**1993**

**199301**

A scientist who does research in economic psychology and who wants to predict the way in which consumers will spend their money must study consumer behaviour. He must obtain data both on the resources of consumers and on the motives that tend to encourage or discourage money spending.

If an economist were asked which of three groups borrow most people with rising incomes, stable incomes, or declining incomes would probably answer: those with declining incomes. Actually, in the years 1947-1950, the answer was: people with rising incomes. People with declining incomes were next and people with stable incomes borrowed the least. This shows us that traditional assumptions about earning and spending are not always reliable. Mother traditional assumption is that if people who have money expect prices to go up, they will hasten to buy. If they expect prices to go down, they will postpone buying. But research surveys have shown that this is not always true. The expectations of price increases may not stimulate buying. One typical attitude was expressed by the wife of a mechanic in an interview at a time of rising prices. "In a few months, she said, “we'll have to pay more for meat and milk; we'll have less to spend on other things.” Her family had been planning to buy a new car but they postponed this purchase. Furthermore, the rise in prices that has already taken place may be resented add buyer’s resistance may be evoked. This is shown by the following typical comment: “I just don' t pay these prices; they are too high.”

Traditional assumptions should be investigated carefully, and factors of time and place should be considered. The investigations mentioned above were carried out in America. Investigations conducted at the same time in Great Britain, however, yielded results that were more in agreement with traditional assumptions about saving and spending patterns. The condition most conductive to spending appears to be price stability. If prices have been stable and people have become accustomed to consider them “right” and expect them to remain stable, they are likely to buy. Thus, it appears that the common business policy of maintaining stable prices with occasional sales or discounts is based on a correct understanding of consumer psychology.

**199302**

In an intact plant community, undisturbed by human intervention, the composition of a community is mainly a function of the climate and the type of soil. Today, such original communities are very rare. They are practically limited to national parks and reservations.

Civilization has progressively transformed the conditions determining the composition of plant communities. For several thousand years vast areas of arable land have been hoed, ploughed, harrowed and grassland has been cut or grazed. During the last decades the use of chemical substances, such as fertilizers and most recently of weed killers (herbicides) has greatly influenced the composition of weed communities in farm land.

All selective herbicides have specific ranges of activity. They control the most important weeds but not all the plants of a community. The latter profit fronithe new free space and from the fertilizer as much as the crop does; hence they often spread rapidly and become problem weeds unless another herbicide for their eradication is found.

The soil contains enormous quantities of seeds of numerous species to half a million perm according to scientific literature that retain their ability to germinate for decades. Thus it may occur that weeds that were hardly noticed before emerge in masses after the elimination of their competitors. Hence, the knowledge of the composition of weed communities before selective weed killers are applied is not only of scientific interest since the plant species present in the soil in the form of seeds must be considered as potential weeds. For efficient control the identification of weeds at the seedling stage, i.e. at a time when they can still be controlled, is particularly necessary; for the choice of the appropriate herbicides depends on the composition of the weed community.

199303

My mother told me a story every evening while we waited for Father to close the shop and come home. The shop remained open till midnight. Bullock-carts in long caravans arrived late in the evening from distant villages, loaded with coconut, rice, and other commodities for the market. The animals were unyoked under the big tamarind tree for the night, and the cartmen drifted in twos and threes to the shop, for a chat or to ask for things to eat or smoke. How my father loved to discuss with them the price of grain, rainfall, harvest, and the state of irrigation channels. Or they talked about old litigations. One heard repeated references to magistrates, affidavits, witnesses in the case, and appeals, punctuated with roars of laughter possibly the memory of some absurd legality or loophole tickled them.

My father ignored food and sleep when he had company. My mother sent me out several times to see if he could be made to turn in. He was a man of uncertain temper and one could not really guess how he would react to interruptions, and so my mother coached me to go up, watch his mood, and gently remind him of food and florae. I stood under the shop-awning, coughing and clearing my throat, hoping to catch his eye. But the talk was all-absorbing and he would not glance in my direction, and I got absorbed in their talk, although I did not understand a word of it. After a while my mother’s voice came gently on the night air, calling, Raju. Raju and my father interrupted his activities to look at me and say, tell your mother not to wait for me. Tell her to place a handful of rice and buttermilk in a bowl, with just one piece of lime pickle, and keep it in the oven for me. I’ll come in later. It was almost a formula with him five days in a week. He always added, Not that I’m really hungry tonight. And then I believe he went on to discuss health problems with his cronies.

But I didn’t stop to hear further. I made a quick dash back home. There was a dark patch between the light from the shop and the dim lantern shedding its light on our threshold, a matter of about ten yards, I suppose, but the passage through it gave me a cold sweat. I expected wild animals and supernatural creatures to emerge and grab me. My mother waited on the doorstep to receive me and said. Not hungry, I suppose! That’ll give him an excuse to talk to the village folk all night, and then come in for an hour' s sleep and get up with the crowing of that foolish cock somewhere. He will spoil his health.

I followed her into the kitchen. She placed my plate and hers side by side on the floor, drew the rice-pot within reach, and served me and herself simultaneously, and we finished our dinner by the sooty tin lamp, stuck on a nail in the wall. She unrolled a mat for me in the front room, and I lay down to sleep. She sat at my side, awaiting Father’s return. Her presence gave me a feeling of inexplicable cosiness. I felt I ought to put her proximity to good use, and complained. Something is bothering my hair, and she ran her fingers through my hair, and scratched the nape of my neck. And then I commanded, A story.

Immediately she began, once upon a time there was a man called Devaka. I heard his name mentioned almost every night. He was a hero, saint, or something of the kind. I never learned fully what he did or why, sleep overcoming me before my mother was through even the preamble.

**199304**

Psychologists study memory and learning with both animal and human subjects. The two experiments reviewed here show how short-term memory has been studied.

Hunter studied short-term memory in rats. He used a special apparatus which had a cage for the rat and three doors. There was a light in each door. First the rat was placed in the closed cage. Next one of the lights was turned on and then off. There was food for the rat only at this door. After the light was turned off, the rat had to wait a short time before it was released from its cage. Then, if went to the correct door, it was rewarded with the food that was there. Hunter did this experiment many times. He always turned on the lights in a random order. The rat had to wait different intervals before it was released from the cage. Hunter found that if the rat had to. wait more than ten seconds, it could not remember the correct door. Hunter’s results show that rats have a short-term memory of about ten seconds.

Henning studies how students who learning English as a second language remember vocabulary. The subjects in his experiment were 75 students at the University of California in Los Angeles. They represented all levels of ability in English. beginning, intermediate, advanced; and native-speaking students.

To begin, the subjects listened to a recording of a native speaker reading a paragraph in English. Following the recording, the subjects took a 15-question test to see which words they remembered. Each question had four choices. The subjects had to circle the word they had heard in the recording. Some of the questions had four choices that sound alike. For example, weather, whether, wither, and wetter are four words that sound alike. Some of the questions had four choices that have the same meaning. Method, way, manner, and system would be four words with the same meaning. Some of them had four unrelated choices. For instance, weather, method, love, result could be used as four unrelated words. Finally the subjects took a language proficiency test.

Henning found that students with a lower proficiency in English made more of their mistakes on words that sound alike; students with a higher proficiency made more of their mistakes on words that have the same meaning. Henning’s results suggest that beginning students hold the sound of words in their short-term memory, and advanced students hold the meaning of words in their short-term memory.

**199305**

TITLE: THE END OF EQUALITY AUTHOR: MICKEY KAUS

PUBLISHER: BASIC BOOKS; 293 PAGES; $25

THE BOTTOM LINE: Let the American rich get richer, says Kaus, and the poor get respects. That’s a plan for the Democrats?

By RICHARD LACAYO

UTIOPIAS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE dreams of the future. But the American Utopia? Lately it' s a dream that was, a twilit memory of the Golden Age between V-J day and OPEC, when even a blue-collar paycheck bought a place in the middle class. The promise of paradise regained has become a key to the Democratic party pitch. Mickey Kaus, a senior editor of the New Republic, says the Democrats are wasting their time. As the U. S. enters a world where only the highly skilled and well educated will make a decent living, the gap between rich and poor is going to keep growing. No fiddling with the tax code, retreat to protectionism or job training for jobs that aren’t there is going to stop it. Income equality is a hopeless cause in the U.S.

“Liberalism would be less depressing if it had a more attainable end.” Kaus writes, “a goal short of money equality.” Liberal Democrats should embrace an aim he calls civic equality. If government can’t bring everyone into the middle class, let it expand the areas of life in which everyone, regardless of income, receives the same treatment. National health care, improved public schools, universal national service and government financing of nearly all election campaigns, which would freeze out special-interest money here are the unobjectionable components of his enlarged public sphere.

Kaus is right to fear the hardening of class lines, but wrong to think the stresses can be relieved without a continuing effort to boost income for the bottom half. “No, we can’t tell them they’ll be rich,” he admits. “Or even comfortably well-off. But we can offer them at least a material minimum and a good shot at climbing up the ladder. And we can offer them respect.” And what might they offer back? The Bronx had a rude cheer for it. A good chunk of the Democratic core constituency would probably peel off.

At the center of Kaus’s book is a thoughtful but no less risky proposal to dynamite welfare.

He rightly understands how fear and loathing of the chronically unemployed underclass have encouraged middle- income Americans to flee from everyone below them on the class scale. The only way to eliminate welfare dependency, Kaus maintains, is by cutting off checks for all able bodied recipients, including single mothers with children. He would have government provide them instead with jobs that pay slightly less than the minimum wage, earned-income tax credits to nudge them over the poverty line, drug counselling, job training and, if necessary, day care for their children.

Kaus doesn’t sell this as social policy on the cheap. He expects it would cost up to $59 billion a year more than the $23 billion already spent annually on welfare in the U.S. And he knows it would be politically perilous, because he suggests paying for the plan by raiding Social Security funds and trimming benefits for upper-income retirees. Yet he considers it money well spent if it would undo the knot of chronic poverty and help foster class rapprochement. And it would be too. But one advantage of being an author is that you only ask people to listen to you, not to vote for you.

**1994**

**199401**

One afternoon while she was preparing dinner in her kitchen, Anne Peters, a 32-year old American housewife, suddenly had severe pains in her chest accompanied by the shortness of breath. Terrified by the thought she was having a heart attack, Anne screamed for help. Her frightened husband immediately rushed Ann to a nearby hospital where, to her great relief, her pains were diagnosed as having been caused by panic, and not a heart attack.

More and more Americans nowadays are having panic attacks like the one experienced by Anne Peters. Benjamin Crocker, a psychiatrist and assistant director of the Anxiety Disorders Clinic at the University of Southern California, reveals that as many as ten million adult Americans have already or will experience at least one panic attack in their lifetime. Moreover, studies conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States disclose that approximately 1.2 million adult individuals are currently suffering from severe and recurrent panic attack.

These attacks are spontaneous and inexplicable and may last for a few minutes; some, however, continue for several hours, not only frightening the victim but also making him or her wholly disoriented. The symptoms of panic attack bear such remarkable similarity to those of heart attack that many victims are convinced that they are indeed having a heart attack.

Panic attack victims show the following symptoms: they often become easily frightened or feel uneasy in situations where people normally would not be afraid; they suffer shortness of breath, dizziness or light headedness; experience chest pains, a quick heartbeat, tingling in the hands; a choking feeling, faintness, sudden fits of trembling, a feeling that persons and things around them are not real; and most of all, a fear of dying or going crazy. A person seized by a panic attack may show all or as few as four of these symptoms.

There has been a lot of conjecture as to the cause of panic attack. Both laymen and experts alike claim that psycho, logical stress could be a logical cause, but as yet, no evidence has been found to support this theory. However, studies show that more women than men experience panic attack and people who drink a lot as well as those who take marijuana or beverages containing a lot of caffeine are more prone to attacks.

Dr. Wayne Keaton, an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Washington Medical School, claims that there are at least three signs that indicate a person is suffering from panic attack rather than a heart attack. The first is age. People between the ages of 20 and 30 are more often victims of panic attack. The second is sex. More women suffer from recurrent panic attacks than men, while heart attack rarely strikes women before their menopause. The third is the multiplicity of symptoms. A panic attack victim usually suffers at least four of the previous mentioned symptoms while a heart attack victim often experience only pain and shortness of breath.

It is generally concluded that panic attack does not endanger a person' s life. All the same, it can unnecessarily disrupt a person' s life by making him or her so afraid that he or she will have a panic attack in a public place that he or she may refuse to leave home and may eventually become isolated from the rest of society. Dr. Crocker’s advice to any person who thinks he is suffering from panic attack is to consult a doctor for a medical check-up to rule out the possibilities of physical illness first. Once it has been confirmed that he or she is, in fact, suffering from panic attack, the victim should seek psychological and medical help.

**199402**

The world’s last known case of smallpox was reported in Somalia, the horn of Africa, in October 1977. The victim was a young cook called Ali Maow Maalin. His case became a landmark in medical history, for smallpox is the first communicable disease ever to be eradicated.

The smallpox campaign to free the world of smallpox has been led by the World Health Organization. The Horn of Africa, embracing the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and Somalia, was one of the last few smallpox ridden areas of the world when the WHO-sponsored Smallpox Eradication Program (SEP) got underway there in 1971.

Many of the 25 million inhabitants, mostly farmers and nomads living in a wildness of desert, bush and mountains, already have smallpox. The problem of tracing the disease in such formidable country was exacerbated by continuous warfare in the area.

The program concentrated on an imaginative policy of “search and containment”. Vaccination was used to reduce the widespread incidence of the disease, but the success of the campaign depended on the work of volunteers. There were men, paid by the day, who walked hundreds of miles in search of “rumors” information about possible smallpox cases.

Often these rumors turned out to be cases of measles, chick pox or syphilis but nothing could be left to change.

The program progressed the disease was gradually brought under control. By September 1976 the SEP made its first that no new cases had been reported. But that first optimism was short-lived. A three:year-old girl called Amina Salat, from a dusty village in the Ogaden in the south-east of Ethiopia, had given smallpox to a young nomad visitor. Leaving the village the nomad had walked across the border into Somalia. There he infected 3,000 people, and among them had been the cook, Ali. It was further 14 months before the elusive “target zero” no further cases was reached. Even now, the search continues in “high risk” areas and in parts of the country unchecked for some time. The flow of rumors has now diminished to a trickle but each must still be checked by a qualified person.

Victory is in sight, but two years must pass since the “last case” be fore an international declare that the world is entirely free from smallpox.

**199403**

The Form Master’s observations about punishment were by no means without their warrant at St. James’s school. Flogging with the birch in accordance with the Eton fashion was a great feature in its curriculum. But I am sure no Eton boy, and certainly no Harrow boy of my day, ever received such a cruel flogging as this headmaster was accustomed to inflict upon the little boys who were in his care and power. They exceeded in severity anything that would be tolerated in any of the Reformatories under the Home Office. My reading in later life has supplied me with some possible explanations of his temperament. Two or three times a month the whole school was marshalled in the Library, and one or more delinquents were hauled off to an adjoining apartment by the two head boys, and there flogged until they bled freely, while the rest sat quaking, listening to their screams...

How I hated this school, and what a life of anxiety Hived there for more than two years. I made very little progress at my lessons, and none at all games. I counted the days and the hours to the end of every term, when I should return home from this hateful servitude and range my soldiers in line of battle on the nursery floor. The greatest pleasure I had in those days was reading. When I was nine and a half my father gave me Treasure Island and I remember the delight with which I devoured it. My teacher saw me at once backward and precocious, reading books beyond my years and yet at the bottom of the form. They were offended. They had large resources of compulsion at their disposal, but I was stubborn. Where my reason, imagination or interest were not engaged, I would not or I could not learn. In all the twelve years, I was at school no one ever succeeded in making me write a Latin verse or learn any Greek except the alphabet. I do not at all excuse myself for this foolish neglect of opportunities procured at so much expense by my parents and brought so forcibly to my attention by my preceptors. Perhaps if I had been introduced to the ancients through their history and customs, instead of through their grammar and syntax, I might have had a better record.

**199404**

Few issues are as clear as the one that drew a quarter-million Americans to the Lincoln Memorial 30 years ago this August 28. “America has given the Negro people a bad check”, the nation was told. It has promised quality but delivered second-class citizenship because of race. Few orators could define the justice as eloquently as Martin Luther King Jr. whose words on that sweltering day remain etched in the public consciousness: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

The march on Washington had been the dream of a black labor leader A. Philip Randolph who was a potent figure in the civil-rights movement. But it was King who emerged as the symbol of the black people’s struggle. His “I have a dream” speech struck such an emotional chord that recordings of it were made, sold, bootlegged and resold within weeks of its delivery. The magic of the moment was that it gave white America a new prospective on black America and pushed civil rights forward on the nation’s agenda.

