

**JOINT PLANNING  
LAW CONFERENCE**

**Planning for Growth and Decline**

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**THE DYNAMICS OF GROWTH AND DECLINE**

**BY**

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#### THE ACCELERATING FORCES OF CHANGE

1. Change is the lifeblood of planning, it is the process by which the future invades the present and sweeps away the past. It demands forethought and a planned response if on the one hand we are to benefit from its forces, and on the other to safeguard social, economic and environmental values.
2. But as Alvin Toffler put it in his book "Future Shock", we are caught up in a "roaring current of change, a current so powerful today that it overturns institutions, shifts our values and shrivels our roots".
3. Underlying that roaring current is a dramatic acceleration in the rate of change. It calls into question whether it is overwhelming our ability now to have any real perception of what the future holds in store, and to plan for it.
4. My purpose in this Paper is to prompt us all to reflect on that question in our discussion of the theme of our conference - Planning for Growth and Decline.
5. The accelerating forces of change are set it seems against a limited pace of human response and adaptation, which produces a strong but probably futile resistance whereby we fight to conserve the past, and our familiar everyday surroundings.

#### THE PRESENT LIFETIME

6. As Toffler reminded us, if we divide the last 50,000 years of man's existence into about 800 lifetimes, of these 650 were spent in caves.
7. He went on to say that only during the last 70 lifetimes has it been possible to communicate effectively from one lifetime to another - as writing made it possible to do. Only during the last 6 lifetimes did men ever see a printed word. Only during the last 4 lifetimes has it been possible to measure time with any precision. Only in the last 2 lifetimes has anyone anywhere used an electric motor. And the overwhelming majority of all the material goods we use in daily life today have been developed within the present, the eight hundredth, lifetime.
8. Within a single lifetime, agriculture has lost its dominance in nation after nation.

9. Moreover, if agriculture is the first stage of economic development, and industrialism is the second, we can now see that a third stage has been reached. In about 1956, in the United States, blue collar workers were outnumbered by those in the so-called white collar occupations - in retail trade, administration, communications, research, education, and other service categories. Within one lifetime a society not only threw off the yoke of agriculture, but managed within a few brief decades to throw off the yoke of manual labour as well. The world's first service economy had been born.

#### THE PAST 25 LIFETIMES

10. To put the rate of change which this country has experienced into perspective we have only to look back over 25 lifetimes of our history.
11. The heavy plough, with its mouldboard and coulter, which could invert the soil and turn a true furrow, and the invention of the horse collar, which allowed the horse to replace the oxen team, were the changes that transformed Britain's agricultural economy and the social picture during the Middle Ages; but it took 1000 years, 16 lifetimes.
12. It was the period which embraced Domesday England, recorded in 2 million words written with a sharpened goose quill on sheepskin parchment.
13. The England William conquered 900 years ago has been described as a rich farming land, long settled, a prize among the countries of Europe. Miles of quiet ways wove through the open cornfields and irregular patches of woods, linking the villages, tiny hamlets and homesteads which nestled in the hollows of hills... Thick hedgerows of maple, dogwood and spindle formed the boundaries... 50 miles was a hard days ride. The Anglo-Saxon was a country dweller; only about 10% of the population are reckoned to have lived in the market towns of Domesday. There was little industry, some lead mining and stone quarrying. Iron was produced at Corby and charcoal smelted in west Gloucestershire. Trade with the continent flourished as it had done for years. Southampton and London were recognised as international trading ports.
14. The water mill was man's principal source of mechanical power. The Domesday Book recorded 5,624 in England south of the river Trent.
15. The population of England was then estimated at about one and a quarter million.

