

Global Research Assembly

Chicago Nexus

July 1976

## PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

These are times of social upheaval and uncertainty, an epoch which an historian one hundred years hence might well call "A Time of Resurgence." There is, through communication and transportation links, one world -- what some have called "Spaceship Earth" and "the global village." There is emerging a sense of unity in that even people very remote from each other are undergoing similar experiences of social change. First, the basic approach to life is changing from a fatalistic acceptance of one's situation: people believe in the possibility of change and rely more on their wits than their fates. Secondly, the lifestyle is increasingly urban whether one lives in a village or a metropolis, people expect more services from their local governments or employers, for instance, than from their neighbors. Third, there is a change in what people deem significant -- the influence of institutional religion is less powerful today than the claims of propaganda, advertising or science.

The sense of commonness deriving from these similar experiences extends to the arena of social concerns. In debate after debate, in war after war, there is a struggle to develop responsible forms of participation. This "Participation Revolution," as Daniel Bell calls it in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* can be regarded as one struggle, whether its particular focus is on economically and socially oppressed groups, minority cultures or underdeveloped nations. The issue of the distribution of wealth and services appears in a variety of guises, but its crux is the same: how to extend the massive economic growth of the past few decades from the urban few to the isolated rural many. While some would argue that values are on the decline altogether and others would insist that they are genuinely emerging for the first time in history, the issue is the same; the struggle, whether conscious or unconscious, to develop systems of values consistent with contemporary thought. Common people are developing new ethics, not by attempting to recreate the Ten Commandments, but by the decisions they make, the things they choose to honor or disregard, the issues they fight for or desert.

No matter how it is acted out, the focus of concern today is, at its foundation, remarkably unified: the basic moral issue of our time is the growing gap between the privileged minority (approximately 15 per cent) of the world's people, and the

dispossessed majority of the world (approximately 85 per cent) who live outside the scope of social care.

There are two ways this issue has been approached: from the superstructure -- through large scale national and international agencies, like the programs of the United Nations -- or through grassroots community organizations and other local outlets. The approach "from the top" ensures cooperation across large areas, the availability of outside resources and the provision of regional services, such as transportation, irrigation and public health. Such systems are generally well developed on the national and international scale. It is at this level that funds are most readily available to developing governments.

It is an ineffective approach, however, unless used in tandem with the grassroots approach, for it is at the local level that agency after agency, group after group, finds itself impeded. From voter registration campaigns to the Peace Corps to the Barangays of the Filipino New Society, efforts to put form on grassroots initiative are in deep crisis today, a fact which leaves the "top down" services and structures disconnected from local people and unexploited by those whose needs they intend to fulfill.

It is this local or grassroots approach which needs development today, and doing so is a genuine possibility. The accelerated struggle with change has created in even the most isolated community a new sense of selfhood, of cohesion. This "resurgence," or outbreak of local energy and initiative, offers the possibility of developing the grassroots forms needed to receive and employ the services and resources which superstructures have made available.

## I. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF LOCAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social realities of our time signify a readiness, a yearning, on the part of people all over the world, for the means to re-create local society. Is such a yearning to be fulfilled? If so, by what means? The following presuppositions of local social reformulation, or the total reconstruction of a community, are the underlying principles that have surfaced as those which release significant local community development.

### A. Delimited Geography

The rebuilding of local community aims at enabling citizens to take charge of their destiny. Such a process of self-determination requires setting boundaries for the community so that residents can grasp their identity in a new way and define their particular focus of activity. It's impossible to deal with the whole globe all at once,

but efforts within a specific piece of geography have a chance to be effective. Furthermore, designating this delimited area on a map shows vividly its relationship to the larger geographical units and thus exposes the relationship of local community action to the society at large. The development project in any local community needs to see itself as part of a network of projects so that accumulated wisdom can be shared from one locale to another and so that local people can perceive the wider dimensions of their efforts. In this sense the renewal of any local community is an example, or an experiment, in renewing the entire world.

