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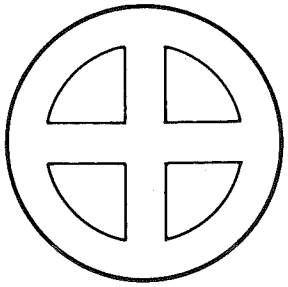
KUHF Radio Interview with Hazel Henderson



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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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**

Hazel Henderson

Co-Director, Princeton Center for Alternative Futures, Inc.

Ms. Henderson is noted as an author, social critic, internationally published futurist as well as an activist and founder of many public interest organizations—she describes herself as auto-didact. In addition to exploring cultural and social change in industrial societies, Ms. Henderson has also focused her efforts on developing conceptual rationale and organizing citizen participation in science and technology issues, critiquing traditional economic systems and proposing new models for managing steady-state economics. She has advised many non-profit organizations, including the Conservation Foundation, the Ford Foundation Energy Policy Project and the National Science Foundation.

She is a guest speaker at many corporate management seminars on social policy and volunteer advisor to many citizens organizations on environmental and consumer protection, corporate accountability, alternative futures and appropriate technology. She has helped organize or found many new agencies designed to influence federal policy at the interface of economics, environment, and social policy. She holds an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Worchester Polytechnic Institute for her work in alternative economics and technology. Ms. Henderson also holds numerous professional appointments, some of which include: director, Council on Economic Priorities and Worldwatch Institute; member, U.S. Association for the Club of Rome; advisor to the Cousteau Society and the Environmental Action Foundation; and member of the Advisory Council of the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment.

Ms. Henderson has appeared as a guest lecturer before numerous national organizations and universities in the U.S., Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Kenya, as well as in Europe and Canada. She has also been an invited guest on the NBC "Today Show" and ABC "Good Morning America Show". As an author, her work has appeared in *The Nation, Saturday Review, The Futurist, Business Economics, National Observer, Financial Analysis Journal, Business and Society Review, Public Administration Review, Harvard Business Review, Columbia Journal of World Business, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Mercurio* (Rome), *Futurology* (Geneva), *Mainichi Shimbun* (Japan), *The Ecologist* (U.K.), *Alternatives* (Canada), *Australian Financial Review, American Management Review* and other journals. In addition to contributions to many anthologies, she has recently published a book entitled *Creating Alternative Futures: The End of Economics.*

KUHF Radio (Houston) Interview with Dr. Hazel Henderson

Co-Director, Princeton Center for Alternative Futures, Inc.
Princeton, New Jersey

Interviewed at the Lutheran Brotherhood Colloquium on the Church in Future Society, January 29 - February 2, 1979.

INTERVIEWER: I'm Mark Markley. I'm on the faculty of the Studies of the Future Program at the University of Houston at Clear Lake City. I'm here at the Lutheran Brotherhood Colloquium on the Church in Future Society. With me is Dr. Hazel Henderson, Co-Director of the Princeton Center for Alternative Futures. We're going to talk on a number of topics relating to the future and what it means to various individuals and groups. Hazel, I wonder if we could first ask what are the essential messages that you try to bring to this conference and, indeed, in your work in general these days?

HENDERSON: What I particularly wanted to communicate with members of the church (and most of these people are either church administrators or pastors) was the way I see the role of the church beginning to change, inasmuch as the kind of technological choices that we're being called upon to make today seem to me to have larger and larger moral components. What I notice in Washington, in corporate board rooms and corporate groups I talk to, and administrative groups I talk to is a serious, honest dilemma that the old legitimacy of technological choices being directed simply willy-nilly by the idea of the consumer in the market place, has worn very thin because we now know that corporations can distort that by advertising. Corporations can dream up a technological innovation and then sort of force it down people's throats by advertising. In the same way, huge government agencies (like those of the Department of Energy or the Department of Defense) can dream up technologies like we dreamed up the nuclear industry and impose them on society almost by legislative decree. What seems to be happening these days is that these technologies are becoming so large and so destructive and impacting so many areas of our national life that they have become moral decisions.

