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ALVIN TOFFLER ON FUTURE CHANGE

by

R.C. Geary

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I ALVIN TOFFLER'S BOOK

This book\* has the supreme merit that it makes one think. One's conclusions may differ from the author's even on his own very voluminous data and may differ more on attaching weight to factors of which he is deemed to take insufficient account. Let the eloquent blurb speak for itself:-

"Future shock is the most startling survey on the present weakness of our society and its future yet written. It is about change and how we adapt to it. It is about those who seem to thrive on change as well as those multitudes who resist it or seek flight from it. It is about our capacity to adapt. It is about the future and the shocks that its arrival brings.

"Jobs are changed more frequently, homes moved, fashions adopted and discarded, knowledge gained and outdated, ideas created and used up faster and faster; marriage, possessions and information become increasingly temporary; sub-cults and ways of living and working become more diverse. Totally new concepts in biology and technology reduce us to naive visitors in a world set on an acceleration course towards advances far exceeding anything that man is yet psychologically or morally prepared to live with.

"Not surprisingly, we feel disorientated. We contract the primary disease of the future - future shock. The symptoms are already apparent: they range from anxiety and senseless violence to physical illness, depression and apathy. Victims often display erratic swings in interest and life-style, followed by an effort to 'crawl into their shells' through social, intellectual and emotional withdrawal. They feel continually aggravated or harassed and want desperately to reduce the number of decisions they must make.

"We cannot arrest the future but we can come to terms with it".

The book is admirable in its scaffolding. Its contents pages display not only the titles of 20 chapters

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\*Future Shock. A study of mass bewilderment in the face of accelerating change." By Alvin Toffler. (The Bodley Head, London, Sydney, Toronto, 1970, £2.50)

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but of the 120 sections, so that perusal of these latter alone tell the reader a good deal of what the book is about, if one has sometimes to take a deep gulp to swallow titles like, "Catholics, Cliques and Coffee Breaks", "Twiggy and the X-Mesons." There are 426 notes, a bibliography of 359 titles and an excellent index. Let us look at some of the author's facts.

#### Evidence of Accelerating Change

Early on he quotes George Thomson: "the nearest historic parallel with today is not the industrial revolution but rather the invention of agriculture ..." and, for Herbert Read, today the historic point is possibly "the one that took place between the Old and the New Stone Age." Of the last 50,000 years, there were 800 lifetimes; of these 650 were spent in caves. "Within the same lifetime a society ... not only threw off the yoke of agriculture, but managed within a few brief decades to throw off the yoke of manual labour as well. The world's first service economy had been born", i.e. in the modern economically active populations, those engaged in services form the majority. Nothing is said about leisure and how to cope with it, surely a major problem of the future. "Leisure" and its nasty stable-companion "boredom" do not appear on the author's index.

A major point in the book is that change is occurring at an accelerated rate. Dr. Bhabha is the authority for the statement that "half of all the energy consumed by man in the past 2,000 years has been consumed in the last one hundred". Without doubting that what has happened is something like this, one statistician would like to have a look at Dr. Bhabha's method of estimate of world energy consumption during the middle ages. And

France, of all countries, is cited as exemplifying industrial growth rate, pre-last war and post-war! Mr. Toffler's own country, U.S.A., shows on the whole, a more or less constant rate of growth in real GNP per head per annum since 1789 (S. Fabricant?). And U.S.A., the most economically advanced country, is naturally the main source of the author's reflections on super-industrialization, over-choice and all the rest.

#### Elements of Future Shock

It is impossible to list here (let alone discuss) all the elements of future change the author deals with - the shorter lives of buildings and longer lives of people, increased travelling and migration and its effects on education, increased recourse to drugs, sex permissiveness, test-tube babies, tinkering with heredity, hippies and other fall-outs from society, sub-cults, human organ transplants and many more. We are scarcely surprised to learn that too much change has had deleterious mental and physical effects on individuals, because too much of anything whatsoever has these effects. And it is impossible to attribute any social evil to a single cause. The mind boggles at the thought of the kind of equations one would have to evolve for full elucidation of social cause-effect.

The effect of the book and his own reflections going well beyond it was one of exhilaration (qualified by the sobering thought that he was unlikely to experience much of this future). Change is life. Stagnation is death. Change, thanks be to God, is taking place all the time. This book could have been written when the wheel, the steam engine, the internal combustion engine or the aeroplane were invented.

Despite the fact that most individuals expect, indeed hope, that tomorrow for them will be much the same as today, the obviously very successful resistance to undesired change (operating through consumer demand, the polling booth and otherwise), the gradual adaptability to change of the great majority in the reasonably long term is to be marvelled at.

All (with striking exceptions) is grist to the author's mill from musical comedy to excellently described social experiments. Chapters are liable to start with the tale of a New York taxi-driver who is also a rodeo expert, a child born old. A critic must point out that most taximen are not rodeo riders and most children are born young. There are too many adjectives and adverbs and verbs tend to be too active. But one of the author's adjectives is absolutely right, when he refers to the "obscene contrast between rich and poor" (page 430). Yet the word "poverty" is not in his index, whereas most thinkers agree that this is one of the major problems of the future; that is it is not dealt with systematically, starting with now, there will occur a "future shock" which will imperil the survival of civilization and then there won't be any future to speak of; only a fresh start as in Thornton Wilder's play "The Skin of our Teeth". World poverty is a greater menace to survival than is the atom bomb; both are related, since the bomb would be used in a Poverty War.

#### Change and Unchange

The author tells us that he coined the words "future shock" in 1965 and worked for the next five years on the book. And one can well believe that he worked very hard. Unfortunately the book leaves one with the

impression that the author set out to prove a thesis, which is an unscientific attitude. Of course, all research starts with some hypothesis but the researcher must keep an open mind as to acceptance, qualification or rejection in the light of the facts and train of argument. There are many good things here - it is a treasure-house of well documented fact - but scarcely of an open mind.

The book could inspire, or provoke, another work, perhaps entitled "Future Unchange" which might not be as interesting as "Future Shock", because change is more titillating than stability and better documented. At the spiritual level the author of such a work would find religion likely to persist, not so much in a fragmentation of subcults (which are of their nature ephemeral, though they will always be there in some form) as in the great historic faiths. At the mundance level he would understand the force of Voltaire's affirmation "If there weren't a God it would be necessary to invent Him" (initial capital H the commentator's!) If he finds mention of God in any context embarrassing and unfashionable, he will at least recognise that the vast majority of mankind are decent people, have always been so, that their standard of conduct is improving and, with the explicit recognition of decency in future, likely to improve more. He will find the present generation of young people, or that great majority unpublicized for misdemeanours, a very splendid generation.

Vast numbers of things, rightly called "goods", which have persisted down the ages, will continue unchanged in function in their relation to man, though possibly changed in the way they are made. The prestige of that immortal trio wine, woman and song, is undiminished.

So is that of art, in essentials, and of natural beauty, if threatened by pollution. We are reminded that future effort must be consciously directed towards preservation of all these precious things against spoliation by industry and vulgarity.

### Bureaucracy

The author, in the face of alleged super-change rejects, as a myth, the Kafkaesque and Orwellian nightmare in which "each man is frozen into a narrow, unchanged niche in a rabbit-warren bureaucracy ... squeezing the individuality out of him". To the extent that in free democracies there was even a threat of bureaucracy in the above sense, the author's finding is welcome. One of the signs of the times, however, is well-organised movements amongst the people resisting attempts of authority to push them around, and these movements, likely to continue, will be a salutary check on any tendency towards bureaucracy (in the pejorative sense). From long experience, the present commentator can aver, with confidence, that in its higher reaches civil service had "infinite variety." A president of an Irish university remarked that "the crisis of today wipes out the crisis of yesterday." If "crisis" be too strong a word, the civil servant's training should enable him to adapt. A characteristic of the competent civil servant is his ability to cope with change and, even if rate of change accelerates, one can have every confidence in the future civil servant being able to deal with the problems that arise. The public service can absorb future shock. Not only in the public service but in every sector, whether change be rapid or slow, there must be organisation. A fossilized organisation is an incompetent organisation.

The author has coined an ingenious term "adhocracy" for the organisation (if it can be so termed) which is to supplant bureaucracy. This commentator holds that the good organisation man has always had to face ad hoc events and, even granting that these are to increase, he will be able to deal with them; if he is very competent, he will even welcome them. For the author, a fundamental change will occur necessitating change in terminology. For this commentator, what may be involved is merely a change in degree.

