

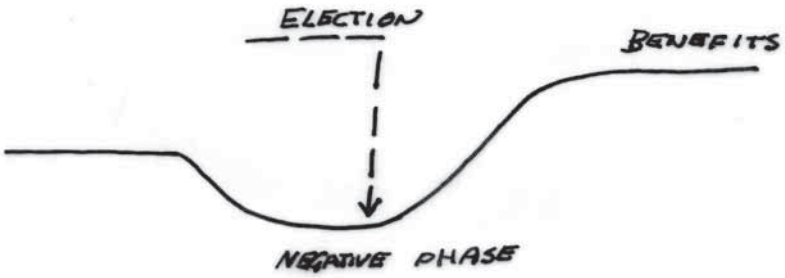
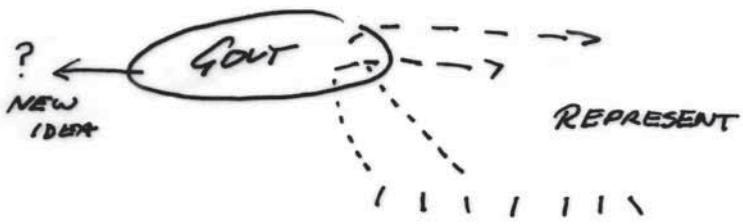


THE SETTING UP AND  
OPERATION OF  
*the*  
COUNCIL FOR  
NEW THINKING<sup>®</sup>



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EDWARD DE BONO



# Democracies are not designed to have new ideas

The great value of democracy is that it prevents tyranny, excesses and the permanent domination of all others by one faction in power. There is always the possibility of change at the next election.

Democracy is excellent at keeping a stable equilibrium. Any self-organising system reaches a local equilibrium, which resists big changes.

Democracies are not designed to provide new ideas.

On the contrary it is very difficult for a democratic government to put forward new ideas – even if the government is perfectly capable of having such ideas.

There are many reasons for this.

1. When a new idea is proposed it immediately becomes an obvious target and focus point for the opposition, the press and all those who find criticism the only outlet for their mental energy.

2. A new idea – even if successful – is always going to upset some part of the electorate and so risk losing votes.

3. Any new idea is high risk. If the idea fails this is a strong mark against the government – forever! An idea which succeeds is just what the government should be doing anyway. There is a strong asymmetry here.

4. Many new ideas, even if they are ultimately very beneficial, go through an initial negative phase, (this effect particularly applies to new ideas in education where the lag time is considerable).

5. Any negative effect occurring at about the same time will be attributed to the new idea whether in fact it is related or not.

## **Because new ideas are new they are not representative of existing thinking**

Representative bodies, like the United Nations, cannot easily have or put forward new ideas. By definition, new ideas are “new” and therefore not representative of current thinking.

Agreement on a new idea is very unlikely so such bodies wait for ideas to emerge as a process of evolution and consensus. Yet there are new ideas which simply cannot emerge in this way because they involve a “re-structuring” of existing thinking rather than evolutionary modification.

It is not fault of such bodies that they are unable to generate new ideas. It is the nature of their organisation which is designed for agreement and continuity.

## Why there is a need for New Ideas

The human brain is a self-organising information system which allows incoming information to organise itself into stable patterns. If it were not for this behaviour of the brain then it would take us seventy-six years to try out, for one minute each, the different ways of getting dressed with just eleven items of clothing (see the book “The Mechanism of Mind”).

So the brain makes stable patterns for dealing with a stable world. Our thinking traditions involved analysing a situation and identifying a standard element and then we apply the standard answer. This is both practical and excellent and has served us very well. It has served us very well in science and technology but less well in human affairs where behaviour is less predictable.

We are used to “judging” our way forward based on history and precedent. Sometimes, there is a need to “design” the way forward with new ideas.

## Information over Time...

Information comes into the brain spread over time. Information does not arrive all at once. The brain makes sense of the information as it arrives by adding to an existing picture of the world.

There comes a time when new information requires that the existing picture be disrupted and all the available information arranged to give a new picture.

This is a mathematical necessity and not a luxury or a matter of choice.

New ideas are a mathematical necessity.

Historically we have relied on new ideas being provided by talented individuals or by chance. We have done very little about the formal and deliberate generation of new ideas.

Today, for the first time in history, we can use the deliberate techniques of “lateral Thinking” to generate new ideas. These techniques are based on an understanding of the brain as a self-organising information system that makes asymmetric patterns.


