

Change Agents

*Alinskyian Organizing Among
Religious Bodies*



Volume III

Ideology

By Stephanie Block

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Introduction

In the third volume of *Change Agents*, we examine the ideological underpinnings of Alinskyian organizing.

At first blush, one might depict it in much the same light that Alinsky did: a ruthlessly practical – that is, Machiavellian – approach to public life that can be used by the “common man.” While this is true enough, it is only a description of the *means* by which Alinskyian organizing operates.

This particular brand of organizing is oriented toward a specific *end*. Its praxis is purposeful. *Understanding* that end is important if we are to go there intentionally...or, are to intentionally reject it.

**The Ideology
behind
Alinskyian Organizing**

1. IAF Reflects: The Changing Truth

For a number of years, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) conducted a national project called “IAF Reflects.” IAF Reflects was a series of “intense, 2-week seminars for veteran organizers.”¹ These retreats for congregational leaders were designed to put them “in touch with the biblical tradition that might give deeper insight into their work together, bind them more closely, and empower them to go forward to build God’s reign. The IAF has come to realize that it is about holy work...”²

Religious communities around the United States are exploring the particular “vision” of social activism that Alinskyian organizing recommends and are trying to discern the spiritual foundation on which to root that activism. “Are there models of success to which we can look for guidance?” the Episcopal Commission on Human Affairs asked at an August 1995 meeting in San Francisco, pointing to the IAF as an example.³

The “holy work” described above is prefaced by a Bible story used in a rather revealing way. Having first protested that there ought to be no need to “justify” committed, social activism in the light of scripture, the author Professor Susan Toton – borrowing from an essay by Walter Brueggemann – explains that in the book of 2 Kings, the Assyrians have Jerusalem surrounded. They send messengers to Hezekiah, the king of Judah. The messengers shout

¹ Jim Rooney, *Organizing the South Bronx*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) p 249, footnote #23. Intensive training programs, often as long as 10 days, are held at various centers around the country – some of them being the *Mexican American Cultural Center*, in San Antonio, Texas and the *Midwest Academy*, Chicago, Illinois.

² Suzanne C. Toton, “Moving beyond Anguish to Action: What Has Saul Alinsky to Say to Justice Education,” *Religious Education*, summer 1993.

³ Minutes of the August 17-19, 1995 Meeting of the Commission of Human Affairs, San Francisco of the Episcopal Church.

from outside of Jerusalem’s walls that the Assyrian king is demanding total surrender. *They speak in Hebrew, the language of the people inside the walls.*⁴

Hezekiah’s commanders, however, would like the opportunity to negotiate. They ask the Assyrians to speak in their own language, Aramaic, presumably so that the “ordinary folk” won’t grow prematurely alarmed and force a surrender. But the Assyrians cry back that they *want* the people by the walls to understand what will happen to them if Hezekiah refuses to yield. “Let not Hezekiah induce you to rely on the Lord,” they shout up in Hebrew.

Professor Toton abbreviates the story’s ending, explaining simply that Isaiah, the prophet, is then brought before King Hezekiah and God delivers the city from the Assyrians. The point to be taken, she writes, is that faith communities, then and now, “must be conversant in two languages -the language of the faith and the language of public discourse,” which Toton equates to IAF-style activism. “Both are essential for communities committed to furthering God’s reign.”⁵

Of course, this “interpretation” disregards that, according to the rest of the text (continuing in 2 Kings), the Hebrews had absolutely no need to know the Assyrian language. Without one syllable uttered in that foreign tongue, nor so much as one Jewish skinned knee, God defeated the Assyrians Himself. “[T]he angel of the Lord went forth and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp.”⁶ Any Assyrians still left, went home.

Toton has another thesis, however, and argues that “not only do we need to learn to speak a second language to effect more than

⁴ “Moving beyond Anguish to Action...” quoting Walter Brueggemann, “The Legitimacy of a Sectarian Hermeneutic: 2 Kings,” 18-19” *Education for Citizenship and Discipleship*, ed. Mary C. Boys, 1989.

⁵ “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action...”

⁶ 2 Kings 19: 35

the ‘idea’ of justice, but we must learn a second language in order to understand our native tongue – our language of faith.” To truly understand our faith, she explains, we must put it into action... a *particular kind* of action. Toton believes that the IAF can teach Christians the techniques of this *particular kind* of applied faith.

Ed Chambers, former national IAF executive director, had a similar idea.

I’d had a little training in philosophy. And I started forcing myself to look at what our kind of organizing meant to people. We worked with people in the churches, and their language was the language of the gospel. Their language was nothing like Alinsky’s language. His language was power talk. Tough, abrasive, confrontational, full of ridicule. And those are really all non-Christian concepts. So I started looking at it. Here are the non-Christian concepts...here are the Christian concepts. Are there any similarities? Is this just a different language for the same thing?⁷

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has convincingly insisted throughout the centuries that these two languages do *not* simply provide different words for the same thing. This was a problem for Chambers, who began his career as a Benedictine seminarian but was asked to leave “when he threw his existential beliefs at the rigidly organized precepts of church orthodoxy.”⁸

Chambers found his way around Church orthodoxy by “reforming” any of its clergy whom he could get into his trainings,

⁷ Mary Beth Rogers, “Gospel Values and Secular Politics,” *The Texas Observer*, November 22, 1990.

⁸ “Gospel Values and Secular Politics...”

teaching them how to organize using gospel language. Harry Boyte, who, among other things is one of the foremost authors chronicling IAF activity from a sympathetic and supportive perspective, reports:

In 1981, the Black Caucus of the [Industrial Areas Foundation] network of organizations produced a new document, the Tent of the Presence, based on the passage from Numbers (Numbers 11: 10 - 18) where Moses gathered a carefully selected group of elders at the ‘tent of meeting’, the center of the Jewish community. There Moses shared with them power and responsibility for leadership during the travels to the promised land.

Tent of the Presence, rich with Biblical symbolism and exegesis, also included the newly accented IAF themes of democratic public life.⁹

Elsewhere, Boyte quotes a bit of a prayer service conducted by BUILD, Baltimore’s IAF local:

Somehow the Kingdom will come on the earth.
BUILD, if you are a mighty people, if you are a noble people, if you are a great people, there’s forests out there. There’s land to be filled.
There’s work to be done. Won’t you be counted in the army of the Lord?¹⁰

This, Boyte explains, is “value based organizing.”

⁹ Harry Boyte, *Commonwealth: A Return to Citizen Politics*, (New York: The Free Press, 1989), chapter 7, “Repairing the Commons,” p. 108.

¹⁰ *Commonwealth...*, p 114.

Value based organizing wedded the struggle for power to communal fabric and cultural traditions in a way that enlisted groups of community ‘sustainers’ - those they called ‘the moderates’.¹¹

Besides retreats, like IAF Reflects, IAF communities in Los Angeles and Texas have experimented with “value based organizing” through scriptural consciousness raising.

In St. Timothy’s Church (San Antonio), for instance, new catechisms connected biblical and Mexican historical and cultural themes with the current issues COPS [the IAF local] was working on....From such experiences [as at St. Timothy’s], the organization [the IAF] developed an ongoing process of community and parish renewal.¹²

A memo to staff at the United Church of Christ Board of Homeland Ministers in 1977 is outlined by Boyte. Conversations with IAF organizers Ed Chambers and Dick Harmon:

...stressed the developing IAF view that organizing had classically *used* religious congregations to build community organizations, but it needed to take more ‘seriously’ religious congregations and religious language...this meant a particular emphasis on the sorts of mainstream, ecumenically inclined Catholic and Protestant church groups

¹¹ *Commonwealth...*, chapter 6, p 81.

¹² Harry Boyte, *Community is Possible: Repairing America's Roots*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p 149-150.

which normally proved responsive...[John Moyer argued that] training sessions for leaders and organizers emphasize the relationship between theology and the dynamics of power relationships.¹³ [emphasis in original]

The IAF re-educates priests using Bible study groups and “theological challenges:”

Ten years ago IAF went into parishes and immediately began organizing around political issues. But in recent years its organizers have moved toward theological reflection, to the point where they have developed a series of Bible study classes to get prospective members thinking about the spiritual life of their parish. From the outside this may look opportunistic, but parish priests praise IAF organizers for challenging them theologically and getting them to *rethink their clerical role*.¹⁴ [Emphasis added.]

The lead organizer of Albuquerque Interfaith, the New Mexico IAF affiliate, conducted leadership development workshops in at least two Catholic parishes and in several Protestant churches whose congregational structures were “reshaped” by the IAF. The leadership development workshops were not billed as Albuquerque Interfaith events, per se, but as opportunities to tap the organizer’s expertise for the congregation’s benefit. Participants were guided through scripture, including Numbers 11:11-17 about an overburdened Moses praying to God for help.

¹³ *Commonwealth...*, chapter 6 FN #7, p 189.

¹⁴ Peter Skerry, “The Resurrection of Saul Alinsky: Neighborhood COPS,” *The New Republic*, February 6, 1984.

God instructs Moses to select 70 elders to help lead the Israelites.

Rather than acknowledge the gracious condescension of God to once again help a rebellious, complaining population, the IAF organizer interpreted the passage about God “changing His mind” to one that concerned governance. According to him, God decided to delegate responsibility for governance to the larger group because that would “empower” His people. By extension, therefore, God wants the participants of the leadership development workshop to become an IAF-trained, lay leadership ministry to address urgent, neighborhood needs.

In the Catholic leadership development workshops, the IAF organizer used specifically Catholic concepts to hone his points. He spoke several times of the Eucharist as binding individual members together through the sharing of their deepest emotions and individual stories, eroding Catholic understanding of the supernatural dimension of its sacramental life to mere humanistic significance.

As part of the congregational leadership development program, the IAF organizer also began to interview people for leadership potential. These IAF chosen leaders were then trained to function in a number of congregational capacities, for example as RENEW facilitators in their parishes. The RENEW program, which purports to stimulate Bible study and prayer in small groups, became instead a filter for IAF training, IAF scripture interpretation, and IAF social justice analysis.

This is to say that, within given congregations, pastors surrendered the shepherding of their flocks – the formation of their people and of themselves – to the IAF, an organization whose founder, Saul Alinsky, wrote in the “dedication” of his book, *Rules for Radicals*,

Lest we forget at least an over-the-shoulder

acknowledgment to the very first radical: from all our legends, mythology, and history (and who is to know where mythology leaves off and history begins - or which is which), the first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom - Lucifer.¹⁵

Alinsky was, perhaps, meaning only to tweak the “bourgeois” values of the middle class with a shocking bit of humor but the words have deep import, whether or not Alinsky himself understood them. Scripture *does* teach that there is a “diabolical” relationship to the world and its power, as well as a correct relationship. Specifically, Christ’s third temptation was to be shown all the kingdoms of the world and promised by Satan, “All these will I bestow on you if you will prostrate yourself in homage before me.” (Matthew 4:9)

Jesus’ response was to give “homage to the Lord alone” but consider the temptation: he was offered power over all the kingdoms of the earth, to multiply the stones infinitely into bread, but not into his flesh; power to heal the lame, but no longer to forgive sins; power to build a utopia without hope of Heaven. If such “power” tempted Jesus, small wonder that it tempts us as well.

For us, of weaker wills and smaller intellects, the temptation rejected in the clarity of prototype is reintroduced with countless variations and myriad opportunities for spiritual compromise. The Prince of the World still tries to persuade us with golden promises, while reassuring us that we will retain the Lord’s blessing. To convince us requires some alteration of God’s word.

¹⁵ This “dedication” has already been discussed in Volume I of *Change Agents* in another context. Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*, Vintage Books, 1971.

Alinsky chirps:

Since the genesis and survival of sacred cows is rooted in fear and reverence, it follows that those who want change must be against sacred cows and not only innately irreverent but outwardly, purposefully irreverent in their actions. They must be iconoclastic bulldozers willing to be regarded as profane spoilers of sacred myths.¹⁶

An organized, Alinskyian church must be re-taught that knowledge of the absolute Truth and the conviction that God can take on the mightiest army – all that is a mythic “sacred cow.” The progressive organizer believes that the battles to be fought are won by man’s own cunning and collective might. When they bring “god” into the picture, it’s to legitimize what man has already determined.

To achieve “iconoclastic bulldozing” takes some exegetic bull. Scripture is given new “relevance” and doctrine is “renewed.” The defining “ritual” of IAF action is quite seriously compared to the “ritual” of the Mass and community organization as an expression of empathetic, caring relationship is likened to the ideal church community:

The genius of many religions has been ritual. The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, has built the largest church in the world by adherence to a ritual, the mass, in which every person present directly participates in the mystery of the faith.
...The defining IAF ritual has been the Briefing-

¹⁶ Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1946), p xv.

Action-Evaluation. It is the IAF liturgy, our central practice in the training and development of leaders and organizers...The weaker organizations also, almost always, move away from our most radical rituals, the individual meetings and house meetings...Individual meetings are the daily food of organization. The house meeting is Sunday dinner.
17

There is also a romanticized vision of the “common man:”

Alinsky passionately believed in people. He believed that ‘if people have the power, the opportunity to act, in the long run they will, most of the time, reach the right decisions.’¹⁸

Of course, Alinsky believed no such thing. If he had, there would have been no need to organize anyone in an effort to balance the badly used power of (other) people who had reached the wrong decisions. What Alinsky believed in was himself and his own organizations. He believed that, in the long run, most of the time, he and they would come to the right decisions.

The Church, however, shares no such optimism. She teaches that man’s nature, including Alinsky’s, is fallen and in sore need of redemption.

Then there is the torturous thought of Ernesto Cortes, the IAF’s southwest regional director, who said:

All of the [IAF] sponsoring churches believe in making a preferential option for the poor, the

¹⁷ Larry McNeil, IAF regional director, “The Soft Arts of Organizing,” *Social Policy*, February 29, 1996.

¹⁸ Toton quoting *Reveille...*, p xiv.

people who in a biblical sense have not yet come to the table. Christ said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world’. He was the good shepherd who brings his flock into the life of the community.¹⁹

This is a pure example of turning Biblical thought inside-out. If, as Cortes also states in the article, the IAF leaders volunteering 20 - 30 hours of work a week, “do it for a sense of power, recognition, and importance,” they are very much serving the Prince of this World. Alinskyian organizing is not concerned about any “kingdom” that does not operate in the here and now:

Through partnerships and alliances...government agencies, corporations, churches, schools, and non-profit foundations are redefining themselves as catalysts for social action.²⁰

However one may feel about government, business, and philanthropy becoming “catalysts for social change,” the hard reality is that the Church cannot redefine itself as anything other than what it is and still remain the Church. Its essence does not derive from what the membership thinks about it at any given moment. If it exists at all, it exists as God has created it to be. Therefore, the Church *is* a “catalyst for social change” only in so far as it performs its “defining,” essential function as a vehicle for saving souls.

Congregations subjected to Alinskyian organizing efforts frequently suffer tremendous division within their memberships. Some percentage of the population invariably bristles over

¹⁹ Kaye Northcott, “To Agitate the Dispossessed...” *Southern Exposure*, July/August 1985.

²⁰ David Tarrant, “Institutions: Striking a New Partnership,”.

attempts by secular organizations to co-opt the parish's function and spirituality for themselves:

Often within individual parishes, members were in conflict with their own values, that is, members may advocate social justice and helping their fellow man, yet be adamantly opposed to the tactics of [the local IAF Interfaith]. Individuals who have been actively involved Catholics both at the parish level and a diocesan level, now display anger and hostility toward the work of the Catholic Church in general and [the local IAF Interfaith] in particular.²¹

This “second language,” this training to play at the world's politics as the world plays, is a language of half truths and twisted meanings. “We must act because YHWH acts,” writes Toton,²² without distinguishing between one act and another, as if speaking a lie or speaking truth were moral equivalents.

However, we can obey or rebel. Prayer and discernment are integral to right action. The Jews standing behind Jerusalem's walls on the day the King of Assyria surrounded them knew with their natural, human understanding of only two solutions – surrender or fight. Isaiah reminded them of another action, divine intervention, for which they might humbly pray and hopefully wait.

Where is the gospel story of Jesus confronting Pilate to get the heck out of Palestine? Where does he round up the Jewish citizens to demand better housing? Conversely, where do the Alinskyian organizing networks exhort congregations to be meek and carry their crosses? These are not simply two different “languages” but

²¹ Maryann Eklund, *Structure and Function of the Rhetoric of Valley Interfaith*, master's thesis for University of New Mexico, 1987, p 64.

²² “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action...”

two different views of the world.

Harry Boyte quotes a Baltimore IAF local president, Marian Dixon as saying that she:

...credited her assertiveness to her experiences in BUILD [Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development] and in a 10 day IAF training session. 'BUILD taught me to demand what was right,' Dixon described. A devout church member and a lay leader, Dixon thought certain facets of Christianity had taught her and others the wrong lessons. 'You're not supposed to have self-interest. You're not supposed to want power. You're supposed to be meek and humble and be trampled on! But we learned.'²³

Too often, people drawn into the influence of Alinskyian organizing read God's will into their own, presumptive actions. Man-made "social justice" rarely accomplishes much justice and frequently falls into the heresy of believing that salvation depends on one's own good works. One researcher noted that:

...[M]any individuals sense their involvement [in social justice activism] as a means of moral salvation.²⁴

There are countless further examples of Alinskyian organizations taking religious language, concepts, and symbols and redefining them with secular meanings. Toton writes, "[T]he IAF

²³ *Commonwealth...*, p 117-118.

²⁴ *Structure and Function...*, p 64.

believes that the churches are potentially sources of power in a sea of seeming powerlessness. But they lack the knowledge and skill to actualize that power.” And in another part of the article, “Through building organizations, churches can come to a new, healthier, and more soundly biblical understanding of power.”²⁵ The implied “power” is not that of the Holy Spirit but the “power of the people,” which is of no sturdier (or holier) fabric than the power of self-serving kings and presidents, corrupt corporate magnates and unprincipled landowners.

Most egregiously of all, we learn that through Alinskyian organization, congregational participants “learn to speak the truth where it is not spoken and to create the truth where it never was, for all to see.”²⁶ Create the truth? If a “truth” must be *created*, then it is a lie.

It is at this point we see how disparate the perspective of the Church and the Alinskyian are.

Ernie Cortes, a key figure in their [the IAF] network, pointed out, the IAF methodology bears resemblance [to the] ‘critical method’ of Karl Popper, philosopher of science, who argued for a view of ‘truth’ not as a positive assertion, but as theories formulated out of practice and aimed at problem solving that had not yet been refuted.²⁷

Toton makes a similar point: “In short, the process of building Poor People’s Organizations reminds the church over and over again that it does not own ‘The Truth.’”²⁸

While the Church does not “own” the Truth in the sense of it

²⁵ “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action...”

²⁶ “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action...”

²⁷ *Commonwealth...*, chapter 6 FN #2.

²⁸ “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action...”

being disposable property, it does know in an historically unique way that which has been granted by revelation: “The Church has faithfully preserved what the word of God teaches, not only about truths which must be believed but also about moral action...she has achieved a doctrinal development analogous to that which has taken place in the realm of the truths of the faith.”²⁹ There isn’t much common ground between the Church’s position and the organizers’.

Toton ends her article by saying, “IAF organizations, in my judgment, offer the church precisely the language that is needed to bring pain to public expression and to negotiate at the wall.”³⁰

The Bible is pretty clear about this, however: Church is not supposed to negotiate with the Assyrians. She exists to teach them *Her* language.

²⁹. *Veritatis Splendor*, #28.

³⁰. “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action...”

2. Liberationism

Liberationism and Alinskyian organizing have walked hand in hand for many decades. A history about organizing in Asia describes how the Alinskyian organizers wrestled with “questions of ideology, which is the critical understanding of the present oppressive and exploitative social reality (analyses) and a statement of the goals for the future society in which justice will be realized.”

In addition to ideological questions, there is the issue of faith in the life and struggle of the people. Christian faith has been articulated within the context of the URM movement³¹ in Asia. Evangelism has been redefined as sharing the Good News that affirms all the people, not as Christian religious colonialism. Mission has been redefined as God's work among the suffering and struggling peoples of Asia. Minjung theology³² in Korea and other similar theological reflections have emerged among the URM communities. Fundamentally URM communities have been reading the Bible in the context of their struggle and have been rediscovering the power of the Biblical stories among the poorest of the poor in Asia in their quest for a just life.

³¹ URM – Urban Rural Movement. URM is an initiative of the World Council of Churches “committed to being in solidarity with the struggles of oppressed people for justice and liberation.” www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/mission/urm.html

³² Minjung theology – liberation theology of South Korea

This is not all. A more important development may be the notion that the people themselves have FAITHS of their own, which become the source of liberation, overcoming not only religious shackles but also socio-political bondages as well. URM has begun to affirm strongly the people's religious faiths and cultural wisdom for liberation. In India faith movements for liberation have been an integral part of the URM movement³³

The Minjung theology in Korea, mentioned by the passage above, as well as People Power in Philippines, was generated by Alinskyian community organizing.³⁴ The same period of time saw similar questions being raised among the four major, faith-based Alinskyian organizing networks – IAF, DART, PICO, and the Gamaliel Foundation – which have included theologians as leaders in their national training meetings “as part of an increasingly aggressive effort to recruit churches for metropolitan organizing.”³⁵ A number of these theologians are liberationists or “process” theologians.

Liberation Theology is a socialist movement which seeks to reevaluate the Christian gospel according to Marxist analysis.

³³ Dr. Kim Yong-Bock, “Review of URM Experiences in Asia and Future Challenges to the Asian URM Movement,” This paper was presented at the 21st CCA-URM Committee Meeting, 24-26 February 1990, Seoul, Korea.

³⁴ Dennis Murphy, “Oh Jae Shik’s Life Story and reflections for the past three decades,” LOCOA Community Organization Workshop / Board Meeting, 4-10-08.