This principle has practical relevance. In planning for work in a given community, building a grid, i.e. designating the bounds of the community on a map, is essential. It is a way of marking off the manageable portion of geography that is the target area. In so doing, existing bounds such as rivers, major highways, political boundaries, or large open spaces are considered. Within these bounds (ideally encompassing no more than 20,000 residents), the major arteries and nodes are marked. The grid then abstracted from the map serves as an identifying symbol of that community. In analyzing the community, it is important to cover every portion of the territory and to identify within it all the geo-social forces at work influencing the community. In actually working in the community, care is taken to form structures of care -- stakes -- that entirely cover the area excluding no person and no territory within the grid.

## B. Comprehensive Approach

Effective social development must be comprehensive rather than piecemeal. Within the delimited area, social reformulation needs to be comprehensive, that is, it must deal with all the problems facing the community and deal with them at the same time, whether they be economic, political or cultural (social). It is ineffective to attack one issue here and another there since all issues are interrelated and part of the single fabric of community life. Further, development efforts must involve all ages from cradle to grave since the age groups interact and influence each other in a powerful way.

In planning for work within the community, the principle of comprehensiveness requires that all the issues be identified. This requires consulting with every segment of the community and having a wide cross-section of the residents present during the planning. Plenary sessions, in which all facets of the community and all viewpoints are actively engaged, allow for a comprehensive analysis of the situation. Then, in actuating plans, care must be taken to move on all the problems simultaneously. This builds motivity within the area by demonstrating that effective action is possible. Practically, it may be necessary to

do no more than signal an intent to deal with some problems while resources for their resolution are gathered. But the signal is an important public declaration that no element of the community is being overlooked.

### C. Depth Issues

Effective social change has as its focus the deep human issues facing a community rather than issues on the surface or issues of one kind only. Unless social development efforts are directed toward the depth human issues in a community's life, they cannot bring about substantial social change. If, for example, housing and health services are improved while nothing is done to alter a deep-seated sense of self-depreciation within the citizenry, the gains will be short-lived. It is also necessary to avoid the current tendency to define community development solely in economic terms, although local economics is a foundational issue in any community development program. Dealing effectively with the depth issue allows for the building of what may be called "primal community," the situation in which local people are recapturing their corporate identity and in which they are taking responsibility for total community care.

In planning for community development, it is important to discern the block to change that lies deep within the community itself. Often it is a mindset, a perspective of impossibility because of external factors. It is often a resignation to defeat, reinforced by generations of futile efforts. Or, it is an embarrassment over the community heritage that prevents full exploitation of its unique gifts. In analyzing the community, close attention is paid to the symbols and stories and attitudes of the people for clues to this factor. Then in every session of consultation and every action taken, strategies are included which address this factor by demonstrating the creative possibility within the situation.

### D. Symbols are Key

The key to bringing about effective social change is in the use of symbols. Human beings are motivated not only by external circumstances but to a far greater degree than ordinarily realized by images and stories that convey the significance of their efforts. People's stance to life is determined by the symbols they use to express the meaning of their everyday living. The agent for social change needs, therefore, to find or uncover symbols that will provide the residents with a new sense of pride in their community's past and a new hope for its future. These symbols may be actions or events as well as physical objects or pictures. They may be "sociological miracles" -- events which, because they were thought to be impossible, awaken citizens to new possibilities and replace despair or cynicism with hope.

In planning sessions, symbols may be used to set a context of creativity for the meeting itself. Wall decor such as maps and grids and pictures may be used along with symbolic acts such as songs and rituals. These items build the morale and motivity of the local citizenry which is 90 per cent of the battle for change. In implementing the project, regular "miracles" increase the momentum of change by dealing in a highly concentrated effort with a major community irritant and transforming it into an object of pride. Transforming a vacant lot into a playground, building a mall and bulletin board in a formerly squalid public square and giving a fresh coat of paint to a community eyesore are examples of "sociological miracles" because of their capacity to evoke wonder. Later into the project more substantial "miracles" such as transformed public utilities or major equipment acquisition will be required for sustaining motivity. But in all implementing actions, their symbolic significance must be emphasized if maximum effect is to be achieved.

