

PROPOSAL ON NORTH AMERICAN CONFIGURATION

I believe that what I am going to propose is what we heard being said. At the same time you've got to say that the particular formulation of it that I am able to give this morning, is clearly going to be fraught with inconsistencies.

You've got to back off a little and say what has led us to this point. Certainly the three campaigns were one of the most incredible undertakings of our lives, and yet we are clear the three campaigns are finished and we are into something new. We are into the three master strategies for 1980-1984: Declaration, Manifestation, and Formation. We did well in the three campaigns but they do not immediately transfer in all of their detail and symbolization into the three master strategies. A new mode of operating, of existing, is called for.

Then I think of the thunderous onslaught of the Regional Consults. This is certainly the way we experienced it in Chicago--how we ever decided to do something as ridiculous as 1,000 interviews, I don't know. I remember driving back from Cleveland and talking about that kind of image. I spent a month in Rockford interviewing 100 people. Most of them had never heard of us before. Not only did it change my life, but it dramatically revealed the incredible network of Those Who Care that are out there.

Relative to the regional team, I thought that the image of the 30,000 was a tremendous one for the next ten or fifteen years. In Chicago, we now have easily 300 people in our broad frame, who see themselves in some way related to what we are doing. God knows how many others are in the broader regional dynamic out beyond that. Right now in this region we probably have the strongest regional team in terms of any criteria you can think of: commitment, involvement, activity, Training Inc., and so on. Those in Fifth City at this point are the strongest, most capable, and the most mature they've ever been; if you don't believe it you need to come over and experience it. But it is not because of the Chicago House, you know from your own experience. But miraculously that kind of thing exists. I will point to just one more thing from St. Louis. They are on the verge of the most phenomenal breakloose in terms of programmatic activity ever in the history of that region. I know there are many, many other illustrations.

What are we going to propose? I have to say we have always been a bit reluctant whenever something new like this has been floated as balloon. And yet a lot of people have been thinking in a similar direction. People here in the Nexus have done work along these lines. Area Edmonton has been trying to get inside it. We thought of this two weeks ago in some of the conversations we had in Area Montreal.

Personally I have found myself in the middle of what I call the push-and-the-pull on House life during the last six months. I felt the push when I heard people were leaving. A couple of years ago I would run around in circles and scream and shout and flap my wings, but I don't do that now. But I feel the push. Something has happened in the last few weeks for me in terms of this pull, and dramatically at the point of something happening in the arena of our being as troops.

I want to back up to get some history on this. When we began the work in India, we broke loose probably the most phenomenal explosion in troops at any time in our entire history. With the creation of Phase III we brought that through the first dimension of its existence. We picked up, and are in the midst of probably an even more incredible breakthrough in Nairobi in that regard. For a while we thought they were unique and then all across particularly the third world we began to see this kind of formulation happening everywhere we looked.

At the same time, in the so-called first world, we began to see that we had a tougher nut to crack. Then things began to happen in Japan this last year. They reported on it and it is a rather incredible experiment. We all should see their model in which they brought into being a missional force paralleling the Symbolic Order. They missionally operate as one force without confusing their separate dynamics and symbolism. I understand in many ways it's at the heart of what we've done in the third world. But it is a rather incredible kind of experiment. When you think back, we were just convinced that in Japan, we could never do anything like this, that we could not win. In London there is the Volunteer Orientation Weekend programme of bringing people in for a short period of time and then catching them on the allure of going to the third world for a year or six months. Get them into the House to prepare them to go to the third world and bring them back to the House afterwards; that has real possibility in it, as a kind of experimentation.

Now as that was happening we began to wonder whether anything was going to happen in North America, and yet in the last month there have been indications of something exploding all over the place. The Panchayat received a letter from three families in the Detroit Region who are proposing that they experiment in a residential structural auxiliary programme--whatever that is. They would live in the House and work at every point with the Symbolic Order to create an effective missional team in that region. That's a very intriguing idea. There is another region where a letter has gone out among the regional colleagues asking if the time has not come (and I think it is significant it did not come out from the Symbolic Order) for this region to decide to ensure the House at the point of the cost of utilities and so forth. Another region has said that they will ensure the support of a team in that region, no matter what. People who have for years seen themselves as the Extended Order are asking if the time has not come for their names to be on the assignment board as the

Extended Order. A meeting has taken place to start the conversations that are clearly at hand over what the next steps in the experiment with the Movemental and Extended Order are. I know personally of at least three or four other regions where people have come up to me or other people on our troika in North America and have said that the team is ready to ensure the existence of an effective House unit in that region.