16. Indeed, all very much as some would wish to see it today!
17. It was little different more than 150 years later when the Black Death took a third and possibly half of the population by plague in less than 2 years, and contributed to sweeping away the society of the feudal manor; but that took nearly another 2 lifetimes.
18. "It is difficult for us today to imagine how slow was the pace of change before the era of inventions" says Trevelyan in his Illustrated English Social History, and such it was when William Caxton first set up his printing press at Westminster in 1477, establishing the means by which the spread of ideas and of knowledge would be immensely accelerated. But still the industrial revolution, based as it was on invention, was 200 years away.
19. Shakespeare's Elizabethan England was said to be a balance between forest, field and city, whilst England's mariners expanded into the oceans of the world.
20. It is probable that by about 1600, no more than 6 of our lifespans ago, the population of England and Wales had just passed 4 million, of which more than four-fifths lived in the countryside, and though a fair proportion were engaged in industry they were craftsmen not to be bound to the service of the machine for at least another 100 years.
21. English commerce and finance were expanding, and London would then have had about 200,000 inhabitants.
22. The greatest social change in Elizabethan England was the expansion of overseas enterprise. It was not yet the age of invention, but that of the adventurous spirit.
23. Slight and gradual were the changes in English economic and social life for yet another 2 lifetimes through the 17th century - agriculture, industry and commerce growing and expanding much as before.
24. True, there was again the plague, the Great Fire, Civil War, and the Restoration of King and Parliament. There was scientific inquiry, such as that of Issac Newton, and by the turn of the century into the 1700s, the number of people living in England and Wales had grown to just over five million, London was a tenth of this, and cities such as Bristol and Norwich boasted about 30,000 people apiece.

25. At the beginning of the 1700s the picture is of a healthy national life, in which town and country, agriculture and industry and commerce were harmonious parts of a single thriving economic system moving forward unconsciously, says Trevellyan, towards the industrial revolution still over fifty years away.
26. Then it was upon them! It was triggered to the accelerating forces of change, little more than three of our present lifespans ago, and taking no more than 100 years to sweep away the social, economic and environmental order established over the 1500 years before.
27. It was change stimulated by the accumulation and transfer of knowledge, scientific invention and practical application; the combination of coal and iron; the machine for mass production; and of course, the steam engine.
28. It brought with it urbanisation. As William Cowper put it "God made the fields and man made the cities". And with it came mobility and economic growth, and it gave birth to the revolution of our own time, the advance of unbridled technology, that "growling engine of change", as Toffler calls it.
29. The rush of technology has brought with it personal mobility, instant communications, and the micro chip, which combined together in little more than the last three decades have without doubt overwhelmed our people, our planners and our policy makers.
30. How has this happened? Let us put it into perspective, and then think on its consequences.

#### FULL CIRCLE

31. The earliest known use of the wheel, a solid device, was over 5000 years ago, more or less at the same time as the day was divided into 24 equal periods. It took a thousand years to make a spoked wheel.
32. It was only 185 years ago in 1801, when the population of the country was 11 million, and just over a million people lived in London, that the steam engine was first combined with the wheel to make a road carriage. It took little more than 20 years to introduce the railway, and little over 80 years to build a vast railway network throughout the country, much as we see it today.

33. It took about the same time to give London its underground system, likewise the electric tram, which replaced the horse drawn omnibus in the first decade of this century - all little more than a single lifespan ago, by which time the population of the country had swelled to 41 million, the majority of whom were now living in the cities and towns, six and a half million in London.
34. By contrast, it took almost as long as it did to build the railways for the first real steps towards parliamentary and local government reform, made in the 1830s, to be translated into urban and rural self government in England, by the Local Government Act of 1888.
35. This established the county councils, urban and rural districts, and the London County Council, leaving the City of London the anachronism it is today, but providing the basis for the administration of health, housing and planning legislation and policy, which remained unmoved for nearly a further 80 years, despite a howling wind of change.
36. It was not before 1928 that women were given voting equality with men. At that time they represented little more than 3% of the country's workforce. Today, one lifespan later, nearly two thirds of all women between the ages of 16 and 60 work, and they make up 30% of the country's workforce.
37. It was at the beginning of those 80 years of unchanged local government administration that the first practical combination of the wheel and the petrol engine took place to produce the motor car, the bus and the lorry.
38. The Rolls Royce partnership began in 1907. In 1910 Herbert Austin's Longbridge plant was employing 1000 people.
39. By 1914 there were about 400,000 road vehicles in Britain. 35 years later in 1939 this had risen to just under 2 million. After the war there were still about 2 million, but by 1955 this had risen to 3.6 million, 5.6 million by 1960, and 9.1 million by 1965.
40. 1965 saw the reorganisation of London's local government, the creation of the GLC and the London Boroughs - a long overdue recognition of the need for a metropolitan dimension in planning and administration in the face of dramatic economic, social and environmental change.

