

# The 'Information Age' and its friends

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## *Part II of Mark Burdman's report on the Toronto World Futures Conference and related perspectives for industry.*

In testimony July 24 before the House of Representatives Space Science Applications Subcommittee of the Science and Technology Committee, White House science adviser Frank Press declared that the United States would not have an Apollo Project-scale space program again until "well into the next century." Press cited budgetary constraints and other economic priorities as necessitating a decades-long postponement of U.S. participation in the space race.

Press's declaration in Congress was not relayed to the attendees of various seminars on the space program at the First Global Conference on the Future across the border in Toronto, Canada. Yet at the same time these attendees were being systematically conditioned to the "reality" that an ambitious U.S. space program may never occur again because of scarcities on earth.

This was also the week the Soviet Union had launched a Vietnamese cosmonaut into space and circulated information that it was nearly ready to launch into space a permanent 12-man station, the first of its kind.

The juxtaposition of these events, and the further reality that the Soviet Union may soon be literally light years ahead of the U.S. in space exploration, research, and military-related applications of space technologies, challenges the American population to take a harder look than ever at the reasons for this country's economic, scientific and technological regression.

Given the roster of eminent corporations that sponsored the Toronto conference and the abundant display of kookery at the event, either we must conclude that the corporate boardrooms of IBM, Xerox, General Motors, and many banks and oil companies have been infiltrated by KGB moles successfully boring from within against Western capitalism, or we must find a better explanation.

### **Deployment against NASA**

At bottom, what the Toronto Conference brought out is how extensively North American policymaking

elites are entrapped in their fascination with the notion of a "postindustrial" or "information" society.

These parallel notions were developed during the 1960s by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization command, and circulated primarily through the Malthusian Club of Rome International and the Sussex, England psychological-warfare Tavistock Institute. During the 1960s and 1970s, many corporate elites, especially in the communications-electronics field, disseminated "postindustrialism" throughout the Anglo-American command structure.

In Toronto, the ascendancy of the Club of Rome's founder and executive director, Aurelio Peccei, was complete. Conference chairman Frank Feather of the Canadian Association for Future Studies identified Peccei as the "inspiration" for the entire event. Two of Peccei's Club of Rome cohorts, Sol Linowitz (former Xerox chairman and now Carter administration special envoy) and Michael Michaelis (of Arthur D. Little), sat on the Board of Directors of the World Futures Society, the sponsoring institution for the conference.

"Postindustrialism" was created explicitly as a counter-operation to the NASA space-program, which catalyzed an unprecedented interest in advanced science and technology among broad layers of the American population.

The "postindustrial" advocates put forth the lunatic notion that breakthroughs in American technology associated with the space program had propelled the United States into an era in which the pursuit of industrial growth would no longer be a desirable goal. The contrary view saw NASA as the best agency for a new scientific-industrial revolution that carried untold promise for all nations.

For the "postindustrial" advocates, NASA would strictly be the catalyst for a new range of communications-related technologies that would help usher in a "society based on information."

“Postindustrial” theorizing has always gone hand in hand with Aquarian kookery. Most obviously, this is so because it seeks to undermine what for most adult Americans is an unstated but stubborn commitment to industrial growth. “Postindustrial society” becomes synonymous with turning the world into a cross between Marshall McLuhan’s neo-feudalistic “Global Village” and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. The predominant media/communications-related interests encourage an attitude of trivial pleasure-seeking and general irrationality that undercuts the “work ethic” commitment of an industrially and scientifically advancing polity.

“Postindustrialism” is also justified by convincing people that “industrial society depletes resources.” By contrast, an “information society” is affirmed to be “resource-efficient,” since manufacturing microelectronic products requires relatively little energy input.

### Phasing out capital formation

In the words of slow-growth advocate Robert Hamrin, a White House and Environmental Protection Agency economic adviser who spoke on the theme, “The Management of Economic Opportunities in a Time of Constraints”: “The influence of industrialization and capital-intensive production should be lessened in the upcoming information economy.”

Hamrin is not exactly a household word, but his views are significant. In 1974-78, as staff director for the Joint Economic Council, he oversaw the multivolume study on the U.S. economy for the decade 1976-1986, which promoted the “information age.” He has also been funded as a Rockefeller Foundation fellow, and is now on leave from EPA as a leading staff consultant for the President’s Commission on the 1980s.

The oddball theory comes full circle when it redefines the very notion of a “resource,” which is no longer the raw material input for capital formation and labor power. “Just as capital and labor frame the problems of an industrial society,” Hamrin writes in his new Club of Rome-recommended book, *Managing Growth in the 1980s: A New Economics*, “information and knowledge will frame the problems of postindustrial society.”

