

THE THIRD WAVE

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The world is fast emerging from the clash of new values and technologies, new geographical relationships, new life-styles and modes of communication, demands wholly new ideas and analogies, classifications and concepts.

The real dangers that are facing us are from nuclear annihilation to and ecological disaster to racial fanaticism or regional violence. War, economic debacle, large-scale technological disaster – any of these could alter future history in catastrophic ways.

In the very midst of destruction and decay, we can now find striking evidences of birth and life. The emergent civilization can be made more sane, sensible and sustainable, more decent and more democratic than any we have ever known. It can turn out to be the first truly humane civilization in recorded history.

The most urgent problems of the world – food, energy, arms control, population, poverty, resources, ecology, climate, the problem of the aged, the break-down of urban community, the need for productive, rewarding work – can no longer be resolved within the framework of the industrial order.

At one level, the industrial revolution created a marvelously integrated system with its own distinctive technologies, its own social institutions, and its own information channels – all plugged tightly into each other. Yet, at another level, it ripped apart the underlying unity of society, creating a way of life filled with economic tension, social conflict, and psychological malaise. Not only politics but culture, too, was shaped by this cleavage, for it also produced the most money-minded, grasping, commercialized and calculating civilization in history. The obsessive concern with money, goods and things is a reflection of industrialism. In such a society, irrespective of its political structure, not only products are bought, sold and traded and exchanged , but labour, ideas, art and souls as well.

Industrialism and the full democracy it promised were, in fact, incompatible.

Indeed, far from weakening control by the managerial elites, the formal machinery of representation became one of the key means of integration by which they maintained themselves in power. Thus elections, far apart from who won them, performed a powerful cultural function for the elites. To the degree that everyone had a right to vote, elections fostered the illusion of equality. Voting provided a mass ritual of reassurance, conveyed to the people the idea that choices were being made systematically, with machinelike regularity, and hence, by implication, rationally. Elections symbolically assured citizens that they were still in command. Election took the steam out of protests from below. So long as they played the representational game, people had at best only intermittent opportunities, through voting, to feed back their approval or disapproval of the government and its actions.

The Third Wave

Today we are once more at the edge of an historical technological leap. It will require a radical restructuring of the entire energy business. An increasing number of people in every country form the core of the techno-rebellion. They are, without knowing it, agents of the Third World. They begin not with technology but with hard questions about what kind of future society we want. They recognize that we now have so many technological opportunities we can no longer fund, develop, and apply them all. They argue, therefore, the need to select more carefully among them and to choose those technologies that serve long-range social and ecological goals. Rather than letting technology shape our goals, they wish to assert social control over the larger directions of the technological thrust.

The Third World begins a truly new era – the age of the de-massified media. A new info-sphere is emerging along alongside the new techno-sphere. And this will have a far reaching impact on the most important sphere of all, the one inside our skulls. For

taken together, these changes revolutionize our images of the world and our ability to make sense of it.

Today, as we construct a new info-sphere for a Third Wave civilization, we are imparting to the "dead" environment around us not life but intelligence.

The Electronic Cottage.

Hidden inside our advance to a new production system is a potential for social change so breathtaking in scope that a few among us have been willing to face its meaning. For we are about to revolutionize our homes as well. Apart from encouraging smaller work units, apart from permitting a decentralization and de-urbanization of production relations, apart from altering the actual character of work, the new production system could shift literally millions of jobs out of the factories and offices into which the Second Wave swept them and right back from where they came from originally: the home. If this were to happen, every institution we know, from the family and the corporation, would be transformed.

The entire structure of family life, the process of child-rearing and personality formation, the whole system of property and power, the culture, the daily struggle for existence were all bound to the hearth and the soil by a thousand invisible chains. Yet these chains were slashed in short order as soon as a new system of production appeared.

Most high-technology nations are now experiencing a transportation crisis, with mass transit systems strained to the breaking point, roads and highways clogged, parking spaces rare, pollution a serious problem, strikes and breakdowns almost routine, and costs skyrocketing.

