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## THERE'S ANOTHER KIND OF INFLATION — AND THE COSTS ARE HIGH

The high cost of living has us all concerned—and the increasing rate of inflation is worrying even the government. "It spells disaster," says the Prime Minister. Important as the economic inflation may be, I am even more worried about another cost of living—of inflation—the psycho-social price we pay for living in this period of change. In the early fifties it was predicted that one in twenty of us would at some time in our lives be hospitalized for a mental illness; by last fall the prediction had risen sharply to one in eight. That rate of increase I am not prepared to accept; that cost of living also spells disaster. But how can we bring this problem into focus so that all may understand the serious implications?

Buckminster Fuller (1963) has said that the important information in a modern society is usually not visible and must be transformed into meaningful patterns: "we can see the telephone wires, but not the conversations taking place therein (p. 275)." Fuller is reminding us that to solve our problems we must find the data that will bring the problem to the surface—into focus. It is when the data becomes visible that we really understand what is happening to us.

This August I watched in fascination a televised press conference in which the Prime Minister showed us the soaring lines which represented the rate of economic inflation (and our resulting tax load). Using hard data, translated into graphs and linear projections, he made visible the situation and told us how the government's powers and resources would be used to modify the predicted disaster. Can we get the hard data for the psycho-social inflation? Can we translate it into graphs and linear projections to bring this problem into focus?

The prediction of mental illness was really noticed when the Dominion Bureau of Statistics released it last fall—it was certainly not "visible." Yet, it was a prediction of vital importance for we are concerned about both the quality of life in psycho-social areas and our national economic development. Mental illness hampers economic development; mental health builds individual potentiality. Since reality is the prime determinant of political action, then we must supply the reality of visible data.

Although we have no exact figures—no hard data—on the extent of our psycho-social discomfort—the extent of our anxiety, anger, despair—the Bureau of Statistics does provide data that is related to the problem. While we cannot tabulate the disabling degree of anxiety we can count the numbers of admissions to psychiatric hospitals or the number of suicides, and estimate through statistics the direction and rate of change. Although we cannot identify the degree of marriage breakdown we can count the number of marriage dissolutions. Although we cannot measure the frustration and anger that erupt in rioting and mob behavior we can check the number of people indicted each year for crime or juvenile delinquency. By combining these in a graph and by projecting the rate of change over the next

five years we can predict the situation we will likely face in 1974—unless action is taken. We may, at least in part, make visible the degree of inflation in the psycho-social cost of living.

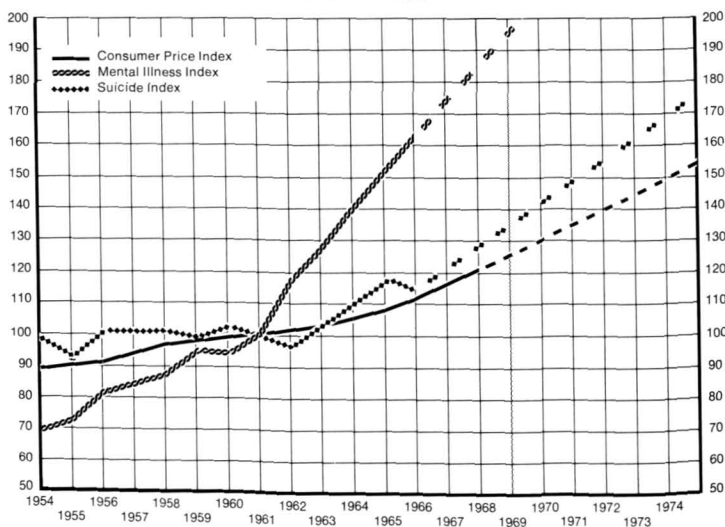
**PSYCHO-SOCIAL PRICE INDEX**

In order to obtain an estimate of the rate of change in psycho-social areas, six different sets of statistics have been used: admission to psychiatric hospitals, suicides, alcoholism, marriage dissolution, crime, and juvenile delinquency. While no single one is a direct measure of psycho-social health, yet all appear to be related to the area; when grouped together they give us an indication of this cost of living.

