

The world enters the critical phase of the third modern dark age

by Christopher White

The following speech, titled "The Critical Phase of the Third Modern Dark Age: A Comparison of the Periods 1200-1400, 1550-1650, and 1882 to the Present," was delivered on Dec. 30 to a conference of the International Caucus of Labor Committees, in Herndon, Virginia.

Twice in the modern history of our civilization, humanity has plunged into the depths of a dark age. First in the period culminating in the outbreak of pandemic disease, bubonic and pneumonic plague which scythed across Europe between the years 1347-51, taking in its wake between one-third and one-half of the souls then living. Barely two centuries later, the grim reaper again took his toll: visiting the indigenous populations of Ibero-America with destruction more total than any seen in history, returning to Europe to sweep away over one-half the population of war-torn Germany and other parts of central Europe.

Twice in our modern history, mankind has descended into the abyss. Twice he has climbed out, to continue the progress disaster interrupted. Our culture has therefore proven twice, that there are policies which cause dark ages, policies which resulted in the hideous collapse of population levels of the 14th and 16th centuries. And on the other hand, that there are alternate policies, policies under which human progress can again flourish.

This difference, the difference between the life of civilization and death, is what has to be understood. What then is it that makes a dark age, a dark age? And why is it that 1986 is to be the turning point in the Third dark age known to our culture? The turning point which will determine whether humanity is to descend into an abyss worse by far than that of the 14th, or 17th centuries, from which humanity may not recover, or whether humanity will have the morality to adopt again, the policies proven by the framers of the Golden Renaissance, and by Gottfried Leibniz and his circle, that overcame our previous dark ages.

We shall show that with the bankruptcy of the United States, and the dollar-based monetary system, we have come to the end of an era. Not simply the post-war era of supposed American hegemony, nor simply the order that has prevailed since the Versailles settlement of World War I, but the end of the modern imperial system in the West—the concert of so-called Great Powers that was consolidated during the 1880s.

Let us proceed with the first question posed, before turning our attention to the second.

The 'Protestant work ethic'

Those who lie to mislead, along with those who do not know the modern history of our culture, have obfuscated the way our culture developed, with their mythical account of how it came about. In their view, the view that is taught in schools and universities, espoused by those who make policy, modern economic theory begins in the 18th century with the so-called free enterprise system of Adam Smith, the British Liberal School. Others, with a somewhat broader sweep, locate the beginnings of modern economics in the Reformation of the 16th century.

They talk of the so-called Protestant work ethic, the development of the profit motive, and the changes Protestantism introduced in social conceptions of the individual. For such, the Reformation's so-called conception of an individualized work ethic, and its supposed reward, the making of individual profit, is the precursor of the liberal economics of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Bentham, and Mill: individual profit-making regulated by the workings of the Invisible Hand of the market place.

The history of our development did not happen that way, nor could it have. This, we have proven repeatedly over the years. Underneath the nice-sounding words "Protestant work ethic," "individual profit," "freedom of the market place," what conceptions for practice are we really dealing with?

The issues are much older. Our culture has developed as the by-product of warfare: warfare between the republican world-view and current, and the opponent oligarchism. The ebbs and flows of our history of the last seven centuries are the determined by-products of that warfare. Dark ages are the result of oligarchic rule and express the essence of the oligarchy and its world-view.

The customary periodization of our history is a fake. Historical progress can only occur politically under conditions of oligarchic defeat.

Oligarchism is what underlies the authoritative rhetoric. It is a racist world-view and a racist practice, rooted in the massive injustice that must flow from the arrogation of supremacy by any heteronomic group. A practice that has been repeatedly doomed in the course of human history. As we

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imbibe the rhetoric, are we to conclude that all non-Protestants, that is primarily those of non-northern European extraction, are lazy, and do not know how to work?. Useless eaters relative to the superior WASP?

"Individual profit," what is that other than a nice name for greed untrammelled? The lining of one's own purse at the expense of others. The freedom of the individual to rob and steal. The working of the market, the so-called self-regulating system, under which the actions of individual robbers are governed. Freedom, then, for the system of usury, under which individual profit-makers rob and steal from others in the name of interest, rent, and speculation, which fictions are supposed to hide the robber from the eye and justice of the robbed. Are we to conclude that mankind's progress remained impossible until moral restrictions against usury and its attendant practices had been done away with?

