

## **Will you surf the tsunamis of change?**

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Before I get to the major subject matter of my talk today, I want to say a few words about what futures studies is, and is not, as I understand it.

I have been involved in futures studies for quite a long time now--since the mid 1960s. I am a member of both the World Future Society, and the World Futures Studies Federation. Indeed, I was first Secretary General, and then President, of the WFSF for ten years. The WFSF has members in 70 countries, and I have had the opportunity to visit about half of them, and to see what the future looks like from different parts of the world.

I can assure you, there is no single, correct, view of the future, but many different views, depending on where you stand--your culture, your language, your age, your gender, your education, your unique personal experiences.

I have also been teaching futures studies here at the University of Hawaii, and in many other universities around the world for thirty years. I direct a graduate program in futures studies through the Department of Political Science. Many of my students have gone on to be very successful consulting futurists worldwide. I also have been director of the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies ever since the Hawaii State Legislature created it in 1971, and have had the chance to consult with a wide variety of organizations not only in Hawaii, but throughout the Pacific Island region, including Guam, the Northern Marianas, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

I have thus had the opportunity to see the future from many, many different perspectives over a long period of time. And there are several important things I believe I need to talk with you about before I begin the substantive portion of my talk:

Futures Studies is generally misunderstood from two perspectives. On the one hand, there are those who believe it is, or pretends to be, a predictive science which, if properly applied, strives to foretell with reasonable accuracy what THE future WILL BE.

There is no such futures studies worthy of your attention. Nothing in society beyond the most trivial can be precisely predicted. Whatever might have been thought to be the case in the 19th Century, we should all know by now that society is not some gigantic machine, the future states of which, if its inner workings are properly understood and its operations carefully calculated, can be precisely pre-determined.

On the other hand, it is not the case that it is hopeless to try to anticipate things to come, or that anyone's guess is as good as anyone else's. Even though the future cannot be predicted (and certainly no prediction of the future should be uncritically "believed"), there are theories and methods which futurists have developed, tested, and applied in recent years which have proven useful, and exciting.

Understanding and applying the theories and methods of futures studies should enable individuals and groups to anticipate the future more usefully, and to shape it appreciably more to their own preferences.

Over the thirty years that I have been teaching futures studies and doing futures research, I have come to understand that there are two basic things to understand about the future, and hence about futures studies. I have, somewhat jokingly, framed them as "Dator's Laws of the Future." They, and a few of their corollaries, are stated here in capsule form. For more details, read the chapters which follow!

I. "The future" cannot be "studied" because "the future" does not exist.

Futures studies does not--or should not--pretend to study "the future." It studies ideas about the future--what I usually call "images of the future"--which each individual (and group) has (often holding several conflicting images at one time). These images often serve as the basis for actions in the present. Individual and group images of the future are often highly volatile, changing according to changing events or perceptions. They often change over one's life. Different groups often have very differing images of the future. Men's images may differ from women's. Western images may differ from nonwestern images, and so on.

IA. "The future" cannot be "predicted," but "alternative futures" can, and should be "forecast."

Thus, one of the main tasks of futures studies is to identify and examine the major alternative futures which exist at any given time and place.

IB. "The future" cannot be "predicted," but "preferred futures" can and should be envisioned, invented, implemented, continuously evaluated, revised, and re-envisioned.

Thus another major task of futures studies is to facilitate individuals and groups in formulating, implementing, and re-envisioning their preferred futures.

II. Any useful idea about the future should appear to be ridiculous.

IIA. What is often popularly, or even professionally, considered to be "the most likely future" is, in all probability, one of the least likely futures.

IIB. If futurists expect to be useful, they should expect to be ridiculed and for their ideas initially to be rejected. Some of their ideas may deserve ridicule and rejection, but even their useful ideas about the future may also be ridiculed.

IIC. Thus, decision makers, and the general public, if they wish useful information about the future, should expect it to be unconventional and often shocking, offensive, and seemingly ridiculous. Futurists, however, have the additional burden of making the initially-ridiculous idea plausible and actionable by marshaling appropriate evidence and weaving alternative scenarios of its possible developments.

In what follows today, I will not tell you what I believe to be THE Future. I do NOT know what The Future WILL BE any better than you do. I also will not present any of the many Alternative Futures which might lie before us. Neither is this an opportunity for you to develop and discuss your preferred future--though I do hope you have done, or will do, that for yourself and your organization.

