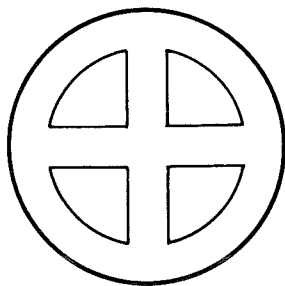


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# “The Role of Leadership in Shaping the Future”

## Harlan Cleveland

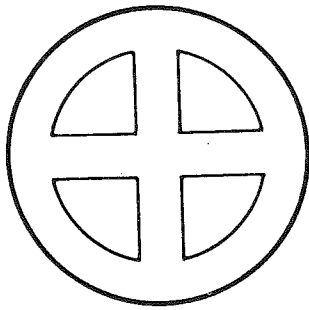


Lutheran Brotherhood  
Colloquium on the Church  
in Future Society

*The Woodlands Inn, Houston Texas • January 29 - February 2, 1979*

 LUTHERAN BROTHERHOOD

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# Lutheran Brotherhood Colloquium on the Church in Future Society

*The Woodlands Inn, Houston Texas • January 29 - February 2, 1979*

The Lutheran Brotherhood Colloquium on the Church in Future Society was a conference of 250 Lutheran leaders and ten nationally-known futurists. It was the first such event ever held by Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal benefit society serving Lutherans nationally, and was the result of consultations with several U.S. Lutheran church bodies. Among the concerns which were expressed by the church bodies in these consultations was the need for more disciplined emphasis on anticipated future changes as they influence congregational life.

*The purpose of the Colloquium was to increase awareness of anticipated future change so that appropriate planning can be effected to strengthen the Lutheran church, especially at the congregational level.*

All U.S. Lutheran church bodies were invited to take part in the planning, and nine participated by sending representatives, including six national presidents. Ten Lutheran church bodies were represented among the participants in the Colloquium.

**The Colloquium was organized around five themes:**

	Theme	Presentors
Monday	The Reality of Change	Alvin Toffler
Tuesday	Problems of the Future	John Platt Theodore Gordon Jürgen Moltmann
Wednesday	Human Values & Potential	Willis Harman Jean Houston
Thursday	Defining the Task	Warren Bennis Hazel Henderson Robert Jungk
Friday	The Role of Leadership	Harlan Cleveland



### Harlan Cleveland

**Director of the Program in International Affairs, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, Princeton, New Jersey; distinguished visiting Tom Slick Professorship of World Peace at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin (January-May semester, 1979); formerly president of the University of Hawaii.**

Dr. Cleveland has had multiple careers which include positions as public executive, diplomat, educator, political scientist and author on public administration and U.S. foreign policy. While director of the U.S. China Aid Program in the 1940's, he was responsible for building new economic aid programs in six other East Asian countries. It was during this period that he first used in a speech title the phrase "revolution of rising expectations" which is attributed to him in Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*.

In the 1960's he became Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. In this position he worked closely with Adlai Stevenson, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; participated as an advisor to Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Presidents Kennedy and Johnson in every peace-and-security crisis during 1961-65; helped invent and bring into being U.S. peacekeeping arrangements in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean; and was instrumental in the development of the World Food Program and World Weather Watch.

President Johnson assigned Mr. Cleveland to Paris as Ambassador to NATO and American representative on the North Atlantic Council, the political board of directors of the Alliance. Mr. Cleveland was a leader in converting the Alliance from a primarily military organization to an active Western caucus on how to make peace with the Soviet Union. He also led allies into important innovations such as the launching of a NATO communications satellite for quick political consultation and military command and control. He later became President of the University of Hawaii; under his leadership a new School of Law was planned, authorized and began its first class; and Hawaii's two-year School of Medicine was raised to a full four-year M.D. program.

Since 1974 Mr. Cleveland has directed the Aspen Institute Program in International Affairs. He has focused the efforts of that program on analysis of three critical problems confronting the world today: the global fairness revolution, the control of nuclear weapons and the capacity of Americans to adapt their institutions to the demands of an interdependent world. Mr. Cleveland holds numerous professional appointments some of which include: current chairman of the Weather Modification Advisory Board, board member of the International Council for Educational Development, International Economic Studies Institute and The Oceanic Society. He continues to interlace service in the private and public sectors with his role as author. His more recent books include: *The Third Try at World Order: U.S. Policy for an Interdependent World*; *China Diary*; *The Future Executive*; *NATO: The Transatlantic Bargain*; *The Obligations of Power*; (co-author) *The Overseas Americans*.