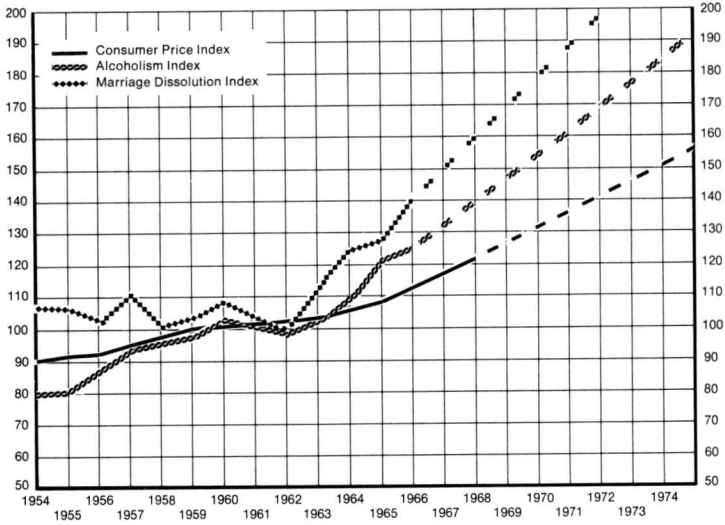
These statistics can be converted into the same scale as that used for the Consumer Price Index and provide us an estimate of a Psycho-social Price Index. The rate of inflation (deemed disastrous) on the Consumer Price Index can then be compared directly with the rate for the Psycho-social Price Index. To control for the "inflation" due to the increase in the population we can express the incidence as rates per 100,000; to make a comparison on the same scale as the Consumer Price Index, we can equate the rate for 1961 to 100 and scale other years accordingly—the same procedure as used for the CPI.

In Chart 1 admissions to psychiatric hospitals Mental Health Index) and numbers of suicides (Suicide Index) are compared with the Consumer Price Index and linear projections for the next five years are indicated. The rate for both mental illness and for suicide is increasing faster than that for the economic area—indeed the projection for admissions is psychiatric hospitals soars off the chart.

**CHART 1**  
**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, MENTAL ILLNESS INDEX,**  
**SUICIDE INDEX**  
 1961 = 100



**CHART 2**  
**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, ALCOHOLISM INDEX,**  
**MARRIAGE DISSOLUTION INDEX**  
 1961 = 100



**CHART 3**  
**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, CRIME INDEX,**  
**JUVENILE DELINQUENCY INDEX**  
 1961 = 100

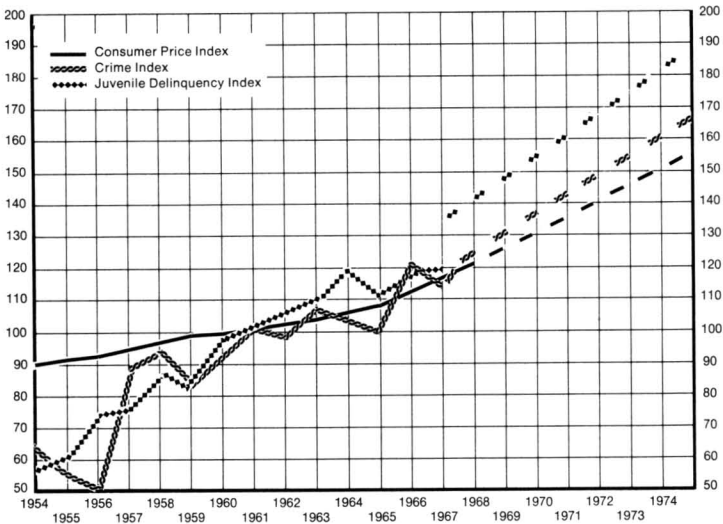
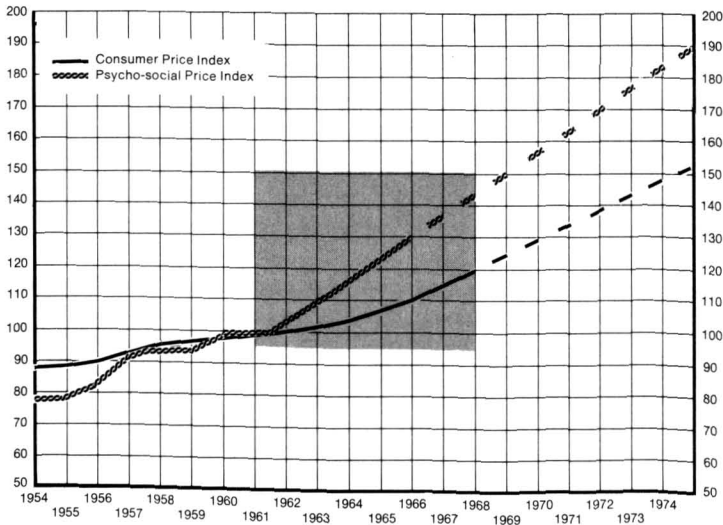