Instead, I am going to present you with what I believe to be several of the major driving forces of the future--trends and events which you need to reckon with in order to prepare for what is coming--or, better, to invent what you prefer.

I see the future racing towards us in the form of several gigantic tsunamis, or tidal waves. While most of us are totally ignoring them, and the rest are into utter denial, the tsunamis continue to roar towards us, unimpeded and unacknowledged. We have only one choice, which is to turn around, study those tsunamis, wax up our boards, and paddle out to try to surf them.

Still, in a sense, nothing I am going to say to you now is new. You've heard it all before. But I hope you see that while each individual tsunami is more or less tolerable and survivable, the interaction between and among these tsunamis--and more that I will not even mention--presents humanity with an utterly novel situation in the early days of the 21st Century. The future has never before been like this, and we are profoundly misled in understanding it by our own successful past and present.

As you will see, I am very optimistic. I face the future eagerly and hopefully. If you are somehow discouraged by anything you hear me say, I will have failed in my mission today. I intend to leave you informed, energized and activated.

But I must admit that my optimism lies mainly in the 22nd Century. I am urgently concerned about the 21st Century. However, if you and others do prepare yourselves properly and quickly so that we can surf these tsunamis successfully, then I can be more hopeful for the 21st Century, as well as for the 22nd.

**The First Tsunami is Demographic**--global population shape and change. When my grandfather was a boy, the global population had only recently, and for the very first time in human history, reached one billion people. But when I was a boy, global population had already trebled, to 3 billion souls. Now, my grandchildren are entering into a world of more than six billion people. And global population continues to soar. Where, when, and why will it end?

There is a ray of good hope in the fact that in some parts of the world, once-rapid rates of population growth are slowing. But even so, population will continue to grow significantly there for the next century or more, severely straining local as well as global resources and environments, and challenging human imagination, creativity, and will as never before. At the same time, in other parts of the world, fertility remains dangerously high, and so far, out of control. Thus, overall, global population growth remains an extremely challenging tsunami for the future.

Of course, while the global population is growing, some parts of the world are experiencing population stability, and others population decline. The problems caused by population decline are also severe--not as severe as rapid growth, but nonetheless urgent. Virtually every aspect of our economic system currently is based upon the assumption of the necessity, desirability, and possibility of continued growth--continued growth of population, of resource use, of income, of consumer goods, of hotels, travel, and tourism. I suspect that all of your indicators of success are marked so as to measure growth good and no-growth bad. And yet, as I will show, that very measure is a significant contributor to the problems racing towards us from the future.

Let me give you another example. At the beginning of the 19th century, the largest city in the world was Tokyo with just over one million people. The largest city in the Western world at the same time was London with just under a million. But in less than one hundred years, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were 11 cities worldwide with more than a million inhabitants--most of them in Europe and North America. By now, another hundred years later, there are 24 cities around the globe with populations in excess not of merely one million, but of 10 million. Eighteen of these megacities are in the so-called Third World. Many of you are located in those burgeoning megacities, and you know the joys and sorrows of life there. But you ain't seen nothing yet, I can assure you. Just imagine what the Kanto Plain will be like when your children or grandchildren reach your age. Or Bangkok. Or Seoul, once it recovers from the consequences of the collapse of North Korea.

Here's yet another way to look at it: Less than 10% of the world's population lived in cities at the beginning of the 20th Century. By 1960, one-third of the world's population lived in cities. This rose to 40% by 1980, and is now almost 50% and will be well over 60% by 2025. Cities in the Third World are growing at 3-4% per year, but shanty towns, illegal subdivisions, and low income neighborhoods are growing at twice that rate. Even while core urbanization is slowing in some places, sub-urbanization is increasing, and purely rural areas, along with the remnants of wilderness, are vanishing everywhere in the world.

I will mention only three consequences of all of this population growth and mobility:

One is that we all, very soon, will live in an entirely artificial world, without a speck of "nature" left anywhere on the globe. Forget about trying to "preserve nature." Nature is, or soon will be, long gone. Focus instead on helping people to learn how to "govern evolution", as Walter Truett Anderson puts it in the title of one of his most important books. I can scarcely imagine a more important aspect of the future for you, as resort managers, to think about and pro-act to, than this, the end of "nature."

