

Toffler versus the U.S. Constitution

Alvin Toffler on "The Coming Super-Struggle" from The Third Wave:

The need for new political institutions exactly parallels our need for new family, educational and corporate institutions as well. . . .

Put differently, the most important political development of our time is the emergence in our midst of two basic camps, one committed to Second Wave civilization, the other to Third. One is tenaciously dedicated to preserving the core institutions of industrial mass society—the nuclear family, the mass education system, the giant corporation, the mass trade union, the centralized nation-state, and the politics of pseudo-representative government. The other recognizes that today's most urgent problems, from energy, war and poverty to ecological degradation and the breakdown of familial relationships, can no longer be resolved within the framework of an industrial civilization. . . .

The defenders of the Second Wave typically fight against minority power; they scoff at direct democracy as "populism"; they oppose efforts to de-massify the schools; they fight to preserve a backwards energy system; they deify the nuclear family, pooh-poo ecological concerns, preach traditional industrial era nationalism, and oppose the move toward a fairer world economic order.

By contrast, the forces of the Third Wave favor a democracy of shared minority power; they are prepared to experiment with more direct democracy. . . . They

demand a renewable and less centralized energy system. They want legitimate options to the nuclear family. . . .

Some [of the advocates of the Third Wave] are drawn from the Second Wave "right"; others from the Second Wave "left"

From Toffler's letter "To the Founding Parents" in The Third Wave:

You are the revolutionists dead. . . . You include the 55 who came together in 1787 to hammer out . . . that astonishing document called the Constitution of the United States. . . .

That piece of paper, with the Bill of Rights added, is clearly one of the stunning achievements of human history. . . .

[W]hat I now must write can all too easily be misunderstood by my contemporaries. Some will no doubt regard it as seditious. . . . [T]he system of government you fashioned, including the very principles on which you based it, is increasingly obsolete, and hence increasingly, if inadvertently, oppressive and dangerous to our welfare. It must be radically changed and a new system of government invented—a democracy for the 21st century.

You knew, better than we today, that no government, no political system, no constitution, no charter or state is permanent. . . . Nor can a government designed for one civilization cope adequately with the next.

You would have understood, therefore, why even the Constitution of the United States needs to be reconsidered, and altered. . . .

[A]bove all, I thank Mr. Jefferson, who helped create the system that served us well for so long, and that now must, in its turn, die and be replaced.

larger and spread all over the globe."

The problems with existing political parties and institutions, in the gospel according to Toffler, is that they are all basically committed to preserving "the dying industrial order." This includes a misguided and ill-fated commitment "to preserving the core institutions of industrial mass society," in which Toffler includes the nuclear family, mass public education, big corporations, big trade unions, and the nation-state.

Toffler's 1980 *The Third Wave* and his 1990 *Powershift* are both long-winded, "popularized" elaborations of this theme—how our ways of thinking about work, home, the family, government, and so on, are all ridiculously outmoded.

In Toffler's view, the differences between Second-Wave and Third-Wave civilizations and their proponents, are much greater than the differences among conflicting groups within

the Second Wave. Thus, he says, Marxists and anti-Marxists, Americans, and Russians marched forth into the non-industrial areas of the world "blindly bearing the same set of fundamental premises" in which "both preached the superiority of industrialism to all other civilizations." (Horrors!)

The three main ideas—now passé—that bound Second Wave nations together were, according to Toffler: 1) the idea that humans should hold dominion over nature, 2) that industrialism was a higher stage of evolution than non-industrial cultures, and 3) the "progress principle—the idea that history flows irreversibly toward a better life for humanity."

First in Toffler's list of such outmoded optimists is the great German philosopher and founder of the modern science of political economy, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

Does Toffler really want to overthrow all the institutions that have made the United States what it is today? There is not one which is left unscathed in his pursuit of futuristic nov-