Chart 2 indicates the comparisons for the rates for alcoholism (Alcoholism Index) and marriage dissolution (Marriage Dissolution Index). The numbers used for alcoholism are the official government estimates (and thus in some way represent "soft" data); the numbers of marriage dissolution do not indicate, of course, simple separation or changes in common law arrangements. It might be pointed out that the figures for the Marriage Dissolution Index do not include the very recent upsurge in applications for divorce-applications influenced by the new legislation.

The rates for people aged sixteen and over indicted for a criminal act (Crime Index) and for children aged seven to fifteen adjudged delinquent (Juvenile Delinquency Index) were used to indicate the aspects of psych-social health (or pathology) represented by aggressive, anti-social acts. It should be noted that the figures for juvenile delinquency for 1965 on should be interpreted in light of changing practices for dealing with children; many are not now being formally charged but are being treated in other ways. Experts in the field say that there has been no drop in the rate of incidence and, indeed, we must expect in the next few years a steady increase in crime for those in the 16 to 24 age group.

**CHART 4**  
**COSTS OF LIVING**  
**PSYCHO-SOCIAL PRICE INDEX, CONSUMER PRICE INDEX**  
 1961 = 100



By averaging the rates for these six indices we can develop a psycho-social price index—an estimate of the rates of inflation in problems affecting our ability to solve problems in living. It is possible, indeed probable, that careful research would identify a variety of facets not presently being documented and permit the development of an index with each facet given its due weight; but the current evidence does make visible a rate of inflation considerably greater than that judged “disastrous” in the Consumer Price Index. Table I gives the figures for each index.

