

Global Research Assembly
1979
Chicago

July 1,
T-600

THE COMMISSIONING ADDRESS

"It is because the sage does not contend that no one in the world can contend against him. Some go in front, some follow; some are blowing hot while others are blowing cold. Some are vigorous when others are worn out. The empire is like a holy vessel dangerous to tamper with. Those who tamper with it harm it. Those who grab at it lose it. Sound of music, smell of good dishes will make the passing stranger pause. How different the words that Tao gives forth! So thin, so flavorless! If one looks for Tao, there is nothing solid to see; if one listens for it, there is nothing loud enough to hear."

This afternoon I was handed this short reading-- the words of an old soldier on the occasion of his 73rd birthday--which seem very befitting to share with you this evening. "The earthworm's philosophy of life is that it only knows how to work with its life. Struggle, struggle, struggle with its whole life - it never stops until its life's end. It never complains about the bitterness; it never shouts about the brilliance of its merits to any other one. Although its body seems very feeble and meek, its spirit and ability are absolutely strong and tough for improving the earth and benefiting farming; it converts the poor soil and barren land into fertile and buxom fields which allow the plants to grow quickly and prosperously. Is this the spirit and the Way of doing things?"

This is going to be a "talking with you talk." I suppose by now there are many people in the room who are wondering just what is this research we have come to do? It is very simple really. In the first place, the Global Research Assembly marks the time when we begin our year. We do so by reflecting on the past and dealing with it. But finally, the task of our research is to create the next year. Second, the research we are here to do is more practical than theoretical. We are here to sharpen the tools we have been using. And third, the research we are out to do begins and ends in the field. There's no central office here to report to. We are here to report to ourselves. I come from India this year; you come from some thirty other nations. Any reports are given to each other. Fourth, our research is radically empirical. We have been active and doing things and now we come to reflect. We do this once a year, and we do it in a big way.

The sources for our research are our own work: our work with the 85% of the world and our work toward the engagement of the resources of the 15% in care for the 85%. We will reflect a lot; we will plan a lot. In fact, many people have accused us of having a disease called "meetingitis". They think we meet too much. And yet our meetings are not bureaucratic "meetings for the sake of meeting". In fact, we intentionally are inefficient at times, in order to ensure a human event; and yet, we get a lot done.

This summer we are here to forge the strategies and design and the formation of this Way that we are on. We will discover, I think, what all this business about focus is. We said that we wanted a summer of focus. I've decided that focus, quite simply, has to do with our corporate decision about what we are going to be and do in the future. It's as if we have been running downhill for two or three years now and our legs have come out from under us. We're going to try to regain our balance during this research assembly.

What is the state of things? There have certainly been some notable breaklooses. Two hundred town meetings have been held in the state of Mississippi, U S A , under the sponsorship of the Governor's office. Two hundred-thirty two Human Development Projects have been launched in Maharashtra State, India and we are looking forward to starting 2,500 more next year. In the Philippines, the Mactan cluster experiment of four projects has been expanded to four more in Langub and 222 impact events have been held in that nation as well. In the nation of Japan, they have set out to do three town meetings in every one of the 47 prefectures: 60 are done. In Australia, there has been one town meeting in every one of the 700 shires. In Latin America, a new project has been launched in Lima, Peru. The breakloose in authorization

and rapid actuation of that project and others across Latin America has astounded us. We received a telegram yesterday from Global Operations Centrum in Brussels announcing: "Continent Europe has moved to polls coverage with its town meeting program. Strongholds are complete with eight strongholds in Belgium. Six hundred ten town meeting events have been done in Europe."

That is only the beginning. We can document this and more later in the assembly. However, we know already what our predicament is. There are simply too many possibilities. We have been requested to do replication in Kenya, Jamaica, Egypt and Korea if we so decide. Ten to fifteen states are already lined up in the United States to repeat the Mississippi saturation campaign. This certainly exceeds all our expectations.

We've embarked on a Way of care. We're moving toward an unknown period in our history. Some weeks ago we set out to create a focused summer. I am still in utter despair for I know that no focus of the kind I long for is going to come. Awakening seems to happen wherever we go. Engagement seems to happen wherever we go. And yet, we have much to learn about how to do awakening and engagement. Some years ago we said we were going to do an end run (to use an American football image). That is, we decided to go into the world in order to find a way to create primal community. The end run is over, it seems to me. We are now back to the line of scrimmage, facing the question, "What is the next play?" We will create that next play in this research assembly. There is no one but us to call it.