41. It took another ten painful years for local government in the remainder of England and Wales to be reorganised, establishing the metropolitan counties and the larger districts of today's administration; the aim was to enable the "huge urban masses to be planned as a whole" and whereas it quartered the number of administrative authorities, the number of planning authorities was trebled.
42. By this time the number of vehicles on the roads was fast approaching 15 million, and a lifetime had passed.
43. Glancing back again, we see the publication in 1902 of Ebenezer Howard's 'Garden Cities of Tomorrow'.
44. Letchworth Garden City was started in 1903, and by 1914 it housed 9000 people.
45. The Town Planning Institute was formed in 1914, the same year as the first department of town planning was established at Liverpool University.
46. Welwyn Garden City was designed and started by Howard in 1920.
47. Lewis Mumford's 'Culture of Cities' was published in 1938.
48. The following war years fostered a mood and a will to grasp and use the forces of change.
49. The New Towns Act in 1946 heralded the key planning notions of overspill, rehousing, and the establishment of the green belt, all coupled with post war reconstruction. London's population was then 8.3 million. By 1956, Basildon, Bracknell, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage, Harlow and Crawley were expanding rapidly.
50. At that time, little more than 30 years ago, it took a whole day to drive from London to Edinburgh. To get to South Wales it was necessary to go through Gloucester.
51. In 1955 it was announced that the country's first motorway was to be built, and in 1959 a modest stretch of the M1 was opened.
52. In 1963 the Buchanan Report made far-seeing and fundamental proposals for dealing with the problem of traffic in towns.
53. In 1970 a car was ritually buried, by American conservationists as a wasteful squandering of the earth's resources and of harmful pollution and death through accidents.

54. There are now over 20 million vehicles on the country's roads; 1,750 miles of motorway and 8,000 miles of trunk road structure up the country; there is a road bridge over the river Severn, opened twice by the Queen by ceremonies at each end so as not to offend the Welsh or English sensibilities; and another is to be built; the 120 mile M25 encircling London is all but complete, but is already carrying traffic far in excess of its designed capacity, requiring substantial widening coupled with another at Darford tunnel if daily queues of several miles long are to be stopped; and that takes no account of the effects of the Channel tunnel should it ever really be built. The Department of Transport is 'studying' London's dreadful south and north circular roads, some say with the ambition of providing the metropolis with a real urban motorway, linked no doubt to the proposed east London river crossing, now caught up in the public inquiry system.
55. Meanwhile, British Rail strive to 'get there', but its advanced passenger train has been assigned to a scrap-yard in Rotherham; and on the day we were reminded of Doncaster's glorious past in railway history by the start of the restoration of the worlds most famous steam engine, the record breaking Mullard, before it goes on permanent exhibition at the National railway museum at York, British Rail announced further wide ranging job cuts in its few remaining engineering works.
56. London's population has fallen to 6.6 million. The new and expanded towns movement has been halted; the new towns are being sold off, yet there remains strong evidence that people, commerce and industry want to exercise the choice conferred on them by mobility, and remove themselves from the cities.
57. High rise blocks of flats, built in the much vaunted city reconstruction period of the 50's and 60's are being blown up, the children of this generation being given the opportunity to press the button to set off the explosive charges resulting in no more than clouds of dust and piles of rubble.
58. London's green belt is under pressure from the housebuilders trying to secure land to build private country towns to satisfy a growing number of aspiring house owners. They call it a planned response to a regional crisis, the declared virtues of which echo the garden city concept of not so long ago.
59. At the same time we have a critical inner city problem, the gross deprivation spreading, it is observed, to the outer city, and having characteristics not too disimilar to those which prompted the

reformers of a 100 years ago to urge action on those responsible for the deprivations of the Victorian cities. Common sense and politics demand that much of the new housing we require should be built in the vast derelict areas of our cities, a notion strongly supported by those already living in and beyond the green belts!