TABLE 1  
COSTS OF LIVING  
1954 to 1968  
1961 = 100

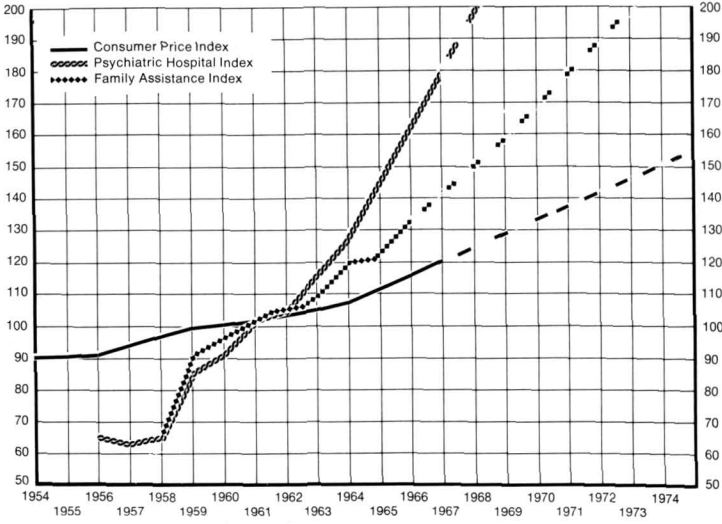
Year	Mental Illness Index	Suicide Index	Alcoholism Index	Marriage Dissolution Index	Crime Index	Juvenile Delinquency Index	Psycho-social All Areas	Price Index Increase or Decrease	Consumer Price Index All Items	Consumer Price Index Increase or Decrease
1954	68.8	97.3	79.4	107.5	61.2	57.9	78.7		89.9	
1955	73.4	93.3	80.8	107.2	54.5	61.5	78.4	-0.3	90.1	0.1
1956	81.2	101.3	87.4	103.6	51.5	73.6	83.1	4.7	91.4	1.8
1957	83.4	100.0	93.9	111.7	88.5	75.6	92.2	9.1	94.3	3.4
1958	87.3	100.0	96.3	102.2	94.2	85.2	94.2	2.0	96.8	2.6
1959	94.1	98.7	99.1	103.9	83.0	84.3	93.9	-0.3	97.9	1.5
1960	93.3	101.3	102.3	108.9	93.0	97.1	99.3	5.4	99.1	1.0
1961	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.7	100.0	0.8
1962	116.2	96.0	99.3	101.1	98.2	106.3	102.9	2.9	101.2	1.3
1963	127.3	101.3	102.3	112.8	107.3	109.4	110.1	7.2	103.0	1.4
1964	141.2	109.3	107.9	124.4	103.0	118.1	117.3	7.2	104.8	1.6
1965	(151.0) <sup>1</sup>	117.3	121.3	127.5	100.0	110.1	122.9	5.6	107.4	2.0
1966	(163.0) <sup>1</sup>	114.6	(125.0)	141.7	120.9	118.2	130.6	7.7	111.4	3.4
1967					113.9	118.1			115.4	3.3
1968	185.7								120.1	3.8

( )<sup>1</sup>: estimate

Economic costs follow psycho-social costs but are difficult to document directly. It is enlightening, however, to look at rates of increase in two areas of expenditures by governments: those for psychiatric hospitals (Psychiatric Hospital Index) and those for family assistance (Family Assistance Index). Family assistance payments were included as they reflected our costs for the care for deserted wives and children. For these figures, the rates per person were used as the base and were then transformed into the same scale. In looking at Chart 5 one is further saddened by the realization that these expenditures made to alleviate suffering, are really money down the drain.

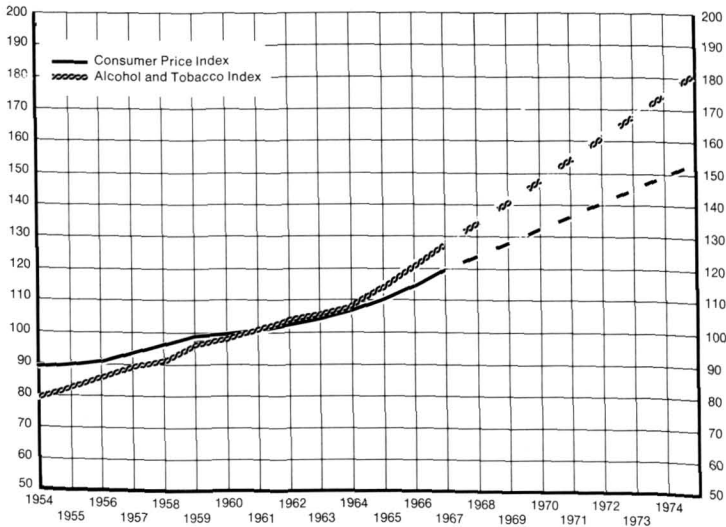
**CHART 5**  
**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL INDEX,**  
**FAMILY ASSISTANCE INDEX**

1961 = 100



**CHART 6**  
**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO INDEX**

1961 = 100



I was intrigued enough with the amounts of money we have been spending on alcoholic beverages and tobacco (according to the federal government's *Economic White Paper for 1969, The Canadian Economy: Recent Developments*, p. 84) to graph a comparison against the Consumer Price Index (Chart 6). We are evidently spending an increasingly larger portion of our money on alcohol and tobacco—in spite of our rising cost of living. Does this higher rate indicate increased affluence or escape? Table 2 gives the indices for expenditures.