#### Organizational Hierarchy

The author has an interesting point that within the organisational structure, hierarchy is likely to "collapse", since the job of each specialist is to become so particular to himself. This commentator thinks that "collapse" is too strong a term. The good organisation can change hierarchical forms has always been able to do so. But in the organisation there must be hierarchy. We may freely grant increased individual competence and responsibility. The fact that one person, or a very small body at the top, must make decisions implies hierarchy down along the line. But hierarchy need not imply master and man status with orders given and accepted, but rather cooperation to a common objective, the decision-maker knowing far less about the details than his staff on any particular job, and frankly admitting it, but having the particular eclectic talent to select the points that matter for making a decision. Relations tend more and more towards discussion and consensus, instead of fiat, as formerly. Ordinary observation goes to show that this very welcome change of status is happening all the time. One hopes that it will continue at an accelerating pace, giving more job-satisfaction to the individual and redounding to the efficiency of the organisation, i.e. to

the common good.

Economics

The author has hard words about economists "the world's economists, traumatized by that historic disaster [the great depression] remain frozen in the attitudes of the past." Economists lack imagination in concentrating solely on means whereas "the super-industrial revolution challenges the ends as well."

"Before such a revolution the most sophisticated tools of today's economists are helpless. Input-output tables, econometric models - the whole paraphernalia of analysis that economists employ simply do not come to grips with the external forces - political, social and ethical - that will transform economic life in the decades before us? What does 'productivity' or 'efficiency' mean in a society which places a high value on psychic fulfillment?"

As this commentator has in the past been extremely critical of the discipline of economics his defence of economists may be suspect. We may go along with the author that the pursuit of happiness is a worthy aim, (if this is what the author means by "psychic fulfillment") if we remain skeptical (as Thomas Jefferson was) about attainment, for nirvana is a kind of death. We recall Sancho Panza's "the road is better than the inn". Down the ages the equation wealth = happiness has always been questioned and never more so than at the present day. We even question that rugged American reply (to the Thoreausque simple life argument) "Money doesn't buy happiness but it buys a dam' good substitute." It is of course undeniable that people should seek happiness, or tranquillity or peace of mind or psychic balance, whatever term one chooses, rather than material wealth.

But it is cant to deny that increased material wealth is conducive to the happiness of the poorer classes, the great majority of mankind. A few economists think that their "mission" is to the poor only, rejecting the implicit thesis that if total wealth increases, all benefit equally. They don't.

The author gives several examples of the present-day concern of large industrial concerns for non-material welfare, apparently altruistic. And there are also the benevolent activities of the great foundations, financed by past profits of giant firms. This commentator finds it hard to believe that future super-industrialization will concern itself with ends which are not directed towards increasing profits, even in socialized states where industry is owned by the people. For all one's wish that the sum of human contentment should expand, one doubts whether sub- or super-industry should be its instrument. However, there is room for rational difference of opinion here. Kindness is welcome wherever or however it appears. If in business concerns, however, it is liable to be labelled "paternalism". It is remarkable how, in the English language, words like "paternal", "love", "intimacy" and many more, enshrining fine ideas, have become debased verbal currency. It is a sign of the times.

While no economists or economic statisticians are satisfied with their "most sophisticated tools," it is an exaggeration to describe economists as "helpless". Their difficulties stem mainly from lack of sufficiently up-to-date, accurate and relevant statistics. With mathematics and the computer always improving, there should be no trouble about methodology. The mathematicians have done their homework.

All planning and forecasting depend on the hypothesis that future behaviour will be broadly similar to past behaviour and that relationships based on past experience will subsist in the future, hypotheses which obviously have the less validity the further the time horizon, which only means that one must provide for change in one's models. If all economic events were random in past and future there would of course be no point in these exercises. - But then again there would be no point in having economic statistics at all. Of course, the situation in the past was never like this. In the short term one is more struck by the stability of economic statistics than by their variation; there is also some degree of random variation, which is a real problem; but there are some valid relationships. Analysis of the facts of the past are worth while as a guide to the future, with elements of uncertainty.

Economists in setting up their models are entitled to argue that they can isolate meaningfully the factors for which statistics exist; that they are aware that other social factors exist; that not infrequently they possess statistical proxies for such missing variables, for example in comparing a social variable "good conduct" they may use as a negative proxy the number of indictable offences as percentage of population.\* At the Centenary Banquet of our Statistical Society in 1947 the then Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán F. Lemass T.D. brought down the (largely statistical) house with his peroration "The best things in life are not measurable by statistics" and, he added, "we may fervently pray that they remain so".

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\* But see statistical caveat later, in Part II.

Now we are less sure. Experience goes to show that when statistics are not available or "with the best things in life" not even conceivable on any aspect, that aspect tends to be overlooked. These include happiness (or peace of mind or any of its synonyms) love, piety, though statistical ingenuity may sometimes provide proxies for these. Those interdisciplinary social studies, which are so much the fashion nowadays, in aspiration if not yet in achievement, must include all social aspects, non-materialistic as well as materialistic (which can be roughly equated to those for which we have statistics).

Admittedly a lot of the foregoing comment in this section is irrelevant to the author's thesis, so the commentator will come quickly to the point that he agrees largely with the author. The explicit goal of social science (using the term in its widest sense) must be to make people happier.

#### What to do about it

The most important chapter in the book is Chapter 20 "The Strategy of Social Futurism" - or, in simple terms, what is society to do about future shock. Here this reader found so much to agree with, sometimes enthusiastically, so much good sense for everyone, that he found himself at pains to discover why he differs at all with the author, having discounted the writing for a strong tendency towards exaggeration of language. Even here the reader will sympathise recalling William O'Brien's dictum "I exaggerate to make my point".

The nub seems to be that the wealth of data presented and discussed by the author is journalistic in character; through much of the work man is biting dog.

In unmetaphorical terms most of the analysis in the other chapters bear on minority phenomena. Of course, society has to cope with these phenomena but, in so coping, prudent authority must never forget the interest of the unnewsworthy great majority who get into the Births, Marriages and Deaths columns only, and then only when they pay. Politicians usually forget all about them except at election time, whereas minorities have disproportionate power in the lobbies, with the help of the press. This commentator, in passing, seriously proposes to the media that they should try in future to publicize the lives of decent men and women who constitute the great majority of mankind. Not being a journalist, he doesn't know how. All people have their triumphs and disasters with which they sometimes heroically cope. Many lives are more worthy of biographies than are those that appear on printers' lists. The other evening I spoke to a lady of my own generation. Her father was a working farmer with primary school education. He sent nine of his twelve children, mostly girls, to the university (sixty years ago!) and all made successes of their lives. Surely this is more heart-warming than is the story of the latest divorce of some Hollywood starlet (albeit with her shapely picture) and other newsfodder of that type. I do not presume to teach newspapers, radio and television their business. I have, however, every confidence in propounding what I conceive to be a major problem of the future. The media have some responsibility for the low moral tone and sense of insecurity of people everywhere (e.g. treatment of news in Ireland in the past three years), for their distorted selection of news. They must try to mend their ways in future, in being concerned to present a more balanced view of life.

Randomness of Shock

But back to the author. In this final chapter we are told of an MP exclaiming that "Society's gone random" and a social scientist that "the rate of change increases at an accelerating speed ...; and this brings us nearer to the threshold beyond which control is lost." There is a vast volume of appeal for this kind of thing throughout the book to quoted authority (who may, for all this reader knows, prove their statements) but there is nothing like proof in the book itself; and this reader counters this thesis with the antithesis "Even if faced with accelerating change, ordinary people, the majority of mankind, who have shown themselves wonderfully adaptable in the past will prove themselves better able to do so because they are learning better how to resist undesired change." Ortega y Gasset, not a name in the author's index, reminded us in the 1930's, at the apogee of the dictators, that the people would always win through at the end, whatever their form of government, and ardent revolutionaries every here will do well to note that ordinary people everywhere are bourgeois in their aspirations.

There is a very puzzling section entitled "The Death of Technocracy" which begins "What we are witnessing is the beginning of the final breakup of industrialism and, with it, the collapse of technocratic planning". This, on the face of it, is nonsense; indeed the author, in citing the USSR plan, Le Plan of France and of a few other countries, disproves his statement. He might have added every country and every large firm in every country and (implicitly) every individual who has reached the age of reason. By careful reading it turns out that what the author means is only that the plans are not comprehensive enough and are too short-term. One has

to remember that for the author "technocracy" is a naughty word which leads him on to another of his naughty words "economics", in fact he tends to equate the two and he sums up "Technocratic planning is econometric." "Technocratic planning is short-range." The economics and economists of the book are largely figments of the author's imagination. As already stated, the fact that economists think they can isolate economic entities for analytic purposes must not be taken to mean that they are unaware of Mr. Lemass's "best things in life." Has the author not heard of Pigou's "Economics of Welfare" or can he deny the broad humanity of Alfred Marshall or, for that matter, of Adam Smith? In the last sentence of "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," J.M. Keynes refers to "the soul of man" - scarcely indifference to non-materialistic values! And, as to the alleged shortness of the planning term, it is many years since the very active organisation ASEPBLT was founded. The initials (in English translation) mean "The European Association for Medium and Long Term Forecasting". As this writer edited, and contributed to the first book produced by this organisation, he can assure the author that planning economists are acutely aware of these problems. "To transcend technocracy, our social time horizons must reach decades, even generations, into the future". Quite. But why "transcend" - why not "expand"? Especially since the social inter-disciplinarians will almost certainly be using the mathematical tools invented by the abhorred technocrats?