Social factors, too, support the move to the electronic cottage. The shorter the working day becomes, the longer the commuting time in relation to it. We are on the edge of a new civilization. But we are simultaneously restructuring our social life as well, from our family ties and friendships to our schools and corporations. We are about to create, alongside the Third Wave techno-sphere and info-sphere, a Third Wave socio-sphere as well.

Work at home involving any sizeable fraction of the population could mean greater community stability. If employees can perform some of all their work tasks at home, they do not have to move every time they change jobs. This implies less forced mobility, less stress on the individual, fewer transient human relationships and greater participation in community life. The electronic cottage could help restore a sense of community belonging. This system would spread our energy demand and thus make it easier to use solar, wind or other alternative technologies.

We are on the edge of a new civilization. But we are simultaneously restoring our social life as well from our family ties and friendships to our schools and corporations. We are about to create, alongside, the Third Wave techno-sphere as well. The electronic cottage opens an alternative way to bring youth back into socially and economically productive roles.

Easing into Tomorrow

A new Third Wave family system is coalescing based on a diversity of family forms and more varied individual roles. This de-massification of the family opens many new personal options. The emergent family system could free each of us to find his or her own niche, to select or create a family style or trajectory attuned to individualized needs.

Values change more slowly, as a rule, than social reality. Thus we have not yet developed the ethic of tolerance for diversity that a de-massified society will both require and engender.

Today a new crisis has struck. Unlike all previous crises during the industrial era, it involves not only money but the entire energy base of the society. Unlike the crisis of the past, it brings inflation and unemployment simultaneously, not sequentially.

The Third Wave brings with it a rising demand for a new kind of institution altogether – a corporation no longer responsible simply for making a profit or producing goods but for simultaneously contributing to the solution of extremely complex ecological, moral, political, racial, sexual and social problems.

Changes in the physical environment, in the line up of social forces, in the role of information, in government organization, and in morality, are all pounding the corporation into a new, multi-faceted,

multipurposeful shape. What is happening, therefore, a thoroughgoing reconceptualization of the meaning of production and of institution that, until now has been charged with organizing it.

During Second Wave civilization, machine synchronization shackled the human to the machine's capabilities and imprisoned all of social life in a common frame. It did so in capitalist and socialist societies alike. Now, as machine synchronization grows more precise, human, instead of being imprisoned, are progressively freed. Today, the Third Wave brings with it personalized instead of universal or massified schedules. The result is less pressure to be "on time" and the spread of more casual attitudes toward time among the young. Punctuality, like morality, becomes situational. In short, the World moves in, challenging the old industrial way of doing things, it changes the relationship of the entire civilization to time. Time itself has changed in the "real world" and along with it we have changed the ground rules that once governed us.

The Third Wave does more than alter Second Wave patterns of synchronization: standardization. All these attempts to achieve uniformity are essentially the rearguard actions of a spent civilization. The thrust of Third Wave change is toward increased diversity, not toward the further standardization of life. An historic turning point has been reached, and standardization is being replaced.

New political parties, new management techniques and new philosophies are springing up that explicitly attack the centralist premises of the Second wave. Decentralization has become a hot issue. We are also radically decentralizing the economy as a whole. We see more and more efforts to restrain the power of the expert by adding laymen to decision-making bodies. At an even deeper level, large organizations are changing the authority patterns that underpinned centralism.

Second Wave civilization encouraged yet another principle: concentration. It concentrated money, energy, resources and people. It poured vast populations into urban concentrations. Today, this process too, has begun to turn around. At the level of energy, we are moving from a reliance on concentrated deposits of fossil fuels to a variety of more widely forms of energy. Thus we are moving toward a future economy in which very large numbers never hold full-time jobs.

Second Wave societies have attempted to cope with unemployment by resisting technology, closing off immigration, creating labour exchanges, increasing exports, setting up public works programmes, cutting back on work hours, attempting to increase labour mobility, deporting whole populations, and even waging war to stimulate the economy.