60. Illogically, in the face of these widespread pressures, central government has seen fit to sweep away the metropolitan dimension of local government under the guise of 'Streamlining the Cities' - the wheel indeed seems to have turned full circle in just one lifespan.

#### THE ACCELERATING THRUST

61. As we reflect on these examples of our political, administrative and in part at least far sighted and vigorous response to the compression of the timespan of social, economic and environmental change, let us return to Toffler's 800th lifetime, which he remarks is different from all others because of the astonishing expansion of the scale and scope of change, 'the accelerating thrust' as he calls it.
62. He saw it, as we have, represented by rapid urbanisation, vast increases in energy consumption, and accelerated economic growth.
63. Predicted average annual rates of increase in the gross national product of the developed nations, he pointed out, imply a doubling of the total output of goods and services about every 15 years - and the doubling time is shrinking. Within a 70 year lifetime, perhaps 5 such doublings will take place - meaning, since the increases are compounded, that by the time an individual reaches old age the society around him will be producing thirty two times as much as when he was born.
64. Whether that will prove true or not remains to be seen, but we have only to think on the rate at which over the last 30 years we have given houses bathrooms and central heating, and at which households are acquiring washing machines, televisions, telephones, video recorders, home computers and so on, to recognise the force of the argument.
65. Let us take another glance back and see how the milestones of our planning system have related to the timescale of technology.

#### FLIGHTS OF FANCY

66. The first true aeroplane is said to have been built in 1804 - a model glider 5ft long. It took 80 years for man to achieve controlled flight - 750ft, and that was nearly 15 years after the great Public Health Act of 1875 gave first recognition to the need to control intolerable conditions arising from unrestrained urban development.
67. By 1903 the Wright brothers had made the first powered and controlled flight, lasting nearly a minute. By 1909 Bleriot had flown the Channel.
68. In that year of 1909, Parliament first recognised town planning with the passing of the Housing, Town Planning ect.. Act, designed to secure "the home healthy, the house beautiful, the town pleasant, the city dignified and the suburb salubrious", words set down no more than a lifespan ago.
69. By 1919 the Atlantic had been conquered, the non stop flight of Alcock and Brown taking 16 hours 12 minutes. As the Times put it, it was a terrible journey in fog and ice, the engine is reported to have run well, although one exhaust pipe fell off. On landing, the machine sank up to its axle in soft ground and ended up on its nose!
70. In that year also the Housing and Town Planning Act broadened the base of town planning making it compulsory for schemes to be prepared for the major urban areas of the country, and introducing powers to control development meanwhile.
71. 1925 saw the separation of housing and planning legislation in this country, and in 1932 the first Town and Country Planning Act set down a completely new code.
72. In 1935 came the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act, in the face of 60,000 acres each year being taken from agricultural use for urban and road development.
73. The Green Belt Act of 1938, a pioneering scheme promoted by the LCC, secured 25,000 acres of green belt from development around London.
74. Those twenty years saw the aircraft pass through its biplane stage to the efficient and versatile monoplane, and innovation in aero engine design gave power, speed and reliability.

75. By 1939 the first turbo-jet aircraft was flown.
76. The war years saw the legendary Spitfire, Hurricane, Wellington and Flying Fortress. They also saw a massive commitment to the principles of planned reconstruction and social and economic development - the Barlow Report on the distribution of population; the Scott Report on rural land uses; and the Uthwatt Report on compensation and betterment. And those years brought forward the great advance to the Welfare State in education, health and housing.
77. Combined with the creation of a Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1943, this set the scene for the all-embracing Town and Country Planning Act 1947, with its notion of comprehensive development plans, and development control; it was the year also in which the first piloted aircraft exceeded the speed of sound, and it was no more than forty years ago.
78. In 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act began to strike the balance between town and country.
79. By 1961, man had made his first flight in space.
80. Four years later the Planning Advisory Group made its fundamental reassessment of the planning system, which led to the Town and Country Planning Act of 1968, and established the notion of structure and local plans. By this time also the attitude towards change in city, town and in the countryside had begun its irresistible shift towards resistance and conservation.
81. By 1969 men were on the moon.
82. The following year town and country planning legislation was consolidated by the 1971 Act; it remains the basis of the planning system today, despite being buffeted by fifteen years ground-swell of change.
83. In 1976 Concorde flew the Atlantic in under 3 hours, and jumbo jets carrying 500 passengers were flying around the world.
84. By 1979, only 60 years after the start of the first scheduled passenger services, 750 million air tickets a year were being sold.
85. The pressures of this enormous growth in air travel required decisions, taking nearly twenty years, on new terminals at Heathrow and Gatwick, and later the decision to make Stansted London's third airport, designed together to accommodate by mid 1995 about 75 million passengers.
86. In 1981 the space shuttle went into service.

