rescue the future. And that the future now stands in urgent need of rescue.

Full text of the talk is at www.futuresfoundation.org.au.

The future of entrepreneurship

The collision of new technology and changing demographics will create a vast range of opportunities for entrepreneurs, according to a special feature in BRW (April 27). "It will be a vibrant, globally focused, risk-taking, younger generation that will seize the opportunities, many of which will be created by wealthy retiring baby boomers.

These are the findings of the fourth BRW Entrepreneurs Roundtable, an annual event that sets out to define the agenda, reveal change and spark ideas for entrepreneurs. Participants at the Roundtable, held in Melbourne, included the Futures Foundation's Colin Benjamin and founding chair, Jan Lee Martin.

"The Roundtable identified a fundamental shift in attitudes introduced by Generation Y and the retiring baby boomers," wrote BRW's Amanda Gome. "As the younger generation questions the long hours and routine of their parents' lives, the baby boomers are looking towards the third stage of their lives and asking, 'What's next?'.

"Enormous opportunities will arise for those who participate in this generational shift from a 'living to work' mentality to lives focused on the 'new values' of personal development and a healthy lifestyle."



BAD NEWS:

Black marks for big brand

Coca-Cola, which has had more opportunities than most to learn about corporate social responsibility, may finally be facing an issue that's bigger than its advertising budget - the right of local communities everywhere to their own fresh water.

As aquifer levels drop around the world, the tide of protest rises. As previously reported in *Future News* (September 03), a growing stream of publicity is drawing attention to the way the world's water supplies are being sold off to international corporate interests at the cost of local farmers and other citizens.

Now Haider Rizvi reports (*OneWorldnet*) that as anger and resentment against Coca-Cola touches new heights in India, rights activists in the US have increased pressure on the company to mend its ways. At a shareholders' meeting on April 19 activists demanded the company disclose the full extent of its liabilities in India, but failed to receive any positive response.

People in more than 20 villages in northern India have organised an indefinite vigil against Coca-Cola, calling for the government to shut down the company's local bottling plant. In the desert state of Rajasthan more than 50 villages are facing acute water shortage, allegedly due to Coca-Cola operations.

Official accounts suggest that water levels have dropped up to 10 meters since 2001 when the company started its operations there. And in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, thousands of people are organising a series of protests against Coca-Cola's plans to build a new plant.

"Coca-Cola is culpable, and therefore liable for the serious problems that are affecting the lives and livelihoods of our people," said Amit Srivastava of the India Resource Center, a rights advocacy group.

"The longer the Coca-Cola company waits to genuinely address the issues in India, the larger their financial liability becomes. It just doesn't make good business sense."

The company is also running into trouble with consumer groups, student bodies and labor organisations in many other parts of the world, including the United States and Europe.

Activists in the US claim that more than 100 colleges and universities already have anti-Coke programs in place, and about 20 schools have either banned Coke products or axed their exclusive contracts with the company.

GOOD NEWS:

Give that man a coconut!

One of the happiest stories we've seen lately comes from an enterprising coconut oil producer in the Solomon Islands, who matched crisis with opportunity and was rewarded by a big improvement in his business.

It's a good news story within a good news story. Jimmy is a supplier to the Canberra company, Niulife, an enterprise that's building a growing business based on that mainstay of Pacific life, the coconut palm. Unashamed enthusiasts for this wonder plant - long valued by island societies for its bounty of food, fibre, oil and milk - Niulife is marketing a range of coconut-based products designed to fill any shopping cart (including the one at www.niulife.com). They're all products that are better suited to the future than to our industrialised past and present, including what looks like a fascinating book on preventing and treating common health problems with coconut.