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Dr. Harlan Cleveland: "The Role of Leadership in Shaping  
The Future"

Director of the Program in International Affairs, Aspen  
Institute for Humanistic Studies, Princeton, New Jersey

Delivered on February 2, 1979 at the Lutheran Brotherhood  
Colloquium on the Church in Future Society

You've asked me to speak to you this morning about the role of leadership. That, of course, requires your introducer to imply that I've clambered up the learning curve of leadership myself, and also requires me not to deny it. But I hasten to make clear that I'm not going to stand on my record, which is always a precarious place to stand. I remember, as perhaps you do, the pitcher who stood his ground when Casey Stengel plodded out to the mound to tell him he was through. "Why take me out?" he pleaded, "That next guy coming up to bat, I got him out last time." "Yeah," said Stengel, "but that was this inning."

This is obviously a friendly gathering, despite your doctrinal differences ... another demonstration, perhaps, of what I've been calling a "second generation Christianity" -- guided not only by that easy early Christian lesson that all men are brothers, but by the hard new multi-cultural non-discriminatory lesson that all brothers are different. Thus encouraged, fortified with a good breakfast, emboldened by the thought that if I'm not among friends, I'm at least among strangers, let me start by quoting not from the Bible, not to an audience full of professional preachers, but from an equally courageous and subversive document, the catalog of the Episcopal seminary in Austin, Texas. "The purpose of this seminary," it says right on page one, "is to conduct a continuing inquiry into the judgment of irrelevance which society has placed upon our church."

I congratulate the Lutheran Brotherhood, and the church it serves, for tackling so imaginatively, so vigorously, and so systematically the self-renewal of the church in this secular age. The predicates of individual action and the predicament of mankind are both essentially crises of morality. And the church cannot in conscience leave the future entirely to others. So the conception and carrying out of your careful preparations for this conference are great good news.

If you had asked me to talk this morning about economics, or military tactics, or scientific discovery, or technology, I couldn't use the past as a reliable guide to the future. The last time I took physics they told me the atom couldn't be split. The last time I took Keynesian

economics, at Oxford University, with a young don named Harold Wilson who later went on to better things, I learned that economics is cyclical, but you can always depend on one thing: that the inflation is at one end of the cycle and the recession is at the other end of the cycle. That hasn't been a terribly useful piece of information.

In all of these technocratic subjects, change is too kaleidoscopic, too various, too complicated, too simultaneous -- in a word too human -- to be arranged in linear logic from cause to effect. But here's the good news: those who preach and practice the arts of politics and administration don't have the same problem at all. They can have a pretty good idea of what's going to happen next because in this business of human cooperation, the verities really are something like eternal.

Each of us inherits an enormous body of wisdom about how to relate effectively to other people. When the engineers invent a new gadget you cannot even find its name in the dictionary for some years. But when you discover a workable way of bringing people together in organizations to make a difference, you are more than likely to find it lucidly described in Aristotle's Politics or Bartlett's Familiar Quotations or the Bible. Now that Mao Tse Tung is dead, the literary archaeologists will doubtless unearth evidence that his most penetrating thoughts were some ghost writer's plagiarism from China's rich thesaurus of inherited practical wisdom. One of the best books about personnel management, The Study of Human Abilities, was written in the third century AD by a Chinese public administrator who hired out to manage principalities for local princes in the Middle Kingdom, a sort of Niccolo Machiavelli of his time. Its chapter on how to conduct an interview, especially the part about how you can't recognize in others a quality you don't have yourself, can still be helpful to all of us.

In America's most famous op ed articles, the Federalist Papers, what Hamilton wrote about economic policy now seems quaint, archaic, the speculations of leaders of an underdeveloped country wondering, as so many new nations are wondering today, how to maintain its declared independence in an interdependent world. But Madison's stuff -- on the nature of politics, the countervailing of powers, the fencing in of factions, the separation of functions, the essence of governance -- is strikingly up to date. For he was describing a society in which, by deliberate design, nobody would be in charge. It's a description, especially in Federalist #10, worth rereading now that we must also invent the institutions of governance for a world with nobody in charge.

