



Utopia Factories, by Alvin Toffler

As we move from poverty to 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. Finding non-zero sum solutions to our social problems requires all the imagination we can muster. While imaginetive centers, sanctuaries for social imagination, concentrate on partial images of tomorrow, defining possible futures for a single industry, an organization, a city or its sub systems, however, we also need sweeping, visionary ideas about the society as a whole. Multiplying our images of possible futures is important; but these images need to be organized, crystallized into structured form. In the past utopian literature did this for us. It played a practical, crucial role in ordering men's dreams about alternative futures. Today we suffer for lack of utopian ideas around which to organize competing images of possible futures. Most traditional utopias picture simple and static societies -- ie. societies that have nothing in common with super-industrialism. B. F. Skinner's Walden Two, the model for several existing experimental communes, depicts a pre-industrial way of life -- small, close to earth, built on farming and handcraft. Even those two brilliant anti-utopias, Brave New World and 1984, now seem oversimple. Both describe societies based on high technology and low complexity: the machines are sophisticated but the social and cultural relationships are fixed and deliberately simplified. Today we need powerful new utopian and anti-utopian concepts that look forward to super-industrialism, rather than backward to simpler societies. These concepts, however, can no longer be produced in the old way. First, no book, by itself, is adequate to describe a super-industrial future in emotionally compelling terms. Each conception of a super-industrial utopia or anti-utopia needs to be embodied in many forms -- films, plays, novels, and works of art -- rather than a single work of fiction. Second, it may now be too difficult for any individual writer, no matter how gifted, to describe a convincingly complex future. We need, therefore, a revolution in the production of utopias: collaborative utopianism. We need to construct "utopia factories".

--Alvin Toffler