

REPORT OF THE LEGAL COMMISSION

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The image of the Gooney Bird has held this quarter for me. I am not even sure if that is the bird's rightful name, but as I understand it, the Gooney Bird is an awkward creature, a big clumsy thing--one of the biggest that flies. It has gangly legs and floppy wings and they tell me it takes about a quarter of a mile for it to build the speed for a take-off. This quarter has been like that for me, especially with that Indicative Battleplanning. I am convinced this all has to do with Dynamical Tension, or the Creating of Complexity or Complexing the situation.

We want to report this morning on the first gathering of the Legal Commission. Juan Luis Segundo writes about decision-making:

Like a child who leaves his feet to mount a bicycle, man is finding that his balance is based on a process of movement. One of the consequent features of this balance-in-motion is the need for ever greater communication. It is not a whim or a passing fad or an ideological thrust; if man is to have balance in a world-in-motion, then all men must be permanently present to each other. For the first time in human history, people scattered all over the world can be the object of our love because now they are no longer faceless entities. We know how they live, how they think, how they suffer...Man's very effort to survive on this planet is inexorably placing more and more decision-making factors in the hands of all..When we attempt to solve any problem within too limited bounds of reality, the problem causes even greater unbalance and is not solved at all. We must continually seek broader and more global solutions just to survive.

I don't know what happened to you when you came across those words, but it was as if I was reading the words of a colleague, for Segundo was saying what some others have attempted to articulate in so many different ways. Perhaps Segundo served as a frame for the work the Legal Commission did.

You ask, "What's a commission?" Some of us discovered what it was and created it in the process of doing it. When a relatively small group of us gathered at the beginning of March, we gathered with one question in mind: How to love the world being one Movement. In the midst of all the complexity of form the Movement is, in the midst of the myriad of activities that go on, the myriad of shapes and forms that we seem to take, in the midst of the innumerable local perspectives and structures, how is it that we remain as one entity? How do we hold global commonness? It seems that the question had to do with the relationship of the decisions we make through the Operational dynamic. That is, how do the operations all of us are engaged in get decided upon so the Mission can be carried out? And in making those decisions, how is it we avoid the archi-tectonic or the hierarchical structure that is just engrained so deeply in every one of us?

We have many times complained about bureaucracy, and have even had some timely words on the subject. It seems to me, the question now is how to appropriate bureaucratic thinking and transform it--or allow it to be transformed--

into a plurocratic function, one everyone participates in. How is it that we stand open to all men participating in the decision-making of the global Movement?

We have talked much about going Global, or Areal. It seems strange, though not surprising, that the Global comes alive when we go into the Parish. The Global has vibrated every time we have broken into the local. For it is in the local that we encounter raw humanness. It is where we encounter the one created a little lower than the angels. It is where we encounter life itself. As we have taken the stance of Going Global, we have, at the same time, driven to the bottom of the local, if you will.

In our work early in March, we pulled together four critical arenas which hold our prominence as a Movement: Global Polity; Analysis of Organization; Fiscal Operations and Common Records; and Property Aquisition and Holding. I want to focus on Global Polity this morning.

What we learned in that two-day commission was that we are a kind of polity dynamic or a decision-making process. Life sort of tells you to simplify, to find the easiest method possible for decision-making. But what we have unselfconsciously done is to intensify complexity, by holding the tension between the global and the local. The words "local-global" have been in our consciousness for years, but Xavierism burned it into us that one stands in the local as one who has both the consciousness and the concern for caring for the global. Every structure we build intensifies the complex tension between these two.

You know how we have talked of the world being created in seven days and in fifty-four parts? Well, consider the complexity of there being fifty-four areas, each with as assigned priorship dynamic. Perhaps we are now ready to step into a time where we have Religious House priors and, perhaps, Global Priors, and perhaps those who are assigned to the Areas, but also those who represent the Centrum Dynamic.

Regionally, local autonomy has meant someone going off in his own little region doing his own little thing the way he has wanted to do it. True, that method has given us some of the models that have created the last twenty years. Now, local autonomy means that what is done must have the impact of the global--doing the global in a local situation. The local is where the global dynamic is held. The Centrum Dynamic would hold the conscience of the global in the local. The Centrum is a four-in-one: but there is one Centrum. There would be no possibility of a dynamical relationship if this became bi-located or geographically split. The Centruns, I think, in contrast to the Areas, will need to be seen as not geographically located, not geographically rooted, but rather as a dynamic with several manifestations: Research, Operations, Development; and Management, each with a specific arena of enabling the global task of creating a tension between the local and the global. They would be the servant dynamic of the local. This, I believe, has far-reaching implications. In the present denominational turmoil, what you have in the Church today is the local entities as servants to promote some denomination or larger program. The Centrum Dynamic, by virtue of its reason for being, will always have its foot on the ground of the local.

Perhaps Centruns will show up in Areas, or in Regions or even somewhere else in the future. I want to suggest that Centruns will serve the local wherever the Mission demands that it be served.

It is the same with Commissions. They will serve wherever needed. The Commission will show up as a kind of advisory dynamic; not a decision-making body of people, but one which is there to review decisions, to make recommendations, to look things over and pierce through what seems to be a fog enshrouding a particular arena of life. Commissions will bring order out of chaos. Remember how the Assignment Commission operated last summer, putting those thousand names all over the walls? That was not a decision-making body, for the assignments did not become any more than recommendations until we had consensed on them--until we had assigned ourselves. The function of a Commission is to advise.

Perhaps what is emerging is a new Global Panchayat. The Panchayat, as we have known it, is mutating, becoming global. I can envision a time when a Panchayat might be nine people who would sit down together representing each Continent. Or maybe it would be three--one representing each Sphere. It would not be out to initiate the task of the Movement. That is done in the local and guided and guarded in the Centrum Dynamic. The Panchayat would be pure symbol. The pure symbolic holds the power to give life or take it away.

I suppose the original seven families of the Movement have experienced the mutation of many forms of what you might call Democracy. That is, they have seen the coming of the PSU and the Collegium dynamic. There are those of use who still struggle to know with how to reach a consensus--not as some substitute form of voting. Consensus is something that flows through your arteries and veins; it moves through every dimension of the Movement. What an insight to be able to give structure and form to the releasing of the power of Consensus! Wherever anyone is meeting together and has their focus on the Mission, then they are engaging in the creation of the Consensus.

One of the breaklooses we had in the Legal Commission was the realization that the decision-making process was being participated in by every dynamic within the Order--every dynamic in the Movement. I understand that in Cleveland (or was it Cincinnati) people gathered from the Religious House, the Local Church Project and the Metros for Indicative Battleplanning, in which they worked on things like the interior life of the House. This alone might be terrifying to those of us branded with bureaucracy, but it must terrify us all to realize that the decision-making is outside or beyond the Symbolic Order. And I want to suggest it is the one way by which we can insure that we create one Movement. It is an indication we have begun to turn on the machinery of the Global.

That was the imagery which the Legal Commission operated out of. And it was amazing to see the way those of us with legal background moved through what looked like the impenetrable complexities of how to incorporate, what kind of bank accounts to have, what to do when you purchase property, etc. It was moved through in a remarkable way. What was even more astounding was the way some of the non-legal laymen could move through that entanglement as well.

One lawyer in the group said, "If we used this kind of method, law could be fun!" He said that in his work with corporations no one was interested in this kind of foundational searching. He said most corporations were interested only in expediency, immediate gimmicks showing how they could get what they needed by paying the least, how they could increase sales without daring to look at the deeps of the dynamics of foundational power. We were conscious that in this

Commissions, we were dealing with the patterns of the new society. It was only a beginning; all of us will be engaged in spelling this out more, but we got clarity on a dynamic that any corporation across the face of this globe would give its right arm to have, if it only knew it existed. We were conscious we were stepping out not only on behalf of corporations, but on behalf of local communities and churches as well. It was creation in how men participate in decision-making and begin to function with consensus, finally accountable to all. Perhaps we need to hear statements like, "The global polity implies that every group and every individual image himself responsible for the total mission. The global polity requires that we operate out of the most comprehensive picture possible."

How is it that we make decisions out of a comprehensive plan, not out of what becomes possible at a given moment? This, I believe, has some direct application to how we move in terms of the Houses. Global polity is sustained by common reporting and common accountability. I do not know how seriously you take our weekly reporting, but our objective reports, our getting the story told, then, holds a radical kind of accountability for every dynamic within the Movement. The Global Elders trip does that, representationally, in the Houses which are visited. Another form of reporting is in the images we plaster all over our walls. That is polity. That is decision-making with a future unlike anything you and I have been bred on. It is shaping humanness.

I never thought I would find myself saying this, but our polity is founded upon trust--a decision to trust. I know we say "trust your colleagues;" that is well and good. But finally, it is the Mission we trust. We trust the path, the call to beckon forth. That means we trust Indicative Battleplanning and that is a decision, I tell you. We trust the battleplanning process to discern what are the trends, but even that is not finally where the foundation of our polity is. Finally, the only basis is trusting that our colleagues, the mission, and the trends are good; then, stepping out over nothing and deciding to trust God, something as certainly uncertain as that.

It seems to me that something broke loose in that Legal Commission.

--- Joe Crocker.