

"System is blowing fuses"

By CAROLINE PRICE

If you are terrified of what tomorrow may bring, you may be suffering from what Alvin Toffler calls future shock. Toffler, whose book, "Future Shock," attempts to alert society to the impending crises ahead, spoke recently at a full house at Schofield College. His lecture, sponsored by the City of Livonia and Schofield College Bicentennial committees, was an update to the problems and solutions he mentioned in his book.

"We are passing through a revolutionary period," Toffler said. "Changes in our values, our families and our deepest assumptions about life itself are all contributing to what I call the super-industrial revolution."

According to Toffler, many factors are contributing to this super-industrial revolution. One is that two hidden subsidies of industrialized society, cheap fossil fuel and raw materials, are no longer readily available. These materials have been provided by the non-industrialized third world countries in the past, but as Toffler says, "The rest of the world won't continue to provide us with all the goodies we're used to."

Another reason is that industrial society is past its prime. "The U.S. reached a period of industrial maturity in the late 1920s and early 1930s," Toffler says. "That decade saw the first time service employees and white collar workers outnumbered the blue collar workers, the advent of the jet, the birth control pill, television, and it was the last decade of a normal presidency." Toffler cites examples of recent presidents who have been shot, abandoned by their political parties or forced to resign as evidence of a breakdown in political structure. "It is a symptom of a general breakdown of parliamentary democracy," he says.

TOFFLER SAYS there are two central features of the super-industrial revolution. "We are facing not just a change of direction but a change of pace," he says. "The rate at which information is exchanged produces political situations where events move so rapidly we can scarcely remember yesterday's crises long enough to learn from them. This acceleration forces us to forget yesterday and face new bizarre problems." Toffler mentions the unprecedented



ALVIN TOFFLER

number of "first-time events" that are happening today, such as the bankruptcy of New York City and the existence of an unelected president and vice-president. "Society is asked to make decisions about things it knows nothing about."

ANOTHER FEATURE of the super-industrial revolution is the growing diversity of society. During the United States' chronic labor shortage, much of the available labor was going west, which resulted in a flood of immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds. As standardization is one of the prerequisites in industrial societies, these immigrants had to become less diversified.

Toffler says the real melting pot was mass public education. Schools had two different curriculums: Toffler says, "the visible and one secret."

The secret curriculum taught pure

loyalty, obedience and willingness to perform a life of repetitious work." Toffler says, "It conditioned generations of lively, diverse little human beings into uniform workers."

Then this uniformity was challenged by the rise of ethnic groups. "They discovered differences and learned to tolerate and even celebrate these differences. This process is inherently anti-industrial," Toffler mentions the recent rise of French Canadians who object violently to giving up their culture and even consider seceding from Canada.

"We are becoming a multi-culture which is healthy in times of change, but it also creates a wider diversity of demands on politics," Toffler says.

"No wonder the system is blowing fuses."

TOFFLER SAYS there are two alternatives in adjusting to these changes. Some people advocate going back to where we were. But Toffler feels we must begin redesigning political structures. He calls his solution anticipatory democracy. "We had better start anticipating the future rather

than letting it happen to us." According to Toffler, "No political party in America is addressing itself to the future. They are relics of the past." But the problem does not lie just with the parties. "All institutions must ask long-range questions. They should encourage ordinary citizens to feed in their ideas. Americans are starved for positive images of the future and are paralyzed into dangerous political passivity which could erupt overnight into violence."

TOFFLER ALSO feels we should ask ourselves some pretty heavy questions. What will the family structure look like? What kind of work force will we have? How can we alter the distribution of population in the U.S.? How do we prevent discrimination? And, most important of all, how do we do all these things while maintaining peace and altering our relationship with the rest of the world?

He also feels we have to get used to planning. "Up until now, government planning was dominated by experts, and was short-range, economics-oriented, centralized and elitist. It won't work in a diverse society."

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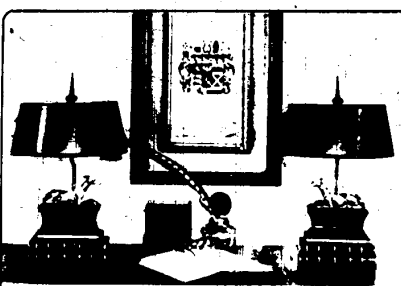
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