"Technology" as Scapegoat:

The Assault on the Collective Creative Powers of Humanity

Introduction

A massive effort is underway whose consequences would reduce the human race to a lower technological level. President Carter's Energy Policy announcement next week will open its execution phase. A scientific, system-theoretic analysis reveals the genesis of this tendency as well as the catastrophic results should it be realized. Such analysis also indicates a social program charting a path of evolution by which we might extricate ourselves from our current predicament.

But why have we come to you -- people attending the West Coast Computer Fair -- with this information? Because of the recent explosive development of low cost computer power of which this Fair is a product. Wide access to advanced computing-power made possible by the advent of LSI, the micro-computer, bubble memory and the like is one of the most hopeful developments in the world today. It is so promising because it can put great powers of information-handling and communication in the hands of large numbers of individuals, shifting the balance of power away from vast bureaucracies. Also, it is spreading familiarization with computer methods. This diffusion is crucial for our future, because a key ingredient in the social program mentioned above is a new kind of many-way communications system, a unified social information utility which we call "UniCom." UniCom is essential to the kind of self-modelling, self-planning society which we are convinced must emerge soon if the human species -- and with it, the rest of the biosphere -- is to remain viable much longer. It is vital to the processes we call "omni-central planning" (omni = "everywhere"; "everywhere-centered" planning) and continuous revision planning which we believe will be
indispensable to such a society.

We are addressing you -- those attracted to this fair -- because of your appreciation for advancing technology in what is perhaps the most healthy area of such advance today. You are in a position to act as guardians of this technology -- that is, of the developing collective creative powers of mankind in this field -- against the onslaught that is coming.

**The Drive To Reduce Living Standards**

A major move is afoot in this country which, if not checked, will have the most dire consequences for the viability of human society. Yet the great majority of Americans are unaware of this, and in danger of being taken defenseless, never knowing what hit them. It behooves those who have become aware of this game-plan to rouse others quickly. This task is difficult because the attitudes, the language, the very concepts which would render our predicament readily communicable and easily comprehensible have yet to develop in the popular mind or, where their embryos have been evident to the powers with which we contend, have been systematically thwarted.

As briefly as we know how to put it, what is happening is this. We are being skilfully softened-up for a drastic reduction in our level of life, and a thorough dismantling of the social values and institutions once considered sacrosanct. The real motives for this are politico-economic. But the measures to be imposed on us will be justified in the name of "ecology" and "conservation".

A key part of this preparation involves a massive publicity drive to turn public opinion against "technology", "science", "affluence", "industrialization" -- ideals that had, until the '60s at least, been idolized, albeit in distorted and partially destructive forms, by the same publicity mills.

There is, in particular, a massive campaign underway aimed to make "capital-intensive technology" a dirty word. This is being conducted via a barrage of commission and foundation reports, government studies, lecture tours, radio and television programs, newspaper articles, and books. Already this year a spate of new books devoted to the themes of "lowered expectations", "labor-intensive" lifestyles, "lifeboat ethics", and the necessity of a future of austerity -- usually marketed under the more palatable misnomer of "energy conservation" -- have poured forth. To cite but a few, we have titles like "The Promise Of The Coming Dark Age" by Stavrianos, "Ecology and Politics in the Age of Scarcity" by Ophuls, "Managing The Commons" by Garrett Hardin (whose more revealing titles include "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping The Poor"), and "The Unfinished Agenda" by the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund.

The latter is particularly stark, in certain unguarded moments, about what the forces behind this campaign have in mind for us:

"It appears that the United States, like other industrial countries, already has far more electricity that it can thermodynamically justify. Reducing electricity generation would save enormous amounts of capital and fuel by decreasing the wastes associated with central power stations." (pp. 60-61)

The same forces who envision this de-electrification and de-industrialization of much of this country are also alarmed by the diffusion of computer-power. More proposals which, like the Bell Bill, would drastically curtail the shift of power toward the individual which the micro-computer entails, can be
expected from this quarter. They can also be expected to abuse the promise of the computer by attempting to turn it into a device of police state rule, a move we should guard against by building a grass-roots movement for an "Information Bill of Rights" amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

So far we have been circumspect; now, we will get specific. First, who are these "forces"? Second, why have they turned against "capital-intensive technology"?

They are the forces which rose to prominence via control of energy, specifically of the oil industry. But they consolidated their wealth and gained worldwide political dominance through the financial institutions they founded or acquired — through powerful international banks like Citibank of New York, Morgan Guaranty and Trust, and Chase Manhattan.

