MONAD MAN: THE CURIOUS CASE OF TECHNOCRACY INC.’S HOWARD SCOTT (PLUS AN APOLOGY TO THE GRAND DRAGON)
Introduction

This chapter (more an appendix) is largely devoted to Howard Scott, the leader of a now long forgotten group from the 1930s and 1940s called Technocracy Inc. So why is it doing as an appendix in a study of Lyndon LaRouche?

The short answer is Bob Miles.

Robert Miles was the late KKK Grand Dragon whose relationship to the NCLC is examined in the chapter “Unity Now.” Some years ago, Miles was asked what he thought of the NCLC. He said it most reminded him of Technocracy Inc. What made Miles’ remarks so interesting, however, is that as someone very much at the center of American fascist and neo-Nazi movements, Miles knew his Nazis. Yet Miles characterized LaRouche not as a Nazi or neo-Nazi but as someone following a tradition that led back not to Adolf Hitler but to one Howard Scott.

At that time I (like almost everyone else) had never heard of Technocracy Inc. The only clue I had was a small ad that Technocracy used to run in the back of the Nation. Curious about Miles’ claim, I found the one scholarly book on Technocracy Inc. written by a former Technocrat named Henry Elsner, Jr. Yet after reading it, I still didn’t see the connection that Miles was getting at.

Now I do.

To his ever dwindling band of followers, of course, Lyndon LaRouche is a modern Plato. To most members of the media, he is an eccentric crank with a confusing (and frequently incomprehensible) blend of views from both the left and right. To most people, however, he is “Lyndon who?”

Yet some of LaRouche’s most fervent critics would have us believe that he is a secret Nazi, neo-Nazi, crypto-Nazi, etc., who is intent of carrying out the Third Reich’s most nefarious plot to
murder the world’s Jews even though for some cryptic reason he hides his Nazism through a complicated code language.

Yet if LaRouche really were a Nazi, wouldn’t Bob Miles be the first to know it?

The deep ongoing confusion about just what exactly the NCLC is all about is somewhat astonishing given that for decades the NCLC has been little more than a perpetual-motion vanity press outlet for the opinions of Lyndon LaRouche, an individual with opinions about virtually everything. Tim Wohlfarth, who knew LaRouche quite well in the mid-1960s, recalled going to LaRouche’s Greenwich Village apartment and hearing him lecture:

LaRouche had a gargantuan ego. Convinced that he was a genius, he combined his strong conviction in his own abilities with an arrogance expressed in the cadences of upper-class New England. . . And he believed the working class was lucky to obtain his services.

LaRouche possessed a marvelous ability to place any world happening in a larger context, which seemed to give the event additional meaning. But his thinking was schematic, lacking factual detail and depth.¹

LaRouche, in short, is a classic auto-didactic, one of many who have littered the footnotes of political history. The real analytical issue comes when one tries to find comparative models for such a seemingly idiosyncratic sect.

**IS LAROUCHE REALLY A NAZI?**

The understandable attempt to locate LaRouche’s movement in a broader political and sociological context has -- in my view -- given rise to a “counter-conspiracy theory” about the NCLC which is almost LaRouche-like in its explanatory power but which – I fear -- also LaRouche-like in that it is basically nonsense. This is the
notion that LaRouche is a “Nazi,” “crypto-Nazi,” “secret Nazi,” “neo-Nazi,” etc. and that, therefore, members of the NCLC were actually “Nazis without swastikas.”

Once the NCLC became a one-man cult, in theory it is quite possible that LaRouche could be a secret Nazi, a KGB agent, a CIA operative, head of a Mossad false flag operation, etc. And one could, of course, selectively cite evidence documenting any one of these claims. However, I believe the most obvious way to understand LaRouche is simply to read his writings where he gives a very clear view of what I believe he actually believes.

Like any widely held ideology, anti-Semitism comes in hundreds (if not thousands) of flavors and variations and LaRouche’s particular idiosyncratic version – which first surfaced in the mid-1970s -- is just one among many. It is, however, in my view simply erroneous to simply then take his own clearly stated brand of anti-Semitism and claim that it is really “code language” for some secret inner belief that LaRouche holds and that really derives from Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Party and its well known racialist ideology.

This accusation is especially ironic given the fact that since from the mid-1970s on, LaRouche has been tireless in accusing Hitler of being a “British” agent, by which he seems to means an agent of a cabal of non-Jewish landed aristocrats led by the British royal family working in alliance with leading Jewish banking houses.

I, for one, find it difficult to read such views and easily come to the conclusion that when LaRouche accuses Hitler of being a pawn of the Jews, he is really using “coded language” to endorse Hitler. Nor do I believe that LaRouche is simply making absurd up conspiracy theories that he doesn’t believe in order to conceal other absurd theories that he somehow “secretly” believes.

Attempts to compare LaRouche to Hitler and the NCLC to the Nazi Party run the risk of mirroring the conspiratorial mindset
found inside the NCLC itself. It also raises basic questions of evidence since it assumes that the NCLC was a Nazi organization that concealed its views. Yet when tested, such a concept runs into some immediate empirical problems. How is it possible that none of the hundreds of members (including some at its highest levels from both Europe and America) who over the past three decades have left the group actually believe that they were secretly witting adherents of National Socialism?

The answer is “zero.”

If so, then bold claims that LaRouche’s decade’s long professed ideas and theories must really be read as “codes” -- a kind of palimpsest behind which only the highly initiated reader will see the “true meaning” -- seems itself a “leftist” variant of conspiratorial thinking.

A DIFFERENT SOCIAL MODEL?

But if the NCLC really isn’t the new NSDAP, is there any historical “model” that might shed some light on the sect? As I have shown, some aspects of the internal transformation of the NCLC strikingly echo events that took place in Gerry Healy’s Workers Revolutionary Party/Workers League in the early 1970s. But just as I would argue that LaRouche is no secret “Hitlerite,” nor is he a secret “Healyite.” Clearly when looking at the NCLC, there are many different approaches. Above all, I would argue, the most relevant involves understanding the dynamics of cults.

Yet the period this study is most interested in concludes in the late 1970s with the NCLC’s total transformation into a one-man political cult. Yet the organization only became a cult in 1973-74 and in examining its earlier history, it is traditional to view it from within the spectrum of the American Left. Yet as Miles’ statement indicates, there are other models and comparisons that can be used as well. Here I will suggest one possible precursor to the NCLC from the 1930s that – I believe -- does have some striking
similarities to the NCLC. This group was Howard Scott’s Technocracy Inc.

No doubt simpletons, ideologues, or simpleton ideologues with polemical axes to grind may claim that I am arguing that LaRouche’s NCLC somehow is the direct descendent of Technocracy Inc. I emphatically am not. To be as clear as possible: I am unaware of a single bit of evidence that concretely links either LaRouche personally -- or any other member of the NCLC -- to Technocracy Inc. Nor do I believe one exists. The fact that there was no direct connection between the two groups actually is, I believe, what makes the argument significant.

In this chapter I am merely trying to show how two social movements operating within radically different social environments evolved along similar lines. In short, I’m advancing a possible comparative historical model to suggest that we can productively look at the NCLC not only from the prism of Trotskyism, Stalinism, Nazism, Fascism or some other headline ideology, but even from something as obscure and off-the-beaten path as Technocracy Inc., an organization that defied more conventional political categorizations both then and now. That does not mean I am excluding other ways of viewing the NCLC. This would be absurd. What I am suggesting is that by knowing something about the history of a group like Technocracy, Inc., we may be in a better position to think more interestingly about the NCLC. Hence the main ambition of this chapter is pedagogical. I am not claiming any “genetic” line of descent from Scott to LaRouche. I am merely suggesting a more synoptic approach.

