

'Future Shock' is provocative

by Frank Parrish
Feature Editor

Alvin Toffler's "Future Shock" may put "future-consciousness" into the dictionary after it has run its course in conversations. If it doesn't it will at least have made the future more tense and cause considerable rethinking among intellectuals.

Toffler, a former associate editor of "Fortune" and currently a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation has written a book for the times.

"Future shock," a clinician's term coined by Toffler, is the "disease of change." Toffler describes it as the physical, psychic damage caused by the accelerating rate of change. Man suffers from excessive change within a frightfully short time. He then lapses into "the dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future." Toffler thinks "it may well be the most important disease of tomorrow" unless corrective measures are taken.

"Future Shock's" originator has a prescription to arrest or prevent this malaise. It necessitates some interesting steps. One is aimed squarely at the educational system. Toffler's forward-looking schools will seek to inculcate "future-consciousness." Students will be assigned readings in science-fiction. They will have to write "future-autobiographies."

Government will similarly act to protect "innumerable millions from 'future-shock.'" A federal agency will study technological advances before they are allowed to filter into an unsuspecting public. The people will gather for "social future assemblies" in which they will discuss the direction society is taking. Toffler cleverly dubs these meetings "anticipatory democracy."

Toffler's gamut of remedies is planned because of the the prospectus he ferrets out from the world today. He notes the passing of traditions during the past generation. Family and community life, the organization of work, education, communications and leisure have changed severely, according to Toffler. He says that future shock is "increasingly mirrored in our culture, our philosophy, our attitude toward reality." Examples Toffler cites are the drugs and connected euphoria of youth and their elders' backward-looking politics.

Yet, Toffler is unclear on whether or not the United States does or does not have "future shock." At one point, he says the U.S. faces "future shock." He also asserts that the United States has the disease "whether it knows it or not."

In fact, some of Toffler's supportive evidence for the spiraling rate of change

seems spurious on the face of it. Heavyweight champions averaged five-year reigns from 1882-1932. From 1951-1967, the average reign diminished to 2.3 years. Or did you know that one paperback appears simultaneously "on more than 100,000 newsstands" and is gone 30 days later? A young man rom San Francisco and woman from Honolulu "see each other every weekend, taking turns at crossing 2,000 miles of Pacific Ocean."

Toffler delights in presenting these little snippets. "Future Shock" is itself part of the "knowledge explosion." Along with this "explosion," automation will bring about the "Age of Transience." The "new nomads" will constantly change locations and form series of friendships. In the same way, "serial marriages" will probably take place, according to Toffler.

Marriages will be divided sequentially into adolescence, childbearing and retirement. The change in the pattern of

marriage will occur "as conventional marriage proves itself less and less capable of delivering on its promise of lifelong love." When did marriage ever deliver on such an inflated promise? Those who forecast the probable future must occasionally be excused for overestimating aspects of contemporary life. Toffler, anyway, has other startling predictions on the future of human relations.

A new sort of prostitute will develop. She will be a member of the "psych-corps" which will satisfy all psychic and physical desires. He opines on page 167 that "super-industrialism...will radiate new opportunities for personal growth, adventure, and delight."

"Super-industrialism" will be the age for "high technology" nations. Then, according to Toffler's forecast, man will control the weather. He will farm the ocean floor. Babies will be produced in laboratory jars. Heredity will be

manipulated. The advent of quasi-humans which Toffler calls "Cyborgs" will be upon us. They will be Gordian knots of wire and metal connected to human brains. Industry will focus on specialized markets in Toffler's opinion.

In the meanwhile, what are we to do with the present since we still have it on our hands? Toffler recommends we "introspect periodically to examine our own bodily and psychological reactions." Why, in heaven's name? He tells us elsewhere that the real problem lies outside ourselves.

Yes, "Future Shock" contains contradictions. More importantly, Toffler seems to exhibit blind faith in the good life through technology. He doesn't worry about the possibility that technology, if out of control, may rule every phase of our lives. Nor does he give more than passing attention to the future of political power. Nevertheless, "Future Shock" is finally a provocative "tour de force" of the future.

Campus activities calendar

Information: Students, please park in the Bell Tower Parking Lot at night rather than risk getting a ticket by parking illegally around the Union. Thank you.

Hamagshimim meet tonight a 8 in the Student Union. All Jewish students are invited to sample this new campus group.

All aliens must file their current addresses with the Immigration authorities before January 31. Cards should be obtained at either Post Office, filled in and returned to the Post Office.

Students participating in the YM-YWCA United Nations Seminar in New York will meet briefly tonight upstairs in the Y at 8:00 p.m.

The Border Mountain Boys, Friday from noon to 2 p.m. in the Great Hall. No admission charge. 1970 Champions of the Fiddlers' Convention in Union Grove, N.C.

Attention Small Men: The UNC Boat Club needs small men 5'4" or under to train as light-weight coxswains. For more information call: Jack Carpenter: 942-2881.

Lost: Prescription sunglasses. Brown frames, gray lens with purple cast.

Urgently needed—I can't drive without them. Please bring by Tar Heel office or call Harry 933-4004, 933-1011.

Found: Gold Omega watch with black cord band. Two inscriptions. One, 6-23-62. The other will make it your watch at the Union Desk. (Found before Christmas).

During the first week of exam period, the Cinematheque will present an evening of comedy shorts. They will be at 8 p.m. from Monday to Thursday in Murphy 111. The shorts will include "Tit for Tat," with Laurel and Hardy; "The Flowerwalker" and "Shoulder Arms," starring Charlie Chaplin; and "The Pharmacist," "The Golf Specialist," and "Hurry, Hurry," starring W.C. Fields. "Shoulder Arms" is considered by many critics the best comedy ever, and it is rarely seen. This is a private print.

The normal Cinematheque price of \$1 has been lowered to 50 cents for this attraction only.

The second sing-thru for the Durham Savoyards' May production of "Patience," by Gilbert and Sullivan, will be held Sunday, Jan. 17 at Allied Arts Building, 810 Proctor St., Durham, from 2 to 5 p.m.

The sing-thrus are informal, and scores will be available.

Tryouts for chorus and principal parts are set for Feb. 7.

The Film Society will present the 1930 film "Morocco" tonight at 8 in Carroll Hall.

The movie was directed by Josef von Sternberg and stars Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper and Adolphe Menjou. Admission cost is \$1.

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Don Perkins as John Adams and R. William Jennings as Thomas Jefferson are undoubtedly discussing how they can instigate the Declaration of Independence in a scene from 1776 (here Feb. 3).

Well, exams are with us again: Once again the complete faith professors have in their students' diligence will be self-evident. You're probably wondering why we go into rooms and subject ourselves to such less-than-exquisite torture. Are students masochists? Probably not. But if you make the grades, you play the game.

As any professor will tell you, "Harrumph...grades aren't really that important. But we have to have some way to measure progress." Endurance and the ability to gulp coffee, belt booze—if you're an underachiever—and smoke endless cigarettes, if you believe the

Tobacco Institute instead of the Surgeon General, are also measured.

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that exams are mutual torture, the oldest form of self-destruction known to education. Professors have to contend with illegible nonsense strewn through three blue books. Then, according to legend, they obliterate all memory of brown nosing and tearful confessions that, "I need this course to graduate."

Theirs is a thankless task. If the student wipes out in the course, he was "given" a grade. If he sparkles, he obviously "made" it. Students have ultimate consolation though. Pedagogy once meant "slave."

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