By systematically interrelating billions of people to one another, the market produced a world in which no one had independent control over his or her destiny – no person, no nation, no culture. It spread vulgar materialism and the belief that economics and economic motivation were the primary forces in human life. It fostered a view of life as a succession of contractual transactions, and of society as bound together by the “marriage contract” or the “social contract.” Marketization thus shaped the thoughts and values, as well as the actions, of billions and set the tone of Second Wave civilization. This grandest construction of all history gave Second Wave civilization everywhere its inner dynamism and propulsive thrust. Indeed. If this now dying civilization can be said to have a mission at all, it was to marketize the world. Today that mission is all but fulfilled. Marketization will no longer be the central project of the civilization. It spread vulgar mechanism and the belief that economics and economic motivation were the primary force in human life. If this now dying civilization can be said to have had a mission at all, it was to marketize the world. Today this mission is all but fulfilled. Marketization will no longer be the central project of the civilization.

The enormous energies previously poured into building the world market will become available for other human purposes. New religions will be born. Works on art on a hitherto unimagined scale. Fantastic scientific advances. And above all, wholly new kinds of social and political institutions. What is at stake is the role of the market in our lives and the fortune of civilization itself. Our energy base, our technology, our information system and our family and business institutions are intertwined, in turn, with the way we view the world. And in this sphere, we are undergoing a historic upheaval. For the entire world view of industrialized civilization – Indus-reality – is being revolutionized.

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The Third Wave will therefore produce history's first “trans-market” civilization. With the basic construction task now virtually complete, the enormous energies previously poured into building the world market become available for other human purposes. From this fact alone will flow a limitless array of civilization changes. New religions will be born. Works of art on a hitherto unimagined scale. Fantastic scientific advances. And, above all, wholly new kinds of social and political institutions.

What is at stake today is more than capitalism or socialism, more than energy, food, population, capital, raw material, or jobs: what is at stake is the role of the market in our lives and the future of civilization itself. Change in the deep-structure of the economy is part of the same wave of interrelated changes now striking our energy base, our technology, our information system and our family and business institutions. These are intertwined, in turn, with the way we view the world. And in this sphere, too, we are undergoing an historical upheaval. For the entire world-view of industrial civilization – industrial-reality – is now being revolutionalized.

We see a mounting attack on establishment science. We see a wildfire revival of fundamentalist religion and a desperate search for something – almost anything – to believe in.

The New Image of Nature

We are moving towards a fresh view of that emphasizes harmony with the earth. We are shifting from an adversary to a nonadversary posture. We find evidence of a heightened, though often romantic, regard for nature.

Since the Third Wave began some 25 years ago, scientists have developed a whole battery of new tools for probing nature's most distant reaches. We are now looking at phenomena that are bigger, smaller and faster by order of magnitude than any we examined during the Third Wave past. By contrast, our astronomers and cosmologists tell us the universe is some 20,000,000,000 years old.. Moreover, in a swirling vastness, we are told the earth may not be the only inhabited sphere. There is the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

Designing Evolution

Our image of nature is not what it used to be. Neither is our image of evolution. Biologists, archeologists and anthropologists, attempting to unravel the mysteries of evolution, similarly find themselves in a bigger and complex world than previously imagined., and are discovering that laws once regarded as universal in application are actually special cases.

Third Wave thinkers conceived of the human species as the culmination of a long evolutionary process. Third Wave thinkers must now face the fact that we are about to become the *designers* of evolution. Evolution will never look the same. Like the concept of nature, evolution too is in the process of being drastically reconceptualized.

Today there is a fast-spreading recognition around the world that the progress can no longer be measured in terms of technology or material standard of living alone – that a society that is morally, aesthetically, politically or environmentally degraded is not an advanced society, no matter how rich or technically sophisticated it may be. In short we are moving toward a far more comprehensive notion of progress – progress no longer automatically achieved and no longer defined by material criteria alone.

We are also less inclined to think of societies as moving along one track. Societies may be able to achieve comprehensive development in a variety of ways.

Today, as our image of nature and matter change, the nation-state in itself is being transformed – another step in on the path toward a Third Wave civilization. A strange thing is happening in the high technology nations: instead of new nations arising, old ones are

in danger of coming apart. One set of forces seeks to transfer political power downwards from the nation-state to supranational regions and groups. The others seek to shift power upward from the nation to the transnational agencies and organizations. Together they are leading toward a crack-up of the high-technology nations into smaller and less powerful units, as a look around the world quickly reveals.

