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Uptown 5
Social Demonstration Report

*Gene
Boivin*

I am out in front of the hounds and I am here to report on the state of being of the rabbit. I do not know how Summer '73 came to you, but when I walked into Summer '73, I'd been prepared to spend my life teaching RS-I, working through the local congregation and hoping that someday, somehow, in some miraculous way, that we would again turn to the local community. At times it seemed virtually impossible that this would ever happen. Then in the middle of Summer '73, Holcombe pushed the button that just changed my life. I will never again relate to geography in quite the same way, and I have never quite recovered from that.

Do you remember from Summer '73, what the first operating image of Uptown 5 was? You had the movement pressing on the church, hoping that at some point down the road, it would engage the local community. Holcombe said, "The time is now. We have all the necessary tools. We can begin the 'end run' immediately." He articulated the end run in which the LENS course allows the formation of the proto-guild. The proto-guild presses back upon the local church, and out of this, the guild finally emerges.

In the midst of that summer, the articulation of the temple dynamic changed my life more than anything else. That was finally, for me, the most radical aspect of what we did. After we did the mini-park, nothing else made any difference to me. That little old postage stamp park setting on the corner just changed my life. It became clear that when I teach RS-I, almost simultaneously, I have to go out and plant a tree. Finally, everyman must articulate where he will raise up the sign of new possibility for life. That statement forever alters any relationship one has to life, and creates whole new possibilities.

Finally, a new operating image broke us loose to begin community reformulation through RS-I, the Galaxy, LENS and the Guild. That image held our work for a full 3 quarters. There was symbolic activity, the business services survey, mini parks, cabarets, and a car park cafe. In the second quarter, our goal was to intensify all that, pushing hard on the guild pole. The galaxy came into being, too, at this point.

The first LENS that summer was basically a global one, with a few participants from Uptown 5. The second one, with 70 people recruited from the parish, really broke loose the guild. We had a follow-up meeting with 40 people, and they were ready to move. We organized ourselves into task forces. They articulate a battleplan that should have taken a year, but we did it in six weeks. Then they were almost paralyzed, because they had accomplished nearly everything they had set out to do. They went Christmas carolling, snow shovelling and recruited another LENS.

We realized then that the focus was too broad, so the next LENS focused in on the proto-parish itself, and we were off and running at the point of a clear demonstration sign. It became clear that Uptown itself was too big. A more delimited geographic area was needed to create a powerful sign.

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The dynamics of the core, the auxiliary and the Order operate within the parish, which is on behalf of the whole globe; a sign for the whole world. This is pretty close to our operating image of what we are about. It is becoming clearer that you are always outside the context of the local once you move to community reformulation. There is no way to be only local. We are some "other" and we will never be anything else but that. The moment you go through LENS, you are an "other," independent of any relationship you want to take to the community.

Fundamentally, we have been about standing outside the context of the local, beaming in tactics - tactics that explode that situation, that explode the operating images of the community, explode possibility for the sake of being the breakloose revolutionaries who go about the task of building a revolution.

Many activities have marked this quarter, but our edge has been at the point of indicative battleplanning, at the point of catalyzing penetration, of launching community PSU's and task forces and radicalizing the ward six system.

We found ourselves walking into this quarter with Uptown 5's job fundamentally done. The global guild network was in history. We had to ask the question, why continue? Why even mess around? Why not just go around and help everyone else get going? Why do Uptown 5? The first step, we thought, was to state our three good reasons. But we did not have these reasons to continue. Two weeks went by, and finally we began to articulate the role of Uptown 5 relative to the Movement, relative to the world and relative to the church.

Relative to the Movement, it was clear that the world needed a sign of the radicalized guild, and the guild had to radically Be in being to shape the future of the Movement, for the sake of the church and the world. In addition, immediate signs of the new urban community were demanded by the current historical situations of collapse of old forms all around us. The world needed signs of forms through which you and I are now living. They needed signs of what these forms would look like in the local community.

Relative to the church, Uptown 5 seemed destined to be a breakloose for the new ecumenism. There are Christian denominations, Buddhists, Muslims and Jews in Uptown 5. The whole world sits at the doorstep. Uptown, like no other place I know, could play the role of breaking forth a new ecumenism which would shape our mode of operation for the future.

Once we said this to ourselves, we were off and running. Boy, did we run. In the guild's first battleplanning, stating the contradictions was a major achievement. On our first battleplanning night, we stated the contradictions and then were paralyzed. It took 3 weeks to get 4 people back to build the rest of the battleplan. Stating the contradictions brings out the pain of being broken.

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I learned in the midst of battleplanning that knowing the contradictions is of no help whatsoever. You have to do your battleplan down to the level of implementary tactics. You are always beaming tactics at those contradictions. You don't release their power and rehearse the contradictions. That would be suicide. I went to meetings where people would run out of the room yelling, "Well, you cannot do anything here." That was one painful lesson.

This quarter, we did our indicative battleplanning in one weekend. We took the Uptown post plus twenty people to Maryknoll Conference Center, and locked ourselves up for two days. Lives changed! We had people whose only context had been one work day last summer in which we did mini-parks all over the place. They were enthralled, excited, as they began to see ways of moving practically, ways of creating miracles and turning this community around. We became clear that indicative battleplanning is a form of evangelism - it alters human consciousness.

This quarter, we wanted to catalyze penetration. The guild took over the recruiting. It was wild. We had an LCC Week 2, the LENS course Week 4, and an RS-I Week 5, and the guild recruited them all. The LCC came off, although at 11 a.m. there were only ten people in the room. By the end of the day, ninety people had come through that room, participating in the LCC. Thirty-five people attended the LENS course and it was a phenomenal happening. We had people from a half-way house as well as middle-class bourgeois people.

You know, the guild is not supposed to recruit for RS-I. They are supposed to hold the secular. But a pattern of recruiting had been set by the time the RS-I arrived, and the guild just kept going. Half the course consisted of people from the guild, who had insisted on going. I did not know what to do except say yes. RS-I was a happening in which we found ourselves with people who were running into the future - and we had all we could do to keep up.

We pulled together the Community PSU's published a brochure and circulated it in the community. We had PSU's every other weekend, alternating with task force weekends, and everyone was welcome. I was scared to death, thinking that you had PSU's only for the guild. We set up procedures that anyone could follow. Thirty-five to forty people showed up for PSU's and walked away having had a great time, of high fellowship.

We pulled our tactics through the 5th City model to organize community task forces. The guild was assigned to different arenas: the political task force, the community style task force, the community symbol task force, the community education task force, and the community economic task force. These are on-going, permanent task forces.

Our major insight into task forces is that they are not concerned with planning. They make, fundamentally, no decisions. They just go out to get a job done. These task forces made montages of Uptown 5 which we put in all the store windows. They worked all over the community. The economic task force swept the streets in the business area. The symbol task force planned a Christmas program and publicized it. We had five task forces out on the street every other weekend.

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The edge of our work is in the whole ward-stake system. In it, we are out to recover "next door" care, or to establish a network of people who decide to care for their neighbors. A major breakthrough occurred in gaining clarity on the function of the ward. We became clear, even in 5th City, that the ward-stake structure is not a convenient way of recruiting courses. It is not a way of getting people to meetings.

The ward-stake system is a care net which deals with the depth problem. It always deals with the spirit problem. It says, "Praise the Lord, Christ is Risen," in a thousand ways. It demonstrates that "The world out there is great. You can live in it." It says, "The future is wide open and you can create it."

In initiating our ward-stake system, we initiated a format very much like Ecclesiola. We also began Wednesday night visitation. We build a construct for visiting that I am most excited about. Would you believe that the one-night visit construct is contextual re-education, structural reformulation and spirit remotivation?

Your contextual push might be something like a conversation about the economic crunch. In the midst of that you push resurgence: "Hey, you know what is happening in the economic, don't you? I believe rebalancing of the whole economic system is taking place right before our eyes. It means we can rebuild the entire economic base of this community." Others react to this statement and say yes or no to it. This is contextual re-education.

Second, structural reformulation is getting people to talk about their concerns. You offer them possibility as you hand them all the PSU brochures, the task force brochures and the indicative battleplanning models. You lay out the community activities and then recruit. "This is what we are doing." You offer people a way of taking their concerns and concretely dealing with them.

Finally, spirit remotivation occurs when you help people create a new story. My favorite story for Uptown these days goes something like this: "There was a time when you and I could count on living in one cultural reality, in one ethnic framework, and never moving out of it. I can be a bourgeois, middle class white man all my life, but my kids are not going to have that. New men are being born and a new man will be born here in Uptown. Something wholly new will emerge from today's situation. By God, can you imagine a New Man walking the streets of the earth?"

That, in essence, is what a ward visit is like. You did not "recruit" anyone to anything. You just gave people images; gave them a chance to respond in new ways to their situations. We visited 100 people this quarter and we have a list for our next LENS course.

Things are beginning to happen, probably because of the continuous practical undergirding. We have been working on program funding. We are searching for a facility appropriate for a Guild Hall, University 13, a pre-school, and for use as a node.

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We have been working intensely in cadre or core formulation. We meet as a guild one Tuesday night and meet as wards the following Tuesday. We also meet on alternate weekends in the same fashion. We have dinner meetings with the leadership to go over the meeting plan, rehearse the roles, and make assignments. After the meeting we spend a half an hour working with people on their roles and before everybody goes home, all of us sit down to reflect on what happened. Then, after the Saturday PSU's and task forces, we clean up, reflect and have a Saturday night celebration - just a great time. This is the pattern we have set this quarter.

As many as 25 people show up just for the Friday night leadership sessions! That many people show up to find out "What are we going to do?" They are getting ready, getting themselves prepared for the task forces and PSU's on Saturday. Fifteen to twenty people show up at 6 p.m. for supper and guild meetings.

We are also working toward sign-posts on the Long March. The funding push for getting the Guild Hall and the educational complex into being are related to this.

And then, there is the elder's node. We have had five elder's courses in elder's homes this quarter. There are five session courses on 5 separate nights. We are learning a lot about elders. Senility is created by the structure of society. On the first night, you have a bunch of vegetables on your hands. At the end of the fifth session, quoting John Epps, "You have a bunch of roaring tigers ready to come out and tear the world apart."

The happenings of these LENS courses are just rocking. It is incredible to watch people who had given up hope of playing any creative role in society, come alive and be ready to roll. I am afraid of them. I don't know what to do with them or how that force will be creatively shaped at this point. We are brooding on that.

The node will be a vehicle through which elders can operate outside of their homes and play the role that elders need to play in a community. I am not sure what that role is anymore, but they will decide what it is and look out!

Our edge at this point is in bringing together the galaxy and the guild. The first common event, a Christmas carolling party, is out to do two things: to bring together the churches through participation in a great Christmas celebration and at the same time, to catalyze stakes and wards. Groups will carol all over Uptown 5 at key locations in their stakes, and then march over to People's Church for a great Christmas celebration. This is one step towards getting the cadre self-consciously into being.

I think our time thus far has involved simply creating rational forms and formats. We are claiming time through various practical forms. We have rational formats for meetings, rational formats for visitation, rational formats for everything. Each group, whether in PSU's, task forces, wards or guild, has a solid time design. Ten p.m. every Tuesday night is reflection time. Wednesdays are ward visitation night. Every Friday night is leadership preparation time and Saturday is either a PSU or task force day. Twenty-five, thirty or forty people are giving their lives in those kinds of task-frames.

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I did not believe it was possible to claim the time that the mission in Uptown has claimed this quarter. But people are showing up. We are now getting self-conscious and steady participation in all ward meetings. Dennis Jennings is starting a Sunday morning breakfast at which we look at the week ahead. The "rabbit" is running. It is healthy. The dogs are not biting too badly at his heels, although there are a few places where they are. But, I want to say that I am grateful for George Holcombe. I am grateful for the first image he put up on the board, because it gave you and me the world.

--Eugene Boivin
12/14/74