



Assignment for Law Entrance Exams 2021

ENGLISH

READING COMPREHENSION

Difficulty: Medium

Assignment code:- RC08

WEEK 2; MARCH 2021

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Reading Comprehension

Recently I spent several hours sitting under a tree in my garden with the social anthropologist William Ury, a Harvard University professor who specializes in the art of negotiation and wrote the bestselling book, *Getting to Yes*. He captivated me with his theory that tribalism protects people from their fear of rapid change. He explained that the pillars of tribalism that humans rely on for security would always counter any significant cultural or social change. In this way, he said, change is never allowed to happen too fast. Technology, for example, is a pillar of society. Ury believes that every time technology moves in a new or radical direction, another pillar such as religion or nationalism will grow stronger - in effect, the traditional and familiar will assume greater importance to compensate for the new and untested. In this manner, human tribes avoid rapid change that leaves people insecure and frightened

But we have all heard that nothing is as permanent as change. Nothing is guaranteed. Pithy expressions, to be sure, but no more than cliches. As Ury says, people don't live that way from day-to-day. On the contrary, they actively seek certainty and stability. They want to know they will be safe.

Even so, we scare ourselves constantly with the idea of change. An IBM CEO once said: 'We only restructure for a good reason, and if we haven't restructured in a while, that's a good reason.' We are scared that competitors, technology and the consumer will put us out of business so we have to change all the time just to stay alive. But if we asked our fathers and grandfathers, would they have said that they lived in a period of little change? Structure may not have changed much. It may just be the speed with which we do things.

Change is over-rated, anyway. Consider the automobile. It's an especially valuable example, because the auto industry has spent tens of billions or dollars on research and product development in the last 100 years. Henry Ford's first car had a metal chassis with an internal combustion, gasoline

powered engine, four wheels with rubber tyres, a foot operated clutch assembly and brake system, a steering wheel, and four seats, and it could safely do 18 miles per hour. A hundred years and tens of thousands of research hours later, we drive cars with a metal chassis with an internal combustion, gasoline-powered engine, four wheels with rubber tyres, a foot

operated clutch assembly and brake system, a steering wheel, four seats - and the average speed in London in 2001 was 17.5 miles per hour!

That's not a hell of a lot of return for the money. Ford evidently doesn't have much to teach us about change. The fact that they're still manufacturing cars is not proof that Ford Motor Co. is a sound organization, just proof that it takes very large companies to make cars in great quantities - making for an almost impregnable entry barrier.

Fifty years after the development of the jet engine, planes are also little changed. They've grown bigger, wider and can carry more people. But those are incremental, largely cosmetic changes.

Taken together, this lack of real change has come to mean that in travel - whether driving or flying — time and technology have not combined to make things much better. The safety and design have of course accompanied the times and the new volume of cars and flights, but nothing of any significance has changed in the basic assumptions of the final product.

At the same time, moving around in cars or aeroplanes becomes less and less efficient all the time. Not only has there been no great change, but also both forms of transport have deteriorated as more people clamour to use them. The same is true for telephones, which took over hundred years to become mobile, or photographic film, which also required an entire century to change.

The only explanation for this is anthropological. Once established in calcified organizations, humans do two things: sabotage changes that might render people dispensable, and ensure industry-wide emulation. In the 1960s, German auto companies developed plans to scrap the entire combustion engine for an electrical design. (The same existed in the 1970s in Japan, and in the 1980s in France.). So, for 40 years we might have been free of the wasteful and ludicrous dependence on fossil fuels. Why didn't it go anywhere? Because auto executives understood pistons and carburettors, and would loath to cannibalize their expertise, along with most of their factories.

1. According to the passage, which of the following statements is true?

- a. Executives of automobile companies are inefficient and ludicrous.
- b. The speed at which an automobile is driven in a city has not changed much in a century.

c. Anthropological factors have fostered innovation in automobiles by promoting use of new technologies.

d. Further innovation in jet engines has been more than incremental.

2. Which of the following views does the author fully support in the passage?

- (a) Nothing is as permanent as change.
- (b) Change is always rapid.
- (c) More money spent on innovation leads to more rapid change.
- (d) Over decades, structural change has been incremental.

3. Which of the following best describes one of the main ideas discussed in the passage?

- (a) Rapid change is usually welcomed in society.
- (b) Industry is not as innovative as it is made out to be.
- (c) We should have less change than what we have now.
- (d) Competition spurs companies into radical innovation.

4. According to the passage, the reason why we continue to be dependent on fossil fuels is that:

- (a) Auto executives did not wish to change.
- (b) No alternative fuels were discovered.
- (c) Change in technology was not easily possible
- (d) German, Japanese and French companies could not come up with new technologies.

5. The word closest to the opposite of 'impregnable' is

- a. destructible
- b. insurmountable
- c. fortified
- d. impregnate

Answer Key- 1- b, 2- d, 3- b, 4- 1, 5-a



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