

# Lean Years



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THE PROMISE OF THE INDUSTRIAL age has been tempered by many disappointments but none so devastating as the growing belief that our civilization is out of control. By every conventional measure the postwar world born in 1945 was a huge success. More goods were produced and sold than ever before. More people were working, the standard of living had never been higher. Yet as the suspicion grows that the era is ending, there is a pervasive sense that something is deeply wrong. We are used to rapid change but there is a new and uncomfortable feeling that we are in a racing car without a driver. The new mood is no conventional pessimism but rather a loss of faith rooted in a sense of betrayal. We worked hard. We educated our children. We believed in the future. We followed all the rules of success. And somehow it has turned out wrong. As the

postwar era began economists<br> promised a managed prosperity  
through fine-tuning of the economy<br> and as it ended they threw up their hands The  
remedy for galloping<br> inflation and nagging unemployment had yet to be  
discovered Econo- <br> mists catalogued reality in a series of exchange  
transactions counted<br> them up and arrived at an astronomical figure they called  
the gross<br> national product It was big enough to make anyone feel rich But much<br>  
> of what they counted--the automobile accident industry the cancer<br> economy the  
costs of pollution crime and welfare though they put<br> money in a variety of  
pockets made the society poorer not richer AS<br> The Street Journal summed it  
up The economic ideas and policies<br> employed during the Great Depression and  
through a long era of Post<br> World War II prosperity seem to have worn out<br>  
Scientists had promised to break the bonds of human finitude to open<br> the secrets  
of the cell and to unveil the mystery of the planets Instead of<br> the boundless  
horizons they had promised limits popped up everywhere<br> The symbol of the new  
world without options was the Energy Crisis<br>

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