I've finally figured out after some years' thought what Nixon's trouble was: he thought he was in charge. He told David Frost that he didn't really understand how it could be illegal if the president had done it.

Since I'm a visiting professor at the University of Texas for this semester, perhaps I'd better start by defining my terms the way professors do. Who are the leaders? Our chairman this morning has already answered my question: you are. Your presence here is witness to your concern; it's your concern that makes you a magnet for adherents and a target for critics and a self-starter in a complex human community with a powerful motor yearning for ignition. There are, by my calculation, something more than a million of you -- a million leaders in the United States of America in 1979. You may be, to adapt some words of John Gardner, clarifiers, definers, critics, teachers, or you may be implementers, managers, problem-solvers, who in Gardner's words "redesign existing institutions or invent new ones, create coalitions and fight off the people who don't want the problem solved". Or again, you may be "mobilizers" who "catalyze the social morale, help people know what they can be at their best, and nurture a workable level of unity." A few of you may be effective in all three roles.

Your opportunity to exercise your instinct for leadership occurs precisely because you live in a society where no one is in charge, which means of course that each of us is partly in charge. Being an American also helps. Americans have this rich, inherited experience of trying, as Madison proposed, to govern communities, states and a nation through mostly horizontal relationships. We started with a notion that freedom was the power to choose, and decided as we went along that the obverse seemed to be equally applicable: power is the freedom to choose.

The central principle of management in a nobody-in-charge system was formulated in China 2,500 years ago by Lao Tse. "Ruling a big country," he said, "is like cooking a small fish" -- that is, too much handling will spoil it. In such a system, orders do not issue forth from a central planner. Action is the plural improvisations by multiple leaders on a generally-agreed sense of direction, a sense of direction that's agreed because those who have to travel together have worked at deciding together where they'll try to go. But it does not require agreeing about philosophy. If we've learned anything in the long history of human cooperation, it is that people of different races, creeds and conditions can agree on next steps to take together if they carefully avoid trying to agree on why they are agreeing -- that is, if they avoid arguing about ideology.

In such a system, the hallmarks of effective action are the soft voice and the low key, the search for consensus rather than choosing up sides and voting, the constructive use of ambiguity, a can-do spirit unwarranted by expert predictions, a willingness to take the initiative and see others get the credit. It must be as true in the Lutheran Church as it is in national and world politics that effective leadership doesn't show and especially that it doesn't show off. You may remember that other wonderful quote from Lao Tse, his epitaph for a leader, which goes something like this: "Of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his task fulfilled, they will all say, 'We did this ourselves.'"

I won't dilate on these points because for a price which is outrageous in terms of the number of pages in the book, Harper and Row will sell you a book of mine called The Future Executive that tells you all about it. I planned to make five comments this morning about the role of leadership in our future. You'll be relieved to know that I've already made one of them: that nobody is in charge. Comment #2 is deceptively simple: that everything is very complicated. Comment #3 is that the leaders don't make the policy, the followers do. Comment #4 is that science and technology have been driving the rest of us for 300 years and it's about time the people started to drive science and technology. Comment #5 is that unwarranted optimism is what makes the world go round. If these headlines grab you, or indeed even if they don't, permit me to elucidate.

That complexity is the name of the 20th century game was already evident to E. B. White in 1927. In that year, he had a character in a New Yorker story predict "a bright future for complexity" in the United States of America. The character then went on to ask one of those wake-up-in-the-middle-of-the-night-and-think-about-it questions: "Have you ever considered how complicated things can get, what with one thing always leading to another?"

Robert Orbin, currently the nation's top gag writer, recently told a Washington Post interviewer that the secret of writing comedy is to know where it's all going and then get ahead of it. The two best humorists of the first half of this century, E. B. White and James Thurber, somehow sensed that in the second half of the century we would be plagued with complexity. White was afraid of it; Thurber reveled in it (remember "The Night the Bed Fell on Father"?), but both were obsessed by it. They knew where it was all going, then got ahead of it.

Because one thing leads to another, all objects of leadership are interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, inter-professional and international. And that means that the leader has to be a situation-as-a-whole guy or gal. You have to think about the whole schmear in order to act relevantly on any part of it.