³⁵ Carl S. Dudley, “Doing justice: congregations and community organizing,” *Christian Century*, Nov 14, 2001.

“Christ led me to Marx,” Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal asserted.³⁶ In liberation theology, the economic, political, and social aspirations of Man are given a spiritual dimension. “The trivialization of religion often occurs as the construal of religious devotion as in ways too idealistic to be relevant to the ‘more real,’ secular world of politics.”³⁷ Material social justice – “this-world” liberation – is pursued through institutional church activism and theology is given an appropriate twist to support its Marxist interpretation of scriptures. For instance, the very noble concept of recognizing the special vulnerability – and therefore special consideration – of poor people is construed to mean that the poor should seize power:

The option for the poor has become very central in both the praxis and theory of liberation theology. This same option for the poor, especially understood in terms of the powerless, characterizes the Alinsky method of organization. Alinsky definitely sides with the powerless – the have-nots – in their struggle.”³⁸

³⁶ Michael Novak, *Will It Liberate? Questions About Liberation Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p 13.

³⁷ Michael Byrd, “‘You Will Rebuild Your Ancient Ruins:’ Religion, the IAF, and Community-Based Organizing in Metropolitan Nashville,” Vanderbilt University, Department of Religion, 1996.

³⁸ Charles Curran, *Directions in Catholic Social Ethics*, essay “Saul. D. Alinsky, Catholic Social Practice, and Catholic Theory,” 1985. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* contains a section on “Love of the Poor,” which has been the Church’s constant tradition. (#2443-2463). However, the CCC also makes plain that “Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts.” (#2423) In addition, *The Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation*, by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1984)

Charles Curran, a writer and “theologian” who has been at odds with Catholic teaching and whose mandate to teach in the name of the Church was therefore withdrawn, has very credibly compared Alinsky’s approach to community organization to current movements in liberation theology. He writes:

There are many similarities between Alinsky’s community organization approach and liberation theology....An important similarity concerns the basic understanding of sociology and epistemology. Liberation theology rightly reacts against a value-free sociology with its claim of arriving at totally objective truth and its emphasis on quantitative analysis. A value-free approach by its very nature tends to identify with and reinforce the status quo. Knowledge is not as objective and independent of human involvement as a classical understanding once thought. The sociology of knowledge reminds us that all knowledge is situated and subject to prejudice. One must approach existing realities and thought patterns with ideological suspicion....There is no dispassionate objectivity. Rationalization is an important human reality with which any organizer must come to grips.”³⁹

makes the point that “We should recall that the preferential option described at Puebla is two-fold: for the poor and for the young. It is significant that the option for the young has in general been passed over in total silence.” (Pg. 8, #6) IAF activity is particularly biased against the preborn.

³⁹ “Saul. D. Alinsky, *Catholic Social Practice...*” Contrast this to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Sections #2464-2499 deal with the subject of truth. Of particular interest is #2499, which describes – and decries – the systematic falsification of the truth by states to further their own

Curran believes that the United States social justice movement will necessarily be experienced differently than it is in Latin America where “liberation theology” is their distinctive response to social injustice. Alinsky’s approach to community organization, according to him, offers great promise for Catholics and he cites Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation’s long history of association with the Roman Catholic Church, mentioning its establishment of the Campaign for Human Development which:

In addition to funding community organizations ...also has an educational campaign aimed at making Catholics and others more aware of the problems of poverty. The vast majority of funding goes to self-help projects involving community organizing using conflictual means in an attempt to bring about substantive changes within the social, economic, and political system. The conflictual character of these community organizations indicate that they are based on the Alinsky model of community organization.⁴⁰

Against this background, Curran develops his theological and ethical comparison between liberation theology and Alinsky’s approach to community organizing. Structurally, their similarities lie, he says, in their mutual rejection of “a value-free sociology

political control. Further, *Veritatis Splendor* (Pope John Paul II,) was written to affirm the Catholic proclamation of not only fixed and unchanging moral and epistemological truth, but the capacity of man to know and respond to it.
⁴⁰ “Saul. D. Alinsky, *Catholic Social Practice...*” p. 149. Reference is from Bernard F. Evans, “Campaign for Human Development: Church Involvement in Social Change,” *Review of Religious Research*, 20 (1979): 266, 267.

with its claim of arriving at totally objective truth and its emphasis on quantitative analysis.”⁴¹ In an attempt to understand the rationalizations of the people they work for and against, organizers and liberation theology proponents alike filter all reality through the varied lenses of different groups of self-interest.

Liberation theology and Alinskyian organizing both emerge out of a concern over the material welfare of the poor and powerless. Both have developed techniques of “conscientization,” approaches to “popular education” which draw the oppressed or the underclass to become aware of their own inferior status and angry enough to take action, seeking societal changes. Curran writes:

Liberation theology gives great importance to Paulo Friere’s pedagogy of the oppressed. In the process called ‘conscientization,’ through an unalienating and liberating cultural action, the oppressed person perceives and modifies one’s relationship to the world....Although Alinsky does not use the word ‘conscientization,’ there is no doubt that such a process is the cornerstone of his method....The people must learn that through their power they can bring about change. Raising consciousness is a part of Alinsky’s overarching commitment to popular education.”⁴²

⁴¹ “Saul. D. Alinsky, *Catholic Social Practice...*” p. 156-7.

⁴² “Saul. D. Alinsky, *Catholic Social Practice...*” The use of the techniques of “conscientization” by IAF organizers has been reported elsewhere, too. Maryann Eklund (*Structure and Function of the Rhetoric of Valley Interfaith*, pp. 82-83) describes the use of “values clarification” by the Texas IAF local, Valley Interfaith. “Both leaders and potential members first attended a training session where questions about individual values were raised....The clarification of individual values with emphasis on living out professed values was begun early in recruitment sessions. Through the avenues of education

Liberation theology and Alinskyian organizing both use conflict to propel the action toward change, polarizing and demonizing the enemy, although Alinsky and the IAF were non-violent and lawful, as a matter of self-preservation. Both collect power as a means to achieve that change. Both “use” religious institutions and the faith of the people in them to achieve these ends.

In this context ‘faith’ does not mean a particular system of religious beliefs, but a more general affirmation that life has meaning. Congregations convey traditions which connect people in the present and hold them accountable to the past and future generations. These institutions - churches, synagogues, mosques, temples - are built on networks of family and neighborhood...

The root of the word ‘religion’ is re-ligare, which means to bind together that which is disconnected. The best elements in our religious traditions are inclusive - respecting diversity, and conveying a plurality of symbols which incorporate the experience of diverse people.⁴³

Curran notes differences, too. Given “different levels of expression of Marxism,” Curran acknowledges the Marxist analysis

and values clarification, Cortes and Drake conducted workshops for the first group of leaders aimed at bringing the values and anger of the people to the surface...The sessions began with a talk about the Valley’s historical background, which was followed by value-clarification exercises.”

⁴³ Ernesto Cortes, “Renewing the Social Fabric,” *Boston Review* (Democracy Project), Winter 1994/95.

inherent to liberationism but feels that Alinsky is committed to “true democracy” which, although Curran does not identify it as such, are also the claims of Democratic Socialism. He feels that,

Alinsky, however, recognizes that democracy itself is only a means and not an end. It is the best means of achieving the values proposed by the Judeo-Christian and the democratic political traditions - equality, justice, freedom, peace, and the preciousness of life with its basic rights.⁴⁴

Liberation theology tends to focus on and organize around one single aspect of oppression, Curran says, while the genius of Alinsky was in his development of the organization foremost for its power, which is then put at the use of whatever issues present themselves. As a result, Alinskyian organizations are more flexible and more capable of compromise than the highly idealistic radicals of South America’s revolutions.

Most significantly, Curran explains that liberation theology has grown out of a Christian and Catholic “context,” whereas Alinsky’s theories were, in and of themselves, forged independently of religion. However, in this distinction, the modern IAF, he believes – and one might add, the other Alinskyian networks, as well – is narrowing the gap, and places itself ever more firmly inside of “religious” language and gesture.

BASE COMMUNITIES

The most useful structure of liberationism has been the base community, a small fellowship of co-religionists who are accountable to one another and committed to a politicized view of

⁴⁴. “Saul. D. Alinsky, Catholic Social Practice...” p. 161.

the world.⁴⁵

Base communities began in Latin America as perversions within Catholic parishes. Alinskyian organizing adopted that model and one can find particularly well-developed examples of liberationism invading North American Catholic communities through them. For example, Albuquerque Interfaith – an affiliate of the IAF – conducted leadership development workshops in various area congregations during the 90s. At Our Lady of Guadalupe,⁴⁶ the organizer offered to interview potential new leaders *for the parish*, which would have the benefit, he explained, of developing leadership not only for the IAF Interfaith but for the parish's RENEW program.

RENEW was a Catholic program that at one time was widely marketed for diocesan spiritual renewal and evangelization. It was developed by the dissident Catholic movement, Call to Action, defender Archbishop Peter Gerety and had a strong, progressively-biased, political “social justice” component. That component was frequently translated into a mandate to participate in Alinsky-style community organization.

The most salient aspect of the three year RENEW program was establishment of smaller “communities” within each parish for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. This was a critical component to Marxist organizing in South America among churches swallowed up by the liberation theology movement and is a significant structure in certain Alinskyian locals.

Harold McDougall,⁴⁷ writing prior to 1993, traces the

⁴⁵ Small base communities go by many terms – some of the most prevalent alternatives being “small faith communities,” “small ecclesial communities,” or “small Christian communities,” as well as acronyms such as SCC, SBC, etc.

⁴⁶ June, 1996

⁴⁷ Harold McDougall, *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community*, (State University of New York Press, 1993).

influence that the North American version of liberation theology, such as that espoused by black historian, writer, and Democratic Socialist, Dr. Cornel West, has had on the Baltimore IAF whose participating pastors networked together to develop a “consistent” theology. He describes the intimate fellowships that BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development) encourages. Integral to these small communities is Bible study and prayer, the “text” of which is always related to the “context” of community.

However, the “religious” elements of these groups, particularly those under IAF control, are clearly subordinate to the organization. That is, the organization makes use of religion to further its own intentions.

An identity needs symbols and rituals to sustain it. Prayers are an important part of religious practice for all Christians. IAF organizations start all meetings with a prayer...Prayer serves to tap the religious sentiment that motivated many leaders to get involved with the IAF. Moreover, they act as symbols to remind participants of their religious commonality.

Since these prayers are to serve a unifying function, they typically draw from scriptures that stress the importance of Community. Prayers that emphasize affirmation of faith, or that are associated too strongly with particular denominations, are avoided. Instead, ministers (and leaders) say prayers that call people to social action, or that refer to the rebuilding of community. For example, before the start of COPS’ [San Antonio local, Communities Organized for Public Service] 20th anniversary convention, Father Al Jost told the story of

Ezekiel’s prophecy for the rebuilding of Jerusalem;
he did not say the ‘Hail Mary.’⁴⁸

Along the same lines, Ernesto Cortes is quoted as having said that “all of the sponsoring churches [in the IAF] believe in making a preferential option for the poor, the people who in a biblical sense have not yet come to the table. Christ said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ He was the Good Shepherd who brings his flock into the life of the community.”⁴⁹ Cortes constructs a confused image. Christ’s kingdom, which is not of this world, together with its Eucharistic table, has always made a “preferential option” for the poor. The biblical sense of “poor,” as in “poor of spirit,” is not what the Catholic Church has meant when it has called for a “preferential option” for the material poor in an earthly sense. Cortes is blurring the two concepts, as if there were no distinction.

This is similar to the abuse of scripture in Latin America in which the Bible is “re-read” – in other words, is reinterpreted – through a liberationist lens to provide support for its ideological aims. The similarity *doesn’t* lie with a shared or common “outcome,” for unlike Marxist Christians in Latin America, Alinskyian organizations aren’t fomenting violent revolution but for peaceful “systemic change.” Both, however, are retelling scripture for materialistic ends. God’s intervention on behalf of the Israelites to protect Jerusalem (as told in the Biblical story of Nehemiah) is interpreted by the IAF to provide providential support for their Nehemiah housing projects in New York,

⁴⁸ Mark R. Warren, *Creating a Multi-Racial Democratic Community: A Case Study of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation*, Introduction, Ph.D. Dissertation Harvard University, 1995.

⁴⁹ Kaye Northcott, “To Agitate the Dispossessed...On the Road with Ernie Cortes,” “Southern Exposure, July/August 1985.

California, and Tennessee.

The base communities formed at the instigation of Alinskyian organizations or at the instigation of proponents of liberation theology and other such groups with a “guided” materialistic content are different from *spiritually* motivated small faith-fellowships and Bible study groups. The common denominator of Alinskyian and liberationist base communities can be appreciated in the comments of Latin American liberation theologian Carlos Mesters:

When the [base] community takes shape on the basis of the real-life problems of the people, then the discovery of the Bible is an enormous reinforcement.

“When the community takes shape only around the reading of the Bible, then it faces a crisis as soon as it must move on to social and political issues...”⁵⁰

The real significance of the base community to the Alinskyian organizer is in the “joint interpretation and celebration of the hopeful messages of the Bible that empowered these people, giving them a sense of direction and purpose as well as a sense of self-worth.”⁵¹ It is in the base community that the deeper, stronger “relationships” of a community can be forged, where people share not merely a common political ambition, but their intimate and personal concerns. Such close-knit fellowships then “feed” into the political goals of the larger group, for “people identify with, and follow, their leaders”⁵² who are well-known and trusted.

⁵⁰ *Black Baltimore...*, p. 161, quoting Carlos Mesters, “The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People.”

⁵¹ *Black Baltimore...*, p. 162.

⁵² *Black Baltimore...*, p 164.

The base communities of the Alinskyians don't discuss Marxist praxis but the "participatory democracy" of the Democratic Socialists. Along the Mexican-Texan border in the Diocese of Brownsville there are 500 small communities which have been networked together since the late 1980s, "working to change our social reality through Valley Interfaith of the Industrial Areas Foundation."⁵³ While the model may be the Christian base communities of Latin America's liberation theology movement, with its small study groups and facilitated discussions "of what community is for, the people involved, and what obstacles to community they think exist, always using the text of the Bible as a central resonating point for the discussion,"⁵⁴ it is, in the words of Harry Boyte, "decontextualized." That is, the base community model is redesigned to operate in a "post-industrial society, whose economy is based on information rather than tilling of land."⁵⁵

The IAF shapes the use of this religious culture by its consensual political strategy. It frames its issues within a broader context of religious and family values. Meanwhile, *it taps religious symbols and practices, like prayers, for political purposes.*⁵⁶
[Emphasis added.]

For his part, Curran sees in these organizational efforts of the IAF an attempt to respond to Catholic social justice teaching, which provides, in his estimation, a "middle ground or a third way

⁵³ "Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Communities," taken from the "Renewing our Church Directory" published by Call to Action <http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/cta/nc-end.html>.

⁵⁴ *Black Baltimore*...p. 181.

⁵⁵ *Black Baltimore*...p182.

⁵⁶ *Creating a Multi-Racial Democratic Community*....

between the extremes of individualistic capitalism and totalitarian Socialism.” The “participatory democracy” of the democratic socialists and Alinskyian organizers may well represent a “middle ground” between the two erroneous (although, not equally so⁵⁷) positions of *lassaiz faire* capitalism and “right-wing” Marxism, but Democratic Socialism is not the solution that the Church provides when she cries for true social justice.

THE INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION AND LIBERATIONISM

There has been specific mention of how Alinskyian organizing, generally speaking, promotes liberationist distortion of legitimate religious thought but now we must consider how the various networks promote this distortion. The IAF, as the oldest of these networks – and their prototype – provides the most developed and well-examined examples of these distortions. We read:

The IAF’s lead organizers from around the United States are avid readers of theology and social science texts and will periodically meet with theologians and other academics for discussions. The success of this network of metropolitan organizing groups is due to its awareness that the spiritual ‘capital’ found in faith communities is an essential source of social change.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Catholic teaching distinguishes between the *intrinsic* errors of socialism and the *tendencies* toward other errors of capitalism. *Tendencies* can be curbed; *intrinsic* errors can only be rejected.

⁵⁸ George E. Schultze, SJ, “Work, Worship, and *Laborem Exercens* in the United States Today,” working draft paper, University of San Francisco, undated. Schultze refers the reader to Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Scholzman and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995): “[These religious institutions] play an unusual role in the American

That's pretty unambiguous. The *spiritual capital* of the IAF lies in its relationship to religious bodies. Since the 60s, when the Brazilian Paulo Freire – a practitioner of “adult literacy”⁵⁹ who was influenced by the socialist Antonio Gramsci⁶⁰ and involved in promoting a distorted variant of Catholic Action⁶¹ – came to the US, the IAF has been engaged in promoting liberationism to those bodies.

Freire coined the term conscientization or consciousness-raising to “describe authentic education.” By this, Freire meant that it was not enough to teach people to read or write but that they must also be taught to participate in the political process, with issues framed through the lens of Marxist analysis, particularly the notion of class struggle. Right education, he believed, leads to action and right action leads to the creation of a socialist world: “authentic praxis seeks permanent transformation of the social structure.”⁶²

Freire came to the United States in the late 1960s, having been exiled from his native country for “bolshevizing the

participatory system by providing opportunities for the development of civic skills to those who would otherwise be resource-poor.” P. 18-19.

⁵⁹ Freire’s educational theories are often translated under the term “critical pedagogy.”

⁶⁰ Paulo Freire, “We Make The Path by Walking,” ed. by Bell, Gaventa, and Peters, Temple University Press, c. Highlander Research and Education Center, p. 36-38.

⁶¹ In Brazil, the Catholic Action movement was strongly influenced by Cardijn philosophy; Michael Campbell, *Young Workers becoming Critical*, thesis for the degree in Master of Education, University of South Australia, 1994, chapter 2.

⁶² Denis E. Collins, S.J., Paulo Freire: His Life, Works and Thought, New York: Paulist Press, 1977. The quote is from p. 68, where Collins is distilling Freire’s thought from *About Cultural Action*, pp. 121-134.

country.”⁶³ He taught at Harvard University and also collaborated with Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Research and Education Center, “a mecca” for progressives “who came not only to learn leadership and organizing techniques but also to discuss and think through new ideas and strategies for social change.”⁶⁴

Saul Alinsky was among those who supported the Highlander and in at least one case helped to bail it out of an “economic emergency.”⁶⁵ The connection is significant, because conscientization techniques made their way from Freire through Highlander to Alinsky, who began to urge the active and deliberate “consciousness-raising” of people through the technique of “popular education.”⁶⁶ Popular education – conscientization – is a method by which an organizer leads people to a class-based interpretation of their grievances, and to accept the organizer’s systemic solutions to address those grievances.⁶⁷

Through the People’s Organization these groups
[of citizens] discover that what they considered
primarily their individual problem is also the

⁶³ Drick Boyd, “Pedagogy for the Reign of God: A Theological Perspective on the Educational Philosophy of Paulo Freire,” Eastern University Working Paper, 8-9-07.

⁶⁴ Highlander Center: Historical and Philosophical Tour,” a “Little History,” section, www.cals.cornell.edu/dept/education/haugen/tour.htm, accessed 12-1-96.

⁶⁵ Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, New York: Vintage Books, 1989, p. 245-6.

⁶⁶ Chapter 9 of *Reveille for Radicals* is titled “Popular Education.” In California, the IAF experimented with what it termed “educationals;” in Texas, the IAF locals used values clarification techniques.

⁶⁷ “Popular Education” is another term for Paulo Freire’s pedagogy. For a brief and sympathetic biography: paginaspersonales.deusto.es/igomez/Freire.pdf.

problem of others, and furthermore the only hope for solving an issue of such titanic proportions is by pooling all their efforts and strengths. That appreciation and conclusion is an educational process.⁶⁸

Liberationism and conscientizing have gone hand in hand and one finds them both promulgated by the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) in San Antonio, Texas.⁶⁹ One of the liberationists who taught at MACC was Peruvian Father Gustavo Gutierrez, called by some the Father of Liberation Theology. He came under Vatican investigation during the 1990s and allegedly renounced his earlier, more radical articulations.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, his more problematic writings and teachings were widely spread throughout North America.

The notes of a 1974 course given by Father Gutierrez at MACC state that in a free society, “private ownership of the means of production will be eliminated.”⁷¹ He calls for the “deprivatization” of religious faith⁷² and interprets the “preferential option for the poor” in terms of class struggle. “It means taking a revolutionary socialist choice and thus assuming a

⁶⁸ Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, Vintage Books, New York, 1946, 1969, p 156.

⁶⁹ The name was changed to the Mexican American Catholic College in 2008 – though its acronym continues to be MACC and the address remains the same. One account of the change is: *Catholic News Service*, “Mexican American Cultural Center evolves into Catholic college,” 10-29-08.

⁷⁰ Alver Metalli, “Gutierrez Revised and Corrected,” *30Days*, September-October 1990, pp. 48-53.

⁷¹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *Praxis de Liberacion y Fe Cristiana/Praxis of Liberation and Christian Faith*, Mexican American Cultural Center, 1974, p. 2.

⁷² *Praxis de Liberacion*...,p. 12.

political task in an all encompassing perspective, a task more scientific and conflictive that it seemed to be in the first stages of political commitment.”⁷³

Another influential liberationist lecturer at MACC was the Brazilian Father Leonardo Boff, silenced by the Vatican in 1985. The Notification found among other things that Boff believed Church hierarchy was a vestige of Roman and feudal society that required change. A “new church” must arise, he taught, which would be “an alternative for the incarnation of new ecclesial institutions whose power will be pure service.” The Notification accuses Boff of “ecclesiological relativism,” and of teaching that “dogma in its formulation holds good only ‘for a specific time and specific circumstances’.” Consequently, “the truly Catholic attitude” would be “to be fundamentally open to everything without exception.”⁷⁴ Boff and MACC’s founder, Rev. Virgilio Elizondo, edited several issues of *Concilium*, a journal of theological trends, highly supportive of liberationist ideas, which came out well after the Vatican Notification.⁷⁵

MACC was founded by the San Antonio organization Padres Asociados para los Derechos Religiosos, Educativos, y Sociales (PADRES, United Priests for Religious Education and Social Causes) in 1972.