When the march was planned by a coalition of civil rights, union and church leaders, nothing quite like it had ever been seen. Tens of thousands of blacks streamed into the nation’s capital by car, bus, train and foot, an invading army of the disenfranchised singing freedom songs and demanding rights. By their very members, they forced the world’s greatest democracy to face an embarrassing question: How could America continue on a course that denied so many the simple amenities of a water fountain or a lunch counter? Or the most essential element of democracy the vote?

Three decades later, we still wrestle with questions of black and white, but now they are confused by shades of gray. The gap persists between the quality of black life and white. The urban underclass has grown more entrenched. Bias remains. And the nation is jarred from time to time by sensational cases stemming from racial hate. But the clarity of the 1963 issue is gone. No longer do governors stand in schoolhouse doors. Nor do signs bar blacks from restaurants or theaters; It is illegal to deny African-Americans the vote. There are 7,500 black elected officials, including 338 mayors and 40 members of Congress, plus a large black middle class. And we are past the point when white American must look to one eloquent leader to answer the question “What does the Negro want?”

The change is reflected in the variety of causes on the wish list of this year’s anniversary march on Washington. Health care reform job training. Religious freedom for American Indians. Statehood for the District of Columbia. Head Start for young people. Security for the disabled. And an end to racism. The compelling issue of 1963 discrimination today is more a matter of dark hearts than evil laws. And the legislative agenda of modern day marchers is American, not black.

**199405**

Ever hear of the small, rat like animal called the lemming? Lemmings are arctic rodents with a very odd habit: periodically, for reasons no one entirely knows, they mass together in large herd and commit suicide by rushing into deep water and drowning themselves. They all run in together, blindly, and not one of them ever seems to stop and ask, “Why am I doing this? Is this really what I want to do?” and thus save itself from destruction. Obviously, lemmings are driven to perform their strange suicide rites by common instinct. People choose to “follow the herd” for more complex reasons, yet we are still too often the unwilling victims of the bandwagon appeal.

Essentially, the bandwagon urges us to an action or an opinion because it is popular? Because “everyone else is doing it”. This call to “get on the bandwagon” appeals to the strong desire in most of us to be one of the crowd, not to be left out or alone. Advertising makes extensive use of the bandwagon appeal (“join the Pepsi people”), but so do politicians (“Let us join together in this great cause”). Senator Yakalot uses the bandwagon appeal when he says that “More and more citizens are rallying to my cause every day,” and asks his audience to “join them and me in our fight for America.”

One of the ways we can see the bandwagon appeal at work is in the overwhelming success of various fashions and trends which capture the interest (and the money) of thousands of people for a short time, then disappear suddenly and completely. For a year or two in the fifties every child in North America wanted a coonskin cap so that they could be like Davy Crockett; no one wanted to be left out. After that there was the hula hoop craze that helped to dislocate thousands of Americans. More recently, what made millions of people rush out to buy their very own “pet rocks”?

The problem here is obvious, just because everyone’s doing. It doesn’t mean that we should too. Group approval does not approve that something is true or is worth doing. Large numbers of people have supported actions we now condemn. Just a generation ago, Hitler and Mussolini rose to absolute and catastrophically repressive rule in two of the most sophisticated and cultured countries of Europe. When they came into power they were welled up by massive popular 'support from millions of people who didn’t want to be “left out” at a great historical moment.

Once the mass begins to move on the bandwagon, it becomes harder and harder to perceive the leader riding the bandwagon. So don’t be a lemming, rushing blindly on to destruction because “everyone else is doing it”. Stop and ask, “Where is this bandwagon headed? Never mind about everyone else, is this what is best for me?...”

As we have seen, propaganda can appeal to us by arousing our emotions or distracting our attention from the real issues at hand. But there’s a third was that propaganda can be put to work against us by the use of faulty logic. This approach is really more subtle, than the other two because it gives the appearance of reasonable, fair argument. It is only when we look more closely that the holes in the logic fibre show up.

**1995**

**199501**

Looked at one way, it is faintly ludicrous that Sir David Frost should be writing his autobiography already. That he should have written just the first 30 years worth might be thought strange. Here he is, not yet 55 years old, producing a volume of 528 pages that takes us no further than 1969.

It is true, the period of his life that established his name and fortune, that swift rise from undergraduate cabaret turn to star host on both sides of the Atlantic, joint founder of an ambitious ITV company and long since able to invite show business stars, business tycoons and a British Prime Minister to breakfast at three days notice. (An event recalled in his book with such empty indifference that you cannot decide whether the comprehensive name-dropping is intended to impress or just a habit.)

And yet David Frost, a significant figure in British television, certainly in the rapidly changing environment of the 1960’s, remains something of a mystery. Never far from positions of influence, wealthier from his broadcasting activities than all but the biggest moguls, he is in many ways on the edge of things.

His book, like his career, perhaps, is as fascinating as it is unsatisfactory. The length is due to its liberal resort to program transcripts, which yield verbatim exchanges with his many interviewees as well as detailed recall of the highs and lows of That Was The Week That Was and the scripting process that achieved them.

The private Frost is to be caught only in passing, as he remains true to his preface: “Where there was a choice between a 60s tale and a personal one I have tried always to include the former.” The outcome is, I think, an insider’s book, dependent on remembering the times or knowing the people. But at that level, it is highly suggestive of its era, offers a view from a unique angle, yields some new insights into the formation of London Weekend Television, for instance, and earns its place in the history of British Television. Like its author.

**199502**

Quietly, almost unnoticed by a world sunk into the Great Depression. Germany on Jan.30, 1933, was handed to a monster. Adolf Hitler arrived, not in jackboots at the head of his Nazi legions but on cat paws, creeping in the side door.

The president, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, 85 and doddering, hated Hitler and all he represented. In 1931, after their first meeting, Hindenburg said Hitler “might become minister of posts but never chancellor”. In 1932 Hitler challenged Hindenburg. The president-Protestant, Prussian, a conservative monarchist-won with the votes of socialists, Unions, Centrist Catholics and Liberal Democrats. Hitler-Catholic, Austrian and a former tramp-carried upper-class Protestants, Prussian landowners and monarchists.

Nearly senile and desperate for any way to establish order in the fractious environment, Hindenburg fell prey to intriguers. Papen began plotting to bring himself to power and his supposed friend Schleicher to the top of the army. Papen offered Hindenburg a government with Hitler’s support but without Hitler in the cabinet. Hindenburg made Papen chancellor and Schleicher defense minister.

In the July 1932 parliamentary elections, the Nazis won 230 of 608 seats, and Hitler demanded the chancellorship; Hindenburg refused. Papen lost a confidence vote in August, and his government fell after losing in the fourth election in a year in November. Schleicher, whose very name means “intriguer”, turned on Papen, persuading Hindenburg to name him chancellor. Hitler’s propagandist Joseph Goebbels noted: “He won' t last long.”

To get revenge, Papen proposed sharing power with Hitler in January 1933; Hitler agreed, but with Papen as vice chancellor. Ever eager for order, Hindenburg shifted once again and fired Schleicher. “I am sure,” the president said, “I shall not regret this action in heaven.” Schleicher replied bitterly, “After this breach of trust, sir, I am not sure you will go to heaven.” Schleicher would later say: “I stayed in power only 57 days, and on each and every one of them I was betrayed 57 times. Don’t ever speak to me of German loyalty!”

At noon on Jan.30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was sworn in as chancellor. Within one month, the Reichstag burned and civil liberties were suspended. Within two months, the Enabling Act stripped parliament of power and made Hitler dictator. On April 1, Hitler decreed a boycott of Jewish business. On April 4, he created the Reich Defense Council and began secretly rearming Germany. On July 14, Hitler made the Nazi Party “the only political party in Germany”.

As they sowed, so they reaped. In the Blood Purge of 1934, a Nazi SS squad murdered Kurt yon Schleicher in the doorway of his home. Franz von Papen lingered on, so powerless an errand boy for Hitler that he was acquitted at the Nuremberg trials.

**199503**

Iris Rossner has seen eastern Germany customers weep for joy when they drive away in shiny, new Mercedes-Benz sedans. “They have tears in their eyes and keep saying how lucky they are,” says Rossner, the Mercedes employee nale for post-delivery celebrations. Rossner has also seen the French pop corks on bottles of champagne as their national flag was hoisted above a purchase. And she has seen American business executives, Japanese tourists and Russian politicians travel thousands of miles to a Mercedes plant in southwestern Germany when a classic sedan with the trade mirk three-pointed star was about to roll off the assembly line and into their lives. Those were the good economic miracle of the 1960s and ended in 1991.

Tunes have changed. “Ten years ago, we had clear leadership in the market,” says Mercedes spokesman Horst Ki ambeer. “But over this period, the market has changed drastically. We are now in a pitched battle. The Japanese are partly responsible, but Mercedes has had to learn the hard way that even German firms like BMW and Audi have made efforts to rise to our standards of technical proficiency.”

Mercedes experienced one of its worst years ever in 1992. The autornaker’s worldwide car sales fell by 5 percent from the previous year, to a low of 527,500. Before the decline, in 1988, the company could sell close to 600,000 cars per year. In Germany alone, there were 30,000 fewer new Mercedes registrations last year than in 1991. As a result, production has plunged by almost 50,000 cars to 529,400 last year, a level well beneath the company’s potential capacity of 650,000. Mercedes’ competitors have been catching up in the United States, the world’s largest car market. In 1986, Mercedes sold 100,000 vehicles in America; by 1991, the number had declined to 59,000. Over the last two years, the struggling company has lost a slice of its US market share to BMW, Toyota and Nissan. And BMW outsold Mercedes in America last year for the first time in its history. Meanwhile, just as Mercedes began making some headway in Japan, a notoriously difficult market, the Japanese economy fell on hard times and the company saw its sales decline by 13 percent in Thai country.

Revenues will hardly improve this year, and the time has come for getting down to business. At Mercedes, that means cutting payrolls, streamlining production and opening up to consumer needs-revolutionary steps for a company that once considered itself beyond improvement.

**199504**

Scientists have made a breakthrough to clone a human being. That’s how at least one television news anchor put it last week, and while his description was off the mark, the real news was almost as fantastic: researchers at George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, D. C., split single human embryos into identical copies, a technology that opens a pandora’s box of ethical questions and has sparked a storm of controversy around the world.

Claiming they began the experiments to spur debate, the researchers got more than they bargained for. The Vatican condemned the technology as perverse; one German magazine called the research “unscrupulous”, and ethicists in this country disagreed hotly over whether or not the technology should be offered to infertile couples.

The news also left many people wondering what, precisely, the technology is all about. The headlines conjured up futuristic images of armies of clones, or human beings reconstructed from a few cells - a sort of Jurassic Park for humans. But what researchers Robert Stillman and Jerry Hall actually did was to extend a technique that has been used in livestock for more than decade. The physicians, who specialize in helping infertile couples conceive, used in vitro fertilization to create human embryos in a laboratory dish. When the embryos had grown enough to contain two to eight cells. The researchers separated them into 48 individual cells. Two of the separated cells survived for a few days in the lab, developing into new human embryos smaller than the head of a pin and consisting of 32 cells each. Though no great technical feat, the procedure opens a range of unsettling possibilities. For example, parents could have one embryo implanted in the mother’s womb and store its identical siblings indefinitely. The spare embryos could be implanted later, allowing parents to create an entire family of identical children of different ages. Spare embryos could also be sold to other families, who would be able to see from an already born child how their embryo would turn out. Even more bizarre, a woman conceived from a split embryo could give birth to her own twin.

Issues to come. Such scenarios raise thorny issues about the rights of parents and the meaning of individuality. Some ethicists maintain that parents have the right to do with embryos what they will, including having twins born very apart But others fear that the procedure unacceptably alters what it means to be a human being, especially when the younger twins are forced to see older versions of themselves. “Does looking at yourself violate some profound sense of self and individuality?” asks Dr. Mary Mathews, director of the infertility program at the University of California at San Francisco.

Amid the controversy, one thing seems certain: the experiments will continue. While cloning is forbidden, in Germany among other countries, fertility researchers proceeding in the United States, largely without federal funding or regulation. The researchers must obtain approval only from their hospitals or clinic’s board. Without federal oversight, the highly competitive fertility business may soon use the new technology to attract clients. As Hall told the scientific journal Science last week, “It was just a matter of time.”

**199505**

It is evident that there is a close connection between the capacity to use language and the capacities covered by the verb “to think”. Indeed, some writers have identified thinking with using words: Plato coined the saying. In thinking the soul is talking to itself; J. B. Watson reduced thinking to inhibited speech located in the minute movements or tensions of the physiological mechanisms involved in speaking; and although Ryle is careful to point out that there are many senses in which a person is said to think in which words are not in evidence, he has also said that saying something in a specific frame of mind is thinking a thought.

Is thinking reducible to, or dependent upon, language habits? It would seem that many thinking situations are hardly distinguishable from the skillful use of language, although there are some others-in which language is not involved. Thought cannot be simply identified with using language. It may be the case, of course, that the non-linguistic skills involved in thought can only be acquired and developed if the learner is able to use and understand language. However, this question is one which we cannot hope to answer in this book. Obviously being able to use language makes for a considerable development in all one' s capacities but how precisely this comes about we cannot say.

At the common-sense level it appears that there is often a distinction between thought and the words we employ to communicate with other people. We often have to struggle hard to find words to capture what our thinking has already grasped, and when we do find words we sometimes feel that they fail to do their job properly. Again when we report or describe our thinking to other people we do not merely report unspoken words and sentences. Such sentences do not always occur in thinking, and when they do they are merged with vague imagery and the hint of unconscious or subliminal activities going on just out of rage. Thinking, as it happens, is more like struggling, striving, or searching for something than it is like talking or reading. Words do play their part but they are rarely the only feature of thought. This observation is supported by the experiments of the Wurzburg psychologists reported in Chapter Eight who showed that intelligent adaptive responses can occur in problem-solving situations without the use of either words or images of any ltind. “Set” and “determining tendencies” opens without the actual use of language in helping us to think purposefully and intelligently.

Again the study of speech disorders due to brain injury disease suggest that patients can think without having adequate control over their language. Some patients, for example, fail to find the names of objects presented to them and are unable to describe simple events which they witness; they even find it difficult to interpret long written notices. But they succeed in playing games of chess or draughts. They can use the concepts needed for chess playing or draught playing but are unable to use many of the concepts in ordinary language. How they manage to do this we do not know. Yet animals such as Kohler’s chimpanzees can solve problems by-working out strategies such as the?invention of implements or climbing aids when such animals have no language beyond a few warning cries. Intelligent or “insightful” behavior is not dependent in the case of monkeys on language skills; presumably human beings have various capacities for thinking situations which are likewise independent of language.

**199506**

They decided to bury him in our churchyard at Greymede under the beeches; the widow would have it so, and nothing might be denied her in her state.

It was magnificent morning in early spring when I watched among the trees to see the procession come down the hillside. The upper air was woven with the music of the larks, and my whole world thrilled with the conception of summer. The young pale windflowers had arisen by the wood-gale, and under the hazels, when perchance the hot sun pushed his way; new little suns dawned, and blazed with the real light. There was a certain thrill and quickening everywhere, as a woman must feel when she has conceived. A sallow-tree in a favored spot looked like a pale gold cloud of summer dawn; nearer it had poised a golden, fairy bushy on every twig, and was voiced with a hum of bees, like any sacred golden bush, uttering its gladness in the thrilling murmur of bees, and in warm scent. Birds called and flashed on every hand; they made off exultant with streaming strands of grass, or wisps of fleece, plunging into the dark spaces of the wood, and out again into the blue.

A lad moved across the field from the farm below with a dog trotting behind him - a dog, no, a fussy, blackleggecl lamb trotting along on its toes, with its tail swinging behind. They were going to the mothers on the common, who moved like little gray clouds among the dark gorse.

I cannot help forgetting, and sharing the spink’s triumph, when he flashed past with a fleece from a bramble bush. It will cover the bedded moss; it will weave among the soft red cow-hair beautifully. It is a prize; it is an ecstasy to have captured it at the right moment, and the nest is nearly ready.

Ah, but the thrush is scornful, ringing out his voice from the hedge! He sets his breast against the mud, models it warm for the turquoise eggs - blue, blue, bluest of eggs, which cluster so close and round against the breast, which round up beneath the breast, nestling content. You should see the bright ecstasy in the eyes of a nesting thrush, because of the rounded caress of the eggs against her breast.