A second consequence of global population growth and mobility is this:

One hundred years ago, and for the very first time, the population of the world, was equally divided between whites and nonwhites. It was this unique population equity, combined with temporary technological superiority, that allowed Western civilization to be globally dominant for a short while.

Because of differences in fertility between developed and nondeveloped parts of the world, the white population is

presently about 20%, and the nonwhite about 80%.

If population trends continue, by the midpoint of the 21st Century, the nonwhite population will be between 95% and 99% of the world, and the white population about 1% to 5%.

Some of my friends in Micronesia call this future, The New Bronze Age. So long, whitey, it was nice to know you. And farewell, Western Civilization.

Indeed, it is very important to understand that Western civilization is not likely to be Number One over the 21st Century and beyond. Rather, I suspect that no single civilization will dominate the foreseeable future the way the West has dominated the world over the past two hundred years or so.

I would put it this way. Confucian cultures--China, the Koreas, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and the vast Overseas Chinese Diaspora--will contest with Hindic cultures, primarily from India, and they also with Islam which is rapidly spreading worldwide. Number four in the comparative cultural pecking order will be Western Civilization.

You are all very well positioned to take advantage of this cultural shift, and I hope you are already doing so.

Finally, a third consequence of the demographic tsunami is that this global population is restless and on the move--on the move to wherever living conditions are somewhat better than they are wherever they presently live. White Westerners moved from overpopulated Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries, and the rest of the world is on the move now. The West--including the United States--must welcome these migrants with open arms, minds, and hearts, and not view them as threats. If the world ever needed welcoming Aloha, it is now, and for the 21st Century.

**The Second Tsunami is Environmental.** I am sure you have all heard all of the doomsday prophecies about global change and various environmental and human disasters looming in the future.

As part of my futures research--trying to understand what is happening now in order to see how current trends and events might shape the future--I keep a catalogue of articles which are hopeful about the future, and a record of those that are frightening. Unfortunately, there are many more scary articles in my files than hopeful ones. Here is a list of scary articles which I have found recently in such respected scientific journals as Science, the official journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; New Scientist, one of the most respected British journals of science, and Science News, a weekly digest of science articles from around the world:

Peter Aldhous, "Doomsday bacteria thrive on radiation," New Scientists, 9 December 1995, p. 18

Ian Anderson, "World's wetlands sucked dry," New Scientist 20 March 1996, p. 9

B. Bower, "Excess lead linked to boys' delinquency," Science News, February 10, 1996, p. 86

Richard Kerr, "Studies say--tentatively--that greenhouse warming is here," Science 16 June 1995, 1567f

Vincent Kiernan, "Millennial gloom descends on science," New Scientist, 28 September 1996, p. 12

Kurt Kleiner, "Panic as grain stocks fall to all time low," New Scientist, 3 February 1996, p. 10 (Worldwatch report)

Sanjay Kumar, "Everyday poisons take their toll in Third World," New Scientist, 9 Dec. 1995, p. 8

Debora MacKenzie, "Ozone's future is up in the air," New Scientist, 16, December 1995, p. 14f. Even under the best of assumptions under current international treaties, the worst is yet to come. Ozone levels won't be safe until the 22nd Century. And not then, if the treaties are rigorously followed.

Debora MacKenzie, "Rich and poor split over ozone," New Scientist, 9 Dec. 1995, p. 5

C. Mlot, "Tallying nitrogen's increasing impact," Science News, February 15, 1997, p. 100

Richard Monastersky, "1995 captures record as warmest year yet," Science News, January 13, 1996, p. 23

Richard Monastersky, "Health in the hot zone. how would global warming affect humans?" Science News, April 6, 1996, 218f

Fred Pearce, "Big freeze digs a deeper hole in the ozone layer," New Scientist, 16 March 1996, p. 7

Fred Pearce, "Cold shoulder for climate research," New Scientist, 25 May 1996, 7  
 "Governments are no longer interested in global environmental issues....'Climate change seems very far away. Only local pollution problems concern them, and economics dominates everything.'" "Industry is all that matters at the minute."