TABLE 2  
NOTEWORTHY EXPENDITURES

1954 to 1968  
1961 = 100

Year	Consumers Price Index		Psychiatric Index	Hospital Increase or Decrease	Family Assistance		Alcohol and Tobacco Index	Alcohol and Tobacco Increase or Decrease
	All Items	Increase or Decrease			Increase or Decrease	Increase or Decrease		
1954	89.9						79.3	
1955	90.1	0.1					81.8	2.5
1956	91.4	1.8	65.0				85.9	4.1
1957	94.3	3.4	63.0	2.0			89.3	3.4
1958	96.8	2.6	65.0	2.0	66.9		91.2	1.9
1959	97.9	1.5	85.9	0.9	89.8	22.9	95.9	4.7
1960	99.1	1.0	90.7	4.8			97.9	2.0
1961	100.0	0.8	100.0	9.3	100.0	10.2	100.0	2.1
1962	101.2	1.3	104.7	4.7	104.1	4.1	103.7	3.7
1963	103.0	1.4	116.3	11.6	109.7	5.6	105.4	1.7
1964	104.8	1.6	127.9	11.6	119.9	10.2	107.7	2.3
1965	107.4	2.0	145.1	17.2	121.4	1.5	114.8	7.1
1966	111.4	3.4	162.8	17.7	133.9	12.5	120.6	5.8
1967	115.4	3.3	180.8	18.0			128.9	8.3
1968	120.1	3.8						

#### PSYCHO-SOCIAL COSTS OF LIVING

While these graphs and linear projections are most enlightening, they still do not give the actual dimensions of the problem of psycho-social costs; rates may well be increasing—and at a greater rate than the Consumer Price Index—but rates themselves, over a period of relatively few years, do not spell disaster. We may be able to allow increases in any given area and still be able to cope with the problems of living; we may have a level of incidence that warns us to take preventive measures—but measures well within the resources of each community. We may be drifting into a serious situation where only the resources of senior governments can take the action necessary to influence the trends.

To estimate the seriousness of the psycho-social costs to us as individuals caught in this tide of change and to our society attempting to develop new systems we must attempt to assess the extent of the problem. The

Canadian Mental Health Association has attempted to document such costs in its informational materials for 1967:

Mental illness disables more people than all other diseases combined. 30% of the population of any community has suffered from definite illness with at least temporary disability.

5.4 million Canadians have "disabling disorders" at present and 600,000 suffer from "incapacitating illness."

There are 100,000 acutely ill children, but treatment facilities for only 400.

Suicides number 1,700 a year in Canada (suicide attempts total over 15,000).

There are at least 230,000 alcoholics in Canada.

In terms of absenteeism, accidents, alcoholism, inefficiency, and physical illness with emotional effects, mental illness costs Canadian business and industry close to \$1 billion a year.

On research, the Federal Government spends 5c per head or \$1 million per year; in comparison, we spend 30 times as much on agricultural research, 60 times as much on Defence research, even 6 times as much on military bands.

In a recent survey reported by the American Psychological Association (1968) it was found that:

56% of the adults polled are bothered by depression, that 17% take medication to "calm themselves," that 9% take "pep pills" and 14% seek professional help. Women were found to be more "susceptible to mental problems" than men, the young more than the old, the less educated more than the better educated, and the non-executive more than the executives (p. 3).

In a brief to the Senate Special Committee on Science Policy this year the Canadian Mental Health Association wrote:

There is a growing conviction that the great social issues of our time are directly related to increasing stress and tension with a concomitant increasing number of people developing symptoms of "a breakdown in living." These social issues include poverty, housing, population growth, unemployment and (probably) the increasing amounts of leisure time. That these contribute to a social and community breakdown is an assumption which has now been reasonably well documented. Closely related, of course, are the breakdown of moral and social values and family disintegration. Problems arising because of alienation and deprivation are common precursors to mental and emotional instability (p. 13).

