

Bob Vance

North American Continental Council
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ON PREPARING FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

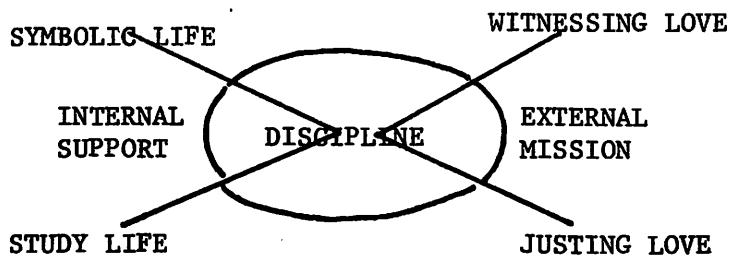
This is rather an unusual time. It has been a long time since we had a Continental Council. We've had staff meetings; we've had continental meetings of one sort or another; we've had rallies and a few other things. But a lot of different factors indicated to us that the time was at hand to do something different, although perhaps, in the first instance, Continental Council doesn't sound different. This coming summer we are going to begin a new four years. In this continent there is a new kind of need and a new kind of opportunity present. Therefore, a Council such as this seems appropriate.

There are four things I am going to talk about: The twenty-eight years' history of the Movement and the Order; the destinal role of North America; the profound role of awakenment (or why still do those crazy town meetings?); and a chart of a suggested four year plan for North America.

History of the Movement and the Order

| The University | Clarifying the Task | | Creating the Forces | | Turn to the World | | Turn to the Masses | | |
|----------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|-------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|----|
| | Church | Culture | Cadre | Mov't | Social Process | Demonstration | Cataly-zation | Order | |
| 52 56 | | 60 | 64 | 68 | 72 | 76 | 80 | 84 | 88 |

We started in 1952, as a group called the Faith and Life Community back in Austin, Texas, and what we were trying to do was to figure out who the revolutionaries were in that day, and how we enable them to do what needs to be done to make this nation and this world a more human place. That was what we were about. In one way, the kind of history I want to talk about tonight, however, started about 1956 when for eight years, from 1956 to 1960, we pushed in two arenas. We worked on what it meant to be "the church". Now, that was rather revolutionary in that time. The key thing



was what we call today the "bug model", which pointed to five dimensions of a life of any group that was deciding to do anything. Namely, that is had to know what it was doing, and be capable of talking about it. It had to know what it was doing and be capable of doing it, and it had to manifest itself in some form of presentation, or presence in the world; that is, witnessing

and justing love. It had to rehearse what it was about, and it had to have a way of study so that it was capable of doing that. It had to have "glue" to hold them together. That is the worship (or symbolic life), study and discipline side of its life. That model was the key thing we were about. We said that once we broke through that we could enable any organization, any group whether it is a church, a corporation, or whatever, to get things done in a way that it had never thought was possible before.

In 1960 we asked ourselves the question, "How do you take the massive knowledge people have available and give them a way to quickly have that at their fingertips?" So, we created the basics of what we call our Academy curriculum. We took all of the basic arenas of knowledge and pulled them into simple, profound constructs that would enable persons, whether they have in education or not, to quickly discern and judge how to make responsible decisions in the world. That took us about four years; and we've been working on that continually since then.

From 1956 to 1964, basically what we were doing was clarifying the task. We had decided that we were about "revolution." We were about causing basic changes in the way in which people live their lives. And we saw that to do that you didn't do it over night. We saw that you had to first of all clarify what it was you were going to do. That's how I would talk about the first eight years.