One afternoon a group of workshops used just one of the techniques of lateral thinking to generate 21,000 ideas for a steel company.

We need new ideas.

We can greatly increase our chances of generating new ideas.

$A + T = AT$   
 $AT + L = CAT$   
 $CAT + D = CDAT$   
 $CDAT + R = ACTOR$   
 $ACTOR + R = CARROT$

RESTRUCTURE



## **Council for new Thinking**

The Council for new Thinking is a group of people whose specific function it is to generate new ideas.

There is an historic precedent. In the great days of Portuguese expansion, India, China, South of Africa etc., the king had a Council of Scholars to provide thinking that was additional to the governing thinking.

## **It is never the function of the Council for new Thinking to criticise or judge the government. (i)**

The government is an elected body in a democracy. It is not the role of the Council for new Thinking to criticise this elected body. To be sure, individuals in the press and elsewhere do criticise governments – but that is never the role of the Council for new Thinking.

As a body and even as individuals, the Council for new Thinking does not criticise the government of the day.

There is an additional reason for this injunction. Criticism is relatively easy and if this was the function of the Council there would be little energy left for generating new ideas.

The Council will be made up of thinkers who are constructive and creative.

## **It is never the function of the Council for new Thinking to criticise or judge the government. (ii)**

If the government proposes a way of doing things it is not the function of the Council for new Thinking to put forward a better way of doing the same thing.

While the proposed alternative way may indeed be better than the one originally proposed, it is not the function of the Council for new Thinking to put forward such alternatives.

Second guessing is a form of criticism and it is not the function of the Council for new Thinking to criticise the government of the day.

## **The Council for new Thinking is not a “think tank” or research body.**

There are many “think tanks” which do an excellent job of analysing and researching situations and possibilities. Governments use such bodies from time to time and even have think tanks of their own.

Such analysis and research is not the function of the Council for new Thinking. From time to time an idea put forward by the Council may need to be checked out through a research think tank. The Council itself, however, is not a think tank in the traditional sense of that world. It is specifically a body for generating new ideas.

## **The Council for new Thinking is an independent body and is not part of government.**

The independence and independent thinking of the Council for new Thinking is an essential part of its operation.

Individuals who are active politically would not form part of the Council. A special form of association would be provided for such people.

The Council for new Thinking must never be seen as a pressure group for a particular section of society whether this is a formal political party of an interest section such as “environmentalists” etc.

The constructive and creative ideas put forward by the Council must be seen to be truly independent and to benefit society as a whole not just one particular section.

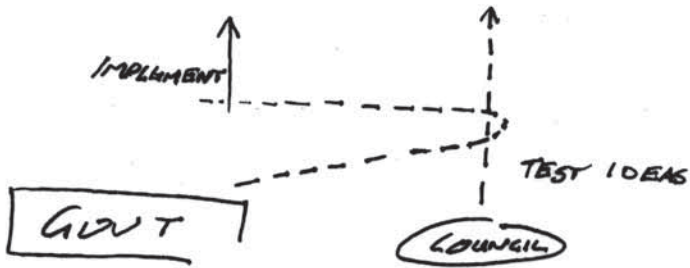
# Functioning of the Council for new Thinking

The Council for new Thinking will put forward, under its own name, new ideas on defined issues. These ideas will be published and made visible to the public in different ways.

The ideas will always be put forward from the “Council” as such.

From time to time, a new idea may be tested against public opinion. This may be done by surveys or polls. It may also be done in cooperation with a newspaper or television channel. The public response to the suggested idea can be tested in this way.

The results from the public response testing will also be made public.

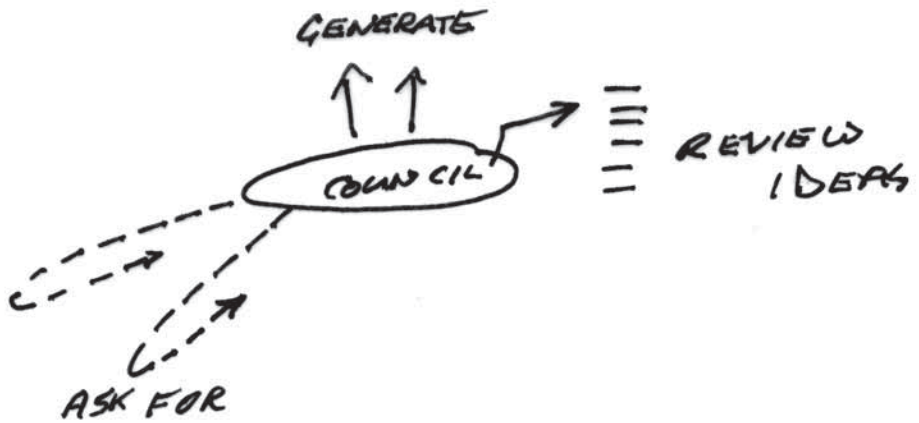


# Relationship to Government of the Council for new Thinking

Although the Council for new Thinking is fully independent of government, there are many ways in which the Council can be of help to the government of the day.