Till the heralds come-till the heralds wave like shadows in the bright air, crying, lamenting, fretting forever. Rising and falling and circling round and round, the slow-waving pewits cry and complain, and lift their broad wings in sorrow. They stoop anguish and protest, they swing up again, offering a glistening white breast to the sunlight, to deny it in black shadow, then a glisten of green, and all the time crying and crying in despair.

The pleasants are frightened into cover, they run and dart through the hedge. The old cock must fly in his haste, spread himself on his streaming plumes, and sail into the wood’s security.

There is a cry in answer to the pewits, echoing louder and stronger the lamentation of the lapwings, a wail which hushes the birds. The men came over the brow of the hill, slowly, with the old squire walking tail and straight in front; six bowed men bearing the coffin on another shoulder, treading heavily and cautiously, under the great weight of the glistening white coffin, six men following behind, ill at ease, waiting their turn for the burden. You can see the red handkerchief knotted round their throats, and their shirt fronts blue and white between the open waistcoats. The coffin is of new unpolished wood, gleaming and glistening in the sunlight; the men who carry it remember all their lives after the smell of new, warm wood.

**1996**

**199601**

Do people who choose to go on exotic, far-flung holidays deserve free health advice before they travel? And even if they pay, who ensures that they get good, up-to-date information? Who, for that matter, should collect that information in the first place? For a variety of reasons, travel medicine in Britain is a responsibility nobody wants. As a result, many travelers go abroad ill prepared to avoid serious disease.

Why is travel medicine so unloved? Partly there’s an identity problem. Because it takes an interest in anything that impinges on the health of travelers, this emerging medical specialism invariably cuts across the traditional disciplines. It delves into everything from seasickness, jet lag and the hazards of camels to malaria and plague. But travel medicine has a more serious obstacle to overcome. Travel clinics are meant to tell people how to avoid ending up dead or in a tropical diseases hospital when they come home. But it is notoriously difficult to get anybody to pay out money for keeping people healthy.

Travel medicine has also been colonized by commercial interests - the vast majority of travel clinics in Britain are run by airlines or travel companies. And while travel concerns are happy to sell profitable injections, they may be less keen to spread bad news about travelers’ diarrhea in Turkey, or to take the time to spell out preventive measures travelers could take. “The NHS finds it difficult to define travelers’ health,” says Ron Behrens, the only NHS consultant in travel and tropical medicine and director of the travel clinic of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London. “Should it come within the NHS or should it be paid for? It’s a gray area, and opinion is split. No one seems to have any responsibility for defining its role,” he says. To compound its low status in the medical hierarchy, travel medicine has to rely on statistics that are patchy at best. In most cases we just don’t know how many Britons contract diseases when abroad. And even if a disease is linked to travel there is rarely any information about where those afflicted went, what they ate, how they behaved, or which vaccinations they had. This shortage of hard facts and figures makes it difficult to give detailed advice to people, information that might even save their lives.

A recent leader in the British Medical Journal argued: “Travel medicine will emerge as a credible discipline only if the risks encountered by travelers and the relative benefits of public health interventions are well defined in terms of their relative occurrence, distribution and control.” Exactly how much money is wasted by poor travel advice? The real figure is anybody's guess, but it could easily run into millions. Behrens gives one example. Britain spends more than 1 million each year just on cholera vaccines that often don't work and so give people a false sense of security: “Information on the prevention and treatment of all forms of diarrhea would be a better priority,” he says.

**199602**

　　While the roots of social psychology lie in the intellectual soil of the whole western tradition, its present flowering is recognized to be characteristically an American phenomenon. One reason for the striking upsurge of social psychology in the United States lies in the pragmatic tradition of this country. National emergencies and conditions of social disruption provide special incentive to invent new techniques, and to strike out boldly for solutions to practical social problems. Social psychology began to flourish soon after the First World War. This event, followed by the great depression of the 1930s, by the rise of Hitler, the genocide of Jews, race riots, the Second World War and the atomic threat, stimulated all branches of social science. A special challenge fell to social psychology. The question was asked: How is it possible to preserve the values of freedom and individual rights under condition of mounting social strain and regimentation? Can science help provide an answer? This challenging question led to a burst of creative effort that added much to our understanding of the phenomena of leadership, public opinion, rumor, propaganda, prejudice, attitude change, morale, communication, decision-making, race relations, and conflicts of war.

Reviewing the decade that followed World War II, Cartwright speaks of the “excitement and optimism” of American social psychologists, and notes “the tremendous increase in the total number of people calling themselves social psychologists.” Most of these, we may add, show little awareness of the history of their field.

Practical and humanitarian motives have always played an important part in the development of social psychology, not only in America but in other lands as well. Yet there have been discordant and dissenting voices. In the opinion of Herbert Spencer in England, of Ludwig Gumplowicz in Austria, and of William Graham Sumner in the United States, it is both futile and dangerous for man to attempt to steer or to speed social change. Social evolution, they argue, requires time and obeys laws beyond the control of man. The only practical service of social science is to warn man not to interfere with the course of nature or society. But these authors are in a minority. Most social psychologists share with Comte an optimistic view of man's chances to better his way of life. Has he not already improved his health via biological sciences? Why should he not better his social relationships via social sciences? For the past century this optimistic outlook has persisted in the face of slender accomplishment to date. Human relations seem stubbornly set. Wars have not been abolished, labor troubles have not abated, and racial tensions are still with us. Give us time and give us money for research, the optimists say.

**199603**

I thought of God as a strangely emotional being. He was powerful; He was forgiving yet obdurate, full of warmth and affection. Both His wrath and affection were fitful, they came and they went, and I couldn't count on either to continue: although they both always did. In short God was much such a being as my father himself.

What was the relation between them, I wondered -- these two puzzling deities?

My father's ideas of religion seemed straightforward and simple. He had noticed when he was a boy that there were buildings called churches; he had accepted them as a natural part of the surroundings in which he had been born. He would never have invented such things himself. Nevertheless they were here. As he grew up he regarded them as unquestioningly as he did banks. They were substantial old structures, they were respectable, decent, and venerable. They were frequented by the right sort of people. Well, that was enough.

On the other hand he never allowed churches -- or banks -- to dictate to him. He gave each the respect that was due to it from his point of view; but he also expected from each of them the respect he felt due to him.

As to creeds, he knew nothing about them, and cared nothing either; yet he seemed to know which sect he belonged with. It had to be a sect with the minimum of nonsense about it; no total immersion, no exhorters, no holy confession. He would have been a Unitarian, naturally, if he'd lived in Boston. Since he was a respectable New Yorker, he belonged in the Episcopal Church.

As to living a spiritual life, he never tackled that problem. Some men who accept spiritual beliefs try to live up to them daily; other men who reject such beliefs, try sometimes to smash them. My father would have disagreed with both kinds entirely. He took a more distant attitude. It disgusted him where atheists attacked religion: he thought they were vulgar. But he also objected to having religion make demands upon him -- he felt that religion was too vulgar, when it tried to stir up men's feelings. It had its own proper field of activity, and it was all right there, of course; but there was one place religion should leave alone, and that was a man's soul. He especially loathed any talk of walking hand in hand with his Savior. And if he had ever found the Holy Ghost trying to soften his heart, he would have regarded its behavior as distinctly uncalled for; even ungentlemanly.

**199604**

In sixteenth-century Italy and eighteenth-century France, waning prosperity and increasing social unrest led the ruling families to try to preserve their superiority by withdrawing from the lower and middle classes behind barriers of etiquette. In a prosperous community, on the other hand, polite society soon absorbs the newly rich, and in England there has never been any shortage of books on etiquette for teaching them the manners appropriate to their new way of life.

Every code of etiquette has contained three elements; basic moral duties; practical rules which promote efficiency; and artificial, optional graces such as formal compliments to, say, women on their beauty or superiors on their generosity and importance.

In the first category are considerations for the weak and respect for age. Among the ancient Egyptians the young always stood in the presence of older people. Among the Mponguwe of Tanzania, the young men bow as they pass the huts of the elders. In England, until about a century ago, young children did not sit in their parents' presence without asking permission.

Practical rules are helpful in such ordinary occurrences of social life as making proper introductions at parties or other functions so that people can be brought to know each other. Before the invention of the fork, etiquette directed that the fingers should be kept as clean as possible; before the handkerchief came into common use, etiquette suggested that after spitting, a person should rub the spit inconspicuously underfoot.

Extremely refined behavior, however, cultivated as an art of gracious living, has been characteristic only of societies with wealth and leisure, which admitted women as the social equals of men. After the fall of Rome, the first European society to regulate behavior in private life in accordance with a complicated code of etiquette was twelfth-century Provence, in France.

Provence had become wealthy. The lords had returned to their castle from the crusades, and there the ideals of chivalry grew up, which emphasized the virtue and gentleness of women and demanded that a knight should profess a pure and dedicated love to a lady who would be his inspiration, and to whom he would dedicate his valiant deeds, though he would never come physically close to her. This was the introduction of the concept of romantic love, which was to influence literature for many hundreds of years and which still lives on in a debased form in simple popular songs and cheap novels today.

In Renaissance Italy too, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a wealthy and leisured society developed an extremely complex code of manners, but the rules of behavior of fashionable society had little influence on the daily life of the lower classes. Indeed many of the rules, such as how to enter a banquet room, or how to use a sword or handkerchief for ceremonial purposes, were irrelevant to the way of life of the average working man, who spent most of his life outdoors or in his own poor hut and most probably did not have a handkerchief, certainly not a sword, to his name.

Yet the essential basis of all good manners does not vary. Consideration for the old and weak and the avoidance of harming or giving unnecessary offence to others is a feature of all societies everywhere and at all levels from the highest to the lowest.

**199605**

The question of whether war is inevitable is one which has concerned many of the world's great writers. Before considering the question, it will be useful to introduce some related concepts. Conflict, defined as opposition among social entities directed against one another, is distinguished from competition, defined as opposition among social entities independently striving for something which is in inadequate supply. Competitors may not be aware of one another, while the parties to a conflict are. Conflict and competition are both categories of opposition, which has been defined as a process by which social entities function in the disservice of one another. Opposition is thus contrasted with cooperation, the process by which social entities function in the service of one another. These definitions are necessary because it is important to emphasize that competition between individuals or groups is inevitable in a world of limited resources, but conflict is not. Conflict, nevertheless, is very likely to occur, and is probably an essential and desirable element of human societies.

Many authors have argued for the inevitability of war from the premise that in the struggle for existence among animal species, only the fittest survive. In general, however, this struggle in nature is competition, not conflict. Social animals, such as monkeys and cattle, fight to win or maintain leadership of the group. The struggle for existence occurs not in fights, but in the competition for limited feeding areas and for the occupancy of areas free from meat-eating animals. Those who fail in this competition starve to death or become victims to other species. The struggle for existence does not resemble human war, but rather the competition of individuals for jobs, markets, and materials. The essence of the struggle is the competition for the necessities of life that are insufficient to satisfy all.

Among nations there is competition in developing resources, trades, skills, and a satisfactory way of life. The successful nations grow and prosper; the unsuccessful decline. While it is true that this competition may induce efforts to expand territory at the expense of others, and thus lead to conflict, it cannot be said that war-like conflict among other nations is inevitable, although competition is.

**1997**

**199701**

A magazine’s design is more than decoration, more than simple packaging. It expresses the magazine's very character. The Atlantic Monthly has long attempted to provide a design environment in which two disparate traditions – literary and journalistic – can co-exist in pleasurable dignity. The redesign that we introduce with this issue – the work of our art director, Judy Garlan – represents, we think, a notable enhancement of that environment.

Garlan explains some of what was in her mind as she began to create the new design: “I saw this as an opportunity to bring the look closer to matching the elegance and power of the writing which the magazine is known for. The overall design has to be able to encompass a great diversity of styles and subjects – urgent pieces of reporting, serious essays, lighter pieces, lifestyle-oriented pieces, short stories, poetry. We don't want lighter pieces to seem too heavy, and we don't want heavier pieces to seem too petty. We also use a broad range of art and photography, and the design has to work well with that, too. At the same time, the magazine needs to have a consistent feel, needs to underscore the sense that everything in it is part of one Atlantic World.

The primary typefaces Garlan chose for this task are Times Roman, for a more readable body type, and Bauer Bodoni, for a more stylish and flexible display type (article titles, large initials, and so on). Other aspects of the new design are structural. The articles in the front of the magazine, which once flowed in to one another, now stand on their own, to gain prominence. The Travel column, now featured in every issue, has been moved from the back to the front. As noted in this space last month, the word “Monthly” rejoins “The Atlantic” on the cover, after a decade long absence.

Judy Garlan came to the Atlantic in 1981 after having served as the art director of several other magazines. During her tenure here The Atlantic has won more than 300 awards for visual excellence, from the Society of illustrators, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, the Art Directors Club, Communication Arts, and elsewhere. Garlan was in various ways assisted in the redesign by the entire art-department staff: Robin Gilmore, Barnes, Betsy Urrico, Gillian Kahn, and Is a Manning.

The artist Nicholas Gaetano contributed as well: he redrew our colophon (the figure of Neptune that appears on the contents page) and created the symbols that will appear regularly on this page (a rendition of our building), on the Puzzler page, above the opening of letters, and on the masthead. Gaetano, whose work manages to combine stylish clarity and breezy strength, is the cover artist for this issue.

**199702**

Why should anyone buy the latest volume in the ever-expanding Dictionary of National Biography? I do not mean that it is bad, as the reviewers will agree.

But it will cost you 65 pounds. And have you got the rest of volumes? You need the basic 22 plus the largely decennial supplements to bring the total to 31. Of course, it will be answered, public and academic libraries will want the new volume. After all, it adds 1,068 lives of people who escaped the net of the original compilers. Yet in 10 year's time a revised version of the whole caboodle, called the New Dictionary of National Biography, will be published. Its editor, Professor Colin Matthew, tells me that he will have room for about 50,000 lives, some 13,000 more than in the current DNB. This rather puts the 1,068 in Missing Persons in the shade.

When Dr. Nicholls wrote to The Spectator in 1989 asking for name of people whom readers had looked up in the DNB and had been disappointed not to find, she says that she received some 100,000 suggestions. (Well, she had written to ‘other quality newspapers’ too.) As soon as her committee had whittled the numbers down, the professional problems of an editor began. Contributors didn’t file copy on time; some who did sent too much: 50,000 words instead of 500 is a record, according to Dr. Nicholls.

There remains the dinner-party game of who's in, who’s out. That is a game that the reviewers have played and will continue to play. Criminals were my initial worry. After all, the original edition of the DNB boasted: Malefactors whose crimes excite a permanent interest have received hardly less attention than benefactors. Mr. John Gross clearly had similar anxieties, for he complains that, while the murderer Christie is in, Crippen is out. One might say in reply that the injustice of the hanging of Evans instead of Christie was a force in the repeal of capital punishment in Britain, as Ludovie Kennedy (the author of Christies entry in Missing Persons) notes. But then Crippen was reputed as the first murderer to be caught by telegraphy (he had tried to escape by ship to America).

It is surprising to find Max Miller excluded when really not very memorable names get in. There has been a conscious effort to put in artists and architects from the Middle Ages. About their lives not much is always known.

Of Hugo of Bury St Edmunds, a 12th-century illuminator whose dates of birth and death are not recorded, his biographer comments: ‘Whether or not Hugo was a wall-painter, the records of his activities as carver and manuscript painter attest to his versatility’. Then there had to be more women, too (12 percent, against the original DBN’s 3), such as Roy Strong’s subject, the Tudor painter Levina Teerlinc, of whom he remarks: ‘Her most characteristic feature is a head attached to a too small, spindly body. Her technique remained awkward, thin and often cursory’. Doesn't seem to qualify her as a memorable artist. Yet it may be better than the record of the original DNB, which included lives of people who never existed (such as Merlin) and even managed to give thanks to J. W. Clerke as a contributor, though, as a later edition admits in a shamefaced footnote, except for the entry in the List of Contributors there is no trace of J. W. Clerke.

**199703**

Medical consumerism – like all sorts of consumerism, only more menacingly – is designed to be unsatisfying. The prolongation of life and the search for perfect health (beauty, youth, happiness) are inherently self - defeating. The law of diminishing returns necessarily applies. You can make higher percentages of people survive into their eighties and nineties. But, as any geriatric ward shows, that is not the same as to confer enduring mobility, awareness and autonomy. Extending life grows medically feasible, but it is often a life deprived of everything, and one exposed to degrading neglect as resources grow over - stretched and politics turn mean.