So what does the coconut do for Jimmy? It keeps him in business, in more ways than one. As Niulife reports, shipping provides the lifeline for people, goods and vital communication in the thousand islands of the Solomon Islands group. When problems arise, caused by weather, breakdowns, management difficulties or other issues (and some particularly ugly ones right now!), the provincial dweller feels the effects through interruptions to supply. One day Jimmy found he was down to his last drum of diesel. It was close to Christmas, and the regular trading ships were all busy carrying passengers to their families for the holiday season. What to do? Luckily he had been to Australia last year, and had seen a demonstration by Kokonut Pacific of a diesel engine running on 100 per cent coconut oil. A qualified mechanic, he understood the principles of diesel engines and was impressed by the demonstration, though he had some questions about the long term sustainability of the alternative fuel. Right now, however, his tractor needed fuel to continue the coconut oil production and transportation operations in his district, which provide livelihoods and commerce for many remote families. Selecting some clean coconut oil of his own production he mixed up a batch with 50 per cent diesel and poured it into the tractor.

"Magic!," was the report. "After repeated fills and regular use in all conditions, the tractor is still running 'sweet'. Now the truck, pickup and small generators that run the coconut oil plants are all running on half coconut oil. Jimmy readily admits that he was forced into taking action by the need to keep his machines running, but now he uses it all the time. 'I always have some available,' he says. 'By using it to supplement diesel supply, it keeps fuel costs down and makes us less reliant on the irregular shipping. Besides,' he added, 'it makes less smoke and sure makes the engines smell better!'"



ESCAPING THE IRON CAGE OF EDUCATION: new paradigm in learning integrates transcultural and transcendental sustainability

"Education is in need of a new worldview and a new story if it is to free itself from the belief that public education requires the mass production model of the factory to succeed," writes Sohail Inayatullah in his introduction to an exciting new book scheduled for publication in June: *Neohumanist Educational Futures: Liberating the Pedagogical Intellect*. From educators Inayatullah, Marcus Bussey and Ivana Milojevic, the book breaks new ground by linking neohumanism with pedagogy and futures thinking.

"The challenge is how to engage with processes of deep change. The educators represented in this text all argue that such transformation requires a neohumanist sensibility - recognition of the need for transcultural and transcendental sustainability.

"At the individual level, neohumanist education recognizes the absolute importance of self transformation through reflective praxis - living

in the world while transcending it; at the social level it links the individual with the generation of a new civilizational narrative that reframes structure, allowing it to be porous and stripping it of the power of 'necessity'. In this way it escapes from the trap of method in the hands of structure, which can only ever result in new forms of violence.

"In this lies the paradox of neohumanism. It provides us with a method to teach beyond method. Earlier attempts to escape from the iron cage of 'education as information transmission' led to the creation of beautiful yet doomed systems of innovative classroom practice. These 'methods' were generated at a time when the deeply compromised nature of knowledge, the stamp of knowingness, was not yet fully appreciated. In the west it had really only been Nietzsche who had foreseen this danger."

While acknowledging its debt to the wisdom of spiritual practice, Sohail Inayatullah argues that

neohumanism and neohumanistic education is best situated as a "transcivilizational global pedagogy".

Its conceptual framework is based on the futures methodology of Causal Layered Analysis, which 'unpacks' contextual influences on visible events. These events and occurrences are influenced by, and in turn influence, the systems from which they emerge and to which they contribute. The systems themselves are the product of individual and societal worldviews - which in turn are born of the mythologies that inform our sense of who we are.

"Neohumanism aims to relocate the self from ego (and individual maximization), from family (and pride of genealogy), from geo-sentiments (attachments to land and nation), from socio-sentiments (attachments to class, race and religious community), from humanism (the human being as the centre of the universe) to Neohumanism (love and devotion for all, inanimate and animate, beings of the universe)," writes Inayatullah.

For full story, see www.futuresfoundation.org.au

Throughout the 20th century, educators sought ways to escape from a system of education that has changed little since medieval times. They found it narrow and toxic - not to mention hierarchic, reductionist, punitive, soul destroying, conformist and misguided based on the concept of the factory, according to the authors of this new book. Early visionaries challenged the medieval/industrial model by designing 'Methods', syllabi and curricula that fostered creative, joyous and liberating engagement with learning. In this way they hoped to build a better world. Sadly the official structure of the education system proved too rigid to accommodate such change. Instead, it continued to insist that the proper place for a teacher was above the student, that students be trained as workers for a competitive global economy, and so on. Teachers who sought to change from within the system were forced to engage with the system's own logic, ruling out transformative change. Here, now, is a new approach -- "a method to teach beyond method".