Some years ago Isaiah Berlin in one of his Conversations with Henry Brandon, described the central paradox of leadership in five incandescent sentences. "As knowledge becomes more and more specialized, the fewer are the persons who know enough about everything to be wholly in charge. One of the paradoxical consequences is therefore the dependence of a large number of human beings upon a collection of ill-coordinated experts, each of whom sooner or later becomes obsessed, oppressed and irritated by being unable to step out of his box and survey the relationship of the particular activity to the whole. The experts cannot know enough. The coordinators always did move in the dark, but now they are aware of it. And the more honest and intelligent ones are rightly frightened by the fact that their responsibility increases in direct ratio to their ignorance of an ever-expanding field."

Once again, with feeling: your responsibility increases in direct ratio to your ignorance of an ever-expanding field. The most thoughtful voices among us keep returning to this theme. "If we are to retain any command at all over our own future," says John Gardner, "the ablest people we have in every field must give thought to the largest problems of the nation. They don't have to be in government to do so. But they do have to come out of the trenches of their own speciality and look at the whole battlefield."

Of course, none of us is trained for the scary profession of managing more while knowing less. No university in the world, not even the University of Texas where I now am, offers a Ph.D. in getting it all together. When I managed a university system, I noticed that we had many interdisciplinary courses listed in the catalog, but on inspection they mostly turned out to be "team taught". (For you who are not in the education business, that's the favorite academic euphemism for avoiding interdisciplinary thought.) "Team teaching" means that three or four professors teach their own separate disciplines to the same group of students, and the students are expected to be interdisciplinary. I complained about this one day at the University of Hawaii to a meeting of deans, and I could see the tolerant smiles on their faces at this presidential naivete. "Don't take it so hard," said the dean of our medical school, "it's the same all over. In a modern urban hospital, the only generalist left is the patient."



What's normally lacking in university education, then, is an interdisciplinary role model up front by the blackboard. We all know that the only truly interdisciplinary instrument is not a committee of experts, but the synoptic view from a single integrative mind. Yet the academic reward system often promotes those who remain close to their starting specialities and penalizes those who reach out to find connections with the rest of reality.

To be a situation-as-a-whole person, then, is not a profession, not just another practical skill like law or medicine or journalism. It's an attitude toward all professions, a propensity to interest oneself especially in the interconnections among the traditional jurisdictions into which we've divided the life of the mind, a willingness to view every problem in global perspective, and one thing more: the presumption to feel personally responsible for the whole outcome to which any individual's efforts can only make a small contribution. If we don't yet have a national energy policy, that just may not be somebody else's fault. If something needs fixing, it's not necessarily someone else's turn to fix it. In a world where nobody is in charge, each of us who chooses the role of conscious coordinator is partly in charge. In some degree, it's always our turn.

Are the churches and church people thus responsible for public policy? For responsible action, no. But for responsible thinking, yes. Those with responsibility for action need continuous access to the best thinking of those who are not. Those who are privileged to think freely, because they are not burdened with responsibility, have to inform their thinking about what it's like to be responsible. And both are part, not of that narrow concept called government, but of that wider concept called governance. The reactive mode of modern government creates a vacuum that has to be filled with ideas that mostly originate outside the government.

An interesting division of labor results, between nongovernmental experts, thinkers and advocates on the one hand and government officials and legislators on the other. Precisely because they are not responsible, nongovernmental people are better able than government people to do several things: One is to work ahead of time on problems that are important but not yet urgent enough to command political attention. (My own guideline for my own work, now that I'm a nongovernmental person, is that if I'm not two years ahead of the government, I'm not in business at all.) Nongovernmental people are better able than government people to shake loose from conceptual confines, and mix up disciplin-

ary methodologies; to think hard, write adventurously and speak freely about alternative futures and work back from the alternative futures to what they imply for public policy today; to generate discussion among people in contending groups, differing professional fields and separate sectors of society who might not otherwise be talking to each other; and to organize dialogue across national frontiers on issues that aren't yet ripe for official negotiation.

Situation-as-a-whole people also have to absorb that hardest of lessons for leaders to learn: that the followers are really taking the lead. This is my comment #3.