What an ignoramus destiny for medicine if its future turned into one of bestowing meager increments of unenjoyed life! It would mirror the fate of athletes, in which disproportionate energies and resources – not least medical ones, like illegal steroids – are now invested to shave records by milliseconds. And, it goes without saying, the logical extension of longevism – the “abolition” of death – would not be a solution but only an exacerbation. To air these predicaments is not anti - medical spleen – a churlish reprisal against medicine for its victories – but simply to face the growing reality of medical power not exactly without responsibility but with dissolving goals.

Hence medicine’s finest hour becomes the dawn of its dilemmas. For centuries, medicine was impotent and hence unproblematic. From the Greeks to the Great War, its job was simple: to struggle with lethal diseases and gross disabilities, to ensure live births, and to manage pain. It performed these uncontroversial tasks by and large with meager success. Today, with mission accomplished, medicines triumphs are dissolving in disorientation. Medicine has led to vastly inflated expectations, which the public has eagerly swallowed. Yet as these expectations grow unlimited, they become unfulfillable. The task facing medicine in the twenty - first century will be to redefine its limits even as it extends its capacities.

**199704**

The biggest problem facing Chile as it promotes itself as a tourist destination to be reckoned with, is that it is at the end of the earth. It is too far south to be a convenient stop on the way to anywhere else and is much farther than a relatively cheap half - day’s flight away from the big tourist markets, unlike Mexico, for example. Chile, therefore, is having to fight hard to attract tourists, to convince travellers that it is worth coming halfway round the world to visit. But it is succeeding, not only in existing markets like the USA and Western Europe but in new territories, in particular the Far East. Markets closer to home, however, are not being forgotten. More than 50% of visitors to Chile still come from its nearest neighbour, Argentina, where the cost of living is much higher.

Like all South American countries, Chile sees tourism as a valuable earner of foreign currency, although it has been far more serious than most in promoting its image abroad. Relatively stable politically within the region, it has benefited from the problems suffered in other areas. In Peru, guerrilla warfare in recent years has dealt a heavy blow to the tourist industry and fear of street crime in Brazil has reduced the attraction of Rio de Janeiro as a dream destination for foreigners.

More than 150,000 people are directly involved in Chile’s tourist sector, an industry which earns the country more than US $ 950 million each year. The state - run National Tourism Service, in partnership with a number of private companies, is currently running a worldwide campaign, taking part in trade fairs and international events to attract visitors to Chile.

Chile’s great strength as a tourist destination is its geographical diversity. From the parched Atacama Desert in the north to the Antarctic snowfields of the south, it is more than 5,000 km long. With the Pacific on one side and the Andean mountains on the other, Chile boasts natural attractions. Its beaches are not up to Caribbean standards but resorts such as Vina del Mar are generally clean and unspoilt and have a high standard of services.

But the tromp card is the Andes mountain range. There are a number of excellent ski resorts within one hour's drive of the capital, Santiago, and the national parks in the south are home to rare animal and plant species. The parks already attract specialist visitors, including mountaineers, who come to climb the technically difficult peaks, and fishermen, lured by the salmon and trout in theregion’s rivers. However, infrastructural development in these areas is limited. The ski resorts do not have as many lifts and pistes as their European counterparts and the poor quality of roads in the south means that only the most determined travelers see the best of the national parks.

Air links between Chile and the rest of the world are, at present, relatively poor. While Chile’s two largest airlines have extensive networks within South America, they operate only a small number of routes to the United States and Europe, while services to Asia are almost non - existent.

Internal transport links are being improved and luxury hotels are being built in one of its national parks. Nor is development being restricted to the Andes. Easter Island and Chile’s Antarctic Territory axe also on the list of areas where the Government believes it can create tourist markets.

But the rush to open hitherto inaccessible areas to mass tourism is not being welcomed by everyone. Indigenous and environmental groups, including Greenpeace, say that many parts of the Andes will suffer if they become over - developed.

There is a genuine fear that areas of Chile will suffer the cultural destruction witnessed in Mexico and European resorts.

The policy of opening up Antarctica to tourism is also politically sensitive. Chile already has permanent settlements on the ice and many people see the decision to allow tourists there as a political move, enhancing Santiago's territorial claim over part of Antarctica.

The Chilean Government has promised to respect the environment as it seeks to bring tourism to these areas. But there are immense commercial pressures to exploit the country’s tourism potential. The Government will have to monitor developments closely if it is genuinely concerned in creating a balanced, controlled industry and if the price of an increasingly lucrative tourist market is not going to mean the loss of many of Chile's natural riches.

**1998**

**199801**

Low self-esteem pops up regularly in academic reports as an explanation for all sorts of violence, from hate crimes and street crimes to terrorism. But despite the popularity of the explanation, not much evidence backs it up. In a recent issue of Psychological Review, three researchers examine this literature at length and conclude that a much stronger link connects high self-esteem to violence. “It is difficult to maintain belief in the low self-esteem view after seeing that the more violent groups are generally the ones with higher self-esteem,” write Roy Barmeister of Case Western Reserve University and Laura Smart and Joseph Boden of the University of Virginia.

The conversation view is that people without self-esteem try to gain it by hurting others. The researchers find that violence is much more often the work of people with unrealistically high self-esteem attacking others who challenge their self-image Under this umbrella come bullies, rapists, racists, psychopaths and members of street gangs and organized crime.

The study concludes: “Certain forms of high self-esteem seem to increase one’s proneness to violence. An uncritical endorsement of the cultural value of self-esteem may therefore be couterproductive and even dangerous......The societal pursuit of high self-esteem for everyone may literally end up doing considerable harm.”

As for prison programs intended to make violent convicts feel better about themselves, “perhaps it would be better to try instilling modesty and humility,” the researchers write.

In an interview with the Boston Globe, Baumeister said he believes the “self”-promoting establishment is starting to crumble. “What would work better for the country is to forget about self-esteem and concentrate on self-control,” he said.

In the schools, this would mean turning away from psychic boosterism and emphasizing self-esteem as a by-product of real achievement, not as an end in itself. The self-esteem movement, still entrenched in schools of education, is deeply implicated in the dumbing down of our schools, and in the spurious equality behind the idea that it is a terrible psychic blow if one student does any better or any worse than another. Let's hope it is indeed crumbling.

**199802**

Social change is more likely to occur in heterogeneous societies than in homogeneous, simply because there are more diverse points of view available in the former. There are more ideas, more conflicts of interest, and more groups and organizations of different persuasions. In addition, there is usually a greater worldly interest and tolerance in heterogeneous societies. All these factors tend to promote social change by opening more areas of life to decision rather than subjecting them to authority. In a quite homogeneous society, there are fewer occasions for people to perceive the need or the opportunity for change, because everything seems to be the same and, if not satisfactory, at least customary and undisputed.

Within a society, social change is also likely to occur more frequently and more readily (1) in the material aspects of the culture than in the non-material, for example, in technology rather than in values; (2) in what has been learned later in life rather than what was learned early; (3) in the less basic, less emotional, or less sacred aspects of society than in their opposites, like religion or a system of prestige; (4) in the simple elements rather than in the complex ones; (5) in form rather than in substance; and (6) in elements congenial to the culture rather than in strange elements.

Furthermore, social change is easier if it is gradual. For example, it comes more readily in human relations on a continuous scale rather than one with sharp dichotomies. This is one reason why change has not come more quickly to Black Americans as compared to other American minorities, because of the sharp difference in appearance between them and their white counterparts.

**199803**

One argument used to support the idea that employment will continue to be the dominant form of work, and that employment will eventually become available for all who want it, is that working time will continue to fall. People in jobs will work fewer hours in the day, fewer days in the week, fewer weeks in the year, and fewer years in a lifetime, than they do now. This will mean that more jobs will be available for more people. This, it is said, is the way we should set about restoring full employment.

There is no doubt that something of this kind will happen. The shorter working week, longer holidays, earlier retirement, job-sharing - these and other ways of reducing the amount of time people spend on their jobs - are certainly likely to spread. A mix of part-time paid work and part-time unpaid work is likely to become a much more common work pattern than today, and a flexi-life pattern of work - involving paid employment at certain stages of life, but not at others - will become widespread. But it is surely unrealistic to assume that this will make it possible to restore full employment as the dominant form of work.

In the first place, so long as employment remains the overwhelmingly important form of work and source of income for most people that it is today, it is very difficult to see how reductions in employees’ working time can take place on a scale sufficiently been for example in Britain and Germany, about the possibility of introducing a 35-hour working week, have highlighted some of the difficulties. But, secondly, if changes of this kind were to take place at a pace and on a scale sufficient to make it possible to share employment among all who wanted it, the resulting situation - in which most people would not be working in their jobs for more than two or three short days a week - could hardly continue to be one in which employment was still regarded as the only truly valid form of work. There would be so many people spending so much of their time on other activities, including other forms of useful work, that the primacy of employment would be bound to be called into question, at least to some extent.

**199804**

During the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, advertising was a relatively straightforward means of announcement and communication and was used mainly to promote novelties and fringe products. But when factory production got into full swing and new products, e.g. processed foods, came onto the market, national advertisng campaigns and brand-naming of products became necessary. Before large-scale factory production, the typical manufacturing unit had been undertaken by wholesalers. The small non-specialised factory which did not rely on massive investment in machinery had been flexible enough to adapt its production according to changes in public demands.

But the economic depression which lasted from 1873 to 1894 marked a turning point between the old method of industrial organisation and distribution and the new. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the 1870s, production had steadily expanded and there had been a corresponding growth in retail outlets. But the depression brought on a crisis of over-production and under-consumption- manufacture goods piled up unsold and prices and profits fell. Towards the end of century many of the small industrial firms realised that they would be in a better position to weather economic depressions and slumps if they combined with other small businesses and widened the range of goods they produced so that all their eggs were not in one basket. They also realised that they would have to take steps to ensure that one their goods had been produced there was a market for them. This period ushered in the first phase of what economists now call “monopoly capitalism”, which, roughly speaking, refers to the control of the market by a small number of giant, conglomerate enterprises. Whereas previously competitive trading had been conducted by small rival firms, after the depression the larger manufacturing units and combines relied more and more on mass advertising to promote their new range of products.

A good example of the changes that occurred in manufacture and distribution at the turn of the century can be found in the soap trade. From about the 1850s the market had been flooded with anonymous bars of soap, produced by hundreds of small manufacturers and distributed by wholesalers and door-to-door sellers. Competition grew steadily throughout the latter half of the century and eventually the leading companies embarked on more aggressive selling methods in order to take customers away from their rivals. For instance, the future Lord Leverhulme decided to “brand” his soap by selling it in distinctive packages in order to facilitate recognition and encourage customer loyalty.

Lord Leverhulme was one of the first industrialists to realise that advertisements should contain “logical and considered” arguments as well as eye-catching and witty slogans. Mary advertisers followed his lead and started to include “reason-why” copy in their ads. For example, one contemporary Pears soap ad went into great detail about how the product could enhance marital bliss by cutting down the time the wife had to spend with her arms in a bowl of frothy suds. And an ad for Cadbury’s cocoa not only proclaimed its purity but also detailed other benefits: for the infant it is a delight and a support; for the young girl, a source of healthy vigour; for the young Turner rightly points out, the advertising of this period had reached the “stage of persuasion as distinct from proclamation or iteration”. Indeed advertise or burst seemed to be the rule of the day as bigger and more expensive campaigns were mounted and smaller firms who did not, or could not, advertise, were squeezed or bought out by the largest companies.

**199805**

Pardon me: how are your manners?

The decline of civility and good manners may be worrying people more than crime, according to Gentility Recalled, edited by Dighy Anderson, which laments the breakdown of traditional codes that one regulated social conduct. It criticised the fact that “manners” are scorned as repressive and outdated.

The result, according to Mr Anderson - director of the Social Affairs Unit, an independent think-tank - is a society characterized by rudeness: loutish behavior on the streets, jostling in crowds, impolite shop assistants and bad-tempered drivers.

Mr. Andeson says the cumulative effect of these\_apparently trivial, but often offensive - is to make everyday life uneasy, unpredictable and unpleasant. As they are encountered far more often than crime, they can cause more anxiety than crime.

When people lament the disintegration of law and order, he argues, what they generally mean is order, as manifested by courteous forms of social contact. Meanwhile, attempts to re-establish restraint and self-control through “politically correct” rules are artificial.

The book has contributions from 12 academics in disciplines ranging from medicine to sociology and charts what it calls the “coarsening” of Britain. Old-fashioned terms such as “gentleman” and “lady” have lost all meaningful resonance and need to be re-evaluated, it says. Rachel Trickett, honorary fellow and former principal of St. Hugh’s College, Oxford, says that the notion of a “lady” protects women rather than demeaning them.

Feminism and demands for equality have blurred the distinctions between the sexes, creating situations where men are able to dominate women because of their more aggressive and forceful natures, she says. “Women, without some code of deference or respect, become increasingly victims.”

Caroline Moore, the first woman fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, points out that “gentleman” is now used only with irony or derision.

“The popular view of a gentleman is poised somewhere between the imbecile parasite and the villainous one: between Woosteresque chinless wonders, and those heartless capitalist toffs who are...the stock-in-trade of television.”

She argues that the concept is neither class-bound nor rigid; conventions of gentlemanly behaviour enable a man to act naturally as and individual within shared assumptions while taking his place in society.

“Politeness is no constraint, precisely because the manners... are no 'code' but a language, rich, flexible, restrained and infinitely subtle.”

For Anthony O’Hear, professor of philosophy at the University of Bradford, manners are closely associated with the different forms of behaviour appropriate to age and status. They curb both the impetuosity of youth and the bitterness of old age.

Egalitarianism, he says, has led to people failing to act their age. “We have vice-chancellors with earrings, aristocrats as hippies...the trendy vicar on his motorbike.”

Dr Athen Leoussi, sociology lecturer at Reading University, bemoans the deliberate neglect by people of their sartorial appearance.

Dress, she says, is the outward expression of attitudes and aspirations. The ubiquitousness of jeans “displays a utilitarian attitude” that has “led to the cultural impoverishment of everyday life”.

Dr Leoussi says that while clothes used to be seen as a means of concealing taboo forces of sexuality and vilence, certain fashions - such as leather jackets - have the opposite effect.

Dr Bruc Charlton, a lecturer in public health medicine in Newcastle upon Tyne, takes issue with the excessive informality of relations between professionals such as doctors and bank managers, and their clients. He says this has eroded the distance and respect necessary in such relationships. For Tristam Engelhardt, professor of medicine Houston, Texas, says manners are bound to morals.

“Manners express a particular set of values,” he says. “Good manners intepret and transform social reality. They provide social orientation.”

**1999**

**199901**

Ricci, 45, is now striking out on perhaps his boldest venture yet. He plan's to market an English language edition of his elegant monthly art magazine, FMR, in the United States. Once again the skeptics are murmuring that the successful Ricci has headed for a big fall. And once again Ricci intends to prove them wrong.

Ricci is so confident that he has christened his quest “Operation Columbus” and has set his sights on discovering an American readership of 300,000. That goal may not be too far-fetched. The Italian edition of FMR – the initials, of course, stand for Franco Maria Ricci-is only 18 months old. But it is already the second largest art magazine in the world, with a circulation of 65,000 and a profit margin of US $500,000. The American edition will be patterned after the Italian version, with each 160-page issue carrying only 40 pages of ads and no more than five articles. But the contents will often differ. The English-language edition will include more American works, Ricci says, to help Americans get over “an inferiority complex about their art.” He also hopes that the magazine will become a vehicle for a two-way cultural exchange – what he likes to think of as a marriage of brains, culture and taste from both sides of the Atlantic.

To realize this vision, Ricci is mounting one of the most lavish, enterprising – and expensive-promotional campaigns in magazine – publishing history. Between November and January, eight jumbo jets will fly 8 million copies of a sample 16-page edition of FMR across the Atlantic. From a warehouse in Michigan, 6.5 million copies will be mailed to American subscribers of various cultural, art and business magazines. Some of the remaining copies will circulate as a special Sunday supplement in the New York Times. The cost of launching Operation Columbus is a staggering US $5 million, but Ricci is hoping that 60% of the price tag will be financed by Italian corporations. “To land in America Columbus had to use Spanish sponsors,” reads one sentence in his promotional pamphlet. “We would like Italians.”

