

## **New Books by leading futurists of the World Future Society and World Futures Studies Federation.**

Yvonne Curtis

Edward Cornish from the WFS and Richard Slaughter from WFSF have coincidentally released their latest books. Both books include brief histories of futuring or future(s) studies and consider that human society as we know it is at a transition point, but differ in their viewpoint and main objective for the publication. Their entries in the FWS Futurist Directory (Millennium Edition) give an indication of their different backgrounds that will have helped shape their viewpoint.

Edward Cornish is a journalist, and association executive by profession and has been the President of the World Future Society (located from its foundation in Bethesda, Maryland, USA) and editor of its magazine *The Futurist* since 1969. He was born in 1927 in New York, educated mainly in the USA and still lives in the USA.

Richard Slaughter is a futurist by profession, and is the Director of the Australian Foresight Institute based at the Swinburne University of Technology and is presently the President of the WFSF (a network of Futurists with its secretariat changing location every few years). He was born in 1945 and educated in the UK but his career in teaching and developing Foresight has mainly been in Australia.

Futuring is a reflective book, which looks back on the development of futures thinking in the USA during the twentieth century and gives Cornish's views of why it is even more important today. Slaughter's book, *Futures Beyond Dystopia*, uses the historical growth of futuring to underpin the development of older futuring methods to form a new discipline of Integral Futures Studies which he considers necessary for futuring to continue to be useful. Both books are valuable additions to the growing Futures Studies literature.

*Futuring: The Exploration of the Future*, Edward Cornish  
World Future Society, USA, 2004, ISBN 0-930242-57-2 (hbk)

This is a vital book written by one of the pioneers of futuring from a life-time involvement in the field. Futuring is really a way of life and does become all-consuming for many people. Edward Cornish is one such person and the book reflects his passion and knowledge of the subject as well as his certainty that it is a life-changing and future enhancing activity for all. From the acknowledgements it is a "community" book with the willing support of many of Cornish's family, friends and colleagues.

Cornish believes that humanity is in the process of The Great Transformation when life on planet earth will change dramatically and possibly catastrophically. The balance between continuity and change is shifting and the speed and magnitude of change is increasing so that, as individuals, our knowledge of the wider world is always out-of-date. Practising futuring will help us to make decisions that better fit in our present

reality. There are a number of chapters covering the main futuring techniques giving examples and parallels and how they can be used effectively at personal, business and governance levels. The final chapters give a history of the World Future Society, the responsibility he sees that futurists have for "improving our futures" and for future generations.

With extensive chapter notes, a bibliography of useful reading with brief abstracts and a glossary, this book is an ideal text for students and as a gift to any friend you want to interest in futuring.

Futures Beyond Dystopia - Creating Social Foresight, Richard A Slaughter

Routledge Falmer, London & New York, 2004 ISBN 0-415-30269-2(hbk), ISBN 0-415-30270-6(pbk) Cost 24.99 pounds?

A foundation book outlining how and why Richard Slaughter developed the discipline that he has called "Integral Futures Studies". He considers it a progression of futures studies that is more "comprehensive" and "inclusive" than practices and techniques of the past.

The new dimension he is introducing is looking at previous futures techniques and how they may be interpreted, using Ken Wilber's "four quadrants of development" outlined in his book "A Brief History of Everything". In Slaughter's analysis, many of the earlier Futures techniques such as backcasting, scenario building and trend analysis concentrated on the external two quadrants (right hand) ignoring the internal two quadrants (left hand). Left-hand quadrant methods he lists include causal layered analysis and metascanning.

Another interesting point is that in putting forward this new concept of futures studies he does not discard the old. He integrates the old into the new process to provide methods that cover all aspects of humans as social beings to discover what viable futures are possible.

The title reflects Slaughter's assessment that the "human species is in greater danger than it yet clearly understands". He regards the new threats placing quite new demands on futures studies and futurists and those new methods are needed to meet these challenges. He also suggests that too many people have begun practising futures without the necessary "professional literacy" and that there is a need for professional standards to be established as in other professions.

Slaughter has developed his theme logically and succinctly, which makes the book a very easy read. There is always a well-argued reason why any conclusion is reached with examples and references given to support his position.

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