#### CONFLICTING DIRECTIONS

87. This accelerating rate of change, exemplified by man's affair with flight, has on the one hand been matched by a growing frustration with the inflexibility of the country's relatively cumbersome planning system, and a conviction on the other that it has failed adequately to control the excesses of change.
88. In 1979 nearly 15 years of special control over office and industrial development was abandoned.
89. In 1980 the Local Government, Planning and Land Act brought forward the Urban Development Corporation to fight degeneration in the urban areas. It is quicker, they say, by quango! Introduced also was the concept of relaxed planning control in enterprise zones.
90. These were the fore-runners of a concentrated policy to relax planning controls and achieve administrative reform as part of wider theme of de-regulation, culminating in the governments White Papers, Lifting the Burden in 1985, and Building Businesses ... Not Barriers earlier this year, coupled with proposals for relaxing the Use Classes Order to allow the flexibility of use required by the new wave industries and to allow people to work at home; simplified planning zones; and the growing use by government of special parliamentary procedures to circumvent the system.
91. These are signs, it has been said, of a concerted effort to dismantle the planning system, established in our single lifespan, in response to the forces of change. The one plank of planning policy which survives, despite all, is the green belt - celebrating its own lifespan and seemingly impassive to change.
92. Meanwhile the apparently irresistible forces of change run deep into our economic and social fabric, and into our environment.
93. Whilst the 8 sq miles of London's docklands is being regenerated by the extraordinary vigour of the London Docklands Development Corporation and with Canary Wharf now set to provide 8.8 million sq ft of sky scraper office development to compete with the City, the Merseyside Development Corporation is moving forward with, perhaps somewhat less panache, to promote the reuse of 865 acres of derelict land, along the Mersey water front.
94. The steel works of Consett, built as part of the post war economic reconstruction programme, have been closed and swept away.

95. It has been announced that the last ships are being built on Tyneside and Teeside lifting unemployment in Middlesborough to a figure of 25%, and in some of its communities as high as 50%. This final blow to the region's economic health has come on top of drastic manpower reduction in the chemicals and steel industries over the past ten years.
96. Once a prosperous industrial centre with an active workforce, Middlesborough has recently been placed near the bottom in a league table which measures the relative economic standing of British towns, at the top of which are Winchester, Horsham, Bracknell, Milton Keynes and Maidenhead, all in the south.
97. A 1,000 acres of Corby's former steel works is proposed to be a Wonder-World theme park.
98. 110 acres of a former steel works in Sandwell in the West Midlands is proposed to be redeveloped with a five and a half million square foot leisure, entertainment and shopping complex.
99. The last lump of coal has been raised to the surface in the Rhondda Valley bringing 200 years of tradition and 54 pits to an end. However, the Rhondda, once the power house of the world is not forgotten as requests for lumps of coal come from over all the world; and there is uncertain talk of tourism and high technology and white collar employment to replace that which has gone.
100. The ancient Cornish tin mining industry now has no future.
101. Whereas employment in 1957 was no more than 250,000, and that was argued by many economists as a figure which was unhealthily low, it now stands at over 3 million, and most commentators tell us that this is a structural unemployment which is unlikely to fall, whatever measures are taken.
102. Yet industry and commerce across a wide belt of south-east England are suffering from a growing shortage of skilled workers, according to the CBI, which is placing constraints on the expansion of production. Skill shortages emphasise the need to improve training and retraining and for measures to enhance the mobility of labour.
103. And all this in just over 30 years. "It was an extraordinary place", says a recent newspaper report on an exhibition of the 1950s, "small black and white television sets flickered uncertainly in a few homes. There were no television dinners, there were no deep freezers. A newspaper column suggested we buy a car, and change our lifestyle -

British naturally. Who had heard of Nissen or Honda? Containers were cardboard, because there were no plastic bags or plastic money. Computers, digital watches, video recorders, microwave cookers, Concorde and trips to outer space were the stuff of sci-fi magazines - that was England 30 years ago."