Like Columbus, Ricci cannot know what his reception will be on foreign shores. In Italy he gambled – and won – on a simple concept: it is more important to show art than to write about it. Hence, one issue of FMR might feature 32 full-colour pages of 17th-century tapestries, followed by 14 pages of outrageous eyeglasses. He is gambling that the concept is exportable. “I don’t expect that more than 30% of my reader... will actually read FMR,” he says. “The magazine is such a visual delight that they don’t have to.” Still, he is lining up an impressive stable of writers and professors for the American edition, including Noam Chomsky, Anthony Burgess, Eric Jong and Norman Mailer. In addition, he seems to be pursuing his won eclectic vision without giving a moment’s thought to such established competitors as Connosisseur and Horizon. “The Americans can do almost everything better than we can,” says Ricci, “But we (the Italians) have a 2,000 year edge on them in art.”

**199902**

My mother’s relations were very different from the Mitfords. Her brother, Uncle Geoff, who often came to stay at Swimbrook, was a small spare man with thoughtful blue eyes and a rather silent manner. Compared to Uncle Tommy, he was an intellectual of the highest order, and indeed his satirical pen belied his mild demeanor. He spent most of his waking hours composing letters to The Times and other publications in which he outlined his own particular theory of the development of English history. In Uncle Geoff’s view, the greatness of England had risen and waned over the centuries in direct proportion to the use of natural manure in fertilizing the soil. The Black Death of 1348 was caused by gradual loss of the humus fertility found under forest trees. The rise of the Elizabethans two centuries later was attributable to the widespread use of sheep manure.

Many of Uncle Geoff’s letters-to-the-editor have fortunately been preserved in a privately printed volume called Writings of a Rebel. Of the collection, one letter best sums up his views on the relationship between manure and freedom. He wrote:

Collating old records shows that our greatness rises and falls with the living fertility of our soil. And now, many years of exhausted and chemically murdered soil, and of devitalized food from it, has softened our bodies and still worse, softened our national character. It is an actual fact that character is largely a product of the soil. Many years of murdered food from deadened soil has made us too tame. Chemicals have had their poisonous day. It is now the worm's' turn to reform the manhood of England. The only way to regain our punch, our character, our lost virtues, and with them the freedom natural to islanders, is to compost our land so as to allow moulds, bacteria and earthworms to remake living’s oil to nourish Englishmen’s bodies and spirits.

The law requiring pasteurization of milk in England was a particular target of Uncle Geoff’s. Fond of alliteration, he dubbed it “Murdered Milk Measure”, and established the Liberty Restoration League, with headquarters at his house in London, for the specific purpose of organizing a counteroffensive. “Freedom not Doctordom” was the League’s proud slogan. A subsidiary, but nevertheless important, activity of the League was advocacy of a return to the “unsplit, slowly smoked fish” and bread made with “English stone-ground flour, yeast, milk, sea salt and raw cane-sugar.”

**199903**

So what have they taught you at college about interviews? Some courses go to town on it, others do very little. You may get conflicting advice. Only one thing is certain: the key to success is preparation.

There follow some useful suggestions from a teacher training course coordinator, a head of department and a headteacher. As they appear to be in complete harmony with one another despite never having met, we may take their advice seriously.

Oxford Brookes University’s approach to the business of application and interview focuses on research and rehearsal. Training course coordinator Brenda St evens speaks of the value of getting students “to deconstruct the advertisement, see what they can offer to that school, and that situation, and then write the letter, do their CVs and criticize each other’s.” Finally, they role play interviewer and interviewee.

This is sterling stuff, and Brookes students spend a couple of weeks on it. “The better prepared students won't be thrown by nerves on the day,” says Ms St evens. “They’ll have their strategies and questions worked out.” She also says, a trifle disconcertingly, “the better the student, the worse the interviewee.” She believes the most capable students are less able to put themselves forward. Even if this were tree, says Ms Stevens, you must still make your own case.

“Beware of infernality,” she advises. One aspirant teacher, now a head of department at a smart secondary school, failed his first job interview because he took his jacket off while waiting for his appointment. It was hot and everyone in the staffroom was in shirtsleeves but at the end of the day they criticized his casual attitude, which they had deduced from the fact that he took his jacket off in the staffroom, even though he put it back on for the interview.

Incidentally, men really do have to wear a suit to the interview and women really cannot wear jeans, even if men never wear the suit again and women teach most days in jeans. Panels respond instantly to these indicators. But beware: it will not please them any better if you are too smart.

Find out about the people who will talk to you. In the early meetings they are likely to be heads of departments or heads of year. Often they may be concerned with pastoral matters. It makes sense to know their priorities and let them hear the things about you that they want to hear.

During preliminary meetings you may be seen in groups with two or three other applicants and you must demonstrate that you know your stuff without putting your companions down. The interviewers will be watching how you work with a team.

But remember the warning about informality: however friendly and co-operative the other participants are, do not give way to the idea that you are there just to be friends.

Routine questions can be rehearsed, but “don't go on too long,” advises the department head. They may well ask: “What have been your worst/best moments when teaching?”, or want you to “talk about some good teaching you have done.” The experts agree you should recognize your weaknesses and offer a strategy for over coming them. “I know I've got to work on classroom management – I would hope for some help,” perhaps. No one expects a new teacher to know it all, but they hope for an objective appraisal of capabilities.

Be warned against inexpert questioning. You may be asked questions in such a way that it seems impossible to present your best features. Some questions may be plain silly, asked perhaps by people on the panel who are from outside the situation. Do not be thrown, have ways of circumnavigating it, and never, ever let them see that you think they have said something foolish.

You will almost certainly be asked how you see the future and it is import ant to have a good answer prepared. Some people are put off by being asked what they expect to be doing in five or ten years' time. On your preliminary visit, says the department head, be sure to give them a bit of an interview of your own, to see the direction the department is going and what you could contribute to it.

The headteacher offers his thoughts in a nine-point plan.

Iron the application form! Then it stands out from everyone else’s, which have been folded and battered in the post. It gives an initial impression which may get your application to the top of the pile.

Ensure that your application is tailored to the particular school. Make the head feel you are writing directly to him or her.

Put yourself at ease before you meet the interviewing panel: if you are nervous, you will talk too quickly. Before you enter the room remember that the people are human beings too; take away the mystique of their roles.

Listen. There is a danger of not hearing accurately what is being said. Make eye contact with the speakers, and with everyone in the room.

Allow your warmth and humanity to be seen. A sense of humour is very important.

Have a portfolio of your work that can link theory to practice. Many schools want you to show work. For a primary appointment, give examples from the range of the curriculum, not just art. (For this reason, taking pictures on your teaching practice is important.)

Prepare yourself in case you are asked to give a talk. Have prompt cards ready, and don't waffle.

Your speech must be clear and articulate, with correct grammar. This is important: they want to hear you and they want to hear how well you can communicate with children. Believe in yourself and have confidence. Some of the people asking the questions don't know much about what you do. Be ready to help them.

Thus armed, you should have no difficulty at all. Good luck and keep your jacket on!

**199904**

This month Singapore passed a bill that would give legal teeth to the moral obligation to support one's parents. Called the Maintenance of Parents Bill, it received the backing of the Singapore Government.

That does not mean it hasn't generated discussion. Several members of the Parliament opposed the measure as un-Asian. Others who acknowledged the problem of the elderly poor believed it a disproportionate response. Still others believe it will subvert relations within the family: cynics dubbed it the “Sue Your So n” law.

Those who say that the bill does not promote filial responsibility, of course, are right. It has nothing to do with filial responsibility. It kicks in where filial responsibility fails. The law cannot legislate filial responsibility any more than it can legislate love. All the law can do is to provide a safety net where this morality proves insufficient. Singapore needs this bill not to replace morality, but to provide incentives to shore it up.

Like many other developed nations, Singapore faces the problems of an increasing proportion of people over 60 years of age. Demography is inexorable. In 19 80, 7.2% of the population was in this bracket. By the end of the century that figure will grow to 11%. By 2030, the proportion is projected to be 26%. The problem is not old age per se. It is that the ratio of economically active people to economically inactive people will decline.

But no amount of government exhortation or paternalism will completely eliminate the problem of old people who have insufficient means to make ends meet. Some people will fall through the holes in any safety net.

Traditionally, a person's insurance against poverty in his old age was his family, lifts is not a revolutionary concept. Nor is it uniquely Asian. Care and support for one’s parents is a universal value shared by all civilized societies.

The problem in Singapore is that the moral obligation to look after one’s parents is unenforceable. A father can be compelled by law to maintain his children. A husband can be forced to support his wife. But, until now, a son or daughter had no legal obligation to support his or her parents.

In 1989, an Advisory Council was set up to look into the problems of the aged. Its report stated with a tinge of complacency that 95% of those who did not have their own income were receiving cash contributions from relations. But what about the 5% who aren’t getting relatives’ support? They have several options: (a) get a job and work until they die; (b) apply for public assistance (you have to be destitute to apply); or (c) starve quietly. None of these options is socially acceptable. And what if this 5% figure grows, as it is likely to do, as society ages?

The Maintenance of Parents Bill was put forth to encourage the traditional virtues that have so far kept Asian nations from some of the breakdowns encountered in other affluent societies. This legislation will allow a person to apply to the court for maintenance from any or all of his children. The court would have the discretion to refuse to make an order if it is unjust.

Those who deride the proposal for opening up the courts to family lawsuits miss the point. Only in extreme cases would any parent take his child to court. If it does indeed become law, the bill's effect would be far more subtle.

First, it will reaffirm the notion that it is each individual’s – not society’s – responsibility to look after his parents. Singapore is still conservative enough that most people will not object to this idea. It reinforces the traditional values and it doesn’t hurt a society now and then to remind itself of its core values.

Second, and more important, it will make those who are inclined to shirk their responsibilities think twice. Until now, if a person asked family elders, clergymen or the Ministry of Community Development to help get financial support from his children, the most they could do was to mediate. But mediators have no teeth, and a child could simply ignore their pleas.

But to be sued by one’s parents would be a massive loss of face. It would be a public disgrace. Few people would be so thick-skinned as to say, “Sue and be damned”. The hand of the conciliator would be immeasurably strengthened. It is far more likely that some sort of amicable settlement would be reached if the recalcitrant son or daughter knows that the alternative is a public trial.

It would be nice to think Singapore doesn't need this kind of law. But that belief ignores the clear demographic trends and the effect of affluence itself on traditional bends. Those of us who pushed for the bill will consider ourselves most successful if it acts as an incentive not to have it invoked in the first place.

**2000**

**200001**

Despite Denmark’s manifest virtues, Danes never talk about how proud they a re to be Danes. This would sound weird in Danish. When Danes talk to foreigners about Denmark, they always begin by commenting on its tininess, its unimportance, the difficulty of its language, the general small-mindedness and self-indulgence of their countrymen and the high taxes. No Dane would look you in the eye and say, “Denmark is a great country.” You’re supposed to figure this out for yourself.

It is the land of the silk safety net, where almost half the national budget goes toward smoothing out life’s inequalities, and there is plenty of money for schools, day care, retraining programmes, job seminars-Danes love seminars: three days at a study centre hearing about waste management is almost as good as a ski trip. It is a culture bombarded by English, in advertising, pop music, the Internet, and despite all the English that Danish absorbs – there is no Danish Academy to defend against it – old dialects persist in Jutland that can barely be understood by Copenhageners. It is the land where, as the saying goes, “Few have too much and fewer have too little,” and a foreigner is struck by the sweet egalitarianism that prevails, where the lowliest clerk gives you a level gaze, where Sir and Madame have disappeared from common usage, even Mr. and Mrs. It’s a nation of recyclers – about 55% of Danish garbage gets made into something new – and no nuclear power plants. It’s a nation of tireless planner. Trains run on time. Things operate well in general.

Such a nation of overachievers – a brochure from the Ministry of Business and Industry says, “Denmark is one of the world’s cleanest and most organized countries, with virtually no pollution, crime, or poverty. Denmark is the most corruption-free society in the Northern Hemisphere.” So, of course, one’s heart lifts at any sighting of Danish sleaze: skinhead graffiti on buildings (“Foreigner’s Out of Denmark!”), broken beer bottles in the gutters, drunken teenagers slumped in the park.

Nonetheless, it is an orderly land. You drive through a Danish town, it comes to an end at a stone wall, and on the other side is a field of barley, a nice clean line: town here, country there. It is not a nation of jay-walkers. People stand on the curb and wait for the red light to change, even if it’s 2 a. m. and there's not a car in sight. However, Danes don’t think of themselves as a wainting-at-2-a.m.-for-the-green-light people – that's how they see Swedes and Germans. Danes see themselves as jazzy people, improvisers, more free spirited than Swedes, but the truth is (though one should not say it) that Danes are very much like Germans and Swedes. Orderliness is a main selling point. Denmark has few natural resources, limited manufacturing capability; its future in Europe will be as a broker, banker, and distributor of goods. You send your goods by container ship to Copenhagen, and these bright, young, English- speaking, utterly honest, highly disciplined people will get your goods around to Scandinavia, the Baltic States, and Russia. Airports, seaports, highways, and rail lines are ultramodern and well-maintained.

The orderliness of the society doesn’t mean that Danish lives are less messy or lonely than yours or mine, and no Dane would tell you so. You can hear plenty about bitter family feuds and the sorrows of alcoholism and about perfectly sensible people who went off one day and killed themselves. An orderly society can not exempt its members from the hazards of life.

But there is a sense of entitlement and security that Danes grow up with. Certain things are yours by virtue of citizenship, and you shouldn't feel bad for taking what you’re entitled to, you’re as good as anyone else. The rules of the welfare system are clear to everyone, the benefits you get if you lose your job, the steps you take to get a new one; and the orderliness of the system makes it possible for the country to weather high unemployment and social unrest without a sense of crisis.

**200002**

But if language habits do not represent classes, a social stratification in to something as bygone as “aristocracy” and “commons”, they do still of course serve to identify social groups. This is something that seems fundamental in the use of language. As we see in relation to political and national movements, language is used as a badge or a barrier depending on which way we look at it. The new boy at school feels out of it at first because he does not know the fight words for things, and awe- inspiring pundits of six or seven look down on him for not being aware that racksy means “dilapidated”, or hairy “out first ball”. The miner takes a certain pride in being one up on the visitor or novice who calls the cage a “lift” or who thinks that men working in a warm seam are in their “underpants” when anyone ought to know that the garments are called hoggers. The “insider” is seldom displeased that his language distinguishes him from the “outsider”.

Quite apart from specialized terms of this kind in groups, trades and professions, there are all kinds of standards of correctness at which mast of us feel more or less obliged to aim, because we know that certain kinds of English invite irritation or downright condemnation. On the other hand, we know that other kinds convey some kind of prestige and bear a welcome cachet.

In relation to the social aspects of language, it may well be suggested that English speakers fall into three categories: the assured, the anxious and the in different. At one end of this scale, we have the people who have “position” and “status”, and who therefore do not feel they need worry much about their use of English. Their education and occupation make them confident of speaking an unimpeachable form of English: no fear of being criticized or corrected is likely to cross their minds, and this gives their speech that characteristically unselfconscious and easy flow which is often envied.

At the other end of the scale, we have an equally imperturbable band, speaking with a similar degree of careless ease, because even if they are aware that their English is condemned by others, they are supremely indifferent to the fact. The Mrs.

Mops of this world have active and efficient tongues in their heads, and if we happened not to like their ways of saying things, well, we “can lump it”. That is their attitude. Curiously enough, writers are inclined to represent the speech of both these extreme parties with-in for -ing. On the one hand, “we’re goin’ huntin’, my dear sir”; on the other, “we're goin’ racin’, mate.”

In between, according to this view, we have a far less fortunate group, the anxious. These actively try to suppress what they believe to be bad English and assiduously cultivate what they hope to be good English. They live their lives in some degree of nervousness over their grammar, their pronunciation, and their choice of words: sensitive, and fearful of betraying themselves. Keeping up with the Joneses is measured not only in houses, furniture, refrigerators, cars, and clothes, but also in speech.

And the misfortune of the “anxious” does not end with their inner anxiety. Their lot is also the open or veiled contempt of the “assured” on one side of them and of the “indifferent” on the other.

It is all too easy to raise an unworthy laugh at the anxious. The people thus uncomfortably stilted on linguistic high heels so often form part of what is, in many ways, the most admirable section of any society: the ambitious, tense, inner-driven people, who are bent on “going places and doing things”. The greater the pity, then, if a disproportionate amount of their energy goes into what Mr. Sharpless called “this shabby obsession” with variant forms of English – especially if the net result is (as so often) merely to sound affected and ridiculous. “Here”, according to Bacon, “is the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter…. It seems to me that Pygmalion’s frenzy is a good emblem…of this vanity: for words axe but the images of matter; and except they have life of reason and invention, to fall in love with them is to fall in love with a picture.”

