

janet white collide- oscope

The signs were subtle five years ago. They went unnoticed for the most part. But in 1972 Americans show every indication of having latched onto one more nationwide craze. It has the novelty of the skateboard, the intrigue of the ESP card trick, and the mind-dazzling effect of a psychedelic light show.

What is it? Futurism. Practiced by growing numbers of futurists, popularized by mass media, lecture tours and well-meaning conversationalists everywhere.

Futurism is the applied science of predicting the future, usually by projecting current statistical trends. Its most popular exponents are probably Alvin Toffler, who wrote *Future Shock*, and Marshall McLuhan, author of *Understanding Media*. The future perspective has given impetus to ecological and population control efforts.

Futurism began as a serious effort by the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences in creating the Commission of the Year 2000. Similar organizations began work in France and England.

As early as 1967, Daniel Bell, commission chairman, pointed out the popular appeal of the year 2000. He cited feature spreads in *Time* magazine, the *New York Post*, the *New York Times*, a running column in the *Wall Street Journal*, and a CBS television show.

Even the beauty industry, Bell wrote, had jumped on the bandwagon. A *New York Times* women's page headline read: "In the Year 2000: Push Button Beauty." The article began: "The chic woman of the year 2000 may have live butterflies around her hairdo—attracted by a specially scented hairspray."

The undesirable result of this popularized futurism is that it distracts attention from the original intent of statistical prediction: to outline trends and alternatives as a basis for intelligent and aggressive

decision-making.

Instead, predictions are often presented as entertainment, belying a trivial or gimmicky subject. Popular books and articles are often written to pleasantly overwhelm the reader with his powerlessness to change the surge of technological progress. The sensation of powerlessness has become oppressive, however, and predictions of technological domination have debilitated the citizen as a participant in his own future.

The widespread sense of being unable to effect change in the environment is mirrored in the social sciences. A deterministic world view has increasingly pervaded the liberal arts, culminating in B. F. Skinner's book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Man is seen exclusively as a product of his environment. There are no alternative modes of action.

Awareness of environmental influence on personality was at first a humanistic trend. It provided a broader foundation for understanding among people. Carried to the present degree, however, the attitude is dehumanizing. It deprives people of their sense of control over their lives.

The trend toward a submissive and docile acceptance of one's fate is the opposite of what is necessary. Alvin Toffler points out that the rapid rate of life change in the future will demand that citizens budget for the physiological and psychological shock they are capable of absorbing each year.

Physiological and psychological afflictions—insomnia, heart palpitations, tremors, unexplained fatigue, confusion, unusual irritability, gastrointestinal disorders, ulcers—may be direct results of too much change in the environment. Toffler suggests controlling the shock of change in personal life through statistical probabilities.

Whether people perceive themselves as pawns of powerful deterministic forces or as active participants in their destiny is of crucial importance. The future is designed by present expectations. The future is designed by present expectations. If people internalize a deterministic world view from popular futuristic writings, they will face the challenge of the technological society disarmed and debilitated, rather than prepared and educated. The prophecy of man's subjugation to technology will fulfill itself.

guest opinion

by Bruce Beecher

Bruce Beecher is manager of the ASUN Student Record Store and Art Shop, and is co-chairman of the ASUN Student Services Committee.

As co-chairman of ASUN Student Services Committee and with my involvement as manager of the ASUN Record and Art Store, I have found that an expansion of student services is both feasible and necessary. I feel that the most promising way of accomplishing this is through the establishment of a student cooperative system. In this article, I would like to outline some specific suggestions for implementation.

The basis of a cooperative system lies in the sale of a co-op card to students and faculty. This card would provide discount prices on such items as records, art works, gas and liquor. The discount on records and art is understandable because of the Record and Art Store already in operation.

How about gas and liquor? An owner of a liquor store or gas station close to campus would more than likely be glad to offer reduced prices in return for the patronage of a large percentage of students on this campus. At the outset there would be four uses for the cooperative card. The card would also have the student's picture, I.D. number and birth date, so that it could be used for cashing checks and purchasing liquor.

The most appealing aspect of the co-op is that the money received from the card sales would then be

used to open new stores and services. If a mere 25 per cent of the student body at UNL purchased a co-op card at, say, five dollars a semester, this would provide a working capital of \$50,000 for the first year. This would be more than enough money to expand services to include other services such as a book store, weekend films, grocery store and a coffee shop.

The following year, more tickets would be sold because of their increased value, and the money taken in would then open other stores. I think that the spiral-effect of the cooperative system is obvious. In effect, by purchasing a co-op card, students would not only be saving themselves money immediately, but would also be investing in future savings.

In view of the recent controversy concerning student fee monies and fee continuation, I feel this is a workable and practical alternative. Also, this would remove the threat of withdrawal of student fees from student organizations by the Board of Regents and the Nebraska Legislature.

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