



January-February Issue 2015

TRENDEVENTS

TRENDEVENTS FOR A NEW YEAR FROM TECHNOCRACY!

IN THIS ISSUE

As the new year is underway, this issue of TrendEvents begins with a warning about climate change. You naturally ask the question: why don't more people care or do something? TrendEvents follows up with some of the answers. We need a *climate of change* to fight climate change! Also featured are questions & answers taken from the *Technocracy Technological Continental Design* publication.

TECHNOCRACY IN ACTION—HIGHLIGHTS

- **All Technocrats are invited to participate in online meetings of the San Francisco section.** Next meeting is February 15, 2015. Meeting announcements are posted at the official Technocracy Facebook page at (or contact the editor for more information):
- <https://www.facebook.com/technocracyinc.scott?fref=ts>

NEWS

U.N. CLIMATE CHANGE WARNING

Despite growing efforts in many countries to tackle the problem, the global situation is becoming more acute as developing countries join the West in burning huge amounts of fossil fuels, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said.

Failure to reduce emissions, the group of scientist and other experts found, could threaten society with food shortages, refugee crises, the flooding of major cities and entire

island nations, mass extinction of plants and animals, and a climate so drastically altered it might become dangerous for people to work or play outside during the hottest times of the year.

“Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts

for people and ecosystems,” the report found.

The expert panel made clear how far society remains from having any serious policy to limit global warming.

The Response

If governments are to meet their own stated goal of limiting the warming to no more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit above the pre industrial level, they must restrict emissions from additional fossil-fuel burning to about 1 trillion tons of carbon dioxide, the panel said.

Yet energy companies have booked coal and petroleum reserves equal to several times that amount, and they are spending some \$600 billion a year to find more.

Utilities and oil companies continue to build coal-fired power plants and refineries,

and governments are spending another \$600 billion or so directly subsidizing the consumption of fossil fuels.

By contrast, the report found, less than \$400 billion a year is being spent around the world to reduce emissions or otherwise cope with climate change.

That is a small fraction of the revenue spent on fossil fuels – it is less, for example, than the revenue of a single oil company, Exxon Mobil.

The Oregonian; 11/3/2014; by Justin Gillis (New York Times News Service)

Comment: No real surprise here. Just so long as money is being made, everything is just fine. One question: Just how much good will the money do us when the place is no long worth living in?

HEAR NO CLIMATE EVIL

Daniel Kahneman is not hopeful. “I am very sorry,” he told me, “but I am deeply pessimistic. I really see no path to success on climate change.”

Kahneman won the 2002 Nobel Prize in economics for his research on the psychological biases that distort rational decision-making. One of these is “loss aversion”, which means that people are far more sensitive to losses than gains. He regards climate change as a perfect trigger: a distant problem requires sacrifices now to avoid uncertain losses far in the future. This combination is exceptionally hard for us to accept, he told me.

Kahneman’s views are widely shared by cognitive psychologists. As Daniel Gilbert of Harvard University says: “A psychologist could barely dream up a better scenario for paralysis.”

People from other disciplines also seem to view climate change as a “perfect” problem. Nicholas Stern, author of the influential Stern Review on the economics of climate change, describes it as the “perfect Market failure”. Philosopher Stephen Gardiner of the University of Washington in Seattle says it is a “perfect moral storm”. Everyone, it seems, shapes climate change in their own image.

Which points to the real problem: climate change is exceptionally amorphous. It provides us with no defining qualities that would give it a clear identity: no deadlines, no geographic location, no single cause or solution and, critically, no obvious enemy. Our brains scan it for the usual cues that we use to process and evaluate information about the world, but find none. And so we impose our own. This is a perilous situation, leaving climate change wide open to another of Kahneman's biases – an “assimilation bias” that bends information to fit people's existing values and prejudices.

So is climate change really innately challenging, or does it just seem so because of the stories we have shaped around it? For example, the overwhelming and possibly hopeless struggle portrayed by the media and many campaigners provokes feelings of powerlessness. Scientists reinforce distance with computer predictions set two generations in the future and endless talk of uncertainty. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change uses the word “uncertain” more than once per page.

