

THE OPENING ADDRESS
OF THE GLOBAL RESEARCH ASSEMBLY 1977

As a result of this past year I no longer experience myself as an Australian standing before you. Indeed, I think that the experience of the past year has told me that I don't know anymore what it means to feel like an Australian, or like an Aussie, even when people do not understand clearly my pronunciation. The strange thing is that I don't know how to account for this experience. It is a strange experience because, of course, I am a citizen of that country. I am one who was born and lived there. And yet, what has coming to fruition this past year is that I experience myself not from the perspective of nationality but as a human being. Don't ask me to describe that now, later I will be able to. But try and get a feel of it. To stand in another nation and within that nation to stand within a local community, to stand within an urban situation, to stand within a rural village, to stand within an impoverished village, is to know what it is like standing in any human community anywhere. That is, standing at the point where awakening and engagement are, then somehow trying to see through that experience to grasp anew the feeling of what it means to be a human being. It becomes evident that what we are called to be about at this time is both human engagement and human effectivity, and tonight, of course, this has been symbolized dramatically. From the sea of hands that waved across this room when we were asked how many people had been in some way involved in Global Community Forum and Global Social Demonstration, I suspect that my experience is not unique. There is a new grasp after humaneness that is emerging rapidly in our midst and in our time.

It has been symbolized for me in the preparation that has been done these past weeks and months. I've asked myself the question, "what is bringing us together at this time?" "What is it that brings 600 people from across the world in order to sit down together and look forward to working for two weeks?" I think the first thing that brings us together is the requirement that there be those people who, on behalf of others, will be the ones who will respond to what it is that is needed in our society and the whole social situation this day. And indeed as you reflect, that is very much the journey of this body of people. It's the journey of first seeking to discern the issues and then to respond to them. To take a twenty-year journey quickly: it began in those years after the second world war and into the fifties. It was a time when the whole arena of education was searching for focus and the response was made through the university. In the sixties, finding the way in which effectivity of both the individual and the society could be made manifest in the urban situation. That was giving form to Fifth City so that, that which had been done could be very practically manifest. In the seventies, the task was to find ways of effective engagement, to discern in the whole social fabric and the process of our time the imbalances within the economic and the political and the cultural dynamics of society. All of this, and everything that went with it over those years has been our journey leading to this present moment.

Who would really have believed a year ago, that we would be celebrating this night the rapid intensification that has taken place? Who, indeed, would have anticipated this last quarter of awakening and demonstration. The decor around this hall bears witness. To have the flags above us, to have the 24 Human Development project symbols and the Global Community Forum plaques surrounding us, standing between Those Who Care and the grid of the world, the arena of our doing.

The band of Global Social Demonstration is completed - every hour on the hour!! To know that in those 24 Human Development Projects there was an average of 500 people participating, that is some 12,000 participated in those communities. In India, with 17 communities moving on behalf of their state and their nation and the world, a total of 41 communities are engaged in creating the new form of local human settlement. 1,500 Forums were held in 25 nations. 1280 Town Meetings were held in the United States. Close to 150,000 people participated in the Global Community Forum. Add to them the International Training Institute, the Academies, the three Replication Schools in India, and the vast number of people who have responded to the needs of the time, in many ways and forms. What a picture of awakening and engagement! Wouldn't it be something to have the 1500 names of the towns in which Town Meetings have been held up before us? Wouldn't it be something to take a compass and be able to see that compass pointing to every point of the globe?

Well, how does one, how do we as a group celebrate? It seems to me that the way that celebration happens is always pointing ahead to the year to come. Out of this year of intensification and acceleration, what has come clear, is that we are at the very moment of doing in history. We are going to be able to recover that word and be able to grasp ahold of the very core of it and pull it out, to reach to the heart of it and use it to describe this moment. We are the "Do People", if you will, the Doing People, we are about "do-ment". How do you say it so that you can reach in and get hold of it and see that this is the time and this is what we are about? It is the reaching in and getting hold of the enactment of awakening and engagement. This time of intensification in awakening is impacting society with it's own possibility of engagement in visible social signs across the globe. We have been creating global signs so that anyone with eyes to see can see them, and now having set them in place, they are ready to go do them. It is the time of doing, it is the time of profound humanness, in which awakening and engagement at once are done.

It has become clear to all of us over this past year and as we look to the year ahead, that this is no longer a time of ideas, but for "Do-ment". I don't know how many people in local communities I've spoken to in the past year who have reported how they have been just inundated with good ideas for awakening and engagement. In one community I was in, the only solution that could be given to the community was that their situation was so bad they needed to get up and move and go somewhere else. The local people said "No, that is not the way it is going to be, it is here. Here is the possibility for us." In this year ahead of doing, of "do-ment", in the time of the intensification and awakening and engagement, we find ourselves caught up into the great moral issue of our time. The discrepancy between the 85% of this world and the 15%. The people in the 85% of the world's population who do not participate in the gifts and benefits of the 20th century, who do not participate in the living of life --those who, as it were, have been bracketed. On the other hand are the

15% who have access to the resources and the goods of this world. As the intensification of this year has caught us up into that, we find ourselves with our nose tight up against the wire of this moral issue of our time. The experience of confronting that issue and being confronted by it, is to wake up knowing it's "I" whom history has tapped upon the shoulder. It is not someone else, it is "I", it is "I".

That tap upon the shoulder, that beckoning out, that calling forth, that setting apart to deal with that issue, is that which calls beyond any specific occupation, profession or location in which I am. It's knowing I've been set aside to engage my one brief life on behalf of the 85% of this world. It's knowing the dreams I dreamed, the dreams everyone has dreamed, that your one life could be very significant in history, can come true. The dreams of the little boy, the dreams of the little girl, that --I want to do something with my life for the sake of history, need not be daydreams. The very intensification of awakening and engagement today enable you to see that your dream's concretion is at hand. The concretion of the dream of doing something with your life is in this moment, being one of those who deals with the primary moral issue of our time. I sense that this has been your experience too, you have also grasped what it is that I am trying to get hold of here. We're out to give, to enable, to make possible for the 85% of this world a tiny chance of experiencing the fullness of their life between their being born and their dying. To have the opportunity of opening that possibility so that they may experience what you and I experience in the living of life itself.

I know nobody in this room will believe this when I say that I'm 48 years old, but that's true. And in those 48 years I've had many images about my life, but at this very moment there is one dominant image about my life: at this moment there is no greater man in history than I. No greater man than I. What that means for me is that everything, everything that we participate in, everything that we celebrate here belongs to me. I've been in it, I've done it and it belongs to me. Everything that Fishel has done out there in Majuro belongs to me and I've participated in that. Oklahoma 100 Town Meeting belongs to me and I've participated in that. The World's Fair, celebrating the completion of the Global Social Demonstration band, belongs to me. There is no greater man in history than I, this night, is now my dominant image. And you know the secret is that these belong to everyone in this room if he has the courage to take it to himself, if she has the courage to take it to herself.

Out of this year and out of having my nose thrust into the great moral issue of our time there are four things I know. The first one is that in the intensification of awakening and engagement, local man is ready. Those Town Meetings, Community Forums, those consults, the 24 Human Development Projects, have demonstrated that local man is a mountain mover. He is ready to move the mountains that have hemmed him in, the economic mountains, the social mountains that have hemmed him in and almost prevented him from ever again being able to stand and watch the rising of the sun. He is ready to move. The Prejudices have been overcome in the fragmented communities. Previous impossibilities have been transformed. This thing I know, that local man is ready.

The second thing I know is that local man can do his doing. Need we but point to 1.6 million people, the poorest of the poor who can catalyze themselves and take responsibility not only for their state but for the nation and for the world.

The third thing I know is that physical well-being is essential for local man, that he enjoys the gift and the essentiality of vitality for his life. In the West we've taken that very much for granted. We've taken health and fine bodies for granted because of what we've done with sanitation, nutrition and medical care and support systems. It is a gift in which local man needs to share. It is essential that he know the experience of vitality. That he can have the opportunity of participation in the creativity of growing his garden, the common garden for common food. The common livestock that will provide the meat for the community so that everyone there have at least one good meal a day. You have seen the evidence of the malnutrition no doubt, and know the damage that is already done not only to the body, but to the brain. Physical well-being is essential for local man.

The fourth thing I know from this past year is that the local economy is critical for local man, now. It's not 20 years from now or even 10 years from now. In our search for a community we read many studies and surveys, and a lot of them were good, basically, except they had a 20-year timeline appended to them to implement them, and you know of course why they were never implemented. Local man is not going to wait 20 years. He cannot, he dare not. The local economy, that is the whole framework within that community that enables the sustenance of him is critical now.

Well, to celebrate I believe, is to look ahead. To look to the two weeks that are before us --two weeks of work and sharing the experience and the wisdom. Working through what are the very practical forms of our Do-ment on behalf of local man, on behalf of the 85% in coming to terms seriously with the deep moral issue of our time. In that sense, that is why we are here this night. That is why we gather around these tables, that we may celebrate the beginning of giving form to the practical doing that is required in this year. To me the secret of what we are doing in these two weeks is, that what we are doing has the possibility of being a profound contribution to all of history and the world. We are going to see the birthing and the continued birthing of a new collegiality across the world. A collegiality that looks only to one thing, the care of the 85% of this world, the catalyzing of the 15% that the resources be available where they are needed, and this possibility is here in this research assembly.

It's somewhat strange tonight that in this nation, in this city and in this community, in this building and in the rooms in which our task forces will meet over this next two weeks, you and I can participate in this great moment of history. I don't know where else I would want to be.