

SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS

STATEMENT FOR THE PROMOTION  
OF INDUSTRIAL RENAISSANCE by Bill Abernathy

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Bill Abernathy was one of the first to argue persuasively that business as usual could not meet the challenges presented by new international competition and technological change. This book, Industrial Renaissance, offers the hopeful message that American industry can regain the diminished competitiveness through innovation.

In 1980, Bill Abernathy, along with Robert Hayes, set the management world spinning with a piece in the Harvard Business Review, entitled "Managing Our Way to Economic Decline." It emphasized the inadequacy of management relying on tried-and-true marketing or financial techniques to insure corporate health. That article marked a period of self-criticism that stretched beyond management to other professions, including politics. The world is changing and so are economic realities. Many of our institutions have been slow to respond.

With this new book, Abernathy argues persuasively that innovation offers the salvation for meeting the new competitive challenges created by technology and growing international competitors. Such innovation requires a rethinking of the fundamental assumptions underlying management decisions. Above all, it requires communication among all parties--labor, management, suppliers, salespersons--to guarantee that the need in the marketplace is actually being met with the right product.

The message of this book, like the HBR article, is equally relevant to our current political circumstances. We have learned that the policy and electioneering alone will not solve the problems of increased international competition, or build a workforce that can benefit from and contribute to new technological opportunities.

We will need better communication among all parties to produce more appropriate public policy. Bill Abernathy's book is one of the first examples giving some hope that we might actually succeed.