

TEN CONSIDERATIONS IN COMMUNITY REFORMULATION

1. Breaking loose a community is like winding a clock. There is one small interior spring in most clocks which you wind up tight and then it supplies the energy for the total. The body of people who do the task have to find a way to intensify their interior life. It is that intensity of purpose that provides the energy for the total community. This energy is a catalyst. A lot of aerosol cans have little balls inside and when you shake the can those balls start going around. They do not add anything to the formula. They do not improve it. All they do is increase the speed of the mixture getting together. As they go around they create waves. In a community there is always motion, but you need a catalytic action. How do you add a catalyst to intensify the motion so that something takes place?

2. Not many people use shoe horns anymore but my uncle never put his shoes on without his shoe horn. That shoe horn enabled his foot to work its way into his shoe. We have to find some kind of shoe horn to enable people to work their way into the community. The issue we are dealing with is how do you break through the inertia? If you look around in most communities and talk with people very long you see that there have been great visions. People have had deep compassion for a chunk of geography. There has always been a cadre dynamic present in every community. In one sense you do not have to create it. It is there, rooted in what is going on. But now you begin to break through the inertia that holds people fixed in a spot where they cannot move.

3. When you talk about breaking things loose or moving over against the inertia it is not simply a great deal of excitement you are after. Most places in the world have had a medicine man. When I was a boy we had a lot of people come to the door to sell things. That was an aftermath of the great medicine man shows that came to town and sold the cure for anything for a dollar. Most communities have had their medicine men, who have come and excited them for a moment and then nothing happened. You can understand why cynicism has a kind of accreditation. How do you move over against that? How do you move in terms of the long haul rather than the next two weeks? How do you begin in terms of human depths rather than in terms of fanciful flights of wonder? You prepare the depths of human beings rather than tickle their tongue with a new taste. How do you do that sociologically? People have learned how to do some of these things psychologically. How do you do that sociologically so that a community wakes up to its depths and prepares itself for the long haul of rebuilding the earth and creating new communities?

4. How do you lay the ground for the ecumenical parish overlay? There are ten considerations to stew over.

5. The first one is that you have to have a grid in order to begin. You always begin with the dirt. The dirt is the base upon which social relationships exist. Gridding is not simply laying out streets or patches of ground. It is tying together the social relationships that add up to a community. The grid is never just a local grid. The grid of your parish is first a grid of the globe gridded down to the parish level of intensity, so that your chunk of geography represents the total. Gridding from the global is a faith stance. It is a commitment of your life. You see that your first pre-occupation is the global, all of mankind. And that is history long. From there you begin to see that the task

is focused on the local. We have one complexity in doing that. You go from the global down to the local via the continent, the area, the region, the metro, the polis, the micro and then the parish. We have said that when you get down to the parish level you should have from 10,000 to 30,000 people. But in certain chunks of geography, following this rationale, you could have as many as 100,000 to 500,000 people. That would be an unmanageable parish. What do you do? We had 109,000 people in our parish so we divided it into five and called them proto-parishes. We held the name parish to hold the common rationale throughout the movement and then anything less than that we called proto-parishes. In other parts of our world you may have to take four or five parishes and put them together to get enough people to be a parish. These could be called mega-parishes. You always have the parish dimension in your grid, and it will always come after your micro grid.

6. What you are out to do with the grid is to hold sociology, geography and the many other factors together. It is not simply a matter of chalking out equal bits of geography or population. There is a whole array of other factors. These are the location of churches, serving institutions, etc. The grid is the most important thing. In our work here we changed the grid almost daily by just walking around and looking and then brooding. That went on for about a week. Then we had to go back and recalibrate it and find a rationale behind why we were gridding what we were gridding until we could tell ourselves a story in depth.

7. The second consideration is the economic, political and cultural analysis to grasp the internal workings as well as the external forces. The problemat is the key thing here, but you put it together very quickly. Its importance is to have it before you as an objective analysis. It is also a kind of a shoehorn to get you into the economic, political and cultural reality. This analysis is always for the sake of the future. That is crucial. The way you do it in a short time is to use the world's wisdom. Model Cities has grids. A lot of agencies have done demographic studies. You get them all and see where they differ, while building your own at the same time. You get population figures, ethnic distribution, age and education, and income groupings, to see how it fits together. That tells you something. Your grid always tells you your story. For instance, when you do the housing grid you suddenly see there are large chunks of vacant lots in your neighborhood. You had walked through there but did not notice there was a vacant lot in that neighborhood and a vacant lot across the street. When you put it on a grid, you notice there is a large strip of vacant lots across your whole grid. You wonder about that. You find out that they have been like that for three years. Then you do a little scratching around and you may find out that someone is going to build a freeway through there in three or four years. You see what is going on in the external and the internal forces operative in your community, so you can get hold of an analysis of what is going on and will be going on in the future of the community. You have to know that better than anyone else.