Then something dramatic happened in 1964. For one thing, we first began self-consciously talking about the "Order"; we began working seriously in the local community of 5th City; and we began creating the forces--the people who would go about doing this task we had begun to get clarity on. We went out across the world teaching RS-1, CS-1, RSIIB. And we tried to deal with the question of "Cadre"--or, how do you create a group of people who, in a local community, could organize, sustain, maintain, and send themselves out to get something done. We did course after course attempting to answer that kind of question. We worked very hard during those years in 5th City. We broke through all kinds of things. Yesterday we had a conversation with Bethany Hospital. We are now on a "countdown" on the West Side of Chicago . . . there's going to be a new twenty-million dollar hospital built in August or September. And it's going to be on the property of the Institute and the Chicago House location. Won't that be an incredible happening for the West Side and for 5th City. It's going to provide an impetus in terms of economic input. It can be a grand and glorious opportunity. With the new shopping center and other things going on over there, you really sense we are at the point of grabbing hold of contradictions. Some of us who had spent a lot of time over there got to talking about what it would mean to tear down Room A and put it in a box and save it!

Then, those years of 1968-1972. Most of you experience the Houses as sort of "normal", but there was a time when they were not normal--they were a frightening idea. In 1968 we got a bunch of trucks and parked them there in the courtyard. We loaded them up with possessions and people and started out to various places across the land. I was just sure that the one going to the West Coast would get lost in the Rockies in a blizzard and would never be heard of again. There was kind of an internal sensing after how we might destroy our unity; we might loose everything if we made that kind of move. Yet now, look at our whole push on the Houses and the dimension of what they sustain. The Ecclesiola was invented back in those years from 1968 to 1972,

in our effort to answer the question of how to enable the cadres out there to stand.

From 1964 to 1972 we were attempting to create the forces. Now that's not to suggest we were sitting around just working on our internal life. But that was our external mission in terms of the overall job we were trying to do.

Now, 1972 was another momentous time--the Turn Symbol was created about that time, and we began what we called "the turn to the world." Now it wasn't that we hadn't been in the world; it seemed like we were in the world every weekend and many times during the week, in a hundred ways. But we began to raise the question now how we are going to do the awakening of every single individual. Now when we'd say things like that, we'd laugh to relieve the tension. You notice nobody laughed this time around. We said to ourselves that we had to figure out what's going on so that we could discern how to change it. And we created these Social Process Triangles. Now, I was out of the country for much of that; but I hear it was a circus. At one time we had ten down about six or seven levels; and we had Whistle Points, and Pressure Points, and little paraplegic snowmen. We're still waiting to test it. I think we would be astounded to sit down and re-read some of the stuff we've written in terms of the kind of accuracy it holds. You've seen that in Town Meetings with the use of the Social Process Triangle.

Around 1976, we began Demonstration. We decided to take what we had learned needed to be done, and to demonstrate that it actually could be done. We began doing the Human Development Projects, Town Meetings, and other things. We do Town Meetings now with one hand behind our back, but we forget how we got there. I can remember when an entire house of twenty people would labor for hours trying to figure out how to set up one Town Meeting. When it was held there would be a phenomenal victory party--after one Town Meeting! We'd call Chicago and declare, "We had one!" Then we'd try it again the next quarter and it wouldn't work. I remember one December where we talked about the snowball. We said we were going to do all these Town Meetings and they'd be like little pieces of snow, and when you got enough of them out there you could roll them up and there'd be a snowball, and it would cause an avalanche. Now at that point, we hadn't even gotten the weather cold enough, much less snow. But periodically, drops of water would come down and splash. It's hard to believe; where are we now? 8,000-9,000 impact events! I remember a meeting in the Lumumba Room where we had a fight about whether we were actually going to have to do 5,000 or 10,000. Then there was another battle over whether we would do 5,000 or just 1,000. The spirit agony that went into all that! Then "boom!", somehow it happened, and we demonstrated it. We have demonstrated probably most critically of all to ourselves, that this can be done.