INTERVIEWER: Even if only implicit.

HENDERSON: One of the recent examples of the way the churches are really facing these kinds of issues in a whole new way is that the National Council of Churches set up an energy task force a year ago, on which I have been participating with my partner (Carter Henderson). They are looking at the ethical implications of energy technology choices and the implications of whether technology decentralized decision-making or centralized decision-making.

The perfect example for me of this dilemma is the decision to go nuclear as far as power plants, because what happens there is that you find that that system is so vulnerable and so delicate and so few people understand it that, as Alvin Weinburg said not too long ago, we now need technological priesthoods to manage our technologies. I didn't notice anything in the constitution that talked about technological priesthoods managing our technologies for us. We are in that realm of moral choices, so the churches are being quite courageous about facing up to these things.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds like one example of the second question I wanted to ask which has to do with what your assessment would be of the most overlooked or least understood aspects of the future as you understand it (those things which, if we understood better, we'd have a better future). What are some other examples of things we really don't understand but which we dreadfully need to?

HENDERSON: I have spent the last 10 years of my life trying to demystify one area of our political debates and our national life that is conducted by the discipline of economics. We have forgotten just how many choices and decisions about what is valuable have been taken away in a very strange way from individuals and they're now arbitrated by this very technocratic discipline which is not at all scientific, even though it pretends to be scientific.

INTERVIEWER: Are you talking about goods being taken away from people, or choices, or what?

HENDERSON: The choices. At any time, the citizenry of a democracy no longer feels confident that they are able to judge, as voters, what is the good society; but some expert comes along with a cost-benefit analysis and says, "You may think you're right about what's good for society but let me tell you that we have a cost-benefit analysis and that says that it's a good idea to dam this river, to build this aerosol can factory, to make vinyl chloride in the way that we make it, to set up a huge oil shale industry that grinds up the hills in Colorado."

INTERVIEWER: Yes, but these things are so complex, how could it be done another way?

HENDERSON: The whole problem is that we need to face up to the real complexities, not the unnecessary conceptual complexities which economists weave around these issues. What really has happened is that Americans no longer grasp the basic truth and that is that economists are really no different than lawyers. A cost-benefit analysis is no different than a brief that a lawyer prepares in defense of his client's case.

INTERVIEWER: You're saying that it's biased in the sense of serving a particular value position.

HENDERSON: Oh yes! Of course if you're in the Army Corps of Engineers and you want to flood the great swamp down in Louisiana or the big thicket, or whatever it is that anybody wants to do, and you hire yourself an economist to portray the costs and benefits of that decision, you're obviously going to maximize and display very carefully the benefits and minimize the costs. What happens is that all the costs get pushed into the social arena and are hidden and delayed, and come back to haunt us in all kinds of other forms, but much later.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds then like you are not advocating so much that every different interest group should get in with their biased report, but that there should be some other kind of way of doing analysis and understanding these issues.

HENDERSON: Actually both of those things because what I've discovered being an advisor for the last few years at the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment in the Congress, is that to bring out all of these complexities so that you identify beforehand who the winners are and the losers are, who is going to get the benefits, who is going to bear the costs and who is going to be on the receiving end of all of those diseconomies, disservices and disamenities, we need to know that beforehand. The way you can construct an analysis of these kinds of technological choices is to bring in the parties and the constituencies who are most likely to be impacted by these decisions before the fact. Every technological choice we make creates jobs and destroys jobs, it creates winners and losers. We have to identify those winners and losers beforehand. The problem with the traditional cost-benefit analysis is that it averages out the cost-benefits per capita and sort of fuzzies up the whole picture about who the winners are and who the losers are. So, we get a lot of confusion because of that.

INTERVIEWER: As you look into the most expected future or any alternative futures that you'd like to mention (say five years out, 15 years out, maybe even as far out as 50 years out), what are some of the greatest surprises that you see that will make some people winners and some people losers? From your work in the Office of Technology Assessment, I imagine you've seen a number of issues that most people just don't know about yet.