The leadership of PADRES was strongly
influenced by the theological trends and activities

⁷³ *Praxis de Liberacion . . .*, pp. 13-16.

⁷⁴ Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Notification to Father Leonardo Boff, March 11, 1985.

⁷⁵ *Concilium* #199, “Theologies of the Third World: Convergences and Differences,” ed. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988. This issue of *Concilium* also contains an article by Boff, “What Are Third World Theologies?” Also, Issue #187, “Option for the Poor! Challenge to the Rich Countries,” 1987; Issue #176, “La Inglesia Popular: Between Fear and Hope,” autumn 1985.

in Latin America, especially liberation theology...Among successful projects was the establishment of the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, founded by Father Virgilio Elizondo, who was a major influence on PADRES through the activities of the center and his theological writings.”⁷⁶

It was no secret that MACC frequently invited “from all over Latin America spokesmen for what has come to be called Liberation Theology.”⁷⁷ Auxiliary Bishop Patrick Flores was one of MACC’s founders and fundraisers, as well as chairman of the Board,⁷⁸ saw the Center as a way to assist Hispanic Catholics “recognize the value of their own cultural identity and prepare them for community and professional leadership.” Many summers, Bishop Flores himself taught a course at MACC, generally on some facet of pastoral theology, while Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonard Boff, and Bishop Samuel Ruiz of Chiapas, Mexico⁷⁹ taught liberationism.⁸⁰ Liberationism, according to the liberationists, was the essence of Hispanic⁸¹ “cultural identity.”

Before MACC changed its name in 2008 and became a

⁷⁶ “PADRES,” from *The Handbook...*

⁷⁷ Martin McMurtrey, *Mariachi Bishop: The Life Story of Patrick Flores*, San Antonio: Corona Publishing Company, 1987. p. 3.

⁷⁸ 1983, 1998

⁷⁹ Genevieve H. Coonly, “The Coming of the Third World Church to North America,” (El Paso: St. Michael the Archangel Foundation, from a series of talks 1983-1986), p 18.

⁸⁰ *Mariachi Bishop ...*, pp. 81-83.

⁸¹ The term “Hispanic” has been hotly contested as it belies the diversity of thought and background among the people it attempts to describe. However, this was the term in vogue when Gutierrez and Boff were speaking at MACC.

“college,” about 80 publications on the subject of liberation theology, including the works of Gutierrez and Boff, could be purchased at its bookstore in San Antonio.⁸² These (and other) titles offered by MACC are problematic. One, for instance, dedicated to the Industrial Areas Foundation, “identifies groups of sinners as oppressed members of society who are marginalized and dehumanized by thoughtless oppressors.”

The second part of the booklet, “How Can We Use the Gospels as a Basis for Our Action?” contains a “version” of the Magnificat⁸³ that was written by a group of IAF leaders, specifically, leaders from the San Antonio IAF local, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS). This reformulation of scripture is offered as an example of how one is “to reflect on the Gospels in order to find the proper response to our own situation” when using a see-judge-act pedagogy of conscientization.

C.O.P.S. Manifesto
Communities Organized for Public Service
From Luke 1:46-55

46. Our community speaks; We proclaim the
love of God and

47. Our hearts are filled with joy; Because God
has been with us in our struggles and

48. the powerful will call us a joyful people for
they will recognize our freedom and blessings;

49. He brings justice and peace (Shalom) to the
oppressed;

50. Our ancestors have known Him as Holy, as

⁸² MACC Bookstore Catalogue 1995-1997, p. 8 “Subject listing – Liberation Theology.” It contains about 80 titles.

⁸³ Luke 1:46-55

we know Him and our people honor Him;
51. He stretches His powerful arms and liberates
us from the clutches and snares of the power
brokers – those who rob the afflicted and needy;
52. He brings down bankers, developers, oil
barons, and raises our barrios and ghettos;
53. He fills our hungry with good things and the
rich, He sends away empty;
54. He keeps His promise to Juan Diego,
Eleonor [sic] Roosevelt, Martin Luther King and
55. will be with us forever:

Elsewhere in the booklet, readers are instructed to rewrite the parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of the Crucifixion “to make it fit the world you know today.”⁸⁴

Virgilio Elizondo, the founder of MACC, unfolded his liberationist ideas in a number of materials available in the MACC bookstore. His *Introduction to Pastoral Theology* developed the thesis of the oppressed Spanish-speaking peoples of the United States⁸⁵ and detailed the “dialectics of: oppressed – oppressor” from which, after a painful process – “true liberation is a childbirth, and as every childbirth, it will be a painful one”–

⁸⁴ Timothy Matovina CSB, “Blessed Are the Christian Peacemakers, For They Shall Confront the Unjust,” MACC publication, 1983. “Dedicated to the Industrial Areas Foundation, Citizens Organized for Public Service of San Antonio...”, Foreword, Preface, and pp 9, 14-15, 18. The “booklet arose out of a course on peace and justice in the New Testament. This course took place at the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas from June 14-18, 1982. The course was led by Father John Linskens, CICM...[and] by Mr. Ernesto Cortes, a National Staff member of the Industrial Areas Foundation...” (Preface)

⁸⁵ Virgilio Elizondo, *Introduction to Pastoral Theology*, MACC publication, third edition, 1974, part II, chapter 3.

there emerges a “new man – not an oppressor, not developed-oppressed, not oppressed, but truly a new man.”⁸⁶ Elizondo sees this as liberation from the old order, including oppressive church structures, and “a rebirth into the beginning of a new order.”⁸⁷

Elizondo has also written: “As great and important as our priests and official liturgies are, you don’t have to go through a priest or an official ritual of the Church to enter into communion with God....Hispanic Catholics have been at the vanguard of the renewal of Vatican II, introducing such breakthrough movements as...the basic Christian communities (small faith communities) and community organizing movements which are redefining the Church.”⁸⁸

CALL TO ACTION – FOMENTING DISSIDENCE WITHIN THE CHURCH

Considering the challenges against the Catholic Church such remarks presented, it is no surprise that MACC and the San Antonio IAF local are related to Call to Action, an organization promoting Catholic dissidence. MACC was instrumental in producing Call to Action’s 1976 working paper on “Neighborhood,” and MACC representatives, as well as those from the San Antonio IAF local, COPS, and from PADRES, were involved in preliminary Call to Action “hearings,” both as speakers and as panelists, besides having several strong supporters on its writing committee.⁸⁹ Small wonder that the

⁸⁶ *Introduction to Pastoral Theology* ...p 123.

⁸⁷ *Introduction to Pastoral Theology*...p 124.

⁸⁸ Virgilio Elizondo, “Hispanic Gifts,” *The Catholic Update*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, June 2000, regarding “Encuentro 2000: The Many Faces in God’s House.”

⁸⁹ Transcript of the NCCB Bicentennial Hearing in San Antonio, “Nationhood,” April 3-5, 1975. The NCCB body that coordinated the preliminary Call to Action hearings was the Committee for the Bicentennial. Virgilio Elizondo, MACC founder and president, was a Committee

Call to Action ratified draft included recommendations for parish support of interfaith and neighborhood coalitions and that:

...a budgetary item of every parish to support competent neighborhood/community action groups be considered necessary for neighborhood preservation and development; that diocesan agencies should provide resources for training current and potential leaders; that each diocese provide as a minimum, matching funds in support of any contribution to competent neighborhood/community action groups.⁹⁰

Call to Action (CTA) has always supported liberationism. For example, Jim Wallis, who had three books recommended in the general resource section of the 1995-1997 MACC Bookstore Catalogue, has been a speaker in the Call to Action stable.⁹¹ CTA's 1996 "We Are Church: A Catholic Referendum" outlined

consultant and a member of the Religious Subcommittee. He also had an article in the "Ethnicity and Race" section of the Discussion Guide that introduced the themes of the Bicentennial Call to Action process. Msgr. Geno Baroni, a staff member of MACC and an "architect" in the creation of the Catholic lobbying organization NETWORK, had another article in the same section of Discussion Guide, "An Introduction."

⁹⁰ "A Call to Action: The Justice Conference Resolutions of the Church," *Origins*, November 4, 1976, Section on "Neighborhoods, Recommendation concerning "The Church and Neighborhood Action," # 2.

⁹¹ Call to Action "Speakers and Artists Referral Service," cta-usa.org/resstars.html. The page explains, before it provides its list of possible speakers: "This service is being provided at the request of our Call to Action Regional chapters. It is intended to facilitate their selection of speakers and performers for regional conferences and seminars."

some of the essential beliefs of the CTA movement. They include belief in lay participation in the process of selecting bishops and pastors, the inclusion of women in all ministries, including the diaconate and the ministerial priesthood, a non-celibate priesthood, birth control, the moral permissibility of homosexuality and divorce, and unrestricted freedom of speech for all theologians.⁹² Additional Call to Action member organizations added the “right” to abortion to the list.

Most significantly, for the purposes of this discussion, has been Call to Action’s support of Alinskyian faith-based organizing, pagan environmental and feminist movements, and liberation theology, including the liberationist goal of replacing a hierarchical church with a “participatory” structure.⁹³ Liberationists have been frequent speakers at Call to Action Conferences. A sampling includes:

- The 1993 national CTA Conference featured Miguel D’Escoto, a Maryknoll priest and former Sandinista Foreign Minister⁹⁴
- The 1996 national CTA Conference featured Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, whose writings include *En La Lucha: A Hispanic Women’s Liberation Theology*.⁹⁵ Diana Hayes, a proponent of black liberation theology, spoke about “womenist theology.”⁹⁶

⁹² Call to Action, “We Are Church: A Catholic Referendum.” 1996; also Walton R. Collins, “A Lifetime of Action,” *Notre Dame Magazine*, autumn 1998.

⁹³ Many of these are openly identified in the *Call to Action Renewal Directory*, 1996 Internet Edition, Texas Listings.

⁹⁴ “D’Escoto: Remember Nicaragua?” *Call to Action News*, January 1994.

⁹⁵ 1996 National CTA Conference Flyer, speaker bios.

⁹⁶ “Hayes Counts Gifts of Black Women,” *CTA News*, December 1995-January 1996.

- Tissa Balasuriya, the Vatican-sanctioned liberation theologian, addressed the 1998 CTA national conference on “Theological Reflections on the Way to Jubilee.” Colombian liberationist Sr. Carmiña Navia Velasco spoke about “Women in the Bible: Oppression and Liberation.”⁹⁷ Jeanette Rodriguez shared “insights from that unique species of feminist liberation theology that emerges from the experience and reflection of Hispanic women.”⁹⁸
- In 1999, three feminist liberationists spoke on a panel moderated by Rosemary Radford Ruether at the CTA national conference: Sr. Mary John Mananzan (Philippines), Maria Pilar Aquino (US), and Teresa Hinga (Kenyan). “We saw right away that being a liberation theologian does not mean being gender sensitive,” said Mananzan.⁹⁹ Ruether, addressing the May 1998 CTA Wisconsin meeting, said: “With the Vatican attack on liberation theology, it becomes evident that class conflict divides the Church as well, separating a Church of the poor from a Church who wants to extend condolences to the poor from the side of the powerful, while concealing and denying their own political option.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ 1998 National CTA Conference Flyer.

⁹⁸ 1998 National CTA Conference Flyer.

⁹⁹ Tom Roberts, “Feminist Theology ‘Must Lead to Action,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, 12-17-99.

¹⁰⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Crises and Challenges of Catholicism Today,” CTA Wisconsin meeting, May 1998. A Call to Action “foundation document.”

- The 2000 CTA national conference included Chung Hyun-Kyung, billed as an Asian feminist liberation theologian.
- The three 2001 CTA national conferences each have a panel titled “Forgotten Colonies? Liberation Theology Today.” Speakers include Otto Maduro of Venezuela (author of *The Future of Liberation Theology*), Kwok Pui-lan of China (author of *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*), Elsa Tamez a Methodist liberationist of Mexico and Costa Rica (author of *Bible of the Oppressed*), and Rosemary Radford Ruether, the American eco-feminist, looking for “resources in the Christian tradition to bring liberation and justice to earth.”¹⁰¹

Call to Action solicited a letter writing campaign on behalf of the Brazilian feminist theologian Ivone Gebara who, according to a CTA ChurchWatch news brief, was “forced by her religious community under Vatican pressure to leave Brazil for a theological exile in Belgium....[she] is a leader in eco-feminism in Latin America and develops her liberation theology out of her work with poor women...”¹⁰² CTA responded similarly to the excommunication of Fr. Tissa Balasuriya of Sri Lanka, urging that letters supportive of reconciliation be written to Balasuriya’s Oblate Superior General.¹⁰³

MACC, as a CTA-supportive body, therefore has the function of re-educating Catholics from Catholic theology into liberationism: “The Alinsky organizers even had their own training institute in San Antonio to educate the clergy and

¹⁰¹ 2001 National CTA Conference flyer.

¹⁰² “Newsbriefs from the Church Reform Network,” *ChurchWatch*, 2-96.

¹⁰³ “Getting Around,” *CTA News*, September 1997.

civilians on ‘social justice’ issues.”¹⁰⁴ Ernesto Cortes¹⁰⁵ frequently instructed at MACC and Father Virgil Elizondo, MACC’s director at the time, was also a disciple of Alinsky’s ideas. MACC curriculum, as one can see from the above-mentioned course and bookstore offerings, “emphasized the principles of ‘liberation theology’ and the development of ‘base communities’ in the barrios and depressed neighborhoods.”¹⁰⁶ The late Jack Egan, at various times, served on the Boards of both MACC and the IAF, as did Bishop Flores.¹⁰⁷

It is important to understand how fundamentally this liberationist-CTA-Alinskyian organizing movement attacks Catholic teaching. Rosemary Ruether, addressing the May 1998 CTA Wisconsin meeting, said: “The present Vatican leadership basically thinks of truth as single, unitary, and verbally definable. It also seems to believe it has a charisma to define such truth that makes it immune from the ordinary human processes of verification through experience.”¹⁰⁸

In a CTA “Foundation Document” from 1982, presented at

¹⁰⁴ Thomas W. Pauken, *Thirty Years War: The Politics of the Sixties Generation*, (Ottawa, Illinois: Jameson Books, Inc., 1995), p 179.

¹⁰⁵ Cortes was lead organizer of the San Antonio IAF affiliate, COPS.

¹⁰⁶ *Thirty Years War ...*, p 179.

¹⁰⁷ Egan and Flores on 1983 MACC and IAF Boards, see “The Coming of the Third World Church...,” pp. 14 and 22. Egan on IAF Board, see IAF 990 for 1999 (available at www.guidestar.com); Flores on 1998 Board, see Mexican American Cultural Center 990 for 1998 (available at www.guidestar.com). Flores and MACC encouraged Bishop Juan Arzube, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles (see above, concerning the Riobamba incident) to hire IAF organizer and start a LA IAF local during the mid-1970s. “Bishop Arzube put together a sponsoring committee and raised about \$100,000 for the effort.” [Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger: A Story of Faith and Power Politics*, University of North Texas Press, 1990, p 130.]

¹⁰⁸ “Crises and Challenges of Catholicism Today...,” A Call to Action “foundation document.”

the Chicago CTA Conference that year, Gregory Baum describes the “new religious experience” that he opposes to “pietism,” where “religious experience mediates the soul’s encounter with God:”

This new religious experience tested by the Scriptures, gave rise to theological investigation. Theologians who shared the same social justice commitment explored the meaning of the Christian message from this new perspective. What do the sacred texts of Scripture mean when they are read out of an identification with the poor and oppressed? What emerged in the church was a new theological school, referred to as ‘liberation theology’ or ‘political theology,’ which argued that social commitment is the starting point for theological reflection and that in turn the norm of truth operative in theological reflection is the justice praxis which flows from it.¹⁰⁹

The goal is to make religion serve politics. Another CTA “Foundation Document” is an interview with Sr. Miriam Theresa MacGillis, one of the “foremost interpreters” of the work of Thomas Berry. It explains Berry and MacGillis’ notion of spiritual evolution, the all-inclusive nature of the divine (including animal spirits), and the shamanistic capacity of all people which is “a potential of the full human person.” When MacGillis is asked what people can do to “strengthen that sense of the sacredness of the Earth” she replies:

¹⁰⁹ Gregory Baum, “The Church since Vatican II: Prophetic Sign of Hope,” Chicago CTA Conference, November 1982, a CTA “Foundation Document.”

Our spirituality has to be extremely practical... We also have to open up the kitchen cabinets, look at the labels and see what we're putting into our bodies and pouring down our drains. I think it's as close as what kinds of clothes we're wearing. It's as close as looking at the recycling policy in our neighborhood. And we have to be active voices at the policymaking level. We have to get to know our township officials, find out who's on the planning board, understand development and zoning policies.

To this, the interviewer asked: "And this is all an integral part of our spirituality?" MacGillis responded, "Oh, absolutely!"¹¹⁰

Liberationism reinterprets scriptures and other matters of faith to support the politicizing of religion. In 1999, three feminist liberationists, all members of the Commission of Women Theologians of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, spoke on a panel at the CTA national conference. The women instructed conference participants to read "the Bible from the perspective of Third World women. For 2,000 years it has been taught, interpreted and translated by men."¹¹¹

Liberationism, Call to Action, and Alinskyian organizing all challenge Church authority and its hierarchical structure through the promotion of small base communities.¹¹² Rosemary Radford

¹¹⁰ Alan Atkisson, "Living the New Story: An Interview with Sr. Miriam Theresa MacGillis," A Call to Action "foundation document," undated.

¹¹¹ Tom Roberts, "Feminist Theology 'Must Lead to Action,'" *National Catholic Reporter*, 12-17-99.

¹¹² It's important to stress that the challenge isn't in the existence of small base communities, *per se*, but in their relationship to either CTA, CTA-

Ruether, speaking at a CTA gathering, outlined the development of base communities and said: “These pictures give a vivid sense of how these base communities were defining themselves over against what they saw as a distorted church as hierarchical institution, in contrast to the church as community.”¹¹³

Ruether goes on to say:

This legitimizing myth of apostolic succession needs to be reexamined. It is historically false that Jesus founded or intended to found such an historical church with a hierarchical government based on the model of the Roman empire.... The institutional church of episcopal hierarchy is not the successor of this apostolic church, but arose by suppressing this apostolic church.... There is no original right church structure founded by Christ which alone transmits grace. Christ did not found a group of apostles to be bishops of dioceses...much less did Christ found the papacy, itself modeled after the Roman emperor and his bureaucracy in Rome.¹¹⁴

The 1993 CTA featured a number of talks and workshops supportive of small faith communities. Fr. Pat Brennan “predicted the ‘household or domestic church’ is the model for the new parish: small groups of perhaps ten or fifteen families with a ‘pastoring figure’ relating to each such small gathering.” “Current church structures simply do not fit the Kingdom of God as described in the gospels,” Brennan was described as saying,

related materials (such as RENEW), or to Alinskyian organizing (including CCHD programs like JustFaith).

¹¹³ “Crises and Challenges of Catholicism Today...,” A Call to Action “foundation document.”

¹¹⁴ Crises and Challenges of Catholicism Today...

while encouraging participants to “abstain” from all that is “dysfunctional” in the church. One conference participant said, “We’re getting the idea. It’s almost like the old ocean liner model of the church we once knew is going down and we have to head for smaller boats.”¹¹⁵

At the 1996 CTA Conference, Fr. Art Baronowski told participants “We must begin again as church...reinvent the church, refound the church – with a different structure and leadership.”¹¹⁶ At a keynote address of that conference, Anthony Padovano told participants that “This is an infallible community, not in its popes but in its people...”¹¹⁷

Another CTA “Foundation Document,” written by Matthew Fox, says:

Our energy must go into the people’s church, the base church – a church committed to defending the rights of humans and non-humans. Base communities, base movements, churches where the gospel news of action and non-action is truly happening. Let me give a few examples of base communities happening in our so-called First World or overdeveloped world. Certainly women-church is such a place. Certainly Dignity is such a place.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ “Faith Communities: Wave of the Future,” and “Brennan: Catholics Should ‘Abstain,’” *Call to Action News*, January 1994.

¹¹⁶ “Baronowski: Build Small Communities,” *CTA News*, December 1995-January 1996.

¹¹⁷ “NCR Publishes CTA Keynote Speech,” *CTA News*, December 1995-January 1996.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Fox, “Renewing Ourselves, Our Planet, and Our Church,” *Call to Action Midwest (Chicago) Conference Keynote Address*, February 1990. A CTA “Foundation Document.”

The Industrial Areas Foundation, with its strong connections to MACC and to the CTA movement, is also promoting liberationism and attempting to disengage religious bodies from their foundational theology. Consider the liberationist technique of “popular education,” that is “conscientization” or “values clarification,” to change the values of its target and replace them with the values of the organizer. One reads, for example, that the “IAF seeks to teach groups like Mexican/Americans of San Antonio to build on and then transcend natural ties of family and ethnicity.”¹¹⁹

Or, how about:

Cortes [head organizer for IAF, SW region] knew that Mexican parents willingly sacrificed for their children – and often for their church. By talking about family values, could you motivate and organize people to act politically in their own genuine self-interest?...the new organization had to reach into the heart...The idea of protecting and enhancing families might make that possible.¹²⁰

The implication of such passages is that the religious and family values of Catholics – and, by extension, of any religious body – are useful in so far as they can spark conversation between believers and the IAF. The IAF then uses the relationship built from those values to introduce another set of values – those of the IAF, which are something *different*.