## II. PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There can be no social development without economic development; therefore particular attention needs to be paid to the local economy. In recent decades, the emphasis in economic thinking has been on global and national economics. The time has come, however, to put the emphasis on local economics, the development of economic self-sufficiency at the local level. Such a move would be in keeping with the general trend that sees special opportunity present in the grass-roots approach to social change. The following six principles are involved in building a local economy, regardless of the sophistication of the broader economy within which the community is set.

### A. Independent Unit

The community has to be conceived as an independent economic unit, as though it were a whole nation-state. Such a decision requires a leap of the imagination, but it is a necessary one if sufficient energy is to be put into the economic growth of a particular locale.

In planning for local economic development as an independent unit, the questions of uppermost concern are: 1) What are the key economic and human resources of this economy; 2) What are the most valuable resources to the needs of the local and to the surrounding economies; 3) Which resources have the most development potential and 4) How are resources now being utilized? Accurate analysis of the local situation is inevitably obscured unless these factors are considered. With an accurate analysis, however, all planning and actuation can be

geared to finding the community's quickest potential for tripling the income of its entire population.

## B. Bring Money In

The community has to accumulate capital so it can inject as much money as possible into the local economy. One means is through exports of local village products such as agricultural goods, crafts or the products of light industry. Often government grants are available. The key to economic development on the local level is the injection of monies into the community to start the local economy moving to a point where it gains self-sufficiency.

Practically, bringing money in involves such activities as 1) increasing outside sales revenue -- increasing the volume of present sales, increasing the price of present sales, producing new commodities for sale, and processing local commodities for export; 2) selling services to outside buyers -- attracting visitors, providing wayside services, developing regional business services, and extending professional services to the outside; 3) earning wages from outside employers -- securing government jobs, working for outside contractors, getting jobs in adjacent communities, and sending out personnel to remote extended employment; and 4) attracting new capital from outside -- developing program grants and capital gifts, increasing government spending, securing investment loans and extending credit lines. In planning to bring money in from the outside, four questions are uppermost in the minds of the planners: 1) How can we increase the revenue we earn from exports? 2) How can we earn revenue from servicing the needs of the economies around us? 3) How can we increase wages earned from employers outside our economy? and 4) How can we serve outside capital for the development of our economy?

## C. Keep Money In

Incoming money must be contained in the community for as long as possible. This is achieved by increasing the local production of goods for local use. If more food can be grown within the community, if building materials can be manufactured from local resources, and if consumer goods can be locally produced, then monies will tend to remain within the community.

In planning to keep money in the local economy, four factors must be considered: 1) What are creative alternatives to desired outside purchased goods? 2) How can we reduce local dependence on services produced outside the community? 3) How can we produce what is needed with the minimum capital investment? 4) How can the drain of cash to the outside be sharply reduced?

Many alternatives appear in response to these questions: 1) reduce outside goods purchased -- enhance local retailing, reduce the cost of necessary purchases, substitute domestic production, and use local resources creatively; 2) reduce outside services expense -- cut outside travel and transport costs, eliminate outside middleman fees, provide all necessary personnel services and import entertainment to satisfy needs; 3) reduce outside capital expenditure -- utilize low cost intermediate technology, build the community's own tools, design attractive investment schemes and reduce capital loan repayments; 4) reduce outside cash flow -- provide local consumer credit, extend outside wholesale credit, develop local owned banking services and reduce tax payments.

#### D. Turnover Within Community

Incoming monies should be circulated in the community for as long as possible and as quickly as possible. For example, the government pays a civil servant a salary; the civil servant buys produce from a local merchant; the local merchant puts the profit into a credit union; a businessman borrows the money to pay a laborer who spends his wage at a local store. This turnover of money is the key to full employment at the local level.