8. The third consideration is that you have to have an entry plan, including a basic model and a holding image. We saw that we had to establish a galaxy, that we were the movement and that our job was to provide an end run to bring a guild into being to help the emerging galaxy. This is inadequate but it is an image that gives you permission to move. You stuff it full of data and it tells you what you have to do first. Your basic model is just an image at first. Then you fill it out. What are the strategic objectives? What is it you are after to get this show on the road? What are the tactics you are going to use? What is the timeline you have them on?

9. What are the operating principles that you are going to work through all this? Are you going to go out with a megaphone or blow a whistle? Or, maybe you take a stance of low profile where you are not out to broadcast but get the job done. I like those lines from Dr. Lao. He said he never did tricks, he did magic. You are not out to do tricks. You are out to do the magic that transforms life. He said there were people who were secretive, and then there were people who were mysterious. You are not secretive, you are mysterious. It is not that you have anything to hold back from people. Do you notice that we really do not know anything that everybody else does not already know? It is not a matter of being secretive, but being mystery to enable people to live their lives. You keep your mouth shut. You adopt a certain kind of stance and distance. You have that written into your operating principles. Then, you do not do this alone. This is always corporate and calls for some kind of internal organization. You have to write a story of why the ecumenical parish, why now, and what is the innocent suffering going on. What is the story that you tell yourself. This is the story of this body of people in terms of their task. What is the rite and the symbol that holds that group in being to get this task done? What is the format of your meeting? How do you lay out your time schedule? When do you meet to report? When do you meet as working groups? Then you rehearse over and over again what it means to be a corporate body. If you have not decided to be corporate you will not know what you are doing. Yet if you have not decided to take your own life in charge, nor decided to be an iron man, or if you cannot get yourself out of bed and on the task, you do not know what corporateness is. Corporateness is deciding that your life is given to that task and nothing else. It is getting yourself on that task. It is seeing that your neighbor is always on that task enabling the total journey. You build your entry plan.

10. Then fourth, you win comprehensive authorization. The most critical factor is that every community has built into it someone who says there is no leadership, or no one cares about this community. Every community has the leadership dynamic present. It may be perverted but it is there. Things just do not happen in any community unless certain channels are honored. They may either be highly conscious or highly unconscious, but they are there. I have noticed that some local churches are run by a little old lady from her knitting needles, rather than by the official board. And if you do not have her permission to move she will cut your throat, and you will never know it. You will think it is someone on the official board or someone else, while Miss Sweet Susie who brings you pies on Sunday, and looks around to see how you keep up the parsonage, is the one. The community is like that. It has its authorizations. Your task is to find out what they are, both the silent and the overt. To get clearer on that you use your head and look and then make some lists and gestalt.

11. We worked out one we thought were symbolic authorities without whose symbolic "nod" you did not go very far. It included church leadership, leading city businessmen and political figures. Then there are key figures in the community. While they cannot give the symbolic nod, because they live out of that symbolic nod themselves, they can block or stop anything you do. Save those key figures are engaged in some way in what you are about you do not move. There are others I call middle authority figures. They cannot stop you, but can make life miserable. Unless you have their cooperation they can generally foul things up for you. Then there is grassroots leadership. In one sense they can not stop you, yet in another they can stop you cold. Save you have all four levels of that authorization working for you, you do not move. In winning comprehensive authorization one thing we have is that we are servants. We never go anywhere we are not invited. Sometimes we have to go in and get an invitation, but you get invited to do whatever you do. You are always a servant. We

are here to serve the community.

12. You have to decide what image you are going to project. What popular image is needed at that moment to go into that situation. In 5th City there were no structures. There we created the image that we were going to build structures. That is a popular image. You have a way of getting out dreams, images, plans, building the structures, and then turn that organization over to local people so they can run their own community. Here you would not want to project the image that you are a great structure builder. There are so many structures around here that they do not know what to do with them all. What is the image? Maybe it is the image of a good neighbor who is out to see that the whole community comes off, and that whatever is here is used and honored. The popular image you project is key in getting authorization. Finally you always get invited. You do not go where you are not invited, even though sometimes you have to go around by the back door to get invited. That invitation is important. You go into other countries, and if you have not had the invitation of the Roman Catholic bishop, the protestant leadership, and local authorities you have cut your own throat. This is true even in your own home town.

13. The fifth consideration is that you capture community imagination. You tell them their story like they never knew it before. You get hold of their history and their understanding of their mindset and their future, and you tell that story so they see new possibility that they never saw before. The aboriginal people always knew they had a long heritage, so you tell them, "You are the oldest people on earth; you are thirty thousand years old; you have changed more than any other people; change is nothing new to you; you have always been an adaptive people." Their jaws fall off, because they thought they were always stuck with being cavemen. All of a sudden their whole picture of themselves is changed, and they have a vision of their future. You take the community story in any community you show up in. There is a deep rooted story there of the past, and you get hold of it, love it and cherish it. You see that the clue to the future of that story is told. Here they tell themselves that all the new people moving in are messing up the whole neighborhood. They say that the neighborhood is really going down hill and you cannot expect anything good to happen. But you say, "why this is the new global community. This is the way it is going to be every place on earth in the next twenty years. You are twenty years ahead of the times. You have a chance to experiment with all the cultures of the earth and create a new life style, and to honor your own tradition by bringing it into the twentieth century. Hooray!" You tell the story a brand new way so that it releases people. You capture their imagination. Then you provide a way to release their spirit energies.

14. The other key there has been that whatever we do as a community or an ecumenical parish is not done for the sake of wherever you happen to be. That would be ridiculous. You do this for the sake of the whole world. You build corporate community for the sake of the globe as a sign representing what it means to rebuild the earth. This is my one opportunity, my one great chance to participate in the globe, to recreate creation. Down in the deeps of man that is what he is after. The release of motivity happens when men see that they participate in the totality of their geography. Once you see that you see that you have a way to participate in the totality of history. You capture the community imagination.

15. The sixth consideration is that you bring structures to the local community. For one thing you bring structures by publishing that grid and getting that space defined. People's minds do not operate in our time because they have

no space definitions through which they can operate in terms of concern. The news casts blitz your mind until you cannot think, because you have no grid to organize your concern so your mind can operate. You structure the local community by giving people a grid to provide them a symbol that informs their lives. You give them some kind of organization, also, where people are working on the issues that need to be worked on. In the midst of that you are out to create the cadre to give shape and form to the leadership so you can break the inertia.

16. The seventh consideration is that you subtly demonstrate possibility with people who tell themselves they can do little or nothing. When people talk about the fact that there is not much external possibility they are always talking about the internal. They are saying, "I do not have much possibility." Unless that is dealt with, whatever you do externally does not help at all. Be careful how you move here to dramatize possibility. To dramatize possibility means that you always create the impossible, that which is unexpected and could not be done. When we were working on the parking lot park one man just got angry. He was huffing and puffing and he said, "You guys cannot do it, you do not even have the right tools." He was right. Some of those shovels looked like Don Quixote's sword. When you pushed them into the ground they did not even move. One man who came by said, "These people have to be out of their minds. They are trying to go through concrete." There was a concrete slab we had not noticed, but when you have decided, you take the slab out with your hands.

17. In Mowanjum they decided they needed a garden. There were three acres of land full of rocks, stumps and everything else, and they did not have tools. We had four shovels, ten hoes and two hundred fifty people. All the men, women and children went out there and pulled grass with their knuckles until some of them were bleeding. In one day they cleared the whole field. The impossible was done. You find that that which dramatizes the impossible, in one sense, does not have anything to do with the external. It says to my interior life, "I can pick up my life and I can live it." It is a deep RS-I in one act, so to speak. You operate on their felt needs in terms of dramatizing the impossible. It is impossible to keep the city clean and beautified, so you beautify it and then you find ways to celebrate that. You do hard labor and you get sore. In clearing that field you worked in one hundred twenty degree heat all day long. The next day you really feel it. It does not feel good, but you celebrate that. Instead of talking about a day when we all got whipped and were miserable and thought we were going to die, we celebrated it and everyone thought it was great. We had a great celebration that night, killed a great big cow and roasted it, and ate it and danced around the fireside. You saw that it was great. It was not anything to be sorry about. It was tremendous to celebrate the impossible.

18. The eighth consideration is that you initiate leadership training. You get the people in the community that you need, in terms of their leadership, and you train them. You put them through LENS courses or you set them down and teach them, or whatever way you have to train people directly in methodologies. Secondly, you do it indirectly. You do this by defining roles, by giving people images, and by providing people with involvement. They begin to be trained. In the midst of that you are out to extend leadership. You go into any community and you have fantastic human beings. Grey's Elegy is a great poem for me. You look at that graveyard and you say, "Look at all this human possibility that never made it. Just think, there are thousands of Shakespeares and Longfellows out there, and they never knew it. They just died, like the three billion people who die and never live. You extend the leadership. Anywhere you go you find

people who are fantastic, but never knew they were fantastic. You give them a possibility. One thing that will excite a community and give it new depths is to see old Charlie Brown, who has always stumbled through life, all of a sudden get a hold on his life and become a man. Everyone of us in this room knows that he has the methodology to take some old willy limp leg and release him as a great human being. You extend leadership and then you deepen their commitment. You deepen the commitment of the community so it can assume responsibility for its life, and can be a sign to the world.

19. The ninth consideration is that you dramatize the serious intent. There are a number of ways to do this. If you happened to be in a religious house you might improve its appearance. The neighborhood may look like a slum, and if you tell people we are going to rebuild the community, it is hard to believe, if we look like a part of the slum. If you go around with your hair all straggling and you are dramatizing serious intent about rebuilding the earth, it is hard to believe. This has nothing to do with anyone's integrity. It has to do with getting the job done, with secondary integrity. You claim the outcast. We have always been a people of the outcasts. We belong to the outcasts of this world and let us never forget that. But you dramatize serious intent by bringing in the outcasts. You take those in the community no one cares for and claim them. You turn them into that which is great. You turn them into that which is fantastic. Then you take awe, the awe that struck, and you turn it into symbol. I imagine that very soon the awe that is there will become a symbol. Then you create global consciousness of what is going on in the world. Something happened when people in 5th City and Samoa and Mowanjum began to sense that they participated in the globe. I will never forget when we put the newspaper out in 5th City and they saw that grid, or when they went to the festivals and learned the Chinese people were somehow different than black people. There were fantastic dances and interesting food and all, and they became interested in the globe and began to see themselves participating in it. All of a sudden there was a whole new kind of commitment in the community, from the oldest skeptic to the youngest rebel.

20. Then, with this serious intent is commitment to the long march. Until someone has decided that he has put his foot into the ring for life he is never a human being. He is always thinking that there is some time in life when his illusionary dreams will come true and he can lay down on his back and gloat on a permanent summer holiday. Unless one sees his life as nothing but expenditure in terms of ninety nine years, unless he lives to be one hundred, he does not know what it means to be a human being, committed to the long march, to be a community on the move.

21. The tenth consideration is that you solidify for the future. After you have been through your model building you intrude into the community. It is a painful rupture, even though it may be done in style and people were laughing and suffering all the way and having a great time. Never-the-less it is a rupture. Now you have to bring that together. You celebrate the accomplishments. You get people planning. I guess that is the greatest healing that ever comes into people's lives. It happens when they sit down and plan and lay out what the future has to look like. Then you have to heal rifts, and that is not done psychologically. That is done through celebrations. That is done through the planning. Then you pull back and begin to talk through with the community. That pull back is very important. People begin to pick up new roles. They take on new tasks and begin to exercise what they know.

22. Now, here are a couple of warnings. One danger you have to watch is your own liberalism. It comes in a couple of packages. One is that if I get my method and model done and tell everyone what to do it will work out smoothly. Once you have a model done, and you really worked hard on it and it is perfect, then everything ought to go right. I cannot understand why uncle so-and-so is upset, and why this blew up, so something must be wrong with the model or with my colleagues. They did not do what I told them to do, or what I thought they ought to do. A model, however, is always built to go smash. You never learn anything in building a model. Where you learn is when you stick it into reality and it goes crunch. Then you go aside and get your wisdom out of that. Then you build a new model. Ortega y Gasset said, "Life is pure problem." He was right.

23. The second danger to be watched is the conservatism in us. This is operating out of what we are out to do, finally, is to get the whole show rolling so smoothly that it really looks like the establishment. You get everything operating as smoothly as it can and before you know it you are back in the throes of the bureaucracy. No, you are responsible for the totality of life, and you know that life is chaos. You do not forget. There is order in the midst of that. In the midst of the chaos and your brokenness and struggle you are made whole only in one thing, and that is the Word in Jesus Christ. Your wholeness does not come from your accomplishments nor the approval of your brothers nor in your futuristic vision. Your wholeness is in the Word in Jesus Christ.