Fred Pearce, "Deserts on our doorstep," New Scientist, 6 July 1996, 12f, "Empty reservoirs, dried-up rivers, and eroded soils that have haunted southern Europe in recent years could signal a permanent shift in climate,"

Fred Pearce, "Global warming 'jury' delivers guilty verdict," New Scientist, 9 Dec. 1995, p. 6

Fred Pearce, "It ain't 'arf dangerous, mum," New Scientist, 16 December 1995, p. 6 "The thinned ozone layer is likely to increase the risk of British children suffering skin-cancer during their lifetime by up to 16 per cent." "One European study found that people who used sunscreens suffered more melanomas,"

Fred Pearce, "Ozone levels tumble to record low," New Scientist, 28 September 1996, p. 6

Fred Pearce, "Only stern words can save world's fish," New Scientist, 10 February 1996, p. 4

Sandra Postel, et al., "Human appropriation of renewable fresh water," Science 9 February 1996, 785-788

Janet Raloff, "Pesticides may challenge human immunity," Science News, March 9, 1996, p. 149

Helmut Rott, et al., "Rapid collapse of northern Larsen Ice Shelf, Antarctica," Science 9 February 1996, 788-792

Karen Schmidt, "Unnatural evolution," New Scientist, 2 March 1996, p. 34-37 (pollution-caused mutations)

L. Seachrist, "Infections making a deadly comeback," Science News, January 20, 1996, p. 38

Jane Seymour, "Hungry for a new revolution," New Scientist, 30 March 1996, 34-37 "Green Revolution crops have trapped the inhabitants of Third World countries into a cycle of malnutrition and under-achievement,"

Laura Spinney, "Global emergency as TB toll mounts," New Scientist, 20 March 1996, p.8.

So do you believe these warnings, or not? If you do believe them, what are you doing either to prevent them from happening or worsening, or to prepare for their arrival? Or do you disbelieve them, and thus ignore them?

Of course, we cannot be sure whether these doomsday predictions are true or not--until it is too late to stop them, if they turn out to be true.

Thus, those of you who either doubt, or ignore, the warnings are playing a massive, global game of Russian roulette with the Earth and with your descendants, if not, indeed, with yourselves.

Again, no one can be sure of the future beforehand, but I think it ludicrous that we overemphasize the uncertainties about future global climate change; scarcities in food, water, and energy; pollution; sea level rise; and new and

renewed diseases, and continue to bet our lives--and the entire future--on the hopes that none of these concerns are real.

I am convinced that we should treat the possibility of global environmental change as seriously as we treated the uncertainties of the Cold War for the past fifty years. No one can be certain about environmental change, just as no one could be sure then if the Russians were going to attack the Free World, or vice versa. But both sides spent trillions of dollars and mobilized millions of lives to prevent something which in fact did not happen.

Why did the Cold War not turn into a Hot War? Was it all a hoax? Just a way for warriors and weapons manufacturers to rake in lots of money? Or did the preparations of the Cold War prevent a Hot War from happening? You will never know for sure. You can never be sure that preparations to prevent something from happening actually prevented it if it does not happen, or whether the entire thing was a trick, or a gross misunderstanding.

Well, why not take the same position for environmental change which will have vastly more profound consequences than becoming all communist or all capitalist might have had?

In the words of the Australian government's Commission on the Future:

"If we act as if it matters and it doesn't matter, then it doesn't matter.  
But if we act as if it doesn't matter, and it matters, then it matters."

I should add, that almost all of the changes in our economy, resources, and lifestyles made in anticipation of, or to prevent, global change would make the world a better place even if all our fears about global change are wrong. AND you can make good money by being environmentally aware--even more than you can make by being environmentally-irresponsible. It makes good business sense--especially for you in the tourist industry!

**Third Tsunami is the Economy.** Since communism is so clearly dead, many people falsely assume that capitalism won. But this is not the case. Communism merely died first. Both systems are unsustainable.

The current economic system is unsustainable on at least four counts, I believe:

1. It is unsustainable because it relies on obsolete measures which don't reveal what is actually going on. GNP, the stock market, and official unemployment figures in the US, for three examples, are distorted and often purposely misleading indicators of economic health and welfare.

2. It is unsustainable because it is based on myths and misunderstandings. For one, the American economy does not operate according to free-market supply and demand. Rather, the American economy floats on an enormous sea of unsustainable debt; and not just national debt, that we hear so much about, but also corporate debt, and especially consumer debt.