Increasing rapid circulation of money in the community includes: 1) increasing cash availability -- making wage payments daily or weekly, securing prompt payment from outside, providing rapid loan services and assuring effective debt collection; 2) assuring local goods availability -- providing adequate stock of goods, assuring a full variety of necessary goods, supplying stocks for local productions and easing consumer credit availability; 3) providing necessary services -- assuring rapid repair services, developing preventative maintenance services, providing personal health and care services and assuring a variety of entertainment alternatives; 4) making investment opportunities accessible -- promoting corporate savings plans, creating many investment opportunities, implementing investment projects rapidly and upgrading and expanding individual tools. In these activities, four considerations are paramount: 1) How can more money be put into people's pockets when they need it to spend; 2) What will encourage people to buy more local goods; 3) How can the local economy satisfy all of the residents needs and 4) How can we capture all unspent money for rapid use in local capital investment.

#### E. Relate to Larger Unit

A local economy, while viewed as an independent entity, must also be geared into an economy more inclusive than any local economy can be. If the local community

is to flourish, markets and industrial opportunities need to be sought at the levels of provincial, state and federal governments as well as at the level of international institutions. As the local economy begins to move forward, the question arises as to what can be done to enable surrounding economies to purchase from this local economy? Again several considerations particularize this concern and give clues to practical action. 1) What do the surrounding economies now purchase from this local economy? 2) What do they purchase from other similar local economies? 3) What would they like to purchase from this local economy? 4) What do they purchase elsewhere that they could purchase from this local economy?

Local economic development will radically expand what is already present in the situation, and there is no local community without some resources. This approach assumes that, except in the face of natural disaster or manmade catastrophe, no person need ever face the ultimate economic deprivation: starvation. When viewed "from the top down" this assumption is hopelessly idealistic. But when viewed from the perspective of local communities, genuine possibility emerges.

### III. PROJECT FRAMING -

The third arena of local community development is framing, or gaining support from the power structures for the particular project. Community development is about winning. It is about actuation, not planning. If planning were the issue, framing would be irrelevant, because framing has to do with winning -- winning before going to battle. Since social development involves implementation, framing becomes a very alive issue.

#### A. Public and Private Support

There are five principal aspects of project framing: 1) For any local demonstration project to win, it requires the support of both the public and the private sectors. Normally these two segments of society operate in complete disrelation to each other except at a very high level. In spite of that fact, they are both immensely powerful. But in disrelation to each other, both are ineffective at the local level. Without both of those sectors supporting local community development, the project will join the wreckage of thousands of other projects which began with the assumption that the only thing necessary was a good idea and much action. Experience has shown that a government program without the support of the private sector fails quickly and expensively. The same is true of programs backed by the private sector alone. The active support of both public and private sectors is required of the project is to be implemented successfully. Framing is engaging both those power structures as allies instead of as enemies. They become supporting forces instead of blocks to be surmounted. Furthermore, in cooperation with each

other, they experience a new creativity that they do not experience working in isolation from one another.

## B. Three Levels of Private Support

In the private sector, support comes from three levels: the local resident, those who care within the community, are those without whom there is no project. They represent all parts of local society, all educational levels, all backgrounds. They are those who will make sure that the project succeeds even if there is no one else to do it. This kind of person is a local "guildsman." His function is simply to get the work done, to make sure the groups of tactics, implementaries and programs are actualized. Only a person at the local level is capable of doing this, for he has the interest of passion for seeing it through.

The Guardian network consist of people with position and expertise in professional arenas who are driven to so invest their expertise in history, that it makes a difference to the local community. These are people who drop everything when called to perform a task which requires skill. The task is accomplished when their expertise is drawn upon. Guardians will go anywhere and will do anything. Their very professional contacts and practical skills are available to the globe. Without this, no local project has access to the expertise of the globe required to win.

The third level of the local sector has to do with the patrons. Patrons are wealthy friends, or friends in positions of influence. They may never visit a project site, but it is through their support, both moral and financial, that the project is implemented.