One of the things that Mao Tse Tung was probably right about was his notion that most social and political wisdom resides in the masses (read: people) rather than in the cadres (read: leaders). Much of what is in Mao's little red book is pretty cliché-ish stuff, sometimes very tactical and really not very interesting any more. But there are a few nuggets and one of them has to do with this subject. Mao is addressing the cadres and he says, translated into American, something like this: Look, you cadres, don't get the idea that you're making the policy. The masses are making the policy. Your job is to go and sniff around and figure out where the masses are going. And then you've got something to do that they don't know how to do. You've got to organize, codify, budget, and program. But then you'd better go and check it back with the masses, because they might not be going there any more. This cyclical process, he says, between the leaders (the cadres) and the masses, is the correct "theory of knowledge."

I doubt very much that that's the way decisions get made in China these days, but it's not a bad description of how they do, in fact, get made in the United States of America. Tick off in your minds the major shifts in U.S. policy these past 20 years. Certainly the government was the last to learn that the war in Viet Nam was over, or that Richard Nixon was through. American women had stopped having so many babies long before school boards and government planners adjusted to "slow growth" assumptions. The rights of minorities, the status of women, protections for the consumer, and safeguards for the environment would not be where they are if the people had waited for public executives or legislators or universities or business corporations or labor unions, or churches for that matter, to take the initiative. On the upcoming ecological issues, the people again seem to be ahead. They know by instinct that air and water are no longer free goods, that energy is valuable and therefore can't be cheap, that knowledge doesn't have to be applied just because it's known.

As every surfer knows, it's not easy to catch a wave even if you know in what direction it's going, and impossible if you don't watch it very carefully. So the task of leadership is often to help the followers go where they want to go. And if the leader gets too far behind, as President Nixon helped us all to understand, he gets wiped out.

My fourth comment tracks with what Robert Jungk told us yesterday afternoon. We are on the verge, he said, of a reformation of science. I don't know what he means by that, but I'll tell you what I think he ought to mean by it. The world will meet in Vienna this August in another one of these enormous sensitivity training sessions called UN conferences, this one on Science and Technology for Development. It so happens that this meeting is being held at a very open moment in the history of science and technology. Until the 1970's, during the 300-plus years of the Scientific Revolution and its consequent Industrial Revolution, scientific discovery and technological innovation have been driving society, setting the priorities of modernization, colliding with traditional cultures (vide Iran), apparently pressing against the physical limits of the biosphere, serving the purposes of indiscriminate growth, and failing to meet human needs worldwide, creating vast inequities in the name of progress. The notion was the control of nature, and as Rachel Carson said in the wonderful book, The Silent Spring, "the 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man."

But somehow, in the 1970's, people and their governments have begun seriously to question the automaticity of modernization, the inevitability of this particular kind of "progress." They have begun to insist on tests of relevance and appropriateness, and even to hold up on the manufacture and deployment of some things we already know how to make and deploy: antiballistic missile systems, the B-1 bomber, the proliferation of nuclear processing capacity, the supersonic transport, carcinogenic drugs, polluting industries, hostile weather modification, and genetic engineering are just a few examples of the new prudence. In any decade up to this one, could the Cambridge, Massachusetts, City Council have presumed that it had political jurisdiction over DNA research at Harvard University?

In these past 300 years, social and political change have followed in a remarkably straight line from new scientific perceptions. Newton's cosmology led to Madison's politics. Darwin's doctrine of struggle led directly to social Darwinism, that is to say, the notion that if you

were poor, it must be because you were unfit to survive and that made it all right for the rich to be rich. Physical technologies led to doctrines in the social sciences, reflected in phrases like "social engineering" and "management science." Space systems led to global institutions -- the World Weather Watch, the international communication satellite system. The life sciences led to the idea of "interdependence"; once we learned that everything is related to everything else, "interdependence" became the new cosmology.

But for the next stage in social development, we had better not wait for the next Newton to point the way. Social strategies will have to point science and technology toward human purposes. To prepare our minds for this extraordinary turn of events, we will need to develop, I think, new attitudes toward resources, their renewability, their ownership and control, their implications for equity; the new significance of information as a resource; new attitudes toward people, their enormous unused brain capacity, their psyches, their spiritual potential, their potential behavior in new kinds of organization systems and their response to mobilization by new kinds of leadership; and above all, new attitudes toward war and peace.