When the snake is the teacher

Cartoonist and philosopher Michael Leunig shared his delightful views on education, among other things, with Andrew Denton on the ABC's *Enough Rope* on May 8.

"...children want to learn.... you can't stop them learning and so you've got to provide, it's a matter of provision. You create an environment where they are keen and eager, and curious... for instance, my daughter, Minna, loves her horses. She has a couple of horses and the horse is the teacher at that point. When they're walking across the paddock, the paddock is the teacher, the snake that crawls in front of them is the teacher. When they're helping fix a fence or fix the pump, that is the teacher. Children's eyes go to things, they sparkle when they see something, so you say, 'OK, we'll go there. We follow that'. You follow things."

Full transcript at www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s1632



What's wrong with the official future?

An Australian futurist's chapter in a forthcoming book reviews what we think about the future and what we are likely to do about it. Party as long as we can? Pray as long as we can? Or challenge the official future and save the world?

We need to think less in terms of a 'wealth-producing economy' and more about a 'health-creating society', writes futurist Richard Eckersley in a book to be published in London (*After Blair: Politics After the New Labour Decade*; G. Hassan, Ed.).

Reviewing a host of surveys that show marked change in people's perceptions of their lives and leaders, he offers alternative future scenarios which invite different societal responses: Apocalyptic nihilism; Apocalyptic fundamentalism; and Apocalyptic activism. (Or party as long as you can; pray as long as you can; or challenge the official future and save the world.) His intent in describing these alternative futures, he said, was to highlight the way people, individually and collectively, can respond very differently to the same perceptions of threat and hazard.

"In recent decades we have witnessed a profound loss of faith in a future constructed around notions of material progress, economic growth and scientific and technological fixes to the challenges we face. This demise of the 'official future' is of utmost importance, but remains largely ignored in public and political debate. We are still to understand its full implications."

Eckersley's main concern is not with changes in the external world but with the subtle and complex relationship between those 'outer' changes and the 'inner' world of thoughts and emotions, and what this means socially, politically and personally.

A summary of his chapter follows. Full text is at www.futuresfoundation.org.au.

Going for growth - but....

The 'official future' prioritises economic growth as the basis for improving quality of life. This position is shared by all governments and major political parties - a 'policy constant' largely beyond scrutiny or debate -- whether the leader is Bill Clinton or George W. Bush, Margaret Thatcher or Tony Blair. However, quality of life is not the same as standard of living, and how well we live is not just a matter of how long we live. Advocates of material progress not only oversell the benefits of growth; they also ignore the social and environmental costs of growth processes, or assume they can be compensated.

Increasing income confers large benefits at low income levels, but little, if any, benefit at high income levels. Life expectancy levels off at a per capita income of about US\$5,000, and happiness at about US\$10,000. Across countries, happiness is more closely associated with democratic freedoms than income, and is strongly linked to equality, stability and human rights.

"we need to see that growth itself is not the main game"



Public perceptions of quality of life

Declining quality of life is apparent in people's perceptions of life today -- the heart of the case against the official future. Studies reveal levels of anger and moral anxiety that were not apparent thirty years ago. There is growing concern that the state of Australian society - rougher, tougher, more competitive, less compassionate - is producing stress, edginess and a sense of personal vulnerability.

Suspensions of the Apocalypse

Perceptions of the future are increasingly shaped by images of global or distant threat and disaster. Evidence suggests that we are being drawn in at least three directions towards alternative future worlds that might be described as follows:

Apocalyptic nihilism: the abandonment of belief; decadence rules.

Apocalyptic fundamentalism: the retreat to certain belief (secular or religious); dogma rules. Neo-liberal economics is also a form of fundamentalism.

Apocalyptic activism: the transformation of belief; hope rules.