## C. Three Levels of Public Support

Public sector support comes from three directions: the local, the regional and federal, or national, levels. All three are crucial. The leadership appointed or elected on the local level provides the grassroots authorization without which community development is hampered. Regional level leadership, too, must be supportive or it will surely be a hindrance. This is the level where work with the existing government bureaucracy is necessary. There are those who care in every agency. Framing is enabling those people to support the project.

Local community development depends upon this kind of endorsement, the stamp of approval from regional leaders. National level leadership framing means obtaining an authorizing nod to begin work. While the concrete participation of national government leaders may be minimal, their endorsement opens many doors and their opposition would peremptorily end the project. Project framing

depends on opening the channels where by those who care in the public sector can participate in community development.

#### D. Actuating Agent

The economic and social development of a community are two highly separated aspects, yet both are necessary to comprehensive community development. Both arenas require an actuating agent which directs, coordinates, and supports the social and economic programs of the project. Such agencies can take many forms. Their important function is to allow for the effective direction of the many programs, and the unified thrust of the project as a whole.

#### E. Catalytic Corps

5) A catalytic corps is required in order to initial community reformulation. For anything to get started, there must be a corps of highly disciplined people who can stand indefinitely when things get complicated. Discipline and objective social methods are keys to their ability to continue to thrust the project forward. The corps is a small group, from ten to twenty people, whose function is to catalyze and train the local guildsmen who will lead and implement the project on the front lines. Three of their functions are of equal importance; project initiation, leadership training, and releasing local motivity.

### 1V. PRINCIPLES OF ACTUATION

Principles of Social Development, Economic Development, and project Framing are necessary operating principles when approaching the task of social change. They shape the concrete organization and planning of the project. But once organized and planned, the project must be implemented. There are eight basic principles of implementation.

#### A. Avoid Economic Delays

Establishing a firm local economic base is not only a key to community development, it is also necessary in order to maintain project autonomy. The project in its initial stage develops its own resources. It does not depend on outside money, although it uses it when available. It transforms the resources of a given situation into useable tools and learns to do more with what it has on hand so that the contradiction is never money, time or forces. Dependence on extended supply lines will quickly induce actualational paralysis when there is a delay or cut in funds or supplies.

## B. Broaden Project Authorization

In order to pave the way for local funding the project has to broaden its authorizational support without excessively relying on it. Heeding too acutely the nods and smiles or doubts and demands of the authorities can cause a brand of paranoia which brings the whole project to a grinding halt, or, at best, to a dilution of its inclusiveness. The catalytic leadership, however, should cultivate the local agencies and use their data and proffered support whenever it is in accord with the project plan. Merging the project implementaries with concurrent but disrelated activities would lead to a loss of focus in the actuation system and turn the project into a benevolent patchwork of social bandages.

## C. Utilize Global Know How

While living off local funding and support, the local community must find a way to share in the know-how of global technology. It must participate in a global repository of useful data, appropriate technologies, technical manuals and consultant personnel into which it both feeds its own resources and inventions and from which it borrows to make up for local needs. This in no way detracts from the necessity of local autonomy, which is not only economic but also political and cultural. In the arena of decision-making, there can be no external court of appeal. The on-the-spot leadership has to assume full responsibility for making its own decisions and must have the resourcefulness to deal with local crises as they occur. From the cultural viewpoint, this principle of local self-determination is made possible only when the locus of the task becomes the whole globe. This principle is critical if local victimization and paralysis is to be avoided.

