

1984

Orwell's future shifted—Toffler

By Tim Richard
staff writer

To futurist Alvin Toffler, "1984" came closest to occurring in the late 1950s.

"We have been moving from a 'mass' to a de-massified society," said the one-time journalist whose books have turned "The Third Wave" and "Future Shock" into household words.

George Orwell's 1949 novel, "1984," pictured a society consisting of three super-nations constantly fighting limited wars over a small, undeveloped segment of the world and its supply of slave labor. The Americas and the United Kingdom had become the chief elements in one super-nation called Oceania. In Oceania's strictly stratified society, 85 percent of the people constituted a mass called "the poles."

Orwell's 1984 was a projection of trends that were in place in 1948, at the close of World War II. But Toffler, in a recent lecture at Schoolcraft College, said those trends reversed themselves in the late '50s and early '60s.

WHAT ORWELL was witnessing was the peak of the world's second revolutionary wave (agriculture was the first), Toffler said.

"Despite the differences between societies like Japan and Sweden, the U.S. and the USSR," he said, "there were certain parallel forms."

In the second wave, there was mass production, made possible by "brute force" technologies and high-energy inputs. There was mass distribution of this mass production — through supermarkets, giant department stores, chain operations.

There was mass education. No matter what the curriculum and the nation, children learned three fundamental things: punctuality, obedience and how to perform repetitive work by rote. "These skills are required for an industrial labor force."

There were mass media — three nationwide television networks in the U.S. and a growing influence of a few metropolitan daily newspapers.

There was a mass rhythm to society —

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—Alvin Toffler

rush hour traffic, prime time television, bedlams.

There were nuclear families as contrasted to the extended families of farming days, and children rarely witnessed work. The elderly were sent off to institutions.

No longer.

"THE WORLD we've known is coming apart at the seams," Toffler said.

The third wave of revolutions began with literary criticism of conformity in such novels as "The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit" and such sociological studies as "The Organization Man."

"Because of computer controls, there has been a shift to customization of production," said Toffler, who with his wife visits factories all over the world while other tourists visit cathedrals.

"Factories no longer turn out a million of that and 27 of the other," he said. As for mass distribution, he found "the supermarket is obsolete" — attested to by the financial troubles of such major local chains as Great Scott, Kroger, Chatham and Packer. "Now it's a bunch of boutiques," he said.

Toffler's poll of the Schoolcraft College audience showed 85 percent recently had purchased something by mail or telephone. He visualized the day when customers would order a product by telephone and, while punching in the order, activate the technology to custom-produce whatever they want.

The third wave has hit the media particularly hard, Toffler said. "Until 1977 there were only three networks. Today there are an increasing number of cable channels for every conceivable group in society."

"In the print media, there are special interest magazines — 15 flying magazines alone. There is even a specialized newsletter to the survivors of those lost in particular plane crashes."

In politics, this customizing is seen in the number of single-issue candidates. In the military, customizing is evidenced by precision targeting of weapons — a far cry from the trench warfare and military draft of the second wave, or of Orwell's "1984."

WHERE WE work shows we are farther than ever from the society of "1984," in which hero Winston Smith worked anonymously in a giant office building of the Ministry of Truth.

"Computing is anti-productive and one of the dumbest things we do," said Toffler. "It once made sense in the days of factories."

"When the cost of transportation rises, employees need a raise. We need to have highways, traffic police, cafeterias — a major drag on the American economy."

"Today when a majority of the work force handles data, paper, numbers, it is no longer necessary to concentrate masses of people under the same roof" (in fact, the number of white-collar workers in America exceeded the number of blue-collar workers for the first time in history in



1957.)

"Many jobs will gravitate to homes and neighborhood work centers," Toffler predicted. "I happen to think it's a very good thing. . . . By 1990, some 15 million jobs will be done at home. There will be more home businesses."

ORWELL VISUALIZED children being commandeered into Young Spies organizations and turning in their parents for "thoughtcrimes." Toffler sees just the opposite.

"In the second wave, many well-educated parents turn over their precious children

to teachers less well-educated than themselves," he said, receiving an ovation from the older element of the audience. But in the third wave, he said, some education will be transferred to the home, "hopefully with the help and consultation of teachers."

Toffler sees the world during the last 15 or 20 years as "restructuring not just our economic but our political and social life. The 'basic industries' will never be basic again."

"We are witnessing the breakup of the world industrial system of which capitalism and communism are both a part."