HENDERSON: I think that one that is really coming down the pike, and seems to me to contain an awful lot of surprises, is the revolution in micro-processing.

INTERVIEWER: The "computer in a chip" business?

HENDERSON: Of course it is possible. It's miraculous the way the amount of information that can be stored on those little chips is more and more on less and less, what Buckminster Fuller calls "ephemeralization," and it's very elegant and beautiful. It creates enormous efficiency in those specific areas where it can be used for the company that's producing it, like for example the great growth of Texas Instruments in the last decade or so. What happens when you have these chips, almost costless in material terms, is we begin to automate whole areas of our lives that have formerly provided lots of low entry jobs. I don't know whether you saw this, but the Europeans are grappling with this -- I think with more alacrity than we are in the United States. The OECD (the 24 member-nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which are basically the world's developed economies) just got its own study together on the implications of micro-processing.

INTERVIEWER: Is that something that's done now or that they're just underway on.

HENDERSON: They've taken the first cut at it and, at the meeting recently before the Bonn summit meeting -- there was one in Bremen, when they were discussing the possibility of European currency -- one of the issues that was raised by this study that they've done was that they saw the impact of these kinds of automation processors as introducing an era in the 1980's of what they called "jobless economic growth."

INTERVIEWER: You mean paper economic growth, but in real terms for people...

HENDERSON: ...it doesn't create jobs. You see, in other words, the capital intensity (and thereby the need for less and less human input to the process) they thought by the 1980's would bring us an era of jobless growth, so you could have economic growth and profits, the only thing is that you wouldn't be creating jobs.

INTERVIEWER: What about the people who are left out?

HENDERSON: That's what they were raising. Is not the whole purpose of macro-economic management to create employment, to keep employment in balance with inflation and money creation and all these other factors? Here, they were saying, is a technology coming in from left field, introduced by private enterprise, and now well indigenized in the U.S. market. You remember, everyone this Christmas was

buying little micro-processor toys. Here will be the social impact of this: what are you going to do with these new ranks of the people who are automated out of the economy, shaken out at the bottom?

INTERVIEWER: Hidden within what you said, do I hear a possible other surprise, at least for business people, that instead of profit being the big goal, it might be maximizing the social welfare through the corporate activity? It might not be something voluntarily endorsed but that would be forced on business.

HENDERSON: I know one corporate chief executive, who I won't mention because I don't think that sort of thing is too fair to do on the air. A few years ago I was talking with him and the top management of his corporation (which is one of the Fortune 500), and he said that he could imagine a time where the Business Council (which is the big corporate lobbying group that really are the movers and shakers in Washington -- they push everybody around) or a Business Council-type group would actually go with their considerable clout and say, "Look, we are going to have to agree amongst each other to introduce more labor-intensive types of technology. We are not going to be able to maximize individual labor productivity in each one of our companies because the result of that would be that the government would become, through political pressure, the employer of last resort, and that means only one thing. The public sector is going to grow and grow, and the private sector is going to diminish and diminish -- which none of us want." I think if more corporate executives had that kind of systemic understanding, that that's where this zero-sum game of corporations maximizing labor productivity in competition with each other is going to end up. All it's going to mean is that the government, in a very inefficient way, is going to have to transfer funds and is going to have to become the employer of last resort. If one doesn't like that, then there will be a revolution.

I think that the need to discuss this sort of thing honestly is going to become extremely pressing. As a matter of fact, I've been discussing that with one of my fellow members at the Office of Technology Assessment Advisory Council for some years (J. Fred Bucy, the president of Texas Instruments).

INTERVIEWER: Do you see openness to this kind of candor increasing or decreasing?

HENDERSON: I see it increasing. I can remember 10 years ago people like myself who had a non-economic analysis of what the problems were, an analysis based in the real energy world of thermodynamics, or based in a much broader systemic sort of social analysis, we were ridiculed. The corporate economist was the basic forecasters.