104. Now Nissen have a factory in Tyne and Wear.
105. But 1986 is not all bad for the 87% in work.
106. Real disposable incomes, the true measure of living standards have nearly doubled since 1957. The volume of consumer spending has jumped by 12% in the last 5 years. Some 23 million credit cards are in use. As a result, 94,000 homes have fridges, against just 5% in 1950, 66% are kept warm in winter through central heating, against only 5% in 1950. In 1957 25% of households lacked baths, let alone a hot water tap. Now 88% of all households have baths and the government does not bother to record the number of homes without hot water.
107. Leisure time has also increased dramatically. In the mid 19th century, workers spent 75% of the waking year at work. Now it is estimated that this is only 30% and falling.
108. The dream of home ownership has become a reality for a majority of households. Since 1951 the number of owner-occupiers has more than trebled from 4 million to 14 million.
109. Nearly 2 million people are now working at home supported by the dramatic boom in micro computing.
110. The City of London, fast approaching the Big Bang is of such importance to the national economy that it now virtually matches that of north sea oil.
111. Shopping has taken on a whole new perspective. In 1963 there were only 2 superstores in Britain; now the figure is over 400. Marks and Spencer, over a hundred years after starting as a penny bazaar in Leeds, has declared its intention to go out of town, fuelling the new wave of proposed large regional centres.
112. Yet, our major cities are in serious decline with many having standards among the worst in Europe with much of the housing stock falling into decay and considerable areas of idle and derelict land. The physical fabric is old, and accelerating obsolescence is taking its toll. It is increasingly costly to maintain, and investment in its

repair or renewal is falling far short of what is needed. Council house maintenance is well behind; as is private sector housing maintenance; over one million dwellings in the country are unfit; and well over half a million in a state of serious disrepair.

113. Less than half the required amount is being spent on the maintenance and repair of the motorways and trunk roads. Sewers, land drainage, flood protection and sea defences are all in need of reinvestment. It is an ageing and neglected infrastructure.
114. And it is being observed that there is an increasingly rapid rate of depreciation in commercial buildings which is undermining property's traditional attraction as a long term investment. This is evident in the rundown spec built office blocks of the 1960s and the out-of-date shopping centres that need complete refurbishment after only 20 years of life; our built environment is fast becoming a wasting asset.
115. How is it possible to plan in such circumstances? Before giving up in despair let us glance back one more time at the remaining force of change which is at work - the accumulation of knowledge and communication.
116. Technology, says Toffler, feeds on itself. First the creative idea, second practical application, third diffusion through society. The cycle becomes shorter and shorter.
117. If technology is the great engine, he says, knowledge and communication is the fuel. And it is the unprecedented ability of the computer to store, analyse and disseminate knowledge in vast quantities and at enormous speed which has enriched that fuel over no more than the last 20 years.

#### INSTANT COMMUNICATION

118. Communications, which started with hill-top bonfires 3000 years ago, had reached no further than the semaphore relay by 1790. The electric telegraph saw us through the early 1800s, and then came the telephone, enhanced first by automatic exchanges early in the 1900s, combined with radio to give international dimension in the 1920s, submarine cables in the 1950s, satellites in the 1960s, computer links in the 1970s, and now optical fibre cables capable of carrying 100,000 calls at once, giving widespread use of telex, facsimile and videotext.
119. In 1894 the first radio signals were sent across a room by Marconi. 6 years later he had achieved the first transatlantic radio signal, confounding those who said that the curvature of the earth would

restrict wireless telegraphy to about 200 miles. Only 150 years before there was still doubt that the earth was not indeed flat.