*Part One*

**FROM VEBLEN AND LENIN TO . . .**

It is hard to fault anyone for not seeing parallels between the NCLC and Technocracy Inc. precisely because Technocracy Inc. today is so obscure. But in the 1930s it was fairly well known and
at its height in the mid-1940s, the sect had an estimated 8,000 supporters in both the United States and Canada.

Technocracy Inc. and related technocratic organizations even caught the eye of the former SWP intellectual James Burnham. In 1941 Burnham published a famous book entitled *The Managerial Revolution*. In it he tried to argue that the rise of managerial elites in industrial societies represented an inevitable “new class” of sorts that had could be seen in America, Russia, Italy and Germany. In *The Managerial Revolution*, Burnham alludes to the general idea of technocracy as an intellectual movement and describes it as “another example of an American variant of the managerial ideologies.” Technocracy’s failure to become a mass movement could even in part be attributed to “the too-plain and open way in which it expresses the perspective of managerial society.”

Burnham viewed the rise of managerial elites into a new “ruling class/caste” of all industrial societies as the inevitable result of the challenge of rationalizing mass production. A horrified George Orwell saw this same trend as a kind of managerial creeping totalitarianism that had infected societies in both the East and the West.

The postwar prominence given to Orwell’s brilliantly expressed dystopian vision, however, has blurred the fact that many people in the 1930s actually welcomed the vision of engineers, scientists and scientific industrial managers playing a leading role in society. In the 1930 there emerged a movement known as “technocracy” that celebrated the idea of engineers and scientists running the world. Its most proponent American promoter was Howard Scott, who became the leader of an organization called Technocracy, Inc. in the 1930s.

The ideological roots of Technocracy Inc., however, lead back to the Norwegian-American economist and social theorist Thorstein Veblen, author of the famous book *The Theory of the Leisure*
Class, first published in 1899 and the book that made famous the idea of “conspicuous consumption.” Veblen was deeply affected by the work of Frederick Winslow Taylor, the founder of so-called scientific management techniques such as his famous time-and-motion studies. As William Akin notes:

More than any other single person, Taylor provided the conceptual framework for the rationalization of the world in the twentieth century. Like most of his engineering colleagues, Taylor conceived the world as a Newtonian universe governed by natural laws. Such laws applied to man and society as much as they did to the rest of the physical world. . . . Taylor’s development of a science of management moved logically from the microcosm of work, to the organization of the factory, and beyond to society.  

For Veblen the major social issues involved

the conflict between the rational organization of modern technology and industry, with its corresponding qualities of mind, and the pecuniary habits of thought based on an ownership concept ultimately derived from personal handicraft production. . . . While Veblen saw industrial workers as being molded by the new habits of thought, and the socialist movement as an expression of the need for rationalization, implicit in his perspective is the idea that technicians and engineers would be the primary agents of change. 

In the fall of 1918 Veblen came to New York where he taught at the New School for Social Research. He also established a small circle around him that included Howard Scott, reportedly an engineer but one with a highly murky past. William Akin says of Scott: “Little was known of his background or the facts of his early life. Scott himself showed a decided predisposition to avoid discussing his past. In later years he was ‘apt to explode angrily’ when queried about his early background.”
Veblen’s circle of bohemian radicals became convinced that people with advanced technological training should help lead any new revolutionary movement that would reflect the advanced technological and complex industrial base of modern American society. Veblen even conceived of a “soviet of technicians and engineers.” This phrase appeared in Veblen’s 1921 book, *The Engineers and the Price System*, which first appeared as a series of articles in a New York radical publication called *The Dial*.

As far back as an 1898 essay in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Veblen had written:

> The businessman in control of large industrial enterprises are beginning to appreciate something of their own unfitness to direct or oversee, or even to control technological matters and so they have, in a tentative way, taken to employing experts to do the work for them. Some experts are known collectively as “efficiency experts” and are presumed to combine the qualifications of technologist and accountant. In point of fact it is as accountants, capable of applying the tests of accountancy to a new field, that these experts commend themselves to the businessmen in control, and the efficiency to which they look is an efficiency in terms of net pecuniary gain.

Now in *The Engineers and the Price System*, Veblen thought he saw a radicalization from within the new managerial strata, which occupied a contradictory middle position and was torn between the demands of ownership and the need for the rational science-driven advancement of the means of production:

> Right now these technologists have begun to become uneasily “class conscious” and to reflect that they together constitute the indispensible General Staff of the industrial system. Their class consciousness has taken the immediate form of a growing sense of waste and confusion in the
management of industry by the financial agents of the absentee owners.\textsuperscript{11}

Veblen believed that in order to realize socialism in the United States there needed to be some kind of alliance between the engineers and the workers:

There must be a working out of a common understanding and a solidarity of sentiment between the technicians and the working force engaged in transportation and in the greater underlying industries: to which must be added as indispensible from the outset, an active adherence to this plan on the part of the train workmen in the great generality of the mechanical industries.\textsuperscript{12}

The historian Donald Stabile stresses that “far from advocating a takeover by the engineers, Veblen highlighted the need for an alliance between engineers and industrial workers.”\textsuperscript{13} Stabile argues that Veblen posited a version of socialism that demanded worker acquiescence to the dictates of technical experts, for the technical organization of the economy foreseen by Veblen contained highly authoritarian and undemocratic features. To be sure, Veblen made it plain that the economy be governed by a national council, an industrial town meeting. But the qualification for meeting membership shifted from the ownership of property, as in capitalism, to possession of productive knowledge.\textsuperscript{14}

Veblen’s arguments also need be read in the context of the Bolshevik Revolution, of which Veblen was a strong defender even though he himself was not a Marxist.\textsuperscript{15} At the time that Veblen was writing in New York, Leon Trotsky, for example, was implementing such “highly authoritarian and undemocratic” measures as the push for “War Communism” and the total
militarization of factory life. Meanwhile Lenin openly championed the introduction of Taylorist methods to Communist Russia.

In a speech to the Supreme Economic Council urging more factory discipline, Lenin argued: “It would be the greatest stupidity and the most absurd opportunism to suppose that the transition from capitalism to socialism is possible without compulsion and dictatorship.” Lenin’s speech first reached an English audience when it was reprinted in the *Bulletin of the Taylor Society*.16

Before the First World War, Lenin took the conventional line of the Socialist International and denounced Taylorism as the highest and most ruthless form of capitalist exploitation of labor. However when he was living in Zurich in 1916, Lenin read a translation of Taylor’s *Shop Management* and other books on how Taylor’s system actually worked and was impressed. After the Russian Revolution, Lenin also promoted the rise of Alexi Kapitonovic Gastev. Dubbed “the Russian Taylor,” Gastev founded the General Institute of Labor, whose aim was to bring Taylorist methods to Soviet factories. Lenin openly sided with Gastev against the “Left Communist” opposition to the introduction of Taylorist methods.

Lenin was seconded by Trotsky who even imported an American Taylorist to report on the Soviet factory system:

Leon Trotsky, second only to Lenin in proposing scientific management methods, employed Royal Keely in May, 1919, to assist in the transition. Keely, an American consulting engineer who had worked with Taylor, spent two years studying Russian factories and working conditions. He reported to Trotsky that loafing accounted for 50 percent of all time on the job in industry... Lenin and Trotsky proceeded to make the punishment for malingering more severe, relying on the proverbial stick than the carrot.17
Part Two

...HOWARD SCOTT

Inspired by both the staggering events in Russia and the ideas expressed in Veblen’s *The Engineers and the Price System* in particular, Howard Scott and his friends created The Technical Alliance in 1920. At the same time, Scott worked with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In 1918-19 Scott met the IWW leader Ralph Chaplin in Greenwich Village and convinced him that the IWW should create a Research Bureau to be headed by Scott.\(^{18}\)

Although Scott left the IWW’s orbit after only a few months, the historian Robert Taylor observed that:

> The technocratic tinkering with Marxist theory happened, of course, in such a dark and remote corner of American history with no one looking. Much of the impetus probably came from the force of contemporary American pragmatism. One can see in it, for example, more than a hint of Veblen. In fact, some kind of triple play is at work, from Veblen to Scott to the IWW. Some of the ideas also seem to preview the later criticism of persons such as A.A. Berle or James Burnham who emphasize the decay of traditional property arrangements and the rise of “management.” . . . But the IWW’s futile attempt is significant in at least a small way. Wobblies were among the first radicals in the Marxist camp to recognize the critical importance of technology in any program to remake society by socialist revolution.\(^{19}\)

Scott’s 15 minutes of fame, however, really began in the midst of the Great Depression after Scott proposed to create an Energy Survey of the United States. As the historian Henry Elsner explains:
The plan of the Energy Survey was to plot on graphs the industrial development of the United States for the preceding one hundred years. Rather than monetary measures, physical factors were to be used: man-hours per unit of production, expenditure of energy per product, employment and working hours, volume and rate of growth of production, and total installed horsepower for each industry.  

Scott’s ideas impressed a number of New York intellectuals including Professor Walter Rautenstrauch, head of Columbia’s Department of Industrial Engineering. Before long Scott was being interviewed as a new industrial prophet and he loaded his talk with phrases like “steady state of doing work,” “energy transversion,” “order of magnitude,” “thermodynamically balanced load,” and “discontinuous wave of technological advance.” For a short period of time, Scott and his buzzword “Technocracy” became famous much as in the early 1970s, the term “Consciousness III” taken from Yale Professor Charles Reich’s *The Greening of America* became came into vogue. (The word “technocracy” even popped up in a W.C. Field’s movie.)

As for Scott, the fact that his Energy Survey was sponsored by Columbia University’s Engineering Department gave the idea of Technocracy even more scientific validation. As the Technocracy craze grew, a new Continental Committee on Technocracy (CCT) was established to handle all inquiries about the new movement.

Scott, however, was given to making strange statements to the press and his eccentric personality of this longtime Greenwich Village bohemian quickly became a problem. He also created controversy with economists when he claimed that the Depression “was not something unnatural or inexplicable, rather it was the inevitable result of technologically produced abundance, technologically created unemployment smashing the ‘price system.’”21 Scott also stressed “the invalidation of all prior economic concepts, based on scarcity, by technologically...
produced abundance. He also introduced, though hardly originated, an energy-level perspective on social development as well.”  

For Scott:

Technocracy’s perspective began with a materialist conception of history: the fundamental factor in any society is its ability to make use of available energy resources. When the rate of energy conversion remains constant, there is no social change (as defined by the technologist). Thus, domestication of crop plants and domestication of animals marked early, important social changes. But thereafter little change occurred from “the dawn of history to the middle of the eighteenth century,” for “man’s own body, whether free or slave, was the only energy conversion engine available.”

Utilizing these concepts, both the rate and the extent of magnitude of social change can be measured in quantitative, physical terms. For example, agrarian societies are limited to 2,000 kilogram-calories of extraneous (nonhuman) energy consumption per capita per day. After the introduction of machine technology in the United States, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, the figure here has increased to 150,000 kilogram-calories per capita per day. This “constitutes a social change from one order of magnitude to another.”  

Scott then examined the pricing system and decided that it would inevitably lead to economic depressions. From Elsner’s study:

Looking at economics, the technologist-Technocrat notes two things. First, that all economic measurements are made in terms of a variable pecuniary standard, price. But prices, pecuniary wealth, and debt are not physical measurements; they fluctuate without any necessary changes in the physical items they represent. The function, therefore, of “fictitious”
economic concepts is not to provide the measurements necessary to balance industrial production and consumption but to provide control over them, in terms of differential advantage. . . .

Consequently, under price system rules of production for profit and payment of return on capital investment, crisis inevitably follows the industrial development that has taken place. In order to cut internal costs, mechanization must be constantly increased, thereby either increasing unemployment or creating overproduction. To pay off capitalization, industry must continually expand at a compound interest rate—a physical impossibility.

Even if somehow a sufficient mass of purchasing power could be injected into the economy to overcome the current depression, the solution would be only temporary. The basic problem is that the entire set of economic concepts and the controls that embody them are simply inadequate to handle a mechanized high-energy society. At best, they are too imprecise, too unstable, to perform the measurement required. This was a basic theme of the Technocrats. It is stated with typical flair by Scott:

So we have before us the spectacle of a company of persons attempting to run a social system under rules which actually were cancelled on the day when Parliament confirmed James Watt in his patent on the steam engine.24

In January 1933, the CCT split, in part under outside pressure, in part over questions involving the accuracy of the Energy Survey, in part because of Scott’s erratic personality and in part from the belief that Scott had plagiarized other authors. A 29 January 1933 New York Times article (“Technocracy Cult Now is on the Wane”) profiled Scott and the split in Technocracy. The Times said that the movement seemed temporarily to be “leading to a new socio-
economic cult or religion” and cited Scott as arguing that “the social system of the future must be adjusted to the energy-producing values which can be regulated by scientific methods. A price system and scientific production cannot exist side by side.”

The *Times* describes Scott this way:

> The ideas of Mr. Scott, who once did a research project for the Industrial Workers of the World, were in no way novel to a host of persons in Greenwich Village. For ten years the tall, rangy man had expounded his ideas in Village restaurants to any one who would listen. His vigorous personality and breezy language, filled with terms of many sciences, won him a hearing even among those who were skeptical.

Scott’s controversial statements and erratic personality caused Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler to formally distance his school from Scott. Butler informed the *Times* that Columbia had no more to do with Technocracy “than with the fourth dimension.”

Scott’s background also came under scrutiny. When the *Times* asked him just where he had gotten his engineering degree, Scott declined to answer and said that it was “the idea that mattered,” not his background. It also turned out that Scott apparently had borrowed many of his ideas from Professor Frederick Soddy, a British-born chemistry professor at Oxford who in 1921 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. In 1926, Soddy published a book entitled *Wealth, Virtual Wealth and Debt*, which Scott seemed to have extensively cribbed from.²⁵

**MONAD MAN**

After the CCT split and in spite of the adverse publicity he received, Scott founded Technocracy, Inc. (“the Technological Army of the New America”) at a 1933 convention in Chicago. Its
symbol was a Chinese ying/yang symbol known as the Monad. As Elsner reports:

An emblem, the Monad – “in vermillion and French gray, which is an ancient Chinese symbol signifying unity, balance, growth, and dynamic functioning for the security of the life processes” – had appeared at the 1933 Chicago convention. It became widely used on lapel pins worn by all members, on letterheads and literature, and on roadside signs.26

The New York-headquartered sect soon established chapters in cities like Milwaukee, Seattle, Spokane, Portland and Los Angeles. Members were spurred on by Scott’s continual prediction of the imminent collapse of the “Price System.” As Elsner explains:

the inevitability of a not-too-distant collapse continued to be dominant in Technocracy, Inc.’s appeal. In its feature article of Technocracy’s first issue, appearing in May, 1935, Scott put the date “some time between now and 1940.” Later 1935 predictions by him set the time for change “within the next decade.”27

Scott became a somewhat messianic figure for his followers. When he arrived for a talk in Los Angeles, “banners were there, armbands, placards, cars painted gray and monogrammed with monads, cheers, salutes, cameras, and a parade through the city to Tour Headquarters.”28 Scott, in turn, would speak to his spellbound followers for hours. In his talks, he went out of his way to laud the youth of America, whom Scott said would present an “ultimatum” for a “clean, hard, bright design for living.” Should any “racial, religious or economic” minority stand in their way, “youth” will “concede nothing short of that minority’s annihilation.”

(Technocracy Inc. even had his own youth group (dubbed the Farads in honor of a unit of electrical capacity). The Farads had
their own distinctive way of dressing with gray sweaters that had large Monad emblems.)

Over time Technocracy more and more adopted semi-military trappings and symbols:

As the 1930’s faded into the 1940’s, and as Technocracy, Inc. reached its peak, the multifaceted image of Howard Scott seemed to change from the prophet of doom crying out into the wilderness, or the technician-revolutionary, to that of the general inspecting his troops poised at the border of alien territory. A front-page spread on Scott’s 1941 Western tour shows two solid lines of gray-suited Technocrats awaiting their Chief at the railroad station; a seventy-one-car gray parade; Scott surrounded by a sea of gray-suited and -shirted followers; and Scott talking to groups of Technocrats in seven different attractively furnished Section halls.29

TECHNOCRACY AND “TOTAL MOBILIZATION”

As World War II approached, Technocracy criticized fascism as a last-ditch attempt to save a decayed status quo while Russian Communism was said to be unable to overcome the scarcity and limitations of a backward economy.

Technocracy argued that wars were simply “another means of keeping the system going, making profits, and diverting attention from the real issues of social change.”30 The movement, however, turned inward like much of isolationist America of the 1930s. And like most isolationists, Scott now focused most his criticism on the British Empire:

Applying technocratic analysis – and writing at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact – Scott saw the war as caused by a conflict between British imperialism, based on colonial possessions and supported by sea power, and a new, stronger, “contiguous continental order.” Like the Pax
Romana before it, the Pax Britannica was collapsing under the impact of physical and economic change. A united Germany and Russia would form a nearly impregnable area, one that could collapse only from internal causes. . . . All of this was by way of again reinforcing the conclusion that America must not enter the war: while England expected Americans to “die for dear old Britain,” intervening on any side, to attack or defend “any rotten European structure,” could only lead to “national suicide.”

Technocracy was even banned in Canada in June 1940 because it opposed Canadian conscription for World War II.

However in July 1940 Scott began to change his views radically. Now he began to openly warn against fascism and claim that fascism had designs on America as well. Scott declared that he wanted to establish a hemispheric union based on Technocracy, and which the United States would dominate down to the northern tip of Latin America. Technocracy now demanded a policy of total conscription as well. The movement next banned “Asiatic” members from joining from November 1941 to 1946. It also backed aid to England in order to buy time for a massive buildup of North America.

Technocracy Inc. even promoted a design for a massive Flying Wing super bomber and by the end of the War the Air Force did indeed construct a bomber not unlike the one Technocracy had proposed. Finally, Technocracy Inc. argued that FDR appoint Howard Scott to run the total mobilization of industry and manpower. A 31 December 1941 Technocracy Inc. press releases read in part:

TOTAL WAR STRATEGY DEMANDED
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DEFENSE NEEDED
TECHNOCRACY URGES PRESIDENT CALL HOWARD SCOTT

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Scott supported Russia as well. In a November 1941 issue of *Technocracy* magazine, the English government was attacked for “stumblebum statesmanship” and for failing to realize that Russia would be England’s natural ally in any war following World War I. Instead, “Tory imperialism” worked to block a Russian-British alliance. But only an alliance with Russia could defeat fascism. Once Pearl Harbor finally happened, Scott sent a telegram to FDR pledging his organization’s “unqualified support to your leadership of our country in its armed conflict against the fascist aggressor nations of the world.”

IS TECHNOCRACY A FASCIST PLOT?

In early 1942, Technocracy Inc. took out large ads in major American papers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. On 8 March 1942, the *Times* ran a Technocracy ad that again urged “TOTAL CONSCRIPTION” and also included the slogan “America Must Liquidate Its Pro-Fascists At Home . . . Before It Can Defeat Its Fascist Enemies Abroad!”

But was Technocracy Inc. itself fascist?

Daniel Bell had reason to wonder.

On 14 March 1942, Bell published an article in *The New Leader* that called attention to the “well-heeled resurgence” of Technocracy Inc. While acknowledging that “conventionally stereotyped slogans cannot be draped about Mr. Scott’s organization,” Bell noted that Technocracy Inc. rejected liberalism and democracy, promoted “Americanism,” and baited aliens living in the United States. Bell said that Technocracy and fascism shared “a nativist appeal, an appeal offering something to everyone, an appeal for a natural elite.” He also wondered if
Technocracy hadn’t been getting secret funds from some unknown source to place its ads.

Following Bell’s lead, *The New York Post* and the *Herald Tribune* ran articles suggesting that Technocracy may be a form of “native American fascism.” Howard Scott now went from a “Greenwich Village nobody” and figure of repeated press mockery in the 1930s to a shadowy figure elevated to the leadership of a well-endowed organization, complete with uniforms and an antidemocratic ideology, which had appeared in full bloom just at the time of foreign crisis. All that was necessary was to locate the Fritz Thyssens.35

Bell, however, never accused Technocracy Inc. of being fascist per se in its politic but he insisted that with its elite theory that it was tilting in a fascist-like totalitarian direction.36 As Bell put it in his 14 March 1942 piece:

> The conveniently stereotyped slogans cannot be draped around Mr. Scott’s organization. It rejects liberalism and democracy. In effect, it preaches a rule by an *elite*, this elite to be composed of engineers who have the sufficient wisdom to utilize our technical resources. It rejects aliens, Asiatics and politicians, with politics and finance its two chief bugaboos.

Technocracy is lodged in a large suite at 155 East 44th St., outfitted in slick chrome style. Young men standing guard salute Technocracy officials on entering. One person in the office insisted that the men did not wear uniforms, that “they are ordinary double-breasted suits,” but all happen to be the same. They wear grey-coats, grey pants, grey shirts and blue ties. On the label is the monad emblem of Technocracy.
Around the office can be seen numerous publications issued by the group. All of these are large, expensively produced, smooth-coated jobs, with many pictures. Estimates in the printing business calculate that production costs on each issue of their magazine and pamphlets run into the thousands of dollars.

For Technocracy Inc.

The constant phrase is total war and total mobilization. Earlier in his swashbuckling harangues, Scott used the Asiatics as a whipping post, claiming that North America was self-sufficient unto itself. In his present talks, this has died down. In his ads, Scott would shut down all foreign language periodicals and broadcasts in this country, emphasizing the American side of our endeavors.

Mr. Scott should explain why the organization is so intent on its alien-baiting.

Bell also hoped that the group might provide an outline of its finances as well:

The organization explicitly claims that it receives no outside subsidies and its work is financed by membership dues of five dollars a year. Technocracy publishes more than six magazines, in New York, Akron, Portland and three in California. Its publications here are two-color jobs, on heavy coated paper adorned with pictures of airplanes and machines. Its ads taken in over 100 newspapers admittedly cost over $50,000. Besides this, Technocracy has gone streamlined in other high-powered ways, to the extent of giving away match folders with red letters advertising Technocracy. It would take a mass following of at the very least 20,000 members to supply that cost, and that figure is nowhere in sight.
Bell concluded his investigation:

Mr. Scott refuses to divulge the source of his funds. Mr. Scott also has not explained why his ads in out-of-town papers call for the appointment of Howard Scott as Director-General of Defense, while the New York ad demurely asked for total conscription.

Mr. Scott wishes to rule America by an elite, but apparently the elite is to be self-constituted and self-recruited.

Technocracy Inc.’s 8 March 1942 ad in the *Times* certainly gave Bell reason for being concerned about the sect. The ad virtually demanded a complete takeover of post Pearl Harbor America by the federal government, a takeover that could only be managed by Technocracy. From the ad:

Men do not create events; events create men. Today’s crisis necessitates that America call upon the ability and statesmanship capable of installing the technological and social mobilization required for victory.

Technocracy makes the unequivocal statement that such ability and statesmanship do not exist among the party politicians and business leaders of America. Technocracy charges that the business leadership of America lacks the vision to design and install a Continental operation of total war, and that such vision cannot possibly stem from the picayune confines of private business and party politics.

Technocracy charges that America must abolish immediately all production for profit at a price, and substitute in its place the engineering design of production for the technological operation of the strategy of the Continental offensive.

*Technocracy asks: How many more disasters will America have to suffer before it installs the design now called for by the march of events?*
In fact Technocracy asked for much more than that. In another section of the ad that obviously highlights Scott’s crackpot view of the world, the organization demanded that

The Government of the United States, as a measure of national safety and national welfare, shall close all public bars and limit the sale of spirituous beverages, wines, and liquors to restaurants, hotel dining rooms, and licensed liquor stores.

The Government of the United States, as a measure of national safety and national welfare, shall abolish all foreign language periodical publications, foreign language advertising, and foreign language radio programs for American consumption.

The Government of the United States, as a measure of national safety and national welfare, shall abolish all foreign language and hyphenated American organizations, associations, and fraternal societies regardless of whether they have been formed to promote political, commercial, cultural, educational, linguistic, artistic, or other relationships.

(Needless to say, FDR declined Howard Scott’s generous offer to run America.)

Clearly Scott hoped that with a massive political and military crisis Technocracy could rejuvenate itself since the long awaited collapse of the Price System had yet to happen. Following World War II, Scott continued to hammer away at the always imminent breakdown of the Price System. In the immediate postwar period, Technocracy Inc. once again convinced itself that the time of final collapse had at last arrived:

now, with the tremendous increase in productive technology, and the labor force swelled by returning veterans, the price system’s day of reckoning must surely be at hand.
Technocracy Inc. never again set a date for the predicted collapse, but the figure “18 months,” related to various base points, was often mentioned among the members.  

Meanwhile Technocracy Inc. went more and more “left” and argued that the day the Democratic Party denied Henry Wallace the Vice-Presidency in 1944 was the day the Democrats had “gone reactionary.”

THE OLD DARK AGE VATICAN PLOT

In tandem with Technocracy Inc.’s program for running America, Scott also developed a conspiracy theory about the evils of the Catholic Church. A reporter who interviewed Scott in the early 1930s commented that

Running through the Scott legends, like a single current gold thread through a multi-colored tapestry, is the idea that the Church of Rome recognizes in the engineer-scientist-revolutionary a deadly enemy to the validity of its world-wide property claims.

Scott’s concern with the evil machinations of the Vatican continued after World War II, no doubt in part because he believed it and in part to distract his members from the obvious fact that “the collapse of the Price System” never materialized.

In a June 1945 story in *The Technocrat* entitled “The Vultures of Peace” it claimed that fascism really was an international conspiracy of “political, economic, and spiritual oligarchies” to oppose social change. Even though fascism had been defeated, it would soon be revived in the form of an anti-Russian crusade.

Fascism itself had been the creation of “a worldwide conspiracy by the international clerical hierarchy.” But fascism’s roots went even deeper:
But fascism is only the most recent manifestation of a centuries-old struggle which began with actions of Pope Innocent III. It was no accident that Hitler called for the abrogation of the Treaty of Westphalia, “thereby fervently proclaiming the historical connection that we have delineated here.” With “social change of a new order” introduced by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, the clerical, aristocratic, and business interests had a new target. Continuing on to recount the history of the 1930’s and 1940’s, the article contains some perceptive social analysis again intertwined with the sinister plotting of Rome.41

Technocracy Inc. argued that the Vatican also manipulated the United States to attack the Soviet Union and that the Hungarian Revolution was a Vatican-State Department plot meant to include Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany as well. Technocracy also

was concerned over the possibility of a nuclear war and of what it considers American provocations that could lead to war. It wants to see the cold war abolished and has proposed a series of steps towards that end: withdrawal from Berlin, Taiwan, and the costal waters of China and from bases outside an immediate defense area; recognition of China and her admission to the United Nations; cessation of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe; and “negotiations with Russia and China of a permanent peace in the world.” Characteristically, the first point in this program was: “Get the ‘dead albatross’ of the Vatican off our neck.”42

In 1948 Technocracy was fatally weakened by a split by dissident members out to challenge Scott’s authority. Technocracy, however, was already fundamentally brittle at its core because the long awaited apocalyptic collapse of the “Price System” never came.
Over time the magical sense that Scott had the “inside track on history” gradually eroded. Meanwhile more and more members were convinced that Scott himself was simply incompetent if not just plain weird. Many Technocrats who had such thoughts simply suppressed them “or rationalized in the interests of the theory and the vision or because it seemed that in any movement the masses always needed a leader to lionize.”

In September 1948 some regional Technocracy leaders alarmed at the decline in the organization and obvious signs of disorder at the National Headquarters in New York submitted a document (“The Expansion of Technocracy”) that called for the limitation of Scott’s organizational powers. Engaged, Scott challenged the dissidents and forced them out of the organization. He also sent a letter to his members warning them about “the cancer of this conspiracy” and how the conspirators had plotted to ruin the sect. Scott’s statement read in part:

Every Technocrat is asked by CHQ [Central Headquarters] to view this conspiracy with a new significance, because of the timing of its perpetration in relation to national and world events. These conspirators did not congregate by accident or happenstance – the timing is too pat! CHQ asks the Membership of Technocracy Inc. to close its ranks and clean house, for there is no room in Technocracy for traitors.

Scott maintained his control because “the total image of Howard Scott, the mysterious workings of the CHQ, and the body of thought of Technocracy were probably too tightly tied together in one psychological structure for most Technocrats.”

(Armin Mohler has also noted that behind its façade of seeming rationality, Technocracy actually was a highly irrational movement that employed scientific sounding jargon in a ritual like way much as a devout Muslim will “endlessly and uncritically repeat phrases from the Koran.”)
In spite of the majority’s adherence to Scott, the split devastated the movement. In 1951 Technocracy’s CHQ had to leave its offices in Manhattan and relocate first to Lambertsville, New Jersey, and then to a farm in Bucks County outside Philadelphia. Although some local Technocracy chapters continued to publish small journals, Scott’s CHQ issued its last pamphlet in the late 1940s. Scott sank into even deeper historical obscurity and when he died in 1970 his passing did not even merit a note in the New York Times.47

Conclusion

”ME FOR DICTATOR”: LAROUCHE, SCOTT AND THE CURSE OF THE “EFFICIENCY INTELLECTUAL”

The year Scott died another leftwing technocrat of sorts named “Lynn Marcus” was giving classes on Marxist economics in places like Columbia’s Hamilton Hall. In these lectures, LaRouche devoted extensive time to ideas about a society’s energy density and its need to expand the “real economy’s” productive base through the development of new sources of energy like fusion power. LaRouche also made reference to the works of Seymour Melman, a Columbia professor of industrial engineering and operations research, whose social concerns were very much in the tradition of Walter Rautenstrauch. Early NCLC texts frequently cited Melman’s book Our Depleted Society and stressed the need to “retool” the U.S. war economy into useful production by “industrial conversion.”

Like Scott, LaRouche was a longtime Greenwich Village radical and big talker with a murky background. Again like Scott, LaRouche believed there was a fundamental contradiction between the real productive forces in society and the credit system and that this contradiction would inevitably lead to a massive imminent economic collapse.
Scott and LaRouche also tried to use external crises to expand their influence with no success. Scott hoped the World War II would provide the perfect opportunity to promote Technocracy as the only way to defeat fascism. In the 1970s, LaRouche used an alleged Soviet superiority in energy beam weapons technology to try to convince the military that only he could create the kind of high-tech total economy needed to defeat the Soviet threat. Scott also appealed to such nativist scare tactics as banning foreign immigrant societies while LaRouche pandered to the fear of homosexuals during the 1980s AIDS crisis.

The NCLC and Technocracy Inc. also defied most conventional observers’ ability to easily categorize them politically. On the one hand, Technocracy Inc. clearly was led by one man in a quasi-cult-like manner and even promoted internal dress codes. It was organized along authoritarian (if not totalitarian) lines and made strong overtures to the nativist movement inside the United States. Yet Scott also had a history of involvement with radical movements and really did believe that Technocracy was the way to defeat fascism. Scott also seems to have sincerely supported many pro-Soviet policies as well.\(^{48}\)

Both Scott and LaRouche tried to explain world events by conspiracy theories. For Scott “fascism” was really caused by the Vatican and in that sense both Hitler and Mussolini were Vatican agents in a conspiracy that he traced back to Pope Innocent III. LaRouche, in turn, claimed that there was a three thousand year cabal of landed aristocrats and Jewish bankers intent on keeping humanity in a state of ignorance and oppression.

Before LaRouche fixated on the Jews, he attacked the Catholic Church. In his *Beyond Psychoanalysis* series -- most prominently in his articles on Feuerbach and “The Sexual Impotence of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party” -- one of LaRouche’s objects of wrath was the Catholic Church. LaRouche saw the Catholic Church as the embodiment of a backward feudal Mediterranean
ideology that had kept the working class too weak to seize power. For some years then, LaRouche had a view of the Catholic Church not entirely dissimilar to Scott’s although LaRouche never believed that the Catholic Church had the kind of political power Scott thought it had.49

Yet what is perhaps most fascinating when one compares the NCLC to Technocracy Inc. is that in spite of many striking similarities, the fact is that there is no evidence that LaRouche or anyone else in the NCLC knew anything about Scott or Technocracy Inc.

It is vaguely possible, of course, that LaRouche may have stumbled upon Technocracy Inc. either in the 1930s or after the war but I find it somewhat doubtful. Although Technocracy Inc. had many chapters in California, Oregon and British Columbia, it had hardly any organized presence at all in the Northeast, even though the group’s central headquarters was in New York City.50 By the time LaRouche moved to New York City, Technocracy Inc. had relocated to New Jersey. In short, there is virtually no internal evidence that LaRouche knew anything about Technocracy Inc. as a movement or that he took it seriously.

LaRouche actually got his core ideas from reading about the world of MIT, Harvard and the Macy Foundation conferences and not from a low-rent and radically marginal outfit like Technocracy Inc. Yet it is precisely that fact that makes the parallels between someone like Scott and LaRouche so intriguing. Interestingly, the one academic review of LaRouche’s book Dialectical Economics by the economist Martin Bronfenbrenner also saw in the text links to Veblen. In his review, Bronfenbrenner comments:

Marcus’s experience extends to the speculative overcapitalization of capital values, creating “fictitious capitals,” which cannot later justify themselves by earning capacity in the normal course of events. Observation of the overcapitalization process confirms Marcus in an
overcapitalization theory of depression, of the sort associated in America with Thorstein Veblen – but Marx came first.  

Bronfenbrenner also notes that Marcus appears to be what my late Wisconsin colleague Selig Perlman called an “efficiency intellectual.” This is to say, Marcus believes all rational men of goodwill accept his own technocratic design or the planned economy with minimal need for repression. . . . In addition, like many other dialectical philosophers, Marcus sets off freedom against necessity in a fashion well adapted to rationalize almost any measure of dictatorship. Admitting that freedom requires the recognition of necessity, who is to draw the institutional frontier between the two domains? Judging perhaps unfairly from his controversial manner, Marcus impresses at least one reader as a Me-for-Dictator type to whom it would be dangerous to entrust the task of drawing any boundary between the domain of freedom and that of necessity or order.  

Today it takes some imagination to recall the world of the 1920s and 1930s. But from the public’s admiration of Herbert Hoover -- a towering figure in American engineering who became President in 1928 -- to the mystique of Howard Hughes in the 1930s, to the admiration for Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin and Hitler’s attempts to rebuild the infrastructure of their devastated nations to the aura surrounding central planning and the New Deal, the ideas of technocracy were “in the air” both in the liberal West as well as in continental Europe.  

Howard Scott’s Technocracy Inc. caricatured this broader Zeitgeist.

It is also easy to see in LaRouche the “radical” efficiency expert imagined by both Veblen and Scott. Although LaRouche entered organized radicalism through Trotskyism, he clearly saw in Lenin
and Trotsky what Veblen saw; Moses-like figures who would introduce a new promised land, a cornucopia of production.

Veblen and Scott were affected by the growth of scientific engineering and factory production methods of the Progressive Era. LaRouche, however, was radicalized by the postwar world of cybernetics and automation that he first had been introduced to in Boston in the late 1940s. In fact, his “day job” as an “efficiency expert” of sorts depended on his having some knowledge of cybernetics, automation, and industrial accounting.

When LaRouche first set up the NCLC in 66-67, he didn’t think of it as a conventional vanguard party. Rather he saw it as a think tank of highly intelligent young New Left radicals who would provide a working blueprint for a rapid transition to socialism that the working class could not produce on its own. In so doing, LaRouche echoed Veblen’s ideas about a “soviet” of engineers allied with workers.

When the economy failed to crash on schedule, LaRouche created his own special vanguard party much the same way Scott created Technocracy Inc. Both men were utterly convinced that they possessed the programmatic blueprint to overcome economic and social crisis and usher in a new dawn. And when reality failed to conform to their blueprint, they increasingly looked to conspiracy theory to explain away their failure.

In examining the NCLC in this admittedly highly unorthodox way, I am suggesting an alternate way or model of viewing LaRouche. To his dwindling band of acolytes LaRouche is the new Plato; to his strongest detractors he is a new Hitler.

Yet one can also argue using historical analogy that LaRouche seems a lot less like Plato or Hitler and a lot more “Howard Scott 2.0.” And I have the sneaking suspicion that future historians – if they even bother to look at LaRouche at all – may well reach a similar conclusion.
Grand Dragon, I owe you one.

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1 Wohlforth’s article appeared in the 10/29-11/4 1986 issue of In These Times.

2 The idea that Hitler was a “Jewish agent” is by no means original to LaRouche. Similar accusations were made as far back as the early 1930s. One prominent example was a book published in Holland in 1933 entitled De Geldbronnen van het Nationaal Socialisme (Drie Gesprekken met Hitler) (The Financiers of National Socialism: Three Conversations with Hitler). This hoax purportedly was the memoir of a non-existent Jewish banker from New York named “Sidney Warburg.” The book was translated and published in the United States. See “Sidney Warburg,” Hitler’s Secret Backers (Palmdale, CA: Omi Press, 1995). It first appeared as far as I can remember in a version published in Arizona in the late 1970s or early 1980s by Anthony Sutton, who wrote books arguing that Wall Street helped finance both the rise of Hitler and the Bolsheviks.

Unfortunately it remains impossible to get at the bottom of the hoax based on the existing evidence. It may have been that the book was a clever money making scam and written simply for profit. However, it might have been part of a “black operation” against Hitler that was meant to be published in Germany but had to be published in Holland after Hitler took power. Of course since Hitler was hated by so many people, it may have been a product of some intelligence service (including Hitler’s opponents inside the German army) or some political allies of Hitler who wanted to weaken his hold on power or – if I had to choose – either members of Otto Strasser’s Black Front or some related “national Bolshevik” tendency meant to block Hitler’s rise to power. Again, it is very difficult to know. The “Paul Warburg” hoax first resurfaced in the postwar period in a book by René Sonderegger (who used the pseudonym “Severin Rehinhard”) in a 1948 book published in Switzerland called Spainischer Sommer (Spanish Summer). Sonderegger wrote numerous rightwing conspiracy books and he is mentioned in Kurt Tauber’s monumental study Beyond Eagle and Swastika as being active in the far right.

3 Nor is this leftwing conspiracy mindset unique to critiques of LaRouche. In 1943, for example, investigative journalist “John Roy Carlson” (Arthur Derounian) wrote Under Cover; My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America--the Amazing Revelation of how Axis Agents and our Enemies within are now Plotting to Destroy the United States. Here he tried to link virtually every obscure far right, nativist and anti-Semitic sect that had the misfortune to be infiltrated by him as somehow all cogs in a vast Nazi-run machine. The book was heavily promoted by the U.S. government which bought thousands of copies to distribute to GIs. It also coincided with the government interning thousands of Japanese and the forced relocations of numbers of Italian and German-Americans as well.
Under Cover is a fascinating and highly entertaining snap shot of the American far right from the late 1930s to the early years of World War II. Unfortunately it comes with a price. As the historian Leo Riboffo noted in his book The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Depression to the Cold War (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1983) in his effort to fight anti-Semitic nativist and isolationist groups, Carlson tried to link them all back to Berlin so that he could portray his foes as “Fifth Columnist” traitors.

Given the fact that the Berlin-backed German-American Bund was a prominent player inside the U.S. far right in the 1930s, it was easy for Carlson to cherry pick the evidence to prove connections that did exist both in fact and on paper but were then strung together to suggest a far grander, far more sinister, and far more nebulous conspiracy theory that the empirical evidence could justify. Carlson, of course, was not alone in “brown baiting.” Many writers associated with the American Communist Party like Michael Sayers and Albert Kahn (co-authors of the 1946 Stalinist classic The Grand Conspiracy: The Secret War against the Soviet Union) followed a similar path. However we now know from confiscated German documents that the idea that there was some vast Berlin-orchestrated conspiracy was an invention. We also know from scholars like Sandor Diamond that the German Foreign Ministry convinced the Nazi leadership to distance itself from the Bund’s activities as much as possible because the Bund was damaging Germany’s image in America and that Hitler followed their advice. See Sandor Diamond, The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924-1941 (Ithaca NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974).

4 Henry Elsner, Jr., The Technocrats: Prophets of Automation (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1957), 214. For this chapter’s discussion of Technocracy, I will rely heavily on Elsner (himself a former Technocracy member). His book is the best one for learning about the history of Scott and his movement. In fact as far as I can tell, it is virtually the only book ever written that is a serious scholarly study of Technocracy Inc.

Also see William Akin, Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocratic Movement, 1900-1941 (Berkley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1977). In contrast to Elsner, Akin is more interested in the non-Scott thinkers about technology and technocracy beginning with people like Veblen. Also very interesting is David Adair, “The Technocrats 1917-1967: A Case Study of Conflict and Change in a Social Movement,” a Jan. 1970 MA thesis for Simon Fraser University available at http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/5072/1/b13876442.pdf. Adair principally concentrates on the Vancouver branch of Technocracy Inc. and even was able to interview some aging Technocrats at their branch office.

That said, there is an enormous amount we still don’t know about Technocracy Inc. There is almost no sense of who exactly joined Technocracy, Inc. and what their political background was, what kind of sub-groups existed inside the organization, why it was so successful on the West Coast but so weak in New England, etc. Nor is there any examination of how Technocracy Inc. was seen by other groups on the fringe from the left to the right. We have no idea from Elsner if the CP ever wrote about Technocracy
Inc. or if Technocracy Inc members were involved in the Henry Wallace campaign or did the group remain deliberately isolated from other social formations. Nor do we know if other groups borrowed part of their ideology or organizational style from Technocracy Inc. or if Technocracy Inc. copied from different groups. Although Scott went on regular speaking tours for Technocracy Inc., it is unclear how the group went about finding new members. Technocracy Inc.'s internal economic structure is unknown and there are no clues as to where Howard Scott lived and how much money he had thanks to his movement. Scott's actual past also remains unknown. Nor is much known about his lieutenants at Central Headquarters (CHQ) in New York City and how they lived. Finally little is known about how Technocracy Inc. may or may not have affected pop culture in the 1930s although its vision seems tailor-made for science fiction and futuristic writers of the period.

Finally it should also be noted that the Swiss historian Armin Mohler -- one of Europe's most famous New Right theorists and the man who really introduced the "conservative revolutionary" movement of 1920s Germany to post-war European scholarship -- also was fascinated by Scott. Mohler (who died in 2003) wrote what I believe is his most detailed study, "Howard Scott und die Technocracy: Zur Geschichte der technokratischen Bewegung, II," in Ernst Forsthoff and Heinhard Hörstel (ed), Standorte Im Zeitalstrom (Athenaum Verlag, 1974). [This is a reprint of a presentation Mohler gave at a Festschrift for Arnold Gehlen for his 70th birthday on 29 January 1974.]