## D. Engage Community in Planning

Another key to the actuation of a local community program is a comprehensive practical plan made by those who are to implement it. The plan should be constructed in such a way that the very process of planning allows the group to consense on what is to be done, why it is to be done, when and how it is to be done and who is going to do it. The steps in making such a plan begin with extracting the latent vision of the group and converting aspirations and dreams into a picture of its vision of the future. The next step is not to carry out the practical vision, but to analyze the underlying contradictions which are blocking the vision. The creation of broad-based proposals to unblock contradictions is the corner stone of the planning process. This approach is distinguished from abstract, goal-oriented systems. The proposals are converted into highly concrete tactics which are woven into structural programs. This plan not only analyzes the situation but also states the direction in which the community sees that it must

move, and as such, is an expression of the consensus of the community. The plan is then treated as the agenda for community work forces which come together day after day, week after week, for tactical modification sessions which convert the programs into prioritized implementaries, or particular actions, for each quarter, month, week and day. The plan becomes the "bible" for the whole social development project.

#### E. Implement Programs Simultaneously

The plan is not implemented one program at a time, but all at once. In the first week of actuation every program is done. The key to this is dealing with symbols, that is, signally holding profoundly motivating events that create project momentum. A self-grading system on the degree of completion of each part of the project provides the objective corporate accountability that keeps the project moving evenly on all fronts. Building and executing weekly implementaries keeps the cutting edge of the tactics thrusting into the contradictions rather than changing the project into an administrative bureaucratic process that guarantees project flame-out.

#### F. The Auxiliary is Corporate Gun

The loss of momentum debilitates the project. The key to sustaining project momentum is the task force who understands its task as only to keep things moving. Their job is to be on top of the comprehensive task and to keep it moving toward rapid effective actuation. They are not interested in individual efficiency, but think and move contradictionally. That is, they repeatedly attack the depth problems. Their object is not to keep wheels spinning or maintaining a process, but to win major victories every day over the prevailing contradictions by means of awe-inspiring concerted efforts, "sociological miracles." This group, the project "gun," acts catalytically and corporately. Their aim is to have the plan implemented by the engagement of the whole community. This is achieved through the catalytic efforts of the task force, whose members work side by side with community people, training them in methods that will enable them to manage the whole project within two years. For this reason, the "guns" select "shadows" from among the local leadership, individuals who can accompany them everywhere they go. This "shadow" authenticates the "gun" with the local people, engineers access to many different forms of local support and at the same time prepares himself for leadership. When the task force meets to prioritize implementaries, the gun presides over the planning, whether or not he leads the meeting. The task force operates as a single unit and not as honchos and peons. All members of the task force are equally responsible for the whole operations. Pre-brooding allows them to enter the meeting with a model and agenda for the day that delivers the team

from long debilitating meetings and leaves the bulk of the day for actuation rather than talking about actuation. The "gun" is a corporate nobody who uses everyone's insights, creativity and energy to execute daily wonders of implementation.

#### G. Organize Community Comprehensively

To enhance the implementation, the community organizes itself into stakes and guilds, residential and working aggregations of people, who meet to actuate the various programs. From these stakes and guilds come a growing body of local leaders who eventually will take over the management of the project. As soon as the project has begun to gather strength, the gun and the task force begin to keep an eye on the framing, timing and scheduling of the replication of the project into nearby communities. The project exists, not for its own sake, but as a demonstration of renewed community for the sake of the rest of the communities in the state, nation, continent or world.

#### H. Rehearse Self-Understanding

The task force of project leadership personnel cannot become a benevolent bureaucracy. The key to its effectiveness is the continual rehearsal of the stance of being a part of the history-long, worldwide band of Those Who Care and who are present as a new force in our time, concerned not only with effective implementation but with the release of authentic humanness itself. They undergo the discipline of deciding to be nobodies. They walk with kings when necessary, but as nobodies. And they work side by side with local man, as nobodies. The sheer creativity and energy required to keep the project moving on all fronts daily can quickly burn these persons out unless they take care of themselves. Ways must be found to keep the spirit of each member of the task force keyed up for doing the impossible without recognition or reward.

The task of effectively enabling local community development is the moral issue of these times. Resources and methods are now available which make possible a genuine reduction of innocent suffering in the world. It is a task not to be entered into lightly, for wavering determination in the process is positively destructive. Yet, the hope of civilization lies with those who take it on themselves to accomplish the same.