From here it is a small step to equating capital formation with “looting Mother Earth,” as many Aquarian ideologues are wont to do.

“It is likely,” Hamrin writes in his official Toronto conference paper, “that in the 1980s traditional, routinized manufacturing, such as the textile shipbuilding, steel, shoe, and small consumer appliance industries will be ‘drawn out’ of the advanced industrial countries and become centered in the new tier of rapidly developing countries, including Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Algeria, and Nigeria.”

Similarly, conference speaker Felix Kaufman of the Michigan-based Science for Business Inc. consulting firm labeled the blue-collar worker a “dying breed,” since “the 1980s will see a great shift in manufacturing to poorer countries with large numbers of low-wage workers” and “there are so many factors against construction of traditional factories in countries like Canada that it doesn’t make sense to build them.”

A variant on the same theme was enunciated by Herman Kahn, the Hudson Institute think tanker whose reputation is that of a growth advocate, but whose function seems to be to serve as a convenient foil, or devil figure, for the Aquarians. In one plenary presentation, Kahn expressed his sympathy for the “limits-to-growth” beliefs of youth in the advanced sector “since they are already wealthy,” but stated that this concept was not workable in the developing sector, which requires growth. Anybody who has seriously confronted the shortage of skilled operatives and advanced scientists and technicians in crucial sectors of the U.S. economy knows that what Kahn is saying is asinine.

The turn toward hedonism, drugs and Aquarian irrationality by thousands of young potential scientists and engineers over the past 15 years has had a devastating effect not only on the United States but on the Third World, which requires high rates of U.S. capital formation and the development of skilled operatives to provide the necessary materiel and manpower training programs required to escape famine, drought, and desertification during the 1980s.

Kahn, Hamrin, et al. are essentially propagating a variant of the “British disease,” a disease lauded in Bernard Nossiter’s 1978 book, *Britain: A Future That Works*, written when he was *Washington Post* London bureau chief.

The survival of a human skyline is another aspect of the British choice, on insistence that things must not always take pride of place before people. It is not inconceivable that other post-industrial states will make similar choices. As a matter of economic strategy alone, they are likely to leave conventional industries more and more to developing peoples in other parts of the world. They are likelier to pursue energetically the new knowledge-arts-entertainment sector. . . . In the same way, post-industrial nations . . . too may find that some jobs can be humanized only by doing less of them, either by working at a slower pace or abandoning them entirely. As rich societies insist on more satisfying work, they are likely to reflect on Britain. Then, instead of serving as a warning, Britain will teach a lesson, serve as a model of sorts in tomorrow’s world



Earth Day April 1980

## Willis Harman on postindustrialism

*Stanford Research Institute social-theorist Willis Harman, a disciple of LSD cultist Aldous Huxley, outlined to the Toronto Futures Conference his interpretation of what the concept "information society" would mean for the development of the U.S. economy. In his July 22 speech, Harman stressed the ascendancy of "quality of life" thinking over capital formation and upgraded standards of living.*

*Harman's speech takes on interest from two standpoints. His systems analysis work on "alternative lifestyles" was what initiated the Aquarian Conspiracy in the 1966-73 period, and Stanford University was the origination center for much of the early work on a new "information age." Harman's speech was entitled: "The Information Age."*

... When phrases like "the information age" are used, often people have very different pictures in their minds which can be given three different names: the "information society," the "knowledge society," and the "learning society."

A familiar argument for the "information society" goes like this: Originally, every industrial country was agrarian, with the largest number of workers on the land. After the Industrial Revolution, the fraction of workers involved in industrial production increased steadily, and the fraction of agricultural workers decreased. Then, more recently, the fraction counted in the "services" increased and came to predominate over the production fraction. Now we are moving into a period when the largest fraction of workers will be classed as "information workers." ...

But there will be limits to this type of society. There will still be a high correlation between economic development and use of resources and between resource use and the environment. Planetary constraints have to be taken seriously. ... Also, a lot of people

will say, "I like sanity more than technology," and there will be consumer resistance to omm aspects of the information society. ... The knowledge society will recognize the planetary limits to production. There will be a "re-rationalizing" of the economy: quality, not consumption will be the key. ... There will be an appropriate technology emphasis, typified by the hand-held calculator and the well-made hand tool. Work sharing will bring increased leisure to all, and much of this leisure will be used in the pursuit of knowledge. Informal gift and barter economies will flourish and decentralization will be the order of the day. ... Mindless consumption will rank low. ... There will be more local self-reliance, and work will be a scarce commodity that has to be rationed."

The "learning society" is based on the term used by Robert Hutchins [former University of Chicago president and founder of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies] from his book, *The Learning Society*.