In the past five or six years, as the economic forecasters have become less and less predictive and as the systemic forecasters who bring in force fields like climate and global desertification and technology and all these other issues, they have simply become more predictive. What I find is happening now, and I check with a lot of my friends in the futures movement who also go talk to corporate people if they're invited, they say that they have more invitations than they can handle and the corporate executives are still a bit embarrassed about calling on futurists. They'd like us to come in a plain brown wrapper. On the whole, they're very, very interested. I find that what they mostly want to know is, "How does your model differ from the model that my economic forecasters have? And you try to show them. You say, "Well, because they haven't included this as a variable, or that as a variable, that's why that model is behaving that way and that's why my model is behaving differently".

INTERVIEWER: And inevitably, that causes you to see ways in which the emperor has no clothes. Hopefully, we can reclothe the emperor. From your work in the Office of Technology Assessment, given the things you've looked at, how optimistic do you feel that we'll be able to reclothe the emperor (where in the metaphor the emperor, of course, is the social system)? How do you assess the sustainability of society given present trends and our ability to correct those trends?

HENDERSON: Well, in some cases, it seems glacial and institutions have different rates of change, as you know. Some seem to have a very rapid slippage into a new mental state, if you will. For others, they are just locked into their doctrines and are not going to change at all. I was listening to Warren Bennis saying this morning, and I so much agree with him, that probably universities are the slowest changing system. He said that it was easier to move a cemetery than it is to move a university. Of course, they do get a theological view of their little disciplinary preserves and all of that territoriality that goes on between academic departments.

INTERVIEWER: In that regard, where do you see that formal studies of the future, as opposed to other kinds of inquiry disciplines in the university or other settings, can be of assistance? What are the things that futurists or would-be futurists (be they in academic settings or lay people, people who want to explore the future -- where in your understanding would they be best off looking?

HENDERSON: I think that a lot of corporations are coming around, as I was saying, to hedging their bets in terms of their economic forecasting capability. So there is some

good futurism done in corporations but the whole problem of institutional-based futurism is that you get into the conceptual trap of looking at the future of General Motors or IBM or whatever your institution happens to be. I think that what we really need are futurists who can assume different logical positions in the system. Maybe what I'm saying is that futurists should not stay in one institutional base for long. I think that the whole idea is sort of problematical, in my terms. I try to be a generalist and a systemic futurist. That's why I'm self-employed because that's the only way to operate like that. One of the problems is that if you are a futurist for hire, as it were, it is very difficult not to fall into this thing of prescribing, to maximize that institution and to help an institution maximize, which, for the good of the whole social system, might have to decline. I mean I'm awfully glad that American electric utilities are so badly managed. (It's been legendary on Wall Street for a decade that utilities have the worst management of any large corporations in the country). I'm terribly glad that they don't have lots of futurists of hire to tell them how to maximize their own growth potential, because they're very growth-dependent institutions and we don't particularly need them to grow. We need all kinds of other energy sources to grow, for which utilities may be very inappropriate institution frameworks.

INTERVIEWER: I'm really struck by something you just said. When you said needing futurists to give this kind of advice on how to behave, on what kinds of decisions to make. I think most people think of futurists as people who study what might be in the future and so forth. They don't really think of them as being strategic advisors. In your understanding of who a futurist is, are they really concerned with present time strategy, not with what's off in the future?

HENDERSON: As I see an awful lot of what purport to be future studies that are done for specific institutions, there is a bottom line. The bottom line is how do we maximize our strategy of getting from here to there. So that's another tragedy of the commons -- it's one more zero-sum game.

INTERVIEWER: How do you mean?

HENDERSON: What I'm saying is I don't understand how anybody can be a futurist in the Year of our Lord 1979 without knowing that it actually is one world operationally. We created the globe-girdling technology and all the rest so that we now have an interdependent planet. So, inasmuch as

futurists begin from the assumption that it isn't really one planet and, as a matter of fact, that all of us can play competitive games (competitive nation/state games, competitive institutional games, all manner of zero-sum games), the world is going to blow up.

