

cc. *Centrum papers*

Dear Colleagues,

Things go well in Area Sydney, we are moving with sets and clusters, and learning a lot. Kath Walker--a renowned aboriginal poetess--visited Murrumbidgee last week-end, and I believe it was one of the most profound happenings we have ever occasioned. The community regarded her with much fear and fascination, but in the end she won their hearts. She is very aboriginal and proud which had a great cultural impact upon them . . . and us. She also gave us a great trust in giving us about 16 names of the non-rebel black leaders with her name as introduction, as well as the loan of her hour long film of her life which is very powerful. Kath said the Murrumbidgee people need shock tactics--by which she meant having a succession of the people she named visit the community and speak with them. She also gave some very helpful hints on the industries and how to get grants from the Aboriginal Arts Council. The previous week we had a very successful presentation to the heads of all the Religious Orders in Australia.

Following are some broodings and reflections on where we are as an Order. These broodings have come from observations of my colleagues and my witness to my own journey in the deeps. If it sounds as though I am cracking up, I don't mean that, but to articulate some how my journey in the deeps of my being, and the various assailants I have to contend with. I believe that it is not only the journey of one old neurotic, but in some way, if I read it right, of the Order, and therefore gives me great concern for how we care for ourselves and keep ourselves in history. Not for the sake of keeping the Order in history, but for the sake of keeping the dynamic of the "elite" in history for the sake of history, for the sake of the dispossessed, the wretched, and the innocent suffering of the earth. Now I believe we are on target with our programs, and we have glorious advantages, but we are in **HARD** times of a transition . . . transition from controlled demonstration to grass roots awakening or movement, and from a cohesive "christian" family order to something else, whatever you call it; from having control over what you decide to do, to standing before the flood gates of possibility; from worked through and tested models to the indicative demands which call for wild creativity or experimentation; from cohesive strong houses and plenty of troops (although we didn't think so at the time) to a scattered thinness. The old church lecture qualities thing of being on your own, no-one's been there before, no script etc. is biting in a new way. You hold all those, and others you could name yourself, in your bowels all together at one time and you will know what I mean by a transition that makes the turn to the world seem like a Sunday School picnic.

Now in the midst of this I sense a deep and profound spirit tiredness That's not new, but it has a new dimension. I can't quite get my finger on it but it is something like the old spirit tiredness was like a game: like running a 4 minute mile--you push yourself beyond endurance till the race is over. Now the illusion that the race will be over if I just keep going a bit longer is burst, shattered and like humpty dumpty, can never be put back together again. This is the way it is always going to be, and the question comes, and is not academic anymore: "How long can I last? How long can I stand it?"

feelings of the Order being over extended; deep, profound loneliness, unfulfillment, that I detect are
can't trust my colleagues any more, everybody's got a different idea, how much more can I take; and we spend all our corporate time building manouvers, and none on journeying and sustaining the spirit.

The related arenas to all these symptoms are four. One is the global symbols or symbols we stand before that have power. For example, that 3 part Yin Yang thing that was awakenment, engagement, and fulfillment in it is a very helpful intellectual design that helps me understand what we are about. But it does not, I repeat, DOES NOT rehearse the radical and profound decision I have made about my life and my death in the same way the old wedge blade did, and thank God, still does when I think to remember it. I was proud when we first put the old wedge blade up on the front of the Adelaide house 9 years ago (it wasn't even religious). The only problem was that Rory Gowers, our first intern, put it up backwards. Another example at the expense of showing my own neuroses: I got really angry having to wait so long for the Voyage to come out; while some God damn intellectuals were polishing it or perfecting it, and freezing it, and all the time our troops out on the front line were literally "dying" for it.