Discussions about economics, meanwhile, invariably turn into self-defeating cost-benefit analyses. Stern offers a choice between spending 1 per cent of annual income now, or risking losing 20 percent of it in 50 years' time. This language is almost identical to that Kahneman used two decades earlier in his experiments on loss aversion. Is it surprising that when a choice is framed like this, policymakers are intuitively drawn towards postponing action and taking a gamble on the future?

If cost and uncertainty really are universal psychological barriers, it is hard to

explain why 15 percent of people fully accept the threat and are willing to make personal sacrifices to avert it. Most of the people in this group are left wing or environmentalists and have managed to turn climate change into a narrative that fits with their existing criticisms of industry and growth.

Conservatives may justify climate inaction on the grounds of cost and uncertainty but they too, are able to accept both as long as they speak to their core values. As former US vice-president and climate skeptic Dick Cheney said: “If there is only a 1 percent chance of terrorists getting weapons of mass destruction, we must act as if it is a certainty.”

Strongly held values can explain the convictions of those at the ends of the political spectrum, but they do not adequately explain the apparent indifference of the large majority in between. If asked, most agree that climate change is a serious threat, but without prompting they do not volunteer it.

This silence is similar to that found around human rights abuses, argued the late Stanley Cohen, a sociologist at the London School of Economics. He suggested that we know very well what is happening but “enter into unwritten agreements about what can be publicly remembered and acknowledged”.

Our response to climate change is uncannily similar to an even more universal disavowal: unwillingness to face our own mortality, says neuroscientist Janis Dickinson of Cornell University in New York. She argues that overt images of death and decay along with the deeper implications

of societal decline and collapse are powerful triggers for denial of mortality.

There is a great deal of research showing that people respond to reminders of death with aggressive assertion of their own group identity. Dickinson argues that political polarization and angry denial found around climate change is consistent with this “terror management theory”. Again, there is a complex relationship between our psychology and the narratives that we construct to make sense of climate change.

For all of these reasons, it is a mistake to assume that the scientific evidence of climate change will flow directly into action – or, conversely, that climate denial can be dismissed as mere misinformation. The systems that govern our attitudes are just as complex as those that govern energy and

carbon, and just as subject to feedbacks that exaggerate small differences between people. The problem itself is far from perfect and the situation is not hopeless, but dealing with it will require a more sophisticated analysis of human cognition and the role of socially shared values in building conviction.

New Scientist; August 2014; editorial by George Marshall (founder of Climate Outreach and information Network in Oxford, UK)

Comment: This opens a rather large gap in human thought processes that threatens our survival. Do we have the wherewithal to correct the problem in time to save human society or to, at least, save it from doing severe damage to itself?

US NAVY SHIPS USE NUCLEAR POWER TO MAKE FUEL FROM SEAWATER

The U.S. Naval Research Laboratory developed a process to extract the carbon dioxide and hydrogen in water and turn it into liquid hydrocarbons. A nickel-supported catalyst reaction then converts them into the ingredients for commercial-

grade fuel, at a cost of \$3 to \$6 a gallon. The Navy has already tested a prototype in the Gulf of Mexico.

Popular Science; December 2014; pg. 83.

THE POWER OF SMALL GROUPS

The American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

Abundance: the future is better than you think by Peter Diamandis & Steven Kotler; Free Press 2010: Chap. 1.

Disclaimer: at times, the Editor receives compensation from endeavors controlled in part from Peter Diamandis. However, materials from *Abundance* in this issue were submitted by a long-

time Technocrat with no monetary interest and published without alteration.

LINEAR OR EXPONENTIAL SOCIAL CHANGE

“Over the past 150,000 years, Homo sapiens evolved in a world that was “local and linear,” but today’s environment is “global and exponential.” In our ancestor’s local environment, most everything that happened in their day happened within a day’s walk. In their linear environment, change was excruciatingly slow – life from one generation to the next was effectively the same – and what change did arrive always followed a linear progression. To give you a sense of the difference, if I take thirty linear steps (calling one step a meter) from the front door of my Santa Monica home, I end up thirty meters away. However, if I take thirty exponential steps (one, two, four,

eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on), I end up a billion meters away, or, effectively lapping the globe twenty-six times.

Today’s global and exponential world is very different from the one that our brain evolved to comprehend. Consider the sheer scope of the data we now encounter. A week’s worth of the New York Times contains more information than the average seventeenth-century citizen encountered in a lifetime. And the volume is growing exponentially.”