Our mythical history is the rationalization of primarily White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, rejecting the prior constraints prohibiting the practice of usury, robbing the rest of the world for their own gain. This is in fact the outlook that has increasingly dominated the policymaking of the Western world under the imperial system of Great Powers that has been in effect since the 1880s. More broadly, it is the tolerated practice of the new dark age. The practice that, as we

shall see, has brought to an end an era in human history. It is not an account coherent with the history of mankind's development. It is the rationalization of insurgent oligarchism, and its world outlook.

For the credulous, such ideas may appear convincing. After all, our world is very different from the world of the 17th century, and as far removed again from the society of the 13th and 14th centuries. Our culture is the culture of the urban center, based on the spread and assimilation of the technology of the heat-powered machine. The earlier developments of mankind in our modern history were predominantly agrarian societies, based on muscle power, whether animal or human, supplemented by the power of wind and water.

Our world may well be separated from earlier periods in our history by such a vast gulf as distinguishes the population of the urban-based, heat-powered technology-dependent society, from the population of the rural society. But we are the same human race. The capacity for development, progress, is what distinguishes our species absolutely from the lower beasts. That capacity, Lyndon LaRouche has proven, permits societies, as different as ours may appear to be from its predecessors in the modern period, to be judged by common yardsticks based in physical economy. Those yardsticks, in turn, permit the policies which characterize human progress to be distinguished from those which dominate in a dark age, and which unleashed, lead unerringly to the kind of catastrophe visited upon mankind in 1347, and repeated in Europe and Ibero-America during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Potential relative population density

What are those yardsticks? The increase of potential relative population density. In our culture, this is reflected as the increase from tens of individuals per square kilometer of habitable land that characterized the agrarian societies of the 13th and 15th centuries, to the hundreds of individuals that can inhabit the same square kilometer of land given the urban technology of the modern period. Worldwide, the same order-of-magnitude increase characterizes the entirety of the modern period.

The increase in potential, reflected as an increase in actual population density, is measured relative to the technological improvement of land for habitation and cultivation. This can be seen, crudely, in two ways: In the earlier periods, the 14th- through 17th-century agrarian society, it can be argued that 90% of the population was required to support the 10% of the population that lived in the cities of the time. Cities, with few exceptions—like perhaps Constantinople and Paris—were large if they reached a population of about 25,000. Now for us, these ratios are more than reversed. Across the so-called advanced sector, less than 10% of the population is required to produce for the 90% of city-dwellers; roughly 20% of which live in cities of more than 250,000 inhabitants. Worldwide, of course, the same is not true.

The increased potential represented by such advance, is

created as advances in technology mediate increases in the productive powers of labor, which increase the potential relative population density. Thus, correlated with the order-of-magnitude increase in population density over the course of the modern period, there is a roughly six orders-of-magnitude increase in the power of the technology deployed by mankind, as the muscle-power, wind, and water of the earlier periods have been supplanted by coal and steam, and the succession of technologies based on electricity that have characterized the recent 100 years. The rapid population advance of the 19th century, for example—approximating the Golden Section geometric pattern of growth, at twice the rate of the 14th or 17th century, and more than twice the rate of our own century—correlates with the most rapid extension of the power of technology in human history, as man created the potential to forever free himself from the relative fixity of muscle-powered peasant culture, the relatively bestial form favored by oligarchism.

