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## Introduction

### Sand Castles

by David F. Noble

Dennis Hayes has seen the future and it doesn't work. His disturbing account of the underside of Silicon Valley provides a powerful and much-needed antidote to the print-out panaceas purveyed by today's born-again progressives, the false promises of Yankee enterprise in the computer age.

Evoked every day by promoters, prophets and politicians, the images abound of a harmonious and prosperous future, a bright, bucolic and beneficent new world created and sustained by the market magic of unbridled entrepreneurial elan and the impetuous spirit of invention. "It's time to rekindle the American spirit of invention and daring," high-tech candidate Michael Dukakis declared; "A new era is about to begin."

The hallowed site of this modern miracle is Silicon Valley, California, microchip mecca, where the future is now. Silicon Valley is the point of departure for all of today's disc-driven dreamers—at once a sign of and a guide to our computer-based salvation. The symbol for this new world is the silicon chip, patterned bits of hardened sand which carry the electronic intelligence of computers and microprocessors into the myriad machinery of modern life. Silicon is the material substrate upon which the high technology culture is being etched. As the technological thons of ages past have left their imprints in stone, bronze, iron, and steel, so those of this new age will leave theirs in silicon. Strength in silicon, we are told, is thus the key to our continued greatness; it is here that the reality and the fantasy converge. For, if the material foundation of this new world is built upon sand, so too are its dreams. This is the unsettling moral of Dennis Hayes' story.

A century and a half ago, at the dawn of America's first industrial revolution, publicists for a powerful group of Boston manufacturers portrayed their new textile town of Lowell, Massachusetts in much the