Mohler first wrote about Scott and Technocracy Inc. in a 1968 festschrift for Carl Schmidt's 80th birthday but he did so inadequately without having access to sources in the United States. For his 1974 presentation, Mohler described his later visit to the United States to do field research and archive work. He met with little success given the almost utter lack of documentary material that he could find in both New York and Washington and the secretive nature of Technocracy, Inc. itself and its few remaining members. Nor could Mohler (nor anyone else) get access to Technocracy, Inc.'s archives that were reportedly stored in a farm in Pennsylvania. The organization was even more closed to research because the one book that had been written by Elsner (a dissident from the organization) was so critical of Scott. Based on his experience, Mohler (correctly in my view) conclude that there remains a great deal of mystery about the group, its members, its finances, its weird political views and even such basic facts as the exact day Howard Scott was born.

Mohler's 1974 study comes with a useful time table of events as well as an attempt to record the (scant) literature on Technocracy that has been published outside the United States. Mohler writes that: 'In spite of such difficulties -- and there are still some more to mention -- research on technocracy should go beyond the subjective view of Elsner." For Mohler, 'Technocracy Inc.' is a paradigm of a "totalitarian" group that existed not in continental Europe but in a liberal environment like the United States and, as such, a study of the movement could overcome the one-sidedness of "totalitarian" studies based on European groupings.
Daniel Bell believes technocracy as a general vision of society really began with the French utopian socialist theorist the Comte de Saint Simon.

Atkin, 8-9.

Elsner, 18.

Akin, 28.

12. For an interesting analysis of Veblen that attempts to argue that Veblen was attracted to ideas that emerged from the engineering community that were critical of capitalist economic decision making, see Donald Stabile, “Veblen and the Political Economy of the Engineer: The Radical Thinker and Engineering Leaders Came to Technocratic Ideas at the Same Time,” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 45 (1) (Jan. 1986), 41-52.

Donald Stabile, Prophets of Order: The Rise of the New Class, Technocracy and Socialism in America (Boson: South End Press, 1984), 213. Stabile’s book is quite interesting in that it attempts to look at the rise of the managerial “class” in the early 20th century and its relationship to socialist thought in America.

217.

218.

Ibid.

219.

Ibid.


292.

Or so Chaplin later wrote. Scott, however, later claimed that the Technical Alliance merely had the IWW as a client that wanted a report on the meat-packing industry. Elsner, 27.


Elsner, 2.

Coleman reports that Soddy believed that “the flow of energy should be the primary concern of economics.” Much like LaRouche promoted fusion energy, Soddy promoted atomic energy as liberating man from the restraints of a coal-based economy. In his 1926 book, Soddy wrote: If atomic energy is ever tapped, an outburst of human activity would occur such as would make the triumphs of our time seem tawdry, and primitive humanity’s struggles for energy as the fantastic memory of some horrid dream.” Coleman, 182.

26 Elsner, 95

27 89.

28 92. Not surprisingly, Technocracy Inc. caught the attention of the U.S. Communist Party. In the mid-1930s the CPUSA issued a pamphlet, The Marxist Exposure of the Fallacy of Technocracy, by Sam Darcy, the editor of Western World, the CP’s West Coast newspaper, It was accompanied by a brief introduction by Lincoln Steffens. (The pamphlet appears to be a reprint from a series of articles in Western Worker.)

Darcy went after Technocracy’s elevation of the engineer and industrial manager and its substitution of energy units for a view of economics based on a Marxist understanding of labor power and the theory of surplus value. He mocked Technocracy’s idea that an expanding rate of technical advance in industry would cause the role of labor in production to dwindle, making industry more and more automatic and people more and more unessential. The truly unessential group was the “pure parasites” – the capitalists, the “rentiers, that is coupon clippers – people who do nothing useful but have vast incomes purely by clipping the interest and dividend coupons from their bonds and stocks.” (As an aside, the idea of capitalists as unproductive “parasites” was far more Veblen than Marx.) But
The Technocrats do not propose confiscation of the means of production. They are careful to make it clear that they do not want a Communist program of abolishing the exploiting class. Therefore the profit system the cause of the crisis remains, and their "solution" is no solution at all.

Darcy also argued that if Technocracy took power:

Who would own and control the means of production? If not the capitalist then the engineer? Who would determine how many ergs [an energy unit used by Technocracy] shall be credited to the engineer? Assuming what is obviously ridiculous that the capitalists would voluntarily surrender their ownership of industry and turn it over to the engineers, would not the engineers become a new exploiting class? What guarantees are there that this would not happen? Maybe their high moral character? Maybe engineers are more god-fearing than capitalists? That's clearly idealistic nonsense.

Darcy concluded his essay:

Some of Technocracy's catch-phrases in a more distilled form may become part of a Fascist ideology in this country. It may affect some sections of the workers and poor farmers. But that depends largely upon the leadership of the Communist movement, who must now conduct a bitter struggle against Technocracy, giving them no more quarter or toleration than any other group of capitalist misleaders.

That Darcy's essay was published by the West Coast wing of the CP also reflects Technocracy Inc.'s peculiar strength in that region of America. Technocracy Inc. and the CP appealed to not entirely dissimilar constituencies desperate to put an end to the utter misery that unchecked capitalism had caused them. It is also clear that both of them were also fighting against the appeal of the New Deal while at the same time they paradoxically helped create a greater demand for government intervention and regulation of the economy.

29 Elsner, 96-97.

30 140.

31 143.

32 Black Technocrats were allowed to join the organization but outside of public meetings, social meetings of Technocrats were not to be integrated and Black Technocrats should meet at their own homes.

33 Elsner, 152.

34 153.
The theory of elites, of course, relates to figures like Pareto and Michel and other sociologists, some of whom saw in Mussolini a realization of their ideas. This is in sharp contrast to Nazi racial “volk” theory that following a century of political romanticism first launched by Rousseau stressed the “volk” as all knowing. Inside Germany, the thinkers most associated with “elite” theory were the Conservative Revolutionaries around writers like Ernst Jünger. Some of them were sympathetic to the Soviet Union and its top-down method of social control.

As for the dissident Technocrats, some wound up joining American Rally, which had been set up by two former Trotskyists to form a peace party composed of Midwestern isolationists and populists. In 1952 the group briefly backed a leftwing U.S. Army Brigadier General named Herbert Holdridge for President. (Holdridge also tried to become a candidate for president for the American Vegetarian Party.) Another group began working with a West Coast vegetarian who predicted wars based on earth tremors. Others tried to set up a glasnost-like sect called Techno-democracy.

Interestingly there was one young far rightist in the 1950s and 1960s who clearly was influenced by some variation on Technocracy and that was James Madole. Madole tried to combine the occult beliefs he derived from a particularly racist interpretation of Madame Blavatsky’s New Age religion, Theosophy, with a vision of a technical racial elite of planners that suggests that he had a good deal of familiarity with at least some of the ideas of technocracy in general and quite possibly with Technocracy Inc. in

49 Up until his “turn” in the mid-1970s, LaRouche believed the ruling elite in America was composed of New York-based Protestants around organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations and the Rockefeller family.

50 A list of Technocracy Inc. sections for 1938-41 only shows one Technocracy Inc. local in all of New England in the town of Mansfield, Massachusetts, near Rhode Island Adair, 75-76.


52 129.

53 Mohler points out that this fact alone makes Technocracy Inc. worthy of serious study.