1. The government can observe the public response to an idea. If the response is very favourable then the government can choose to adopt that idea and make it part of government policy. In this way the government has no responsibility for the ideas that are not accepted by the public.
2. The Council may be asked by the government for new ideas on specific issues. In such cases the Council will maintain its independent position.
3. The Council may be asked by the government to test a specific new idea. This would be “kite flying” for the government. The council would accept this task provided the idea did not damage its image.
4. The Council may provide a mechanism to solicit from the public new ideas on defined issues. From time to time such issues may be defined by the government. The government cannot easily be seen to solicit ideas on its own behalf – it is supposed to have all the needed ideas!
5. The Council may be asked to help in problem solving.
6. The Council may be asked to help in “designing a way forward” in conflict situations.
7. The Council will never pass judgement on the government even if specifically asked to comment on aspects of the government policy. This applies to the Council as a whole and even to individual Council members.
8. The Council can suggest mechanisms for testing ideas and for implementing new ideas.
9. The Council can review and list alternative ideas on a particular issue.
10. The Council can help the government, through training in creative methods etc. to generate its own ideas.

Although the Council for new Thinking is specifically not a part of government, the existence of such a Council and the services offered by the Council can be of great help to governments whose ability to propose new ideas is so limited by the nature of democracy.



*Relationship to Government of the Council for new Thinking*

# The Value of New Ideas

Even if a new idea is not used that new idea can have a significant value in a number of ways.

Once thought an idea can never be unthought. The new idea now exists into the future. It can be re-considered at any time.

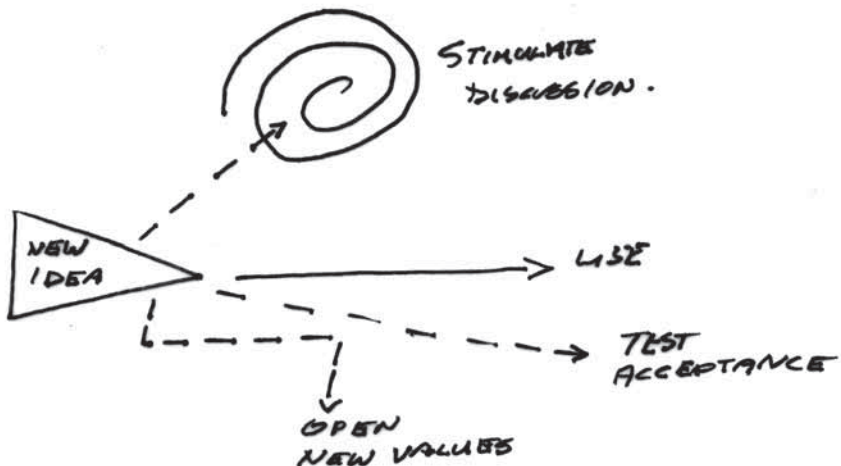
A new idea can open up new “possibilities” and new ways of looking at things. This may lead to new ideas that bear little resemblance to the original one.

A new idea can suggest new values that have not been considered before. Once the new values are made visible then there might be other ways of delivering these new values.

A new idea can stimulate thinking and debate and the generation of further new ideas. Once the rigidity of current ideas has been weakened it becomes easier to think of further ideas.

A new idea can test the “mood” and public response in specific areas.

A new idea can force re-evaluation of existing ideas. This may even show that the current idea has more value than might have been supposed.



# Organisations of the Council for new Thinking

The short name might be I-CoT (Idea Council for new Thinking).

There would be a “Selector Group” that would decide which ideas would be put forward under the name of the Council. Ideas that were wacky or dangerous or politically biased would not be put forward.

There would be a “Core Group” of individuals who had shown themselves to be especially creative and constructive in their thinking. This group might be to generate new ideas.

There would be a “General Group” which would be made up of people who were invited to join the Council and also individuals who were recommended by others. This group might include political figures and also individuals who showed the motivation to be creative.