The second related arena is corporatness. We don't talk about it much these days. We used to. I remember Ed Shinn giving us so many short courses on it once that we almost corporately tarred and feathered him. We don't need to talk about it in the same way these days, although that was good training, but corporatness is still our strength, it is the most crucial thing we have as a body of people, and the most powerful. I believe the key to our corporatness, and if its shaky its here, is in the arena of being obedient to our assignments. I frankly tremble with fear for us when we take 6 months to get our assignments finalized after Global Order Council. That is the most serious erosion of that which is our most profound power. Can you imagine being in an army, or a guerilla force in the hills and being pinned down by fivemachine gun posts on the ridge. The only way to move is to send out units to do a flanking operation and lob hand grenades into the machine gun pits from behind. . . . and your troops say "Like hell. I'm not ready yet." or "That's not my thing, I'm getting out!" You'd never win a battle! and you'd die in the process.

The third related arena I would point to is the vision. Our vision is crucial. If you see colleagues waning you can bet that it is not that their tired, and overworked, or ill, but that they have lost their vision. When satan gets to me in this stage, even my stoacism doesn't work (and I'm a great stoic, my stoacism often saves me) but when I'm in that state only a self-conscious and deliberate rehearsal of my vision can save me from apostacy. That vision has to do with actual human suffering. Sometimes it verges on sheer liberalism, sometimes on very rational onl range and effective strategies that are out to build a new social vehicle for all men. Neither of these are very practical in the immediate situation in which I find myself, but both have the capacity to keep one striving for something beyond, something better. Don Quixote stands tall in my meditative council here. "And the world will be better for this, that one man scorned and covered with scars, still strove with his last ounce of courage, to reach that unreachable star." Without a vision, whatever it is, we have nothing that sustains us in our endeavour.

The last related arena is the void in training our fellow travellers. This is particularly related to the Western affluent world. We do all these great town meetings; people say its great and things are happening in local communities, but how many really get on the band wagon, or make a life decision to be the elite that occasions those life impacting events which occasion the catalysation of the grass-roots movement.

A couple more reflections to get me launched into the next part. Firstly, the long march and the Dark Night were very effective spirit tools for sustaining the spirit journey. I worry that at the moment we seem to have no spirit screen that pull our experience through and provide the enabling poetry that gives a way of articulating the spirit struggles. The Profound Humanness Chart is a fine rational design of the categories of Profound Humanness but without the spirit exercises that journey the spirit. Similarly the Way. We have a lot more work to do there yet, particularly on some categories of the "journey" of the Way, of which I have written to you before and enclose a copy.

Now I want to do just a little bit of brooding regarding the future. There is no question of turning the clock back, except to use the past in a way that enables us to move into the future, like the dynamics of the old infinity model. I want to look at the four arenas of Spirit, Corporateness or Discipline, Vision, and Training. It is in these arenas that I believe we are vulnerable and therefore where we need to take special care of ourselves. First by naming the Vulnerability, and then some tentative brooding on how we might deal with that.

In the arena of spirit, vulnerability is unsustained spirit decision. The cycle has come around again where our knowing has thrown us into doing that drops the bottom out of Being. When that happens we have to find a way to let go of our rationality. The arena of spirit has nothing at all to do with rationality. Later you may try and put some rational form over it so you know what it is that is happening. The essence of raw being is as non-rational as anything you can get. The difficulty here is that for the past 4 or 5 years we have been very rational in our knowing and doing. What we now need to invent and create are new spirit tools that journey the spirit. The spirit gets flabby without spirit exercises. I would point in the direction of the New Religious Mode, the old 144s as one possibility. They are not Christian, (with a small shift of poetry), and they are not even Religious, they are just Profoundly Human.

The other aspect here I would point to is "missional breathing space". I put this one forward very tentatively because of our understanding that for the revolutionary there is no time off etc., etc. Also that if we can deal with the spirit tiredness by coming at it another way we may be better off. It has to do with missional effectivity on the long haul, and would be controlled and structured 'time off' from experiencing the front line pressure. The church's wisdom on this was what they called 'furlough' which was not a holiday per say, but included speaking engagements or deputation work, or the retreat. God knows how we would organise assignments around it, but if we deemed it necessary I guess we would create a way to do it.

