



What's Next

A NEWSLETTER OF EMERGING ISSUES AND TRENDS

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THE FUTURE OF POLITICS: A Lost Generation of Voters

Pollster Peter Hart met with Members of Congress as part of the "Dialogues on America's Future" series. Excerpts of his remarks follow.

There is a tendency to look at people and issues in a vacuum rather than tying them to lifestyles and values. I thought I would talk about 90 million Americans—"the baby boom generation"—and give you a better sense of their fears, their priorities, and how they relate to politics.

Born in the 1940s, 1950s, and on into the 1960s, the baby boom generation is the first generation whose lives have been dictated by the tube. Television has both expanded and defined their lives. I would call them "the TV generation."

In a recent survey, we interviewed 816 people. The survey was door-to-door with



During his February 7 meeting with Members of Congress, Mr. Hart addressed issues concerning the future of politics.

face-to-face interviews that were 75 to 90 minutes long. I chose to discuss this study because it is important in order to be able to talk about the future. I think we have the tendency to get caught up with the issue of the day, but this study addresses basic bedrock values, and you can really get a sense of where people are.

When baby boomers were asked if they are satisfied with life, the answer was generally yes — 61 percent said they are either very happy or quite satisfied. It is not an unhappy generation, yet the satisfaction breaks out into different areas.

In terms of being satisfied with their life, their friends, and their opportunities, they are very positive. But if you look at jobs, financial security, and money, you start to see uncertainty. That represents just how insecure they are economically, and this is one of their major driving concerns.

continued on page 2

"Elderboom" Could Bring Glut of Single Family Homes

Over the next 20 years, the nation's housing needs will change dramatically largely as a result of the burgeoning number of over 65 year olds, according to a recent report from the Urban Institute. The report examines future housing needs of the elderly and policies that could help meet those changing needs.

Because the elderly frequently have activity limitations and many live alone, traditional, single-family homes are often unsuitable. If current trends continue, many elderly are likely to be inadequately housed. The report notes that elderly women, older elderly, and those who do not own their own homes will be most at risk.

The report calls the stakes in developing successful housing policies enormous and warns that "it is quite possible. . . that as a country we are devoting too great a share of newly constructed units to large single-family dwellings compared with the demand 20 years from now. The result, if unchecked, could be a serious oversupply of such units, with attendant waste in the nation's investment resources."

A number of housing assistance policies, such as vouchers for renters, vouchers for owners, reverse annuity mortgages, and congregate housing vouchers could influence the housing situation of the elderly. The study concludes that congregate housing vouchers seem to have the greatest potential: congregate housing appears particularly well suited to elderly with minimal impairment who could be forced into institutions simply because housing facilities are unsuitable. (Studies have found that at least 10 percent of the elderly who

continued on page 3

What's Inside

Major Health Risks of the 21st Century.

Scientists discuss new risks.

Environmental Refugees

Over 10 million people reported.

"The Future World of Work."

United Way's report forecasts economic turbulence.