The following individuals would be eligible, by virtue of their position, to become members of the general group:

**Nobel prize winners**

**Professors at universities and Presidents of universities**

**Editors of newspapers**

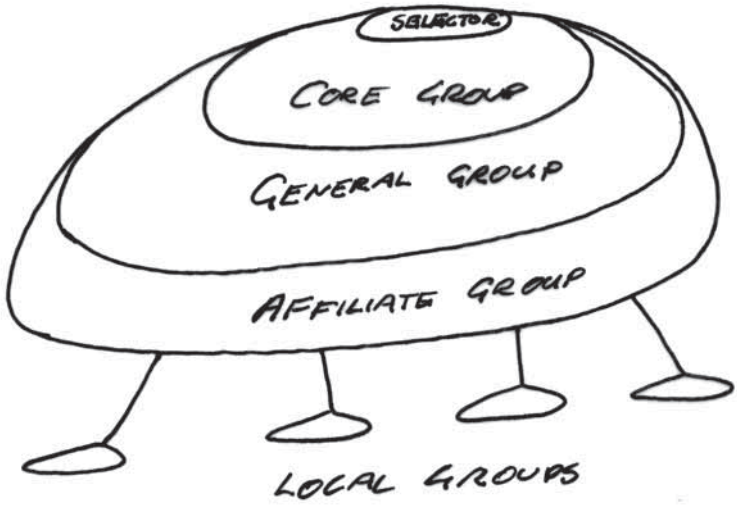
**Heads of professional associations.**

Each of the above people would be asked to recommend people who were known to be creative and constructive thinkers.

Any person in the general group could be invited to join the core group if he or she showed the talent and energy to generate new and constructive ideas.

Finally there would be the “Associate Group” which would be made up members of the public who wished to contribute thinking and ideas. This group would operate through the Internet and would submit ideas on defined topics.

Members of the associate group could also set up local groups to help them with their thinking. These would be known as “Local Groups”.



*Organisation of the Council for new Thinking*

# Publication

The Council would seek to publish its ideas periodically. This might be on a regular basis and also if there was a particular topical issue that needed new thinking.

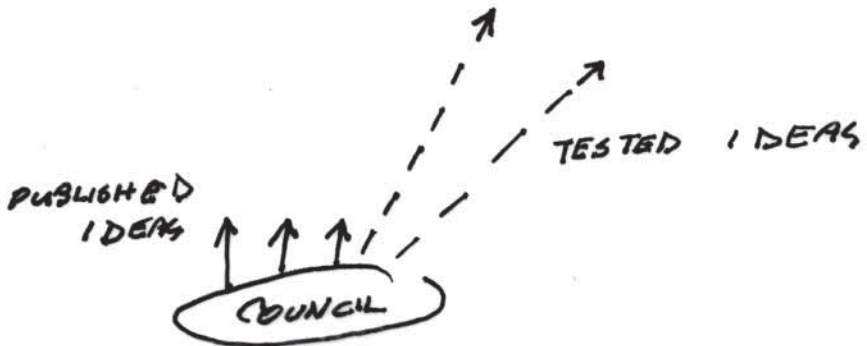
Publication might be by means of a press release.

Publication might be by means of paid-for-advertising.

Publication might be through a booklet.

There might be co-operative arrangements with newspapers and other media.

Whenever ideas had been tested by means of polls or surveys the result of such tests would be made public and also communicated directly to the government.



## **Agreement**

All ideas would pass through the “core group” before reaching the selection group.

There would be no need for agreement in the core group and no votes would be taken. Each idea exists in its own right. The Council may choose to put forward two or more separate ideas on an issue. Each of the ideas may be tested by means or opinion surveys, polls, etc.

The purpose of the Council is to generate ideas and to make them public. It is not the purpose of the Council to agree on the best or most suitable idea.

# Roles

Each of the groups listed here would have a president, an organiser and a secretary.

The role of the president would be to lead the group, to make final decisions and to set the tasks and direction for the group.

The role of the organiser would be to organise meetings and communication between members of the group.

The role of the secretary would be to note what was happening and to keep records and archives of the activities of the Council.

In addition the Council would have a publications officer whose business it would be to arrange for publication of the ideas generated by the Council and also research results.

The research officer would arrange for opinion polls, survey etc. in order to test the acceptance of the new ideas. This might be commissioned directly or arranged in co-operation with newspapers or other media.

Further roles might be added.

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