



"Dark Age Ahead" by Jane Jacobs

By Dr. Dick Burkhardt

Amazingly, [this book](#) was written well before the financial crash of 2008 and the 2016 US presidential election. Yet even in 2005 Jane Jacobs' book became a bestseller, resonating with the many who suffered from, or who could see, the damage and corruption being wrought by an expanding culture of greed. She focuses on 5 points: (1) family, (2) higher education, (3) science and technology, (4) taxes and regulations, (5) self-policing.

Her chapter on family is really a lament for increasing domination by the car and the ensuing loss of public transit and social life, and the increasing cost of housing. On higher education, it is all about real education versus credentialing. On science, she describes three cases of scientific stupidity, deriving from unquestioned dogmas, taking examples from traffic engineering, public health, and economic development. On taxes, it is about Toronto's dysfunctional property tax system and the rapid deterioration of public services due to a corrupt, neo-conservative government. On self-policing it is about failures in business and the professions, from Enron to the Catholic Church.

Then Jacobs looks for ways out of this "vicious spiral" of decay, such as revival of street life and affordable housing after the housing bubble; "performance zoning"; and redundancy in mentoring people and promoting economic diversity. Her final warning: Empires have not recognized that "the true power of a successful culture resides in its example". [Dick Burkhardt, UUJEC GA Committee Chair]