INTERVIEWER: But why does that mean that a futurist should necessarily work out all the action implications of their study and give strategic advice and so forth? What about the old academic tradition of just studying things for their own sake?

HENDERSON: Well yes, that's the kind of futurism that I approve of and the strategic futurism could be terribly worrying. Now, of course, a higher level strategic futurism could simply take into account that we are actually all hominids and we all do live on one planet. If they had correctly modeled the system from the start, then you might have a higher order of strategic futurism which would say, "Strategically we have to cooperate and strategically we have to share."

INTERVIEWER: So you'd be studying those kinds of alternatives because they're inherently more interesting.

HENDERSON: They're in the model, that's all. If you've got a correct model, those become the issues. What are the operating principles of this system we're on? The whole problem is that if you start from the operating principle that you're going to model the system as the future of Company X or Bureaucracy Y, then you're very unlikely to begin with a correct system model. Then you're going to start getting into these lower order strategic games about how can we beat the competition.

INTERVIEWER: ...Unless you're very careful about where your system boundaries are and your subsystems and your supersystems. Hazel, let me shift a little bit and ask about books, articles, other kinds of resources that you know of, thinking both of lay people and serious students of the future. What 5 books or papers or other kinds of works would you recommend?

HENDERSON: I think, since I am talking to a Lutheran group here and I'm very much concerned with what the ethical operating principles ...

INTERVIEWER: This is also for the Houston community and for the students!

HENDERSON: I would say that we should begin to prepare ourselves for understanding that we have been through the soaring 60's, the stagflation 70's and we are approaching what I call the economizing 80's. The best handbook to go into the economizing 80's that I can think of is Erich Fromm's To Have or To Be? It is a very nice statement of how you almost have to give up the silly game of keeping up with the Joneses if you want to develop more of your potential. I think that we are at the stage now where the main cultural game that's rewarded in all the ads and magazines and all the rest of it, of having the second boat and the third vacation house and all the rest of it, first of all, inflation is making that harder and harder already. The wife has to go out to work and all that sort of stuff. But second of all, it's beginning to sound a little bit silly. So I think that Erich Fromm's book is good food for thought on that level.

I think that one of the surprises to most futurists is going to be the rising of feminine consciousness. Not in terms of the feminist movement but as a balancing of the kind of attributes that we have always designated as feminine.

INTERVIEWER: As a cultural rather than a political phenomenon.

HENDERSON: Right. Where you will have much more of a rebalancing of the principles of cooperation to balance out all of the excessive competition. Not that competition isn't a perfectly good thing, but in nature competition is always balanced by cooperation. That aspect of futurism might best be looked at by reading Adrienne Rich's book Of Woman Born, which is very heavy and difficult for both men and women to read. It's the history of patriarchies. I believe one of the changes will be the decline of these excessively centralized, hierarchical, patriarchal, nation/states.

I've read so many books in the last two or three months. Another that I'm hoping will see the light of day and get published shortly is the political platform of a party that has come into being in New Zealand called the Values Party. They won 6% of the vote (not in the last election -- they didn't do so well in this election) in the first election where they fielded candidates. They call themselves the Values Party because they reject the values of both of the major parties in that country. They reject the value of measuring national progress by GNP (Gross National Product) and they reject individual success (as only measured by dollars -- income). This political party has a lovely book called Beyond Tomorrow. It's a perfect political futurist

document. It starts by saying we do not inherit the world from our parents, we borrow it from our children. That sort of blew my mind! Then, the next rubic comes from Mohandas Gandhi: there is enough in the world for all of our needs but not for our greeds. So I thought, "Well, this is really making a lot of sense to me," so I read on. They have worked out their principles in every field: housing, health care, the whole thing (it's a 100-page book). It is the most beautiful political platform, the most idealistic in the old sense but the most realistic in the new global sense, that I've come across. There are similar parties with very similar platforms now emerging in France, Germany, Denmark, and Britian; and there is a new push to get candidates representing these kinds of views onto the Parliament of Europe, elected as at-large members. I think that these kinds of political movements are going to be very interesting to watch.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any central source that describes the various emergent movements, be they political parties or people who are exploring various ideas having to do with sustainability and high quality future? How can someone who wants to understand what's going on in that whole area -- where can they look? Or do they have to phone someone like you?

