

April 3-5 1981

BUILDING THE EARTH

The task of those who care is going through yet another mutation. One wonders: How many of these things can one person live through? Will one lose our nerve in the next one as some apparently already have? Or will one be by-passed simply due to some quirk in our being? Or will our goffy, ageing brains, simply not comprehend the change?

We have said this week-end that we are about one revolutionary task: the structural re-direction of the social fabric is the task we do not perform as some group outside society demanding its change, but as individuals and colleagues firmly immersed in that fabric.

The 1980's have already become a symbolic decade, not only for us but in the world around us. It is as though we have already claimed the 1980's as a decade in which the Great Transition connects with Bedrock like a bridge standing in an enormous gorge. The gorge, of course, is the distance we have traversed in the 20th century, the distance between the mechanistic universe of the late middle ages to the relational universe of post-modern consciousness.

As a people we enter the 1980's somewhat bruise and scarred. Our energies are somewhat depleted, but we stand upon victory, not defeat. To us the victory may seem somewhat Quixotic at times but we stand victorious. In local communities around the globe individual lives have been transformed into wholeness. Community structures have been revitalized and continue on their own to grow and mature. The Don Quixote in us proves to be of our own making, our own lack of faith. We stand on these victories. Mill Shoals, IL was a community losing its school and faced its demise. Not only did its sense of community survive. Today its external face has been reconstructed.

The victories are only in the local. The victory is in the people. In towns, in neighborhoods, in villages, in corporations around the world demonstration has happened and is happening. From Sungai Lui to Bata Shoe, Starks, Maine to Hughes Tool, a new style, a human method is acting out the victory on behalf of humanness everywhere. It is in these grassroots we stand to put in place the last span of bridge onto the firm foundations of the future. It is grassroots up revolution, not the upbeat is into the social fabric around and through these victories.

The four sector strategy is to call upon the private, public, voluntary and local aspects of society to relate in a new, creative polar tension as they put new life into their organization and mode of operating. It is the re-direction of their efforts, not toward immediate felt needs but toward the actual depth human need discerned in contradiction analysis. To speak confessionally it is not what we think we need. It is what God requires.

This grassroots up into the structures move is requiring of ourselves changes the extend of which we are only beginning to surmise. We are building a "New Town" in our own very midst. We are walking with people we never imagined we would walk with. We are not outside the structures working in; we are inside joining hands with new colleagues.

From the grassroots up, the path ahead is conceptually simple. It is massive only in the sense of covering all the geography. The basic demonstration projects are in place. New ones are needed only we discover some new homogeneous unit who as yet cannot identify with the self-determination already displayed. Urban Latino, as well as Urban black, for example, require a sign of hope. This is the strategy of Manifestation.

Where a demonstration sign is in place a mechanism is needed to communicate self-reliance, self-confidence and self-sustenance. The dependency mind-set the world over is the depth human problem. Where this problem is broken, profound humanness spreads like wild fire. We spread it through multiple town meeting campaigns and all other media at our disposal. This is the strategy of Declaration.

Where a sign is raised and people are standing on their own, input from outside is not only welcomed but essential to structural rebuilding. The third component of the new direction is an inclusive repository system. Technical, educational, and environmental input undergird and merges with the human development that has begun. This is an organizational component and therefore a part of the strategy of Formation.

The fourth and final component is the residue of a catalytic core. These are the people who carry on ahead. They are equipped with prowess in methods. They are both we and not we. It is their task to build the new strategems needed to fill the vacuums on into the future. They require symbols and study. They require internal and external discipline, witnessing and justing love. This completes the strategy of Formation.

The task ahead is structural redirection of the social fabric we are. It is our responsibility as earthlings to God for the world. Re-think our Continental strategies, yes. Change our destinal posture, No! We are structural revolutionaries only beginning to understand what that means.

To do this task it is required that we both ordinary people and an alien people. We are a people who are never at home in this world. Always restless, constantly changing, we belong to another realm. We are not protestors. We are not rebels. But neither are we synonymous with the social fabric we are in. We are always standing back and boking as we have this week-end. We care for this world. Therefore we continually stand apart. We call into question injustices. We spot the inequities. This requires a posture of being wayfaring strangers. We are cosmic volunteers as it were. Some cannot endure this dual identity, but we have no choice. We are marked for life, marked by history itself as it were.

Sun Tzu, the Chinese philosopher of the Way, utilized the metaphor of war and militarism. He lived in an era of war, not unlike our own. The only difference is the realism of our dream of the end of such an era. In his metaphor he identified five types of spies or agents that any kingdom requires to sustain itself. There were local agents, inside agents, double agents, expendable agents and living agents. The kingdom takes all five. The locals are natives of the soil who know they are one with the situation being cared for. Those inside are the professionals of the land who have the prowess to carry out their task but as strangers. The double agent lives this in but not of existence self-consciously. The expendable ones hold nothing back--not their comforts, nor their families, nor their vocations, nor their very lives. And the living ones bring back the information; they deliver the goods. It is through who you are that the war against inhumanity is won.

The war we fight is not a war between nations or against structures that we are not a part of. It is not against people or organization. It is a war against principalities and powers. It is the mindset in ourselves as well as in others we seek to change. There is no human situation that cannot be changed. The structural hedonism and economic self-seeking of our age must be slain. The reduction of life to narrow causes, however good they are, must be brought to an end so that life as a whole may be renewed. Benevolent activism that generously bestows a little here and a little there cannot win the day; generosity when it comes to a crunch finally runs out.

We are both ordinary people and alien people to ourselves and others. Externally we appear like everyone else, but internally we are totally other to the world about us. We jolt ourselves every morning lest we forget the urgency, lest we forget the enemy beyond the gates, lest we forget the league of history of which we are a part. The creative offense of being a self among selves is profound humanness in any age or worldview. Now the earth itself must be shocked into the unity. The unity that the earth is, is underneath all of our wars and rumors of wars.

We humans have come of age, but the task at hand necessitates the building of the earth in its spirit life as well as in its social structures. Without the spirit life all the victorious creations are like grass in shallow soil. The human fulcrum in the next decade lies not in the balancing of the social processes alone, but in the formation of practical, daily events of a new religious mode. Human fulfillment has been born in our time, but it is still in its infancy. The traumatic revolutions of the 1960's characterize the new foundations on which we build. Like all births it was rending and painful. The terrorized 1970's likewise were a painful struggle. They were costly in those who died on the march, but they were victorious. The infant has learned to walk, but this earth person has a life-time ahead.

When God whispers, I pay attention. I am talking to you secular ones now. The voice of God has thundered loudly in our ears in the 20th century. And the voice spoke in our own work. I believe in God. I do not rely upon my

own status for it has often crumbled, not our own credibility for it has been seriously questioned, nor some emotional buzz inside, nor any intellectual satisfaction. These are gods of our making and undependable.

The voice of God spoke through a town meeting campaign that took off, through worldwide HDPs that were utterly on target. And now LENS is exploding. These are the clues to the new direction if it is new at all. Where the mushrooming of transformed lives takes place, there is where I point with the term, Divine Activity. So what if we got a little burned, a number of wounds, even lost our colleagues. The victory is not our victory, it is God's victory, the victory of history. In a way it was not even our own doing; it was God's doing. To be sure it was not done in some pious, hallowed hall, but it was done. And rest assured something miraculous is happening in the hallowed halls as well.

The task ahead requires of us interior steel. It requires confidence--not a subjective feeling of confidence, but an action that is confidence. It requires the act of total reliance upon our corporate consensus as that consensus relies upon the activity of God. Nothing can hurt spirit people, but some of us have allowed ourselves to be hurt. The broadsides against our integrity have not dented it. Our integrity remains our only defense. Individually and together we are taking our vows. The vow is not a vow to anything or anybody but a vow to God that the earth be build.

The task ahead requires our presence. It requires socio-spirit guidehood. We know great things. We do great things. And these are not completed. We will continue to know and do and that is our being. Creating our programs out of the actual need is not opportunism. It is the will to overcome.

All of this simply means that we continue to be about the task of creating a profound ecumenism. Whether it take the form of a multi-sector coalition or zones of sectoral care, it is one historical task. In the diverse world we have on our hands all participate in its creation willingly or not. The poetry of all cultures is becoming transparent. But the unity honors the particular diversity rather than merging or destroying it.

If I were given the chance, I would select a town in my region, determine what God requires of it. Hold a town meeting. Call for a 4-sector Symposium. Initiate selected issues forums. And take the views to the surrounding towns. In the process a core of committed colleagues would emerge and they would join hands in the Long March of Love. They would know and continually rehearse the Dark Night of the Soul their journey involves.

With the innovative skills of the private sector, the empowered professionalism of the voluntary sector, the enduring and pervasive care of the public sector and the grounding of human care in the local sector, the building of the earth has begun.