Much of the world is now deep in debt to these banks, and the IMF and World Bank whose policies they control. Not only U.S. cities like Detroit and New York, or major U.S. industries, but whole governments like those of Italy and Britain and most of the "Third World" and even China and the USSR are sinking deeper in debt to them at accelerating rates! These banks are facing massive default on their world-wide debt-holdings in the context of the world economic recession that has characterized the '70s.

It is only just now beginning to seep out into public that the Trilateral Commission, an international organization founded by David Rockefeller, President of Chase Manhattan Bank, has in effect taken charge of the U.S. government. President Carter, V-P Mondale, Cyrus Vance, Security head Zbigniew "Zbig" Brezinski and Secretaries of Defense and the Treasury, as well as numerous deputy secretaries, under-secretaries, ambassadors, etc. are members (or rather, "former" members, having "resigned" upon taking office). (See Oakland Tribune, March 6, 1977, p. 39; Charles McCabe, "The Rockefeller Connection", p. 35; Far East Economic Review, March 25, 1977, pp. 39-40; L. T. Patterson Strategy Letter, No. 900-V).

In short, the forces we have been describing are, by name, at their core, the Rockefeller family — not really a "family" anymore, but a peculiar institutional growth feeding on the Rockefeller family fortune and the web of foundations, universities, multinational corporations, energy and banking interests and other organizations under its dominion.

We can expect Carter's energy message, to be delivered starting Monday, to announce the same policies being pushed in the spate of books, and particularly "The Unfinished Agenda", cited above. This will mean a curtailment of all forms of "capital-intensive" energy development, including even fission power, which these interests once backed, as well as solar-electric and fusion power, technologies. The energy problem will be "solved" solely by "conservation" — i.e. austerity — enforced by sharp increases in the prices of oil, natural gas, and gasoline.

We may soon find ourselves paying as much again for our utilities each month as we now pay for rent or property taxes. This is a convenient way the oil-and-banking interests can reach into our pocket-books to draw out the cash flow to meet their growing debt-defaul and other liquidity crises, all under the cover of "ecology". The resulting general social contrition will have devastating effects on our entire social life.

But why have these interests turned so strongly against "capital-intensive technology"? To answer this question adequately would take us deep into the dynamical laws of
the socio-economic process, the system of what we call "self-expanding exchange-value", by which we presently make our livelihoods. The explanation involves a process we call "technodepreciation" or the loss of value to capital owing to technological obsolescence. It involves the time trajectory of the ratio of aggregate fixed capital to aggregate circulating capital. Early in the history of capital accumulation, when this ratio is less than 1, i.e. when circulating capital predominate, technical progress in productivity, while it devalues older capital equipment, still in balance widens profit margins. But later, as the ratio exceeds unity, i.e. as fixed capital becomes preponderant, losses outweigh gains due to the evolution of productivity, and propertied interests begin to turn against further technical evolution outside government-guaranteed military and other waste sectors. The preponderance of fixed capital, as a barrier to new entry, also blocks the feedback which enforces technodepreciation in the "capital-intensive" sectors of industry, but not in others, resulting in the accumulation of "fictitious capital" -- overvaluation of fixed capital -- in the capital-intensive sectors. This later shows up as accelerated growth of indebtedness of the other sectors, whose "terms of trade" with the effectively inflated capital-intensive sector deteriorate. Accelerating indebtedness, waste-production for the state market, etc. lead to "debt-pull" inflation, and toward liquidity crisis and depression, as exemplified in the depression we are now in. More detailed expositions of the dynamical evolution of this economy are available from us. Here let us only mention two examples of the vast technodepreciation now threatening the Trilateral interests. Fusion power, a potentially clean and abundant source of energy, would bankrupt the oil industry, because then ocean water would become a source of fuel, a fuel more powerful than petroleum by far. UniCom would devalue much of the capital of the telephone, radio, television, audio-recording (tapes and records), publishing and printing industries, as well as of the transportation and construction industries. This is because UniCom would replace existing communications devices -- telephone handsets, radios, TVs, stereos, books, magazines, newspapers, postal services, audio-recordings, and the like -- with a single computerized communications network, with a single audio-visual console device installed in places of residence, etc. Its capacity for audio-visual conferencing would obviate the need for many kinds of public and private buildings, reshape cities, and substitute communication for much that is presently accomplished by transportation. We believe, however, that the most important dimensions of this technology would be political and economic. It should be noted also that much of the technology needed to implement it has already been developed or could be developed quickly, given even a small "crash program". We are told today that the higher the technology, the more it clutters-up and pollutes the natural landscape. The UniCom concept reveals the fallacy of this. It would save forests, by vastly curtailing paper needs, for example, and actually "de-clutter" the landscape of many large fixtures.

Those interested in more information on the program we are developing are urged to contact A.G.E.N.D.A.