In St. Timothy's Church [in San Antonio], for

¹¹⁹ Peter Skerry, “Neighborhood COPS,” *The New Republic*, Feb. 6, 1984.

¹²⁰ Mary Beth Rodgers, *Cold Anger*, pg. 97.

instance, new catechisms connected biblical and Mexican historical and cultural themes with the current issues COPS [the IAF local] was working on. . . . From such experiences, the [the IAF] developed an ongoing process of community and parish renewal.”¹²¹

As mentioned above, Alinskyian organizing – and specifically the IAF – encourages the formation of small base communities. Participating pastors in the Baltimore IAF, BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development) are networked together in a “peer group, sharing experiences. . . . They are trying to raise consensus-oriented decision-making models for BUILD as a whole on the foundation of their peer relationships. Some are beginning to see the need to share power within their own churches. . . .”¹²²

Small base communities are a useful tool for weaning individuals from their religious roots and pulling them into progressive political action.

[T]hey will also need something more: participation in small, intimate ‘base communities,’ peer groups of a dozen or two dozen people which can evaluate the day’s struggles. . . . This kind of personal, intimate contact with trusted others is a necessary building block for Harry Boyte’s “third way” of citizen engagement. . . . Families are not large or diverse enough to perform such a function. Churches are too large. The contact must take place in a new, smaller form of association in some

¹²¹ Harry Boyte, *Community is Possible: Repairing America's Roots*, 1984, p 149.

¹²² Harry McDougall, *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community*, 1993, chapter 8.

ways similar to the social units liberation theologians in Latin America have called *comunidades eclesiales de base*, which translates as “ecclesiastical base communities,” or simply “Christian base communities.”¹²³

BUILD small faith communities engage in facilitated discussions “of what community is for, the people involved, and what obstacles to community they think exist, always using the text of the Bible as a central resonating point for the discussion.”¹²⁴

Another IAF affiliate, the Pima County Interfaith Council (PCIC) in Arizona, produced a liberationist handout for one of its leadership assemblies. After discussing how the “Prophet Jeremiah Provides a Model for History-Maker in Five Crucial Ways,” – “history-maker” being a Marxist concept and including “a capacity for social analysis and criticism” – the assembly was led in a distorted, responsorial version of the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the History-makers! A litany for
God’s people working for change

L: Blessed are the History-makers!

P: For we stand with the people in their pain,
their struggle and their hope.

L: Blessed are the History-makers!

P: For in the midst of the world as it is, we
believe and work for the world as it should be.

L: Blessed are the History-makers!

P: We do not undertake this alone; we believe
God the ultimate History-maker is with us.

L: Blessed are the History-makers!

¹²³ *Black Baltimore...* p 161.

¹²⁴ *Black Baltimore...* p 181.

P: We are not a people of despair; we are a people of faith, love and hope.

L: Blessed are the History-makers!

P: For they shall be called the people of God. ¹²⁵

A few weeks later, PCIC distributed a sample sermon for pastors. Problematic enough was turning the Parable of the Lost Sheep into mandatory acceptance of illegal immigration, but the PCIC sermon also presented a highly problematic and un-Catholic view of the Eucharist:

People become lost in many ways for a great number of reasons. Policies that are unjust, born into family situations they have no choice or power over. The “Dream Act” can be preached as our societies call to compassion for children of undocumented immigrants. The dialogue found in Luke 15: 1-32, between the father whose lost son has returned and the son who “Kept the rules/laws” could help people to be more compassionate about accepting “Laws breakers” coming across our borders.

In connection to the Eucharist, the table of the lord is a table of inclusion and NOT exclusivity. All are welcome to eat and drink with the Lord no matter where they came from or what it took to make it to his table. ¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Handout, PCIC Leaders Assembly, 8-12-10

¹²⁶ PCIC Leaders Meeting, “Sermon notes for Sunday September 12th 2010,” based on “Scripture Luke 15:1-10 - The Parable of the Lost Sheep,” distributed 8- 26-10.

Liberationist “tapping” of religious elements for political purposes, in Warren’s words, hasn’t been limited to Christian bodies. Consider the “paradigm shift” described by Rabbi Jonah Pesner, founding director of the Union of Reform Judaism’s Just Congregations program, which promotes congregation-based community organizing. One IAF affiliate¹²⁷ used the sacred feast of Rosh Hashanah to encourage its Jewish members to “sign a petition in support of a ballot initiative calling for universal health coverage in Massachusetts” and the sermon on the second day of Rosh Hashanah was used for “one-on-one meetings designed so congregants can get to know each other.”¹²⁸

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America minister, Dr. Stephen Paul Bouman, showed that he, too, confuses community organizing with evangelization: “The first and best of our resources must be dedicated to the training of leaders for evangelism,” he writes, explaining that one discipline for this ministry is church based organizing. He describes how the organizers came into his church community and that, from there, “We became a founding member of the Queens Citizen’s Organization.” The work spread. “It was my privilege,” the minister continues, “to host the first meeting in Brooklyn between local leaders and the leadership of the Industrial Areas Foundation out of which grew East Brooklyn Churches and Nehemiah housing. Tony Aguilar of our staff, which leads our Black strategy, was an IAF organizer.”¹²⁹

Religion as a vehicle for political activism only serves the ends of politics – not the ends of religion. Anthony Mansuetto, who was director of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas’ Justice and

¹²⁷ Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)

¹²⁸ Daniel David May, “Partners in Power,” Reform Judaism Online, Spring 2009

¹²⁹ Dr. Stephen Paul Bouman, “Ecstasy and Conversion on Mars Hill: Some Insights from New York for Evangelization,” Hein-Fry Lectures for 2004.

Peace Commission and a secretary of the Strategy Committee for the IAF local Dallas Area Interfaith from 1988-1991, wrote that the IAF claims:

...to be carrying out a real transformation of the religious institutions they organize, the purpose of which is to ‘make Judeo-Christian values effective in the public arena,’ a goal reminiscent of the ‘intellectual and moral reform’ which Gramsci argued could make popular religion a bridge to the formation of socialist consciousness.¹³⁰

PICO

As with the IAF, liberationist thought is integral to PICO organizing. “On the final day of a PICO national training, an African American female participant expressed the ‘high’ of solidarity that the training had produced for her as ‘a glimpse of heaven. This is God.’”¹³¹

The idolatry of an organizational god goes beyond *feelings*. PICO has disseminated numerous articles – some removed after a time, some not – through its website resources.¹³² One example is an article written by the executive director of two PICO affiliates that uses scripture to justify PICO’s political/social activities:

The language and ideas inherent in our faith

¹³⁰ Anthony E Mansuetto, “The Industrial Areas Foundation: A Preliminary Analysis of Its Social Base and Political Valence” (*Dialectic, Cosmos, and Society*, Spring 1992)

¹³¹ *Organizing Urban America*...p 55.

¹³² www.piconetwork.org

traditions, particularly those of the prophetic tradition provide us with resources for cracking through the predominant political ideologies of the United States to imagine a new day. Faith language and ideas provide us counter-cultural dissonance. They allow us the perspective from which to question prevailing beliefs.

[Referring to the Exodus story of God taking the Israelites out of bondage to the Egyptians] When the Israelites cried out, and God heard their groaning, a new day was beginning, a world was being born that was fundamentally different from the static world of Pharaoh.... Those cries are a necessary step in order for people to heal. Public grief also powerfully criticizes the dominant consciousness or ideology, by making it plain that not all is right with the world.

.... The research phase of our organizing process is crucial to forming the discipline and sense of solidarity among our leaders that leads to effective organization. In the early stages of research, each sign of the Kingdom we produce is met and negated by the technical experts at Pharaoh's court. If the victory comes too easily, without testing the people, they will not break free of prevailing ideologies and they will never leave Egypt. In the early parts of the plague cycle, the people are tested.

....Our symbols cannot be empty symbols; they must tap into deep values. They must also be accompanied by tangible progress in addressing

issues, both local and county-wide. . . . When actions go well, in the midst of all our work and preparation, there is a tremendous sense of grace present, of God working among us. The Exodus story leading up to and following the parting of the Red Sea presents God interceding in history with awesome power.

. . . [W]e have to draw a line and speak for the concrete community if the promise of God is going to have any meaning to people. Nevertheless, when we stand on the opposite shore and look back at the waters through which we have come, we are amazed at the great work God has done. In order for people to find their own power and grow as people, they need not only skills, but a change in perspective, a set of ideas and beliefs that support their growth. The methodology of faith-based community organizing provides people with tools and skills. But faith-based community organizing can only reach its full potential in the United States in the context of deep and sustained reflection on our faith.¹³³

The PICO website has carried an article that quoted Father Fred Bugarin, a priest who organized with PICO in Alaska, as saying PICO is “a new ecclesiology, a new way of being

¹³³ Warren Adams-Leavitt, executive director of Kansas City Church Community Organization (CCO) and Wyandotte Interfaith Sponsoring Committee (WISC), “Ideology and the Prophetic Tradition”

church.”¹³⁴

It has also carried the text of a speech delivered at a PICO conference that twists Jesus’ commissioning of the 70 to spread the gospel of salvation through the forgiveness of sin to confirmation of PICO’s materialistic vision:

...[T]hese texts present us with a unique picture of the historical Jesus and his strategy for engaging in mission. It takes both an ideal, creative vision and a practical, social program to constitute a mission. In this story of the commissioning of the seventy, Jesus combines the two.

...For Jesus, the strategy comes down to a simple equation: **Mission = Creative Vision + Social Program.** [emphasis in original]¹³⁵

The speaker goes on to present a tremendous distortion of Christianity to those being formed at this PICO conference:

To speak of vision is to describe a future reality. It is to see ahead, to imagine what tomorrow could be like. Jesus’ vision is of the reign of God. To speak of this reign being near, being at hand, is to affirm that the future is breaking into the present moment. In the midst of Caesar’s rule of

¹³⁴ John Roscoe, “Institute Provides Faith-based Tools for Positive Change,” *Catholic Anchor*, May 11, 2001.

¹³⁵ Rev. Dr. Kendall Clark Baker, “A Reflection on Congregation, Faith-Based Community Organizing,” presented at the PICO National Clergy Caucus, Los Altos, California, October 1998, p 2. [Baker attributes this idea to John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 349]

control and domination, God’s rule of justice-love is already being experienced as we engage in this mission.¹³⁶

He discovers that Jesus “offers a three-part social program” consisting of relationship (table fellowship), addressing self-interest (curing the sick and addressing poverty), and of making hope real (announcing that the kingdom of God is near).¹³⁷

Liberationism isn’t incidental to PICO’s vision – it’s built into its fabric. Analyst Richard Wood describes in some detail a liberationist co-opting of a Bible story for organizational uses by PICO. This description is rather long but has been well-observed:

On the first evening of the April 2004 national meeting, San Diego lay leader Gloria Cooper led the group in their self-introductions. The most common theme expressed: a sense of intimidation by the power represented by the nation’s capital, and fear of confronting it. The focus of the evening was a “faith reflection” by Rev. Heyward Wiggins, the pastor of Faith Tabernacle, an African American Pentecostal church in Camden, New Jersey:

My Lord, we come together truly with no strength of our own, but only in your spirit... magnify yourself... allow your children to have their minds and hearts challenged and changed, to be empowered, to be hopeful, to

¹³⁶ “A Reflection on Congregation...,” p 6.

¹³⁷ “A Reflection on Congregation...,” p 6-7.

understand the mission that lies ahead of us... My brothers and sisters... it is no longer enough to have lofty metaphorical phrases, you must walk, act, and stand firm to confirm your faith in God...

Note how a superficial “political” reading of Wiggins’ presentation might see this as only an effort to “motivate” his listeners. This is of course correct as far as it goes, but note, too, the deeper effort to *construct shared meaning* among participants by interpreting their current position in light of shared mission and scriptural commitments. This process continued as Wiggins drew on the scriptural account of the ancient Hebrew people hesitating in fear before crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land to invite participants to reflect on where they stood at this moment: Their fears paralleled the ancient Israelites’ fears and their intention to influence national politics placed them imaginatively “on the banks of the River Jordan” – desiring a promised land of national influence but intimidated by the prospect.

Note the dynamic here: all want collective action, but all are fearful of failing – a classic situation of strategic *monitoring*: who will step forward “into the water” first? In the powerful prophetic tradition of African American Christianity, Wiggins here invoked both Dr. Martin Luther King’s regular citation of God’s promise to “never, ever leave us alone,” and the original account of crossing the Jordan River: “So the priests are called to carry the ark across: it

represents [God's] power, honor, and glory. As the priests held it up, God called them to step in first, so the people will cross over." He got a standing ovation at this point; my own notes from the event say simply, "folks are eating this up; he's a terrific preacher." Wiggins went on to argue this did *not* mean clergy being the primary leaders of the effort, but *did* mean that they not hold back fearfully; only in that way would lay leaders find the courage to be the primary leaders.

For our purposes, note the way that this reflection interprets these days devoted to national organizing as linked to the liberation of the ancient Jewish people, to the civil rights struggle in America, and as a time of legitimate choice: people are fearful, but can choose to overcome this fear.¹³⁸

Another paper describes the liberationist elements in PICO's Central American organizing. One Catholic bishop who assisted at a 2007 PICO action in El Salvador delivered a speech at which he said:

The Kingdom of God – of faith, fraternity, health, and justice – is revealed here because of our faith; because we have believed in Jesus Christ and the will of God... PICO is an organization that moves

¹³⁸ Richard L. Wood, "Higher Power: Strategic Capacity for State and National Organizing," *Community Organizing and Political Change in the City*, University of Kansas Press, 2007.

people to necessary action to realize the Christian life; the peace that we have to create, the peace of Christianity through the force of faith.¹³⁹

In this case, the “will of God” involved improved upkeep of city streets, improved trash collection, more accessible public health services, better organized positioning of local vendors, and the decontamination of a river by the local cheese factory.

By 2009, the PICO El Salvadoran affiliate, COFOA,¹⁴⁰ was working with a “priest who worked in the mountains for years ministering to the guerrillas” and was now the government representative for the country’s Marxist party.¹⁴¹ The priest/political representative assured COFOA activists: “You are trying to assure that the will of God is done here on earth.”¹⁴²

PICO cunningly uses the language of religious people to describe its work. In a short biographical description of Birmingham Faith in Action (an Alabama PICO affiliate), one reads that executive director Quinn Kareem Rallins was *called* “to this *ministry*.”¹⁴³ Important as clean water and streets are,

¹³⁹ Bishop Elías Bolaños, quoted in a paper by Stacy Keogh and Richard L. Wood, “Resurrecting Catholic Collective Action in Central America: Structure, Leadership, and the New Religious Mobilization,” (unpublished).

¹⁴⁰ COFOA - *Comunidades de Fe Organizando para la Acción/ Faith Communities Organized for Action*

¹⁴¹ FMLN: *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional/ Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front* - formerly a coalition of five revolutionary organizations that has been a political party since 1992. “Resurrecting Catholic Collective Action in Central America...” It must be noted that ecclesial law forbids Catholic priests from civil office (Code of Canon Law # 285, par 3).

¹⁴² “Resurrecting Catholic Collective Action in Central America...”

¹⁴³ Birmingham Faith in Action website, “About Us – Staff: Executive Director, Quinn Kareem Rallins,”

www.birminghamfaithinaction.org/aboutus/staff

however, the “Kingdom of God” is about something larger; God’s “will” requires something more than community organizing and His peace isn’t one that mortals have to create. In liberationist reductionism, however, the ideas are confused.

The particular scandal is that the Church’s authority is being used to convene a political forum at which the “goods” of civil society – such as clean streets and potable water – are more important than spiritual goods. The Church, therefore, is no more than a tool of the State and organized “faithful” are mere pawns to be played by the organizers and their ecclesial allies.

GAMALIEL

In the Gamaliel network, organizing is said to be a way of “giving your faith feet.”¹⁴⁴ Liberationists Dennis Jacobsen and Cornell West are on Gamaliel’s “First Year Reading List for New Organizers.”¹⁴⁵ In fact, Jacobsen is the director of the Gamaliel National Clergy Caucus,¹⁴⁶ and a Lutheran pastor in Milwaukee. His book, *Doing Justice*, was published in 2001, based on presentations Jacobsen has made at Gamaliel’s clergy-training center.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Robert Kleidman, “Participatory Democracy in Progressive ‘Faith-Based’ Community Organizing,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal Convention Center, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Aug 11, 2006.

¹⁴⁵ www.gamaliel.org/Employment/neworgreadlist.htm; Jacobsen’s book *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing*, says that Gamaliel is the only network to have an organized and staffed national Clergy Caucus. (p. 26)

¹⁴⁶ www.gamaliel.org/CRI/DIRECTORY/GNCCbd.htm

¹⁴⁷ Bill Wylie-Kellermann, Book Review of *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* by Dennis Jacobsen. (Augsburg Fortress: 2001), for *Sojourners Magazine*, Nov/Dec 2001.

An excerpt from the book gives something of its liberationist flavor, where the work of the organizer is understood as “prophetic,” and is self-identified, in this instance, with Jeremiah:

[W]hat keeps one going year after year, decade after decade? For those who have been summoned to do justice, the Spirit simply will not let go. The lament of Jeremiah puts it this way, “Oh Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me and you have prevailed. . . . For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more his name,’ then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in and I cannot.” (Jer. 20:7-9) Those summoned to do justice would like a more normal life, easier laughter, fewer burdens to carry.” . . . Like it or not, those summoned to do justice must carry this burden. Like prophets of God, they see and feel the world differently from others.¹⁴⁸

One reviewer says that, “Working from a liberationist perspective, Jacobsen makes an articulate and persuasive case.”

Theologically, Jacobsen presents the link between love and power as the bridge that brings congregations into community organizations confronting the world's evils. With Martin

¹⁴⁸ Dennis Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing*, Augsburg Fortress, 2001, pp 96-7.

Luther King Jr. (and Paul Tillich) he reminds us that "power without love is tyranny, but love without power is sentimentality." Jacobson uses biblical and theological resources and the personal experiences of pastors to show the fallacy of attempting to help individuals without transforming oppressive systems. He presents the achievements of the Milwaukee inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA) as an example of what community organizing can accomplish. What MICAHA has done could be duplicated in metropolitan areas throughout our land, he suggests.¹⁴⁹

Another analyst says the book is “pervaded by a form of liberation theology that is a very close cousin of the black liberation theology favored by the Reverend Jeremiah Wright.”

In Jacobsen’s conception, America is a sinful and fallen nation, to whose pervasive classism, racism, and militarism authentic Christians must offer constant resistance. Drawing on the book of Revelation, Jacobsen exhorts, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! . . . Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins.” For Jacobsen, in other words, America is Babylon. The United States, Jacobsen maintains, employs illegitimate nationalism, propaganda, racism, bogus “civil religion,” and class enmity to bolster its

¹⁴⁹ Dudley review of “Doing justice: congregations and community organizing...”

entrenched and oppressive corporate system. Authentic Christians forced to live in such a nation can “come out of Babylon,” says Jacobsen, only by entering into “a perpetual state of internal exile.”

Rather than experiencing feelings of internal exile, of course, many Christians do feel at home in the United States. According to Jacobsen, these inauthentic and misguided Christians have been lulled into the false belief that the United States is somehow different from other countries – that it stands as a genuine defender of freedom and democracy. In reality, says Jacobsen, these benighted, so-called Christians have “blinded themselves to the realities of racism, and deluded themselves into imagining that the vast military force of this country is the agent of justice.”

... Jacobsen is horrified when he finally realizes that many in the American military actually think of themselves as Christians. For Jacobsen, this means that the church has “aligned itself with oppressive forces and crucified its Lord anew.” The solution, says Jacobsen, is community organizing: “Metropolitan organizing offers a chance to end the warfare against the poor and to heal the divisions of class and race that separate this sick society.”

These, then, are the beliefs at the spiritual heart of the Gamaliel Foundation’s community organizing

efforts.¹⁵⁰

These liberationist beliefs have ramifications for the faith traditions being organized by the Alinskyans. Richard Lederman, until recently United Synagogue’s national director of public policy and social action, began to see the power of these one-on-one conversations at a retreat sponsored by the Jewish Funds for Justice, a national private foundation that has worked to involve synagogues in organizing since 2002. “I realized that this wasn’t just about social justice but about a new way of re-organizing synagogues,” Dr. Lederman said.¹⁵¹

The reorganized faith institution develops a politically partisan character. Specific political or social *solutions* – as opposed to values – are presented as God’s work, with other solutions dismissed as “divisive.” So one hears the Gamaliel network proclaim: “Be a flame shining a vision of justice into our world.” How? By joining its “Faith in Democracy Public Gathering” to support – and encourage state legislators to support – funding for public education projects and domestic violence prevention programs.¹⁵²

In 2006 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America authorized and funded Vital Congregations/Just Communities, which were synodical training events, to “introduce organizing concepts in tandem with Lutheran theology. They are tools for

¹⁵⁰ Remarks by Stanley Kurtz, from an edited transcript of a panel discussion, “Mr. Obama’s Neighborhood,” Hudson Institute’s Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, October 1, 2008.

¹⁵¹ Daniel May and Peter Dreier, “Justice and Judaism: Community Organizing in the Conservative Movement,” *CJ: Voices of Conservative/Masorti Judaism*, Summer 2008.

¹⁵² Gamaliel, “Faith in Democracy Public Gathering,” October 10, 2004 promotional material.

getting congregations engaged in their communities beyond charity, while developing leadership within the congregation to create vitality.”¹⁵³ One ELCA pastor, a member of the Gamaliel National Clergy Caucus and a former chair of the Religious Leader Caucus of MICAHA, the Milwaukee affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation, explained the goal of Vital Congregations/Just Communities: “Community organizing helps people find the power in their voice and their vote...Part of the training is to help people think about their story,” she was reported as saying.¹⁵⁴ The “story” is Christ’s salvific action in a sinful world but the “salvific” action of an empowered people.