Coloring contest winners named

The coloring contest published in the recent Observer & Eccentric Holiday Gift Guide sponsored by Animal 'n' Stuff had hundreds of entries, and the judges have announced the winners.

The preschool and kindergarten class winners are: Beth Srigley of Rochester, first prize; Donnell Vanker of Birmingham, second prize; Shane Boudreau of Warren, third prize. Honorable mentions go to: Andrea Berman of Oak Park, Philip Olsen of Rochester, Harry Limauro of Clawson, Julie Trumble of Royal Oak, Benji Manson of Southfield, Mike Hopp of Bloomfield Hills, Michelle MacIsaac of Rochester, Kim Brown of Warren, Shanna Gelb of Birmingham and Christina T. Gilduly of Birmingham.

The first-, second- and third-grade winners are: Chris Holstrom of Birmingham, first prize; Jennie Berk of Troy, second prize; Jenny Janiga of Farmington Hills, third prize. The honorable mentions go

to: Lia Rowland of Rochester, Adrianna Anton of Farmington Hills, Cameron Howell of Birmingham, Julie Jones of Farmington Hills, Kathy Kury of Rochester, Michele Iles of Troy, Emil Horner of Troy, Sonja Buckanes of Highland Park, Megan Profit of Southfield and Kenny Mills of West Bloomfield.

The fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade winners are: Jason Donovan of Rochester, first prize; Wendy Tamblin of Troy, second prize; Jessica Norton of Orchard Lake, third prize. The honorable mentions go to: Robert Green of Rochester; Mike Sanko of Troy, Leslie Lackner of Birmingham, Julie Greene of Birmingham, Jon Victor of Bloomfield Hills, Julie Bielek of Troy, Jennifer Jones of Farmington Hills, Kristy Kozlowski of Farmington Hills, Nyles Anton of Farmington Hills and Devin Luzzo of Birmingham.

Workshops scheduled

Workshops on financial aid for high school and college students will be held Jan. 14-31 at various locations throughout the tri-county area.

The Michigan Student Financial Association is sponsoring the sessions, which are designed to give parents and students information about financial aid programs and the application process. All meetings are scheduled for 7 p.m., with the exception of a session, set for 10 a.m. on Jan. 14 in the Adray Auditorium at Henry Ford Community College, 5101 Evergreen, Dearborn. A session also is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Jan. 24 at the college.

Here's a list of other locations and dates:

- Jan. 16, Oakland University, Student Center Building, Walton and Squirrel roads, Rochester.
- Jan. 17, Macomb Community College — Center, Student Union Building, 44575 Garfield, Mt. Clemens.

- Jan. 17, Oakland Community College, Highland Lakes Campus, Student Center, 7350 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake.

- Jan. 19, Wayne State University, Student Center, 5221 Gullen Mall, Detroit.

- Jan. 24, Oakland Community College, Royal Oak Campus, 739 South Washington, Royal Oak.

- Jan. 24, Macomb Community College — South, Student Union Building, 14500 12 Mile, Warren.

- Jan. 25, Mercy College, Science Center, 8200 West Outer Drive, Detroit.

- Jan. 26, Madonna College, Activity Center, 38600 Schoolcraft, Livonia.

- Jan. 31, Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus, J Building, 27055 Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills.

Vietnam show basis of class

Starting on Jan. 12, the 13-part series "Vietnam: A Television History" will be an integral part of a Wayne State University credit course, Vietnam: A History (HIS 395).

Registrants will watch the televised programs and attend eight meetings at the WSU Southfield Center, 25610 11 Mile.

Called by the New York Times "one of the most ambitious public affairs projects in the history of public television," the series explores the full chronology of the Vietnam conflict from 1945 to 1975. The program also assesses the experience and puts it in historical perspective.

It was produced by WGBH, Boston, and includes motion picture newsreels, documentaries and propaganda films from the archives, still photographs and interviews with participants in and witnesses to events to show a wide spectrum of viewpoints.

PROGRAMS WILL BE broadcast on Channel 56, WTVS, 6-7 p.m. on Sundays and 8-9 p.m. on Thursdays. It also will be featured on local cable television.

Class sessions with Richard Place, WSU assistant professor of history, will be from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. every other Saturday, starting Jan. 14.

The course is offered through the College of Life-long Learning and individuals need not be admitted to the university to register for credit.

People may register at any of the WSU extension centers after Jan. 3. Resident fees for the three-credit course are \$208 for freshmen and sophomores and \$238 for juniors and seniors.

For registration information or center locations and hours, phone 577-4662.

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