The Third Wave brings new problems, a new structure of communications, and new actors on the world stage – all of which drastically shrink the power of the individual nation-state. Just as new problems are too small or localized for national governments to handle effectively, new ones are fast arising that are too large for any nation to cope with alone. “The nation-state, which regards itself as absolutely sovereign, is obviously too small to play a role at the global level,” writes a French political thinker, Denis de Rougemont. Most economic infections are now communicable across national boundaries. The economic shell of the nation-state is now increasingly permeable. Nations are less and less able to take independent action – they are losing much of their sovereignty. The nation-state, already threatened by pressures from below, finds its freedom of action constrained, its power displaced or diminished, as a radically new globe system takes form. The new global economy is dominated by the great transnational corporations.

In sum, at every level, from economics and politics to organization and ideology, we are witnessing a devastating attack, from within and without, on that pillar of Second Wave civilization: the nation-state. At the exact historical moment when many poor countries are desperately fighting to establish a national identity because nationhood in the past was necessary for successful industrialization, the rich countries, racing beyond industrialism, are diminishing, displacing or derogating the role of the nation.

We can expect the next decades to be torn by struggle over the creation of new global institutions capable of fairly representing the prenational as well as the postnational peoples of the world.

In short, we are moving toward a world system composed of units densely interrelated like the neutrons in the brain. It is now possible, moreover, as it was not in the past, for a society to attain a high material standard of living without obsessively focusing all its

energies on production for exchange? Given the wider range of options brought by the Third Wave, cannot a people reduce infant mortality and improve life span, literacy, nutrition and the general quality of life without surrendering its religion or values and necessarily embracing the western materialism that accompanies the spread of Second Wave civilization?

The Third Wave also raises non-economic and non-technological concerns to primary importance. It makes us look at education with fresh eyes. Education, every one agrees, is central to development. But what kind of education? Today we need to combine learning with work, political struggle, community service, and even play. All our conventional assumptions about education need to be re-examined both in the rich countries and the poor. Even the definition of functional literacy requires fresh thinking. Better nutrition is likely to raise the entire level of intelligence and functional competence among millions of children – at the same time that it increases drive and motivation.

And so, not merely in the fields of energy or technology, agriculture or economics, but in the very brain and behaviour of the individual, the Third World brings the potential for revolutionary change.

The emerging Third World civilization does not provide a ready-made model for emulation. Third Wave civilization is itself not yet fully formed. But for the poor as well as the rich it opens novel, perhaps liberating, possibilities. For it calls attention not to the weaknesses, poverty and misery of the First Wave world, but to some of its inherent strengths. The poor as well as the rich are crouched at the starting line of a new and startling different race into the future.

We are no longer where we stood a decade ago, dazzled by the changes whose relationships to one another were unknown. Today, behind the confusion of change, there is a growing coherence of pattern: the future is taking shape.

The third World civilization we find is not coherent and workable in both ecological and economic terms, but if we put our minds to it – could be made more decent and democratic than our own.

With information becoming more important than ever before, the new civilization will restructure education, redefine scientific research and, above all, recognize the media of communications. Today's mass media, both print and electronic, are wholly inadequate to cope with the communications load and to provide the requisite cultural variety for survival. Instead of being culturally dominated by a few mass media, Third World civilization will rest on inter-active massified-media, feeding extremely diverse and often highly personalized imagery into an out of the mind-stream of the society. The fusion of Third Wave energy forms, technologies and information media will spread revolutionary changes in the way we work.

To operate factories and offices of the future, Third World companies will need workers capable of discretion and resourcefulness rather than rote responses. The most striking change in the Third World civilization will probably be the shift of work from both offices and factory back into the home. The home will assume a startling new importance in this civilization. The home's re-emergence as a central unit in the society of tomorrow - a unit with enhanced rather than diminished economic, medical, educational and social functions.

The Third World carries with it deep challenges for humanity, from ecological threats to the danger of nuclear terrorism and electronic fascism, it is not simply a nightmarish extension of industrialism.

We are left with only one option. We must be willing to reshape ourselves and our institutions to deal with the new realities. We must take a totally fresh and imaginative look at two blazing issues. Both are crucial to our survival, yet all but ignored in public discussion: the future of personality and the politics of the future.