In this society, there will be a renaissance of interest in things transcendental, a re-spiritualization of our institutions. We see this in the new interest in "consciousness research" and "transpersonal psychology." ...

The recent historical model for this is the Freemasonry of the Founding Fathers, symbolized by the eye on top of the dollar, which means work in the service of the divine intellect. ...

The evolution of ideas like this demonstrate to me that now we are not in an economic recession, but in the beginning of a transition period with some institutions collapsing and others building. This will have some rather disruptive aspects. ...

Of these models, the momentum is toward the "information society," and many are made anxious by the thought of departing from "a parth that has worked." However, there has been a significant social counterforce arising in the form of social movmments, e.g., "conserver society," "appropriate technology," "voluntary simplicity," "holistic health" in the industrialized countries and "alternative development" in the developing countries. A strengthening voice from the Third World insists that a just and sustainable global order will require that the rich countries drastically reduce their consuming tendencies. There is a growing sense around the globe that somehow the industrialized world will have to become much clearer on man's relationship to the natural living and life-support processes and on his spiritual connections with the total environment.

Photo: Linda Ray/NSIPS

According to Hamrin, the "information society" is not a model or a future, but a present and developing reality. Fifty percent of the workforce, he claims, is currently engaged in "information-related" activities, while only 20 percent are involved in industry. Furthermore, he notes, a document no less prestigious than the 1976 President's Report on National Growth and Development has already officially acknowledged the phenomenon as the prevailing vector of the U.S. economy by declaring: "The U.S. 'post-industrial society' is coming to be recognized as a services economy in which the dominant feature is information." The President's Report, Hamrin added, "singled out computers and communications as vital growth industries now spawning an economics of abundance in our information resources rather than the economics of scarcity that tends to characterize energy and other natural resource sectors."

With the White House propagating such ideas, what is left for the U.S. are several "tasks" to be carried out "in the new information economy era," including: "To rechannel the present narrow thrust for growth and its associated materialistic ethic" and "to foster economic policies and practices centered around stewardship toward nature."

A commensurate "change in our energy budget" toward soft technologies, Hamrin stresses, would "reverse the decision in the Hamilton-Jefferson debate that actually went in Hamilton's favor, not in the political arena, but by the dominance of the fossil fuel era of the past 150 years." By choosing soft-energy paths over nuclear, he notes, there will be a return to a "Jeffersonian scale," in which "by comparison to today, communities would be smaller. There would be less need for mobility. Smaller technologies would tend toward more generalized ownership and therefore more distributional equity. More labor-intensive production, lower consumption, and emphasis on durability, repair and recycling. The focal point of social organization would necessarily return to a Jeffersonian scale centering on the individual, the family and local communities," Hamrin writes.

The United States has been socially engineered in this direction already: "When people truly become satisfied with less or with staying where they are, then we will experience an effective type of social limit [to growth]. . . . What the social limits concept is really saying is that the more immediate limits the United States faces are limits of demand rather than supply. . . . The consensus that has arisen in such a short time on the dominance of social limits to growth and their impact on growth beginning in the 1980s is so complete that it almost smacks of conspiracy."

The upshot is that an "information economy" can-

not coexist with a workable space program or with such promising future energy options as thermonuclear fusion power. Unquestionably, the Toronto Futures Conference was organized on the basis of foreclosing exactly those future paths which present the most promising and challenging goals for mankind.

In the case of fusion, its potential was dismissed by the conference organizers. Of the scores of speeches made in energy-related panels, only one, that of Professor Mohammed Abdou of Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois, dealt specifically with fusion, and the conference organizers made sure that Abdou was "balanced" by an antinuclear soft-energy advocate—who received all the publicity in the next day's "Future Focus" conference newsletter.

Similarly, only one out of the approximately 25 plenary and keynote speakers even mentioned nuclear fusion. This was Marvin Cetron of Forecasting International Ltd. in Arlington, Virginia, who spoke at the last day's plenary, declaring: "We need fusion power! It's the best energy source potential for the future around. That's where we should spend our money. We should put our money into an area where there is a payoff, and I'm talking about fusion." Cetron was immediately followed by World Bank economist Mahub al-Haq, who dismissed Cetron as ignoring Third World realities, and no subsequent speaker even mentioned fusion again.

Such conference gurus as "alternative futures" writer Hazel Henderson actively lobbied against fusion. In an interview with *EIR*, Henderson proudly identified herself as a "veteran of the fusion holy wars," launched into a diatribe against Princeton Laboratory tokamak director Dr. Melvin Gottlieb, and dismissed fusion as an "exotic technology."

