## Technology's Future

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| *Author* | Thomas J. Knight |
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| *Reviewer* | Arthur E. Bergles |

This book is basically a report of the Hague Congress on Technology Assessment held in 1973. The first noncommercial edition of the book was published in 1976 by the Congress sponsor, the short-lived International Society for Technology Assessment. Many of the Congress papers, quoted in part and discussed by Prof. Knight, were printed in *Technology Assessment*, the Society's archival journal.

In spite of having been held ten years ago, the Congress has much to offer contemporary scholars in technology assessment (TA) as well as those having an interest in this important subject. I should say that a keen interest in TA would be helpful, as the presentation is detailed and emphasizes the philosophical and organizational background of the movement. Nuclear fission is given only fleeting mention, but there is a good discussion of nuclear fusion issues.

Prof. Knight provides liberal interpretative comment so as to make the Congress papers more cohesive and readable. It is not always clear, though, whether the opinion is that of the paper's author or of Knight. Since the first six chapters are not updated, the discussion on the organizational structure of TA is quite out of date. For instance, the National Science Foundation's Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) program was then new, but it has already disappeared from the alphabet soup of federal programs. The cast of characters has also changed in accordance with the practice of most Western governments. There is, however, a fine seventh chapter, "Since the Congress," which brings the worldwide TA story up to the 1980s.

Prof. Knight ruefully chronicles the difficulties encountered by the Office of Technology Assessment and its counterparts in many other countries. While there is now much support for the idea that it is necessary to assess the impacts of technology, there is no generally acceptable political approach for carrying out the assessments. Knight's final remarks sound the popular TA warning and give the rationale for publication of this book: "The only way to avoid repeating the history of harmful impacts of technology is to assess the risks beforehand. And that is the intent of TA under any of its aliases. Hence where TA does not exist, something will have to be invented to replace it, and the deliberations at the Hague Congress constitute as good a place as any to find a sketch if not a blueprint."

I found this book interesting and informative, and trust that it will be widely acquired by libraries. It is the record not only of an important international conference but also of the TA movement in general.

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