#### Futurist Organisations

"One of the healthiest phenomena of recent years has been the sudden proliferation of organisations devoted to the study of the future" and the author gives many instances of such organisations. This writer shares the

author's enthusiasm. The author makes the fundamentally important point that a single group of experts at the top is not enough. Each community, down to the smallest should have its group of futurists, well-informed about the views of technologists, technology being more predictable than the social effects of this or that technology in operation. The most important function of the groups will, however, be to study these possible effects. These studies are not exercises in crystal-gazing but, ultimately, to influence decision. The purpose is "not so much to predict the future, but, by examining alternative futures, to show the choices open" (C. Bertram, London, quoted by the author). The author might be reminded that, interpreted mathematically, this is exactly the approach of the Netherlands Plan Bureau for many years, in the economic context.

"Corporations must not remain the only agencies with access to such services. Local government, schools, voluntary associations and others also need to examine their potential futures imaginatively." If the author implies that amongst "others" are included "individuals with ideas", this commentator is in full agreement. Unless such individuals enter politics, which they rarely wish to do, their ideas are disfranchised (in the sense of being utterly ineffective) in the British parliamentary democracy we operate in these islands.

Another very apt remark in this Chapter 20:  
"As we move from poverty towards affluence, politics changes from what mathematicians call a zero sum game into a non-zero sum game. In the first, if one player wins another must lose. In the second, all players can win." And may the non-zero sum, in economic and cultural values, be as large as possible.

"One way might be to assemble a small group of top social scientists - an economist, a sociologist, an anthropologist and so on - asking them to work together, even live together, long enough to hammer out amongst themselves a set of well-defined values on which they believe a truly super-industrial utopian society might be based". One notes, with interest, that, pace earlier animadversions on "technocrats", the economist is mentioned first. And one assumes that "utopian" does not mean impossibly idealistic. In line with the author's earlier recommendations, one assumes that such a body would set down all the options open, with full discussion of all specific proposals, the pros and cons of each and their inter-relationships, perhaps with their own recommendations, but mainly as a guide to discussion in all the agencies, down to the thinking individual with full feedback. One can easily imagine, indeed one might anticipate, this small group's recommending in affluent societies a lower rate of advance in real GNP (the present most sacred cow) if this would bring about some other social good, e.g. a more equitable distribution of income, or a reduction in that social abomination, inflation.

"What would its (the imagined society's) family structure be like? Its economy, laws, religion, sexual practice, youth culture, music, art, its sense of time, its degree of differentiation, its psychological problems?" There are many references to religion in the book, invariably in contexts like this. There is no specific references to religion as a great social force. Obviously religion does not play a large part in the author's system and thinking. Taking a contrary view, this commentator will argue later that there is little hope for a "utopian" society, on the strictly terrestrial plane, unless and

until our daily conduct is impregnated with the thought of God. Does the author need to be reminded that the inventor of the word "Utopia" is a saint of the Church, one of the greatest? The Ten Commandments still enshrine a great social code. This being so, in this commentator's system "sexual practices" within the family would be somewhat circumscribed.

"If the humanization of the planner is the first stage in the strategy of social futurism ..." Excellent! The author might agree that the word "planner" could extend to "administrator". In a modern society, while there will always be scope for private charity, the great bulk of social welfare must be administered by government (though with maximum devolution). Even though civil servants in their private capacity may be the kindest of people, they have to administer under acts of parliament which are necessarily formalistic having in mind "The greatest good to the greatest number", with its unhappy corrolary "the devil take the hindmost". A change must be made so that every individual in the nation can approach government with the least formality and receive, as of right, a sympathetic hearing, financial help and guidance, no matter how exceptional his problem. This commentator has given much thought to this proposal for application in his own country - space does not allow for details - and he is convinced that great good would come of it, at comparatively small cost. Nothing would do more to restore the prestige of government, which everywhere is in decline.

"Thus Todd Gifflin, a young American radical (student) ... notes that while 'an orientation toward the future has been the hallmark of every revolutionary (movement) ...' the New Left suffers from 'a diabolical

in the future'... He succinctly confesses 'We find ourselves incapable of formulating the future.'

The author finds elements of elitism (the desire to be boss, pushing other people around) and a "passionate penchant for the past" in student movements. Perhaps one should probe a little deeper (remembering one's own student days). The mood then was one of dissatisfaction at the state of the world and therefore of its institutions. Lacking knowledge of consequences and most else, over-simplified solutions made an irresistible appeal. The main differences between student bodies today and a half-century ago is that they are now more numerous, more sophisticated and better organised. Establishment should recognise the generous elements in student movements, their main impulsion, and students might realize the imperfection of their knowledge and experience. In other words both sides would benefit by the exercise of the Divine virtue of Humility. But authority must recognise that student revolt, i.e. of young people at their most self-conscious, intellectually active years, is natural, a phenomenon to be anticipated, a manifestation of personal liberty.

Of great interest is the author's citation of the words of W.R. Ashby stated to be a "mathematically provable law that "when a whole system is composed of a number of subsystems, the one that tends to dominate is the one that is least stable." A kind of Social Gresham's Law! The point here is the independence and elitism of the subsystems, weakening society so that the wilder subsystems have disproportionate power. Contrarywise: in a society confident of its values, would thousands of us walk to work for weeks because one employee (justly or unjustly) is dismissed by a bus company?

"To master change, we shall therefore need both a clarification of important long-range social goods and a democraticization of the way we arrive at them ..."

"The time has come for a dramatic reassessment of the directions of change, a reassessment not made by the politicians or the sociologists or the clergy or the elitist revolutionaries, not by technicians or college presidents, but by the people themselves. We need quite literally to 'go to the people' with a question almost never asked of them 'What kind of a world do you want ten, twenty, or thirty years from now?' We need to initiate a continuing plebiscite on the future". The author might accept the following gloss on this excellent statement, to this writer's mind the most important in the book. Expert groups (including some of those mentioned in the quotation) help to formulate the question, to advise as to the choices open. The people give the answers. Of course, we must not idealize "the people" in these contexts, the vast majority of whom can't or won't think (one nearly adds a fervent "Thank God") now or ever. But in even the smallest social units there are people who can, and who would make true democracy work (for the first time?), and can we not try to increase the number of thinkers in society?

"Highly paid executives, wealthy professionals, extremely articulate intellectuals and students - all at one time or another feel cut off from the power to influence the directions and pace of change". Full agreement, if all adjectives and adverbs be regarded as expunged from the statement.

"To master change, we shall therefore need both a clarification of important long range social goals and a democratization of the way in which we arrive at them. And this means nothing less than the next political revolution in the techno-societies - a breathtaking affirmation of popular democracy".

### Communications

The author is enthusiastic about the social potential of improved communications and this commentator agrees with him:-

"The encouraging fact is that we now have the potential for achieving tremendous breakthroughs in democratic decision-making if we make imaginative use of the new technologies ... that bear on the problem. Thus, advanced telecommunications mean that participants in a future assembly need not meet in a single room, but might simply be hooked into a communications net that straddles the globe..."

"The mass of voters today are so far removed from contact with their elected representatives, the issues dealt with are so technical that even well-educated middle-class citizens feel hopelessly excluded from the goal-setting."

This writer's own comment is that the revolution in telecommunications is overdue. The manifest worsening year after year in the official post and telegraph services - in Ireland one now pays six shillings for a telegram "Deepest sympathy", the ordinary letter rate was recently increased at one go by 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % and days of delivery reduced to five - makes drastic change in the whole system an urgent necessity. The writer has his own ideas about how to break this monopoly.

May a statistician make a special appeal at this point, bearing on official economic and social statistics. Almost the principal reason why control of national economies is so ineffective is the delay in availability of so-called "current" statistics. The result is that crises are constantly on us without sufficient warning necessitating too drastic reaction which invariably has its own usually unanticipated deleterious effects. The alternative - much to be preferred - would be to be in a position to observe developments almost daily and, knowing the signs, take corrective action (if required) gradually. So crises, often with their aftermath of human suffering and financial loss, would be avoided. Methods of collection of current statistics are in drastic need of overhaul, the modern telecommunications systems being largely the instruments therefor.