The obvious stress of life today makes Selye's comments, the views of a medical researcher, worth noting (1969, p. 26):

No living organism can exist continuously in a state of alarm . . . The body's faulty adaptive reactions seem to initiate or encourage various maladies. These could include emotional disturbances, headaches, insomnia, sinus attacks, high blood pressure, gastric and duodenal ulcers, certain rheumatic or allergic afflictions and cardiovascular and kidney diseases.

Englehardt (1969) reported that a study of people hospitalized after an accident disclosed that at least 80% of them showed accident-prone characteristics—all symptoms of deep emotional conflict. He said that accidents appear to stem from an unconscious psychological pattern:



The accident repeaters exhibited a clear pattern of suppressed anger, carelessness in work and personal habits, and passivity in all human relationships. Lacking an outlet for many emotions, they used selfdestructive accidents as a means of expressing hostility, of getting care and attention, and as punishment for sexual guilt (p. 174).

He also noted that there were 8239 deaths from accidents in Canada in 1967.

Then there was that report last October from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (1968, p. 8):

Of the estimated number of 19,644,000 persons (9,789,200 males, 9,764,800 females) living in Canada in 1965, 2,394,804 (1,256,925 males, 1,137,879 females) would be expected to be admitted to a psychiatric institution on at least one occasion during the remaining years of their lives (12.7% of the males, 11.7% of the females). The remaining 17,249,196 persons would not be expected to be admitted because (a) they will remain mentally healthy, (b) they do not utilize the reporting in-patients facilities even though in need of treatment or (c) death will "rescue" them from admission to a psychiatric institution by intervening before they develop a mental disorder requiring admission.

#### TRANSITORY OR ?

There is serious inflation in our Psycho-social Price Index and the level of distress is already too high; the question now remains: is this a passing phenomenon? We recognize that we are in a period of rapid change, that our old guidelines for living are fading and viable alternatives have not yet emerged. We know, too, that we are in a transition between an industrial age and a technological age of affluence, that we are leaving behind an emphasis on nationalism for McLuhan's global village, for Barbara Ward's spaceship earth. We realize that we can expect an increase in anxiety simply because the situations are new to us. It is not clear, however, how much anxiety is tolerable—even beneficial—and how much crippling.

Leighton, in his study of psychiatric disorder and sociocultural environment in Nova Scotia (1959), said that a time of rapid social change could trigger social disintegration which would be shown in a community by a high frequency of broken homes, few and weak associations (religion, work, recreation), few and weak leaders, few patterns of recreation ("the modes of enjoying oneself will tend to be individualistic and short-term, such as drinking and sexual promiscuity"), high frequency of hostility, high frequency of crime and delinquency, and weak and fragmented network of communication (p. 318, 319). He added that:

Changes are part of adjustment and growth, or of maintaining a dynamic equilibrium. It is when they occur rapidly, one right after the other and at many points in the social system, that the effect is malfunctional. In such a situation change follows change before adjustments are achieved; different parts of the group are in various stages and hence out of step with each other, and disarticulation and disruption tend to become cumulative (p. 323).

But the question is still not answered. We have found many of the symptoms but the problems themselves have not yet surfaced. We are like the three fishermen who noticed a body floating toward them. While attempting to rescue it, another body, and yet another, appeared. Their frantic efforts at rescue became pitifully inadequate and one of the fishermen rested

upstream to see what was pushing them in. Rapid change in the social system had thrown them off-balance but society had not equipped them to be strong swimmers.

FULFILLING OUR POTENTIALITIES

Rollo May, a prominent psychiatrist, in his book *Love and will*<sup>1</sup> has identified our problem as the result of a major conflict between a feeling of powerlessness with options involving great responsibility:

Ours is an era of radical transition. The old myths and symbols by which we oriented ourselves are gone, anxiety is rampant . . . The individual is forced to turn inward; he becomes obsessed with the new form of the problem of identity, namely, *Even if I know who I am, I have no significance, I am unable to influence others*. The next step is apathy and the step following that is violence. For no human can long endure the perceptually numbing experience of his own powerlessness (p. 17).

