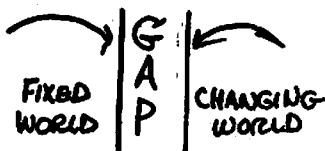


THE NEW WORLD

Greetings, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Mayor, local citizens, and honored guests. I want to address you this morning as ladies and gentlemen because I want to honor the depth in every human being. I want to honor the mayor because he is the one who symbolizes this city. I want to honor the local citizens because they are responsible for the future of this city. And, I want to honor the guests because they are the ones who can do in their local communities what can be done in this local community here. There is the slob in all of us that prevents us from really dealing with our local communities. But, this is the kind of occasion in which one has to decide to be honored - to decide to be in a given location. I have decided it is a great honor to be here in your local village where we can talk together and work together on problems and issues and vision you have for your given community. So I want to talk a bit about where we are and what we need to do in the kind of social setting you and I are given in our particular time and world.



In my mind we are living in the kind of times that stand somewhere between the end of a time that is no longer and the coming of time that is not yet fully in being. That is, we find ourselves in one of the "gaps" of history. One of the gaps is that man is no longer searching for that which he can find or nail down as being a key part of his life. The world a hundred years ago was fixed, fairly set; everyone knew what was right and what was wrong, what it meant to be related to society, what kind of work to do, who to marry, and so forth. In our world today none of those is yet certain. We live in the midst of confusion, in terms of making our decisions about who we are going to be.

The crucial question of every last being here today is how to deal with this age. How do we relate to it? How do we forge the models needed for the society and the world? How do we enable our governments to forge the models for their societies? I suppose, at the moment, Henry Kissinger is the public figure whom many admire and look to for what might be done in the Middle East, or South-east Asia, or wherever international problems are cropping up. I look at Henry Kissinger and I ask myself, "What is it that I admire about him?" In some ways I think he is still operating out of a balance-of-power understanding between nations - an understanding men operated out of in the past. Yet, as I look more closely, I find that what I know about Henry Kissinger, whether in agreement with his particular policies or not, is that he has a model for society; and he has a method for implementing it. He goes to the Israelis and talks to them about how they could change or moderate their position just a bit - but not all the way - to the way Egypt would have it. Then he goes over and talks to Egypt about how they might moderate themselves just a little bit more toward the

Israelis; and back and forth and back and forth until he has them together. That is what I mean by methods and model for what someone thinks needs to happen in the world.

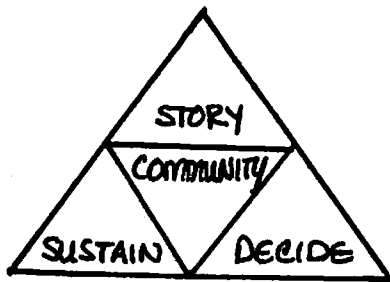
Most of us, however, go around in utter confusion. I was watching television the other day, and one of the old soap operas was on, one I had not seen in years. For some reason, I found myself fascinated with that soap opera called "The Guiding Light." As I was growing up, I remember "The Guiding Light" as the program you could always turn on and someone would have a good, clear answer for how you ought to live. Whether you agreed with the answer or not, at least it was an answer. But this program I was watching was not that way at all. It was some kind of a romance and the family was in trouble. They kept confiding in their friends with sob story after sob story, the way soap operas do, but everywhere they turned, even to the old grandmother, for what they should do about their marriage, the answer always was, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know." That kind of confusion about what is needed in the world today is the way most of us are.

Maybe the confusion also results from the utter complexity we encounter in concrete, everyday, mundane experiences. It's like when you go to a cafeteria where the line seems to get longer and longer because of all the many varieties of food there are to choose from, and most of the foods are about the same price and all within your range - how do you choose between all those? The other night we took a group of kids out to get ice cream, and I decided I would get as many of the good flavors as I could get into one dish. Well, I got them all in one dish, but it didn't taste too well; it was just a mess, partly because I had mixed up several flavors which just didn't seem to mix. That kind of confusion and complexity over our communities and its real human problems is what we are faced with in our times.

