




Can we rescue our future?

Graham H May
Futures Skills

1943

A horizontal yellow brushstroke with a textured, painterly appearance, extending across the width of the slide below the year '1943'.

- Croydon, South London
- Little optimism
- Continuation of current trends not inevitable
- Future may be better
- A personal example of hope



"While you have to learn from history you must not copy history because the future will not be the same."

David Potter, Psion

History and the future



- We have muddled through in the past
- No guarantee we will continue to do so.
- Our present predicament may be worse
- Each generation may believe it has greater problems
- We have greater capability to tackle our problems.
- That same capability can also be the cause of current and future problems.

Can we rescue our future?



- Can
- Will
- we
 - living things
 - humanity
 - distinctions
- our
 - west and the rest

Can we rescue our future?

A horizontal yellow brushstroke with a textured, painterly appearance, spanning most of the width of the slide.

- Does the future need rescuing?
- History of warnings
- Pessimists and Optimists

About the future



- We would like to know the future in order to prepare for it,
- But not if we could do nothing to influence it.
- The point of "knowing" the future is to change it.

The three "p's"



- Possible,
- Probable
- Preferable futures
 - conflicts in defining the preferable
 - assume our preferences are self-evident
 - they are not
 - George Bush and Osama Bin Laden

Rescuing our future from



- Global warming
- "Frankenstein Foods" and genetic manipulation
- Virtual reality
- Millions starving
- An aging population
- Terrorism and violent conflict
- Globalisation

Is it that bad?



- Few times in history when everybody looked to the future with optimism.
- H.G. Wells and Jules Verne
- William Morris
- With the benefit of hindsight we might conclude they were all right.

Problems of success?



- Global warming
 - our urban-industrial life-style.
- Technological development
 - the growth of scientific knowledge.
- Population
 - medical and nutritional improvements
- Conflict
 - more aware through global communication.
- Globalisation
 - international collaboration

Technology



- GM Foods
 - potential benefits
 - selective breeding
- Human genome
 - concerns and opportunities.
- Information Technology
 - television, the cinema and the theatre
 - Pompeii

Perception of issues



- We face serious issues
- The context of history
- To cut deaths : Ban the car!
 - | road crashes will be third largest cause of death across the world by 2020.
 - | ease the problem of global warming
- My car is not a problem, it is you that create traffic, and they who cause congestion, accidents and pollution!

Difficulties of futures thinking



- Making choices about things that do not exist
- Not facts but “futura” or conjecture
- The present is normal
- Easier to identify threats than to imagine the opportunities
- Both good and bad impacts can occur

The future is more important now



- 6 billion and rising
- Impact on the planet and on ourselves
- Understanding the impact
- Increasingly rapid change
- The responsibility we have for the future

Can we rescue our future?



- Many potential problems
- Also potential for good
- It is a matter of the choices we make
- How we relate to one another
- The future is scary and exciting
- The pull of the future
- We owe it to ourselves, and those who will follow us, to do the best we can.