If lavish advertising, and wildly generous and largely unsupported consumer debt, had not been invented and widely encouraged in the 1970s and especially 1980s, the American, and thus global, economy would have crashed to a halt long before now.

To cite another myth, the United States on another dimension is not a "free market" economy, but instead is the only surviving "command economy". It is a military-corporate welfare state, with the "free-market" only the icing on the huge "command-economy" cake. When the Cold War ended, there was great concern about the future of the economy if the US government were to stop its massive military spending and corporate welfare. And so, while the military has been scaled back a bit, it is still a huge beneficiary of the taxpayers' largesse--and especially the unwilling "generosity" of future generations, who, as a consequence of federal indebtedness, actually will have to pay for the military-corporate welfare of present generations.

Moreover, in between the free market icing on the command-economy pound cake is a huge and flourishing criminal economy, and an extensive underground barter economy--both of which exist out of the official reckoning and public understanding.

3. The third reason I believe our current economic system is unsustainable into the future is in relation to income equity. The world, and especially the United States, is moving rapidly towards a four-tier society composed of a very small number of unemployed super-rich people who basically control the world; a large number of overworked-rich people (of which each of us in this room is an example, thus helping to blind us to what is actually happening); a huge and growing number of marginally-employed poor people, among whom our own children are often found; and finally a gigantic and growing number of permanently unemployed and unemployable people. And this is a worldwide phenomenon, growing more and more urgent with every passing day.

4. Finally, the current economic system is unsustainable vis-a-vis the environment. Our economic system almost entirely discounts the future. While a true free market is indeed a wonderful system for assessing needs and distributing goodies in the present, it is almost wholly blind to the future. Indeed, it views the future as an endless resource to be consumed, and thus is a major reason for my sense of urgency about the 21st Century. The more market-oriented the global economy becomes, the less it is concerned about the future--a true tragedy.

However, global capitalism is the only game in town now. It is the cock of the roost, just like the Roman Catholic Church was in the late Middle Ages.

But it is a **Global** Economy. It is beyond the effective control of any nation, much less of smaller polities, such as the Pacific Island communities where you operate.

We very urgently need new economic theories, indicators, and practices which are sustainable, fair, and future-oriented. Fortunately, there are many groups and people attempting to develop and promulgate the needed new ideas and activities. I refer you to the works of Hazel Henderson, James Robinson, Paul Dawken, and Ira Rohter to mention only four of the many people laboring in this vineyard.

But in the meantime, most humans continue to pursue mindless, cancerous, planet-eating, and future-consuming economic growth with blind religious fervor. But somewhere, there is a Martin Luther about to nail us to the wall, unless we join the "reformation."

**The Fourth Tsunami is Governance.** Currently, in spite of enormous wealth all around them, all governments pretend they have no money. But I can assure you, we are not poor. There is plenty of everything we need to do everything we might want. However, the dominant ideologies of the present permit this wealth to be almost entirely misappropriated for the private advantage of a tiny number of people, and hardly at all for the broader, public good.

There certainly is no respect for politicians or other governmental personnel. Indeed, there is a serious crisis in governance worldwide, and especially in the US. So the other tsunamis are essentially out of intelligent, purposeful control being left, for the most part, to the tender mercies of the present-minded economic system.

Oh, of course, "Democracy" is triumphant in word everywhere, though certainly not in deed. This is especially clear in the US where politicians of all political parties run on promises of destroying government--or at least of reducing it to a pale shadow of the present.

But, the nation-state is *already* nearly dead. If current trends continue, the US government of the future may soon be nothing but the military, the paramilitary, the courts, and the prisons.

Now, my longtime friend and fellow futurist, Newt Gingrich, is probably correct about peoples' abilities to self-organize and govern themselves peacefully. But are people prepared to do so now--so quickly? Unfortunately, given the puny nature of their formal education, and the mindless distractions of the media, most people are not prepared to self-organize locally and peacefully at the present time. But I do agree with Newt and others that this should be our long-term goal, towards which current actions should point and prepare.

But even if people do learn to self-organize, how can their small self-governing communities control the global economy? I have a vision of the future as a global economy, controlled by a handful of "competing" gigantic multinational corporations (of which your firms may be an intimate part), running roughshod over millions of local polities which are focused on their own small, local matters, and utterly incapable of stemming the global economic

tsunami.