Conclusion

To create a fulfilling emotional life and a sane psycho-sphere for the emerging civilization of tomorrow, we must recognize three basic requirements of any individual: the needs for community, structure and meaning. All three suggests how we might begin designing a healthier psychological environment for ourselves and our children in the future.

To begin with, any decent society must generate a feeling of community. Community offsets loneliness. It gives people a vitally necessary sense of belonging. Yet today the institutions on which community depends are crumbling in all the tecno-societies. The result is a spreading plague of loneliness.

In building the Third Wave society We must also begin providing a framework of order and purpose in life.. In working towards these ends, it will help us to understand that the present agony of social isolation, the impersonality, structurelessness and sense of meaninglessness from which so many people suffer, are symptoms of the breakdown of the past rather than intimations of the future. It will not be enough for us to change society. For as we shape the Third Wave civilization through our own daily decisions and actions, Third Wave civilization will in turn shape us. A new psychosphere is emerging that will fundamentally alter our character: the personality of the future.

The image of a new man also haunted the Communists. It was Trotsky rhapsodized most vividly about the future human. "Man will become incomparably stronger, wiser and more perceptive. His body will become more harmonious, his movements more rhythmical, his voice more melodious. His way of life will acquire a powerfully dynamic quality. The average man will attain the level of an Aristotle, of a Goethe, of a Marx.

The fundamentally changed material conditions of life leaves personality or, more accurately, social character, unaffected. As we change the deep structure of society, we also modify people. What the Third Wave is doing is not creating some ideal superman, some new heroic species stalking through our midst, but producing dramatic changes in the traits distributed through society – not a new man but a new social character.

For these reasons, the baby born tomorrow is likely to enter a society no longer obsessed with – perhaps not even terribly interested in – the needs, wants psychological developments and instant gratification of the child. Others, later on, are likely to be reared in work-at-home or electronic- cottage families. Such facts suggest a shorter childhood and youth, but a more responsible and productive one. They may well turn out to be the high achievers of tomorrow. Growing up will be different. And so will the resultant

personality. AS the Third Wave cuts across our society, work grows less, not more, repetitive.

Instead of ranking people by what they own, as the market ethic does, the prosumer ethic places a high value on what they do. Having plenty of money still carries prestige. But other characteristics count, too. Among these are self-reliance, the ability to adapt and survive under difficult conditions, and the ability to do things with one's own hands. While the production or market ethic praises single-mindedness, the prosumer ethic calls for roundness instead.

It is impossible to be simultaneously blasted by a revolution in energy, a revolution in technology a revolution in family life a revolution in sexual roles and a world-wide revolution in communications without also facing – sooner or later – potentially explosive political revolution.

All the tools we use to make and enforce collective decisions are obsolete and about be transformed. A Third wave civilization cannot operate with a Second Wave structure. Today we care faced once more with the need to invent new political tools. This is the political message of the Third Wave.

Today, we are witnessing a profound crisis not this or that government but of representative democracy itself, in all its forms. In one country after another, the political technology of the Second Wave is sputtering, groaning and malfunctioning dangerously. Political parties are losing their drawing power. Citizens are now expressing revulsion and contempt for their political leaders and government officials. They sense that the political system, which should serve as a steering wheel or stabilizer in a change—tossed, runaway society, is itself broken, spinning and flapping out of control. Finally, what happens when, among the myriad religious cults now flowering, some spring up to organize for political purposes? As the major organized religions splinter under the de-massifying impact of the Third Wave, armies of self-ordained priests, ministers, preachers and teachers are likely to appear – some with disciplined, perhaps even paramilitary, political followings.

The leaders of tomorrow may well have to deal with a far more decentralized and participatory society – one even more divorce than today. Leadership may well prove to be more temporary, collegial and consensual.

If there is one thing we should have learned in the past few decades it is that all social and political problems are interwoven – that energy, for example, affects economics which in turn affects health, which in turn affects education, work, family life, and a thousand other things. The attempt to deal with neatly defined problems in isolation from one another – itself a product of industrial mentality creates only confusion and disaster.

The extreme speed of change catches governments and politicians off guard and contributed to their sense of helplessness and confusion. Social change, too, as accelerating and putting additional pressure on the political decision-maker. As the Second Wave produced a mass society, the Third Wave de-massifies us, moving the entire social system to a much higher level of diversity and complexity.

Too many decisions, too fast, about too many strange and unfamiliar problems explain the gross incompetence of political and governmental decisions today.

A political system must not only be able to make and enforce decisions; it must both reflect and respond to the diversity of society. The single most important political issue facing us is the obsolescence of our most basic political and government institutions.

As we race into the Third Wave era, those of us who want to expand human freedom will not be able to do so by simply defending our existing institutions. We shall have to invent new ones.

Twenty-First Century Democracy

The system of government must be radically changed and a new system of government invented – a democracy for the twenty-fifth century. No government, no political system, no constitution, no charter or state is permanent, nor can the decisions of the past bind the future for ever. Nor can a government designed for one civilization cope adequately with the next. We shall have to create a whole new structure of government capable of making intelligent decisions necessary for our survival in a new world. The time has come for us to imagine completely novel alternatives to discuss, dissent, debate and design, from the ground up, the democratic structure of tomorrow. Not in a spirit of anger or dogmatism, not in a sudden impulsive spasm, but through the widest

consultation and peaceful public participation, we need to join together to reconstitute our country.

Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As new discoveries are made, new truth disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times. The system that has served us so well for so long must now, in its turn, die and be replaced. Over the months and decades ahead, the entire "global law machine" will eventually face a mounting, ultimately irresistible, demand for restructuring. All these structures will have to be fundamentally altered, not because they are inherently evil, nor even because they are controlled by this or that class group, but because they are increasingly unworkable – no longer fitted to the needs of a radically changed world.

To build workable governments anew – need to carry out what may well be the most important political task of our lifetimes – we will have to strip away the accumulated clichés of the Second Wave era. And we will have to rethink political life in terms of three key principles, which may turn out to be the root principles of the Third Wave governments of tomorrow. These are 1. minority power, 2. semi-direct democracy, and 3. decision making.

The first principle of the Third Wave government is that of minority power. It holds that majority rule, the key legitimizing principle of the Second Wave era, is increasingly obsolete. It is not majority but minorities that count. And our political systems must increasingly reflect that fact. Today we are leaving industrialism behind and rapidly becoming a de-massified society. In consequence it is growing increasingly difficult – often impossible – to mobilize a majority or even a governing coalition. In place of highly stratified society, in which a few major blocks ally themselves to form a majority, we have a configurative society – one in which thousands of minorities, many of them temporary, swirl and form highly novel, transient patterns, seldom coalescing into a 51 percent consensus on major issues. The advance of Third Wave civilization thus weakens the very legitimacy of many existing governments. The third Wave also challenges all of our conventional assumptions about the relationship of majority rule to social justice. Throughout the era of

Second World wave civilization the fight for majority rule was humane and liberating. In Second wave societies, majority rule always meant a fairer break for the poor. For the poor *were* the majority. But now majority rule is no longer adequate as a legitimate principle, it is no longer necessarily humanizing or democratic in societies moving into the Third Wave. Given appropriate social arrangements, diversity can make for a secure and stable civilization.

It is the lack of appropriate political institutions today that unnecessarily sharpens conflict between minorities to the knife-edge of violence. It is lack of such institutions that makes minorities intransigent. It is the absence of such institutions that makes the majority harder and harder to find. The answer to these problems is not to stifle dissent or to charge minorities with selfishness. The answer lies in imaginative new arrangements for accommodating and legitimizing diversity – new institutions that are sensitive to the rapidly shifting needs of changing and multiplying minorities. Today, in a dangerous world, we cannot afford to delegate total power to anyone, we cannot surrender even the weak popular influence that exists under majoritarian systems, and we cannot allow tiny minorities to take vast decisions that tyrannize all other minorities. We need, in short to modernize the entire system so as to strengthen the role of diverse minorities yet permit them to form majorities. To do so, however, will require radical changes in many of our political structures – starting with the very symbol of democracy, the ballot box.

In the Second Wave societies, voting to determine the popular will provided an important source of feedback for the ruling elites. When conditions for one reason or another become intolerable for the majority, and 51 percent of the voters registered their pain, the elites could, at a minimum, shift parties, alter policies, or make some other accommodation. Voting to determine the majority tells us nothing about the quality of people's views.

For a de-massified Third Wave society the feedback systems of the industrial past are entirely too crude. Thus we will have to use voting, and the polls, in a radically new way. There are many ways for the people to register such views without ever setting foot in a polling booth. And there are also ways to feed these into the political decision-making process. There are methods that allow voters to

register not only their preferences but the intensity and rank order of their choices.

The second building-block of tomorrow's political system must be the principle of "semi-direct democracy" - a shift from depending on representatives to representing ourselves. The mixture of the two is semi-direct democracy. The collapse of consensus subverts the very concept of representation.

The problem of overemotional public response can be overcome in various ways, such as requiring a cooling-off period or second vote before implementation of major decisions taken via referendum or other forms of direct democracy. Many other imaginative arrangements can be invented to combine direct and indirect democracy. Why voters couldn't be empowered directly, through petition, to compel a legislative body to set up committees on topics the public – not the lawmakers – deems important. ?

There are powerful ways to open and democratize a system that is near breakdown and in which, if any, feel adequately represented. But we must begin thinking outside the worn grooves of the past 300 years. We can no longer solve our problems with the ideologies, the models or the leftover structures of the Second Wave past. Objections to representative democracy are growing stronger. Semi-direct democracy is a moderate principle that can help us design workable new institutions for the future.

It is clearly necessary to move a vast amount of decision-making downward from the centre. A great deal of economic policy making must be denationalized and decentralized. It is not possible for a society to decentralize economic activity, communications and many other crucial processes without also, sooner or later, being compelled to decentralize government decision-making as well. Today in every sphere of social life we face the need to create new.

We are living in a dangerous world. Social instability and political uncertainties can unleash savage energies

Elites, no matter how enlightened, cannot by themselves make a new civilization. The energies of whole people will be required. But those energies are available, waiting to be tapped. Indeed if we, particularly in the high-technology countries, took as our explicit goal for the next generation the creation of wholly new institutions and constitutions, we could release something far more powerful even

than energy: the collective imagination. The sooner we begin to design alternative political institutions based on the three principles of minority power, semi-direct democracy and decision division, the better our chances for a peaceful transition. To avoid violent upheaval we must begin now to focus on the problem of structural political obsolescence around the world. We must launch the widest public debate over the need for a new political system attuned to the needs of a Third Wave civilization. We should be prepared to use the most advanced tools available to us, from satellites and computers to video-disc and interactive television.

No one knows in detail what the future holds or what will work best in a Third Wave society. For this reason we should think not of a single massive reorganization or of a single revolutionary cataclysmic change imposed from the top., but of thousands of conscious, decentralized experiments that permit us to test new models of political decision-making at local and regional levels in advance of their application to the national and transnational levels.

By launching a vast process of social learning in many nations at once, we can head off the totalitarian thrust. Without this tremendous pressure from below, we should not expect many of today's nominal leaders to challenge the very institutions that, no matter how obsolete, give them prestige, money and the illusion, if not the reality, of power. Some unusual,, far-seeing politicians or officials will lend their early support to the struggle for political transformation. But most will move only when the demands from outside are irresistible or when the crisis is already so advanced, and so close to violence, that they see no alternative.

The responsibility for change, therefore, lies with us. We must begin with ourselves, teaching ourselves not to close our minds prematurely to the novel, the surprising, the seemingly radical. This means fighting off the idea-assassins who rush forward to kill any new suggestion on grounds of its implacability, while defending whatever now exists as practical, no matter how absurd, oppressive, or unworkable it may be. It means fighting for freedom of expression – the right of the people to voice their ideas, even if heretical.

Above all, it means starting this process of reconstruction now, before the further deterioration of existing political systems send the

forces of tyranny jack booting through the streets, and makes impossible na peaceful transition to Twenty-first Century Democracy.

If we begin now, we and our children can take part in the existing reconstruction not merely of our obsolete structures, but of civilization itself.

Like the generation of the revolutionary dead, we have a destiny to create.

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