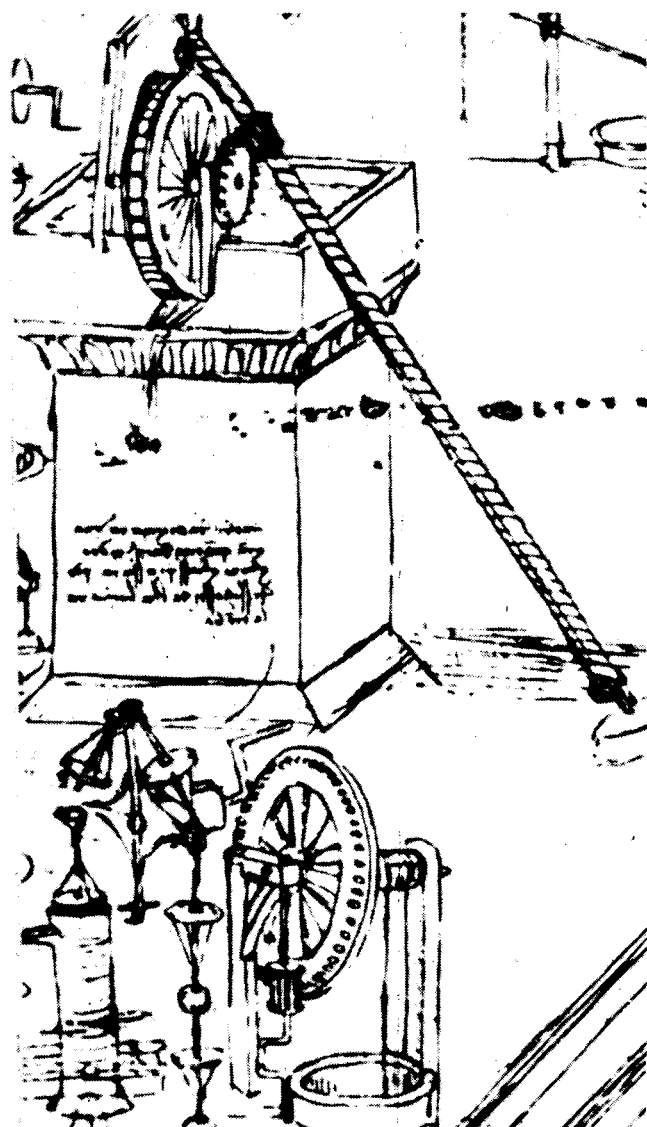
Human population does not grow as the population of the animal kingdom grows. Growth of population density is not simply a function of the increase of population. To maintain the growth of the population, and increase of population density, the technological potential of the society must increase faster than the growth of the population. Credit policy and finances must therefore subserve the broader aim of fostering the necessary increase in rates of relative potential. Correlated cultural requirements are demanded of the population; educational requirements of the workforce rise; productive working life is extended as life expectancy increases.

Societies can thus be ranked in terms of the necessary increase in relative potential population density. By the same criteria, a society's capacity to increase such potential can be assessed. The society which is characterized by stagnation or decline in relative potential population density, is a society which, violating the principles of natural law which have been proven efficient by human progress itself, is dooming itself to submit to a new dark age.

In a dark age, relative potential population density declines, because contrary policies are dominant. Relative potential population density is parasitized in favor of accumulations of nominal wealth, the proceeds of usury, ground rent, and speculation, feeding on the decaying body of the host.

The decline in potential can, over time, continue to appear as a growth in actual population, and growth in population density. But under such conditions, there will come a point when a threshold is crossed. The relative potential falls below the actual population density reached. At that point, the society can continue to stagger along, but its days are numbered. Sooner or later, the actual population will fall to the levels established as sustainable in that technological mode by the decline in potential.

The process which governs such a decline can be known, as well as the process which governs advance. Both are governed by the same laws. The turning points in the downward descent are identifiable.



Models of pumps driven by chains, drawn by Leonardo da Vinci. Technological advance is the basis for increasing potential relative population density; without it, the world enters a dark age.

Are there limits to growth?

In recent years, the recurrent catastrophic crises of the 14th and 17th centuries have again been used to adduce proof for the discredited thesis which Parson Malthus stole from the Venetian monk Ortes, that there are limits to a society's continued growth. Under the constraints of an apparently fixed technological mode, a society appears to converge on the limits of the resource base defined by its technology. The better a society appears to reproduce itself in the form of expanded population, the more rapidly it appears to exhaust the resource base on which it depends. Ortes and Malthus argued that human population growth, in the agrarian peasant-based mode, would always outrun man's capacity to bring land into cultivation on a large enough scale to supply the needs of the increased population. What they called "nature"

would apply corrective measures to restore balance, eliminating the so-called surplus population.