Agents of change

Studies by American researchers reveal that about a quarter of people in Western societies are 'cultural creatives'. They represent a coalescence of social movements that are not just concerned with influencing government, but with reframing issues in a way that changes how people understand the world. In the 1960s, these people represented less than five per cent of the population: now they are 26 per cent. Surveys show that 25 per cent of Britons and 23 per cent of Australians aged 30-59 had 'downshifted' in the previous ten years by voluntarily making a long-term change in their lifestyle and earning less money. Beyond those who are changing their lives are many people who are thinking about it.

Beyond growth, towards sustainability

Sustainable development is challenging material progress as a framework for thinking about human betterment. It seeks a better balance and integration of social, environmental and economic goals and objectives to produce a high, equitable and enduring quality of life. Rather than casting the core question as pro-growth or anti-growth, we need to see that growth itself is not the main game. *ff*

ABSOLUTE FRIENDS: *is fiction stranger than fact?*

Q: Why would a futures journal want to review a new thriller from a best selling author? A: Because John le Carre's latest novel, *Absolute Friends*, illuminates key issues affecting the future more powerfully than anything we could write.

Futurists, as you know, explore the future. They encourage others to do the same. As with any exploration, it helps to know precisely where you are when the journey begins.

That knowledge isn't easy in today's world. Many of the things we thought we knew turn out to be political spin, manipulation of the truth to suit private agendas of power or money. (For more on this, see Harold Pinter's Nobel lecture - *Future News* March 2006 or at www.nobelprize.org.)

Anyone who doesn't go along with the dominant - that is, the political leaders' -- view of the world is labelled "left", "progressive" or one of any number of other terms designed to consign alternative views to the margins. But, as futurists know, new wisdom comes from the margins. That's where change begins, just as ice melts around the edges.

It is the wisdom of the past that becomes locked into institutions, some of which decay into irrelevance as the world changes around them.

Alternative views, these views from the margins, are often available from the far-sighted even at the beginning of a sequence of events. They're simply not heard. For example, check out our own special issue of *Future News* of September 12, 2001, which argued for reconciliation, not revenge. How long has it taken for the dominant view, imposed by political leadership and the power of supportive mass media, to be undermined, challenged and ultimately devalued by the slow erosion of emerging truth?



"John le Carre takes the futures message to the world with dramatic power"

Remember the "war against terrorism"? The "weapons of mass destruction"?

Daniel Ellsberg pointed out years ago that the patterns of US conservative political leadership that had led the world into the Vietnam War were being resurrected to create the Iraq catastrophe. And now the pattern begins to repeat itself with Iran and perhaps Venezuela, another oil-producing nation.

It was Ellsberg, of course, who released the Pentagon Papers - documents showing the American people had been deceived about Vietnam -- which in turn triggered the Watergate scandal that ended Richard Nixon's presidency. With hindsight, he says, he should have done it sooner. That's why he was speaking out about Iraq. But the war machine rumbled on, making millions of dollars for the US defence industry and possibly protecting US access to oil as it killed thousands of women and children in the name of "democracy".

John le Carre has chosen to use his talent and his power to speak out, too, this time in the form of fiction. He describes with his usual skill, peak incidents in the evolving lives of an English student who meets and befriends an East German activist. Their friendship plays out its astonishing drama against a backdrop of world events involving various regimes and the people who fight them -- and the people who fight *them*.

Like his previous novel about the pharmaceutical industry, *The Constant Gardener*, this novel tells us that le Carre - like Harold Pinter - has set out to do much more than merely entertain. He is tearing off our blinkers, offering the world a clear vision of itself that is both unexpected and chilling. At the same time, he reminds us of the modest needs and desires of the ordinary person, living in the kind of world we used to think we understood.

The growing gap between those who wield the power and those who have given it to them is revealed, again, with power and clarity. As *Publishers' Weekly* said: "This is a book that offers a bitter warning even as it delivers immense reading pleasure. No reader, whatever his politics, could fail to be moved by the passion and intelligence of le Carre." *The Observer* in the UK agrees: "Few could fail to be thrilled by the unbridled rage that fuels his storytelling....".

So if your serious reading on geopolitical futures has been putting you to sleep lately, try this instead. It's not comfortable, but unfortunately, nor is the probable future.