In the arena of corporateness or discipline I find it a bit more difficult to name the vulnerability but let me be bold enough to call it individualism. When you call it that of course, immediately you see it as a spirit problem, yet there are some structural factors related to it. Now one of the keys to it is "Decisional obedience to the power in the centre of the table". The question is how do you enable

own barrow and your own personal achievements, comes from pushing you to achieve a hell of a lot these days.

Structurally teams and units etc, are crucial here but beyond that there is another dimension. I like the old word of prior, or the priory dynamic--first among equals-if you like, which is the meaning of "Bishop" which is exactly what I mean. For example, so much of our corporate time is spent in manouever building; theatre manouvers, field manouvers, weekly manouvers etc, and these have been one of the great gifts to us and I don't mean we should do less manouever building, but who sits back and sniffs out where decisional obedience is being eroded, and what is eroding it? I expect you to say the Area Prior, of course, yet there is more. How is that Priory dynamic pushed right down through, so that Houses, teams, and even units have that dynamic within them? I for one don't want everybody running around and prioriting everyone else, we left that behind years ago, but I believe we need to selfconsciously, and intentionally re-introduce the Priory dynamic to guard the deep--call it what you like and do some training in it.

Now the vision. The vulnerability is having a vision so vague that it has no sense of howness in it; or you have visionless activity, and this is all a part of the struggle in getting out the next 20, and 4 year visions. The 2 million villages has captured our imagination, but it is a little bit like "All the earth belongs to all the people", which is a great ideological statement. Two million villages yes, but what the hell do you do in them, I mean how do you know when you've done one, and can move onto the next? What criteria or screens do we need? I find the image of 1% much more helpful. I think we ought to take the image as a revolutionary principle and shove it into everything we are doing.

The second thing here I believe is more difficult because it is much less tangable, and that is the myth factor. Finally the only task we are about is Imaginal Education, changing the images out of which local man lives, so that he sees a way for new creative possibility, instead of impotency and despair. Now we use many different strategies to do that; Demonstration (HDP), Awakening (TM), Impact Forums etc. The one thing that pulls them all together is the "story" of what local man is doing: The new mythology. I am thinking the focus needs to be at the regional level. Now we are moving in this direction in a number of places--but it needs to be pushed hard everywhere. Then, when it fires at the regional level, not only are you doing your region, but your vision takes on a whole new practical dimension. It is visible.

Lastly I list training here as a key arena not because we don't know how to train people, in fact we are pretty good in that. The arena I am pushing here is fellow travellers. The vulnerability is simply that we are running out of people. By that I mean the people who have made a selfconscious decision to be out there on the point of the wedge blade. Small houses (I mean small!) are not the most effective units. I believe here we ought to go back to an old image, and work out the practical implications of it, and then just drive it hard.

It is the image of: you impact 1,000 to awaken 100, to get 10 strong people from which the one Iron Man emerges, that goes back to work with the 10 (for a quarter and then interns). I think we are in a tremendous position of advantage now, as well as being on death