Abundance: The Future is Better than You Think by Peter Diamandis & Steven Kotler 2012: Free Press; Chap.3.

LIGHT

“In England, artificial lighting was twenty thousand times more expensive circa AD 1300 than it is today. But when Ridley extended the equation and examined how the amount of light bought with an hour’s work (at an average wage) has changed over the years, there is an even bigger savings:

“Today (light) will cost less than a half a second of your working time if you are on an average wage: half a second for an hour of light! Had you been using a kerosene lamp in the 1880s, you would have had to work for 15 minutes to get the same amount of light. A tallow candle in the 1800s: over six hours’ work. And to get that much light from a sesame-oil lamp in Babylon in 1750 BC

would have cost you more than fifty hours work.”

Light is a fabulous example: Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist* (Harper, 2010), pp.20-21

Put another way, if you compare today’s cost of lighting with the cost of sesame oil used in 1750 BC, you’ll find a 350,000-fold time-saving difference. And this covers only the savings of work-related time. Since those with electricity rarely knock over a lantern and set the barn on fire or suffer the respiratory ailments resulting from breathing in candle smoke, we have further gained those hidden hours once lost to poor health and habitat repair.”

Abundance: the future is better than you think by Peter Diamandis & Steven Kotler:

Free Press, 2010: Chap.4.

HERE'S TO THE CRAZY ONES

“Here’s to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in square holes... the ones who see things differently – they’re not fond of rules ... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify them, but the only thing you can’t do is ignore them because they change things ... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are

crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones who do.”

Apple Introduced: text only:
<http://americandigest.org/mt-archives/004924.php>

Quoted in:

Abundance: the future is better than you think by Peter Diamandis & Steven Kotler; Free Press 2010: Chap. 18

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TECHNOCRACY

CONCEPT AND ORGANIZATION (continued from last issue)

These questions deal with the body of thought of Technocracy itself and with the organization formed to fill the need for disseminating that body of thought to all North Americans.

Research indicated that increasing technological disemployment would render impossible the distribution of sufficient consuming power in salaries and wages to buy back the products of increasingly efficient machines. The social program of Technocracy, therefore, is one specifically designed to distribute an optimum of goods and services to all citizens. (The resulting disemployment by technology mentioned above is on the lips of nearly everyone in North America today.)

Is not Technocracy very similar to Socialism or Communism?

No, it is not — mainly because it proceeds from entirely different premises than either socialism or communism. Technocracy originated out of a circumstance of technologically produced disemployment.

Socialism and Communism, by contrast, were outgrowths of an environment in which practically all work was done by human

muscle power, and wherein it was never possible to produce sufficient goods and services for all citizens. Karl Marx's theories were formulated to overcome conditions as they existed in Europe in the middle of the 19th Century -- far different conditions from those faced in 20th Century North America.

Only Technocracy applies the necessary measures to cope with 20th century technological problems.

Did not Technocracy state in 1937 that the Price System would be over by 1942? If so, why do we still have it? What happened?

What happened is that we have had a World War and a series of smaller conflicts ever since. These have given massive blood transfusions to the ailing Price System and prolonged its life expectancy.

Furthermore, Technocracy did not make the bald, unqualified prediction stated above. Instead, it indicated that if trends continued in the direction they were taking, the Price System would be in ever-increasing difficulty until it reached the point of breakdown. The mounting problems of the present system are plainly evident on every hand.

What can one do as an individual to bring about a better system?

We suggest that the best way to do this is to acquaint yourself as fully as possible on all aspects of the problem, after which an objective solution will commence to suggest itself. While anyone can do this individually and alone if one has the integrity and interest to do so, it seems rather a waste of time to go over ground that has already been covered with the likely result that a similar

conclusion would be reached to one that has already been rather widely publicized.

We refer, of course, to Technocracy's social analysis and synthesis. Probably the best move individuals could make would be to join the organization of Technocracy Inc., investigate it from the inside, and prepare themselves in any way practical through the organization's media to inform other North Americans of Technocracy's conclusions. If you feel that the organization does not have the answer, you can drop your membership more easily than you attained it.