**200003**

Fred Cooke of Salford turned 90 two days ago and the world has been beating a path to his door. If you haven't noticed, the backstreet boy educated at Blackpool grammar styles himself more grandly as Alastair Cooke, broadcaster extraordinaire. An honorable KBE, he would be Sir Alastair if he had not taken American citizenship more than half a century ago.

If it sounds snobbish to draw attention to his humble origins, it should be reflected that the real snob is Cooke himself, who has spent a lifetime disguising them.

But the fact that he opted to renounce his British passport in 1941 – just when his country needed all the wartime help it could get-is hardly a matter for congratulation.

Cooke has made a fortune out of his love affair with America, entrancing listeners with a weekly monologue that has won Radio 4 many devoted adherents. Part of the pull is the developed drawl. This is the man who gave the world “mida tlantic”, the language of the disc jockey and public relations man.

He sounds American to us and English to them, while in reality he has for decades belonged to neither. Cooke's world is an America that exists largely in the imagination. He took ages to acknowledge the disaster that was Vietnam and even longer to wake up to Watergate. His politics have drifted to the right with age, and most of his opinions have been acquired on the golf course with fellow celebrities.

He chased after stars on arrival in America, Fixing up an interview with Charlie Chaplin and briefly becoming his friend. He told Cooke he could turn him into a fine light comedian; instead he is an impressionist’s dream.

Cooke liked the sound of his first wife's name almost as much as he admired her good looks. But he found bringing up baby difficult and left her for the wife of his landlord.

Women listeners were unimpressed when, in 1996, he declared on air that the fact that 4% of women in the American armed forces were raped showed remarkable self-restraint on the part of Uncle Sam's soldiers. His arrogance in not allowing BBC editors to see his script in advance worked, not for the first time, to his detriment. His defenders said he could not help living with the 1930s values he had acquired and somewhat dubiously went on to cite “gallantry” as chief among them. Cooke’s raconteur style encouraged a whole generation of BBC men to think of themselves as more important than the story. His treacly tones were the model for the regular World Service reports From Our Own Correspondent, known as FOOCs in the business. They may yet be his epitaph.

**200004**

Mr. Duffy raised his eyes from the paper and gazed out of his window on the cheerless evening landscape. The river lay quiet beside the empty distillery and from time to time a light appeared in some house on Lucan Road. What an end! The whole narrative of her death revolted him and it revolted him to think that he had ever spoken to her of what he held sacred. The cautious words of a reporter won over to conceal the details of a commonplace vulgar death attacked his stomach. Not merely had she degraded herself, she had degraded him. His soul’s comp anion! He thought of the hobbling wretches whom he had seen carrying cans and bottles to be filled by the barman. Just God, what an end! Evidently she had been unfit to live, without any strength of purpose, an easy prey to habits, one of the wrecks on which civilization has been reared. But that she could have sunk so low! Was it possible he had deceived himself so utterly about her? He remembered her outburst of that night and interpreted it in a harsher sense than he had ever done. He had no difficulty now in approving of the course he had taken.

As the light failed and his memory began to wander he thought her hand touched his. The shock which had first attacked his stomach was now attacking his nerves. He put on his overcoat and hat quickly and went out. The cold air met him on the threshold; it crept into the sleeves of his coat. When he came to the public house at Chapel Bridge he went in and ordered a hot punch.

The proprietor served him obsequiously but did not venture to talk. There were five or six working-men in the shop discussing the value of a gentleman's estate in County Kildare. They drank at intervals from their huge pint tumblers, and smoked, spitting often on the floor and sometimes dragging the sawdust over their heavy boots. Mr. Duffy sat on his stool and gazed at them, without seeing or hearing them. After a while they went out and he called for another punch. He sat a long time over it. The shop was very quiet. The proprietor sprawled on the counter reading the newspaper and yawning. Now and again a tram was heard swishing along the lonely road outside.

As he sat there, living over his life with her and evoking alternately the two images on which he now conceived her, he realized that she was dead, that's he had ceased to exist, that she had become a memory. He began to feel ill at ease. He asked himself what else could he have done. He could not have lived with her openly. He had done what seemed to him best. How was he to blame? Now that’s he was gone he understood how lonely her life must have been, sitting night after night alone in that room. His life would be lonely too until he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory-if anyone remembered him.

**2001**

**200101**

“Twenty years ago, Blackpool turned its back on the sea and tried to make itself into an entertainment centre." say Robin Wood, a local official.” Now he thinking is that we should try, to refocus on the sea and make Blackpool a family destination again. To say that Blackpool neglected the sea is to put it mildly. In 1976 the European Community, as it then was called, instructed member nations to make their beaches conform to certain minimum standards of cleanliness within ten years. Britain, rather than complying, took the novel strategy of contending that many of its most popular beaches were not swimming beaches at all. Be cause of Britain’s climate the sea-bathing season is short, and most people don’t go in above their knees anyway-and hence can’t really be said to be swimming. By averaging out the number of people actually swimming across 365 days of the year, the government was able to persuade itself, if no one else, that Britain had hardly any real swimming beaches.

As one environmentalist put it to me: “You had the ludicrous situation in which Luxembourg had mere listed public bathing beaches than the whole of the United Kingdom. It was preposterous.”

Meanwhile, Blackpool continued to discharge raw sewage straight into the sea. Finally after much pressure from both environmental groups and the European Union, the local water authority built a new waste-treatment facility for the whole of Blackpool and neighbouring communities. The facility came online in June 1996. For the first time since the industrial revolution Blackpool’s waters are safe to swim in.

That done, the town is now turning its attention to making the sea-front me re visually attractive. The promenade, once a rather elegant place to stroll, had become increasingly tatty and neglected. “It was built in Victorian times and needed a thorough overhaul anyway,” says Wood, “so we decided to make aesthetic improvements at the same time, to try to draw people back to it.” Blackpool recently spent about. 4 million building new kiosks for vendors and improving seating around the Central Pier and plans to spend a further $15 million on various amenity projects.

The most striking thing about Blackpool these days compared with 20 years a go is how empty its beaches are. When the tide is out, Blackpool’s beaches are a vast plain of beckoning sand. They look spacious enough to accommodate comfortably the entire populace of northern England. Ken Welsby remembers days when, as he puts it, “you couldn't lay down a handkerchief on this beach, it was that crowded.”

Welsby comes from Preston, 20 miles down the road, and has been visiting Blackpool all his life. Now retired, he had come for the day with his wife, Kitty, and their three young grandchildren who were gravely absorbed in building a sandcastle. “Two hundred thousand people they'd have on this beach sometimes.” Welsby said. “You can't imagine it now, can you?”

Indeed I could not. Though it was a bright sunny day in the middle of summer. I counted just 13 people scattered along a half mile or so of open sand. Except for those rare times when hot weather and a public holiday coincide, it is like this nearly always now.

“You can't imagine how exciting it was to come here for the day when we were young.” Kitty said. “Even from Preston, it was a big treat. Now children don’t want the beach. They want arcade games and rides in helicopters and goodness knows what else.” She stared out over the glittery water. “We’ll never see those days again. It's sad really.”

“But your grandchildren seem to be enjoying it,” I pointed out. “For the moment,” Ken said, “For the moment.”

Afterward I went for a long walk along the empty beach, then went back to the town centre and treated myself to a large portion of fish-and-chips wrapped in paper. The way they cook it in Blackpool, it isn't so much a meal as an invitation to a heart attack, but it was delicious. Far out over the sea the sun was setting with such splendor that I would almost have sworn I could hear the water hiss where it touched.

Behind me the lights of Blackpool Tower were just twinkling on, and the streets were beginning to fill with happy evening throngs. In the purply light of dusk the town looked peaceful and happy-enchanting even-and there was an engaging air of expectancy, of fun about to happen. Somewhat to my surprise, I realized that this place was beginning to grow on me.

**200102**

Pundits who want to sound judicious are fond of warning against generalizing. Each country is different, they say, and no one story fits all of Asia. This is, of course, silly: all of these economies plunged into economic crisis within a few months of each other, so they must have had something in common.

In fact, the logic of catastrophe was pretty much the same in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Korea. (Japan is a very different story.) In each case investors-mainly, but not entirely, foreign banks who had made short-term loans-all tried to pull their money out at the same time. The result was a combined banking and currency crisis: a banking crisis because no bank can convert all its assets into cash on short notice; a currency crisis because panicked investors were trying not only to convert long-term assets into cash, but to convert baht or rupiah into dollars. In the face of the stampede, governments had no good options. If they let their currencies plunge inflation would soar and companies that had borrowed in dollars would go bankrupt; if they tried to support their currencies by pushing up interest rates, the same firms would probably go bust from the combination of debt burden and recession. In practice, countries' split the difference-and paid a heavy price regardless.

Was the crisis a punishment for bad economic management? Like most clichés, the catchphrase “crony capitalism” has prospered because it gets at something real: excessively cozy relationships between government and business really did lead to a lot of bad investments. The still primitive financial structure of Asian business also made the economies peculiarly vulnerable to a loss of confidence. But the punishment was surely disproportionate to the crime, and many investments that look foolish in retrospect seemed sensible at the time.

Given that there were no good policy options, was the policy response mainly on the fight track? There was frantic blame-shifting when everything in Asia seemed to be going wrong: now there is a race to claim credit when some things have started to go right. The international Monetary Fund points to Korea’s recovery and more generally to the fact that the sky didn't fall after all-as proof that its policy recommendations were right. Never mind that other IMF clients have done far worse, and that the economy of Malaysia-which refused IM F help, and horrified respectable opinion by imposing capital controls-also seems to be on the mend. Malaysia’s prime Minister, by contrast, claims full credit for any good news-even though neighbouring economies also seem to have bottomed out.

The truth is that an observer without any ax to grind would probably conclude that none of the policies adopted either on or in defiance of the IMF’s advice made much difference either way. Budget policies, interest rate policies, banking reform-whatever countries tried, just about all the capital that could flee, did. And when there was no mere money to run, the natural recuperative powers of the economies finally began to prevail. At best, the money doctors who purported to offer cures provided a helpful bedside manner; at worst, they were like medieval physicians who prescribed bleeding as a remedy for all ills.

Will the patients stage a full recovery? It depends on exactly what you mean by “full”. South Korea's industrial production is already above its pre-crisis level; but in the spring of 1997 anyone who had predicted zero growth in Korean industry over the next two years would have been regarded as a reckless doomsayer. So if by recovery you mean not just a return to growth, but one that brings the region's performance back to something like what people used to regard as the Asian norm, they have a long way to go.

**200103**

Human migration: the term is vague. What people usually think of is the permanent movement of people from one home to another. More broadly, though, migration means all the ways from the seasonal drift of agricultural workers within a country to the relocation of refugees from one country to another.

Migration is big, dangerous, compelling. It is 60 million Europeans leaving home from the 16th to the 20th centuries. It is some 15 million Hindus, Skihs, and Muslims swept up in a tumultuous shuffle of citizens between India and Pakis tan after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947.

Migration is the dynamic undertow of population change: everyone’s solution, everyone’s conflict. As the century turns, migration, with its inevitable economic and political turmoil, has been called “one of the greatest challenges of the coming century.”

But it is much more than that. It is, as has always been, the great adventure of human life. Migration helped create humans, drove us to conquer the planet, shaped our societies, and promises to reshape them again.

“You have a history book written in your genes,” said Spencer Wells. The book he’s trying to read goes back to long before even the first word was written, and it is a story of migration.

Wells, a tall, blond geneticist at Stanford University, spent the summer of 1998 exploring remote parts of Transcaucasia and Central Asia with three colleagues in a Land Rover, looking for drops of blood. In the blood, donated by the people he met, he will search for the story that genetic markers can tell of the long paths human life has taken across the Earth. Genetic studies are the latest technique in a long effort of modern humans’ to find out where they have come from. But however the paths are traced, the basic story is simple: people have been moving since they were people. If early humans hadn’t moved and intermingled as much as they did, they probably would have continued to evolve into different species. From beginnings in Africa, most researchers agree, groups of hunter-gatherers spread out, driven to the ends of the Earth.

To demographer Kingsley Davis, two things made migration happen. First, hum an beings, with their tools and language, could adapt to different conditions without having to wait for evolution to make them suitable for a new niche. Second, as populations grew, cultures began to differ, and inequalities developed between groups. The first factor gave us the keys to the door of any room on the planet; the other gave us reasons to use them.

Over the centuries, as agriculture spread across the planet, people moved toward places where metal was found and worked and to centres of commerce that then became cities. Those places were, in turn, invaded and overrun by people later generations called barbarians.

In between these storm surges were steadier but similarly profound fides in which people moved out to colonize or were captured and brought in as slaves. F or a while the population of Athens, that city of legendary enlightenment was as much as 35 percent slaves.

“What strikes me is how important migration is as a cause and effect in the great world events.” Mark Miller, co-author of The Age of Migration and a professor of political science at the University of Delaware, told me recently.

It is difficult to think of any great events that did not involve migration. Religions spawned pilgrims or settlers; wars drove refugees before them and made new land available for the conquerors; political upheavals displaced thousand’s or millions; economic innovations drew workers and entrepreneurs like magnets; environmental disasters like famine or disease pushed their bedraggled survivor’s anywhere they could replant hope. “It’s part of our nature, this movement,” Miller said, “It’s just a fact of the human condition.”

**200104**

How is communication actually achieved? It depends, of course, either on a common language or on known conventions, or at least on the beginnings of these. If the common language and the conventions exist, the contributor, for example, the creative artist, the performer, or the reporter, tries to use them as well as he can. But often, especially with original artists and thinkers, the problem is in one way that of creating a language, or creating a convention, or at least of developing the language and conventions to the point where they are capable of bearing his precise meaning. In literature, in music, in the visual arts, in the sciences, in social thinking, in philosophy, this kind of development has occurred again and again. It often takes a long time to get through, and for many people it will remain difficult. But we need never think that it is impossible; creative energy is much more powerful than we sometimes suppose. While a man is engaged in this struggle to say new things in new ways, he is usually more than ever concentrated on the actual work, and not on its possible audience. Many artists and scientists share this fundamental unconcern about the ways in which their work will be received. They may be glad if it is understood and appreciated, hurt if it is not, but while the work is being done there can be no argument. The thing has to come out as the man himself sees it.

In this sense it is true that it is the duty of society to create condition's in which such men can live. For whatever the value of any individual contribution, the general body of work is of immense value to everyone. But of course things are not so formal, in reality. There is not society on the one hand and these individuals on the other. In ordinary living, and in his work, the contributor shares in the life of his society, which often affects him both in minor ways and in ways sometimes so deep that he is not even aware of them. His ability to make his work public depends on the actual communication system: the language its elf, or certain visual or musical or scientific conventions, and the institution's through which the communication will be passed. The effect of these on his actual work can be almost infinitely variable. For it is not only a communication system outside him; it is also, however original he may be, a communication system which is in fact part of himself. Many contributors make active use of this kind of internal communication system. It is to themselves, in a way, that they first show their conceptions, play their music, present their arguments. Not only as a way of getting these clear, in the process of almost endless testing that active composition involves. But also, whether consciously or not, as a way of putting the experience into a communicable form. If one mind has grasped it, then it may be open to other minds.

In this deep sense, the society is in some ways already present in the act of composition. This is always very difficult to understand, but often, when we have the advantage of looking back at a period, we can see, even if we cannot explain, how this was so. We can see how much even highly original individuals had in common, in their actual work, and in what is called their “structure of feeling”, with other individual workers of the time, and with the society of that time to which they belonged. The historian is also continually struck by the fact that men of this kind felt isolated at the very time when in reality they were beginning to get through. This can also be noticed in our own time, when some of the most deeply influential men feel isolated and even rejected. The society and the communication are there, but it is difficult to recognize them, difficult to be sure.

**2002**

**200201**

Do you ever feel as though you spend all your time in meetings?

Henry Mintzberg, in his book The Nature of Managerial Work, found that in large organizations managers spent 22 per cent of their time at their desk, 6 percent on the telephone, 3 percent on other activities, but a whopping 69 percent in meetings.

There is a widely-held but mistaken belief that meetings are for “solving problems” and “making decisions”. For a start, the number of people attending a meeting tends to be inversely proportional to their collective ability to reach conclusions and make decisions. And these are the least important elements.

Instead hours are devoted to side issues, playing elaborate games with one another. It seems, therefore, that meetings serve some purpose other than just making decisions.

All meetings have one thing in common: role-playing. The most formal role is that of chairman. He sets the agenda, and a good chairman will keep the meeting running on time and to the point. Sadly, the other, informal, role-players are often able to gain the upper hand. Chief is the “constant talker”, who just loves to hear his or her own voice.