In the application of science and technology to military purposes, the so-called advanced societies seem to be reaching a natural asymptotic limit in the usefulness of more and more explosive power. The capacity to destroy whole societies with deliverable thermonuclear blasts and their radioactive aftermath is now widely regarded as suicidal, though again the government planners may be the last to learn about it. The resulting uncertainties, codified as mutual deterrence, have paradoxically become the most stable element in world politics. But the old balance of power used to be based on the certainty of what the other fellow would do. Today's balance of power is based on the uncertainty of what he would do.

Human needs of societies will increasingly be driving scientific research and technological development. It will be increasingly important to make a very clear distinction between "science" and "technology." Science should remain free, open, transnational in its search for demonstrable truth at the frontiers of knowledge. This freedom for the scientific enterprise should itself be regarded as a social goal and as a part of every nation's development or growth strategy. But the technologies that flow from scientific discovery can and should be socially managed and directed with a view to serving human needs, enhancing (not just "pre-serving") the human environment and maximizing choice for

individuals in society. Social management and direction does not, of course, mean merely negative control, merely stopping bad things from happening. It should also mean affirmative action to move toward new goals, as in the U.S. space program for example.

So we're at a watershed. Science and technology have driven us for 300 years. I think it's probable, perhaps predictable, but certainly desirable that in the next 300 years, we the people will be sitting in the driver's seat and setting the direction for science and technology.

My final comment also tracks with the essence of Robert Jungk's upbeat message of yesterday afternoon. The priceless ingredient of leadership is what I've called "unwarranted optimism": optimism unwarranted by the testimony of experts, but warranted by the sense that the individual leader can make a difference. The leader needs this grain of salt to confront the descriptions of a glum future which litter his desk, shout at him from the local media, and burden his ear whenever he finds himself in the company of professional futurists.

You will have noticed in your own experience that if you have a staff, the most expert member of it is the most conservative in resisting change. You will have noticed that most experts are downbeat about their own subjects: gloom and reluctance are the hallmarks of expertise. The general manager in any enterprise gets used to being told by the specialists around him that he should study the problem some more and then do nothing, cautiously. His staff will as a matter of course contain one or more systematic extrapolators of the disastrous consequences bound to flow from whatever action his instinct tells him to take. If he's a university administrator, he will find professional colleagues, some scholars who are even making good royalties by thus mistaking present trends for future destiny.

The most breathless of these computerized Cassandras seem very often to be wrong and I've puzzled a good deal about the abnormal frequency of predictive error. Isaiah Berlin gives the clue: the experts cannot know enough. Keeping up with the trends in one's own field is difficult enough. The expert is almost bound to assume that the factors he doesn't have time to study will cancel out the factors he has studied but doesn't understand. That leaves only his own golden line if extrapolation from the corner of the complexity he really does know something about. And each specialized projection, carried far enough into the future, leads to the Apocalypse. The demographers who underestimated the effect of development on world population

growth, and in the United States overestimated the need for school buildings and tickets of admission to higher education, are only the most obvious examples of that original statistical sin, which is to assume that what you know will not be stood on its head by what you don't know.

The situation-as-a-whole person, on the other hand, knows by instinct what the souls in Dante's Inferno learned to their sorrow. They could see clearly what lay far in the future, but things blurred as they drew nearer. He or she learns to mistrust predictions, especially when they are so long-range that when the eventual disaster is due, the forecaster (and if his prediction is correct, also his readers) will be dead. Or if not dead, the forecaster might at least hope to be retired, preening himself on his long record of accuracy like that ancient retiree from the Research Department of the British Foreign Office who served from 1903 to 1950 and boasted thus at his retirement ceremony, "Year after year, the worriers and fretters would come to me with awful predictions of the outbreak of war. I denied it each time. And I was only wrong twice."

You recall that Mark Twain was hard on the extrapolators too. "In the space of 176 years the lower Mississippi has shortened by 242 miles," he wrote. "That is an average of one mile and a third per year. So any person can see that 742 years from now the lower Mississippi will only be a mile and three-quarters long. There is something fascinating about science," he went on, in that same passage. "One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact."

It won't do, of course. Somebody has to be around to say, "Why don't we try it anyway?" Somebody, let's call them leaders for short, has to be the kind of person Thurber was describing when he said of his fabled boss and editor, Harold Ross, "He was always leaning forward, pushing something invisible ahead of him."

Thank you.