I want to try to work into the proposal we're making. First, what if we undertook a three-year experiment in North American regional maturation. We haven't got the poetry yet. We need to push at the crack that is there, but we dare not be naive about the House symbol. Therefore, a one-year experiment is not called for; we need three years, at least, in this phase, to work this through carefully and thoughtfully.

Second, it is clearly indicated for North America, though you could say that it ought to be done in some other places as well. Our proposal is that it be done this year only in North America. This would provide the controlled experiment without being just a good idea that is simply dissipated through the body without ever having the dimension of a radical kind of experiment.

Third, it needs to be carefully worked out. Someone in the group said that it needs to have the same kind of intensity behind it as the Latin American experiment, in which we thought that through, did the framing and had those four couples work together before we sent them into Latin America.

Fourth, it is an experiment in formation, an experiment in the third master strategy. I get so angry when people think that formation is holding hands with old cadres. It is not that. Formation is doing LENS courses; it is programmatically breaking open the future of who we are becoming. It is not a worn-out term.

Since it is an experiment in regional maturation, we only do it in regions that are mature. This means wherever we have done those three campaigns. In a very real sense, every region in North America with the possible exception of Yellow Knife, maybe a couple of others, is at that point. Each has different degrees of strength in the overall regional team but depth preparation has been done, even if, when you blow a whistle, you don't get thirty people to a meeting. You are out, in this experiment, to empower the regional house dynamic. You are out to empower the regional team dynamic. For me, there is a theoretical fuzziness there which is just fine, and which will not be resolved by sitting around and discussing whether this is a regional house dynamic or a regional team dynamic; the fact is, it's both.

We sense there are three functions in this experiment. The first function is the radical empowering of our Houses. It's JWM's image that if you sent him and Lyn out, the first thing they would do is

fill the House--not because we need to recruit people to the Symbolic Order but because without the House you do not demonstrate profound life. That's why you need ten or twenty people in a House. For me there's a subtle yet absolutely crucial distinction between empowering the dynamic of demonstrating profound living by having the House and going out and recruiting people into the Order.

The "Foundations of the Order" paper that the Panchayat did pointed out that our whole internal life was built to relate to previous missional undertakings. We are at a point where we must redo our houses relative to the missional undertaking we are now involved in. That is not a throw-the-baby-out process. I will come back and push on that at several other ways, but it is going through what we mean by the Religious House and recreating it, not a liberal watering-down. If that's what we are doing, in order to be able to say that we really still have houses, then nobody that I know of is really interested in doing that. It would destroy everything that we have been out to do.

It is re-inventing things like the sojourner programme. It's going back and capturing what we used to mean when we said somebody would intern and then they would be assigned out of the house for three years and then they would come back in for a year and then be assigned back out for three years. We have not known how to bring that into being, but maybe the time is coming. One image in my mind is to get beyond the idea that houses are something that the Symbolic Order set up, ran and paid for, to the point at which everyone begins to say, "My God! Houses are the responsibility of the Movemental and Extended Order." I'm not interested in the practices. What I am interested in, is that this kind of a jump could allow us to come at the question of people: "How do I live in a community that makes sense of my life?" instead of always asking how we get enough Symbolic Order to go out and bring that kind of thing into being. That is the first function.

The second one is, over the three years, the opportunity of creating the actual form of the Order, the Movemental, the Extended, and the Symbolic. At first, I thought what we needed to do this year was work on the triangles. But this kind of an experiment gives us a way to figure it out as we have always figured things out, in connection with a field experimentation dimension. Back in 1968, we invented the Religious House very carefully, put it in being very carefully, and experimented for four years. We are not proposing anything less careful than that kind of radical undertaking. We do not know, but we will not find out until we decide what needs to happen and go do it.

The third thing is the regional dynamic, the regional team. What I'm pointing to is what a colleague keeps calling my attention to, that we are not out to get everybody into the Order. That is not and never has been what we are interested in doing with the regional team

dynamic. We were out to create a force, the Order, Movemental, Extended and Symbolic, that could empower the regional dynamic of Those Who Care, the Regionalis. On that also, we have a long way to go, but it seems to me that this experiment is working on re-empowering the house, creating the Order and enabling the regional dynamic.

I think that it will take perhaps three forms. Right now, you have in North America, essentially only two basic dynamics: area houses and regional houses. All houses are regional, not metro. This next year, you would have area houses with no fewer than nine adults. They would move to become primary locations of training. The Chicago House has fallen into that excitement over the last two months, of the training possibilities. You could have courses on a regular basis. Maybe this is where you could decide in those area houses to respond to the scream for manifestation and push on what it looks like in the urban, with the minorities, and so on. It is a tremendous opportunity for the international presence, both at the point of what that can do for this continent and what it does at the point of training for the people who participate in it.