Just as the individual feels powerless and plagued with self-doubts, he is assured that he can do anything . . . We are promised every hour on the hour (in the commercial spot) our daily blessing: told of the tremendous power in our computers, in the techniques of mass communication, in the new electronic age that will re-form our brain waves and make us see and hear in new ways, in the guaranteed income, in art for everyone, in automatic education, in drugs, in chemical techniques to remake personality, in plastic organs to replace wornout hearts and kidneys, and so on *ad infinitum*. It is not surprising that the listener is confused as to whether he is the anointed one of just the fall guy. And of course he is both . . . The dilemma is sharpened by the fact that just as we feel most powerless in the face of impersonal power, we are called upon to take responsibility for much vaster choices . . . The gift of freedom, yes; but the individual's burden is tremendous (p. 48).

We must develop a new consciousness in which the depth and meaning of personal relationship occupy a central place. Such an embracing consciousness is always required in an age of radical transition. Lacking external guides, we shift our morality inward; there is a new demand for personal responsibility. We are required to discover on a deeper level what it means to be human (p. 57).

The only way out is ahead and our choice is whether we shall cringe or embrace and affirm it . . . We mould ourselves and our world simultaneously (p. 64).

*Love and will* is not yet available but has been quoted extensively in the August issue of *Psychology Today*.

Maslow, another important thinker of today, has turned from a pre-occupation with the area of illness and concentrated on the facets of abundant psychological health, a concept he terms self-actualization. His self-actualized person may well be the "man for tomorrow" with his "superior perception of reality," "increased acceptance of self, of others, and of nature," "increased spontaneity," "increase in problem-centering," "increased detachment and desire for privacy," "increased autonomy, and resistance to enculturation," "greater freshness of appreciation, and richness of emotional reaction," "changed interpersonal relations," and "more democratic character structure (1962, p. 23 & 24)." To develop to this level of humanness, he has said we must first be reasonably satisfied in our needs for survival and safety, for belongingness, love, respect, and self-esteem—mighty important prerequisites.

In looking at psycho-social development, I find it useful to consider growth in three major areas of living, areas in which Maslow's prerequisite

basic needs may be satisfied: (a) an area of relationships centered on love and affirmation, (b) an area of learning where progress is recognized, and (c) an area of involvement where contributions are made. The family has traditionally been the source of love and affirmation but I question its effectiveness to provide these now. Parents too often are at a loss to know how to bring up children and the former answers are now not adequate. One only need note the incidence of the battered child syndrome, of drifting teenagers, of alcoholism, and of deserted families to recognize the trouble signals in this vital area.

The major responsibility for the area of learning and progressing has now been given to the schools yet for the most part the schools have not recognized the extent of their charge, of their responsibility to teach young people to meet the problems of our time with courage and competence. Far too often the schools discourage: they grade competitively on a curve of expectancies, and the majority of our young people drop out discouraged before the completion of high school. Drucker (in his thought-provoking book, *The age of discontinuity: Guidelines to our changing society*, 1968, 1969) has charged that schools do not usually give opportunities for a young person to gain a sense of his growing competence through performance; instead they indicate only promise of future performance through verbal tasks—and woe to the child whose forte is not verbal skills. Certainly if a joy in learning and a sense of progress are vital to a people facing new situations, new choices, then indeed we must rethink our provisions for development in this area.

And an involvement and contributions in the on-going life of our society? It is sobering to try to find examples of aspects where even adolescents form part of our team. We have not yet found a replacement for the economically productive family unit where sons and daughters grew up sharing the responsibilities—and making a worthwhile contribution.

It may well be that the major problem we are facing in this age is learning to live together in a democracy. Dreikurs (1961) has called this “equality, the challenge of our times.” He pointed out that the old power relationships—of government over subjects, adults over children, management over workers, men over women—no longer hold; yet we have not developed the necessary skills and attitudes for working together on our common problems. In the end, such temporary problems as the power of children to manipulate their parents, of rioters to force their will will abate in favour of profitable consultation and dialogue. Answers must be found that do not infringe on the rights of others. Man is basically a social being, these problems of interaction must be solved to a tolerable degree before he can free himself to develop his potential.