Then there are the “can't do” types who want to maintain the status quo. Since they have often been in the organization for a long time, they frequently quote historical experience as an excuse to block change: “It won't work, we tried that last year and it was a disaster.” A more subtle version of the “can’t do” type, the “yes, but…?”, has emerged recently. They have learnt about the need to sound positive, but they still can't bear to have things change.

Another whole sub-set of characters are people who love meetings and want them to continue until 5:30 pm or beyond. Irrelevant issues are their specialty. They need to call or attend meetings, either to avoid work, or to justify their lack of performance, or simply because they do not have enough to do.

Then there are the “counter-dependents”, those who usually disagree with everything that is said, particularly if it comes from the chairman or through consensus from the group. These people need to fight authority in whatever form.

Meetings can also provide attenders with a sense of identification of their status and power. In this case, managers arrange meetings as a means of communicating to others the boundaries of their exclusive club: who is “in”, and who is not.

Because so many meetings end in confusion and without a decision, another game is played at the end of meetings, called reaching a false consensus. Since it is important for the chairman to appear successful in problem solving and making a decision, the group reaches a false consensus. Everyone is happy, having spent their time productively. The reality is that the decision is so ambiguous that it is never acted upon, or, if it is, there is continuing conflict, for which another meeting is necessary.

In the end, meetings provide the opportunity for social intercourse, to engage in battle in front of our bosses, to avoid unpleasant or unsatisfying work to highlight our social status and identity. They are, in fact, a necessary though not necessarily productive psychological sideshow. Perhaps it is our civilized way to moderating, if not preventing, change.

**200202**

Cooperative competition. Competitive cooperation. Confused? Airline alliances have travellers scratching their heads over what’s going on in the skies. Some folks view alliances as a blessing to travellers, offering seamless travel, reduced fares and enhanced frequent-flyer benefits. Others see a conspiracy of big businesses, causing decreased competition, increased fares and fewer choices. Whatever your opinion, there’s no escaping airline alliances: the marketing hype is unrelenting, with each of the two mega-groupings, Oneworld and Star Alliance, promoting itself as the best choice for all travellers. And, even if you turn away from their ads, chances are they will figure in any of your travel plans. By the end of the year, Oneworld and Star Alliance will between them control more than 40% of the traffic in the sky. Some pundits predict that figure will be more like 75% in 10 years.

But why, after years of often ferocious competition, have airlines decided to band together? Let’s just say the timing is mutually convenient. North American airlines, having exhausted all means of earning customer loyalty at home, have been looking for ways to reach out to foreign flyers. Asian carriers are still hurting from the region-wide economic downturn that began two years ago-just when some of the airlines were taking delivery of new aircraft. Alliances also allow carriers to cut costs and increase profits by pooling manpower resources on the ground (rather than each airline maintaining its own ground crew) and code-sharing-the practice of two partners selling tickets and operating only one aircraft.

So alliances are terrific for airlines-but are they good for the passenger? Absolutely, say the airlines: think of the lounges, the joint FFP (frequent flyer programme) benefits, the round-the-world fares, and the global service networks. Then there’s the promise of “seamless” travel: the ability to, say, travel from Singapore to Rome to New York to Rio de Janeiro, all on one ticket, without having to wait hours for connections or worry about your bags. Sounds utopian Peter Buecking, Cathay Pacific’s director of sales and marketing, thinks that seamless travel is still evolving. “It’s fair to say that these links are only in their infancy. The key to seamlessness rests in infrastructure and information sharing. We’re working on this.” Henry Ma, spokesperson for Star Alliance in Hong Kong, lists some of the other benefits for consumers: “Global travellers have an easier time making connections and planning their itineraries.” Ma claims alliances also assure passengers consistent service standards.

Critics of alliances say the much-touted benefits to the consumer are mostly pie in the sky, that alliances are all about reducing costs for the airlines, rationalizing services and running joint marketing programmes. Jeff Blyskal, associate editor of Consumer Reports magazine, says the promotional ballyhoo over alliances is much ado about nothing. “I don’t see much of a gain for consumers: alliances are just a marketing gimmick. And as far as seamless travel goes, I’ll believe it when I see it. Most airlines can’t even get their own connections under control, let alone coordinate with another airline.”

Blyskal believes alliances will ultimately result in decreased flight choices and increased costs for consumers. Instead of two airlines competing and each operating a flight on the same route at 70% capacity, the allied pair will share the route and run one full flight. Since fewer seats will be available, passengers will be obliged to pay more for tickets.

The truth about alliances and their merits probably lies somewhere between the travel utopia presented by the players and the evil empires portrayed by their critics. And how much they affect you depends on what kind of traveller you are.

Those who’ve already made the elite grade in the FFP of a major airline stand to benefit the most when it joins an alliance: then they enjoy the FFP perks and advantages on any and all of the member carriers. For example, if you re a Marco Polo Club “gold” member of Cathay Pacific's Asia Miles FFP, you will automatically be treated as a valuable customer by all members of Oneworld, of which Cathay Pacific is a member-even if you've never flown with them before.

For those who haven’t made the top grade in any FFP, alliances might be a way of simplifying the earning of frequent flyer miles. For example, I belong to United Airline’s Mileage Plus and generally fly less than 25, 000 miles a year. But I earn miles with every flight I take on Star Alliance member-All Nippon Airways and Thai Airways.

If you fly less than I do, you might be smarter to stay out of the FFP game altogether. Hunt for bargains when booking flights and you might be able to save enough to take that extra trip anyway. The only real benefit infrequent flyers can draw from an alliance is an inexpensive round-the-world fare.

The bottom line: for all the marketing hype, alliances aren’t all things to all people-but everybody can get some benefit out of them.

**200203**

It is nothing new that English use is on the rise around the world, especially in business circles. This also happens in France, the headquarters of the global battle against American cultural hegemony. If French guys are giving in to English, something really big must be going on. And something big is going on.

Partly, it’s that American hegemony. Didier Benchimol, CEO of a French e-commerce software company, feels compelled to speak English perfectly because the Internet software business is dominated by Americans. He and other French businessmen also have to speak English because they want to get their message out to American investors, possessors of the world’s deepest pockets.

The triumph of English in France and elsewhere in Europe, however, may rest on something more enduring. As they become entwined with each other politically and economically, Europeans need a way to talk to one another and to the rest of the world. And for a number of reasons, they've decided upon English as their common tongue.

So when German chemical and pharmaceutical company Hoechst merged with French competitor Rhone-Poulenc last year, the companies chose the vaguely Latinate Aventis as the new company name-and settled on English as the company’s common language. When monetary policymakers from around Europe began meeting at the European Central Bank in Frankfurt last year to set interest rates for the new Euroland, they held their deliberations in English. Even the European Commission, with 11 official languages and traditionally French-speaking bureaucracy, effectively switched over to English as its working language last year.

How did this happen? One school attributes English’s great success to the sheer weight of its merit. It’s a Germanic language, brought to Britain around the fifth century A. D. During the four centuries of French-speaking rule that followed Norman Conquest of 1066, the language morphed into something else entirely. French words were added wholesale, and most of the complications of Germanic grammar were shed while few of the complications of French were added. The result is a language with a huge vocabulary and a simple grammar that can express most things more efficiently than either of its parents. What’s more, English has remained ungoverned and open to change-foreign words, coinages, and grammatical shifts-in a way that French, ruled by the purist Academic Francaise, had not.

So it’s a swell language, especially for business. But the rise of English over the past few centuries clearly owes at least as much to history and economics as to the language’s ability to economically express the concept win-win. What happened is that the competition-first Latin, then French, then, briefly, German-faded with the waning of the political, economic, and military fortunes of, respectively, the Catholic Church, France, and Germany. All along, English was increasing in importance: Britain was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, and London the world's most important financial centre, which made English a key language for business.

England’s colonies around the world also made it the language with the most global reach. And as that former colony the U.S. rose to the status of the world’s preeminent political economic, military, and cultural power, English became the obvious second language to learn.

In the 1990s more and more Europeans found themselves forced to use English. The last generation of business and government leaders who hadn't studied English in school was leaving the stage. The European Community was adding new members and evolving from a paper-shuffling club into a serious regional government that would need a single common language if it were ever to get anything done. Meanwhile, economic barriers between European nations have been disappearing, meaning that more and more companies are beginning to look at the whole continent as their domestic market. And then the Internet came along.

The Net had two big impacts. One was that it was an exciting, potentially lucrative new industry that had its roots in the U.S., so if you wanted to get in on it, you had to speak some English. The other was that by surfing the Web, Europeans who had previously encountered English only in school and in pop songs were now coming into contact with it daily.

None of this means English has taken over European life. According to the European Union, 47% of Western Europeans (including the British and Irish)speak English well enough to carry on a conversation. That’s a lot more than those who can speak German (32%) or French (28%), but it still means more Europeans don’t speak the language. If you want to sell shampoo or cell phones, you have to do it in French or German or Spanish or Greek. Even the U.S. and British media companies that stand to benefit most from the spread of English have been hedging their bets-CNN broadcasts in Spanish; the Financial Times has recently launched a daily German-language edition.

But just look at who speaks English: 77% of Western European college students, 69% of managers, and 65% of those aged 15 to 24. In the secondary schools of the European Union's non-English-speaking countries, 91% of students study English, all of which means that the transition to English as the language of European business hasn't been all that traumatic, and it’s only going to get easier in the future.

**200204**

As humankind moves into the third millennium, it can rightfully claim to have broken new ground in its age-old quest to master the environment. The fantastic achievements of modern technology and the speed at which scientific discoveries are translated into technological applications attest to the triumph of human endeavour.

At the same time, however, some of these applications threaten to unleash forces over which we have no control. In other words, the new technology Man now believes allows him to dominate this wider cosmos could well be a Frankenstein monster waiting to turn on its master.

This is an entirely new situation that promises to change many of the perceptions governing life on the planet. The most acute challenges facing the future are likely to be not only those pitting man against his fellow man, but those involving humankind's struggle to preserve the environment and ensure the sustainability of life on earth.

A conflict waged to ensure the survival of the human species is bound to bring humans closer together. Technological progress has thus proved to be a double-edged sword, giving rise to a new form of conflict: a clash between Man and Nature.

The new conflict is more dangerous than the traditional one between man and his fellow man, where the protagonists at least shared a common language. But when it comes to the reactions of the ecosystems to the onslaught of modern technology, there is no common language.

Nature reacts with weather disturbances, with storms and earthquakes, with mutant viruses and bacteria-that is, with phenomena having no apparent cause and effect relationship with the modern technology that supposedly triggers them.

As technology becomes ever more potent and Nature reacts ever more violently, there is an urgent need to rethink how best to deal with the growing contradictions between Man and Nature.

For a start, the planet, and hence all its inhabitants, must be perceived as an integral whole, not as a dichotomous mass divided geographically into the rich and developed and the poor and underdeveloped.

Today, globalization encompasses the whole world and deals with it as an integral unit. It is no longer possible to say that conflict has shifted from its traditional east-west axis to a north-south axis. The real divide today is between summit and base, between the higher echelons of the international political structure and its grassroots level, between government and NGOs, between state and civil society, between public and private enterprise.

The mesh structure is particularly obvious on the Internet. While it is true that to date the Internet seems to be favouring the most developed sectors of the international community over the less developed, this need not always be the case. Indeed, it could eventually overcome the disparities between the privileged and the underdeveloped.

On the other hand, the macro-world in which we live is exposed to distortions because of the unpredictable side-effects of a micro-world we do not and cannot totally control.

This raises the need for a global system of checks and balances, for mandatory rules and constraints in our dealings with Nature, in short, for a new type of veto designed to manage what is increasingly becoming a main contradiction of our time: the one between technology and ecology.

A new type of international machinery must be set in place to cope with the new challenges. We need a new look at the harnessing of scientific discoveries, to maximize their positive effects for the promotion of humanity as a whole and to minimize their negative effects. We need an authority with veto powers to forbid practices conducive to decreasing the ozone hole, the propagation of AIDS, global warming, desertification-an authority that will tackle such global problems.

There should be no discontinuity in the global machinery responsible for world order. The UN in its present form may fall far short of what is required of it, and it may be undemocratic and detrimental to most citizens in the world, but its absence would be worse. And so we have to hold on to the international organization even as we push forward for its complete restructuring.

Our best hope would be that the functions of the present United Nations are gradually taken over by the new machinery of veto power representing genuine democratic globalization.

**2003**

**200301**

Hostility to Gypsies has existed almost from the time they first appeared in Europe in the 14th century. The origins of the Gypsies, with little written history, were shrouded in mystery. What is known now from clues in the various dialects of their language, Romany, is that they came from northern India to the Middle East a thousand years ago, working as minstrels and mercenaries, metal-smiths and servants. Europeans misnamed them Egyptians, soon shortened to Gypsies. A clan system, based mostly on their traditional crafts and geography, has made them a deeply fragmented and fractious people, only really unifying in the face of enmity from non-Gypsies, whom they call gadje. Today many Gypsy activists prefer to be called Roma, which comes from the Romany word for “man”. But on my travels among them most still referred to themselves as Gypsies.

In Europe their persecution by the gadje began quickly, with the church seeing heresy in their fortune-telling and the state seeing anti-social behaviour in their nomadism. At various times they have been forbidden to wear their distinctive bright clothes, to speak their own language, to travel, to marry one another, or to ply their traditional crafts. In some countries they were reduced to slavery it wasn't until the mid-1800s that Gypsy slaves were freed in Romania. In more recent times the Gypsies were caught up in Nazi ethnic hysteria, and perhaps half a million perished in the Holocaust. Their horses have been shot and the wheels removed from their wagons, their names have been changed, their women have been sterilized, and their children have been forcibly given for adoption to non-Gypsy families.

But the Gypsies have confounded predictions of their disappearance as a distinct ethnic group and their numbers have burgeoned. Today there are an estimated 8 to 12 million Gypsies scattered across Europe, making them the continent's largest minority. The exact number is hard to pin down. Gypsies have regularly been undercounted, both by regimes anxious to downplay their profile and by Gypsies themselves, seeking to avoid bureaucracies. Attempting to remedy past inequities, activist groups may overcount. Hundreds of thousands more have emigrated to the Americas and elsewhere. With very few exceptions Gypsies have expressed no great desire for a country to call their own-unlike the Jews, to whom the Gypsy experience is often compared. “Romanestan” said Ronald Lee, the Canadian Gypsy writer, “is where my two feet stand.”

**200302**

I was just a boy when my father brought me to Harlem for the first time, almost 50 years ago. We stayed at the Hotel Theresa, a grand brick structure at 125th Street and Seventh Avenue. Once, in the hotel restaurant, my father pointed out Joe Louis. He even got Mr. Brown, the hotel manager, to introduce me to him, a bit paunchy but still the champ as far as I was concerned.

Much has changed since then. Business and real estate are booming. Some say a new renaissance is under way. Others decry what they see as outside forces running roughshod over the old Harlem.

New York meant Harlem to me, and as a young man I visited it whenever I could. But many of my old haunts are gone. The Theresa shut down in 1966. National chains that once ignored Harlem now anticipate yuppie money and want pieces of this prime Manhattan real estate. So here I am on a hot August afternoon, sitting in a Starbucks that two years ago opened a block away from the Theresa, snatching at memories between sips of high-priced coffee. I am about to open up a piece of the old Harlem-the New York Amsterdam News when a tourist asking directions to Sylvia’s, a prominent Harlem restaurant, penetrates my daydreaming. He’s carrying a book: Touring Historic Harlem.

History. I miss Mr. Michaux’s bookstore, his House of Common Sense, which was across from the Theresa. He had a big billboard out front with brown and black faces painted on it that said in large letters: “World History Book Outlet on 2,000,000,000 Africans and Nonwhite Peoples.” An ugly state office building has swallowed that space.

I miss speaker like Carlos Cooks, who was always on the southwest comer of 125th and Seventh, urging listeners to support Africa. Harlem's powerful political electricity seems unplugged-although the sweets are still energized, especially by West African immigrants.

Hardworking southern newcomers formed the bulk of the community back in the 1920s and 30s, when Harlem renaissance artists, writers, and intellectuals gave it a glitter and renown that made it the capital of black America. From Harlem, W. E. B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Zora Neal Hurston, and others helped power America’s cultural influence around the world.

By the 1970s and 80s drugs and crime had ravaged parts of the community. And the life expectancy for men in Harlem was less than that of men in Bangladesh. Harlem had become a symbol of the dangers of inner-city life.