## II. APPLICATION TO IRELAND

We have control of our political destinies for just fifty years; this is an appropriate time for drawing lessons from our experience for future guidance. Regard must be had to Toffler's ideas which bear mainly on the impact of change due to novelty, signs of which have made their appearance only during very recent years. It is at least equally important to examine in a fundamental way the principles which we in Ireland accepted (usually implicitly) for our guidance in the past. Do these principles require modification in future? If examination discerns good in these principles and our practice with them, they should be preserved, in preference to new and untried principles. The point is that it may be difficult to preserve them in a rapidly changing world. In the fundamental examination proposed, principles new and old must be identified and made explicit and our conduct as individuals in future governed (to repeat, explicitly) by these principles.

The first principle is Reason, implying knowledge and logical argument. We reject irrationalism. The level of discussion of public issues (inside and outside politics) is not high in Ireland. As a substitute for thought in existing or probable future circumstances there is a proneness to refer to dead and gone authority, usually irrelevant, because applicable only in entirely different conditions. Of course, the methodology (of thought) of great thinkers has eternal relevance.

Reason will be a guide to action, to qualify the word "action" by the adjective "right". Reason must be governed by Charity to each individual to which

it is to apply; in the spirit of Lamartine's (?) "the heart has its reasons that Reason doesn't know". Pure reason (with full knowledge) will probably be a sufficient guide to right action applicable to most people; its dictates will usually have to be modified in its application to minorities.

Reason in debate is at a low ebb in Ireland and is worsening, if statements of these are increasing on matters of public interest - scientific theses, which still reason, are explicitly excluded from this statement; but science has a lowered prestige, as Toffler points out, in this age of irrationality. It is especially irritating when a case is carefully constructed, point by point, to find discussants on the general topic starting their contribution "I disagree" (without the smallest indication of points of disagreement) and then giving their own views, as if the original paper were never written. The writer writes with feeling on this topic for he has often had the experience. Non-scientific writers in the press are too prone to write on this or that, the tone being that they were the first to think of it. Always thesis, never antithesis or synthesis. This attitude must be explicitly recognised as irrational and steps taken to eradicate it.

Man and God. Fundamental principles are surely involved here. Years ago, in the writer's studies on emigration, he was struck by the fact that, though emigration was (and is) popularly regarded as an evil (which it isn't) no public odium attached to the many people who emigrated "voluntarily" (involving another misleading distinction). This attitude, of course, is as it should be, but what instinctive or implicit principle guided the people, justifying this apparent contradiction? It took the writer some time to discover this principle, which seems

an excellent one "The individual is the fundamental unit in Irish society: his/her needs and aspirations are paramount; and he/she are the best judges of their own interests". It implies individual Freedom, perhaps the most fundamental principle of all. It is a corollary that the spiritually and materially poor individual is not free.

Our Constitution has something relevant to say. Paragraph 41.1.1<sup>o</sup> reads:-

"The State recognises the Family as the natural and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law".

In the subsequent paragraph woman (but not, explicitly, man!) is recognised because "by her life within the home woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved". The emphasis would be quite different if man/woman were the fundamental unit. It is true that the paragraph quoted refers to "unit group". The new principle would mean that the family, state, school, job are all groups conducive to the good of the individual. The groups cited are secondary, in this sense. The individual is paramount. The individual must be protected from tyranny within the family, quite common in the past, happily less so in the present. Of course the individual principle would require qualifications, e.g. as regards children for whom discipline is necessary for their protection. Also within the family, adults (for their full development) have rights as well as children. So much, here, for Man!

And God! If an all-powerful, all-knowing God exists, he must be fundamental principle in our out daily lives. Do the Irish believe in God? If most of them were asked, they would answer with an emphatic Yes. If one probed a little more deeply one would find that most believers followed a particular denomination because it was the religion of their fathers. A lucky few have had the experience in their formative years of abandoning their traditional form of religion and refinding it or another after a process of ratiocination. Religion is probably more deeply felt for such people, who must be few in number, as confined to the minority who can think. Incidentally the few who have abandoned religion after thought and knowledge are to be respected. Their argumentative presence in a society is to be welcomed since they keep Faith active and alive.

In Irish belief, formalism plays a considerable part and we make undue drafts on the virtue of Faith and perhaps too little on Reason. (Seeing the mess theologians have got themselves into, mainly on trivialities, our Irish reliance on Faith may not be such a disadvantage after all). Probably the majority of Irish actively believe in God, people who not only practice their religion but turn to God in their trouble. Most of these people are poor people and the public ignorance of God in our every day affairs (notably in the media) is tantamount to our ignorance of ordinary people. If and when we give the people power, God will come into His own as a mighty Principle conducive to the greater mundane happiness (in particular their sense of security) of the people.

In Part I we quoted with approval Toffler's proposal to assemble "a small Group of top social scientists" whose function would be to initiate discussions on "a set of well-defined values on which they believe a truly super-industrial utopian society might be based". There follow some too brief notes on too few topics which such a group might discuss in Ireland.

The writer wants to be clear on the status of these notes. They are not to be taken as representing in any case his fully-thought-out position. He is incompetent and unknowledgable about most of the points he seems to take a definite attitude about and is more than open to conviction, a remark which also applies to many of his expressions of opinion in Part I. More than anything he is concerned to take an extreme position, to be sure that such options will be taken into account, to be sure that the group's examination will be fundamental. At all costs he wants Toffler's group (hereinafter called the "Council") to be as different as possible from a government commission (of which he has had much experience) and which invariably finds for the status quo (with perhaps some changes in the colour of the wrapping paper). Of course the Council may find in favour of the status quo in this or that, but this can happen only after the fullest exercise of reason and knowledge and full regard to basic principles first firmly set down.

The people might respond to an imaginative lead.

#### Religion\*

In Ireland the vast majority of people are Christian, most are Catholics, and most Catholics "practice" their religion. The quotation marks require explanation.

\* "Everything is permissive in the permissive age except raising the subject of moral standards" (Editorial in The Sunday Times, 15 May 1971)

Practice means that we attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays, refrain from eating flesh meat on Fridays and so on. Prior to Confession we "examine our conscience" and perhaps, on the whole, let ourselves off lightly, particularly as to "love thy neighbour as thyself". We try to build up a good deposit in the Bank of Heaven to serve us on the Last Day (or some of us hope "it will be all right on the Night"), our daily conduct being but little influenced by our religion.\*

In Catholic practice in Ireland, is there too much formalism and not enough sense of God and Charity in our daily lives? Preachers have asked this question often enough, but what is our answer? Preachers lack credibility because of the cry-of-wolf element and the fact that we associate preaching with our Sunday-practice. Think of what would happen to anyone who, on discussion on strategy or tactics within the great monopolies (industries or trade unions), or in negotiations between them, raised the question "But is that proposal in accordance with The Ten Commandments?" Or even if he asked "Is it just?" or "Is it for the common good?" As matters stand, such questions are barely conceivable.

They are becoming even less so as we move towards affluence. Religion is a consolation for the poor only; there is more than a grain of truth in the socialist jibes of "pie in the sky" and Marx's "opium of the people".

We have smiled in a superior way at the Chinese hordes during the Cultural Revolution waving the little red books "The Thoughts of Mao" and it is not suggested that we ever send our people into the streets waving

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\* In the famous disputation on the nature of truth between J.E. Newman and C. Kingsley the Irish habit of telling small lies became an issue and Newman defended us in kindly fashion. Nothing was said about perjury.

"The Thoughts of Jesus" (because Catholics do not like evangelical zeal and anyway there is no guarantee that such formal and organised manifestation have any influence on day-to-day conduct). One has, however, an impression that Communism has been more successful than has Christianity in making the Communist faith influence personal conduct. Of course, we don't know if this be true but we should try to find out and, if true, how Communists do it. One surmises also that with improved material wellbeing, the force is weakening in Communist countries. As we said before, people everywhere tend towards bourgeois habits and mentality whatever their public image and assertion.

The real practice of Christianity in our daily lives might become a major principle for our future guidance.

The Council will be expected to examine the quality of Irish Catholicism and, if necessary, and after the fullest discussion at all levels, make proposals towards its day-to-day practice for improving the quality of our lives. It will be recognized to be not so much a problem for Churchmen (better preaching etc) as for application by individuals and by their secular groups so that their conduct will be better informed by moral principle.