When we say we are on the Way of care, we also know that requires risking ourselves. Care has within it both action and the renouncing of action. For example, we have been employing "the shadow principle" in all of our work. Anyone who has been entrusted with wisdom knows that in the midst of working to impart that wisdom, there comes a time when he must step aside and let those who have been walking with him move out ahead. We have received wisdom which we call methods. There are social methods which have to do with town meetings and human development projects. There are intellectual methods which relate to training schools and seminars. There are motivational methods which illuminate the power of singing and work days. There are corporate methods for planning and acting. However, it seems to me we are at the point of corporately giving up all of our accomplishments in order to move again.

We set out to participate in building the earth. The symbol of the earth rise which you see every where these days is a symbol of this new perspective. The overwhelming response to what we have been doing over the last four or five years has catapulted us into something like "hyper-space." It is as if we have been in the right place with the right thing at the right time.

We are related to people of all kinds. Those people are doing what we hoped they might do and are doing is well. And we are nobodies. The question is, "What do we do now?" How do we sustain the excitement that has happened in people's lives and in local communities? How do we maintain the momentum that has begun in these various human communities? Will the earth be built simply by doing more of the same? My answer is, "No". We have decided with the symbol for the summer to allow the ancient Tao to be a guide on our way. Our way is the Way of service, and it is a strange type of service and way. It is about the human factor in world development.

This eastern symbol, I think, points to the kind of wisdom that we sorely need. It is the wisdom of the sage. Only two years ago, in the village of Oyubari, we were handed a large block of coal, on which was inscribed the Chinese character for the Tao. Ever since that awesome and somewhat humiliating experience, I felt that we had been given the legacy of carrying the wisdom of the East to the world and returning that wisdom to the East with new life.

Everyone knows by now that we are a religious people. We are not religious in any traditional sense, yet we have a deep tradition, and we have maintained it. We do symbols; we do singing; we do rituals. We go to any place in the world and do almost anything needed to serve the world. We do global research assemblies. And we honor all traditions.

What is honor? Honor, very simply, is being who I am before the other as who he is. We were born out of a renewal movement within Christianity. We have become related beyond its social borders within the global society. We have in some sense become a new "we". There is nothing about this new "we" that offers membership or anything to join, in the usual sense. All we know is that our collegueship has transcended all our traditions. We are excited because, what for years, we referred to-as "grassroots ecumenism" has happened.

What is our commissioning for this research assembly? We have had a year of being both interiorly and exteriorly attacked. Interiorally, it has been a spirit desert, and we are thirsty for some kind of nurture. It is as though we have found out, as Daniel Moynihan puts it in his book, that the world is, in fact, A Dangerous Place. The external struggle has been occasioned by various types of criticism and the continual need for funds.

Our commissioning is, first of all, to spell out the implications of the convergence of the three campaigns. We are in a new orbit. What are the implications of that?

Second, our commissioning is to draw together the learnings of both the awakening and engagement campaigns to push their depth and their edge, and to forge models that advance them both extensively and intensively. We are raising the question of how we move beyond where we are geographically. We have raised questions of going strategically to the fourth world in which five of our 30 locations are now situated. What would it mean to move beyond even those? Intensively, we are to create even greater depth and event-filled-ness in all of our programs.

And third, there is a dimension of our commissioning that is related to standing before an unknown. In preparation for this assembly we called that unknown simply X, like in xylophone. We have affectionately called it the X factor. When the convergence takes place, something else happens. It is an X, like in algebra, $x+y=z$. Awakening plus engagement equals X. How do you account for the happening that occurs in town meeting or human development projects? Is it a spirit, a way, a people, or is it simply a loose collegueship of vastly diverse people who care?

Our commissioning is to bring intentionality to bear upon understanding the X factor, not for our sake, but for the sake of the task in the future. Fulfillment, it seems to me, is never contrived. It just happens and then it cannot be held onto. When you're "On the Way" there is a kind of unspeakable joy that occurs, for you see the weak being made strong. Fulfillment involves a very solitary journey. You suddenly find that no one can help you. Those who defect from the Way simply do so because of that pressure of solitariness and the desire for lesser things. Fulfillment also is collegueship, and you're going to find yourself assigned with some very unexpected team mates this next two weeks.

Now, we are going to participate in a musicale. As-you listen, see if you can find out more about this summer. By the way, have fun.