Without a doubt, the most urgent need of the present for the future is public discussion leading to the creation global governance. And here, too, there are indeed people and organizations attempting to provide practical and inspiring ideas. I recommend the report of the international commission on global governance titled, Our Global Neighborhood. And again Walter Truett Anderson and Harlan Cleveland, through the World Academy of Art and Science, have spearheaded many vital global dialogues on this.

Finally, I point to the work of the Japanese entrepreneur, Katsuhiko Yazaki, and his Future Generations Alliance Foundation, of which the Korean intellectual Prof. Tae Chang Kim is executive director, for a global fund of new and inspiring ideas about democratic global governance in the interest of future generations.

**Finally, I see the Fifth Tsunami--New Technology--as our major source of new hope for the future.** It is because of new technology that I can also urge you to work even more hopefully and actively for a more equitable, sustainable world.

Marshall McLuhan, the patron saint of the future, said, "We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us." It was the technologies of the 19th and 20th Centuries which were the major cause of the other four tsunamis I have been discussing here. The technologies of the 19th and 20th Centuries caused rapid global population growth by reducing infant and child mortality, and extending the healthy life span. Unfortunately, they also created environmental pollution by extracting fossil fuels and other minerals from the Earth, where they had been locked for millennia, and releasing them to quickly and massively into the air and water. The 19th and 20th Century technologies made enormous wealth, and unfortunately, enormous poverty, possible on previously-unimaginable scales. And they made the modern nation-state system possible, if not inevitable.

So, can the technologies of the 21st Century be the solution to the problems of the 20th Century--without generating still more serious tsunamis of their own?

In my opinion, late 20th and early 21st Century technologies, coupled with human will, imagination, and creative action, are the sole sources for solutions to our late 20th Century problems, if there are to be any solutions whatsoever.

You already know what current and emerging electronic technologies are doing to your work--and to all work--and to all other institutions everywhere:

Telework is ending the tyranny of distance and time. There simply is no need to "go" to work any longer. Almost all work can go to you, wherever in the world you might be.

And why go to school--or at least why go to college? Certainly the "Virtual University" will soon displace the old ivied halls of brick and mortar.

Similarly, I have for years been working on global electronic democracy, and I clearly see global "Virtual Government" as a desirable possibility as the territory-based nation state system fades away.

And so on, through every institution and role of the 20th Century. Work and jobs as we have known them over the past two hundred years are out. The only meaningful goal for the future is full unemployment, which cannot be completely achieved, but is infinitely easier than trying to reach full employment.

One of the most wonderful developments of the future will be the arrival and surge to dominance of artificial intelligence--brought clearly to home as we contemplate the current contest between the world's best human chess player and his artificially-intelligent challenger.

During the 21st Century, humans finally will be relieved of the necessity not only of working, but also of thinking and the pretense to rational thought. We will be freed to do what we humans do best, which is to play, pray, feel, love, and more generally emote.

Of course, the even more potent technologies of the future are the fruits of biological, genetic, and molecular engineering which will bring new foods, new energy systems, and new materials, as well as new lifeforms, including



new intelligent lifeforms as well. The recent notoriety of Dolly, the world's first cloned sheep, is merely a harbinger of what lies ahead with genetic engineering and the creation of new lifeforms, many of which will be intelligent.

The 21st Century will thus see the emergence of intelligent post-*homosapiens*, and the end of the monopoly of *homosapiens*, *sapiens*, as we know her now.

So there you have it. As I said at the outset, I have NOT tried to predict THE future for you. That is impossible. But I have tried to give you a hint about some of the major forces racing towards which will crash together, along with our wit and will, to create the future. I have said that these forces are approaching us like oncoming tsunamis, which so often have swept over and transformed the islands on which we live or work.

To repeat, I hope you will not be discouraged by anything I said. But, equally, I hope you will not discount or choose to disbelieve them without first considering them seriously.

I suppose many of you are surfers. I encourage all of you to take the attitude of a surfer here: Stand up and look at the oncoming waves. Study them. Think about them. Discuss them among yourselves and others. Prepare your mind and your body. Then wax up your board and paddle out to surf them. They may turn out to be nothing but harmless ripples. Or they may be smooth, even glassies which will give you a long and boring ride. Or they may indeed be roaring tsunamis which will challenge every ounce of strength and will you can muster.

But I believe that surf's up. And that there is no place to run and hide.