120. The BBC put out its first programme in the early 1920s, listened to by crystal sets. By 1930 there were over 2 million receiving sets in Britain. 1954 saw the first all-transistor radio, and in less than 20 years everyone had one.
121. The Cathode ray tube was invented in 1897. By 1926 the world's first demonstration of television was given by Baird in his Soho laboratory. The BBC started the first live television service from Alexandra Palace in 1936.
122. Today over 90% of households in Britain have a television.
123. Sputnik 1, the world's first satellite, was launched in 1957. The following year the Americans had begun experiments with communications satellites, and that year a pre-recorded message was transmitted down to the American people giving Christmas greetings from President Eisenhower.
124. Now, no more than 30 years later, the world has a global communications network based on satellites, which combined with television has become a force able to make the whole world run for charity.
125. The first electronic computer was developed in 1945; it contained 18,000 valves.
126. The silicon chip microprocessor was patented in 1971. What has happened since with the computer needs no description save to say that as they become smaller they become more powerful; as they become more powerful they become cheaper; as they have become cheaper they become available throughout commerce and industry, and for home use. The robot factory already exists and the intelligent computer is now a clear possibility. The word processor has taken over from the typewriter, and soon perhaps it will be voice activated. Technology is coming of age.

#### RETROSPECTIVE RESPONSE

127. By comparison, our ability to assemble, analyse and utilise knowledge, and define and communicate our policies and plans for the future has been, and remains pedestrian.

128. By the end of the first 30 years of the legislation for town and country planning, only 3% of Britain was covered by operative planning schemes.
129. The Greater London Plan of 1944 was the first real comprehensive planning policy statement.
130. Great expectations were placed on the development plan provisions of the 1947 Act, but in many cases five to ten years passed as the planning authorities struggled to cope with the sheer task of survey, analysis and plan, public inquiry and ministerial approval.
131. Through the 1960s and 1970s the experience was very largely the same, and with structure and local plans further weighed down by the notion of public participation and consensus, and confused by the continuing standing of many old style development plans conceived in the 1950s, the period spawned as a result a host of adhoc informal and uncoordinated plans and policy statements.
132. The situation changed little in the first part of the 1980s.
133. Structure plans are frequently exhausted before they are reviewed and often out of date before they are approved; the process of review is now often caught up in a growing political involvement; and the process of examination in public and the Secretary of State's consideration and approval still takes an inordinate time when compared with the accelerating forces of change which have such impact on the very policies which we are struggling to settle and put to work.
134. Public inquiries into major projects affecting our future, such as the third London airport and Sizewell, now extend over years rather than months, and produce volumes of deliberation, completely beyond the ability of those who have to make the decisions to assimilate, all seemingly designed to satisfy democracy, but in reality simply undermining its ability to make choices and decisions.

#### PLANNING FOR THE NEXT LIFESPAN

135. Is this any basis to deal with the 801st lifespan - Toffler's "throwaway society", "transience", and "impermeance", rapid obsolescence in social, economic and environmental terms, and of "overchoice"?
136. Toffler makes the point that: "Apart from the increased power and scope of technology, the options multiply as well. Advance technology helps create overchoice with respect to available goods, cultural

products, services, and lifestyles... Today we need far more sophisticated criteria for choosing among technologies. We need such quality criteria not only to stave off avoidable disasters, but to help us discover tomorrows opportunities."