Research in human development, especially in a technological age, has been very limited and our knowledge is fragmented and inadequate. It has been an area where we have readily accepted experience as the basis for wisdom and have been particularly reluctant to question the established verities and institutions.

#### A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

I am not one who belongs to the doom-gloom school but I feel we are flirting with anarchy. Personally I don't like that prediction that one in

eight of us will be hospitalized for a mental illness—an indication of our inability to cope with life. I don't like the rate of increase in the Psycho-social Price Index. *I want someone to do something!*

I find I would like our politicians to assume the responsibility to lead, to act—to do something about the deteriorating quality of life. But, some ideas by Buckminster Fuller keep haunting me:

(In the 1920's) we were ready for a great new venture. If only we had known what we were doing—we were dealing in invisibles (p. 302).

I would guess that one hundred years from now, historians will note that in the period of 1927 to 1967, man was so preoccupied and so relatively illiterate that he thought it all right to leave the problems of the world to the politicians. This idea will look preposterous in the perspective of history (p. 306).

It was the beginning of a society where people thought the politicians could solve the problems of the world, but the politicians have truly no idea of what to do about them . . . The politician is someone who deals in man's problems of adjustment. To ask a politician to lead us is to ask the tail of a dog to lead the dog (p. 304).

World society has throughout its millions of years on earth made its judgments upon visible, tangible, sensorially demonstratable criteria. We may safely say that the world is keeping its eye on the unimportant, visible one per cent of the historical transformation, while missing the significance of the ninety-nine per cent of over-all, unseen changes (p. 275).

Almost all of yesterday's fundamentally held and practical everyday causes and their resultantly adopted stratagems are obsolete; therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that, despite their venerated status, a large part, if not all, of our educational institutions and their disciplines are obsolete (p. 274).

But, he also said:

There are very few men today who are disciplined to comprehend the totally integrating significance of the ninety-nine per cent invisible activity which is coalescing to reshape our future. There are approximately no warnings being given to society regarding the great changes ahead. There is only the ominous general apprehension that man may be about to annihilate himself. To the few who are disciplined to deal with the *invisibility integrating* trends it is conceptually probably that man will not destroy himself. Instead, it is increasingly readable in the trends that man is about to become almost one hundred per cent successful as an occupant of the universe (p. 275).

I would like to point out to our political leaders—and to us as professionals—that the data are becoming visible. There *is* another cost of living—and the price is already high. But, we can train the strong swimmer, we have the resources to improve the quality of life—and I suspect that it is the university-based social scientists who must assume the responsibility to find the patterns, to propose the solutions, to recommend to government. And we need:

- (1) comprehensive and through *research* to identify the faulty systems producing this degree of malfunctioning.
- (2) new *professionals* to act as consultants for the emerging society.
- (3) substantial *grants* to identify and train the perceptive, alert adult to fill these new roles.
- (4) continuous *reappraisal* of the functions and possibilities of our traditional institutions.

If we are to modify the inflation indicated by the Psycho-social Price

Index, the federal government must assume the responsibility (for it alone has the necessary monetary resources) to set in action some type of council to facilitate and coordinate the needed research and to bring together experts able to find new solutions—and this council must be in action within two years at the latest.

If we are to produce the needed professionals, the federal government must assume the major responsibility of financing their training—and must make sizable grants available within two years.

If we are to train the most suitable people, the universities must assume a responsibility to admit applicants with the desirable abilities and personal characteristics—regardless of their formal paper prerequisites.

If we are to develop the strong swimmers, our institutions must find how to build young people with courage and competence.

John Steinbeck has aptly expressed our conflict:

The lines of change are down. We, or at least I, can have no conception of human life and human thought in 100 years or 50 years. Perhaps my greatest wisdom is the knowledge that I do not know. The sad ones are those who waste their energy in trying to hold it back, for they can only feel bitterness in loss and no joy in gain (1962, p. 107).

Let us flirt no longer with anarchy.

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