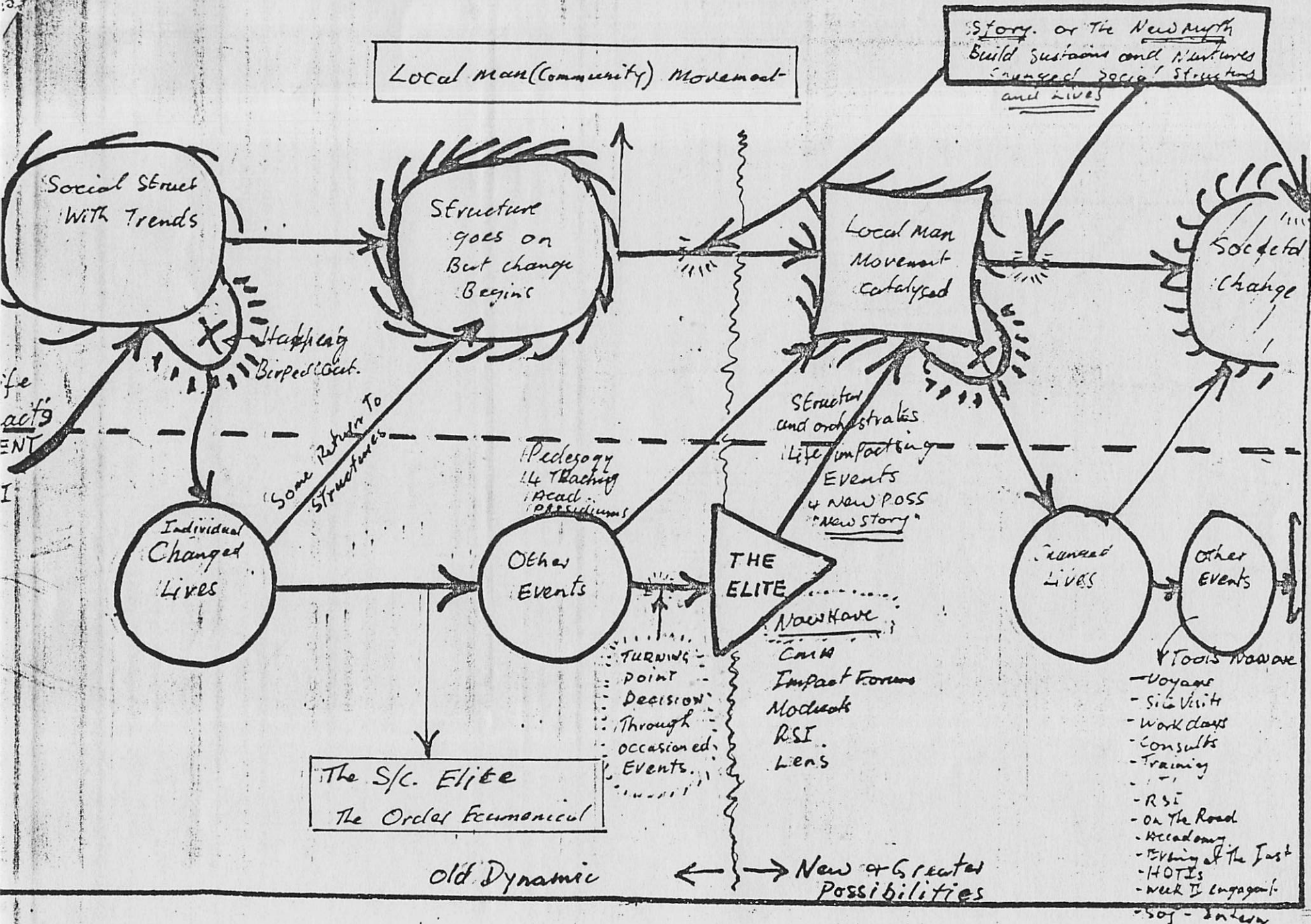
ground, but it won't just happen unless we figure out the How and What in every local situation, Enclosed is a bit of doodling on the Dynamics of Movement Building.

However, whether I am right or wrong, on target or not, I am prepared to leave it to our corporate brooding and wisdom, and humble submit it to you for your reflections. But I am adamant in my concern that we should think, talk a bit about some of these things.

Grace and Peace

Boris Oakley

NOTE: The John and Julie Mieson family completed covenant with the Order Ecumenical on 15th, February, 1980.



I guess there is a danger of everybody for witnesses and spins, etc. to try and find something new to say about the WAY. Yet because in many ways there is so much yet to bring to consciousness about the way, and the articulation of The Way that that is a risk we need to take this year. For everyone needs to try and get a hold of what it is we have gotten ahold of here? Finally, of course there is no definite statement about the Way, just statements that point to it, the same as there is no definitive statement or description about God, the Myster, but just statements that point to it.

Except that there is one thing that I would suggest is definitive, that is, that the Way is "not cheap." It is not the place for people to go around, stick their thumbs in their belts and say, "I'm on the Way." Probably the person that really is on the Way never talks about being on the way, but is a transparent guide.

Where my brooding began to take a turn was that it seemed to me that we were saying nothing new. That we were pulling on our life experiences and consciousnesses and fitting them into a new form, giving them new names. Now I don't mean that there is anything wrong with this, indeed it is necessary to articulate the journey we are on. But it is just at that point of the journey where I want to spin a little. For example, I have a bit of a problem with the bridge image, the bridge being a log over a creek, and either you are on it or you are off it. Except to say there is an element where, like being a man of faith, in a given situation either you respond as a man of faith or as a man of non-faith or somewhere in the struggle inbetween. It's like I can be a man of faith in this situation, but I can never be sure, even though I decide about my whole life, that I will be a man of faith in that situation, when the chips are down and the bullets are really real.

To me it is like riding a bike down a path,--the path toward the log bridge. I am on the way, I haven't got to the bridge yet, but I am aiming at it. I am on the way, yet I am not sure if I will make the log ridge on my bike or not.

It seems to me that there are four stages on the way. The first three are on the way and aiming for the log bridge, the fourth stage is where you are on or off the log, on or off the way.

The first stage is where the world impacts you and you see life is not fair for so many other people..the first consciousness of care. The response is, I would if I could, but it is impossible for me to care for the mountain villagers of Argentina, the Republic of Dominica's typhoon victims, let alone India.

This is where the church is "we are the people of God and we see we must do something, but I can't go to India. I have a job responsibility and family etc. so will put a little more in the collection plate to help our mission fund." People do care, but are void of any imaginal possibility or methods of how to get that care effectively engaged. They are on the Way, or at least the journey has begun. I guess this began for me on my decision to be a churchman.

The second stage of the journey of The Way is the life expenditure decision. Or you move from consciousness of care to decision about the object of that care. You don't know where, or how but you have made a decision to give your life. Push through the emotionalism and psychologism of a decision for Christ and you have that kind of decision. Too often there is no authentic or effective avenue for a person to give his life. In the great missionary century men and women went out to Africa to give their lives knowing that they would probably be dead of the fever in 6-12 months. The perversion here is the "martyr complex", that is, "so long as we are being persecuted, or in danger, then we must be right." I think this stage happened to me during the Academy of April 1971. Although it is like the decision to be in the Order. I thought at one time that if only I could make that decision once, and never have to face that struggle again. Now what I have discovered is that it is more like an every day decision, or in other words there is slippage on the way.

The third stage of the Way is what I call the Winner's Circle. It is where your care has seeded and taken root. What matters now is winning. It matters not only that I care and have decided to expend my life, but also that I don't throw my life away. My life needs to be effectivity par excellence. It is where the Way of the Saint and the Way of the Revolutionary, the General or strategist come together. If the first stage was consciousness of care and the second was the decision of life, the third would be Claiming the Victory. I got a new look at this one this last year where it came clear to me that there are two kinds of models - both look good, even pretty transrational and all that. But one is a winning model. I find I'm not interested anymore in a model unless it is a winning model. I think this is something like Kierkegaard's "defiant man", but who at the same time is a man of faith.

Then lastly there is the On the Way, that stage where you have transcended all things. We used to talk alot about being the dead man. No one can hurt a dead man. That's where you have most power. It is not a question of me winning, but the cause winning. In fact it might mean that I don't come off-- especially by the world's ^{or even colleagues} criteria. This is where you are either on or off the log. My title here would be The Victorious One. Examples would be Gautama, Christ, Gandhi, Shogun. They are the ones who are the complete masters of every situation, every event. It may not turn out as they expected but they have the final plan. "You do not have the power to take my life from me, or give it back to me."