

"The world today is at a cross-roads. One road leads to greater hopelessness and despair, the other to utter destruction and extinction. God grant us the wisdom to choose the right road."  
(Woody Allen)

The optimist school, on the other hand, appears to worship at the high altar of technology. Breakthroughs in technology are seen as providing universal answers to the ills of developed and developing countries alike. Preliterate societies are somehow to be propelled into the information age through the massive application of new technologies. The question of how this is to be done, by what means, and above all what the side effects will be, is often left unanswered.

Without wishing to be critical of futures studies in general or unfair to some of the excellent work which has been done, these recurring twin themes have in part been responsible for the fact that policy makers have not been able to benefit from futures research to the extent they could have.

I think, however, that this is changing as techniques and approaches become refined. Here I would like to pay tribute to your association, and to your conference which has chosen a specific theme for study and which has oriented the discussions in such a way that they do promise to provide useful information about possible future courses of action which will be of use to policy makers.

**Disturbing trends**

I don't want to give the impression that I don't take seriously the global projections contained in the various major global studies which have been published over the last ten years. There has been a general consistency in their findings. From Jay Forrester's *Global Study on World Dynamics* and the *Limits to Growth* report for the Club of Rome in the early Seventies to the recent *Global 2000* report to the President of the U.S., the message has been clear. One can argue about techniques and methodology, but on questions related to population projections, pressure on the environment, food and energy supplies, these studies point to a number of very disturbing trends which must be taken seriously. Two points in particular can be drawn from these studies — that the cumulative impact of economic, population and environmental pressures will hit the developing world the hardest and secondly, that the growing linkages and interdependencies between North and South mean that no country in the North can hope to isolate itself from these growing disturbances. North and South are firmly intertwined; our destiny and that of the South is interlinked.

I also don't want to give the impression that I entirely disagree with the optimist school. In parts of the North, we may be entering a new era as significant in its own way as the earlier industrial revolution. I would agree with the optimists that the new technologies which characterize this era have the potential to solve many of our problems, both in the North and in the South.

But the new technologies will, on the other hand, have a significant impact on the structure of employment and production in the North which will have a spill-over effect on the South. The impact on the use of the new information technologies and the so-called "smart machines" of tomorrow still remain an unknown quantity. Some estimates indicate that the "factory of the future" may require 65 to 75 per cent less