The conference operations against the space program were somewhat more subtle, since space exploration is very popular in "futurist" circles and an anti-space program attitude as such won't get very far. What was done instead was to deploy social science and related quacks to use the Rand Corporation's "Delphi" technique to manufacture a "compromise" between the NASA people in attendance and the soft-energy advocates, who oppose the space program as too "centralized" and "wasteful of resources." By the time this process was completed cumulatively in a series of seminars, any hope among conference attendees for an Apollo-type project was deadened.

### **The Delphi technique**

How this process operated in Toronto was most evident at three panels on the U.S. space program.

At the first, on July 20, an architect of the U.S. space-shuttle program, NASA scientist Jesco von Putt-

kamen, was preceded by a mock dialogue between LSD guru Timothy Leary and "cornucopia" futurist Herman Kahn. What began as a presentation of differences between the two ended up with them finding areas of commonality, or, in the words of the moderator, "conflict resolution between false polarities." The resolution in part revolved around the space-exploration program, with self-professed "hedonistic pagan" Leary leaping out of his seat to cry, "A space program would galvanize and harmonize Americans and solve the problem of reindustrialization," and Kahn answering, "I would be prepared to spend \$10 billion on the space program to turn people on."

Three days later, at a forum on "Long-Range Space Goals," matters got even worse. Following a sane attack by retired NASA rocket scientist Konrad Dannenberg on President Carter's "inadequate" space program and a factual presentation on the Spacelab program by European Space Agency representative Jan A. Bilvoet, University of Alabama sociologist Donald Tarter proceeded to give a ranting 30-minute presentation on how "Malthusian realities" on earth such as increasing population, scarce resources and inflation could well force the triaging of the space program altogether! To nary a whimper of protest, Tarter concluded: "We must acknowledge earthly limits and constraints. Pro-space groups should increase the awareness of their members of limits. At the same time, the Malthusians and neo-Malthusians should work with Herman Kahn. . . . Technology is on trial with the public after Three Mile Island. There is fallout from Three Mile Island on Huntsville and Cape Kennedy [NASA installations]. Let us be cautious. Let us not let dreams outpace reality. Let us work with the opponents of the space program to deal with the limits that *imperil* the space program."

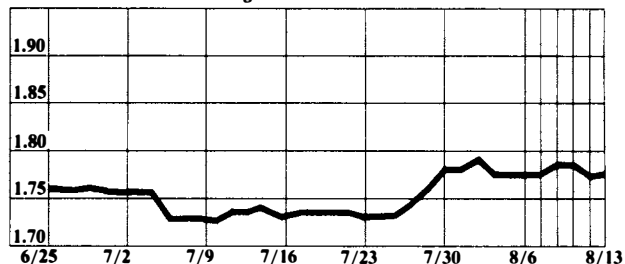
Tarter's presentation occurred the day before Carter science adviser Frank Press's declaration in Congress that the space race would be sacrificed in the face of growing economic problems. Tarter's Delphic "unity of opposites" presentation was social conditioning to cushion the impact of Press's policy statement.

Similarly, on July 24, on a panel on "Space Industrialization," space affairs expert Charles Chafer of the Public Affairs Council in Washington responded to the question, "How do we deal with advocates of a decentralized soft-energy path when we are arguing in favor of a centralized space program?" by stating: "Tailor your arguments to their bias. by-technology basis. Not all the technologies of the space effort are adverse to the desires of the soft-energy advocates. This is a form of conflict resolution, developed at the Department of Energy, under the name of environmental mediation, to work with the environmentalists."

## Foreign Exchange

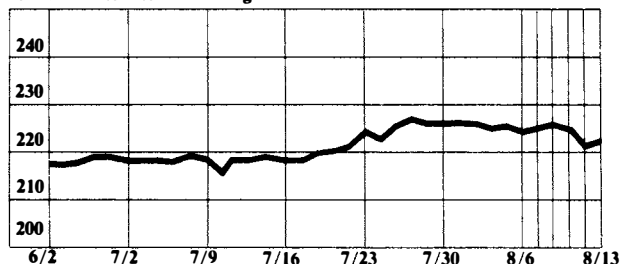
### The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



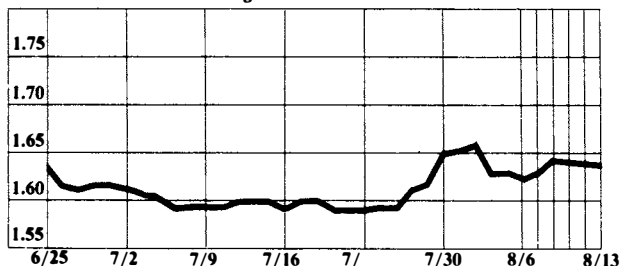
### The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



### The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



### The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing

