

42. Millennium Bug

The year 2000's New Year's Eve was anticlimactic compared to 1999's. Though it was repeatedly explained, people didn't care they were only celebrating the last night of 1999, but not of the century or millennium. A century only ends after its 100th year. January 1st, 2001 ushered in 3rd Millennium, A. D., according to flawed western calendar. Those who wanted to set an example of precision, those where Al worked, should've made sure everyone appreciated this. They didn't; no profit in it. His essay slid ignominiously into his unused bin. Why kill the buzz? Trying to be accurate recalled a skit on SNL of Debbie Downer. Everyone hates being yanked from brink of foolishness, rather dangerously surf big waves than wade in untroubled waters, even if they don't know what the hell they're doing and drown. It's good advice you can't take. Might as well go with the flow, party on with crowd instead of by yourself a year later.

Anything associated with word *Millennium* has been seized by factions on opposing ends of religious bigotry, from new age do-it-yourselfers to orthodox mega-congregations. There was all that talk in *Bible* about a Resurrected One someday coming back to rule on Earth for 1,000 years. A millennium might be a wink of an eye in cosmological terms, but any Second Coming has certainly been a long slow procession by human perspectives. Even so, from birth to age of majority does take time. Can't wait for directions from an ineffable infinite; got to take care of goodness in the here now. Why force yourself to deal with guilt and reparation? Best to avoid acts that bring them on.

On New Year's Day, it's customary to make a pledge to be better over next 12 months, a resolution, as U2 sang, "I will begin again on New Year's Day." At such a unique time with an unparalleled historic perspective, mankind needed a Millennium Resolution. Are there pivotal moments in history when all threads come together for progress? Never had so much been known about what should or shouldn't be done, from archeological evidence to self help books on a World Wide Web, from Supreme Court decisions to United Nations treaties, everything mankind, as a species, has done badly or well. He wished for once they'd just get it right!

Terrible daily suffering makes one wonder why curing it isn't of extreme importance. Cynicism bugged him even more. Copouts hinge on why you can't do something. What if all agreed to stop

being such slackers and straighten up? Where should mankind begin?

A big look forward happened already. Authors tried to shock World into a new future, predicting new trends that came about like a self-fulfilling prophecies in the absence of any real direction. A small look forward was underway, with people questioning macro-flows they chose to swim with and where they were headed, not necessarily anywhere better, as far as he could see, more like falls over rocky escarpments into chasms of futility. Issues are basic with simple solutions everyone can do but won't. Greed had to go. The easiest way to shrink government is to eliminate all agencies which help deprived, helpless, poor. Nobody powerful would mind. How can poor retaliate? Rich can employ armies of lawyers and fund campaigns against lawmakers who don't support their greed, or withhold funding for those who don't vote their way. Government has become a way to concentrate wealth, not redistribute it to the needy. Every vote suits campaign backers, never the masses. There should be a moratorium on all new legislation until masses, who are supposed to be represented, can replace entire governing body with real representatives and social systems designed to support them. Religions relish repressive Republican ideals and take advantage of misery they spread by being there to console and extort. If wealth were distributed evenly, neither religion nor Republicanism would be necessary. When communism intuited this, they ganged up to snuff out any such competition.

Alvin Lee, of British rock band Ten Years After, sang "I'd Love to change the World, but I don't know what to do, so I'll leave it up to you." Millennium ended 30 years after song's release on their album *A Space in Time*. Though 3 decades had passed, nothing has been done. No prescription had been written. Instead businesses concern themselves with quarterly profits, all of which grasping CEOs siphon off, and remedy for Y2K bug, an oversight in Billiongate's planning. This other millennium bug meant computers' internal clock would go berserk when unable to distinguish between years 1900 and 2000, since years were only allotted 2 digits. Who knew computers would become so popular? A former partner for one. That's why Pippin Computers weren't effected.

Everyone endures things that bug more than anything else, but fixing everything at once isn't possible. It's a matter of priorities. Luckily, there's a tool to set some: Pareto Analysis. It's a key tool in Lean Sigma. For almost any problem, 80% of it is caused by 20% of its sources. People generally think tiny causes reap huge effects,

but that's generally untrue. Mindful that for want of a nail cavalryman died and kingdom was lost, people attribute significant influences to minor factors. Sand in your sandal may cause walking discomfort, but in a fuel tank it'll grind you to a halt. Pareto's explain why mistakes are made; people can't separate minor annoyances from major hazards. Pareto is a way bring order to chaos by listing all known causes, rating their influence, then concentrating efforts on the most influential. Seems simple enough, worked successfully in many companies, not the least of which were industrial giants General Electric and Motorola. Moreover, Why not apply these tools on a grand scale? Ending relatively few wasteful practices should make World a better place pronto. Here are 10 big issues where you'd think continuous improvement could cut costs and present new opportunities.

1) *Reform government*. People want federal government to do what they agreed to let it do: set policy, maintain international relations, help all to climb, and catch any who fall, in that order. Instead, politicians call for promises from a well-thumbed playbook that they have no intention of honoring, and seem oblivious to what real issues are. Sure, anyone would welcome better housing, great education, low unemployment, but aren't these accomplished locally? Levi's *Freakingnomics* acknowledges that state spending is goofy and plainly demented. Better public policy is a chimera. You can't legislate sanity. You can cut funding to insane programs. After all, everything government does, including warfare, is an experiment gone awry decades too late. Inflexible systems are forever bypassed. Here's an idea: Let federal laws set policy and town boards handle local issues. Then eliminate state offices altogether. Since most business has been deregulated and welfare has been cut back, states have little left to do besides collect revenue, fix roads, and operate prisons; relegate necessities down or up and privatize what's not crucial. Cut out governmental duplication. Can anyone remember a piece of state legislation that didn't serve a handful of powerful people or presumably insurance and real estate interests? Inefficiency and lack of uniform practice on a state level cause most problems nationally, as 2000 election in Florida attests. All of government has strayed too far from what was intended. Taxation doesn't support common good anymore. Don't forget, states employ 25% of workforce. Migrate positions to federal, municipal, or private sectors. Meanwhile, forget campaign reform; instead have a computer assign people at random to serve, like jury

duty or military service. Any reasonable adult from anywhere would do admirably, whether in Congress or on a town board, after a 2-year course and passing grades in governmental studies. If you really couldn't serve, you could apply for hardship deferments or simply fail your test. This would weed out riffraff. Founding fathers, mere farmers, did a credible job, and framed Constitution in exactly this way. After all, those conscripted would be representing citizens like themselves and probably have as much experience and wisdom than those there now; you'd more likely get equal representation by class, race and sex. From among themselves let representatives elect senators, then senators a presidential figurehead with limited powers. Who was picked might be a point of hot contention, but this would be a more effective and much simpler method than that currently used, hesitantly choosing between two privileged individuals, neither of whom you want, neither of whom represent your interests at all. Tremendous waste could be avoided: Ballot recounting, campaign financing, PAC lobbying, and those horrible debates over trivialities that detract from daily commerce. Let newly assigned body deliberate on what people think are good uses of internal revenue and real issues, for example, what follows.

2) *Provide universal medical care.* Retirees cite as their biggest fear being wiped out by astronomical medical costs. Why should this be? Because quality of care can mean death or life, doctors have to pay enormous premiums to protect themselves against malpractice. This system is nuts! Because older workers might get sick and use services, insurance carriers promote rampant age discrimination. You could require affirmative action affidavits from every business collecting Federal funding stating their demographic mix includes a suitable percentage of people between 40 and 65 years old, but that would require enforcement and follow up. Better yet, drop plans for universal health care insurance and fund hospitals directly. Consider possibilities. First, open low-end clinics in homes or storefronts where general practitioners or nurses provide free care for simple ailments and prevention lectures. Major drug store chains already plan to establish these as profit centers. Then, subsidize existing hospitals likely to close, i. e., VA Hospitals obviated as a so-called *peace dividend*. Keep them open to provide treatment costing so little anyone could afford it. Charge no more than typical housing rentals for bed stays. Do more home care with doctors without walls and visiting nurses. Finally, keep some for profit hospitals as excellence centers for advanced research and expensive procedures. This plan would cost a fraction of

universal health coverage; it cuts out insurance middlemen. Having 3 classes of care would catch problems earlier, clear emergency rooms for sicker patients, create jobs for those who would actually care for patients, limit exposure to infectious diseases, stimulate competition among providers, and stratify employment opportunities. Which would you rather do: Let an actuary with a calculator decide whether you need treatment or decide yourself after free consultation from medical specialists whose livelihoods don't depend on your ability to pay? After all, insurance is an unregulated, inefficient system where everyone pays equally for misfortune of a few, and, thus, feel they're no longer culpable for their own mistakes. Not so! You wind up in court anyway, so what is it you're actually buying? A chance to act irresponsibly behind the wheel? Medical care for smokers and substance abusers? Think of what better things insurance companies could be doing. They'd be fit for close inspecting, doing analyses, ensuring best practice while continuing to underwrite business ventures. As made plain in books like *The Hunter and the Hunted*, business that don't cater to customer needs are soon driven from marketplace. Why doesn't this apply to hospitals? People should get the best care at least cost, and insurance companies, mostly looking to mitigate their own losses, have done little or nothing to achieve this. Competition among insurance companies defies business logic by fixing high consumer prices, which is illegal in other industries.

3) *End hunger*. With a mastery of snack food, can't industry prepare a cracker packed with nutrition, packaged against contamination, easily shipped anywhere? Instead, they waste time loading snacks down with chemicals and hydrogenated fats known to be unwholesome or puffing them up with air. Back to your kitchens! Back when he wrote this nobody heard of banishing transfats, now everyone's on that wagon. Genetic engineers have already developed crops with vaccines built in, but those who might use them can't afford. So, why not extirpate whatever causes people to go hungry? Farm subsidies that limit production, incompetent distribution, man-made strife, supply manipulations, or unregulated commodities trading that drive prices up, and too few reasons for anyone to care. Despite what's commonly held, only 3 activities generate all real wealth: agribusiness, manufacturing and mining. Without such industries that impart value into raw materials, every service business would collapse, such as banking, gaming, insurance, retail selling, small businesses, tourism, 50% of workforce. And without clean drinking water nothing is possible, yet supplies

are allowed to dwindle, be tainted with toxins, or left untapped locally, which creates great suffering and stifles progress. Vital agribusiness repeatedly proves itself by how it sustains a rural economy practically single-handedly. Americans ignore these foundations, take them for granted, watch them slip away. They glorify a New Economy of E-commerce, finance, information, white collar activities which add nothing to what sensible people deem worthwhile. In fact, doing so undermines their ability to comprehend them and to innovate on necessities they present. Focused on quick profit, quarterly gains are ranked above long term sustainability. Activities that don't create value inhibit any healthy circulation of wealth. If more people were in the business of producing high quality goods and replenishing natural resources, many of World's problems would quickly disappear.

4) *Find energy alternatives.* When Congress discontinued incentives for alternative exploration, oil cartels cheered. They responded by cutting their losses. There are only 1/3 as many exploratory gas wells as there were in 1995. Gas isn't easily transported, so you need wells on your own continent, or permit liquefied natural gas ships to unload dangerously near population centers. A slight mishap, it's Hiroshima all over again. Well gas and oil aren't renewable sources, although garbage and industrial wastes are. Why not burn solid wastes or recapture useful gases from it? Tire dump fires rage uncontrollably. Not very clean, burning trash with scrubber stacks might cure multiple problems at once. Then there's E85 fuel with grain alcohol from renewable resources, corn or wheat fermentation, although methanol emits cancer causing formaldehyde, perhaps better to fuel electric plants than mo-ves. Estimates predict Worldwide oil depletion within 30 years, and, guaranteed, it'll get increasingly ugly as supply dwindles. About 90% of new electrical plants stateside being planned will be gas fired. Any gas infrastructure built today will be obsolete within a generation. Deregulating energy hasn't driven prices down because industry is driven by short term profit, not future exigencies, and passes all costs onto consumer. Wait! Who needs all this energy? Cities waste most of it. Shopping 24/7, lights are left on. Just count vehicles driven without passengers. Get rid of most cars; clear streets for bikes. People already have energy plants in their own homes, furnaces, ways of converting materials into heat or power, hearths to which they must attend. When they invent clean miniature cold fusion generators, you'll be able to get off grid altogether. America's GNP thrives on arrogance to think this will go on forever and laziness to

do nothing about it. Alternative transport—boats, bullet trains, monorails, subways—would reduce gasoline waste if people could be persuaded to use them. As Thoreau avowed, walking was healthier and more economical. This hasn't changed much, if you consider public subsidies used to keep commuter rails running. It's encouraging to see facilities being built, but far more might be done. They could build health clinics, hostels, repair stations and stores along bicycle paths, patrol them better, pay people to pedal instead of drive, and reward those who follow earth friendly practices. Better city planning—such as closing cities to vehicles, connecting airports, businesses, shopping centers with fast, free transport, and removing ineffective, fuel wasting traffic signals on secondary roads—would surely have great impact. Economy can't continue to rely on car and fuel sales, but needs to diversify. It's time to restore incentives, as well as support automakers who explore technologies that enhance performance and lower consumption and levy sanction against those who don't. Somehow society seemed to completely reverse directions since 1970's, when, instead of gas guzzling SUVs, they actually had vehicles that could offer over 30 mpg. Clock ticks while atmosphere becomes unbreathable, landfills close, roads crumble, and supplies vanish.

5) *End war.* It's the violent last resort to diplomacy. Consider its waste, potential for madmen to trigger reprisals that kill cities, countries, all life. Why pay a buck a bullet, thousands per missile, millions for weapon systems to kill potential allies? Nobody wins. Perhaps you have to stay vigilant to preserve peace, but can't man find a better way? If everyone agreed what their priorities were, they wouldn't squabble so much. They'd learn restraint. Have armies aid hungry and sick, not force your customs on them. Offer help without strings attached; assist only when invited. Preserve "ethno-diversity", let villages survive in their native state. You have as much to learn from them as they do from you. Being guided by superstition isn't so wonderful. When jungle diseases inevitably infect, those afflicted blame healthy tribal members of witchcraft and kill them. Every tribe does something suited to ecosystem within which it has persisted since prehistory. Nevertheless, those starving in African countries aren't going to ask for help unless you go there, impose yourself upon them, interview individuals. Those who already have know they want clothing, complete books to read so they can apply their learning of letters, food, potable water, soap. You have to agree anyone cut off from basic amenities would dearly appreciate such minimums. You don't have to be a bleeding heart about it. Creating local centers with deep wells, schools,

small industries, and stores would alleviate incalculable suffering. Until recently, all they got were churches. No individual is as smart as many working together. Wars are for failures, not for confident, smart, strong people minding their own business, going about providing what others require to survive.

6) *Champion human rights.* Be intolerant of tyranny. Whoever consolidates power by denying justice, silencing opposition, or torturing rivals deserve worse. But such a situation only arises when prevailing economic model fails. Communism is unpopular because it doesn't provide personal incentives. Capitalism offers incentives galore, but none designed to overcome mutual problems. World needs a model beyond these extremes. Can't maintain freedoms without jobs and justice. Nations, like China, that find a way to combine better aspects of both will be the only successful ones in future. Money isn't the evil, ignorance is, and what it breeds—fears of a bleak retirement, of having too little to avoid hunger or squalid living, of not having enough to pay relentlessly increasing insurance fees and taxes. Society can't tolerate an economy that can't feed the masses. Inalienable rights are limited to respect for those who do what's honorable, leave World in better condition than they found it, preserve planet's resources, and punish those who don't, whether government officials or industrial tycoons. Individuals can be forgiven of most things as long as they clean up afterwards. Don't let these criminals sneak off without undoing mess they've created. Let this be penalty that fits the felony.

7) *Honor substance over style.* Wise men say that all the riches this World has to offer can't compare with only 1, respect. So why can't anyone name a Nobel Laureate? As with politicians, media and sports stars may have style, but why ignore enterprise creators, philanthropists, teachers or truth seekers? It's time to balance news and credit good deeds, as well as deflate fascination with bad behaviors, distractions from what's important, and foolish issues. More time and money is spent reporting minutia on celebrities who don't effect your life than industrialists who do. Just because publicists eagerly provide copy, does that mean journalists should report trivial information? By taking easy way out, society's priorities have been totally obscured. Surveys of college students say they yearn for a vision they can support. Are those in charge ready to give them one? Sure, but only a self-serving one.

8) *Standardize.* There's bad and good in consistency. Standards can be drafted to exclude by class, restrict uniform rights, or solidify opportunities for a few. However, a standard currency for

Europe was convincingly argued. Francs, lire, marks, pesadas, pounds? Currency was a chunk of culture, like language. Society would be impoverished without French, mes amis, voice of diplomacy for centuries. Nobody wants to be forced into a single language. “Protect your language,” to be sure. But teaching children a simple subset of all languages, some sort of pigeon English, would definitely arouse conversation, bridge differences, and foster trade, as would common currency. Didn’t Latin have that effect across an empire without supplanting native languages? If it weren’t for miscommunication of Japanese word “makasatsu”, simply “no comment” not “adamant refusal”, WWII wouldn’t have ended in nuclear holocaust. Lack of a single diplomatic language leads to “globalunacy”. Converting between Inch and Metric leads to costly fiascoes; a universal metric measure is long past due; money exchanges are just licenses to steal. By standardizing control layouts in aircraft and medical equipment they’ve decreased incidents and saved lives. Stupidity stifles conventions that could free billions to pursue meaningful progress. Why not simplify? Society needs to find that compromise between bland uniformity when it doesn’t matter and devices made exactly alike with best ergonomics when your life depends upon it.

9) *Rebuild to last.* Some buildings are designed to collapse after a dozen years. Public infrastructures of many cities are crumbling. Cities have actually relaxed codes since 1600’s whose beam and post frames still stand after centuries, to say nothing of Egypt’s pyramids, thousands of years old. Why not think out of the box: better bridges, clean fusion plants, earthquake-resistant buildings, passive solar heating systems, windmill farms? You’d think in a world of advanced materials and CAD, they could make modular panels that snap together to form attractive, inexpensive yet strong structures, easily transported, expeditiously assembled, ideal for populating areas or deserts without natural building resources or providing quick shelter to victims of natural disasters. Building codes could specify new and replacement roofing and siding which possess longer service life. What happened to tax credits for solar installations? If you accept temporary buildings, nothing more than boxes on anchored slabs, why not demand they use recycled materials? Everyone was told to sort trash. Why waste their time if it isn’t effectively used? Complete this cycle and conquer waste forever. Wood is renewable, but takes generations and centuries to grow. It’s so prone to decay it can only be considered a cheap temporary expedient for use inside a structure, never outside, but,

historically, people used what was readily available around them. Today that's not trees but garbage, first choice of the poor, who huddle in empty shipping cartons against circumstances and weather. Properly recycled, wood can be remade into sterile sheets or usable forms. Painting wood sheathed houses is an unnecessary waste repeated increasingly often as paint formulations fail to protect against worsening air pollution. Paints exude harmful gases; some deposit toxic materials, formerly lead, against mildew. Anyway, lawsuits over additives have nearly put manufacturers out of business. Permanently pigmented materials, such as vinyl siding, are readily available, if more expensive. Food and drug grade vinyl could quickly be melted, disinfected, infused with pigment and recycled into clapboard and wall studs. They already make simulated wood from plastic scrap and wood chips. You'll never have to paint it, or replace it, for that matter. Not readily nailed? Drilling and screwing is a better technology, holds better, or precast with grooves and lock points. Plastic is synonymous with moldable; can be corrugated, channeled, extruded, formed into gingerbread, made biodegradable at high enough temperature from corn (PLA). It butts nicely with anything, even replaces heavier structural elements to defy both gravity and wind. You might assemble houses like an erector set or Legos, quicker and stronger than wood frame housing. One could easily envision eventually supplanting wood with ferroconcrete, glass, metal, plastic, and tile and leaving wood for furniture and paper. Architectural glass could be replaced with polycarbonates infused with materials that turns dark during bright sunshine, opaque white at night at flick of a wall switch. An electrical current stimulates a plastic sandwiched sheet. Gives privacy at night and protects fabrics and occupants against UV. Could still be glass; after all, glass is only melted sand. Which uses more energy to produce, glass or plastic? Glass production uses high temperatures. But what of transporting oil, then subsequent fractioning and processing? Subsidies or tax credits could encourage use of advanced or recycled materials. Lag between a new material's introduction and standards based on its use lengthens as commissioners address meaningless issues that are politically correct but predicament insensitive. They should commission impartial studies on long term effects of air pollution from interstates, electrical fields surrounding power lines, groundwater flow from landfills, petrochemical toxicity, and what to do about hazards presented. Roads must accommodate all users not just busses and trucks, must be built from their edges in of durable materials suited to type of

traffic which they will handle and be suitably maintained. Teams of biologists, chemists, and physical scientists ought to constantly study materials public is exposed to daily and derive consensus on long term safety. After all, lead caused Roman Empire's decline.

10) *Colonize new worlds.* As mankind succeeds through these measures, it needs to deal with Malthusian inevitability of a population exceeding subsistence. About the only viable outlet would be to begin settling other planets, a space station, perhaps Mars. Man is good at exploring, finding new resources to exploit, and inevitably dominating. Prospective colonists might study earthbound villages for dynamics that could work in micro-civilizations elsewhere. They've already found a balance between overindustrialized and underequipped and how to be productive at the speed of a bicycle and work with limitations. This planet is overpopulated anyway. Multiple sites across space may be the only way to preserve species given man's fondness for biological and nuclear weapons. If you believe astrophysicists, in 2036 World might be slammed by a 1,000-mile wide asteroid. Likewise, comets pose a threat. A gamma radiation blast from an exploding star lightyears away could boil off all Earth's atmosphere. Hope humans have a firm foothold somewhere else by then. Obsessed with transportation, engineers neglected to develop materials that can withstand seawater, so when the entire planet is deluged through global warming humans can still survive beneath the seas. You'll need artificial soil and hydroponics to grow food in space, manufacturing cells that don't require dry land, methods to distill and mine fertilizer compounds and other necessary chemicals and gases, like oxygen, no longer readily available. If a vast amount of technology is required to keep one individual alive, billions will die. Someone suggested creating a DNA ark deep below Earth's crust, stationed by a few humans or robots, so life could be brought back should the unthinkable occur. But recreating a sheltering sky through terraforming would take millennia, too long for any such effort to succeed. Domed cities, Dyson spheres, or massive spaceships make more sense. Only active exploration and mass emigration to diverse locations will increase mankind's chances for survival, assuming, of course, mankind is a survivable species, of which there is little evidence.

Here's a short list accounting for at least 80% of World's problems which can only be solved if everyone participates. Waste on a small scale can indeed be magnified by being repeated by billions of others following suit. Causes and effects are intertwined.

This is where good policies come in. By mandating behaviors, best practices become daily habits. Until mankind decides to focus all its attention on curing these ills, they're just setting themselves up for a fall of biblical proportions. Surely, everything else is silly nonsense by comparison. One can easily be distracted by films, gaming, specious arguments to the contrary, and sports and forget to ensure a future. In a constitutional democracy, all it takes is a majority to agree. You don't need Congressional approval to change anything. They answer to you, not the other way round.

Working effectively and vehemently against these 10 suggestions are corporations and self interests of their CEOs. In 2001, Veep Chainease invited only energy companies to a secret energy task force, subsequently refused to divulge a list of who participated, upheld by a stacked Supreme Court. No environmental or public health advocates were briefed, although every major oil company was, facts of which you can be assured. The very rich twist policies to increase their feast, toss bones to dogs so they'll do their bidding. Policies make everyone except the powerful slaves despite laws against it. The only emancipation left is starvation. When snooty think tankers were tasked with coming up with a quick panacea for society's ills, even Havayard's Gardnot came right out and declared, "Confiscate wealth from those with excess." Ridicule and scoffing immediately followed, instead of reasonable consideration of this argument's obvious merits.

Kaczynski's *Industrial Society and Its Future* would have been a dull postgraduate political science thesis had the author not sought to elevate its importance by killing sixteen technophiles and maiming twenty-three others. Any rational essay by a former mathematician is bound to make the mistake of relying upon faulty words to impart a message of divisiveness and hate. Continuous improvement and scientific techniques don't work on an anesthetized, disengaged population. People cannot be improved; they can only improve themselves. A schizophrenic, Kaczynski was quick to attribute society's many ills on collectivists and leftists, admittedly terms too difficult for Ted to define, and other broad stereotypes, just as today's downtrodden workers impute immigrants. Leaders keep a whole barn of different scapegoats ready to deflect blame. If immigrants are more successful working the system than you, they are simply smarter. Huggers survive amidst turmoil by clinging together in families and gangs. Misanthropic hermits live secluded in mountain shacks and wrap themselves in self-effacing insincerity to escape having to deal with ideas and needs of those who won't submit to theirs. Once they've sufficiently whipped up their

isolated fury, they lash out. Among their victims are their own families, friends and mentors. Not even unrelated people with Ted's surname can compose polemics without instant persecution. If your relative is a psycho, so are you; give up, they say. Don't ever write under pseudonym Hitler or Marx, especially if you're a master of rhetoric.

The question isn't how best to root out terrorism, but why did system fail to protect Americans on 9/11/2001. Arrogant cost cutting, penny pinching, personal pleasure, and self interest were all put ahead of public safety, before vigilance, while a succession of incompetent administrations created enemies unnecessarily around the planet and jeopardized your future. Twin Tower disaster was also a failure of America's transportation network, which relies on skybound jets rather than surface trains. Unless societies adopt a collective approach, successful terrorist attacks are easily provoked and virtually assured. China doesn't suffer much from crime or terrorism. Every individual is accounted for. If someone doesn't show up for work, an overseer is dispatched to find out why. There's literally no room there for self indulgence. Anyone who's tasted the forbidden fruit of personal freedoms might describe this as oppression. But if your mom pulls off your warm covers to get you out of bed and out to school or work, you call it caring, loving commitment. Neither regimenting nor smothering can be stomached. Parents spend so much time straightening progeny, they forget how to fledge youth and let them fly, or stop telling strangers how to live. Yet when you give up on people you bring out their worst character. Relationships outrank individual reactions. Create emotional vacuums and they quickly fill with contempt.

So what really happens? People subrogate all responsibility for learning ethics, math, politics, religion and science, expecting someone else to figure things out and make decisions for them. When a fair decision gets made and they are told they have to pay taxes so everyone can survive, they scream and weep inconsolably. America's drift from altruism to self interest is like a boat headed for rocks. Mutually assured destruction is not irrevocable, but it takes a daily commitment to decency.

One could invent toys from scrap in a form that would be used for architectural purposes, some small machine that forms any plastic trash into game pieces. Get kids started thinking about recycling. Or invent a game that would address social injustices. Pull together a board scenario where goal wouldn't be World domination but rather a conquest of World problems, where all players

would strive to better themselves as a group. Object of such a game would be keeping it going as long as possible. You'd pit yourself against game; like golf, you'd play for par against a course. Crisis cards would challenge you by introducing a problem somewhere in World. Monetary exchange rates, news gathering, politics, religion, weather: anything could be a source of crisis. "A journalist reports a false story of international treaty violations." "Feuding sects of an ancient religion threat nuclear exchange." You could choose to answer trivia questions from a game book, spin wheel, throw dice, or trade something with a disadvantaged country. Sometimes a circumvention card could be played. "Foreign ambassador was owed a favor so crisis was diverted." Have a World headquarters that moves around. Game would not be about competition, unlike chess, which was designed to teach princes to sacrifice citizens during battles to preserve their grip on power. Did you think games were nothing more than silly pastimes? At least this game would reward proactive planning, whereas most games require passive aggression, slaughtering every living thing you encounter. In this game you all lose by making wrong decisions. "Your support of that dictator plunges country into a bloody coup in which citizens die, or which expands throughout region." Game's lesson would be that life is a shared adventure, not just a time to acquire wealth or monopolize resources. Play could be done on levels, extended into schools, while champion players might eventually emerge as World leaders. Beats systems in place: divine right, inherited wealth, lucky circumstances, megalomaniac machinations. Might lead to a real meritocracy. You'll never see any such game. Toys only offer escapes into fantasy, prime children for draining adult amusements at casinos.

Why spend money on warfare or welfare? Instead fund *workfare* and *worldfare*. Workfare would consist of casual work that people can flit in and out of with minimal supervision, punch a clock, and receive pay immediately after in credits or food stamps. Good for single mothers, homeless, and others who find a steady routine too confining. Worldfare is compensation for applications of any known principle for the common good, environmental friendliness and social justice. America already gives money for humanitarian aid, but doles it out unevenly, with no guarantees it will do any good, while other nations stand by stupidly. Americans can't say they abhor banana republic dictators who don't treat their people justly when their own government ignores homelessness and hunger and tramples rights granted by their Constitution.

Likewise, they shouldn't criticize those who would hack down primordial rainforests while struggling to move ahead when they don't encourage conservation here. Americans should be cleaning house instead of deposing dictators abroad.

If you can't get entire World to agree with 10 simple plans, you might at least do something about nagging smaller problems. Why continue to reward bad behaviors or sustain known boondoggles? A quick survey of existing policies suggests numerous drastic improvements: Blanket green card renewals, corporate dividend minimums, deficit spending elimination, energy credit restoration, highway building moratoriums, immigration localization, operator licensing criteria, parole violation sweeps, prison reforms, security exchange oversight, tax allocation caps, tax loophole reduction, use of military restrictions.

Countries become aid junkies. G8 gives them incentives to pull themselves up by offering trade agreements, which amounts to pouring money down ratholes. None of this works because of capitalism itself, an imperial notion that doesn't translate well into a free world. Countries that fail to become part of a global economy are not necessarily failures, at least not by social values of those who live there. G8 nations think of themselves as better off, superior financially and technologically, but aren't really. They make it hard to live within them, and superimpose their values on those who they think lag behind. What needs to happen: Only offer assistance when asked, then provide whatever makes a difference in clean water, debt relief, food production, medicine, refrigeration, sanitation, vaccine distribution, and things that will improve lives locally. Objective of all foreign aid should be to make it possible for a vibrant lifestyle that everyone in a particular locale can enjoy equally, so they begin to trade among themselves without yoke of debts, fees, foreign intervention, and profiteering by multinationals. Aid has been sold to taxpayers based on projected returns. What happens now is akin to free coffee and donuts if you listen to hours of proselytizing. Nobody wants that except those with ulterior schemes. Show people how to do things that are useful to them and skip the rest. Send bodies to help clean up disasters, then back out. Relieve debt but never send money. Otherwise all you do is set a precedent that catastrophes are ways to revitalize after years of neglect, like a suspicious fire that renovates a restaurant. Be satisfied they become less of a burden to you and themselves.

Nations to whom USA has given colossal stacks of cash are not receiving aid but payment due for wars by proxy. They act as

agents to stabilize their area, keep hostilities in check, maintain profits. If they fail to do so, donor nations have a right to assess their role and decrease payout. A string of unexamined failures works in proxy's favor, nothing to disrupt flow of easy money. If mercenaries don't do what they're supposed to, shouldn't they be replaced? Countries shouldn't hire proxies at all. Reliance and trust are so difficult to achieve, people turn to less intimate relationships, outright extortion, rough trades, service for pay; win-win situations no longer matter to them. Corporate neglect should be considered criminal. Today's biggest crimes are institutionalized. Capitalistic opportunism is so 20th Century, not 21st.

If his suggestions seem unrealistic to you, why not make it *your resolution* to list your own top 10? Think of it as a way to leave earth in better shape than you found it. Someone had to start this dialog. Some 150 years ago industrialist Lucian Sharpe said, "My one idea in life was to work a little more accurately," which proves, if nothing more, some people can't keep 2 thoughts in their head for any amount of time. Edwards Deming and others have rephrased it, leading to continuous improvement in manufacture. As a result, there has been remarkable advancements in aircraft, medicines, machinery, manned vehicles, and things that make World a little easier to live in. But technologies can spin out of control, exist for the sake of existing, focus everyone attention on sterile data rather than human warmth. Ethics wither while moguls profit from stagnation. As a generation passes gains are forgotten, boundaries intervene, and progress grinds to a halt. It's up to you, reader, to restore momentum. Begin again on New Year's Day. Have a nice millennium.