Liberationist beliefs also change individual congregants. Ntosake is the Gamaliel woman’s leadership training program run by Mary Gonzales, wife of Gregory Galluzzo, Gamaliel’s founding executive director (since retired). “A central part of the Ntosake training is encouraging women to rethink their ideas about religious faith, anger, and power.

Many women who attend are uncomfortable with anger as a religious value: they see it instead as destructive and unholy. Gamaliel, however, encourages women to consider how religious figures have used their anger as inspiration. It offers models of women’s power, from Audre Lorde to Mother Jones. It encourages women to move into their gut so that they do less

¹⁵³ Trinity Lutheran Seminary, “Baptismal Covenant Inspires Gaeta as Organizer,” www.trinitylutheranseminary.com/baptismal-covenant-inspires-gaeta-as-organizer ; Another example can be found in David Liners, an ex-priest and lead organizers for Gamaliel local MICAHA of Milwaukee directed a 2011 Parish Council retreat for Holy Cross/Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Parish “working with 20 members to reflect on their understanding of what it is to be a Church.” (www.hcihm.org, accessed 3-30-11)

¹⁵⁴ “Baptismal Covenant Inspires Gaeta...”

“screening” of their anger—it tries to move women away from their constant concerns about being “good girls.”¹⁵⁵

Liberationist changes affect one’s relationship to God, Who has been reduced to a human construct. “Are you ready for the Resurrection...” yells the organizer to an enthusiastic congregation, sitting in church. He pauses ever so slightly, letting the religious significance of that word, “resurrection,” resonate before completing the sentence: “. . .of your *community*?”¹⁵⁶

DART

DART, explains one author, “has a very strong biblical training component that includes how to read and use the Bible to do social analysis and to work for corporate and social reform in cities through community organizing. Its annual Clergy Conference is a continuing means for honing biblical interpretation and organizing skills of its pastors and church leaders.”¹⁵⁷

The DART website provides ample liberationist materials to assist in this training, including a set of “Biblical reflections on God’s call to do justice,” tailored to clergy from various faith

¹⁵⁵ Institute for Woman’s Policy Research publication, Research-in-Brief (April 2006), p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ Youtube video clip prepared by ChicagoVideoProject, based on *Independent Television Service*, “The Democratic Promise: Saul Alinsky and His Legacy,” documentary about the history of community organizing through the work of Saul Alinsky, 1999.

¹⁵⁷ Robert C. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities*, Biblica, 2006.

perspectives.¹⁵⁸

“The City of God” reflection targets Jews, drawing from the story of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy. “Moses provides the Hebrew people with a vision for God’s kingdom that extends far beyond religious observance in the narrow sense. Here we discover a detailed and challenging vision for political and economic affairs.”

A reflection called “The Prophetic Call to Do Justice” targets black churches, comparing various biblical prophets to the writings and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority. . . . we find time after time in the Hebrew Bible, a litany of stories and testimonies about prophets who are clearly critical of the political, religious, and economic leaders Today DART Clergy answer the prophetic call to do justice by organizing their people to powerfully call the systems back to what God created them to be.”

For mainline Protestants and Catholics, there’s the “Redeeming the Individual and the Systems” reflection. “Christians learn that Christ’s life was not simply a collection of valuable lessons and deeds, as invaluable as these instructions are for our day-to-day living. Christians learn that Christ was sacrificed for the redemption of a world that has fallen away from its Godly origin. Conventional Christian teachings often view this sacrifice solely in terms of one’s individual salvation, so that Christ’s sacrifice is limited to forgiveness for our personal transgressions. Many Biblical scholars would question such limitations, and believe Christ’s sacrifice acted to redeem and transform the world including the political and economic systems we relate to every day (e.g., schools, healthcare

¹⁵⁸ www.thedartcenter.org/justice.html All quotes in this section come from here.

industries, corporations, governments).”

“Acts of Justice and Mercy – Moses and the Good Samaritan” is an ecumenical reflection. “In the spirit of the Samaritan,” the reflection tells us, “the church may decide to respond to this crisis by establishing a tutoring program through the generosity of its members. . . .Meanwhile, the school system stumbles along and hundreds of other children fail to achieve basic reading and writing abilities. Another church may decide to act similarly to Moses by recognizing the failure of the school system and organize with other congregations to publicly call for needed changes to make all schools more effective.”

Another ecumenical reflection, “To Love Your Neighbor as Yourself: an Interfaith Perspective on the Great Commandment,” adds an Islamic perspective. All these reflections suggest further study, recommending liberationist reading and extending an invitation to attend various DART workshops.

IN CONCLUSION

There are very real consequences to be had in schooling people in liberationism, as Roman Catholic bishop Salvatore Cordileone discovered at a 2011, St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church Confirmation Mass in Berkeley.

Angered that the pastor appointed by the bishop had closed his rectory conference room to the PICO affiliate, Berkeley Organizing Committee for Action, about a 100 protestors demonstrated outside the church during Mass.¹⁵⁹ The clergy, priest and bishop, were expected to accede to the will of the People’s Organization.

¹⁵⁹ “Unrest at Berkeley parish,” *California Catholic Daily*, 6-22-11

3. New Citizenship

THE “NEW CITIZENSHIP” OF THE ALINSKYIAN ORGANIZATIONS

When the Clinton Administration promoted the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the 1993 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act with its Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Provisions, the School-to-Work Opportunity Act, and other related bills, it explained that this legislation was part of a “reinventing” of American government, a “downsizing” and “streamlining” of its bureaucracy. Despite appearances, these legislative acts were only going to make the federal government a collaborator - a partner - in helping communities take local control and “get the job done.”

Such reinvented government requires a cooperative citizenry and that has been one of the tasks of the Alinskyian organizing networks.

BEGINNING WITH A NEW PARTY

Dr. Cornel West, an honorary chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, and Ernesto Cortes, the southwest regional director of the Industrial Areas Foundation, two panelists at a 1995 Convention for the Catholic “charity,” the Campaign for Human Development,¹⁶⁰ spoke of a “New Party.” This “New Party” was created as a coalition, developed in response to an “unresponsive” American political system. The coalition particularly wanted to influence the 1996 elections.¹⁶¹

The New Party described itself not only as “a new, progressive

¹⁶⁰ Not yet called the *Catholic* Campaign for Human Development.

¹⁶¹ 25th Anniversary Conference for the Campaign for Human Development, August 1995, Chicago.

political party,” responding to the inability of the Republicans or the Democrats to be serious vehicles of systemic government change, but as a *movement* that was to be part of a larger, globally connected mobilization. “In the last few months alone” the New Party wrote in a 1994 Progress Report:

Democratic reform’ is on the agenda in Mexico, due to the Zapatista peasant uprising. In Japan, the once invincible ruling party has been replaced by the aptly named ‘Japan New Party’ ...In Brazil the Worker’s Party has made democratic control of the economy a central issue in the upcoming election. In Africa, Mandela will be elected President...¹⁶²

The New Party saw itself as a “mirror image” of the Christian Coalition in that both groups were struggling to “build new political forces that can contend for power at the local level” – the New Party appealing to the left, and the Christian Coalition, to the right. Unabashedly imitating strategies of the Christian Coalition, the New Party claimed victories in two out of every three of the 1994 campaigns it backed and a good number of elections in 1995 as well, focusing its ambitions on modest, local offices such as the county commission, city council, school board, and state representative.¹⁶³

Ideologically, of course, the New Party was diametrically opposed to many of the goals of the Christian Coalition. Touting a platform that embraced “reproductive rights” and “an absolute bar to discrimination based on race, gender, age, country of origin, and sexual orientation” in “all aspects of our economic and social life,” as well as the “democratization of our banking and financial

¹⁶² New Party “Progress Report #5 - On the Move with the New Party,” April, 1996.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

system - including popular election of those charged with public stewardship of our banking system,”¹⁶⁴ the New Party also supported “public regulation” of “a sustainable economy” and a “substantially more egalitarian distribution of income and basic goods, including food, housing, health care, and education and training.”¹⁶⁵

New Party “allies” included not only the Democratic Socialists of America, but the National Organization of Women, ACORN, Greenpeace, the Rainbow Coalition and the Industrial Areas Foundation.¹⁶⁶ The coalition’s principles were founded in a New Party document that opens with a statement which could have been written by Saul Alinsky:

The New Party believes that the social, economic, and political progress of the United States requires a democratic [peaceful] revolution in America – a

¹⁶⁴ “New Party Principles,” approved and released by the New Party Interim Executive Council.

¹⁶⁵ “Constitution of the New Party,” March 1992 first draft.

¹⁶⁶ New Party “Progress Report #5...” Lists the Democratic Socialists of America and the Industrial Areas Foundation as among those conducting “extensive discussions” with the New Party. While the IAF will not affiliate itself directly to any specific partisan group like the New Party, its potential as an ally “can be helpful in various ways.”

For example, the New Party and its allies, including the IAF, combined forces to promote “living wage” legislation, according to New Party promotional materials, “Living Wage and Campaign Finance Reform Initiatives,” undated. The winter, 1996 issue of Brooklyn Metro Times reports that the Metro IAF proposed a living wage bill in New York City. An article for the American News Service by William Bole, “Citizens Define Their Own ‘Living Wage’” says similar proposals appeared in Chicago, San Jose, St. Louis, and Baltimore. Baltimore’s IAF, BUILD, is credited with pushing that city’s living wage bill.

return of the power to the people.¹⁶⁷

It is interesting to compare that “principle” to those articulated by the IAF. William Greider asks in his book, *Who Will Tell the People*:

What would the IAF communities talk about if they develop a strong voice in national politics?...[The IAF] can begin addressing large economic issues from the perspective of the workers. Some ideas may be small and pedestrian, some may be large and radical.

Greider then quotes Ernesto Cortes, who is reflecting on what the IAF would do with a national power base of IAF groups in 15 or 16 states (which was achieved by 1996):

We can then raise questions about work, which raises questions about investment patterns...Can we create some fundamental institutions that allow reinvestment in communities? If we all come to the conclusion that the cost of capital is a serious impediment to economic development, then we’re going to have to have a new institution to provide low-cost capital... Workers need to be paid in accordance with the things they control.¹⁶⁸

In the light of such comments, it is not at all difficult to see how the Industrial Areas Foundation and the Democratic Socialists of America could be “allies” within a “New Party.” Their goals were

¹⁶⁷ “New Party Principles,” taken from the New Party home page: www.cs.wisc.edu.

¹⁶⁸ William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, 1992, pp. 236-237.

similar. A 1990 IAF promotional, “The Next Fifty Years,” reads:

The IAF goal is empowerment - making democracy work through a restructuring of power and authority relationships so that the powerless can come to understand for themselves that they not only can but should participate in the economic and political structures that affect their lives.

And the Industrial Areas Foundation will teach them how to do it, with the help of participating religious bodies.

PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT

Progressives had been discussing and attempting to create a “new” party for years. In 1980, Harry C. Boyte wrote in *Social Policy* about a “Citizen’s Party” that had been conceived to support strikingly similar objectives as the New Party. It was a “populist political force” that represented an “array of insurgent citizen’s networks” including “neighborhood groups, larger-scale citizen, consumer, and environmental organizations; the burgeoning cooperative movement; working women’s organizations; and so forth.”¹⁶⁹ Boyte felt, however:

Among such groups are many committed, able, and energetic activists whose contributions will be vital to a populist political movement. Yet few have, at this point, the kinds of political skills needed for successful action.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Harry C. Boyte, “Building a Populist Politics,” *Social Policy*, Nov/Dec 1980.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

His contention was that one way people acquire the skills and knowledge they need to take civic action was through Alinskyian organizing: “The new techniques and approaches to leadership training in the center established by Saul Alinsky himself, through the IAF, are especially intriguing.”¹⁷¹

In the spring of 1995, the Dallas Morning News carried a story describing a new social movement, a “civic revival,” which was spreading across the country. “This is the equivalent of a nonviolent revolution,” a representative from the Ford Foundation was quoted to have said. Tapping into “feelings of powerlessness” and a “helplessness to change” the way government works, community organizations, the news story explained, are finding that they can direct that frustration into community activism.¹⁷²

The article described some of these community organizations, including the Industrial Areas Foundation, and their collaborative networks around the nation, including Harry Boyte and Benjamin Barber’s “American Civic Forum.”¹⁷³ These groups suggested exciting possibilities for the progressive movement. “President Clinton and Al Gore spent six hours talking with leading scholars about the need for citizen involvement, the promise of grassroots activism and the federal government’s possible role in it.” There were subsequent meetings held in Santa Fe and Washington, DC, of civic, political and foundation leaders to discuss “how the

¹⁷¹. Harry C. Boyte, “Neighborhood Action: Neighborhoods and the Elections,” *Social Policy*, Jan/Feb 1981.

¹⁷². Nancy Kruh, “People’s Movement,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 5, 1995.

¹⁷³. The American Civic Forum carries a good deal of information on the Internet through its Civic Practices Network site, whose several editorial teams contain members who write for the American Civic Forum (e.g. Sirianni, Bass). Anthony Massengale, who is part of the CPN Youth and Education Editorial Team is also a former IAF organizer. See CPN Youth and Education Team Profiles, http://www.cpn.org/sections/about_cpn/staff_youth.html

movement can be lifted to national prominence.”¹⁷⁴

Harry Boyte has been, among a number of other things, a writer about community organizing¹⁷⁵ and what he has termed “citizen politics,” that is, organized, civically “educated” people who can have, or ought to have (according to the thinking), a significant impact on government. In one of his books, Boyte records the IAF director, Ed Chambers, as saying: “The mistake of our first thirty years of organizing was that we never reflected much on what organizing means. We were very good at action, clever and imaginative. But we didn’t make a commitment to the growth process of the people.”¹⁷⁶

YOUTH TRAINING: THE PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

During the late eighties, an attempt was begun to rectify that “mistake.” Drawing on the lessons he had learned while observing groups like the IAF - and the IAF is prominently featured and greatly admired in his work - Boyte, applied the ideas of “citizen politics” and Alinskyian principles of organization in the preparation of two training manuals, “By the People: Citizenship Training in AmeriCorps”¹⁷⁷ and “Making the Rules.” The latter was developed for a program called Public Achievement, to be used with youth in schools, religious congregations, and other

¹⁷⁴ “People’s Movement...”

¹⁷⁵ Harry Boyte is also a senior fellow at the Hubert Humphrey Institute, one of the partners for the New American School design teams, “Community of Learning.”

¹⁷⁶ Harry Boyte, *Community is Possible*, p. 34.

¹⁷⁷ In June, 1995 the National Rural Development Partnership and the EZ/EC signed an agreement which specified the use of AmeriCorps volunteers to work in and with EZ/EC grantees. The June, 1995 Community Empowerment Board News announced that EZ/EC areas would receive priority preference for AmeriCorps*USA funding.

groups such as the Minnesota Extension 4-H. The programs provided experiential, practical civic training, using concrete, age-appropriate public “actions.”

Melissa Bass co-authored “Making the Rules” with Harry Boyte (and several others), and also wrote a paper about the Public Achievement program.

The goals of the program in its pilot stage were to test whether young people could learn to impact problems in their schools, churches, and neighborhoods in a serious way; and learn to define this work in political terms.¹⁷⁸

In other words, the young people were trained to analyze social problems from a *political* perspective: “Only by understanding your power and the power of others can you make the changes you want.”¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, they were not taught generalized civic concepts but were given indoctrination into a very specific ideology.

Ethical relativism was part of that ideology. In a discussion of some of the conceptual difficulties Public Achievement has run into, Bass recognizes the tendency that young people have for choosing projects that are selfish or shallow. “[S]hould adults steer them in other directions?” she wonders rhetorically and then answers her own question. “While there are no ‘right’ answers to these questions, young people can be challenged to justify their

¹⁷⁸ “Towards a New Theory and Practice of Civic Education: An Evaluation of Public Achievement,” by Melissa Bass, (1995), written in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Affairs, University of Minnesota.

¹⁷⁹ “Making the Rules, A Public Achievement Guidebook for Young People Who Intend to Make a Difference,” by Melissa Bass in collaboration with Harry Boyte and others, 1994, Project Public Life and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship (chapter 5).

proposed projects in the light of Public Achievement’s broader purpose, which is to further public problem solving.”¹⁸⁰

From this perspective, the right or wrong of any given action, or the right or wrong use of power, are not understood in the context of higher authority or natural law. Pragmatic, secular training is grounded on the shifting sands of consensus:

Democracy means that we all have a say about how we will govern and be governed, how we will solve our nation’s problems, and how we will make our communities places where we want to live. In short, we, the people, get to make the rules.¹⁸¹

THE NEW CITIZENSHIP

Saul Alinsky didn’t originate the idea but implied in his thought is a startling concept of what it means to be a citizen:

[Citizenship] meant one questioned authority, took the initiative to address community problems, and developed an understanding of how events and forces in the larger world affected one’s own life and community.¹⁸²

Public Achievement promulgated this idea and Bass explained that it redefined citizenship “as a process based on work, rather than a status based on birthplace.” American children would learn that they are not American citizens because they were born on

¹⁸⁰ “Towards a New Theory ...,” chapter 5.

¹⁸¹ “Making the Rules...,” chapter 1.

¹⁸² Sanford Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) p 108.

American soil but because they have rights and duties that, when practiced, will gain them membership in the “society.”¹⁸³ Defined in these terms, any *appropriately productive* person is a citizen.

The two dominant models for public life, Bass explained, are what she calls mainstream civics and service learning programs. “Mainstream civics” is a combination of the nebulous understanding people have of nasty, partisan politics and their vague recollections of government structure gleaned from high school. “Service learning programs” are those “individual acts of volunteerism” that teach altruism and charity. Public Achievement, she believed, has something else to offer.

Public Achievement’s perspective on civic education works to bring young people into both the processes of decision making and taking action, and helps them to see the expressly political work of the citizen.¹⁸⁴ ...[Public Achievement’s] citizenship framework is counter-cultural, and hardly the dominant model for reinventing either government or education.¹⁸⁵

Obviously, Public Achievement’s proponents believed that it *ought* to be a dominant model for government and education. In evaluating the success of this program, Bass made some interesting observations. She noted that for youngsters to have “a serious impact” on bringing about a given change, it required “that institutions become receptive to working in partnership with young people.”¹⁸⁶ The authority structure must be altered from hierarchical to “democratic.” It was an important lesson. While

¹⁸³ “Towards a New Theory....” chapter 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Towards a New Theory...*, (chapter 3).

¹⁸⁵ *Towards a New Theory...*, (chapter 2).

¹⁸⁶ *Towards a New Theory...*, (chapter 6).

Public Achievement’s developers recognized that the adults had to retain certain non-negotiable areas, the new system, which the children would learn to call democratic, was being constructed in their minds.

Public Achievement’s ultimate goal was to teach young people “to define their work as politics, and identify themselves as citizens through their work.” Bass’s assessment was that the program had a way to go. “While a few young people have adopted the language of citizen politics,” she wrote, in general they “do not see the civic, political dimensions of their work.”¹⁸⁷ Public Achievement – which, as of 2012, was still operative and claimed to be an “internationally-recognized model for youth education in citizenship”¹⁸⁸ – continues to experiment, refine, and assess its program in participating 4-H clubs, school classes, and church youth groups.

DIVERSITY AND MORAL INDIFFERENCE

One other, terribly important aspect of the New Citizen is his capacity to embrace diversity. On the surface, this would appear to be a simple recognition of the fact that as travel and communications improve throughout the world, man must not disparagingly dismiss his fellow man because of the superficial differences of race and culture.

However tolerance of “culture” has been broadened to include serious moral considerations, as well. For instance, an AIDS-awareness discussion “among fourth and fifth graders in Minneapolis schools,” taught ten and eleven year olds not only to be empathetic but to tap “into the perspectives of a gay among the

¹⁸⁷ *Towards a New Theory...*, (chapter 6).

¹⁸⁸ Center for Democracy and Citizenship, Public Achievement Program: www.augsburg.edu/democracy/publicachievement

group.”¹⁸⁹

One of the case studies (also called “civic stories”) provided by Boyte’s Civic Practices Network¹⁹⁰ is the Common Ground Network for Life and Choice. This group claims to seek “non-adversarial dialogue” about abortion. The pro-lifer is asked to “consider” that there are some “valid” perspectives to a pro-choice position, and the pro-choicer is asked to “consider” limitations to his position. Together they might agree to work toward mutually acceptable goals such as neonatal care or welfare reform. Who profits in such a dialogue? The fruit of this “civilized” collaboration is that while babies continue to be aborted, the strident urgency of the pro-lifer is mitigated.

This interpretation of “diversity” serves only the moral deviant and relativist, who gains the appearance of legitimacy, while compromising and neutralizing the moral absolutist. The New Citizenry must accept and be tolerant of promiscuity and feticide but not of Jewish, Muslim, or Christian moral traditions.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ “Making the Rules...,” chapter 4.

¹⁹⁰ Civic Practices Network is the Internet vehicle for Boyte and Barber’s American Civic Forum.

¹⁹¹ CPN website, CPN “Affiliate” section on Common Ground Network for Life and Choice, http://www.cpn.org/common_ground. This critique applies also to the AmeriCorps training manual, “By the People: Citizenship Training in AmeriCorps,” by Harry Boyte. AmeriCorps, “part of the Corporation for National Service, is President Clinton’s initiative to achieve direct results in addressing the nation’s critical education, human, public safety, and environmental needs at the community level.” (“What Is AmeriCorps” promotional material, undated) One of the AmeriCorps service groups, the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) is trained by former military officers on military bases. NCCC volunteers are trained to “help protect and conserve natural resources, promote public safety, or meet the educational and human needs of residents” (same promotional literature). In other words, AmeriCorps is used by the American government to promote its legislative reforms through “community activism,” including a para-military branch. There is also, incidentally, a Literacy AmeriCorps.

AMERICAN CIVIC FORUM

Boyte and Barber’s American Civic Forum has not only been training youth in the New Citizenship but also has sought to teach adults to “reclaim authority and responsibility for public affairs.”¹⁹² As these ideas have formed the thinking of the Alinskyian organizing networks, it’s valuable to study them in some detail, even if they haven’t been fully realized yet.

Using extensive examples (“civic stories”) from Boyte’s writings about the Industrial Areas Foundation, his American Civic Forum envisioned the creation of a “Citizen Government Partnership” that would:

...create a non-partisan political voice at every level of policy making that emphasizes civic problem solving and civic capacity building and the idea of government as a catalytic agent. We believe that the major policy arenas of our time – from health care to education – will be fundamentally reconceived in positive ways by putting citizens at the center as deliberators and actors, not mainly in the roles of clients and consumers.¹⁹³

One article reproduced by the Forum was Will Marshall’s “The New Citizenship: Redefining the Relationship between Government and the Governed.” Marshall referred to the National Performance review led by Vice President Al Gore in the 1990s as the “first serious effort to ‘reinvent’ the federal

¹⁹² American Civic Forum, general information sheet. (See FN #27)

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

government for the Information Age.

This “reinvented government” was particularly responsive to the “new citizenship” movement that, in the 1990s, was politically represented by the New Party (it has since become more mainstream). The New Citizenship, writes Marshall, claims a third position between the liberal confidence in government and conservative mistrust. “It is defined by four key themes: reciprocal responsibility, catalytic government, civic culture, and civil society.”

Catalytic government means that its present bureaucracy is replaced by a participatory citizenry that “solves its own problems,” “decentralizes decisions, puts resources directly into the hands of citizens, expands choices in public services, uses competition to lower costs and spur innovation, and focuses relentlessly on outcomes rather than processes.”

The Civic Forum’s “Civic Declaration: Call for a New Citizenship” claims to “speak from the vantage point of a ‘third sector’ - that vibrant array of voluntary associations, religious congregations, schools and colleges, the free press, professional groups, and community organizations that mediate between government and the market and that span the space between private life and the world of mega-institutions.” It calls on Americans to “reassert common agency and repossess democratic institutions...to grasp the popular sovereignty.” In order to accomplish this, however, citizens have to be trained to exercise their “civic capacities.” They must learn “how to listen, to respect differences, to work with those with whom [they] disagree and share little in common, to be frank about interests, and to be willing to negotiate and compromise in order to advance larger public goals.” Of course, there is no discussion of what values might be non-negotiable and worth defending without compromise.

The Declaration describes the several-fold “tools” that the New Citizenry has at its disposal:

- “*Civic stories*” are working models of the sort of citizen activism under discussion and provide examples to emulate. The work of the Industrial Areas Foundation is prominent among the examples given. “America is an immense laboratory of democratic initiative,” the Declaration states and the IAF is one of the successful social engineers, or change agents, in this laboratory.
- “*Civic Journalism*” is the in-depth reporting on a given issue provided by media with the aim of helping to produce a well-informed public. Surveys, discussions, forums, exploration “of the ‘core-values’ at the heart of political controversies” and other approaches are used “to shape coverage of a candidate,” or to challenge citizens to “regain control over the systems that control [their] lives.” Of course, it’s discomfoting to learn that “core-values” are often dichotomized between a simplistic “what’s in it for me” (supposedly representing the conservative point of view) and “caring and sharing” (which is to be translated as “progressive”), nor are all points of view discussed on equal footing.¹⁹⁴
- “*Community Action*” refers to the work of Alinskyian community organizing networks – the IAF is named – that purport to educate “ordinary people for public life through the skills of everyday politics.”
- “*Public Deliberation*” includes the sponsorship of forums to provide “alternatives to radio talk shows.” They are designed to deepen “public judgment, rather than simply private opinion” and are found in literacy programs, curriculum for Spanish-speaking students, and “Town

¹⁹⁴ See chapter 19 for further discussion about civic journalism.

Hall” situations.¹⁹⁵

- “*Education and Youth Development*,” including community service training like AmeriCorps, “reclaim[s] a strong civic mission for educating young people in the skills and values of public life.” Boyte’s own Project Public Life, used by the Minnesota 4-H Extension (described above), is an example of this.

The Civic Declaration concludes that “foundations have begun to take on the citizenship theme” through grants to various community service organizations and their civic education projects. It observes that these groups are developing a strong network of mutual support and information sharing. “The New Citizenship, building on what has already developed at the grassroots, articulates a vision of politics that belongs to all citizens.”

Lest there be any doubt that the “New Citizenship” is anything other than a re-marketing of the old, liberal agenda, a paper by Boyte and Barber makes it clear that agenda is:

- School reform: specifically, a “reconceived education system” that is nothing more or less than their own Goals 2000 design team;
- Citizenship Education: a new term for an old program of teaching the masses to accept leftist conclusions;

¹⁹⁵ The February, 1996 issue of *Foundation Watch*, published by the Capital Research Center, contained an insightful discussion of the “public deliberation” efforts promoted by the Public Agenda Forum (partner with the IAF in the National Alliance school design team) and the Kettering Institute. By transforming the way they select and present the “news,” the newly re-educated media will “improve” citizen decision making about politics... This process is intended to stifle genuine political disagreements, under the rubric of “deliberation,” consensus, and nonpartisanship... At worst, the body politic would be poisoned by a diet of mind control.

- Reinvented Government: an all-encompassing statist solution to the “health care crisis” and all other social ills. Unelected, “citizen-legislators” who can hold officials “accountable” and “insure accurate voter knowledge” are the foundation of this government.¹⁹⁶

ASPEN INSTITUTE FOR HUMANISTIC STUDIES

Another connection worth examining is that between the IAF and the Aspen Institute. Ernesto Cortes, the IAF’s southwest regional director for decades, was also a long-time member of the Aspen Institute’s Domestic Strategy Group, which describes itself as a “bi-partisan dialogue on social issues and policies.”¹⁹⁷

The Institute, headquartered in Washington DC, has affiliated centers in Germany, France, Italy, and Japan. The function of the Institute is to conduct seminars and policy programs “designed for leaders in business, government, the media, education, and the independent sector from democratic societies worldwide.”¹⁹⁸

In 1979, the *Freeman Digest* devoted one of its issues to exploring the background and ideology of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. The 100-page digest details, in 8 separate articles, the ramifications of the Institute’s philosophy and global focus. Article 6, for example, “A New Civic Literacy: American Education and Global Interdependence,” by Ward Morehouse¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Harry Boyte, Benjamin Barber, Dorothy Cotton, Hal Saunders, and Suzanne Morse, “The New Citizenship: White Paper, A Partnership between Citizens and Government,” 1993.

¹⁹⁷ 1996 member list of the Domestic Strategy Group of the Aspen Institute.

¹⁹⁸ “Welcome to the Aspen Institute,” promotional information, website, undated.

¹⁹⁹ Ward Morehouse, “A New Civic Literacy: American Education and Global Interdependence,” *Freeman Digest*, 1979, p 61; A paper prepared for the National Commission on Coping with Interdependence, Interdependence Series No.

reads, in spots, substantially like the first draft of the Texas IAF “Community of Learners” education vision paper.²⁰⁰

A New Civic Literacy

An important part of the problem of adapting education to help Americans cope with global interdependence is the legacy which we have inherited from the past. Historically, one of the principal social purposes of the American common school was to fashion a national identity out of a population of diverse origins.²⁰¹

A Community of Learners

These “common schools” played a multiple role in early American society. They were pluralist, not separatist... Future citizens acquired a common core of knowledge, learned the values of tolerance and respect for differences and, importantly, shared critical experiences in their formative years.

A New Civic Literacy included a six-point plan of action to bring about the “transformation of education which will make education a better instrument for coping with interdependence.” These points are:

- new and expanded civic literacy on global interdependence;
- **legitimizing** of local initiatives of civic literacy on global interdependence by culling policy support from prominent leaders;

3/Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies Program on International Affairs, NY, 1976, pp. 7, 12,13, 24-27.

²⁰⁰ Texas IAF, “Community of Learners” education vision paper, p. 3.

²⁰¹ “Ward Morehouse, “A New Civic Literacy: American Education and Global Interdependence,” p. 61.

- development of political consensus;
- analysis and experimentation on the “world views embedded in American popular culture” with the aim of altering them until they are “more compatible with the realities of global interdependence”;
- development of new patterns of long-term cooperation with intellectual and educational communities throughout the world;
- use of mass media and **other institutions**. [Emphasis added.]

This last point specifies that churches and other community-based institutions be brought into “dealing with the realities of global interdependence.” As churches have already an established geopolitical structure, one would not think they need much schooling in this subject but schools are another matter. The Texas IAF “Community of Learners” education vision paper warns:

American schools can no longer afford to prepare children for the simple, uncomplicated world of 1949...It will not suffice to teach them our traditional knowledge and attitudes. We must think clearly how to prepare them for roles as citizens and workers which we have not experienced.²⁰²

If the academic preparation proposed here merely meant incorporating scientific advances or new technology into a child’s schooling, there would be no need to abandon traditional knowledge or attitudes. The industrial changes that moved the

²⁰² Texas IAF, “Community of Learners” education vision paper, p 5.

world from horse and buggy to the automobile required no novel role of the citizenry.

A serious break with traditional knowledge and attitudes, however, requires a transformed educational system and transformed religious institutions to assure their acceptance or, at least, their cooperative silence. To phase out nationalism and replace it with a community of nations and one-world citizenship, to institute comprehensive social planning in hopes of achieving collective security worldwide, is no minor undertaking.

A VISION OF THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

The ambitions of the Alinskyans are explained in the academic tracts and public policy proposals of their allies. In collaboration with the White House Domestic Policy Council, Carmen Sirianni co-authored one such proposal for the Reinventing Citizenship Project in 1994. The proposal suggested the construction of a Civic Partnership Council, conceived as a “cross-agency” body (with representatives from Housing and Urban Development, the US Department of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, etc.) and representatives from the voluntary sector, academia, private industry, the media, and the foundations. It would be chaired by the Vice President and attached to the Domestic Policy Council and members selected by an “independent panel of eminent civic leaders.” What would be the duties of the Civic Partnership Council (CPC)?

The CPC will concern itself with improving government programs, policy-making processes, and civil service performance to promote the values of active citizenship and the capacities of civic organizations themselves for public problem solving, collaborative partnership, deliberative

dialogue, and agenda setting.²⁰³

There doesn't seem to be much left out. With the funding to collect "best case examples" and disseminate them, and the mandate to "develop an integrative strategy that can make civic education an important component of how all our institutions do their work, be they educational, professional, service, legal, media, health, or commercial," including a specific collaboration with the Department of Education for the express purpose of "incorporating...practical civic curricula into educational institutions and professional training programs," the CPC becomes a propaganda tool for its "reinvented government" and education is put at the service of politicized ideology. Authority to develop a "media partnership for civil journalism" translates into government control of the press. With the capacity to assess "agency regulations, requirements, and behavior toward citizen participation," to assess "the relationships between legislative and executive branches, among agencies, and among different levels of government" and "to prepare an executive order on the enhancement of citizen participation and other appropriate legislation," the CPC would have possessed the capacity to become an American-style Politburo. With control over "criteria for legislation, grant and program implementation" supportive of community and civic problem solving, as well as control over the way public hearings, deliberative forums, and "alternative

²⁰³ Carmen Sirianni, Harry Boyte, Jermome Delli Priscoli, and Benjamin Barber, "Can the White House Help catalyze Civic Renewal? A Proposal for a Civic Partnership Council," 1994, prepared for the Reinventing Citizenship Project of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs (Boyte), in collaboration with the White House Domestic policy Council. Carmen Sirianni is the editor in chief of the Civic Practices Network.

approaches for citizen dialogue and dispute resolution,” with the commission to “develop...a comprehensive strategy to redefine...the civil service,” very little individual private life is left untouched by some potential arm of the CPC. All the above were proposed functions of the CPC as presented in Sirianni’s document.

The document stated further that it sought to build on the existing government initiatives towards civic renewal, specifying HUD’s empowerment zones, AmeriCorps, and “teacher-parent empowerment teams used in innovative school systems,” among others. It specified support of particular “models” of partnership and civic activism it wanted to develop, including “faith-based organizing of the IAF groups like Texas Interfaith and Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development.” (It also recommends for consideration programs in “secular civic leadership education” such as Boyte’s own 4-H youth project.)

Another article by Sirianni emphasized “congregation-based organizing that derives from Alinsky has many durable and influential projects, refined leadership development and capacities for collaboration with government and business, four major networks, and is growing steadily.”²⁰⁴

POPULAR EDUCATION

In the decades since these proposals were outlined, congregation-based organizing has begun to realize the fruit of its hard, careful “educational” work in schools and religious institutions. To fully grasp the direction that proponents of the New Citizenship are headed, it is necessary to examine the concept

²⁰⁴ Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland, “Social Capital and Civic Innovation: Learning and Capacity Building from the 1960s to the 1990s.” This paper was originally presented at the Social Capital session of the American Sociological Association Annual Meetings, August 20, 1995 in Washington, DC.

of “Popular Education.”

The “pedagogy” of Popular Education was developed by Brazilian Paulo Freire, writer, welfare worker, and Director of the Department of Education and Culture of the Social Service in the State of Pernambuco. Freire himself was influenced by the thought of Marx and the Catholic intellectuals Jacques Maritain (a close friend of Saul Alinsky), George Bernanos, and Emmanuel Mounier.

Freire was in charge of adult literacy teams who worked with peasants throughout northeast Brazil. He taught them a good deal more than reading and writing skills, including participation “in the political process through knowledge of reading and writing as a desirable and attainable goal.”²⁰⁵

Jailed and subsequently exiled to Chile for “incontestably politicizing” the population, Freire eventually made his way to Harvard, where he taught as a visiting professor during the turbulent 60s. Freire was deeply influenced by what struck him as the realization that “repression and exclusion of the powerless from economic and political life was not limited to third world countries and cultures of dependence.”²⁰⁶

Education, Freire wrote, is the means to liberation and is achieved in two steps. The first is “conscientization,” in which people are made aware of their oppression and taught how to transform the state. The second step is maintaining a permanent “liberating cultural action.”

Freire’s books, *Pedagogy of Hope*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Pedagogy of Liberation* were deeply influential among both the Latin American revolutionaries, American activists and Christian socialists of the next twenty-five years. These activists

²⁰⁵ Denis E. Collins, S.J., *Paulo Freire: His Life Works, and Thought*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

and reformers have sought to “wake up” the American people to the physical, human suffering around them, first within their own neighborhoods and then, by slow degrees, to an awareness of the misery in the world at large and then to channel that awareness into the solutions which the reformers believe are most valid.

“Literacy education,” these activists argue, merely trains the individual to become a contributing and efficient tool of the status quo, whereas “Popular Education” has social change as its goal. “The aim of popular education is not facility with words, but a voice.”²⁰⁷

Popular Education teaches through action and experience, believing that the “hands on” stimulation of “doing” is infinitely more memorable and persuasive than abstract intellectualizing. Learning activities are designed to simultaneously train people in “the system” and its machinations, as well as how to manipulate it, and possibly overthrow it. Of course, it also gives participants “ownership” of ideas about which they may not have thought deeply but on which they have already acted.

An example of liberation education is provided by Maryann Eklund who describes the IAF’s “conscientization” work in the Texas Valley region:

Every time Cortes, Drake, and Chambers met with groups they began by reiterating the Valley’s history. For varied reasons, a majority of the people who live in the Valley do not know or understand their ethnic history, nor do they understand the social and political history that has contributed to the Valley’s problem...[Valley Interfaith leaders] attempt to change perceptions of past history as well as reality of present and future

²⁰⁷ Tom Heaney “Resources for Popular Education,” (Internet article, published by Lifelong Learning, 1995).

history of the Valley.

Through the avenues of education and values clarification Cortes and Drake...aimed at bringing the values and anger of the people to the surface.²⁰⁸

The organizers no doubt see their work in exactly such terms. The use of “values clarification,” and the “attempt to change perceptions” about social and political history are the tools these organizers bring to “agitate” a population to the position of giving loyalty to the organization as the mechanism for change.

Popular Education then teaches people to move from their local circumstances and parochial concerns into an expanded awareness of the need for more radical action - systemic change, “revolution,” or a “transformed, reinvented government,” whatever is the movement of the moment. Joe Chrastil, lead organizer of Spokane’s IAF local (Washington Rural Organizing Project) remarked at a 1995 workshop that his goal was to move the site-based councils of the public schools, which he had helped to form, away from the petty focus of curriculum and teaching and into larger regional and national education and political issues. In both IAF organizing and in Public Achievement, the objective of civic education, or Popular Education, is to use the immediate concerns of the group (its self-interest) as the foundation for acceptance of the agenda of the “People’s Movement” or a “Reinvented Government” or the “Education Reform.”

Melissa Bass, in a promotional piece for Boyte’s Public Achievement, writes that the “civic education” of this program taps into natural, youthful idealism and asks young people to ...

²⁰⁸ Maryann Eklund, *Structure and Function of Rhetoric of Valley Interfaith*, Master’s Thesis, 1987, pp. 81, 83.

...think critically about the problems they experience and tie them to larger public concerns... It challenges young people to evaluate any number of possible solutions in order to find one that might really work. It necessitates careful planning...It requires sustained vision and commitment...²⁰⁹

Saul Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals* taught that People's Organizations had, as their very purpose and character, the goal of education.²¹⁰ That "education" occurred naturally, as people from different backgrounds broke down their prejudices and worked together toward mutually valued civic ends. He also supported the axiom of popular education that people were inspired to learn because life and experience stimulated them to need certain knowledge to solve the practical problems at hand. The "Socratic" discussions of his California IAF locals (the "educational" of the network of Community Service Organizations established by Fred Ross and Cesar Chavez) were a way to reason about the issues, to examine actions which would be, or had been, taken to address them. The goal was to teach their participants to think energetically, speak articulately, and keep the organization vital.

Are the conclusions reached in popular education classes valid? Whether one answers "yes" or "no," most Americans would rejoice that such discussions can be held freely. Certainly, the effectiveness and power of "Popular Education" is undeniable. Anyone who has ever worked on an election campaign can attest to the excitement political activism engenders. The need to

²⁰⁹ Melissa Bass, "Raising a Generation of Problem Solvers." www.cpn.org/sections/topics/youth/civic_perspectives/youth_problemsolvers.html Bass is Managing Editor of the Civic Practices Network.

²¹⁰ *Reveille for Radicals*, chapter 9: "Popular Education."

possess ready, articulate, persuasive information serves to sharpen the memory and build conviction.²¹¹

The problem such an approach to “education” presents is when it becomes “institutionalized” outside of its own organizations. If the “techniques” and reconstructed history of Popular Education become the public schools’ version of civics or the “social justice” training of religious institutions, they no longer are free choices and their conclusions increasingly become obligatory mandates.

Further, skilled presentation of reconstructed history, whether personal or collective, focusing on half truths and incomplete facts, coupled with a predetermined, activist agenda, can easily generate a false sense of victimization and polarization. It is very important for Harry Boyte’s youth training manuals (“Making the Rules,” and “By the People: Citizenship Training in AmeriCorps”) to commence their respective programs with in-depth development of “self-interest” awareness and personal stories. One exercise in AmeriCorps “By the People” has the young people develop a personal lexicon of definitions to words according to personal definition. “This is an exercise,” it says, “in putting self-interest

²¹¹ The question of when such activity moves from the legitimate exercise of free expression into manipulated and abusive invasion of an individual’s core beliefs is a subtle one. Dr. William Coulson, a prominent and influential psychologist and former “disciple” of Carl Rogers, has publicly and courageously lamented his own contributions to the destruction of entire religious communities using the behaviorist, consciousness-raising “therapy” which he has utterly repudiated. “We overcame their traditions, we overcame their faith: Interview with Dr. William Coulson,” *The Latin Mass Magazine*, special edition, 1995. “Remember that in the field of ‘change agency,’ or behavioral science, taking **action** is the reinforcement tool for cementing ‘knowledge’, values, and beliefs, which are adopted after ‘examining’ all the alternatives. Role-playing has been used in classrooms and elsewhere in the past for just such a purpose.” Billy Lyon, “Connections and Conflicts of Interest (Or, There Ought’a Be an Investigation),” 1992, published in *America 2000/Goals 2000*, James Patrick, 1994.

back into the words you use. This helps to encourage civic responsibility because: You get clues to what is important to you when you examine how your experience influences your understanding of certain words.” It is all too easy to steer the direction this exercise takes, for the suggested words which “you might use to tell your story” are: anger, citizenship, conflict, community, democracy, diversity, education, family, imagination, judgment, listening, maturity, negotiation, politics, problem, public, private, racism, self-interest, service, sexism, volunteerism, wisdom, and work. The exercise asks at the end if there are any other words “you think need redefining,” but it is unlikely that in the timed format that the group will reach that point, and even if it does, the “direction” of the activity has already been established - that the program assumes and solicits negative emotions and recollections of abuse which will find their focus in political activism.

It is a short step from examining individual acts of cruelty or ignorance to regarding them as general “historical” patterns and an even shorter step to eschew personal responsibility. One unkind teacher becomes a representative of an oppressive education system; a homeless addict is the victim of capitalism.

Most significantly, “education” that recognizes only material or social problems can develop only material and social solutions. This limited view of the world is well expressed in an essay by John Hurst on Popular Education. Describing “participatory research,” or the philosophy of knowledge particular to Popular Education, Hurst writes that “in a truly democratic society, knowledge is not simply for the people, but created with and by the people.”²¹²

He then quotes Muhammad Anisur Rahman as saying that participatory research:

²¹² John Hurst, “Education: A Powerful Tool,” *The Educator*, spring 1995. Hurst is the founder of Outward Bound.

...returns to the people the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing through their own verification systems, as fully scientific, and the right to use this knowledge - including any other knowledge, but not dictated by it - as a guide in their own action.²¹³

It is in the light of such thinking that Suzanne Toton, writing about IAF activism, can say that “through their organizations [the IAF locals] learn to speak the truth where it is not spoken and to create the truth where it never was, for all to see.”²¹⁴

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The same themes of “new citizenship” among the “new Democrats” and “reinvent government” proponents cropped up at the 1995 Democratic Leadership Council’s Annual Conference (DLC).²¹⁵ DLC speeches proposed a “third way” or a “third wave” (depending on the speaker), which was neither Republican nor Democrat, but “a wholly different governing philosophy.” Government, they insisted, exists to “expand opportunity,” but the people need to understand their responsibility to give back to society, too. Citizens are not simply the open-handed recipients of a welfare state, but they are productive and generous, volunteering

²¹³ Muhammad A. Rahman and O. Fals-Borda, eds., *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research*, 1991.

²¹⁴ Suzanne Toton, “Moving Beyond Anguish to Action: What Has Saul Alinsky to Say to Justice Education,” *Religious Education*, summer 1993.

²¹⁵ “Blunting the Conservative Surge: Ideas for a New Progressive Majority,” DLC Annual Conference November 13, 1995. Panel chaired by Will Marshall, Progressive Policy Institute President.

their time freely.

While they insisted that the “third way” would decentralize government, welfare was to be replaced with an employment system that “both requires people to work [and] also makes it possible, that enables them to work.” The “third way” would, admittedly, “redistribute income,” supported guaranteed, “100% health care” and social security programs, and believed that community and citizenship values could be reconstructed through the action of citizens groups, such as the church-based IAF, drawing a segment of the population back into public engagement. This was the political vision with which the DLC wished to shape future Democratic Party activity and, ultimately, the United States government. Nearly two decades later, it’s coming close.

MILLENNIUM REPORT

With the political system moving progressively forward and major institutions involved in substantial reeducation projects, the great philanthropic foundations were pumping large sums of money into monitoring the movement. Long-time supporter of progressive community organizing and the particular values it promotes, the Rockefeller Foundation chronicled the activity of the New Citizenship in its 1994 “Millennium Report: A Communications Strategy for Revitalization.”²¹⁶ Claiming to draw predominantly from the progressive and liberal American political “traditions,” the report described a good number of “revitalization initiatives,” including civic journalism, urban partnerships, deliberative discussion, and initiatives begun by religious institutions and neighborhood organizations, specifically mentioning the work of the Industrial Areas Foundation and its Texas Networks.

²¹⁶ *Communications as Engagement: The Millennium Report to the Rockefeller Foundation, 1994.*

The common elements that the Millennium Report delineated among diverse groups like the IAF, the American Civic Forum, Catholic Charities, and the National Council of Churches (to name a few) were their “collaborative” structures, their commitment to “empowerment” and “leadership development,” their common desire to develop a powerful “third vector” force affecting “public” decisions in a “revitalized” United States.

The resources of these varied groups lie, the report explained, in their being networked together and able to take advantage of the communication capacities provided by the Internet. An example – not mentioned by the Millennium Report – would be the Department of Housing and Urban Development under Henry Cisneros (long-time IAF supporter), which experimented early on with “civic mapping” programs to make on-line information about every neighborhood in the country available to organizers. The report spoke of the “need” for all revitalization organizations to be connected by means of the present and emerging communications technologies. In the ensuing decades, this has happened.

The report also outlined the strategies for “supporting and accelerating revitalization” that include:

- Strengthening the voice of revitalization with additional messengers;
- Creating demand for civic journalism;
- Linking the actors [revitalization organizations such as the Alinskyian community organizations] in “multiple flexible learning and information networks;” and
- Mounting an orchestrated nationwide publicity campaign for the revitalization movement - to which end the Advertising Council was brought into “conversation” for “message

development.” An example of this was its 38-page “special informational advertisement,” appearing in the June, 1996 issue of *Reader’s Digest*. Called “Who Will Speak for the Children,” the supplement wove an emotional “prayer” throughout its “family values” ad, together with stories about people who were actively working in their neighborhoods to support various, progressive education programs.

Not only did the report speak of “orchestrated publicity” on behalf of the revitalization message but it proposed “injecting community-building or diversity themes into made-for-television movies or into sit-coms...[which] would be a powerful way to reach very large numbers of people.”

The tremendous irony was that, while professing to support a democratic renewal of the United States, the report described a concerted effort by self-appointed “leaders” to control this development. Further, “revitalization” required a considerable propaganda effort to persuade citizenry that it was beneficial, that is, that it was in their self-interest.

Most interestingly, beyond describing “revitalization” as some sort of collaborative civic action to accomplish a common good, the Rockefeller Report had no concrete suggestions for *how* the United States was to arrive at the benevolent, prosperous neighborhoods it envisioned. Community networks and the trusting relationships it was optimistically presumed they would engender seemed to be the only requirement.

The New Citizenry’s “reinvented” government was not about down-sizing bureaucracy and making government more “user friendly.” It was a grand design for massive, federal systems of education, health care, and the work force, under the doublespeak of “local control.” While such a “reinvented” government was

something new to Americans, it has a long and wretched history in other parts of the world. “Democracy” which must be coerced has more honest names.

CITIZEN SCHOOLS

In the light of the above, it’s interesting to examine how “new citizenship” education operates in an Alinskyian “citizen school.” In addition to programs like Public Achievement, various Alinskyian organizing affiliates have started their own schools – such as the IAF’s Bronx Leadership Academy or ACORN’s New Visions School in New York. The organizers see public schools as “‘laboratories of democracy’ which students and their parents learn the art of civic engagement and the skills necessary for participating in our rapidly changing world.”²¹⁷

Adults require a different sort of formation than children do. The Industrial Areas Foundation’s London affiliate, Citizens UK (formerly the Citizen Organising Foundation - COF), manages a training institute for selected community leaders, teaching them “to connect faith and values to practical action,” and “the role that power and self-interest play in holding a group together and making the world work,” including “campaigning methodology.” These skills are necessary if COF is to fulfill its mission of building a “network of competent, informed and organised citizens who act responsibly in the public life of their communities and are able to influence, for the common good, decisions which impact on their communities.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Dennis Shirley, *Valley Interfaith and School Reform Organizing for Power in South Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.) Quote is from book’s back cover.

²¹⁸ “Welcome to COF,” www.cof.org.uk (accessed 8-10-11). British spelling is retained where there is a quote from British sources.

This training, however, is something different from COF's work in British schools, for which task it hired Lead Organizer Ben Hammond.

Ben is also one of three London Citizenship Advisors for the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT). Through ACT, Ben co-ordinates the London Citizenship Teaching Network - a network for teachers across the capital which seeks to support the teaching of Citizenship in London schools through termly training and sharing, an online forum, and local school linking.

Prior to his work at Deptford Green and with COF, Ben spent a year working in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border as a teacher trainer and language teacher with Burmese refugees, and through outreach in the UK has worked with schools and young people to develop global citizenship education for the last eight years.²¹⁹

Citizen Schools is an initiative of COF, existing “to support schools across the UK in becoming ‘citizenship rich’ schools - that is, schools with active, community focused teaching and learning and a culture of engaged, active governance. Citizen Schools are schools who believe in an active, real-life education for active, responsible citizens.”²²⁰

The educational member institutions of London Citizens have been organized into the Citizen Schools Alliance and “can opt to take part in a 1-year development programme to build their

²¹⁹ www.citizenschools.info/#/who/4534121812

²²⁰ Citizen Schools, www.citizenschools.info/#/what/453412811 (earlier webpage)

capacity to embed active citizenship education and bring teaching and learning alive.”²²¹

The current Citizen Schools website gives only a generalized, vague idea of what this program entails. Its earlier website was more informative and explained that its efforts are a step toward implementing Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that “reaffirms young people’s rights to be involved in (political) decisions that affect them. Citizen Schools looks to support schools in creating strategic, sustainable, and powerful approaches to make all this happen.”²²²

For instance, the Citizen Schools collaborated with the Citizenship Foundation, utilizing its “Citizen Manifesto.”

There is still considerable uncertainty in schools about the meaning and scope of citizenship and that students’ experience of citizenship is often patchy. In particular, schools have found it difficult to build up links between explicit citizenship learning in the classroom and what students can learn through participation in the life of the school as a whole and through its connections with the wider community. There is a real need to identify those elements of a school’s structure and organisation that have a bearing on citizenship learning, and to understand how these different elements can be improved and brought together to form a coherent programme. The Citizenship Manifestos Project

²²¹ Citizen Schools UK blog, citizenschoolsuk.blogspot.com

²²² Citizen Schools, www.citizenschools.info/#/what/453412811

aims to articulate and inform this process through the creation of citizenship manifestos.²²³

The draft manifesto proposed by the Citizenship Foundation outlines the rights and responsibilities of students “in accordance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights” and includes the “right to have access to learn about current global issues through Citizenship lessons” and experiencing “citizenship work beyond the school, by having different organisations and companies come into the school to talk to students, as well as the students going out on visits.”²²⁴

Among other things, Citizens Schools, working with London Citizens member communities, “have the opportunity to put their agenda for change direct[ly] to the three main political party leaders.”

We want everyone to learn about and take part in this agenda, which has come about through London Citizens' meetings, local assemblies and the huge Assembly at the Barbican on 25th November 2009. As a result the schools team is creating 8 learning opportunities for schools (and faith groups, youth groups etc) to investigate the agenda of...a living wage; affordable housing; safer streets; no detention for children of people seeking sanctuary; putting 1% of the banking bail-out into mutual, local forms of lending; putting a cap on the amount of interest people can charge; [and] tackling the real power players

²²³ Citizenship Foundation, “Citizenship Manifestos,” www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/page.php?259.

²²⁴ Citizenship Foundation, Draft Manifesto, www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/page.php?352

in London. Each learning opportunity will include 8 steps to help people make up their minds on the issue.²²⁵

It's an amazing effort to target school children and their teachers with progressive political propaganda.²²⁶

²²⁵ Citizen Schools UK blog, citizenschoolsuk.blogspot.com/search/label/Alliance

²²⁶ As with the IAF in the US, COF collaborates with progressive political groups in the UK. For example, COF participated in the 2007 annual conference of Compass, a “progressive left” pressure group allied with the UK Labor Party.

4. Civic (or Public or Participatory or Communitarian) Journalism

BACKGROUND

Should reporters be investigators of system failure or initiators of solutions? Should journalists be detached observers or activist participants? Should newspapers be independent watch dogs or conveners of public forums? There are significant ethical questions embedded within this debate, a debate that swirls around and cuts beneath what we have come to know as civic, public, or community journalism.²²⁷

These are rhetorical questions. The person asking them believes that, yes, a reporter *should* be an initiator of solutions and an activist, albeit an independent one, rather than merely an investigator or a detached observer.

This view is also held by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, which was founded “to help stimulate citizen involvement in community issues” by persuading print and broadcast journalists to abandon news reporting standards of impartiality or objectivity and instead “listen to how citizens frame their problems and what citizens see as solutions to those problems.”²²⁸

W. Davis “Buzz” Merritt Jr., former editor of *The Wichita Eagle*, author of *Public Journalism and Public Life*, and an early

²²⁷ Bob Steele, Nelson Poynter Scholar for Journalism Values, “The Ethics of Civic Journalism: Independence as the Guide,” *Poynter Online*, 3-19-07.

²²⁸ Democracy Place USA, democracyplace.soundprint.org

practitioner of civic journalism, defines it in a similar vein:

Public journalism is a set of values about the craft that recognizes and acts upon the interdependence between journalism and democracy. It values the concerns of citizens over the needs of the media and political actors, and conceives of citizens as stakeholders in the democratic process rather than as merely victims, spectators or inevitable adversaries. As inherent participants in the process, we should do our work in ways that aid in the resolution of public problems by fostering broad citizen engagement.²²⁹

Civic journalism isn't simply about *reporting* news:

Early public journalism experiments pioneered practices that helped news organizations to “move beyond the limited mission of telling the news to a broader mission of helping public life go well,” as Davis “Buzz” Merritt describes in *Public Journalism and Public Life*. “When public life is going well, true deliberation occurs and leads to potential solutions.”²³⁰

Merritt's thoughts are developed by Jay Rosen, one of the first academics promoting civic journalism:

²²⁹ Jeffrey A. Dvorkin, “Can Public Radio Journalism Be Re-Invented?” National Public Radio interview with W. Davis “Buzz” Merritt Jr., 12-30-01: www.npr.org/yourturn/ombudsman/2001/010705.html

²³⁰ Mary Beth Callie, Regis University, “Civic and Citizen Journalism: Past, Present and Future,” *The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, 8-5-10.

Jay Rosen described how the story of civic and citizen journalism depends on the frame that we use: “In the 300 year view, the episode of civic journalism is part of a continuing struggle to bring more people into the political process—to give them roles as participants; to open up politics and discussion beyond the confines of a limited class,” Rosen explained. From the view of 1988, Rosen added, civic journalism is an “early warning system” that foreshadowed present conditions.²³¹

Of course, this brings to journalism a whole new set of problems. The conclusions to be drawn from any given report or forum are substantially colored by controlling *which* citizens are asked to inform it – confirming the author’s or the paper’s prejudices – as anyone in public office knows only too well.

[Paul Soglin, Mayor of Madison, Wisconsin] worries that a newspaper can get too much power by mixing the roles of reporting the news and creating it. Soglin says the Wisconsin State Journal has been “wearing two hats” by reporting a story it helped create, in this case on economic development issues.²³²

²³¹ “Civic and Citizen Journalism: Past, Present and Future...” Rosen was speaking at the 2008 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention in Chicago, in a pre-conference panel.

²³² Glaberson, W., “Press: From a Wisconsin Daily, a progress report on a new kind of problem-solving journalism,” *The New York Times*, 2-27-95, p. C6.

Rick Thames, editor of the *Charlotte Observer*, sees it differently:

We journalists, of course, can't guarantee that candidates will adopt campaign platforms and strategies that speak to the public's concerns. But don't we have a responsibility to dig out and publish what voters need to know about the candidates, anyway? What do the American people want that we aren't providing? Simply this: the information they need to make an intelligent decision.²³³

Then Thames offers several ideas for making political coverage more *relevant* to viewers. He stresses that journalists must first discover what matters to voters by asking them. In 1992, the *Charlotte Observer* conducted “issues polls,” individual interviews, and focus groups with poll respondents.

With that information, journalists cover day-to-day developments – like political dogfights – cursorily, focusing instead on the important issues. Companion pieces explore the issues, explaining how they affect voters' lives, and it should identify how the candidates propose to address these issues. Candidates with any agenda other than the “important issues” must be forced to respond to them anyway – at the risk of being exposed as “unresponsive.”²³⁴

One can see how manipulative this approach is. In the first place, it presumes complete “issue polling” impartiality and a willingness to explore issues that might be unpopular in the

²³³ Rick Thames, “Covering Politics Civic Journalism Style,” *Civic Catalyst*, October 1995.

²³⁴ “Covering Politics Civic Journalism Style...”

newsroom. If, for example, a significant number of voters were concerned about abortion, would a progressively-oriented newsroom make that the election year *cause célèbre*? Not likely. And if it did, could it present its issue-based reportage in a balanced fashion? Again, unlikely. Would it force candidates to express their unveiled intentions to address the issue? Once again, it's difficult to imagine this.

The “important issue” will be something the progressive reporter can shape – providing issue coverage that can produce, or at least encourage, a specific, approved outcome.

In fact, civic journalism is just a component of a much broader political agenda called the New Citizenship movement — a movement defined by a document called the Civic Declaration, written by unrepentant sixties radical Harry C. Boyte.

...The Civic Declaration claims credit for introducing the idea of “civic journalism.” It is, Boyte explains, “aimed at bringing citizens into public discussions of politics and policy in a far more active fashion” and to “reconnect” journalists “to the communities they serve.” That kind of gobbledygook sounds good to many journalists — even well-intentioned ones. But it is a recipe for more advocacy, more activism and more agitating.

...That's exactly what civic journalism is, after all — a euphemism for the kind of propaganda that will help rebuild the statist, collectivist,

widely discredited American left, a movement that wouldn't recognize a community-based solution if it tripped over it.²³⁵

No wonder civic journalist proponent Jay Rosen is so cavalier about the ability of individual journalists to navigate these ethical waters – they aren't supposed to be navigated but seized and re-hammered into a form that is more useful for progressive politics:

Public journalism is not a settled doctrine or a strict code of conduct but an unfolding philosophy about the place of the journalist in public life...journalists will have to redefine their own standards of proper conduct, draw new and imaginative lines that mark off their special functions but also connect them to the work of others.²³⁶

Thus, the propaganda arm of the progressive movement is conceived.

HISTORY

²³⁵ Joseph Farah, "The truth about civic journalism," *World Net Daily*, 6-4-97; Capital Research Center's *Foundation Watch* (George Pieler, "Reforming Social Security: Pew-Funded 'Debate' Spurns Private-Market Solutions," 12-98) makes the additional point that the "technique of Pew-funded civic journalism turns journalists' attention away from real events and the passions they incite. Instead, it wants reporters to cover 'issues' generated by its deliberative process of opinion polls, focus groups, forums, and teleconferences."

²³⁶ Jay Rosen and W. Davis "Buzz" Merritt, "Public Journalism: Theory and Practice," Kettering Foundation paper, 1994.

Civic journalism blossomed during the 1990s.

In 1993, the Project on Public Life and the Press (PPLP) was launched. Led by Jay Rosen, a professor of journalism at New York University, the PPLP was nurtured by the Kettering Foundation (especially its president, David Mathews), the Knight Foundation, and the American Press Institute. The PPLP compiled information on the emerging movement, and began to hold a series of seminars and workshops led by Rosen, Merritt, and others to develop a vocabulary for journalists who were trying to reinvent their profession. The next year, the Pew Charitable Trusts funded the Pew Center for Civic Journalism led by veteran CBS journalist Ed Fohy. The “movement” for public or civic journalism was born.²³⁷

The Pew Center for Civic Journalism was created to be an “incubator for civic journalism experiments”²³⁸ that has, over the years, supported dozens of civic journalism projects, involving several news organizations. . . support, in this case, including the funding of various “projects,” such as salaries for “community coordinators” who work as liaisons between the newsroom and a neighborhood.²³⁹ The success of the Pew Center to promote

²³⁷ Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland, “Civic Innovation and American Democracy,” *Change* vol. 29, no.1 January-February 1997.

²³⁸ “About Us,” Pew Center for Civic Journalism:
www.pewcenter.org/about

²³⁹ Charlotte Grimes, “Whither the Civic Journalism Bandwagon?” Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy

this new approach to news reporting:

...is a sharp departure from journalistic traditions. Most reputable news organizations usually refuse to take outside money. Many have policies against accepting even airfare or other support. Exceptions are rare and usually require extraordinary circumstances and lengthy in-house soul-searching over whether the news organization's independence is compromised. Some journalists, pinched by budget cuts and profit margins, see the non-profit Pew Center as an acceptable source of money to pursue worthwhile coverage. Others adamantly object. "Would newspapers who take Pew money be willing to take money or put in their newsrooms 'coordinators' paid by General Electric, say, or the United States Information Agency?" as Michael Gartner, former president of NBC News and now editor of the Ames, Iowa, *Daily Tribune*, poses the concern. "What's the difference? Why is Pew money somehow not tainted?"²⁴⁰

The Pew Center for Civic Journalism wasn't the only sponsor of the new journalism.

Rich Harwood's Institute for Public Innovation makes its webinars and resources widely available

School of Government, Harvard University, Discussion Paper D-36, February 1999.

²⁴⁰ "Whither the Civic Journalism Bandwagon?" Gartner's full comments and the responses of Jennie Buckner can be read in Edmund B. Lambeth, Philip Meyer, Esther Thorson, *Assessing Public Journalism*, University of Missouri Press, 1998, chapter 11.

to communities and organizations. The institute also recently partnered with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on its “Community Engagement Initiative” (CEI), with 12 public radio and television stations. Harwood proposes that stations turn outward instead, seeing themselves not as traditional broadcasters but as “community-based leaders with media assets,” spanning boundaries. The CEI includes regular coaching to teach the journalists “community conversation” and authentic engagement practices.²⁴¹

Another big proponent has been the J-Lab Institute for Interactive Journalism, which has formed “collaborative multi-media partnerships and networking to encourage community engagement in public issues.” J-Lab projects have included support for a study that “finds a changing definition of news, in which both creators and consumers seek to build and participate in community, not just cover community from afar.”²⁴²

The definition of “news” is changing, all right.

FUNDING CIVIC JOURNALISM

Much of civic journalism’s expenses have been borne by foundations that are interested in promoting particular social positions at odds with mainstream thought. For instance, one area in which Alinskyian organizing networks have been

²⁴¹ “Civic and Citizen Journalism: Past, Present and Future...”

²⁴² “Civic and Citizen Journalism: Past, Present and Future...”

seriously engaged is education “reform.”²⁴³ The Annenberg Foundation, which poured millions into this “reform,”²⁴⁴ has also provided insight into how civic journalism and Alinskyian organizing have been used to create “public engagement for public education” – by which they mean “a collaborative constituency for change and improvement in schools” as they would define “improvement.”

In one Annenberg report about education reform, “written to bring support and validation to the practitioners of engagement at the local level,” the section titled “Equipping communities to make tough decisions,” cites various ways “the community” has been rallied.

