

THE WEIGHT OF VICTORY

I want to begin tonight by reading a bit of poetry from the invitation to this Global Research Assembly. It is amazing and it means so much more to us now than it did just a few years ago.

*There is now incontrovertible
evidence that mankind
has just entered upon the greatest
period of change the world has
ever known.*

*The ills
from which we are suffering
have had their seat
in the very foundations of
human thought.*

*But today something
is happening
to the whole structure of
human consciousness.
A fresh kind of life
is starting.*

Teilhard de Chardin

That's what David Wood was saying and that's what the Global Research Assembly litany is about. I have lived in Brussels for the past year, and we are a crossroads for about half of the world, for example India, Africa, Europe and North America. Colleagues traveling across the world stop often at our place, and when they come, it is always a great occasion. We have the opportunity to hear reports of happenings around the world. Everything seemed to gain momentum in January, as we moved into Quarter III of this year. A group came through from Chicago on their way to Africa and India, and began to tell us what was happening in North America. They talked about the counties of the U.S., and about Canada—about Town Meeting and Community Forum Canada and how the whole place was turning gold, and we were just amazed and wide-eyed. We knew we had said it was going to happen, and we were convinced that it would happen. But when they said it, something new began to stir in us. Turning the United States of America gold with a Town Meeting in every county is not simply a product of last summer's Global Research Assembly; it is a product that has gotten into the fiber of the whole of North America.

Later on, John Patterson came from India to spend a couple of weeks working on grants in Europe. John began to talk about the newest, latest happenings across Maharashtra—about Maliwada, and the 25 district projects, and a fine new replication design. He talked about the most recent Human Development Training School. It was the largest one yet. Young people poured in from all over Maharashtra until finally they just had to say, "you'll have to go back home this time because we can't accomodate you." Then, toward the beginning of Quarter IV, Joseph Kameme came to participate in the Tairgwaith Consult in Wales. He brought news from Kenya, and he talked not only of Kawangware but of Kamweleni, the new project, Kawangware's "little brother." He also talked about *Village Meeting* in Kenya, told us that Kenya was going gold and going gold on the backs of the local auxiliary members who had come up out of the Kawangware Project. A whole new swirl of images of possibility and excitement swept over us!

Then other groups came through. The *Community Youth Forum* trek came; the CYF sold like hotcakes in Europe. We could have done many more. They reported on the excitement of wandering youth who appeared at these forums, then lingered on to talk about how their lives might be something more than a packsack on their backs and aimless movement from one place to another—how their lives could count for the future of history. Before the Youth Forum team left, the Women's Forum trek arrived from Africa, reporting on Forums in Egypt, Kenya and Zambia, both in villages and among the privileged 15%.

I had the great, great fun and awesome experience of going to Nigeria to lead a Global Women's Forum. We went way over into eastern Nigeria, ten hours from Lagos by car to the City of Onitsha. They had sent 220 invitations to women in the surrounding area, and women began arriving about eight o'clock in the morning. Finally, from 93 different towns and villages, 222 women came. They were the most elegantly dressed group you could imagine! Every one of them had a unique headdress, which together presented a dazzling montage. But, beyond the wonder of their appearance, the physical and intellectual discipline those women displayed was absolutely staggering. It was exciting beyond all of my fondest hopes. I could tell you about our colleagues' visit to Kapini in Zambia and the fact that four members of that Kapini auxiliary came from Shantumbu. Shantumbu had a Consult but factors beyond their control and ours made that project impossible on the terms we had in mind. Despite all this, the Shantumbu people were so excited that four of them are members of the Kapini auxiliary.

Add to these happenings such events as the newest Human Development Projects. People are returning from the Consults launching the USA 12 and if you run into them, you'll find it is hard to get away. They just cannot quit talking—the excitement is that high. All of this points to the new era we are in. I talked with John Epps by phone around March Council time and he said then, "We are in a whole new orbit." I responded, "and so are we." This is true for both Town Meeting and Social Demonstration. You look at that gold map of North America and then you look again. It's all shrunk into tiny little dots, tiny dots that leave a vast expanse of untouched territory. Then there are all the communities that have participated in Human Development Projects. They are not simply communities come to life, but communities come to life with a brand new vision far beyond anything they had ever dreamed before and which once again, needs to be filled full. It's not simply the community forums of the past year, or the human development projects but the kind of catalytic power which those have had, each on their own. Belgium turned gold because North America was turning gold. And the moment Belgium turned gold, all of Europe saw that it had to happen in every country—and so it has. You can also point to the catalytic quality of HDPs. I have already mentioned Kawangaware and Shantumbu. When I told the women in Onitsha that Ijeda could happen because of Fifth City, they understood that. It clicked for them. When you envision a whole band of communities around the world which begin to catalyze new hope, it's *beyond* awesome. We are faced, not simply with the happenings and the catalytic events of this year. We are in the era when those two things have come together. Town Meeting and Social Demonstration, will increasingly work in catalytic interaction to sweep into being something which is far beyond our liveliest visioning.

We are also in a new era in terms of the framework that is around that, or underneath it, or beside it. The fact is we are far more public than we have ever been before. David Wood talked about going to New York to accept \$600,000 from International Telephone & Telegraph. At the April Guardians Meeting in Brussels there was a man who was quite new to us. Ken Whitney had been doing some work for this man and Ken and this fellow and his wife started talking about our work. Pretty soon, the couple was so excited that they said, "Wouldn't it be a great thing to go to a Consult!" Now, this man works for ITT: Europe. He's one of their really inventive think-men. He came to the Guardians meeting, knowing nothing about us except Ken Whitney in his paint clothes. Add to that the fact that the Brussels Nexus, where we held the meeting, is several rungs down the ladder in appearance from Chicago Nexus, not to mention the ITT Building, which is the most imposing one in Brussels. So, all weekend long, he kept trying to match what he saw with what he was hearing—not only what we were saying, but what others said. August Vanistendael, who has become a deep colleague of ours, had just returned from India, where he visited Maliwada. He had gone to India to work on behalf of one of the largest funding agencies in Europe, and is himself a most experienced and highly regarded man in his field. He was telling glowing stories of Maliwada, and the training school. By the end of the meeting, the ITT man was in a daze trying to fit all the pieces together. On Tuesday afternoon, the doorbell rang, and there he stood at our door; he had practically turned transparent. On his desk that very morning was a copy of the ITT Annual Report. He thumbed through it only to run across a two-page spread on ITT's social responsibility, featuring their gift to the ICA. I tell you, we are public!

You put all of that together with the other things we have talked about tonight, and it is something brand new. This era is going to demand a whole new set of strategies for the coming year and years. It's not simply a matter of doing what we are doing quicker and better. We can't simply produce Town Meeting workbooks that get tinier and tinier, until we walk in with a piece of microfilm and walk out with a document. Or, you can imagine us whitewashing more rocks and more rocks and more rocks to line all of the pathways of all the villages of the world. That would be great, but that is not an answer. How do you take these catalytic times and make them explosions of new awakening and new engagement across the planet?

The title of this talk is *The Weight of Victory*, and as I tried to get inside of that, I asked myself “Now, what is the weight of victory? What does it mean for us? What does it do to us?” Until now, I’ve been talking about the new era of victory. Another aspect of the picture is the new obligations of victory. These obligations are no longer abstract, but are really grounded in the blood and bones and hopes and dreams of individual human beings and individual communities across the globe. We are obligated to all the people who have been awakened in every Town Meeting, Women’s Forum, Youth Forum and LENS that has happened this year. We are obligated to the budding communities and the renewed communities that have been spawned in Human Development Projects around the world. Beyond these, we are obligated to all those people who have not been touched by a new sense of the consciousness of the times, the wonder of the times and the possibility of the times.

We are also obligated simply to the times, this period of awakening and resurgence — and to all of those who have bet on victory. I don’t mean our victory, although that is part of it. We are obligated to all of the agencies of government, all of the funding groups, the corporation executives and to all of those people who have bet on victory because they sense the wonder of the times. This includes the mayors and the pastors who have seen the possibility of a Town Meeting, and have said yes as well as the bartenders who have heard the story and suggested people to see about Town Meeting. I am talking about the Sadat’s of this world, who are placing their bets on victory, rather than doom. Our obligation is to them, and it scares the life out of you. A colleague from Bayad told us that the Egyptian government is not simply interested in Bayad. They are at the point of demanding that the methods which created Bayad be made available across Egypt, and it scares the life out of you and yet, in the same moment, your being is shattered with delight.

But the weight of victory has to do, not simply with our obligations. It has to do with motivation. Suppose, for example, you are in a park sitting on the lower end of a seesaw and suddenly the weight of victory drops on the other end. You are catapulted into a whole new era. The weight of victory is not simply burden, more than you can bear. It is also in and of itself, motivity. It is the catapult into the future. Our people came in several weeks ago from Town Meeting circuits in Italy and France drunk with the wine of victory. They were ecstatic! They raced in and colored the map gold, put up signs and told stories, and it was simply out of the delight of seeing human beings awakened over and over again. It was not just that they went into little towns in Italy at eleven in the morning and in the evening, had 30 out of 80 people in the village at the meeting, wrote a document and ended up dancing in the street. It was that people came alive. Human beings! *New hope—and the wonder of it.* That is motivating. That is a catapult into the future.

The weight of victory also catapults because it reveals new contradictions and requires new inventions and produces sheer creativity. A team came through several months ago on their way to India. It’s hard to prepare for a trip like that. You don’t sleep for 24 hours before because you are trying to get all the right things in your briefcase. Then you board a plane, dead tired, your time is all mixed up and you end up in Brussels. The team came in and greeted us and we assumed that they wanted to rest a bit (they were leaving for India the next day), but they said, “Let’s just get to work.” So we sat down around the table, and out of that tiredness, created a whole new model of accountability for grants. It took five or six hours of hard-headed work and sheer human imagination and creativity to bring into being something which had never been before. Working with that kind of creativity, day in and day out is motivating. That is a catapult into the future. Besides that, think of the thrust of all those new power centers called *new communities*. And consider the veritable army of awakened people—what happens when the weight of their human care lands on the other end of your seesaw!

This is where we are in terms of the weight of victory for this Research Assembly. There has never been another Assembly like this one. We have never been here before, and we are going to work a little differently this summer. We are going to spend a lot of time working as a whole Assembly. We are going to spend a lot of time just squeezing the learnings of this year out of ourselves so that the individual task forces can soak them up and use them for their work. We will be working out new plans, new strategies, and new manuals where necessary. We are going to do a lot of visioning in small collegium spurts. In our task forces in the mornings we will be pushing our minds toward the future and asking ourselves what is required, not simply in terms of our task force, but in terms of the many tasks which are ours. We will also be celebrating it all, you’ll be glad to know.

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