What are the duties and obligations of members of Technocracy?

The only requirements for membership are to pay your dues and to abide by the organization's Bylaws and General Regulations. Beyond that, your degree of participation depends upon your personal initiative.

Presuming, though, that you joined the organization because you were convinced that Technocracy holds the only answer to North America's social dilemma, you would wish to learn as much as possible as soon as possible about the organization. By so doing you would be preparing yourself, through whatever personal knowledge or ability you may possess, to further Technocracy's objectives by informing your fellow North Americans about them.

The first step will be to attend a Study Class where, after either learning the rudiments of basic science or refreshing your memory of them, you will learn Technocracy's analysis of the existing society and why the Price System is incapable of solving its problems; the final lessons explain what is necessary for their solution.

Technocracy has room for many talents, such as teaching, speaking, writing, typing, accounting (since we are still in the Price System), printing, and a wide variety of others. The combination of these abilities through the efforts of its various members constitutes the full capability of Technocracy to inform North Americans of "the only organization that is preparing the people of this Continent for social change." A member's most important obligation to Technocracy Inc. is one's sense of realization of that responsibility, coupled with a determination to carry it out.

What do Technocrats mean by social change? Their use of the term seems to differ from that of the popular understanding.

Very much so. Social change is far more basic than the periodic switches from one political party to another, even if these switches are from the far right to the far left; for unless the essential ingredient of social change is introduced by the new administration, nothing more than superficial differences will result.

The essential ingredient to effect social change is a change in the rate of energy conversion, whether this be upwards or downwards. Thus, a society that converts energy at a low rate can have only a low overall living standard, while another that converts energy at a higher rate can have a correspondingly higher standard of living for all its citizens. That this may not actually occur has nothing to do with society's ability to do so; the fault lies in the distributive mechanism.

For all practical purposes we may consider social change to involve an upward

adjustment of the ability to convert energy. Historically, from time immemorial until the last couple of centuries, the only significant means humankind had of converting energy was the power of their own muscles. This accounted for about 98 percent of all energy converted; notwithstanding the assistance obtained from such extraneous sources (those outside the human body) as domesticated animals, windmills, and waterfalls. Thus, the general living standard throughout the world in the middle of the 18th century was not substantially different from what it had been four or five thousand years earlier, which suggests that the rate of energy conversion was at its irreducible minimum.

The first significant change upward occurred when the energy of burning coal was harnessed for use through the medium of the newly invented steam engine in the 18th century. Slowly at first, but with rapidly gathering momentum, the trend to the use of extraneous sources of energy — coal, petroleum products, electricity — increased until today in North America an exact reverse of the historic situation exists. Less than two percent of all energy converted for the production of goods and services can be attributed to human muscle power; the balance, over 98 percent, comes from extraneous sources: technological energy, mechanical, electrical, or chemical. Accordingly, we now have the physical ability to produce an optimal amount of goods and services for every resident of the Continent. The fact that they are not receiving it stems from their stubborn retention of that archaic Price System social mechanism that was conceived in natural scarcity and is operable only under those environmental conditions.

What is your symbol called, and what is its significance? Would it, with the gray field, be the flag of the Technate?

The symbol is called the monad and it signifies balance between production and distribution, which is an integral part of the social program designed by Technocracy. Whether it and the gray field will be the flag of the Technate is a matter that will have to be determined by the citizens of the Technate.

What are you going to do with the people who are not interested in Technocracy?

If the question asks what we intend to do with persons today who are not interested in

Technocracy, the answer is "nothing." We are seeking people who are intelligent and open-minded enough to embrace a new idea. However, deteriorating economic and social conditions will force many people not presently interested to look in our direction.

In the Technate, even the people who are not interested in Technocracy will enjoy the same high standard of living and increased leisure along with greater opportunity for cultural activities. Should they still prefer to live somewhere else, there will be no restriction on emigration.

IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN TECHNOCRACY ...

Please feel free to tell them to contact CHQ or go to the below websites to learn more!

Although Technocracy proposes some simple, down-to-earth concepts, we have a depth of materials and literature that are thought-provoking and rich in details. There is always more to discover and learn!

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With their grey suits, Monad lapel pins and the tour bus with the Technocracy emblem, these dedicated members are about to embark on an informational excursion.

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