137. Someone once said "the notion of far seeking men able to plan for ages unborn is fancy generated by pride and unsupported by fact!" Yet we ignore and indeed resist the dynamics of change at our peril. We must be prepared to speculate and attempt to chart a course even though we have enough evident problems where we stand.
138. There is certainly no shortage of people prepared to predict.
139. It is expected, they say, that Britain will still be one of the 20 most prosperous countries in the world in the year 2000, and although employment could be as high as 4 million they will not be hungry, and their children will not go barefoot. The scourge will be obesity and heart disease. Homes will have multiple telephones, video screens and kitchens equipped like a cross between a fast-food dispensary and a home economics laboratory. Shopping will take a more important part in our lives because we will have more money and more time. Shops will stay open longer throughout the week and some will stay open for 24 hours a day.
140. The Institute of Manpower Studies anticipates for the year 2000 a 35 hour week, a 35 working week year, and a 35 year working life.
141. This compares starkly with the present average working week of Britain's top executives of 53 hours; nearly half of them are told by their family and friends that they are working too hard. Just over a quarter have been told to ease up by their doctors, but few of them follow this advice. Stress is seen as the disease of the future.
142. The demise of money which can be seen and handled is predicted, having been replaced entirely by the plastic card.
143. "Networking" - based on a experiment undertaken by Rank Zerox is leading to a conclusion that "work will be increasingly decentralised away from the city centre, with the large office an increasing irrelevance".
144. The National Economic Development Office follows the same line in looking to the effects of technology and concluding that travelling to work could be a thing of the past for a quarter of the British workforce by the year 2010. Between 10 and 15% of the workforce are expected to be working from home-based telecommunications-integrated offices in just 10 years time.

145. The CBI is also into prediction, having drawn together 19 young men and 2 young women selected to "draw the chart which British industry will use to navigate into the next century". They have instructions to come up with a vision of what they want to see happening in industry in the year 2010. They have not yet done so!
146. The Office of Population Censuses predicts continuing population increase to the year 2001, by about 3%, nearly another million people, compounded significantly by rises in household formation, and indicating an increasing divide between south and north, with a broad band across southern and central England, from Cornwall to the Wash, being expected to have a rise in population of more than 10%.
147. Microgravity research is expected to revolutionise materials for making super-computers, exceptionally strong but light-weight structures for cars and aircraft, and biological molecules for the next generation of drugs and vaccines - so say those involved in the European Space Agency.
148. Some say man could land on Mars in 2003.
149. The Peacock Committee on the future of broadcasting has recently given its views on the 21st century electronic house - no doubt mock-Tudor but connected to a two way flow of information and entertainment.
150. All that has to be set against the Gallop Survey of Britain which finds, as the Times put it, fun-loving Britons mourning the passing of a golden age. The British apparently think of themselves as friendly, polite, hard-working, fun-loving folk who inhabit a country in irreversible decline, despite the fact that people today are much better off in real terms than they were 20 years ago.
151. But little wonder they cannot appreciate the real course of change when they seem to be evenly divided on the vexed question of who should go first through the door when one person is trying to go out at the same time as someone is trying to come in; and when 6% put the fork to the right of the plate when setting the table for dinner, and 9% say they have never thought about it, and 2% were undecided!
152. To face this wide-ranging future we are of course armed with the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 coupled with the Local Government, Planning and Land Act of 1980 and the Local Government Act of 1985; and we have a plethora of plans prepared and conceived reflecting the last 10 years, but not the next ten; we have promise of government

strategic policy guidance for a confused and politically changed local government administration; and we have the prospect of UDP's and SPZ's and a relaxation of the UCO. And we have our green belts, and listed telephone boxes.

153. We have a government less than interested it seems in the notions of town and country planning, yet with a declared commitment to economic and urban regeneration, ideally by market forces. On the other hand we have many who see the planning system as the means to twist and resist the social and economic future and its physical consequences.
154. All that leaves aside issues such as the future of nuclear power and alternative energy, and our ability to handle hazardous technology; and education for a very different future, retraining for work; health leisure and long retirement; the European outlook mothballing farmland, and the effects of the Channel tunnel; the battle for a natural Britain and against acid rain; and the implications of international and worldwide economies over which individual nations have seemingly little control.
155. I leave you to dwell on whether in such circumstances we have a sound basis for looking to the future and planning its outcome. Indeed we have to pose the questions whether it is feasible to plan at all in the face of accelerating and seemingly uncontrollable social and economic change; whether we have the intellectual ability, the resources and the will; and if so whether it can really be done with a system derived in an era no more than half a lifespan ago, when, however, much of what we experience in our lives today was inconceivable, and when much of what we can expect to experience in the lifespan to come is equally so; or whether we urgently need to make a quantum leap in attitude and change fundamentally the legislative and administrative framework within which we plan for growth and decline.