Many of us who have been around know that the way we got trained was to work alongside a group of people doing the mission day-in and day-out. It wasn't just some course. After the first RS-1 I ever taught, the first teacher came over to me and said, "That was good, but you left out the Word." If you think that's bad, my response was, "What word?" We did not have manuals that told you how to do this thing. You listened to Slicker, you tried to write down everything he said and then tried to figure out what he had said.

Our house, these last two months, has been grinding out imaginal education curriculum, and when you've got a larger unit you can do that. For the second dynamic, the regional house, we are proposing that there be six persons in each of those, and that they care for the programmatic formation underpinnings of our whole undertaking. The third dynamic is the discontinuous one in this Experiment. It's like the long and the short sword, and this is the short sword. We are suggesting that in North America we deploy a group of two-person teams and possibly a couple of those might be made up of single-family units. These teams would undertake a radically discontinuous, but profoundly related undertaking on behalf of the whole Experiment that would push over against the other two dynamics of the area and the region. Everybody has warned me about this two-person house. But if you go back a bit, the first house I was ever in was a two-person house, and we thought we were sent to change the world. One person told me, "I didn't know that there were anything but two-person houses." They had lived on the tiny island of Rong-Rong for a year and a half. They knew that they were changing the world. It is not an old idea we have finally gotten over. It is how we opened Latin America, and you could go on and on with illustrations.

I found I had been trapped, like some of the rest of you, in a little scenario that goes something like this: A six-person house is almost human, a five-person house has a pretty good dynamic, a four-person house tears people to pieces, and a three-person house can just barely make it. And a two-person house.... Well, we went around as the area priors this year and visited two-person houses in our area; this is the research aspect of our area function. According to the little scenario I just laid out, we should have had to scrape these couples up off the pavement. It was not true. Detroit was as excited as all get out about the possibilities there and they were not just putting on a show for the area priors. The same thing was true in St. Louis and Indianapolis. I am convinced that there is something inherent in that dynamic of the couple, particularly, but the small unit, of deciding "We are the ones."

Now, a lot of people kid about, "Who would want to move in with that particular couple?" It is one thing to move into a house, but it is something else if you are asking interns to move in and become "Aunt Louise" with one other family. The solution to that is that you get three or four couples to move in simultaneously so that they move in with each other. You would want the same kind of careful thinking through that happened in the Latin American Experiment; with bottom lines that were clear-cut; and these units would need to sit down and think through how they were going to win immediately. Two could get on the phone and have six more by the end of the Council; it's certainly not out of the question if the ground swell that we see is really there. A lot of people have been excited about the fortnight. Well, the first thing that these two-person teams might do is recruit a fortnight and have it handled by October.

A bit on practics. Who would do this? Realizing how dangerous this is, we felt we ought to have some suggestion on where. This is a tricky business because you might follow only one rationale like put them where there are really strong regional teams. But what is a strong regional team? Frankly, there are not many bodies in St. Louis, but I think that is a pretty strong regional team. Some places that have a lot of bodies, I'm not so sure are right for this Experiment. It was said that we are at the point where we could create an unbelievable transrational plan. Transrational plans are not something that are shoved down on the face of reality. They emerge out of the givenness of reality.

Some implications: first, I think this could be done in North America and still maintain the essential work that we are doing in HDPs and some of the other kinds of things we see have to be done. You could do it with the number of troops that are currently assigned to North America and, if you counted the Centrum troops as part of that, you might even have some excess. One of the by-products of it would be that you would eventually create a new troop base, but in

this year it might be a little tight. There are still many configuration issues to be worked out. Secondly, this is a tremendous way to do priory training, to encourage more people to play the prior role. Third, this kind of a move would both require and enable the radical rethinking that is called for and is apparently upon us in arenas such as Order funds, house practices, the new relationship with Development.

There are still many unresolved issues. I don't think that you can view this as a panacea for self-support, although there are clear indicators that regions are determined to ensure that self-support not be a block to this kind of experimentation. The effects on the functions of the centrums still have to be worked out very carefully. Nor will this solve all the personnel questions, by any means.

Lastly, here are four poetic images. Some of these are better than others. One of them is the eye of the needle. What we need is a big poster with a big needle and a camel half-way through the eye of the needle. That is, in one sense, where we are, and the question that we were raising is not unlike the question of how do you go through the eye of that needle. We've also used the notion of the leap. I'm hesitant to use it because we have used it for so long without really knowing what we meant by it.

Two stories come to me out of our past. I remember sitting around in 1967 on the West Side talking with some people and everyone was saying, "Well, we have finally reached the point where we are now doing everything we possibly could. We have seventeen people in pre-school, thirteen people in the Jets, and so on. There is no way on earth we could ever do anything more than we are now doing. We are working eighteen hours a day and we have reached the zenith of our capacity." You should be laughing; the next year we sent out the Religious Houses. The eye of the needle!

The second story is about Uptown. There was a group of about ten or twelve of us during the Summer of 1973 working on something in the Guild. Joe pulled us aside and said, "I want you to go out and change history in Uptown." We thought, "You have got to be kidding. Have you walked around Uptown? Do you have any idea what you are talking about?" And Uptown was an absolute pansy in 1973, compared to now. As you look back on it now, we did three or four LENS courses, and we planted a few trees over where the Japanese rock garden was, and we talked some guy into putting up some billboards, and we sang a lot of songs. But our internal experience was that we were taking on the world. Again, we had made the move, we were replicating Fifth City. Three years later, we did twenty-four projects around the world. The eye of the needle, getting the camel through that.

The second poetic image I want to use is the paradox. This is the one I think has personally addressed me the most. We are experiencing

ourselves in the midst of some horrendous paradoxes. One of them is the small versus the large. I came in knowing existentially that there was a paradox there, but I thought it was just that I was confused. I would hear people get up and say, "I will never live in a small house again. It is dehumanizing. You cannot recruit interns, there is no way you can do training." And I would say, "Yes, you are right." Then I'd hear somebody get up and say, "We have been working in a two-person house for ten years and we have changed the world." And I would say, "yes, yes". I thought the solution to this was that I had to pick a side and beat out the opposition, mainly. I was either for the small house or I was for the large house and then we had to gang up and get rid of the other ones. What finally dawned, and I mean it very seriously, is that there is a very real tension. Both of those are right, and if you collapse that tension, you are a fool; what it means to be a human being and what it means to change history is to go through that tension. I think that is what happened in 1967. I think that is what happened in Uptown: the eye of the needle.

The second of these tensions is between our experience of fragility, particularly as the Symbolic Order (although I think it is more an experience of personal fragility) and your immediate inclination to hold the fort, guard who we are. That tension is right. We must not water down the phenomenal gift we are to history, and yet the only way we are going to move is to risk. Risk does not mean risking two cents, it means risking everything. That is a tension, and if you collapse it, you cannot move. You have to go through that tension.

The third one is a little older one, but it is mission versus internal. Now, my wife is great for coming down on the pole of the mission. Once you corner her in the room and pound on her a bit, she acknowledges the other. You need people like her around to save your own being for mission, set up LENS courses, and yet it is so clear that our mission is who we are. When we did RS-1 courses, it was not some unique method that allowed people to take a new relationship to their lives. It was running into us and encountering the presence. If you separate out our methods and pretend that you can peddle the methods without the presence, you do not understand who we are. Those two are tensions that must not be broken, a paradox we must go through.

Another is the Extended and Movemental Order. We would be fools not to see that something is happening there. And yet, there is risk involved in deciding to move and give form to that and appropriate that. Finally, there is the tension between the past and the future. What we have known is that whatever we do is continuous with what we have done, and yet, at the same time, the future is always radically discontinuous. I have been so struck by that. When you go back to our earliest days, we had penetration and contextual re-education and then there were the three campaigns. They are all here again, but they are different in those master strategies. It is that dimension

of the past and the future.

My third image has to do with this continuity with the past or with Kazantzakis' spiral. When we hit this point, as we did during the riots in Fifth City in 1968, there is a pause. There was a radical pause then, and we stopped. People left, we all left, and yet, you know, we stayed. It was a time of evaluating our real situation. It was a time of great deliberation. It was a time of deciding to be who we clearly were. Another way I'd talk about that is that our only alternative is to move ahead. We tried to come up with images. Sometimes when you are playing football you are in the backfield and somebody hikes the ball and it is handed to you. You are just standing there with the ball. You look up and there are eleven people who have but one purpose in mind: to kill you. They are charging at you. And the defensive linemen open up a hole. Now it seems to me that's where we are. There is a hole opening up. We do not stand around and wonder if a better hole will come. Nor do we take the ball and run in the opposite direction if we are out to win. You have to trust that because you have decided to play football, and win, and that hole has opened up, you go through it.

My last image has to do with our charts on Order history. Even ten or twelve years ago, we talked about this four-year period of time as the four years of the Order. It was pointed out last night that ten years from now our houses will be so radically different from what they are right now that we won't recognize them. The Religious House is the biggest tactic that we ever did outside of the tactic of the Order. I mean the Religious House is a phenomenal kind of tactic, and we sense that there is a ripeness to fulfilling it that has not been present before.

I could say a lot of other things, but I think I will just close by saying that this term maturity is very much upon us, and I truly believe that the greatest time ever to be in the Order is now beginning.