In the first place the Committee will recognize (in the context of permanence) the historical significance of Irish Catholicism. Before 1919-1921 Ireland's political and military history was a succession of disasters, compounded by treachery; its adherence to the Faith is the only success story in Ireland's history. Therefore it will be prudent to take full and explicit account of the Faith in planning for the future, by conviction, of course, not by force. The Council will note that Ireland took

like a duck to water, to the considerable modernization of religious practice resulting from Vatican II, though we are generally regarded as a conservative country, a good augury for our reaction to future change of all kinds.\*

A thought on hypocrisy, that ugly sister of religion. Once when anything dire was about to be inflicted on the people, announcement thereof was prefaced by a routine "We regret the inconvenience to the public but ...." Probably this was abandoned because it was regarded as hypocritical. Hypocrisy is scarcely a desirable attribute but La Rochefaucauld had this good to say for it

"Hypocrisy is the homage that vice path to virtue."

Hypocrisy implies the working of, therefore the existence of, conscience. The permissive society preens itself in its destruction of hypocrisy. May an observer suggest that in eliminating hypocrisy they may have eliminated virtue (defined in the wider sense) as well. With rare foresight, in its application to a well-publicized minority, the English called the executive heads of their universities Vice-Chancellors. No, hypocrisy is not the worst state.

#### Government and People

The system of British parliamentary democracy which, on independence, was adopted as the form of government in Ireland, has worked fairly well. However, after just fifty years' experience, it is time to examine whether it is the system best adapted to the country's needs, with what lights we have, or can imagine, of the shape of things to come.

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\* There was no objection to the change in the Mass from Latin to the vernacular. The Irish people even accepted the response "And also with you" to "The Lord be with you" (noble in any language), possibly in the reflection that it might have been worse "That goes for me too". The feelings of one Christian are deeper about the change in the Gloria from the soul-stirring "men of goodwill" to "men who are God's friends", but he offers it up for his sins.

One needs a fresh eye to see how strange a system it is. It involves political parties, i.e. groups of elected representatives who are doomed (stet!) to think alike, the group with the largest number forming the government, the rest the opposition. It is extremely unlikely that such a government would, at any time, be the individuals in the Oireachtas best fitted to govern, i.e. the group which would act most prudently under internal<sup>or external</sup>/stresses. It is when these occur, i.e. when the people require protection, that government is most important. Of course decision on any matter does not in theory rest with the government but with the Oireachtas as a whole; in most cases, in practice, it does, and when it does the Taoiseach has the largest "say".

An alternative system would be of the Oireachtas, the Committee of the Nation, electing its own Chairman and executive (the government) without regard to politics and discussing and voting on every issue on its merits. Politics would be irrelevant, and the game of political point-scoring with its attendant discourtesies "out".

Political parties would cease to exist. Perhaps the process will begin by a congress (An Árd/Eheis) of the three existing parties, from which there will emerge a Declaration that they will work together for the common good an agreed eclectic programme\* What will transpire ultimately is not One Large Party, as this might lead to tyranny - but 150 or so individuals who will think for themselves, instead of tamely following the whips into the lobby chosen by the party, whatever they think. An important effect of the proposed change is that it is

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\* This time without a large picture of the leader at the back of the rostrum, that curious practice in Irish parliamentary democracy. Through the OLP machine and, in particular, its Secretary.

likely to improve the quality of public representation, in attracting candidates for whom the rough and tumble of present-day politics has no appeal.

The two largest parties owe their origins to a major political cleavage in 1922, but this difference has ceased to have any meaning. It is doubtful if there is any real difference between any of the three parties, in their basic philosophy, pace their political programmes - perhaps only some difference in priorities. By real difference one means that if one could ascertain the real views of deputies on any given set of issues, the similarity of views and their variation would be the same in the three parties.

Politics is an irrelevance creating all kinds of false loyalties but the political party machines are very real. Despite their efforts, it is unlikely that the numbers of voters dedicated to particular parties ("card-carrying members") are many, though it is true that two-thirds of the electorate turn out at each election and most of them vote for the same party mainly because their fathers did. With the disappearance from the political scene of the big personalities of the Civil War, one surmises that political loyalties are diminishing. It is fairly certain that, under the present system, people feel that they have little influence on government, which is partly the reason why so many more of them nowadays take to the streets in groups to exert pressure on government. These "demos" indicate lack of faith in present parliamentary institutions.

(Insert A here)

Here particularly, but in all these notes, the writer must stress that he must not necessarily be assumed to endorse the foregoing proposals. The case for the continuation of present arrangements is strong. As human

A.

A long time ago the writer remarked to a visiting English professor of economics that if he (the writer) mentioned a number of political issues of importance in Ireland to a group of university people, even with differing political and other backgrounds, all would agree in their views on each of the problems, but not one of these would be accepted by any political party. His friend replied that it was exactly the same in England!

An eminent Irish political personality now retired told the writer that when he was young he visited Australia where he met Mr. Lyons, the then Prime Minister, who remarked "Mr X, I had a great regard for your late father and, at the beginning of your political career, I will give you a piece of advice. When you are addressing a political meeting, always try to think you are speaking to children fourteen years old". One often finds, in private conversation, that politicians are wise and well - informed by any standards. Somehow these qualities are rarely to be found in their speeches; instead, generalized rhetoric. Why?

There are subtleties here. A political audience is very different from a collection of individuals. The audience expects the orator to tell it what it already thinks it knows, in as vivid language as he can command. Thus Mr. H. Macmillan, as Prime Minister, wishing to convey to an audience that he intended to improve the time schedule of official statistics, stated "The country cannot travel on last year's Bradshaw". Bernard Shaw spoke of the political "leader" "following the crowd with loud whoops".

A. Continued

The writer once heard an Irish orator applauded to the echo for the phrase "the grim reaper emigration" (which went down so well the first time that it must have occurred half a dozen times in a twenty minute speech). He reflects that if the orator's son had got a good job in England, he would expect his friends to congratulate him, in his and their private capacity, of course.

Instead of "doing a good turn" for individuals in his constituency (pretence in most cases, since politicians have little influence with civil servants who merely follow the rule-book in disregard of individuals), the politician's ideal and very important role will be to explain future change, technological and other, to the people. Technologists themselves are rarely good at this. Here the politician's gifts of language and simplification without distortion will be essentially useful. He will become expert in obtaining the reactions of the people to proposed change, incidentally curbing technology of megalomaniacal and tyrannical tendency.

Practically all nationalistic politicians (with the honourable exception of Ernest Blythe), during the past fifty years, have hopelessly confused themselves and the public on the subject of the Unity of the country. The main source of their error was failure to recognise that the term "unity", which they thought of only as Unity of administration, unimportant in comparison with what everyone wants, namely Unity of sentiment, whereby all persons in all Ireland conceive themselves to be of a kin. The persisting stupidity of Southern politicians has been largely responsible for the criminal acts of violence now being perpetrated in the North.

A Concluded

Opponents of Ireland's EEC membership make much of the point that membership will limit our political sovereignty. With the destruction years ago, of the Seanad, as an influential, corrective, deliberative assembly, some curb on the Dail, external or internal, would be a positive advantage.

they are imperfect but "the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know." They are set down as emphasising the need for fundamental consideration by the Council of all conceivable alternatives.

The trade union movement must be examined under "government", as affecting the lives of all the people. In so far as principle can be discerned here, it is outdated, as applicable to 19th century conditions, when workers were the underdogs. The power pendulum has swung to the opposite quarter. Workers have power, without responsibility, a dangerous situation indeed; the term used is "workers" not "unions" because union chiefs usually exercise responsibility in the national interest; but the more they have regard to the common good the less influence they tend to exercise on a group of workers directly concerned. There is too much democracy in the trade union movement; any loud-mouthed ignoramus on the shop floor can shout down the most able union chief. Democracy works well only through the exercise of leadership, i.e. autocracy deliberately built in at various points on the lines of communication of authority.

In the past this writer has protested vigorously against the plain idiocy of "two sides" in the economy when the interests of the two sides (labour and capital) should be identical. The "two sides" philosophy is fully accepted by both labour and management, has therefore its vested interests, and is going to be hard to change.

There are three factors of production in each sizable firm (i) labour (ii) management and (iii) shareholders and of these labour is by far the most powerful. In practice, at most times there is no conflict. Even

when there is a dispute, the situation can be highly artificial. Invariably the workers start the process, say a claim for higher wages, asking for more than they expect, in the belief the higher the initial claim, the higher the settlement. Management will loyally (to the owners) fight the claim; but its members are employees, knowing that whatever the workers get they will get too; finally owners "get theirs" through the pricing system. The union aspiration of a "fairer divvy-up" (of added value), i.e. of raised wages making inroads into profits with no increase in price, is an illusion. What has always happened is that if workers get x%, the employers get x% (as indeed they should with increasing capital investment). And so, on to inflation. The unions are the "front men" for the employers, with the advantage for the employers that, if the claims are extravagant, the unions (and not they) attract the public odium. The process, as described, explains why management groups' reaction to big wage claims is so mealy-mouthed.

Inflation is good for profits and keeps less competent firms in business. Suppose the production or exchange period is a month. Materials are bought on 1st of month and labour costs remain unchanged during month. Product is sold 1st next month. If all prices (materials, labour, product) are unchanged, say costs total 95, selling price 100, profit 5. But if product price rises by 1% in the month, i.e. by 1, profit becomes 6, a huge percentage increase in profit. We cannot pursue this aspect to show how inflation is swindling most of the people all the time. It is of its nature an evil thing and its elimination must be a major preoccupation of the Council.\*

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\* Elsewhere the writer will develop the thesis that, instead of being a symptom of public unrest and insecurity, it is a major cause thereof. A currency unit of fixed purchasing power should be the great steadying influence in everyday affairs, with all kinds of civic virtues (at present lacking) flowing therefrom.

The answer is nearly obvious: participation i.e. that the workers themselves take active part in all decisions affecting the firm, from board level down. This revolution will take a long time, because workers and managements are set in their ways, but there could be a declaration of intent without delay. Of course there is no suggestion that promotion from shop floor to directorship is ever likely to occur; rather that unions will produce their own executive class, competent to take their appropriate level in business firms and some with directors' batons in their knapsacks. The transition will not be easy, the major problem one of mutual confidence, to the ultimate end that the worker entering the door of a factory will feel "This is mine." In the meantime, the declaration of intent, with greater frankness of managements to workpeople or their representatives, will begin the process of ending distrust and the destructive false philosophy of the "two sides".

Trade unions, much fewer in number, will change their character and function. They will be more like professional organisations.

Individuals, faced with all kinds of organisations, pressure groups selfishly dedicated to their own ends, are helpless. They must counter-organise, from small local societies, say parish councils, up. These societies, soviets if you like, will be the beginnings of the individual's avenue to power so that he can make his presence felt on every issue he wishes. They are part of the parliamentary mechanism and will be recognised in a new Constitution. Existing organisations of the public dedicated to particular ends may continue to exist but experience may show that it will be more effective to work through the local councils.

## Education

That the clergy are largely responsible for education in Ireland implies that saving of souls is the most important object of education. This is a major principle which believers will wish to be retained.

At the mundane level, no such principle is discernible. The Council, while recognising the magnificent contribution of the teaching Orders to Irish education in the past and in the present, must feel bound to fill this lacuna, as perhaps its most important function, since most of those who have to come to terms with the future are now at school; and it is this writer's major thesis that such adaptation cannot be efficiently effected without adherence to principle, to which every detailed proposal can be referred.

But the principles cited must themselves be analysed. In, say, "The object of education is to produce good citizens" requires definition of "good",\* and "citizen" may imply loyalty to a larger entity like the State which may conflict with "the good of the individual" (if this be a prior principle) or, at least, a difference in emphasis. "To teach pupils how to think" may not be apt to the majority or a large minority (though an objective dear to the writer). It may be necessary to stress the importance of cultural elements in education as well as the "useful" (education for jobs), pointing out the importance of culture of greater leisure, the socially egalitarian function of culture, and (a little wickedly in the prevailing atmosphere) that the word "culture" comes from "cultus" meaning "worship".

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\* A surprisingly large number of Irish parents, if asked what they wanted from education for their children would still reply they wanted them to be "good" (in the moral sense).

The Council will note the curious fact that religion (of any denomination) is not a compulsory subject in public examinations. At the mundane level, apologetics is an excellent means for teaching philosophy and logic, an introduction for young people in learning how to think for themselves (wherever their thoughts will lead them), the first essential in proper education.

The Council will (and should) announce that, as the major element of Irish culture, the Language must be saved. It will recognise that, despite devoted and ingenious methods, it is always losing ground; that its prestige is minimal compared with what it was pre-World War I, during the British regime. It badly wants an imaginative shot in the arm.

An eminent member of the Second Dail told the writer that during several annual Votes on Education the only subjects ever discussed were teachers' salaries, school buildings and Irish. To prepare us for the future the educational sub-committee of the Council must do better than this, consistent with fundamental principles guiding education adopted in due course by the people.\*

Why will not some university or institute invite some eminent Communist to Ireland as Visiting Professor in The Theory and Practice of Communism? Alexander Dubcek is the obvious first choice. The Czech Government may not release him, but they and he can at least be asked. We have much to learn.

If people could only be taught how to think and then forced to observe the rules of debate, the lunatic fringe would tend to be less populated. Too often we hear "X said ...", "Who did you say?", "Z", "That bloody fellow". Sic transit X's thesis.

\* The present-day (comparative) irrelevance is community schools. What is really important is what is taught and how it is taught: the quality of teaching, and learning...

Incidentally children should be taught how to speak, with nearly as high a priority as teaching them to write. Conveyance of information by speech is increasing in importance with the development of telecommunication.

### Social Research

It is a healthy sign that in Ireland there is genuine concern about the state of the country and the world, perhaps the main reason for the widespread public anxiety: fear is far more reliable as an active agent for remedial action than is altruism. In pubs and across dinner tables one hears "The Irish are a lazy lot," "Half the Irish are dotty", "The strikes are ruining us," or, near closing time in pubs when the company is in relaxed mood, "I'll tell you what's wrong with this bloody country..." and the wrongs cited will be nearly as numerous and varied as the complainants, and not unrelated, perhaps, to personal grievance.

Social scientists may smile at such kinds of affirmation, for their hopelessly unscientific formulation. We will be wiser to have regard to them, giving them proper analytical form, as hypotheses for analyses, by definition and classification. We must recognise the danger of popular oversimplification, the injustices perpetrated on whole peoples by such beliefs as "The Irish are this," "The Blacks are that, "The Jews are the other". If we state "The Irish are X" we mean that we can define X (if only on a scale 1 high, 2 medium, 3 low - and we can often do better) and a statistical frequency distribution of the population (or of a sample) might (or might not) show comparatively high (or non-high) proportion at 1, usually by international comparison. All this is a far cry from popular generalizations.

Yet these processes may be still more complicated. If popularly we attribute an unflattering attribute to any nation, we would probably find that the proportion of the population with this attribute is small in the absolute (even if high by international comparison). It is an hypothesis of the writer (which he hopes will some day be proved, qualified or disproved by social inquiries) that if a people are high in an undesirable attribute X (but, to repeat, low in the absolute), they are also high in non-X. The process: people with large X have the more ample opportunity of observing the harm of X, driving a higher proportion to non - X. Racialists will do well to note that the large majority of people of every nation are decent people, with a like definition of "decency" throughout. If demonstrably one nation is "better" than another according to one attribute, it is likely to be "worse" in others.\*

Yes, we social scientists should tackle the oversimplified beliefs (really hypotheses) which agitate the people. At the lowest level, nothing but good can come of ascertaining the facts; reliable statistics (even if their showing be bad) are steadying influences. And we should try to come up with firm, comprehensible answers; too often our "analysis" merely jargonize the problem, giving fine names to simple entities (like Toffler's "psychic fulfillment" for "happiness"); or, having started with the best intentions, we are beguiled by those fascinating byways, to which our method is apt, never coming up with an answer to our main problem; or the answer may be "yes" and "no", finishing up with more problems than we started with.

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\* In the old days Denmark with its hardworking people, its highly efficient agriculture, its Folk Schools, was constantly held up by Irish counsellors of perfection as an example for Ireland to follow. The writer confesses to an unholy glee on learning that Denmark has achieved a new distinction in the last few years - as a very large exporter of pornography!

Truth to say, scientific method is better adapted to minute, well-defined problems than to large, fundamental hypotheses. The writer understands that Pope Pius XII has revived the prize of one million gold francs for a mathematically valid proof of the existence of God. While the writer does not suggest this as a fruitful project for a researcher on a payroll, he freely gives his opinion to a young mathematician of genius (for spare time reflection) that the proof will be stochastic, a theory of an infinity of events each probably with a probability greater than one-half and if he be also a philosopher he will make liberal draughts on 1 Corinthians "Now we see in a glass darkly".

This "knowing more and more about less and less" is not good enough. Our Council may come up with a recommendation that social science should have a look at its methodology and its problems, as directed towards finding answers of mundane utility, much as scientists of other disciplines apply their skills in industry.

#### Economics

Since we are most familiar with economic forecasting even in the long term, little need be said about it here, though the Council may have to have specific regard to it in accordance with Council's principles, to ensure that the whole interest of Man is fully taken into account, and not only aggregate material optimization. For instance, the Council may strongly urge that particular attention be directed towards income size distribution and its redistribution through taxation and subsidy, a field practically neglected in present-day national income accounting.

It will also have to examine the validity of the current economic atmosphere. It may find the latter's favouring of non-agriculture (industry and services) as against agriculture (a diminishing way of life, chronically and substantially on the dole) as inapt for Ireland under E.E.C. conditions and for the future, in general. It will recognize that human values (mainly non-statistical) are lost in the decline of the agricultural population; whether these lost values are compensated by the gains (mainly material) by transfer of population remains to be seen. Examination might reveal that Irish unit costs of production for certain agricultural products are uniquely favourable in Europe, given our wonderful climate, on which a huge export trade could be based. Here science and technology can be very important. One suspects that in future Europe will be fed largely on products which are "agricultural" only in name, factory products like broilers in fact. Suppose Ireland continued to produce the genuine agricultural article, even with minimum recourse to artificial fertilisers. It might achieve a gourmet value and price. These may be naive reflections. The point is that the Council, with the best technical information available to it, must approach Irish agriculture in a revolutionary spirit. With greatly increased productivity the Council may be able to show that the present agricultural population can be maintained, in the dignity of just reward for labour, instead of the dole, as at present.

#### The Law

This will be a fruitful field for the Council's cogitations. Imperfections are obvious but nobody seems to worry: "the Law's delays" (which Hamlet knew), expense, method of appointment of judges, arbitrary penalties and others.

Poor men and rich men are not equal before the Law. The individual and the State are not equal. The poor man can receive State aid for litigation but this is quite inadequate. He may be assigned counsel by the Court at no cost to himself but the rich man, corporation or the State, against which he may be taking action, will always be able to pay for the services of more able counsel. An obvious reform is that leaders of the Bar (like eminent physicians and surgeons) should give a certain proportion of their services free. No man is free unless he is equal before the Law.

Judges should be appointed on merit only and not because they favour the political party in power. This is one of the practices we borrowed from England. It doesn't work well here because our choice is so limited. The fairly recent "fluorine in water" case points to a grave injustice. In this case a lady took action against the official proposal to add fluorine to the public water supply. She lost her case with costs which, it is understood, amounted to £20,000. In instances of this kind when the issue is of public importance, the plaintiff, on a certificate from the High Court, should be indemnified against expenses up to a stated sum.

An expert in the Law (which the writer is not) could point to other imperfections. Perhaps enough has been given to make a prima facie case.

#### Local Committees

The Council's function will be purely advisory. It is, however, the first body in the new dispensation; it will start the ball rolling towards Utopia. If it is successful it will inspire the formation of all kinds of

Committees, those at the geographical level being the most important because, in theory at least, the local Committee can take a comprehensive view (as distinct from that which might emerge from, say, a committee of doctors or engineers).

This Committee stage will require a good deal of preparation. It is absolutely essential that these bodies should be oriented towards the future. This does not mean that they should be composed only of intellectuals; neither does it mean rejection of intellectuality. Young people, products of schools which have thought its pupils to think, those who will have a greater vested interest in the future they must learn to live with, will clearly be well represented.

The last thing we want is the old type of County Councillor, local Bloquent Dempseys, adherents of political parties; in Ireland at present it is practically impossible for anyone, however competent he may be to serve his locality, to get elected unless he first gets himself labelled Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour. This is the main reason (the composition of Seanad Éireann being another) for the common saying "Politics are the curse of this country".

The second last thing we would want - a danger particularly to be apprehended among young people - is the extremist, always on the lookout for a Movement to take over and, having taken it over tries to mould it to his heart's desire, usually with effect of destroying it, at least its original motivation. An extremist is, by definition, one who has swallowed some other set of principles and mode of action hook, line and sinker; to the point of being incapable of contemplating, still less discussing logically, any other system. This emphatically does not mean that Committees cannot learn from all

doctrines, in detail if not acceptable in toto. The common Irish good must be paramount and the Committee's business solely discussion of the Council's document of recommendations thereon. Modifications of, and addenda to the document may, of course, be suggested, not only as for local application, but in general.

It may well be that the Council will recommend the appointment of local Organisers, trained to educate people in the spirit inspiring the work of the Council. One of the Foundations might provide the Funds.

#### Ireland as Leader

So far it might appear that these notes are the usual kind of thing "The most distressful country ...", redolent of the national inferiority complex. This would be a wrong view, since the writer has had little to say about the rest of the world which, on the whole, is in a sorrier state than we are, as regards anxiety, insecurity, absence of standards, lack of confidence in leadership and all the rest; this lot may be termed "low morale".

Whatever about us, the Irish, Ireland is singularly blessed by Nature. The countryside is of great beauty almost everywhere. Our capital city is still handsome; even some of the many <sup>new</sup> buildings are not bad and will be better in future (from lessons learned from earlier ugliness); all this building indicates faith in the future. A New Zealand agronomist could wax poetical about the quality of much of our grassland. We have a wonderful climate; we are singularly free from natural disasters. Our geography books were wont to repine our lack of mineral wealth; that is no longer true; and presently we may find oil and gas in the Irish seas, to make up for the lack of coal, receding in importance

as a fuel. We are fortunate in the size of our population in relation to area, small but not too small, so that we are basically strong economically. If we don't count, and utilize our blessings, (and there are many more than these listed), we have only ourselves to blame.

Always interpreting general statements of this kind in the statistical fashion described above, the Irish are a courteous, kindly, hospitable people. At the middle-class level our standard of hospitality surprises our foreign guests; if there is an element of inferiority complex here, there is also genuine old-fashioned courtesy, "my guest must have the best I have". Pace those statistics of our alleged comparatively high rate of mental illness\*, quoted against us down the ages, observation shows that the ordinary people are (comparatively speaking) uncomplicated, unhurried and easygoing. We have, as already asserted, a very splendid generation of young people, lacking nothing except a worthy ideal to inspire them, leading them towards "ideals" which must be qualified by quotation marks<sup>+</sup>. The Council will consider, in detail, our natural and our human resources, suggesting programmes for economic and social inquiry where information is lacking.

If the Council adopts the good of the individual as a primary principle, it will recognize that this good must come mainly for the individual's own efforts (though

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\* May a statistician let off steam here. It is misleading to measure health by disease and death, sanity by insanity, housing by bad housing etc. positive good measured by negative bad. It is true that something has to be done about the x% bad; so we need these statistics, but the (100 - x)% is usually the very much larger figure, and the more important as such, for the consideration of well-being. All kinds of statistics and social inquiries can be envisaged in regard to normal people. At any rate the negative approach gives a distorted view.

<sup>+</sup> Years ago, in conversation with an Irish Professor I remarked that I was sorry for students of that generation in their lack of an ideal, such as we had in Sinn Fein days. He replied "What's wrong with drink and women?" I should have rejoined: "Nothing, but they need Heaven too." Those crashing bores The North, Vietnam and Apartheid (all misunderstood) may indicate generosity of student spirit, but fall short of great ideals, such as eliminating poverty or ending inflation.

family and school must help, in the spirit of the Socratic "know thyself" and Descartes' "cogito, ergo sum". Though essential at the start, vaunted Leadership will be gradually phased out, so that ultimately it will not be a case of Big Brother telling us what to do for our collective good, but of our telling him, and getting rid of him quickly if he doesn't do it.

### An Irish Utopia and How to Get There

The Council's main task will be to set out long term objectives for Ireland, in such language as will fire Irish imagination. A friend, sojourning in a country X (discretion is necessary to avoid an international incident, when these notes get the publicity they deserve), asked "Why are the X so industrious"? The writer replied "Because they lack imagination". He has struggled in his own mind for years with this problem of the comparative idolence of the Irish and has found philosophic elements in it related to religion, namely an inbuilt skepticism about the value of material goods. The Council will examine this theory, i.e. this weakness on the side of demand, this opting-out from over-choice (in Toffler's term). Truth to say, vast quantities of goods offered for sale are worthless (though they find buyers); so is much of excess of a genuine good, e.g. those three motor-cars. Far better surely that such excess spending power should be deflected towards satisfying the real needs of the poor at home and away. Therefore much production though functionally harmless may have to be eliminated except for export, for consumption by the less wise abroad!

So, if the Council finds this anti-materialistic instinct widespread in Ireland, it will not regard it as necessarily a bad thing. Or, almost the same point, Edward Nevin's question: "Why should Ireland enter the

ra trace"? Why, indeed, when we have eliminated poverty within our borders? Though some will say that we should widen our poverty-horizon. Here we mean material poverty. There remains the problem of spiritual poverty (for more closely related to individual tranquillity) afflicting rich and poor alike.

In the distant future, civilised society may not be so large a consumer (per person) of so-called goods as at present. The swing of demand will be towards services. These, of course, can be expensive. As the world becomes better educated the swing, however, may be towards simplicity in consumption pattern.

It will not be enough for the Council to define ends. It must show, step by step, how we can get there, starting from where we are now. By this process, and by this process alone, will the Council show the Irish people that its Utopia is practical of achievement.

But first the Council must initiate social studies to find out where we are (in every respect except the geographical!) and why we are where we are. Changes cannot prudently be suggested until we have this knowledge. To state the obvious\* there are usually good reasons why things are as they are if we only knew the reasons. To give an example: In Ireland, shamefully, we pay people out of work through no fault of their own one-third of the wages they had when at work; for this reason, or this reason mainly, unemployment is inconsistent with the dignity of Man. But unemployment (and redundancy) may be inevitable (i.e. as consistent with the greater good of the greater number). In this case the unemployed and the redundant should in justice be properly compensated.

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\* "Ce qui va sans dire va encore mieux en le disant"

However Luddite the attitude may be, this writer is of the opinion that the just remuneration of those thrown out of employment should be legally charged against innovation, even if this slows down the pace of innovation.

In the New Ireland Man must be assured of his dignity even if he is unemployed. For most people work is better than idleness ("better" here in the full sense). We referred above to "involuntary" unemployment. We end this section with the thought that in a free society people should be free to idle, if they want to. But society must protect itself by extracting a charge for this happy state (for some).

#### Inferiority Complex

Though there has been a fairly marked improvement in recent years there is still plenty of evidence that we Irish suffer from inferiority complex, understandable enough from our history. In individuals, it is true, it is a more attractive quality, (an excess of the virtue of humility) than its opposite, popularly known as "bounce". But it begets lack of selfconfidence. It is inimical to action and enterprise. This sense of inferiority exhibits itself in all kinds of ways. Our exaggerated respect for foreign thought and action, which we imitate indiscriminately, or, when politics are involved, an undue reverence for the opinions of our dead patriots, instead of doing our own thinking, our own making. Our genuine respect for, and courtesy to, foreigners is good for our tourist trade, but foreigners are inclined to take us at our own valuation, which is under-valuation, especially as our values tend to be less obvious, unstatistical. In the past the result was some excellently - disposed Englishmen who made it their business to "improve" us; the type morcilessly satirized in Broadbent in "John Bull's Other Island".

We have<sup>been</sup> viciously lacerated by our writers, far beyond the limit of insipid gloom normal in poets nowadays. During the past few years the writer has interviewed many excellent students, minded to do social research. Almost invariably he found them unreceptive to new ideas; an indisposition to tackle these "on their own", to be uncomfortable about them unless they found them already respectably enshrined in a textbook. Some of these students exhibited almost genius in tracking down references.

One of the reasons for our (relatively) large emigration of talent, is that Irish talent is insufficiently appreciated in Ireland in comparison with our regard for almost anything foreign. Irishmen of talent tend to "find themselves" abroad, shedding their native sense of inferiority. They are helped by the belief in the countries to which they emigrate that "If an Irishman is good, he is very good" and observation goes to show that this belief is verified by experience, in most cases.

Is there something basically faulty in Irish education at all levels? Too much respect for authority, for the written word, too little encouragement of the critical approach, which would imply ability to think? Should not the fundamental principle in education be to teach and encourage pupils to think, taking precedence even of the three R's. If pupils can think, all else will be added unto them.

Of course, this section is redolent of Irish writers' inferiority complex (which by the way, nearly always implies that the writer is free from the faults he attributes to the rest of us). But please read on, to the genuinely optimistic ending!

It has been our Irish habit to imitate England in almost everything, good and bad. There is probably as high a proportion of decent people in England now as at any other time, or anywhere else but (having discounted reports in the media for exaggeration and distortion), there is little doubt that they are in even worse moral disarray and in sense of bewilderment and insecurity than are we. In the words of one of Toffler's authorities, they have "gone random". It will be prudent for us to be more critical of ideas imported from England in the future than in the past.

### Tradition

Mainly in its respect for tradition, Ireland is, on the whole, well-equipped to absorb future shock. There is no possibility of our isolating ourselves from its impact, even if we wanted it, which most of don't. But we must give thought to these traditions. That political ancestor-worship (our necrolatry), to which we seem particularly prone, is an almost unmitigated curse. The political ideas of Tone, Marx, Connolly et al may have been apt to their times; they have no relevance, as such, as guides to action in the very different circumstances of today and tomorrow; any correspondence between their thought and ours (if any) is coincidental. Of course, adopting their thought saves us the tedium of thinking for ourselves (our intellectual laziness), about the choices for the future open to us.

We must, in prudence, explicitly reject those elements in our tradition which are going to break (with possibly widespread ill-effects) under future shock, retaining only those which though they may bend will not break; we shall find this a distinction also between "bad" and "good" in tradition. The operative word here is

"explicitly": let us, for a start, coherently list all these traditions, have a good look at them, taking nothing for granted.

Conclusion of Part II

Part II was written in a mood almost of despair, which the writer hopes does not show up too much in his text. His personal trouble is the contrast between the Ireland he and his generation dreamed of a half-century ago and the Ireland which has transpired. The irony is that economically we are far better off than we ever thought we would be; are we happier? The events of last year, the selfish materialistic grabbing by the employee class, under the monopolistic, blackmailing threat and realization of strike, with total and absolute disregard of the common good, lead one to the edge of the abyss of despair.

The employers and indeed all other classes, connived at these inordinate wage increases; we were at least equally guilty (some of us more so because we had the education to know our wrong-doing) as we knew (and we were right in the main) that we would "get ours", mainly through the inflationary price mechanism. We of the latter class could also comfort ourselves by the reflection that the workingclass, which started the racket, would inevitably be the victims of inflation, through unemployment, mainly.

Of course in the years up to 1921 there was nothing that could be termed "planning" in the thought of any of us. We all read Griffith's "Resurrection in Hungary" but its effect was minimal. As a matter of fact, the policy of the first government was markedly laissez-faire, quite contrary to the spirit of "Resurrection".

The very notion of planning, if it were mentioned, would have been frowned upon.

The mood of the time was to get rid of the British and when the British went, Ireland would flower like a garden of its own accord. If anything had to be done, the government would do it. The answer to everything was politics; as we now know too well, a disastrous fallacy.

Now, fifty years on, is surely a good time to have a fundamental look at all our people and our institutions and ask ourselves "Are they apt to the welfare of our people?" "what changes should we make with whatever lights we have of the shape of things to come?" Our planning must be so fundamental that we must first evolve principles to guide us; principles to which appeal may explicitly be made in every decision we make. These principles must be evolved in the light of our experience.

Any politician worthy of the name can propound a programme; most of them do. The Council must do better than this. It too must look at choices of programmes but not in any detail, at the first stage. Programmes invariably relate to institutions. The Council, as a principle of early priority will remind itself that institutions are for the people and not the other way about. The Council's interest must be the Irish people, as individuals. The question, however, is not "what kind of people do we (the Council) want the Irish to be?" In addition to being a futile question anyway, the people might reply (a little rudely) with another question "Who the hell are you to tell us what we should be?" Better: create, modify, reform, institutions so as to enable the greatest possible number of people to realize their potential; "Set the people free." When the Council has discovered

the spirit in which to work, it can convey to other groups of people, i.e. experts in various institutions, before "going to the country".

Even if the Council project should fail, a fuss will have been created which will be to the good, in forcing the Irish people to think in a big way about their future. At present what "thinking" there is is practically all short-term and inadequate in quality of thought, and scope. The only long-term ideas with vestiges of idealism are the Language and Unification. And views held on both of these are naive. Worse, proponents are falling into our errors of fifty years ago, that with achievement of these ideals, all else will follow. It won't.

The writer attaches little importance to his personal views on the several issues, expressed in the foregoing notes. Though the expression of opinion is forthright, he has an open mind and is quite prepared to change his views, provided the case is properly argued in the light of knowledge. As he has emphasised he is concerned only that examination should be fundamental and that every practical option should be considered.

Ireland has so many advantages, its achievements, especially abroad, so great, that it will not be extravagant to adopt the slogan "Ireland, Save Civilization", especially to fire the imagination of our young people, so that some day we may paraphrase William Pitt "Ireland has saved herself by her exertions and will, as I trust, save the World by her example".

Historically speaking, it wouldn't be the first time.