One has to look for the kind of thing needed today. What I sense every man needs is a whole new grasp of what integrity means. What does it mean to be an honest man? It doesn't mean what it meant yesterday, where you did not do somethings and did do others. If you had to follow those rules, most of us would just stay home and not get involved in anything. But honesty, integrity - what is it for us today? How does one build a whole life and put it together in grasp and understanding. Someone was telling me about the restaurant owner down the street here. I think his name is Padilla and he comes from somewhere in Latin America. And I understand that he is a man who has given his life not to a corner restaurant but to this community. Those men are rare in our times; those who have decided they can hand out food without charging for it in order to get this community launched. This is our situation, finding ways to grasp the society in which we are living.

I do not know what your model for society is, but there is a model that seems to be abroad in every magazine and every book and in every newsbroadcast or television program that you watch and listen to. The model looks something like this: In every situation portrayed in one of these programs or stories, there are certain things in life that just sustain. Every community has to have some means of sustenance; people must have jobs, they have to have income, they have to have food and housing. Then, depending on the climate, there is the question of what kind of food, what kind of clothing and so forth. That is the basic sustenance of life or that in life which is utterly necessary.

People need some way of making decisions about what sustains them, or in what way they are going to order their society. How they are going to make decisions, with the flexibility to turn in new directions, if that is what is needed.



And finally, communities need to have a story, they need a way of telling themselves what it means to be a human being. How does one know what it means to be human in an age where all the values are changing and the complexity is overwhelming. You can go into almost any community and this illustration will hold. Here in the Mission District in San Francisco you have people from all over Latin America, from all the various countries there, many of whom speak Spanish or Portuguese. The Filipinos also live here. Everyone of these "peoples" has a

little bit different story. I understand there are sixty (60) to eighty (80) agencies here each to take care of each different understanding and story that people live out of in this community. The, the question is, what is the common story we have to forge in order to have a society that is responsive and responsible for the well-being and needs of all the people.

One society I have known illustrates what the model needs to be. It was back in my home town. My first 18 years of life were spent in a filling station and garage. The station itself is very much a small society, a community. We had all of the different supplies we needed in order to sell gasoline and oil. Gasoline and oil, of course, were the obvious things that kept the filling station in being. As I grew up and learned more about business, I discovered that it took money to buy gasoline to sell to customers and our profit margin was quite small. We really made our money on labor. That was difficult for me because it meant fixing tires made more money than pumping gasoline. Fixing tires was never a favorite form of expenditure for me. We also had to decide what salaries we would offer to the people we hired to work in the filling station, and then how to distribute the income. My father did the deciding and he had a certain means of equity; that is, he decided how to distribute the money primarily through a system that started with the owner of the station, namely himself. He got the biggest cut. Many of the people who worked for us were Latin Americans. Their salaries were smaller. In fact, as I recall, they got sixty cents an hour back in the 1940's and 1950's and even then that was not much of a wage. Distribution was a problem in the filling station as I look back on it. And only one person made decisions. That committee of one was the entire decision-making system in the political process of that filling station, or that community. At times, things got a bit raucous. Some of the employees did not like the jobs they were doing so they objected to the hours they had to work, something like twelve to fourteen hours a day. One day one of the employees got angry and my father socked him in the jaw. That is the way decisions were made. We in that filling station operated out of a story. Our story was that Texaco was the greatest gasoline in all of history, it was the one product everyone needed to buy. If you did not know that story well, if you could not talk about how Texaco oil was better than Mobil Oil, then you wouldn't have made a very good salesman there. In the filling station, we had particular ways

of living out our lives. We had to keep the filling station clean. Wiping up all the grease spots was part of keeping the station clean. That helped us sell more gas. We also had to wear a clean uniform daily. We had a certain style; we had to greet the customers and be nice to them and say "Good Evening" or "Good Morning". Whenever they dropped in and in West Texas this was not too often, that story and style was our symbolic life, our story about what it meant to be human. This little sketch is just to illustrate that any society, be it a filling station or a nation, operates out of those dynamics: the economic, political and cultural dynamics.

In the economic realities, if you do not deal with the economics of a community, then you have not dealt with its basic, given, sustaining element. You could not have any kind of filling station without gasoline, oil and labor. In the political, you have to have some means of making decisions, some means of ordering society, certain laws, regulations - we had plenty of those too - certain hours we had to keep and so forth. Then there is the cultural dimensions of life. We are less familiar with this area perhaps, but it has to do with the story, it has to do with the education that goes on in that community; it has to do with families; it has to do with various symbols and songs. I suspect a good many communities like yours have a song that is part of their tradition. Those elements are very crucial.

The question for us is what is an adequate society for San Francisco or for the Mission District? What is an urban society, planned for a city? We have yet to develop the urban structures needed for society. I want to maintain that the people who can build urban society are not the mayors, although the mayor has his role, but certainly he cannot do it alone, not even with the help of the police force at its best. What are the adequate ways? I have been interested in the local people. Local man will be able to respond adequately because he knows where the problems are. He is the one who runs into the problems. He is the one who experiences them. He is the one on the end of the problems and therefore, it is in his family, in his relationship to the economic structures of his community, that decisions are made.

As I look around, however, it seems we are paralyzed when we think about doing something effectively. How do you avoid all of the community organizations that vie with each other back and forth and back and forth and vie for Federal and state funds? How do we avoid the antagonisms between people who have completely different self-stories about life? How do they begin to work corporately?

It appears there is an imbalance in our times. This triangle today in our society, and across the whole globe, is oriented primarily toward how one sustains himself. It is oriented entirely toward the economic. This is peculiar because if you look at the world as a whole, there is more economic sustenance available to people than ever before. And yet, we are formulated by our need for sustenance - or, put it this way - by our need to have gadgets. It is as if our whole life is formed by our need to buy this and buy that, buy this and buy that, not necessarily because I have to or because I need it, but just because the thought of it bombards me every day when I go to the store or because my neighbor

has one or whatever. The economic dimension has come to dominate the rest of society so that even our cities are unable to meet the needs of local people. No matter how good our city governments are, or however well attended they are, they themselves seem to be caught in an economic swell. They are unable to unblock themselves or to push themselves to the real problems. This means that the whole cultural dimension is warped; it has no life to it.

Think of the movies you go to, think of the television programs you watch for the most part. How many of these really communicate something significant to you? How many of them really address the problems you face everyday on the street? How many of them offer a vision of what ought to happen? Perhaps these movies or shows will analyze the problems, but in our times, we have to do more than deal with the problems. We are living beyond that point. We are living not in the moment of the gap, but just on the end of the gap. We are living on the end of the gap which has to do with building the new form of society and civilization. People have had an analysis of the problems for a long time. What is needed now is a perspective, a vision, of what can happen in a local community.

Now parts of the vision have become obvious. That is, as you begin to look at society and ask yourself what is it you want to effect, the first thing you have to effect is a new story. The first story we have to learn is that it is good to live in urban society. Most of the time, I do not think living in an urban society is good. It certainly does not have the same familiar community atmosphere we had in West Texas, nor all the great things we had back home. The story of a community has to do with the values you want to hold about life.

Another thing is becoming obvious. We have got to find a form of education that is relevant. Perhaps you have noticed that your children go to school and study issues and books and problems that do not seem related at all. If you look even more closely, in the universities people are getting very well trained in things that are outmoded by the time they graduate. How does one get an education that is relevant to the society of which he is a part? This can only happen through new learning methods. Because we are living in a dynamic, fast-changing society, something new is always required of us. There are no static values, no static understandings about life which one can hold on to and use. What we have to learn are methods that enable us to respond. How do I learn a method by which I can get cooperation in my own local community? How do I learn to workshop and brainstorm with people to get out all their wisdom so they can respond to their own needs? I am convinced that this task must be done in local communities. There is no other place where people are both experiencing the problems and have the chance to get together and work them out. People in local communities will have to be dealing with even larger problems. They will have to be dealing with the basic woes of our whole society.

To put it another way, I have to be able to find a way to be responsible within my community and in my work. Those are the two places where I am directly and immediately responsible for the shape of society. In fact, we will not be able to shape society unless we find a way for everyone to become involved in the process. Have you noticed how voting does not really get you involved in the way society is moving? And who does decide how many gadgets are produced each year? Who does decide what advertisements communicate to me what I need to buy? This

thing called technological society is difficult to get at. Even more difficult, is that local people will have to do this deciding within the structures that already exist. I do not know what kind of housing problems you have here, but I certainly know the kind we have in Chicago, where I live. To deal with the problems of housing in the City of Chicago means you have to deal with the whole area of real estate practices, and with the tax base, and with the laws now being passed, and with the laws that were passed several years ago to protect businesses (and therefore not really for the benefit of local communities.)

All of these issues, which I am sure you have struggled with in some form, have to do with the bureaucratic systems in our society. What really mystifies me is in having adequate information to deal with those issues. Where do you go to get it? You certainly cannot go waltzing into a City Hall office and ask people there to answer your questions. They are only involved with a small part of the city. Where do you get the information to make the City of Chicago become a community?

Finally, in the area of the economic, it seems to me a major problem we have is how to decide what are the major needs of a community in urban society? What are the real needs? At one point, the poverty level in the United States was something like a \$3,000 annual income. That is high for the rest of the world, but in our country, if one makes less than that, he is on welfare. Of course, now people say the actual poverty level is \$6,000, and if you read social management publications, they say the poverty level is more like \$12,000 or \$18,000. They say it actually takes that much money to be able to function responsibly in an urban society. How many people are able to command that kind of wage? Then, how do you decide what wages will be and what the money will be used for?

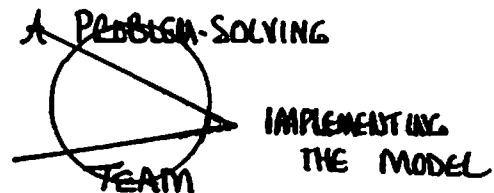
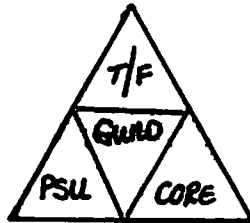
The task of building society is a huge one. It is not something one does because he had read books, nor because he has experienced the agony of the streets. He goes about rebuilding society because he has the chance to get together with others and work the problems through.

The first step is to gather people together--like getting people to this Convocation. That is the only way societies have ever been built, especially at times of great change. These "getting togethers" have been called many things in the past. I want to call them Guilds. You are probably familiar with the nineteenth century guilds; they were adequate for a world that had not yet become urban. And anyone who is a member of a trade union belongs to a type of guild that came into being to deal with the problems of industry as it began. Today, labor unions are dealing with the same problems and difficulties as the rest of us in society. They are anticipating needs and making decisions. The question for these times is, how do you form guilds that cut across the various levels of society--including both employer and employee. To deal seriously with society's problems takes groups composed of both women and men; both youth and adults.

A Guild is not an organization which I, as an individual, can join and get individually helped. A Guild is, first of all, a body of people who are concerned enough about their community to do something about it. They are a core of people who have a method or a way of thinking themselves through on problems. How do you get problems thought through? I discover a problem, I solve it, and then, within a day I discover ten new problems have taken its place. That is not getting a problem thought through.

In order to get problems thought through, we need something called problem-solving units which develop whatever expertise, insights and information are necessary for society. These insights and expertise should come, first of all, out of a community's own experience. That is, community members brainstorm what the problems are, then bring that into a list, then into a model and then they can forge a response to implement the model. That is what I mean by method. Whether that is the method or not is not important. We need some method.

Lastly, any model needs implementation. Perhaps your group is like ours: We tend to think things through, at least to a certain degree. We get a model built and then create a pack of resolutions. Then everyone leaves the meeting with no one assigned to implement the model. We also need what many communities and corporations are beginning to call Task Forces. Task Forces actually implement models. If you have a housing problem in a particular community, for instance, the best way to solve the problem is not to assign Joe Blokes or Jose to the job because he knows something about housing. Instead, call together a group of people who have some knowledge, or at least know where to get it. Let them deal with the housing problem. They could take a model built by a problem-solving unit and implement it in a local community. This all relates to the Guild. A Guild is a core of people, a problem-solving unit and a task force. A Guild implements models.



It is no answer to stand here and talk about what might be done. We want to experiment today with actually doing it, or with being a Guild. We want to try ways of effectively awakening and caring for the people of this whole community. Some of the people, I suspect, do not even know what the problems are; others do not want to do anything about them. Therefore, some people will have to take responsibility for the others. This is what is needed in local communities everywhere. We need a way of creating a sign of possibility, a demonstration. It will not be an easy job. It is not even a job you have asked for, in the first instance. To show up in these times just means our job is to forge human community.

Well, let's move into our think tanks.

---David McCleskey

5/26/74