Our very existence is the proof that there are no such limits. If there were, we would not be here. Human history would have ended long before the crisis in the 13th and 14th centuries that marks the beginning of the modern era in European culture. If there are no such existent absolute limits, then the reduction of potential relative population density that is characteristic of a dark age, though governed by the laws of economics, is not fundamentally economic at all, but rather political and cultural. A dark age is governed by the law of economy, in the way that a violation of law is nonetheless governed by law. In this sense, 1986 is marked as a turning point in the dark age of the last 100 years.

Man must not adopt, or tolerate those policies which result in a reduction of the potential relative population density. But if progress, as measured by the increase in that parameter, is what distinguishes mankind absolutely from the beasts, then, under the policies of a dark age, man must in effect have renounced in his practice his species identity, to reduce himself to the fixed range of practices otherwise characteristic of the beasts.

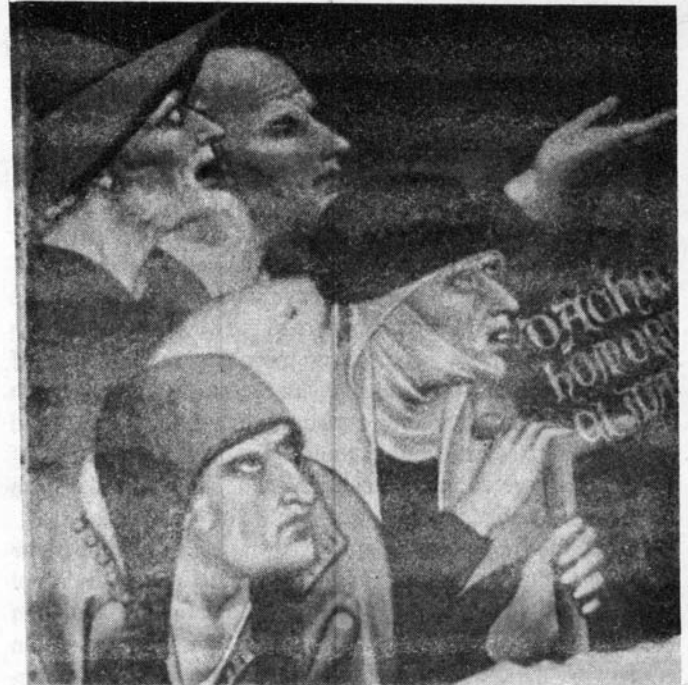
Where the progress of human society is mediated through increased productivity of labor, and therefore through the increase of wealth available for humankind, the dark age is characterized by parasitical growth. Progress is stopped. Wealth-generation is made subservient to the compounding of usurious debt, as the parasite spreads. Labor's capacity to assimilate advanced technology is degraded to the repetitious fixed routine of the beasts. Labor becomes another source of loot for the parasite. The parasite takes over the host.

Our century is a dark age of that form. Let us return to the divisions we referenced before, distinctions between predominantly agrarian and predominantly urban forms of economic organization, and between the power of muscle and the power of the machine assisting muscle, to establish in what ways the dark age of our century is comparable to the earlier dark ages, and in what ways it is different.

Imperial domination continues

First, our world, like the world of the 13th century, like the world of the 16th century, is still primarily agrarian. The earlier phases of our modern culture foundered on the limitations imposed by agrarian existence. We have disposed of the power, for over 100 years now, to have ended the apparent cycle in which simple human labor, condemned to live out the cycle of the seasons, in exactly the same way as did generations before, is subordinate to the ostensible powers and vagaries of nature. We have had the power to end this arrangement, but under the dominant Great Power system, of imperial "master race" and nation ruling subject colonies, we have not done so.

The nations of the southern hemisphere, under the standing imperial arrangements consolidated since the 1880s, were



adapted to the requirements of what had become the captive world of the industrialized countries, captive to the usurious financial interests that had taken them over. In the intervening century, no country has been added to those numbered among the industrialized, with the possible exception of Japan; the industrialization of Russia by then was underway. The spread of the industrial system outside the northern hemisphere was halted, not because of the racial supremacy of the inhabitants of the north, but because a decision was made, and has effectively been kept, to draw that line.

The nations of the southern hemisphere, whether free or colonized outright, became the suppliers of raw materials to the economies of the industrialized world. To accomplish such a function, urban centers, urban work-forces were developed, along with the rudiments of infrastructure-to permit the extraction of products for export.

This looting activity nonetheless increased the potential of the nations of the southern hemisphere, unleashing an expansion of population unprecedented in human history—but without providing the in-depth development that would sustain such increased potential. Except for pockets of development, such as Argentina was, or India became, the principal century-old enforced obstacle to development, is the maintenance of an unproductive peasantry as a cheap pool of substitute labor available to replace those otherwise employed in occupations considered urban.

For the oligarchy and its financial power, this is the System. Eternal. Unchanging. The way things ought to be. The way things will stay, cleansed of the influences of industrial urban life. A peasantry that knows its place. An urban-based



UN Photo/John Isaac

Shown left is a fragment of a fresco in Florence, showing survivors of the Black Death of the 14th century. Above are victims of famine in Ethiopia, 1984.

oligarchy whose global financial power permits it to rule the world.

Under such arrangements, there are essentially two options. Of these, the one proven correct in the development of the industrial economies themselves, is the one rejected out of hand for the last 100 years: the industrialization of agriculture, facilitated by the in-depth development of infrastructure, and in-depth industrialization. The other is the simple extension in scale of existing agricultural practices.

Under the latter, potential relative population density is doomed to decline. As more land is brought into cultivation and production to provide for more people, the less such available cultivable land must remain to be introduced to cultivation. Under this to impose a limit which reduces population. But the more extensive cultivation of the lands thus farmed, must also result in accelerated exhaustion of otherwise fertile soils. As the growing population approaches the limits apparently set by the availability of land, the quality of the land farmed must also decline: the dust bowl phenomena of the 1930s. Land cannot be farmed extensively, indefinitely, without transformed into drought-ridden parched-out dust bowls. Labor-intensive cultivation of crop land is perhaps the fastest way to ensure the depletion of the soil and the onset of drought and famine.

In this dominant mode of agricultural production, turning points in the devolutionary process can readily be defined: the rate at which the growing population is approaching the limit of land cultivable in that technological mode; the rate at which cultivable land is being depleted, relative to the need

for increased crop yields from that land; the rate at which the depletion of land results in formerly fertile land being taken out of cultivation; the rate at which production in per-capita terms is falling short of satisfying necessary consumption to maintain the population; the rate at which the demands of usury, ground rent, and tax farming are accelerating the underlying decline.

It is an illusion to think that so-called things in the real universe stay as they are, or maintain a steady state. There is either growth, or decline. Change governed by law. The System has not maintained an eternal declined worldwide at an accelerating rate, especially in the period since the eruption of the currency turmoils of the 1960s. By such parameters, Africa has already traversed the course of the accelerating downward spiral, but Africa is not alone.

In this respect, the dark age of our century appears to conform to the pattern established in the 14th, and again in the 16th century. There are those whose policy this was, among the oligarchic families and their retainers, who take comfort from that, thinking that the consequences of their system—and they know what those consequences are—will be confined to those parts of the world against which such policies have been applied. In this, the white race supremacists are profoundly wrong.

They have adopted a model, as Bertrand Russell and Barbara Tuchman have made clear.

How the Black Death happened

The model is the process which led to the Black Death. Twelfth- and 13th-century Europe saw perhaps the most rapid expansion in population then known to the human race. Between the beginning of the 12th century and the beginning of the 14th, the population of Western Europe more than doubled. The increase in population was based on the clearing of forest-covered lands, and drainage programs, which must have more than doubled the amount of land available for cultivation.

The productivity of the land thus claimed for use was improved by the introduction of three-field crop rotation, alternating winter and spring crops and fallow land, and by the widespread use of the horse collar, which permitted that animal to be used for draught purposes more effectively. The power of water mill and wind mill supplemented the achievements thus made.

The apparent economic limits to this kind of approach were actually not reached, even on this technological base, as is evidenced by renewed clearance and drainage, by the same methods, in subsequent centuries.

The apparent limits of this agrarian-dominated mode were imposed politically, through primarily the spread of sheep-grazing for the production of wool. Sheep and wool served as the vehicle for the extension of usurious credit, and tax farming, supplying an export market in the eastern Mediter-

anean, barter goods, via Venice and Florence, for the spices and drugs of the East, coming via the overland route through the Near East. The sheep were moved onto cultivable land, typified by the creation of the Mesta in Spain, the mortgaging of England to Venetian and Florentine wool interests, on the security successively of sheep and land, and the parallel destruction of northern France and Flanders. The potentials that had been developed were undercut, even as the population continued to grow. The agricultural system, now supporting twice as many people as ever before, began to break down, 50 years and more before the Black Death hit. Famine appeared and spread beginning 1312, killing, in a first pass,

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an estimated 10% of the population of northwestern Europe, and perhaps more.

This is how an agrarian-based society is destroyed. In the post-Renaissance period, the same general considerations apply, even though this is known as the period of religious wars. The scale of European-based activity had expanded to encompass the globe, through improvements in ship-design and construction, and the recovery of navigation. The opening of intercontinental navigation was accompanied by the improvement of internal water-borne transportation along European rivers and canal systems, typified by the systems built, and projected for construction, by Leonardo da Vinci. If wind and water and muscle remained the dominant power sources, advances and improvements in the technology and infrastructure of transportation cheapened costs of all activity, increased productivity, and produced related benefits, along with advanced war-fighting capabilities—in metal-working, for example.

But again, the previous pattern applies. In the period 1515-27, the usurers took over; usury latched onto the great power of the period, imperial Spain; Europe was plunged into a century or more of war. The indigenous population of Ibero-America was exterminated in less than a century, by the combined impact of disease and slave labor in mines to produce the precious metals that would permit Spain's debt

to be serviced, and Venice to finance its trade with the East.

In this respect, the new dark age may appear to conform to the previous pattern. But it does not. The numerical domination of the world's agrarian-based population does not therefore mean that it is agrarian society, and the patterns of agrarian society, which determine the course of events. Our agrarian-dominated world does not exist in isolation. It is rather the symbiotic product of the master-slave relationship perpetuated from the developed North for the last 100 years. By enforcing the backwardness of the southern hemisphere, the North has in fact sealed its own death warrant.

Some will argue that if population potential in the southern hemisphere has fallen, and continues to fall, nonetheless the technological North has continued to advance. The technologies that have been developed in the last 100 years might be marshaled in support of such a claim. We have conquered the Moon, broken beyond the confines of the Earth's atmosphere, mastered the principles of supersonic and powered flight. We have replaced the horse with the automobile and tractor.

Stagnation of production

What we have *not* done is more to the point. Look at two industries which characterize modern industrial processes: the making of steel, and the generation of electricity. Above we argued that human progress is dependent on increasing the rate of increase of potential relative population density, that the productive powers of human labor, mediated through technology, must therefore advance more rapidly than the growth of population density itself. Technology which advances the productive powers of human labor, characteristically advances the flux density of the energy source delivered to the work surface. If the productive powers of labor are to advance, then the flux density of the technology applied must advance more rapidly again.

We have seen that the order-of-magnitude increase in population density effected between the 14th century and the 19th, was correlated with a five or six-orders-of-magnitude increase in the power of technology applied. The generalization of the increasing power of technology was halted and consolidated in the aftermath of the decisions which sealed off the southern hemisphere from industrial development. Electrification of the economies of the North, begun in the 1880s, despite the *New York Times*, and in the United States largely completed, with the exception of the farm sector, by 1925, was the last such effort.

In the case of electricity generation, and also with steel, the flux densities of processes applied, have stagnated at levels reached earlier in the century.