HENDERSON: Well, I'm hoping to bring out a book as soon as I get a chance to get home and get organized. Woven in and out of that book, which if it still sounds right I'm going to call <u>The Politics of Reconceptualization</u>, I've got a rather large collection of all these political manifestoes. I need some help because some of them are in Danish, some of them are in Swedish, some of them are in German. I have one that is in Iranian. It's a beautiful blueprint for a sane future for Iran. I would really like to get this translating job done and to put together all these political manifestoes under the same covers so we can see the incredible commonality. The commonality is not surprising because most of them are coming out of the conditions of what I call late-stage industrialism. So, they are growing out of the understanding of the social problems created by excessive industrialism, psychotic technology as opposed to sane technology. It's not surprising that they all have the same elements. The elements are (roughly speaking) more citizen participation in decision-making, economic and political decentralism, more local-based enterprise, ecological caring, and appropriate types of renewable resource technologies. They're all there. Humanistic caring for the development of families and individuals. All of those elements emerge out of these totally different cultural experiences. The only thing that they share is that late-stage industrialism.

INTERVIEWER: They're coming out of very different cultural traditions. I know that you (from hearing you speak before) value greatly cultural diversity and preserving that just because of what time it is in terms of the planet's history, the varied cultures having common problems, hence of necessity needing to find some common solutions.

HENDERSON: So the cut will be different. In other words, I think we'll have just as much diversity but we'll begin to see that the store of all of the learning of all the individuals in all of the cultures on the planet, is now the storehouse that has to be ransacked for the new ideas.

INTERVIEWER: Can I ask you a really direct question which you may want to dodge and if you do, that's okay. Given that you've been involved in technology assessment for several years, do you think that really provides us much basis for optimism in terms of being able to control the pernicious effects of technologies? Is it really a worthwhile endeavor?

HENDERSON: It has the potential to be. At the moment, in terms of our fledgling capability to do these studies well and the amount of funding compared with all of the straight-line, instrumental, extrapolative studies that tell us how to go on doing what we're doing, no. There will have to be a lot more very serious effort devoted to doing this. One of the things that I've been interested in at the Office of Technology Assessment is the kind of exchange with many governmental people in other countries. Particularly I've been involved with dealing with these ideas vis a vis people in Japan and Europe. In many ways, they have seen the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment as a bright little interesting experiment that they can go home and use to persuade their governments to start doing the same thing. So, I think that a sort of international dialogue is coming about which may be reinforcing that it's no longer sort of sissy to do this.

INTERVIEWER: ...To assess the technologies before we apply them.

HENDERSON: It's no longer effete and sissy. I can remember a very scathing article by Norman McRae in "The Economist" to that effect, that it was sort of a ladies' garden club type of sentiment and if you wanted to be really tough and macho, you ought to just go in there and take the risks.

INTERVIEWER: Real science. If you can do it, by all means do it.

HENDERSON: The whole thing is that what really scares me to death at this point are the wild-eyed realists. They're the ones that really scare me. "Well be realistic: we have to have breeder reactor." I think that this thing is beginning to temper the wild-eyed realists and is making them realize that the British are going to have to do it, and the Germans are going to have to do it, and everybody is going to have to do it: we all are going to have to be good boys and stop playing with these dangerous toys, or at least figure out what the consequences are.

INTERVIEWER: So they're going to have to learn to do it together in some way, even though we have to do them apart too.

HENDERSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Hazel, the kinds of things you've talked about give me more reason to feel optimistic and I thank you very much for being with us today.