
Documentation

Newt Gingrich's New Age kookery

For all his talk about "traditional values," and of "renewing American civilization," Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), soon to be the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, is a New Age kook. The "third wave," "information age" of Alvin Toffler, which Gingrich praises so highly, is an anti-capitalist piece of lunacy; for Gingrich—a self-described "conservative futurist"—it becomes the "right-wing" counterpart of the "left-wing" Aquarian Conspiracy: Both are intended to induce an anti-industrial paradigm shift away from the principles of American System economics and scientific progress on which this country was built. To give the reader some flavor of this, we provide some excerpts from a speech delivered by Gingrich to the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 16.

We're going to replace the welfare state, we're going to reassert American civilization, we're going to develop the opportunity society, and we're going to move into the information age, and we're going to compete in the world market, and we're going to reassert civic responsibility, then anybody who's willing to work within that framework, we want to have a total dialogue with and we want to accept good ideas from everybody who agrees on the general direction. But we don't particularly want to have a single ounce of compromise with those who still believe that they can somehow improve and prop up and make work a bureaucratic welfare state and a counter-culture set of values which are literally killing the poor. . . .

But I want to walk you through a few big ideas, because this will give you a sense of where I believe we have to go in the next two years. . . . I think that [Peter F.] Drucker's *The Effective Executive* is the best single book on citizenship for the 21st century. Drucker is a remarkable student of management, and every citizen in the information age is, in fact, an executive, and I believe that the new addition of Alvin Toffler's *Creating a New Civilization, The Politics of the Third Wave*, which was produced by the Progress and Freedom Foundation, gives you a sense of the direction we have to move in in terms of the information age. I believe that to solve problems—this is a model I use very explicitly and I will use in the Speaker's office—that there is a four-layer hierarchy of visions, strategies, projects, and tactics. This is part of what confuses the Washington news media and the Washington establishment. We have a very clear general vision which I'm going to give you in just a minute. We

are trying to design a series of strategies within that vision. Projects are the building blocks of a strategy. And a project in my mind, because it's an entrepreneurial model, is a definable, delegatable [sic] achievement. It's getting something done.

And, finally, you have to have tactics that fit where you are going. . . .

I think that there are five parallel changes we have to make, and we badly need the Heritage Foundation's help intellectually in helping us understand how to make them because they have to occur simultaneously. All five have to be occurring in an interlocked, synergistic pattern for it to work. The first is the transition from a bureaucratic, mechanical, second-wave society to an information-age, third-wave society—I'm using Alvin Toffler's model where he said the first wave was agriculture, the second wave is industry, the third wave is information. . . .

The second major change we have to have is to have a thorough inventory of America to make sure that we are competitive in the world market. Let me make it very clear, we are in the world market; you couldn't get out of the world market if you wanted to. We are permanently in the world market. The question is: Are we going to win and be competitive and be successful in the world market? And I would argue that we should have an inventory which reviews litigation, regulation, taxation, education, welfare, health, the structure of government—looks at all of it. . . .

The third thing we have to do is literally replace the welfare state with an opportunity society. Now, I was a little surprised on Sunday and Monday because I was asked what should do in the long run, what should be our focus be on dealing with the very poor. I believe we should have a conscious strategy of dramatically increasing private charities. . . .

The fourth big change, after moving into the information age, learning how to compete aggressively in the world market, and replacing the welfare state with an opportunity society, is to reassert American exceptionalism. . . .

Which gets me to my final point, and this is the most radical, and I don't understand it very well and we need the most help with it, and I'm totally convinced it's true. The experiment we have had with professional politicians and professional government has failed. . . . In fact you have to be engaged, you have to be involved, that we have to reassert civic responsibility. And for that purpose I want you to look at this one little chart. . . . There are four boxes here, you'll notice, within this framework. They start on the upper left hand with culture and society and work their way down through civic responsibility to free markets and the pursuit of happiness to a limited effective government. . . .

It's going to take a lot of effort. It's going to take help from [the] Heritage [Foundation]. It's going to take help from all of our conservative allies, from the radio talk show hosts. . . .