Now where are we? About a year ago we started talking about a great a great leap. Some of us noted that 1980 was coming, and that we needed to get on the stick. We said, "By God, let's have ourselves a great leap!" Now I am still in favor of a great leap; but as I remember, it went something like this. We got a great number of "high priests and high priestesses" together in this room and we said there needs to be a great leap, and that it would be helpful if we could have it around July so that it would coordinate

to find out which of these cares you should honor. I know people who are spending their lives trying to save the whale. You could go on to describe situation after situation similar to that. The second metaphor is that of "fighting a hundred brush fire at once" or, experiencing the apparent ineffectivity of your actions. There is a phenomenal effort to get food to Cambodia, and it is still questionable whether it's really going to get there. You can look across the continent of North America and see many similar kinds of happenings. The third metaphor is that of "isolationism". It's as if you were assigned to the University of Chicago Library for life. We have talked at various times about this isolationism. Television moves in on us some, with this. But most of us find that we are caught up in structures which tend to pull back, to isolate us from what is going on in the world. Fourthly, the image of trying to fix a watch with mittens on, in terms of one's essential effectiveness, In working in Fifth City, I have discovered some respect and sympathy for the U.S. government. It tends to get its problems exposed more often. The city of Chicago and the problems that Mayor Byrne is trying to deal with, like the school board mess. How do you say something in relation to that?

I sense that dangers are upon us. One is the danger of a failure of nerve--an attempt to create a risk-free society. I read an article in Time magazine about a civics teacher who drew up a petition calling for the abolishment of the ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. His class took it to a shopping center. Seventy percent of the people there signed it, many of whom had read it fully before signing. It wasn't that they were stupid. It's rather, "Let's do what we can to eliminate the risk." Secondly, there is the danger of the failure of imagination. I agree with Jerry Brown in that I think we made a mistake on space, pulling back the way we did. I think there is a danger in pulling back on our technological use; a danger in foreign policy in the world, of pulling back and getting the lowest possible denominator of consensus rather than some kind of authentic vision for the world.

Now, what would I say in terms of vision. Since about 1972, we have said that all the goods belong to all the people, all the decisions belong to all the people, and all the gifts belong to all the people. That is still valid. The question is still how does North America participate in relation to the whole world? That, it seems to me, is the question. In the arena of the economic life, it was a surprise to discover that 90% of all the technologists and scientists are alive today. What would it mean for North America to take its technological gifts and transforming them appropriately, make them available to the whole world.

The political arena is hardest for me, but I finally decided on the image of "social pioneer". What is needed is transforming the urban today. And what do we do with leisure time, so that it does not turn into a horrifying dead-end? I've had opportunity to mix a little with the naive hedonistic culture which glorifies leisure in an unbelievable way.

In the cultural arena, the thing that struck me was "the pluriform society". There must be fifty nations represented in Uptown. There are at least fifty nations represented in the Mission District of San Francisco.

Even in a place like Des Moines, I am sure we'd be astounded over the many different cultures and nations you would find there. What would it mean for this continent to not fall into a melting pot image, but to allow these diverse cultural gifts to exist, and to create something new out of that. We're in a time when we must look hard at this. What if we did awaken thousands and thousands of communities; what would we want them to do? We must answer that question.

Profound Awakening Center

Now how do I go about doing this awakening thing? I've been convinced our philosophy of social change is still valid. The way you change what's going on in a society is you change the basic operating images of the people all across a continent. You do not change the presidents - in one sense it makes no difference whom we elect in 1980. If it be Edward Kennedy or Bob Dole, in terms of where we're standing, it's "Twiddledee and Twiddledum", because we will not have the kind of change required until there is a bubbling out of thousands and thousands and thousands of communities. I think most of us agree with that. We know that genuine revolution (and I don't mean rebellion, I mean revolution) is about when people grasp a new way to live - they decide to pick life up and live it in community after community after community. It has to happen to them; they can't just read about it in a newspaper, although that's good.

We started out with this thing called RS-1: a weekend seminar which gave people a chance to self-consciously decide what they were going to do with their lives. This course takes the religious categories of the Christian faith, which virtually everybody in this country and in many other countries grew up in, and makes a little sense out of them in relation to reality. But the crucial thing is not those symbols; it is the reality everybody experiences. What we discovered was that it did not look like we could not make it to every single human being fast enough with RS-1s, although we talked about RS-1 for every single human being. And so we began to raise a new question: how could you do a whole community? At the time, we didn't know that's what we were doing. We look back now to the invention of this thing called the Town Meeting and see it as a tool to awaken people. A Town Meeting really does take people and awaken them. They go right back to sleep or they turn around and march in a direction you might not think they ought to march. A Town Meeting, we discovered, has the power of doing real awakening.

The only reason it made any sense, however, is because of a revolution called resurgence of Local People. Ten years ago I was trying to figure out what was meant by that. Then came Proposition 13, the ERA, cults, Black Africa, Jane Byrne, gay movement. We must keep clear that the resurgence does not necessarily come out in a releasing, humanizing form, i.e., the reactionary theocracy present in the Iranian situation. It could mean even more pain before resurgence finally breaks through. You begin to see why it is we didn't form into a political party, or why we didn't create a community organization, or why we didn't decide to just be a Christian group, or a Christian Order. What a joke it would be, to be missing so much of what's going on in the world, namely, that our awakening is riding on the back of this resurgence--and this

resurgence is bigger than all of us. We are beginning to see that there are trends in the midst of this that we can't even identify, much less begin to ride with or against.

We made our shift to the community base with the Town Meeting. That is not synonymous with saying we are no longer interested in having that kind of event happen to an individual. Of course we are. But we're not interested in a particular individual--we're interested in a whole world. We're not playing games, we're interested in how do we actually impact two million villages, not to mention the million urban centers. This involves a three million awakenment phasing. If we could do that this year that would be a miracle.

We started out doing these Town Meetings. Then we said, when you go in and awaken a community more has to happen after the awakenment. So we started the Social Demonstration--those human development projects of which we have several hundred now. But we were not interested in creating a nice community life; we are not interested in increasing the economic base; we were not interested in setting up preschools. We are interested in creating signs so that when somebody wakes up over here, they can look over there and see "live communities". It was exciting in the Human Development Training School to have people coming from across the world who had heard, but had said it couldn't possibly be. They looked and they saw people and events in Fifth City as signs that you could do something that could make a significant difference in your community. That is what a social demonstration is, and that is why we must have them.

We are doing awakenment. When we finished the first stage of covering the counties, that was an ingenious breakthrough. But all it was was a demonstration. It was a toehold. It was "manuevers in the back yard" to see if we could really do it. Somebody was saying that when you take the map and you color it yellow it is really impressive. But when you take a little dot and put it up for each meeting, those shrink until they are almost invisible. Take five thousand divided into three million, and you begin to see the picture. The question now is how do we do the masses. We need ten alternatives of how to do that. Mississippi is an example. They laid down their lives, almost literally, to get an alternative into history. We need nine other alternatives, and we're in the process of creating those. I've been watching the Upper Great Lakes to see whether or not they have the nerve to do it differently. By that I mean instead of one colleague going out and doing all those Town Meetings, convincing lots of other colleagues to do it. We need to train many more people . . . what will that look like? They are trying to work with the Regional Commission there, and I know many of the rest of you are trying to do the same sort of thing. We must be on the lookout for places where the time is right. There has been a group floating a balloon that perhaps the time has come to do 76 Town Meetings in Chicago. That's the number of neighborhoods there are in the city. It just may be that the time is at hand to do such a thing. But again, you want to say, if we end up just doing it the way we did it in 1977, then let's not do it because it is not going to get us down the road.

Proposed Phasing Chart

I don't know how many people have worked on this chart but the fact is, it is a model which demonstrates intentionality. We are not out this weekend to work on this chart. The most significant thing about it is that it exists. It's an attempt to say what we might do in the next four years in North America. The thing that is most similar, it seems to me, is the chart on Maharashtra in India. Kenya, I think, more than any place, gave us the courage to decide that we could do something like this. We walk around saying "Oh, dear, we don't know what to do . . ." All right, we now know what to do. There it is.

You will notice there are four phases. Now that was kind of an audacious thing right there. Phase I is finished. Phase II is the next four years. Phase III and Phase IV go to 1992. The most important thing on here probably are the five categories down the left. The first category is Systematic Geographic Penetration. That is an old word, penetration; it simply means getting the possibility of life in a new way to every community. An impact target could be the the state of Iowa; another could be Chicago; and another could be the Lower East Side in New York. It's not numbers of Town Meetings or LENS courses. It is the comprehensive geographic approach. Out of those four thousand impact targets you might do twenty to thirty thousand impact events. I'm not trying to prejudice the number ther. Now, I suspect we're going to have a little more trouble with the Demonstration Projects. The debate we have going on is: do we need any more demonstration projects? If so, do we need eighty more to go with the 19 we already have? I mean real demonstration projects, where we go in there and maybe in two years, or even a year, we create a sign so that when awakenment happens people can go and look and see that people actually can live after their awakenment.

Target network permeation is trying to answer the question of how you soften-up the bureacratic structure so it is responsive to local people in communities when local people say we need to have x, y, z. You do LENS courses, forums, etc. We've put service agencies and economic pillars with this, but group what you want under there, we're not trying to push anything in particular. But it's clear that doing this kind of job takes something more than a "ladies aid society" on its' last breath, who sees us as its' hope to keep from going under. We need to find the alive networks that are going to respond to the cries of local people.

Primal Community Demonstration is a hard one. I think this is the convergence column. There maybe a consensus coming that we not use that phrase "Demonstration Communities"; we use the phrase "Signal Communities". It doesn't make any difference, except that we have already used the word "demonstration" to refer to something else. Signal Communities are those which are awakened and doing things. There are a couple communities in Iowa that would put Lorimor to shame! They didn't even have us do anything but a Town Meeting in those communities; and now they've outdistanced Lorimor. Tremendous! I was astounded. I suspect there are hundreds of communities like that that would embarass our project directors. Then there is the Urban Target. Here is where we get a downbeat on population. What would it mean to systematically hit San Francisco or Oakland or the North part of the peninsula.

It's so clear that Movement Cadre Formation has to be a part of what we're doing now. Is not the time at hand when we need to push a little on the Extended Order and bring into being - not the group of people who are trying to suck their existence out of the fact of the Movement, either in the Order or out of the Order, - but people who will do whatever needs to be done, whether they live in a house or not. We need Movement Cores of people in town after town after town who in some way see themselves consciously working in the direction of awakening of local communities across this continent.

The last category is Faculty Leadership Training: master pedagogues and a Continental Faculty. We need to recapture that kind of image, if we are to do the above. We are going to have one hell of a lot of impact, and we need to get the same kind of iron held in our impact events that we used to have when we were a much smaller group doing seminars. We need 10,000 faculty. I think we'd be surprised how many there are now. After being in the HDTS, my reflection is that the time has come to shift from training being periferal to training being pivotal. The time has not come to stop doing impact and now do training; but , by god, we've got to make sure we are getting people thoroughly trained, not just slapping a three-hour session just before a Town Meeting and thinking we've got somebody trained.

I'd like to conclude this context for our work in this council by naming four dimensions of the spirit malaise we find ourselves in these days. The first is Misplaced Messiahism: why are we not able to get it all done like when we should be able to? It's the sense that someone else needs to decide. Well, no one else is going to. There is no external answer - only our interior resolve. The second is Insidious Turfism: "my family, my region, my project". We worry over our little turf because we believe no one else is worrying over it. But when we talked about being assigned to our foxhole, it wasn't to protect our foxhole. Our job was to protect the whole geography. We are assigned to the whole turf - and our turf is the world. I am assigned to Chicago for the sake of the whole world. The third is No One Cares: "about my good ideas". We're flooded with a miracle of ways we can go. There are fine ideas all over the place. Therefore, we must naturally set priorities. But down underneath that is the sense of not being needed. And then underlying that we know our life is flooded with care that we do not know what to do with. The last is the Low Whine: "everyone is leaving, we might fall apart". But the Movement, the Order, is bigger than ever. People have always come and gone. We struggle with "I can't do it! I can't bear it. Life is being used to the fullest and I can't bear it".

Well, we face unbelievably glorious times. I find myself continually excited day after day with what is going on. And I believe we face an incredible challenge as we enter this council and address ourselves to these next six months in North America on behalf of the Globe.