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Demographically this is reflected in declining birth rates

throughout the advanced sector, declining below demographic replacement levels. It is reflected in the increased proportion of the population that is aged, in the stagnation and decline of population, in the decline of urban culture, measured simply by the proportion of the population resident in cities of over one-quarter of a million.

Economically it is reflected in the greater cost of raw materials, costs which increase as a function of the refusal to permit the development of cheaper, higher-flux-density technologies, such as nuclear energy and thermonuclear fusion power, which would redefine the energy throughput of the economy more dramatically than steam power did. The increased costs, in terms of labor and energy requirements, are not offset by the falling prices paid to Third World countries for their production, accelerating the decline in the South, concomitantly with the North.

This situation is also reflected in the stagnation and decline of basic industry and infrastructure. Through war and depression of the last hundred years, we have been living vicariously off the scientific and technological accomplishments of the past, refusing to make the investments that will create our own future.

A turning point

Now comes the time of reckoning. Increasingly, the nations of the developing sector no longer produce raw materials, but rather export manufactured products, intermediate products, and final consumer goods into markets that northern nations like the United States can no longer supply. The decline in the South is accelerated by this absolute shift of resources, redirection of labor and energy, out of internal economic activity. Surplus food-producing areas, especially in the North, are destroyed, while millions starve.

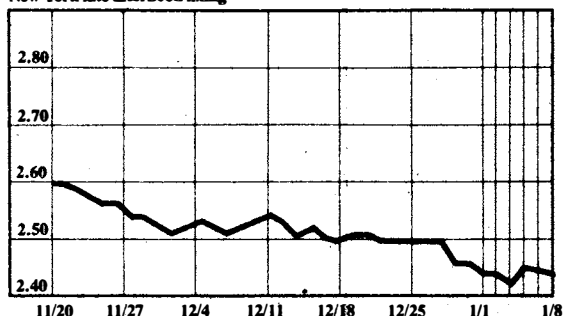
And over all, the claims of the users, for their title against world productive activity. The monetary system is bankrupt. The largest of the great powers of the West is bankrupt. The time has come for the bankruptcy of the financial and credit system, typified by the approximately \$7 trillion worth of claims against the U.S. government, economy, and so-called consumer. The compounding of interest on the \$7 trillion dooms the system that has thus been parasitized, as previously the users doomed the Spanish monarchy, and doomed the culture of 14th-century Europe.

The collapse of the southern hemisphere, under usurious looting that can no longer be sustained, the collapse of northern industrial capabilities, under related policies of enforced technological backwardness subordinating productive economy to usury, the bankruptcy of the leading economy of the West—these are the features, accelerating the decline of relative potential population density, which make 1986 a political and economic turning point for mankind. This is the year in which the decisions are made which determine whether mankind, and human civilization survives. Our responsibilities are therefore of an immensity proportional to what is historically at stake.

Currency Rates

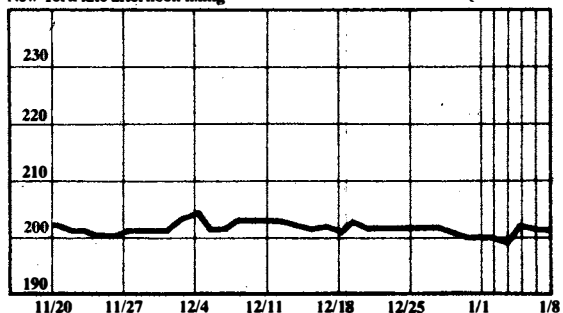
The dollar in deutschmarks

New York late afternoon fixing



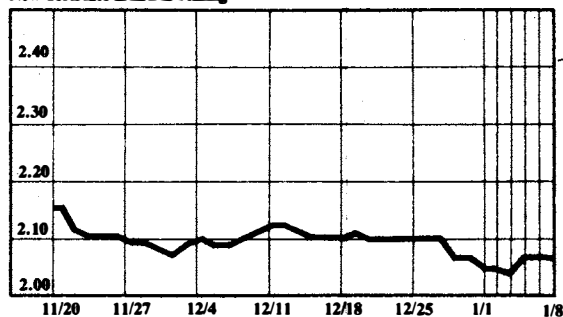
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing

