

THE FUTURE

I am amazed by the pride that wells up within me as I hear you spin about the Town Meeting victories and the Social Demonstration; accomplishments. I sat back there overwhelmed, thinking to myself, "We are really somebody. We are altering the course of history and that is making us somebody." Strangely though, your meditative council begins to operate when you find yourself thinking you are somebody. Immediately, a little voice a whole chorus of voices out of our past said, "Remember, remember, we are NOBODIES."

Now when we go into the high places we are moving into these days in order to put wheels under Town Meeting and Social Demonstration, we must be somebodies in our methods and our prowess, but even while visiting the officers of the principalities and powers, we are nobodies. For me that takes a daily reminder, because the accomplishments of the past year have been so fantastic. Even our failures are victories in the Lord's economy.

I am going to talk about the past, about our fundamental presuppositions, about Town Meeting and Social Demonstration, and about the future. I want to read three different excerpts from our past. I feel as though I ought to start with this one:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth.....

"When the community was originally formed for the purpose of preparing proficient laymen on behalf of the church, we did not foresee just what this would entail, nor the avenues through which we would be led. Since that time, much has been learned, and perhaps more in the past year than in any other period."

I would suggest that that is a very contemporary statement. However, it was written as part of the report for the academic year 195758 of the Christian Faith and Life Community.

Secondly: "Basic to any revolution is that it must arrive at the grassroots level, where the local church is. It involves every individual within a geosocial area, the parish. Crucial to see is that behind every change is the religious change, that which allows and sets the context for any significant social revolution."

That came out of the Order Council of 1968.

Another. This one came out of the March Planning Council of 1972 when the priors were delineating the five overarching strategies for the next four years.

The Future

The five overarching strategies for the next four years:

- 1) Transforming Social Structures: We must create models that bring health, balance and order to sick society structures, live out of a style of possibilities in the midst of sociological collapse to be a new form of sociological health.
- 2) Mass Participation in Global Movement: It is not

enough to titillate and excite people by giving a few people RS1. The shift is to invite, recruit, demand that the masses not only hear the Gospel but to train them in building models that embody the Gospel.

3) Tactical Visioning: Research and support, spirit machinery, vision construction, backup systems. Vision is built when people are saturated with necessary tools and methods and when they see it is possible to actualize a dream.

4) Self Conscious Engagement in Historical Order: Corporateness is crucial in capturing the shift from depending solely on interior resources for sustenance to depending on sociological relationships.

5) Style Creation: The discontinuous strategy that must sweep through the movement is one which embodies not only sociological health, but the spirit health, and is therefore a sign that appropriate style is necessary and is the key to transforming the impossible situation into the possible.

Seventy-one such paragraphs were written during the council. I almost got bogged down reading all 71 in preparing this talk, but I want to suggest that they were the strategies of 71 generals who knew what it meant to state the strategies and build the tactics.

It was fun to go back through the past. I discovered a timeline that laid out the locations of 1,000 religious houses, taking us up through the year 1999. It was surprising to see the number of houses that we had planned to open and indeed, those that we have opened. In the year 1976, we had projected the opening of the Addis Abba House, but the Lord has strange ways of moving in on all of our four year plans. However, we do go to E1 Bayad and two months from now, we put the foot of the Movement down on the turf of NAME.

Although the Lord, in his infinite mercy, rearranges all of our four year timelines, there are fundamental, unchangeable precepts out of which we live. I thought the movie, "Give 'Em Hell, Harry" was just fantastic. There was sheer genius in the producer's decision to use the vehicle of that play as the movie. It was great not to see the people of independence, Missouri, walking down the street. The power of the movie was just in Old Harry. The fundamental precepts out of which Old Harry operated and which informed his actions were first, that local man is to be cared for; second, that every man has the right to participate in the decisions that affect his destiny (and he was going to be sure they had that right) and third, that the office of the President is to be honored. That was a tremendous sequence in the movie about honoring the office. Old Harry took his life in his hands when he went up to the Ku Klux Klan boys because he saw that the enemy had to be vanquished. The principle that the enemy is to be vanquished required bold risk. Truman was a general.

The Order and the Movement has its grounding in the fundamental precepts out of which we live and which determine all of our actions - RS-I. The first is "God is the enigmatic power beyond time, but in the temporal, beyond being, but moving in it." I experience the reports as an encounter with the mystery, an encounter with judgment. As I heard our colleagues report on what they have been doing on the front line, my first response was one of being infinitely judged for my own laziness, my own cowardice, and in the judgment is the mercy.

The second precept out of which we live is "Simply accept the fact that you are accepted." We would not

last one minute on the Long March save we lived out of that Word. How could you sing the song "Move it, move it, move it. History approves it," save it be out of the forgiveness of the Word in Jesus Christ? Shall we rehearse the blunders? Shall we rehearse the ten years in Fifth City? That Word is a fundamental precept.

Thirdly, "The action of the responsible man is performed in the obligation, the only obligation which gives freedom, the obligation to God and neighbor as they confront us in Jesus Christ." In 1970 we said, "We're going for broke. We're going for broke on the local church." That is precisely what we have been doing ever since. That decision was posited only in the authorization of the Mystery. Certainly the world was not rendering that authorization. That was a moral act of deep profundity.

Fourth, "As the representative and pioneer of mankind, the church meets its social responsibility when in its thinking, organization and action it functions as world society, undivided by race, class, and national interests. This would seem to be the highest form of social responsibility, the radical demonstration of faith." Is not Maliwada, is not Kawangware, is not the Duncan Town Meeting, the Plainview Town Meeting, the Canterbury Town Meeting, leading society in the act of moral repentance? That is what I heard Kamala bearing witness to when she told us about Maliwada. All the social demonstrations are the concretions, an act, that will lead the world in the act of social repentance. The transformed communities that are the residue of social demonstration and town meeting are rendering up the new shape of the Church. We are out to bring the new form of the people of God into the midst of history.

Now Town Meeting. I like to think of Town Meeting as the actuation of our first of three basic strategies, that of Contextual Reeducation. Town Meeting is mass evangelism. It is the greatest instrument that the movement has yet devised in terms of mass impact. The image of Town Meeting as a camp meeting holds this for me. In all three of the Town Meetings I was privileged to attend, I was reminded of the camp meetings I went to as a child. There is a time of repentance and absolution that is the glory of the Town Meeting Day. The participants have the priceless gift of having their illusions about themselves and their communities smashed as they work on the issues.

One of my favorite Old Testament verses, from the Psalms, is "Lord, take not thy judgment from me." The judgment, the breaking of illusions, comes in as people dare to write those issues. When they push underneath to get hold of the contradiction, they are getting hold of Satan. They are giving Satan a name. They are naming and objectifying a sociological happening that is keeping them from being fully human. In daring to build a plan or proposal, they are spelling out what the Kingdom of God needs to look like. Is it any wonder that at the end of the day the participants have a hard time talking about the happening? Excitement is there, but it is hard for them to say what has happened. For one day of their lives, they just believe.

Social Demonstration is the concretion of the second of our strategies, Structural Reformulation. It is a radical demonstration of faith. The image of Social Demonstration as a prayer meeting holds this for me. Social Demonstration is far more than those actuating programs and the tactical systems. It is the intrusion of the alien image into the social structures and society finally has to come to terms with that intrusion. That is prayer. A social demonstration is the inventing of the new civilization and that is prayer.

Let's not get sentimental about this. Social Demonstration is hard work. In Kawangware and Maliwada, which I visited, it means getting up at 4:00 in the morning and falling into bed exhausted from a radical kind of expenditure at 10 p.m. That is what inventing the new civilization takes. That is prayer. It is a sociological entreaty. Social Demonstration is a sociological entreaty to the Mystery. It is an entreaty to the comprehensive and to the future, and that is prayer. It is primal sociality which renders up

corporateness, the spirit deeps of corporateness and that is prayer. When you undertake the creation of a society that alters and re-balances the 15 to 85% ratio, that is prayer. The communal structures of the guild and the ward meetings are prayer. The people in social demonstrations are caring for themselves in order to care for the rest of the world. That is what a prayer meeting is all about. Social demonstration is about prayer. It rises out of the very being of life itself. Social demonstration is profound engagement and that is prayer.

Town Meeting and Social Demonstration are being the Church. When you intensify profound consciousness and profound engagement, then you have the superabundance of fulfillment or spirit re-motivation. As we move into next year and sweat out our life blood, that is precisely what we are about. Authentic selfhood, individual and corporate, happens in a Town Meeting. A new kind of morality is being forged in the community through social demonstration. The intensification of authentic selfhood and radical engagement births happiness fulfillment is given, and that is what every man yearns for. Every man yearns for the experience of being an authentic self that is in bondage to no man and to radically pour himself out in expenditure. That is what he wants and that is what social demonstration is about.

What is the future? I am sure we will create some four-year timelines. I received the timeline on replication while on my trip and I had to retreat for about three hours when I saw what we were projecting for ourselves, but during Council, we will put some objective plans and strategies on how that is going to happen. What we know is that the Lord will probably move in and blast our next four-year plan wide open just as he has exploded every four-year plan we have ever made. That is what needs to happen. Who are we to say, once and for all, what the face of God looks like? He is always moving in and giving us a few hints along the way. You know that is usually pretty painful in the deeps and accounts for the pain, the suffering and the weariness that has been ours this year.

The future is doing Town Meeting and Social Demonstration, We are the servants that are in, but not of, the world. There are enemies out there. We have won the princes of the church, there is no question. We have captured the princes of the business and political communities. But one enemy is the second and third echelon bureaucrats those who hate life, those who operate out of a failure mentality, those for whom change is such a threat that they can only strike out in sheer defiance.

We have already met this enemy in the past year and we will meet him more intensely next year. That requires us to be nobodies. If you are trying to be somebody, that is real defeat. Out of the posture of being nobodies and being clear on what we are about, we can bring forth the new shape of the church, take on the enemy, beat them, and change their ways. I deeply believe this.

Kazantzakis has spoken to me afresh although he is beginning to sound old mood sometimes. There are still some passages that just grab me. He reminds me that we are in a war. That whole imagery was so offensive to me when we began. Now I am convinced that we are in a war the war of the 85% 15%. It is a war against the unbelievers, against the satisfied, the satiated, the sterile. We are living in perilous times, chaotic times, violent times. The structures of society are crashing down. However, within that very situation is the possibility. We are building the new civilization not apart from the world we live in, but right in the midst of it. Town Meeting and Social Demonstration are the seedlings of that new world They are the flower at the bottom of Picasso's "Guernica" picture. They are the hope of the future.

We are, most importantly, the religious. We have learned a lot this year about being religious in a practical, hard-nosed sense. For me, the religious cannot be sustained outside his symbolic life, that is outside the Daily Office. You should hear some of the conversations about lack of attendance at Daily Office. Someone says, "We shouldn't ring the bell too loud. The people are free. They should have alarm

clocks to get them up." That is liberal heresy. In one RS1 course, we brought a man up to worship in his cot. If we can do it in RS1, we ought to be doing it here.

The Daily Office is a matter of life and death. I get up every morning in a state of paralysis because of the burden of care. I do not build any great battle plans in the middle of the night. But I get myself to Daily Office and something happens. I am even willing now to call it magic. The Daily Office is a rehearsal of profound consciousness. In the world today with all of its snares and temptations, we forget the profound consciousness out of which we live in a hurry. Maybe we ought to do c on the hour. I don't know. But it is just crucial.

The other aspect of our symbolic life are the 6 p.m. prayers. They are the rehearsal of profound engagement. If our task does not drive us to 6 p.m. prayers, then there is something amiss. That is not something we ought to do. It is something we have to do in order to rehearse profound engagement with the world.

Every man, every culture has found a way to symbolically act out and remind itself of what it means to live before the Mystery, what it means to be a man of radical integrity, what it means to be filled full out of radical expenditure of his life. The greatest happening for me on my recent trip happened in Maliwada. The Indian people are very gracious and have great rituals. The cup of tea is a ritual. I had four or five different cups of tea in four or five different little huts. The awe and wonder of that experience broke in so much that I felt, "Lord, if I have to have one more cup of tea I cannot stand your presence." It was because of the ritual.

Before you sit down, they put a red dot on your head. Then, they reach into a little jar of orange paste and put an orange dot on your head. Then they light their little brass urn of incense and move it around in front of you. That little red dot means submission or obedience to the Mystery. The orange dot means love or care. The incense means unity or on behalf of all. I think on that trip, for the first time, I knew what it meant to transcend my own poetry.

What we're about in the next four years is that great symbol of the summer. We are about forging the IntraGlobal Movement, we're about doing Social Demonstration, and we're about bombarding the whole world with Global Community Forum.