Now, you want to shout “Lookin 'good!” at this place that has been neglected for so long. Crowds push into Harlem USA, a new shopping centre on 125th, where a Disney store shares space with HMV Records, the New York Sports Club, and a nine-screen Magic Johnson theatre complex. Nearby, a Rite Aid drugstore also opened. Maybe part of the reason Harlem seems to be undergoing a rebirth is that it is finally getting what most people take for granted.

Harlem is also part of an “empowerment zone”? a federal designation aimed at fostering economic growth that will bring over half a billion in federal, state, and local dollars. Just the shells of once elegant old brownstones now can cost several hundred thousand dollars. Rents are skyrocketing. An improved economy, tougher law enforcement, and community efforts against drugs have contributed to a 60 percent drop in crime since 1993.

**200303**

The senior partner, Oliver Lambert, studied the resume for the hundredth time and again found nothing he disliked about Mitchell Y. McDeere, at least not on paper. He had the brains, the ambition, the good looks. And he was hungry; with his background, he had to be. He was married, and that was mandatory. The firm had never hired an unmarried lawyer, and it frowned heavily on divorce, as well as womanizing and drinking. Drug testing was in the contract. He had a degree in accounting, passed the CPA exam the first time he took it and wanted to be a tax lawyer, which of course was a requirement with a tax firm. He was white, and the firm had never hired a black. They managed this by being secretive and clubbish and never soliciting job applications. Other firms solicited, and hired blacks. This firm recruited, and remained lily white. Plus, the firm was in Memphis, and the top blacks wanted New York or Washington or Chicago. McDeere was a male, and there were no women in the firm. That mistake had been made in the mid-seventies when they recruited the number one grad from Harvard, who happened to be a she and a wizard at taxation. She lasted four turbulent years and was killed in a car wreck.

He looked good, on paper. He was their top choice. In fact, for this year there were no other prospects. The list was very short. It was McDeere, or no one.

The managing partner, Royce McKnight, studied a dossier labeled “Mitchell Y. McDeere-Harvard.” An inch thick with small print and a few photographs; it had been prepared by some ex-CIA agents in a private intelligence outfit in Bethesda. They were clients of the firm and each year did the investigating for no fee. It was easy work, they said, checking out unsuspecting law students. They learned, for instance, that he preferred to leave the Northeast, that he was holding three job offers, two in New York and one in Chicago, and that the highest offer was $76,000 and the lowest was $68,000. He was in demand. He had been given the opportunity to cheat on a securities exam during his second year. He declined, and made the highest grade in the class. Two months ago he had been offered cocaine at a law school party. He said no and left when everyone began snorting. He drank an occasional beer, but drinking was expensive and he had no money. He owed close to $23,000 in student loans. He was hungry.

Royce McKnight flipped through the dossier and smiled. McDeere was their man.

Lamar Quin was thirty-two and not yet a partner. He had been brought along to look young and act young and project a youthful image for Bendini, Lambert & Locke, which in fact was a young firm, since most of the partners retired in their late forties or early fifties with money to bum. He would make partner in this firm. With a six-figure income guaranteed for the rest of his life.

Lamar could enjoy the twelve-hundred-dollar tailored suits that hung so comfortably from his tall, athletic frame. He strolled nonchalantly across the thousand-dollar-a-day suite and poured another cup of decaf. He checked his watch. He glanced at the two partners sitting at the small conference table near the windows.

Precisely at two-thirty someone knocked on the door. Lamar looked at the partners, who slid the resume and dossier into an open briefcase. All three reached for their jackets. Lamar buttoned his top button and opened the door.

**200304**

Harry Truman didn't think his successor had the right training to be president. “Poor Ike, it won't be a bit like the Army,” he said. “He’ll sit there all day saying do this, do that, and nothing will happen.” Truman was wrong about Ike. Dwight Eisenhower had led a fractious alliance you didn't tell Winston Churchill what to do- in a massive, chaotic war. He was used to politics. But Truman’s insight could well be applied to another, even more venerated Washington figure: the CEO-mined cabinet secretary.

A 20-year bull market has convinced us all that CEOs are geniuses, so watch with astonishment the troubles of Donald Rumsfeld and Paul O’Neill. Here are two highly regarded businessmen, obviously intelligent and well-informed, foundering in their jobs.

Actually, we shouldn't be surprised. Rumsfeld and O’Neill are not doing badly despite having been successful CEOs but because of it. The record of senior businessmen in government is one of almost unrelieved disappointment. In fact, with the exception of Robert Rubin, it is difficult to think of a CEO who had a successful career in government.

Why is this? Well, first the CEO has to recognize that he is no longer the CEO. He is at best an adviser to the CEO, the president. But even the president is not really the CEO. No one is. Power in a corporation is concentrated and vertically structured. Power in Washington is diffuse and horizontally spread out. The secretary might think he's in charge of his agency. But the chairman of the congressional committee funding that agency feels the same. In his famous study “Presidential Power and the Modem Presidents,” Richard Neustadt explains how little power the president actually has and concludes that the only lasting presidential power is “the power to persuade.”

Take Rumsfeld’s attempt to transform the cold-war military into one geared for the future. It’s innovative but deeply threatening to almost everyone in Washington. The Defense secretary did not try to sell it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress, the budget office or the White House. As a result, the idea is collapsing.

Second, what power you have, you must use carefully. For example, O’Neill’s position as Treasury secretary is one with little formal authority. Unlike Finance ministers around the world, Treasury does not control the budget. But it has symbolic power. The secretary is seen as the chief economic spokesman for the administration and, if he plays it right, the chief economic adviser for the president.

O’Neill has been publicly critical of the IMF’s bailout packages for developing countries while at the same time approving such packages for Turkey, Argentina and Brazil. As a result, he has gotten the worst of both worlds. The bailouts continue, but their effect in holstering investor confidence is limited because the markets are rattled by his skepticism.

Perhaps the government doesn't do bailouts well. But that leads to a third role: you can’t just quit. Jack Welch’s famous law for re-engineering General Electric was to be first or second in any given product category, or else get out of that business. But if the government isn’t doing a particular job at peak level, it doesn’t always have the option of relieving itself of that function. The Pentagon probably wastes a lot of money. But it can't get out of the national-security business.

The key to former Treasury secretary Rubin's success may have been that he fully understood that business and government are, in his words, “necessarily and properly very different.” In a recent speech he explained, “Business functions around one predominate organizing principle, profitability ... Government, on the other hand, deals with a vast number of equally legitimate and often potentially competing objectives ? for example, energy production versus environmental protection, or safety regulations versus productivity."

Rubin's example shows that talented people can do well in government if they are willing to treat it as its own separate, serious endeavour. But having been bathed in a culture of adoration and flattery, it's difficult for a CEO to believe he needs to listen and learn, particularly from those despised and poorly paid specimens, politicians, bureaucrats and the media. And even if he knows it intellectually, he just can't live with it.

**2004**

**200401**

Farmers in the developing world hate price fluctuations. It makes it hard to plan ahead. But most of them have little choice: they sell at the price the market sets. Farmers in Europe, the U.S. and Japan are luckier: they receive massive government subsidies in the form of guaranteed prices or direct handouts. Last month U.S. President Bush signed a new farm bill that gives American farmers $190 billion over the next 10 years, or $83 billion more than they had been scheduled to get, and pushes U.S. agricultural support close to crazy European levels. Bush said the step was necessary to “promote farmer independence and preserve the farm way of life for generations”. It is also designed to help the Republican Party win control of the Senate in November's mid term elections.

Agricultural production in most poor countries accounts for up to 50% of GDP, compared to only 3% in rich countries. But most farmers in poor countries grow just enough for themselves and their families. Those who try exporting to the West find their goods whacked with huge tariffs or competing against cheaper subsidized goods. In 1999 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development concluded that for each dollar developing countries receive in aid they lose up to $14 just because of trade barriers imposed on the export of their manufactured goods. It’s not as if the developing world wants any favours, says Gerald Ssendwula, Uganda's Minister of Finance. “What we want is for the rich countries to let us compete.”

Agriculture is one of the few areas in which the Third World can compete. Land and labour are cheap, and as farming methods develop, new technologies should improve output. This is no pie in the sky speculation. The biggest success in Kenya’s economy over the past decade has been the boom in exports of cut flowers and vegetables to Europe. But that may all change in 2008, when Kenya will be slightly too rich to qualify for the “least developed country” status that allows African producers to avoid paying stiff European import duties on selected agricultural products. With trade barriers in place, the horticulture industry in Kenya will shrivel as quickly as a discarded rose. And while agriculture exports remain the great hope for poor countries, reducing trade barriers in other sectors also works: Americas African Growth and Opportunity Act, which cuts duties on exports of everything from handicrafts to shoes, has proved a boon to Africa’s manufacturers. The lesson: the Third World can prosper if the rich world gives it a fair go.

This is what makes Bush’s decision to increase farm subsidies last month all the more depressing. Poor countries have long suspected that the rich world urges trade liberalization only so it can wangle its way into new markets. Such suspicions caused the Seattle trade talks to break down three years ago. But last November members of the World Trade Organization, meeting in Doha, Qatar, finally agreed to a new round of talks designed to open up global trade in agriculture and textiles. Rich countries assured poor countries, that their concerns were finally being addressed. Bush’s handout last month makes a lie of America’s commitment to those talks and his personal devotion to free trade.

**200402**

Oscar Wilde said that work is the refuge of people who have nothing better to do. If so, Americans are now among the world's saddest refugees. Factory workers in the United States are working longer hours than at any time in the past half century. America once led the rich world in cutting the average working week from 70 hours in 1850 to less than 40 hours by the 1950s. It seemed natural that as people grew richer they would trade extra earnings for more leisure. Since the 1970s, however, the hours clocked up by American workers have risen, to an average of 42 this year in manufacturing.

Several studies suggest that something similar is happening outside manufacturing: Americans are spending more time at work than they did 20 years ago. Executives and lawyers boast of 80 hour weeks. On holiday, they seek out fax machines and phones as eagerly as Germans bag the best sun loungers. Yet working time in Europe and Japan continues to fall. In Germany’s engineering industry the working week is to be trimmed from 36 to 35 hours next year. Most Germans get six weeks’ paid annual holiday; even the Japanese now take three weeks. Americans still make do with just two.

Germany responds to this contrast with its usual concern about whether people’s aversion to work is damaging its competitiveness. Yet German workers, like the Japanese, seem to be acting sensibly: as their incomes rise, they can achieve a better standard of living with fewer hours of work. The puzzle is why America, the world’s richest country, sees things differently. It is a puzzle with sinister social implications. Parents spend less time with their children, who may be left alone at home for longer. Is it just a coincidence that juvenile crime is on the rise? Some explanations for America’s time at work fail to stand up to scrutiny. One blames weak trade unions that leave workers open to exploitation. Are workers being forced by cost cutting firms to toil harder just to keep their jobs? A recent study by two American economists, Richard Freeman and Linda Bell, suggests not: when asked, Americans actually want to work longer hours. Most German workers, in contrast, would rather work less.

Then, why do Americans want to work harder? One reason may be that the real earnings of many Americans have been stagnant or falling during the past two decades. People work longer merely to maintain their living standards. Yet many higher-skilled workers, who have enjoyed big increases in their real pay, have been working harder too. Also, one reason for the slow growth of wages has been the rapid growth in employment which is more or less where the argument began.

Taxes may have something to do with it. People who work an extra hour in America are allowed to keep more of their money than those who do the same in Germany. Falls in marginal tax rates in America since the 1970s have made it all the more profitable to work longer.

None of these answers really explains why the century long decline in working hours has gone into reverse in America but not elsewhere (though Britain shows signs of following America's lead). Perhaps cultural differences the last refuge of the defeated economist are at play. Economists used to believe that once workers earned enough to provide for their basic needs and allow for a few luxuries, their incentive to work would be eroded, like lions relaxing after a kill. But humans are more susceptible to advertising than lions. Perhaps clever marketing has ensured that “basic needs” for a shower with built in TV, for a rocket propelled car-expand continuously. Shopping is already one of America's most popular pastimes. But it requires money-hence more work and less leisure.

Or try this: the television is not very good, and baseball and hockey keep being wiped out by strikes.

Perhaps Wilde was right. Maybe Americans have nothing better to do.

**200403**

The fox really exasperated them both. As soon as they had let the fowls out, in the early summer mornings, they had to take their guns and keep guard; and then again as soon as evening began to mellow, they must go once more. And he was so sly. He slid along in the deep grass; he was difficult as a serpent to see. And he seemed to circumvent the girls deliberately. Once or twice March had caught sight of the white tip of his brush, or the ruddy shadow of him in the deep grass, and she had let fire at him. But he made no account of this.

The trees on the wood edge were a darkish, brownish green in the full light for it was the end of August. Beyond, the naked, copper like shafts and limbs of the pine trees shone in the air. Nearer the rough grass, with its long, brownish stalks all agleam, was full of light. The fowls were round about the ducks were still swimming on the pond under the pine trees. March looked at it all, saw it all, and did not see it. She heard Banford speaking to the fowls in the distance and she did not hear. What was she thinking about? Heaven knows. Her consciousness was, as it were, held back.

She lowered her eyes, and suddenly saw the fox. He was looking up at her. His chin was pressed down, and his eyes were looking up. They met her eyes. And he knew her. She was spellbound she knew he knew her. So he looked into her eyes, and her soul failed her. He knew her, he has not daunted.

She struggled, confusedly she came to herself, and saw him making off, with slow leaps over some fallen boughs, slow, impudent jumps. Then he glanced over his shoulder, and ran smoothly away. She saw his brush held smooth like a feather; she saw his white buttocks twinkle. And he was gone, softly, soft as the wind.

She put her gun to her shoulder, but even then pursed her mouth, knowing it was nonsense to pretend to fire. So she began to walk slowly after him, in the direction he had gone, slowly, pertinaciously. She expected to find him. In her heart she was determined to find him. What she would do when she saw him again she did not consider. But she was determined to find him. So she walked abstractedly about on the edge of the wood, with wide, vivid dark eyes, and a faint flush in her cheeks. She did not think. In strange mindlessness she walked hither and thither...

As soon as supper was over, she rose again to go out, without saying why.

She took her gun again and went to look for the fox. For he had lifted his eyes upon her, and his knowing look seemed to have entered her brain. She did not so much think of him: she was possessed by him. She saw his dark, shrewd, unabashed eye looking into her, knowing her. She felt him invisibly master her spirit. She knew the way he lowered his chin as he looked up, she knew his muzzle, the golden brown, and the greyish white. And again she saw him glance over his shoulder at her, half inviting, half contemptuous and cunning. So she went, with her great startled eyes glowing, her gun under her arm, along the wood edge. Meanwhile the night fell, and a great moon rose above the pine trees.

**200404**

The banners are packed, the tickets booked. The glitter and white overalls have been bought, the gas masks just fit and the mobile phones are ready. All that remains is to get to the parties.

This week will see a feast of pan European protests. It started on Bastille Day, last Saturday, with the French unions and immigrants on the streets and the first demonstrations in Britain and Germany about climate change. It will continue tomorrow and Thursday with environmental and peace rallies against President Bush. But the big one is in Genoa, on Friday and Saturday, where the G8 leaders will meet behind the lines of 18,000 heavily armed police.

Unlike Prague, Gothenburg, Cologne or Nice, Genoa is expected to be Europe’s Seattle, the coming together of the disparate strands of resistance to corporate globalisation.

Neither the protesters nor the authorities know what will happen, but some things are predictable. Yes, there will be violence and yes, the mass media will focus on it. What should seriously concern the G8 is not so much the violence, the numbers in the streets or even that they themselves look like idiots hiding behind the barricades, but that the deep roots of a genuine new version of internationalism are growing.

For the first time in a generation, the international political and economic condition is in the dock. Moreover, the protesters are unlikely to go away, their confidence is growing rather than waning, their agendas are merging, the protests are spreading and drawing in all ages and concerns.

No single analysis has drawn all the strands of the debate together. In the mean time, the global protest “movement” is developing its own language, texts, agendas, myths, heroes and villains. Just as the G8 leaders, world bodies and businesses talk increasingly from the same script, so the protesters’ once disparate political and social analyses are converging. The long term project of governments and world bodies to globalise capital and development is being mirrored by the globalisation of protest.

But what happens next? Governments and world bodies are unsure which way to turn. However well they are policed, major protests reinforce the impression of indifferent elites, repression of debate, overreaction to dissent, injustice and unaccountable power.

Their options apart from actually embracing the broad agenda being put to them-are to retreat behind even higher barricades, repress dissent further, abandon global meetings altogether or, more likely, meet only in places able to physically resist the masses.

Brussels is considering building a super fortress for international meetings. Genoa may be the last of the European super protests.