John le Carre takes the futures message to the world with dramatic power: unless we can alter the trajectory of change we will be leaving a troubled globe for our children and theirs.

Jan Lee Martin

Signals in the noise

Try before you die..... teens test religions

More than a third of young Australians say they are unsure about their beliefs and almost three-quarters think there's 'something out there' -- some sort of greater force, according to a survey by the Christian Research Association. Meanwhile, the debate about what they should be taught in school continues: compulsory religious studies, or none? Emily Maguire suggests a third way: a compulsory, wide-ranging religious education course that does not preach or proselytise for any faith but would examine the impact of religious belief on art, literature, science and human development.

Sydney Morning Herald

April 3 and 19 2006

New studies back benefits of organic diet

Organic foods protect children from the toxins in pesticides, while foods grown using modern, intensive agricultural techniques contain fewer nutrients and minerals than they did 60 years ago, according to two new studies from the US and the UK.

Inter Press Service

March 4 2006

A handbook of wisdom

"At a time when poor choices are being made by notably intelligent and powerful individuals, this book presents analysis and review of a form of reasoning and decision-making that is not only productive and prudent but also serves a beneficial purpose for society." Reviewer Michael Marien comments that wisdom appears to have much to do with outstanding futures thinking.

Future Survey

February 2006

Graduate program in dialogue, deliberation, engagement

The Fielding Institute has announced an expansion of this program to the University of Sydney, Australia. The distinctive program focuses on recent innovations in dialogue, deliberation, and public engagement featuring faculty who have played key roles in developing these approaches. To learn more please visit <http://www.fielding.edu/hod/ce/dialog/index.html> and join an information teleconference and conversation with core faculty.

Deliberative Democracy eBulletin

25 April 2006

Polls fail to detect apathy

Party politics in the West represents a victory for disillusion, not democracy. Phillip Adams argues that "what's happening at the ballot box is as threatening as bird flu." Ever fewer Americans are engaged in the political process....people are opting out. "If the trend continues all governments will be minority governments. The majority will vote with their feet and head for the shopping mall.

The Australian

28 March 2006

future news -- TEN YEARS AGO

Business executives hold key to sustainable futures

Business executives can do more than most to secure the future of humanity, according to Australian futurist Richard Slaughter. In doing so, they will create a better future for business itself.

Dr Slaughter's work explores some of the actions that present generations can take to avoid "stealing the future" from unborn generations. As a first step, he proposes an alliance between the long-term thinkers of major futures study centres around the world - what he calls the "institutions of foresight" - and the practical achievers of business.

"The work of the world's best thinkers and writers is clearly indicating that business as we know it is over," he says. "A simple continuation of business-as-usual attitudes and practices leads inexorably to futures no sane person would wish to inhabit."

Leaders in the corporate sector now understand this. That is why we are seeing a shift in corporate values, a growing recognition of the wider role of organisations in society and acceptance of social responsibilities. More compelling still, we now have clear evidence from a range of sources that short-term success is frequently achieved at the cost of long-term prosperity - for an individual, an organisation or a society."

According to Dr Slaughter the major social formations - government, business, education, media and so on - are caught up in learning lags. Most of them are still operating in industrial-age assumptions which have been outdated by new knowledge from many disciplines. However he and other futurists believe that more and more people are making the vital paradigm shift which releases them from industrial age assumptions and allows them to see that a viable future demands a different ethos.

...and in the same issue...

US survey reports 'growing anger' at corporations

The Preamble Center for Public Policy in Washington DC claims a new survey shows Americans are becoming angry at big corporations.

"Americans have not lost their anger at government, but now they have decided that large corporations are the major cause of their growing economic insecurity, and they are fuming about recent corporate behavior," said journalist Peter Montague.

The item points out that citizen and political action could capitalise on this hostility, but Montague says it would be a mistake to overstate the findings of the survey.

He identifies some of the hot issues (layoffs at the same time as profit increases, firing full-time workers in favor of temps without benefits, firing older workers and replacing them with younger workers on lower wages) and reported that most people now see corporate greed as a greater problem for the economy than government corruption, waste and inefficiency.

Future News November 1996