



# Newsletter

April 19, 1985

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On March 22-23, the Centre sponsored a Workshop on Human Values and Technology at the University of Waterloo. More than 60 people attended, including undergraduates, graduate students, faculty members from all six Faculties of the University, and a number of visitors from the community and other universities.

The purpose of the Workshop was to initiate a dialogue on STV issues among scientists, social scientists, engineers, and humanists. In this respect it evidently was a success.

The group discussions clarified a number of points concerning the role of the Centre and its future direction:

1. The Centre is mainly an umbrella organization which exists to shelter and facilitate STV activity on campus. As such, it has no narrow focus of its own, no doctrine which it espouses, beyond the conviction that, in a society and University where much time, money, energy, and expertise are devoted to developing advanced technologies, it is especially important to look closely at the implications of such technologies for the quality of human life, broadly conceived.

2. The activities which the Centre would shelter and facilitate are described in the Working Paper issued by the Senate Long Range Planning Committee and published in the March 27 issue of the Gazette. In that paper, under the heading "Technology and Society", it is suggested that there are two complementary dimensions to the University's Fourth Decade attention to the human aspect of technology. On one hand, there is study of the actual impact of technology on people, technology's effects; on the other, study of the processes by which technologies are developed. The former refers to the humanly significant output of technology; the latter, to the humanly significant inputs, the values and institutions which determine whether and how technologies are developed and diffused. "STV" refers to the critical study of technology in both of these aspects: (1) How is the quality of our lives affected by the institutions and values which guide processes of technological innovation and diffusion? And how might these institutions and values be altered to ensure that technologies better serve human needs? (2) What are the indirect effects of adoption of advanced technologies - especially for the worker and the consumer? And, insofar as these indirect effects impact negatively on the quality of human life, what adjustments and controls are called for?

The Centre for Society, Technology and Values is an umbrella organization in that it exists to shelter and facilitate attempts to answer or shed light on these questions.

3. It follows that although the Centre has no narrow focus or ideology of its own, its area of concern is essentially critical.

4. An important role which the Centre can play in the University is that of facilitating communication between the EMS Faculties and the AEH Faculties, and in this way contribute to the building of bridges between the "two cultures" resident at UW. Limited participation of EMS faculty members at the Workshop suggests, however, that the desired communication is still in its infancy.

5. It was suggested at the Workshop that the Centre sponsor research into STV issues. One of the areas identified by the SSHRC Strategic Grants programme is "The Human Context of Technology". There is reason to think that a strategic grant application in this area would be successful. If you would like to participate in discussions leading up to submitting a proposal to SSHRC or some other agency, contact Larry Haworth (x6215). We have on file a fairly comprehensive list of the researchers on campus who interest themselves in STV issues. In addition to providing a forum at which the details of a proposal might be hammered out, we can probably provide staff who would be of assistance in preparing the proposal.

Among the STV research areas which have been suggested are the following:

- Jobs and the quality of working life
- Privacy, security, and individual performance monitoring
- Technology in peace and conflict
- Ethical aspects of biotechnology
- Health care and biomedical research
- Psycho-social impacts of advanced technologies