Newspapers and broadcast outlets are mounting civic journalism projects to bring in-depth information on local issues to a wide range of citizens. Few engagement efforts studied for this project have yet achieved an environment in which the schools and their community routinely and intentionally deliberate and decide together on what kind of schooling they want for their children. But pieces of that environment are being created or strengthened every day in an increasing number of communities across the country. Their dynamic vitality has energized this research.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ See chapter 10, Education Reform, for a more detailed description of the IAF’s work in this area – and the Annenberg Foundation’s support of it.

²⁴⁴ JH Lytle, *Urban School Reform, To What End*, Springer International Handbooks of Education, Volume 19, 2007, writes that the Annenberg Foundation’s investment in urban school reform is around \$500,000,000.

²⁴⁵ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change,” Report of the Annenberg Institute on Public Engagement for Public Education,” 1998, p. 5.

While emphasizing that there are many players providing “the impetus for an engagement process,” the report particularly lauds the efforts of “[n]etworks or programs such as the Industrial Areas Foundation”²⁴⁶ and quotes one IAF supporter as saying:

Public engagement is... just trying to create a public conversation where there’s interest and then building the will to take some action. It’s the same organizing process in a school to change culture and gain consensus as any other issue.²⁴⁷

Cited examples of successful “engagement process” include the IAF’s Lower Rio Grande Valley’s Texas Interfaith Alliance;²⁴⁸ its Parent Organizing Project in Spokane, Washington, together with the Rural Organizing Project that works in the Columbia River area;²⁴⁹ and its Alliance Schools Project of the Interfaith Education Fund in Austin, Texas;²⁵⁰

The report is remarkably candid about the goal, which isn’t to offer the finest academic programs possible but is, rather, to achieve education reform without provoking an avalanche of protesting parents, as happened when outcome-based education reforms were first introduced into the public school systems:

Members of the Washington Education Association, school administrators, and the Rural

²⁴⁶ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change...,” p. 21

²⁴⁷ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change...,” p. 29, quoting Carrie Loughlin, Industrial Areas Foundation, Austin, TX.

²⁴⁸ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change...,” p. 29

²⁴⁹ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change...,” p. 30.

²⁵⁰ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change...,” p. 36

Organizing Project began strategizing together the best avenue to restructure public education in eastern Washington. “The 1993 legislation gave us a chance to engage parents in meaningful ways,” recalls former teachers’ union rep [and IAF organizer] Joe Chrastil, “without opening a flood gate of parents charging into classrooms and overwhelming teachers.”

The goal, in Chrastil’s words, has been to build “public judgment about public education through public involvement.”²⁵¹

Is civic journalism *efficacious*? The Pew Center for Civic Journalism analyzed several hundred examples between 1995 and 2000 and found that in 37%, there was strong evidence “that the project directly influenced the implementation of, or change to, a policy that impacts the community.”²⁵²

The report also explained how a paper might go about influencing policy change:

Education, a subcategory representing 48 cases or about 7% of the total cases, addressed the quality of a community’s educational system while focusing on such issues as overcrowded schools, under-funded school districts and poor academic performances of students (67% of this subcategory). A common theme here was to evaluate the status of the community’s

²⁵¹ “Reasons for Hope; Voices for Change...,” p. 30.

²⁵² Lewis A. Friedland, Sandy Nichols, “Measuring Civic Journalism’s Progress: A Report across a Decade of Activity,” A study conducted for the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, 2002, p. 18.

educational system by comparing it to a known successful system elsewhere in the country. The remaining education projects focused on specific educational policies such as school choice policies (19%), evaluating performance of specific schools (12%), and building values and character development into curricula (2%).²⁵³

The omission in this discussion, of course, is whether or not these programs improve objective, academic student performance. It simply isn't relevant.

CIVIC JOURNALISM AS A CHANGE AGENT

In 1994, the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer launched its “Education 2000” project, “a major reporting initiative” featuring “weekly takeouts on a full range of education issues.” One result of the extended journalism coverage was “the formation of ‘The Columbus Education Partnership,’ an independent steering committee for education reform,” as well as the formation of the Chamber of Commerce’s “Education 2000” committee.²⁵⁴ “Education 2000” was one of many names under which the flawed pedagogy of outcome-based education (or mastery education) was pushed on local school systems.

Another clear attempt to change public opinion has been documented by LifeTree, a North Carolina-based effort “to raise awareness about the need to protect life, from its earliest beginnings to natural death,” has mapped the “three-pronged strategy” to “change American death-denying culture to [a]

²⁵³ “Measuring Civic Journalism's Progress...” p. 37.

²⁵⁴ New York University Department of Journalism, Case Study, “Project on Public Life and the Press,” 1994.

death-accepting culture.”²⁵⁵

The entire propaganda package has been exposed and can be viewed on a timeline created by LifeTree. The “professional education” and “institutional change” components are interesting enough but, in the light of a discussion about civic journalism, it’s the “public engagement” prong we must consider.

First, there is the use of Public Radio and T-V. In 1997, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation invested approximately \$800,000 to air and market the Public Broadcasting Service program “Before I Die.”²⁵⁶ The program begins:

Most Americans – even doctors – don't like to hear or think about it [death], as if not breathing the monster's name will prevent its next visit.

But avoidance has its costs; and today what we fear most is not so much death itself as the modern medical nightmare: a death alone, in pain, tethered to expensive machines that merely prolong dying.

²⁵⁵ Ione Whitlock, Euthanasia Timeline, LifeTree: www.lifetree.org. There is both a short and a long version of this material. The quoted objective comes from Daniel Callahan’s three themes around which the Last Acts campaign “to promote improvements in care and caring near the end of life” was built.

²⁵⁶ Extensive information about the program can still be viewed at www.thirteen.org/bid/program.html; Prior to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s programs, George Soros, through his Open Society Institute, launched the “Project on Death in America” in 1994 to transform “the culture and experience of dying and bereavement” in the United States. [Diane E. Meier, MD, “The Development, Status, and Future of Palliative Care,” Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Series, 2010, quoting from McGlinchey L, editor. *Transforming the Culture of Dying: The Project on Death in America, October 1994—December, 2003*. New York: Open Society Institute; 2004.]

Our experiences with the death of loved ones has made us all wonder: isn't there a better way to die? Is dying in American more impersonal, painful and expensive than it needs to be? Should physician-assisted suicide be an option?²⁵⁷

The emphases of these opening remarks were entirely intentional. “Before I Die” was prepared as one of several “projects,” including an end-of-life discussion kit, of which it is a major component.²⁵⁸ The transcript continues with several excruciating dramatizations in which individuals are asked to make life and death decisions. While “Before I Die” does recognize that individual religious beliefs may inform these decisions, there is no sense of any external moral truth binding doctors or patients. In the end, it seems to say, each person makes his own exit plan.

Around the same time as “Before I Die,” National Public Radio aired a series called “The End of Life: Exploring Death in America.”²⁵⁹ The series covered a number of topics, including personal stories of grief and dying, funerals, and American sociology. They also covered “The Slow Code,” which was the title for one program in the series.

Noah Adams talks with Dr. Gail Gazelle about the practice of “Slow Code” in hospitals. Also known as “Show Code,” “Hollywood Code” and

²⁵⁷ “Before I Die,” Transcript of the program,” Tim Russert narrating.

²⁵⁸ Background about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the “Before I Die” PBS program, www.thirteen.org/bid/p-johnson.html

²⁵⁹ There were nineteen programs in the series, which aired from November 3, 1997 through April 2, 1998; Transcript and resources can be found at www.npr.org/programs/death.

“Light Blue,” a Slow Code happens when a terminally-ill patient goes into cardiopulmonary failure. The medical staff goes through the motions of attempting resuscitation but do not make a sincere attempt to revive the patient. Dr. Gazelle maintains this occurs because the attending physician has not written a DNR [Do Not Resuscitate] order or the patients family has requested that “everything be done” to save the patient, but the doctor decides that the patient cannot expect a quality of life that warrants sincere efforts at resuscitation.²⁶⁰

Dr. Gazelle said she was exposing the practice of “slow code” with the hope that it might lift the burden of life-and-death decisions from physicians to their patients and patients’ families. These programs were part of a media campaign to build a “grass roots reaction” to a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded study “designed to improve end-of-life decision making and reduce the frequency of a mechanically supported, painful, and prolonged process of dying.”²⁶¹ The “Study to Understand Prognosis and Preferences for Outcomes and Risks of Treatment” had, as its objectives:

...decision-making in order to address the growing national concern over the loss of control that patients have near the end of life and to reduce the frequency of a mechanical, painful, and prolonged process of dying.

²⁶⁰ Transcript of “Slow Code,” *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, 2-11-98.

²⁶¹ Background about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the “Before I Die” PBS program, www.thirteen.org/bid/p-johnson.html

...The intervention was expected to increase communication, resulting in earlier decisions to have orders against resuscitation, decrease time that patients spent in undesirable states (e.g., in the Intensive Care Unit, on a ventilator, and in a coma), increase physician understanding of patients' preferences for care, decrease patient pain, and decrease hospital resource use.²⁶²

Following this study, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiated Last Acts, a “multiyear, multimillion-dollar national campaign to promote improvements in care and caring near the end of life.”²⁶³ Last Acts supports a patients’ wish to withhold artificial nutrition and hydration (tube feeding)²⁶⁴ and is one of the Foundation’s many strategies to “improve care at the end of life.” Last Acts publications include links to right-to-die organizations such as the Hemlock Society.²⁶⁵ Its Targeted End-of-Life Projects Initiative includes projects “to engage the public

²⁶² Scope of Study Summary, “Study to Understand Prognoses and Preferences for Outcomes and Risks of Treatment (SUPPORT) and Hospitalized Elderly Longitudinal Project (HELP),” 1989-1997, www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/2957/detail;jsessionid=5C1F7AD175A47868A3E915D6F609ED75

²⁶³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “Means to a Better End: A Report on Dying in America Today,” 11-02, p.2. www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/meansbetterend.pdf

²⁶⁴ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Last Acts: A Vision for Better Care at the End of Life, “When Patients Cannot Eat or Drink,” 12-31-04: “Legally, artificial nutrition and hydration is a medical treatment that may be refused like any other treatment.”

²⁶⁵ Margaret Metzger, JD & Karen Orloff Kaplan, MPH, ScD, “Transforming Death in America: A State of the Nation Report,” Prepared for Last Acts, June 2001.

and professionals,²⁶⁶ one of which was the Writers' Project:

In 1999 and 2000, W.E. Duke & Company, Los Angeles, (a subcontractor hired by the communications firm of Barksdale Ballard & Company, Vienna, Va.) worked with the Writers Project of the Last Acts® campaign to educate creative decision-makers within the entertainment industry on the need to portray end-of-life issues accurately.²⁶⁷

The project, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, accomplished “briefings with key writers and producers of the prime-time television programs *ER*, *Gideon's Crossing*, *City of Angels* and *Strong Medicine* led to six end-of-life story lines aired during the grant period,” and “provided a technical advisor to work with HBO in their film adaptation of “Wit,” the Pulitzer Prize-winning play that portrays the difficulties of terminal illness in modern medicine,” among other things.

“National surveys have shown that daytime and prime-time viewers pay attention to the health information in TV shows, learn from it, act on it, and share the information with others,” the federal Centers for Disease Control and

²⁶⁶ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “Targeted End-of-Life Projects Initiative,” September 2003, www.rwjf.org/reports/npreports/eol.htm

²⁶⁷ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “End-of-Life Issues Get an Airing on Prime-Time TV,” April 2004: www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/037832.htm

Prevention report on their Web site. Using television and film to depict accurately how the end of life is treated can dispel myths and help people understand their choices and ask for more humane options.²⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded the Radio Television Digital News Association to create a resource guide on end-of-life issues, “Covering the Issues of Death and Dying.”²⁶⁹ The guide contains a section about physician-assisted suicide, about which it claims public opinion is “split,” though weighted in favor of permitting²⁷⁰ it. Contact information provided by the guide is quite comprehensive, including numerous organizations supportive of euthanasia.²⁷¹ While this may seem no more than providing the balanced reporter with “both sides” of the issue, the guide’s “story ideas” make it clear that the guide is not coming from a neutral perspective:

What is your state’s law regarding advance directives? Are there any changes in the works? How many people use advance directives? Choice in Dying (202/338-9790) can provide a state-by-

²⁶⁸ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “End-of-Life Issues Get an Airing on Prime-Time TV,” 4-04. www.rwjf.org/reports/grr/037832.htm

²⁶⁹ Contributing writers include Therese Droste, Kris Rebillot, Karen Lamoreux and Larry Beresford, “A Journalist’s Resource Guide, Covering the Issues of Death and Dying: A primer for journalists covering stories on the end of life,” supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 1998. www.rtdna.org/media/pdfs/bestpractices/death_and_dying/1998/ddguide.PDF

²⁷⁰ “A Journalist’s Resource Guide...,” p. 11-14.

²⁷¹ “A Journalist’s Resource Guide...,” p. 81-82.

state breakdown of laws governing living wills and the appointment of health care agents. Is there anything in your state’s law that makes it easy or difficult for people to express their end-of-life preferences?²⁷²

What it neglects to explain to the reporter is that Choice in Dying advocates euthanasia in some circumstances.²⁷³ This is hardly a neutral perspective.

Among all this activity – and many other projects not mentioned – the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Samuels Foundation, and Life Institute launched a 15-part newspaper series, “Finding Our Way,” carried by Knight Ridder.²⁷⁴

One article in the series, “Maintaining control: Writing down health-care wishes eliminates guesswork for families,” contains subtle messages. A sidebar glossary reads:

²⁷² “A Journalist’s Resource Guide...,” p. 26.

²⁷³ Rita L. Marker and Kathi Hamlon, “Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Frequently Asked Questions,” International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, quoting from audio tape transcript of “On Target,” WVON Radio (Chicago), debate between Rita Marker and T. Patrick Hill, September 26, 1993. Hill (who in 1993 was an official of Choice in Dying and later served on the board of directors of the New York Citizens’ Committee on Health Care Decisions) stated that continuing to prohibit euthanasia would, in some circumstances, “abandon the patient to a horrifying death.” Hill acknowledged that “even under the best circumstances active euthanasia is indeed a troubling issue,” but he said, “I do think there are very restricted circumstances where, in fact, it is the more humane thing to do rather than not to do. Because, *not to do it would, as I say, be to abandon the patient to unbearable suffering, whether emotional suffering or physical suffering.*”

²⁷⁴ “Finding Our Way: Living With Dying in America,”
www.findingourway.net

Benefits and burdens: Guideline for deciding whether to withhold or withdraw medical treatments for you. A benefit can refer to the successful outcome of a medical procedure or treatment. But a benefit from one point of view can be a burden from another and might be viewed differently by doctors, patients and families. For example, if you are resuscitated, this may be a benefit from your doctor’s point of view. For you, though, resuscitation may be a burden if it causes suffering.²⁷⁵

Another sidebar suggests “Questions to Discuss” and asks, if facing Alzheimer’s disease, “What would you want to happen if you stopped eating because of your Alzheimer’s? If you developed an overwhelming infection, at what point would you want antibiotics stopped?”

The article itself tells the story of an elderly woman who prepared an advance directive that very specifically told doctors to not “attempt cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if her breathing and heart stopped unless she had a good chance of survival.”

Not only is the reader given a concrete example of what to do, acceptance of this particular directive is reinforced with praise: “Her wishes were put in writing. Margaret did two things right. First, she was specific in her instructions. . . . Second, she picked relatives whom she trusted to advocate for her and to make difficult decisions under stressful situations.”

²⁷⁵ Robert A. Bendiksen and Bernard J. Hammes, “Maintaining control: Writing down health-care wishes eliminates guesswork for families,” www.findingourway.net/downloads/Advance.Directives.pdf

And difficult situations will come, the article continues, describing decisions made “because of pressure from others rather than the patient’s values.” When the article’s protagonist found herself “unable to breathe and her lungs filled with fluid,”

It was then that she changed her mind about her advance directive. When asked, “Do you want to be resuscitated?” she said, “Yes.” But, her niece later said, “I think she was scared and sick when she made this decision.”

Back in the hospital, Margaret’s personal doctor was met with a list of questions from the family: How bad was her heart? What could she expect for the future? If her breathing and heart stopped, would CPR be successful? Would her treatment be top quality if she did not choose CPR? Could a plan be made to assure that she was comfortable no matter what happened?

Gently, the doctor explained to Margaret that CPR would not help extend her life with any quality, if it worked at all. She then agreed to let her written directive stand.²⁷⁶

Another article describes the death of a woman from ovarian cancer. “Like many baby boomers,” she “was used to being in control of her life. She was...physically active and independent.” As she grew sicker, however, “she had to lean more heavily on others for her care, something she never expected nor wanted.”

The message is reiterated further along the article:

²⁷⁶ “Maintaining control...”

Baby boomers, accustomed to knowing what they want and how to get it, are beginning to demand the ultimate right. As the end draws near, Americans are saying, give us the time, information and guidance to move to the final reprieve of palliative and hospice care. Allow us in our last days to live smart, to embrace the life we have left and to make our deaths our own.²⁷⁷

Which the subject of this story did. While she said good-bye to friends, she “elected to resume getting her nutrition intravenously.” Once the good-byes were over, however, “she decided it was time to stop the intravenous fluids that had tided her over as she took control of her life. Five days later...she died the way she chose.”

This isn't journalism. It's euthanasia propaganda.

²⁷⁷ Robert Milch and J. Donald Schumacher, “America’s End-of-life Care: There’s Light at the End of the Tunnel,” Knight Ridder/Tribune.

5. Is Alinskyian Organizing Socialist?

SOCIALISM

Before labeling the ideological bent of the Alinskyian organizing networks, it is necessary to have common definitions of terms and some historical perspective. Therefore, we must first ask, “What is socialism?”

The dictionary calls it a “system or theory of social organization in which the producers possess both political power and production and distribution means.”²⁷⁸ Its proponents would quickly add that this concern with wealth distribution isn’t an end, in itself, but a means to *happiness*. Prior to the more developed thought of Marx and Engels, socialists sought:

... the collective regulation of men’s affairs on a cooperative basis with the happiness and welfare of all as the end in view and with the emphasis not on “politics” but on the production and distribution of wealth and the strengthening of “socializing” influences in the life-long education of citizens in cooperation, as against competitive, patterns of behavior and social attitudes and beliefs.²⁷⁹

Modern socialistic ideas were, first and foremost, an attempt to address problems of the Industrial Revolution and they come in great variety. Marxism (sometimes referred to as “scientific socialism”) is that variety of socialism propounded by the German philosopher Karl Marx, who co-authored *The Communist*

²⁷⁸. *American Heritage Dictionary*, Dell Publishing, NY, 1987.

²⁷⁹. Michael Harrington, *Socialism*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1970) p 51; quoting G.D.H. Cole.

Manifesto in 1848 with Friedrich Engels and wrote *Das Kapital* in 1867. Marx, an atheist, believed that mankind could attain a perfect social order through the scientific observation and application of social and economic laws. His analysis of these “laws,” based on a wholly humanist perspective, lead him to see the world as comprised of necessarily competitive and antagonistic economic strata or “classes” which were fated to struggle against one another until the utopian political structure of socialism replaced the class structure of capitalism.

Modern communism developed its theories from his thought. The term “communism” has come to be synonymous with an active, participatory process of revolution to hasten downfall of capitalism. Stalinism pertains to that form of communism practiced by Joseph Stalin and has been dubbed as “right-wing socialism” by Dr. Cornel West²⁸⁰ because, while the means of production are purportedly controlled by the state, in reality all power is concentrated in the hands of a dictator.

Leninism is a dictatorship by the Communist Party, with only a small portion of the population being party members. Dr. West identifies this position as “right of center.”

Communism, therefore, has become the term for a form of socialism associated with repressive government and brutal oppression of subject peoples. Michael Harrington,²⁸¹ one of the

²⁸⁰. Dr. Cornel West is a professor at Harvard and an honorary chair of the Democratic Socialists of America. His ideas are considered here because they have influenced at least one IAF local, Baltimore’s BUILD, and probably a good many others, as evidenced by his invitation to be a keynote speaker at the 1995 Catholic Campaign for Human Development Conference in Chicago, though he is not Catholic. For West’s opinions about the spectrum of Marxism, see his book *Prophecy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), chapter 5, particularly p. 136.

²⁸¹. Michael Harrington is identified by the Democratic Socialists of America as a long-time leader of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee and the Democratic Socialists of America. His book, “The Other America” was

foremost American socialist apologists, records Marx as anticipating that “communism must free itself from all ‘false brothers.’” Harrington makes the case that Marx “regarded democracy as the essence of socialism,” and that “orthodox,” right-wing communists wrongly interpreted Marx to oppose civil liberties in order to rationalize their totalitarianism.²⁸²

According to this thought, twentieth century dictators Stalin, Lenin, Hitler and Mao, who called themselves Marxists, were examples of “false brothers.”²⁸³ Harrington quotes Zbigniew Brzezinski saying that, in Eastern Europe, “Socialism has wide popular support whereas communism, as an institutionalized belief, has not.”

Harrington’s assessment may or may not be accurate but it has been accepted by a number of thinkers who want to redeem Marxism from its more deplorable actualizations...and it’s useful to have terms that can distinguish between the two political entities. Using these terms, then, we can say that contemporary US politics are not so much influenced by radical, violent communism as by democratic socialism, which agrees with Marx’s essential analysis of class structure and his vision for a classless, egalitarian society. Democratic socialists seek to bring about the ideal society by peaceful, persuasive means, working inside of existing political and social structures and, they insist, intent on preserving free speech and press, labor unions, and free elections among free political parties. They point to the last chapter of the Communist Manifesto in which Marx describes the tactic of building a united front, or an alliance, between the bourgeois (middle-class) and proletariat (working-class).

influential in bringing about the Great Society anti-poverty programs. Harrington died in 1989. (<http://ccme-mac4.bsd.uchicago.edu/DSA.html>)

²⁸². *Socialism*.... pp. 62-63.

²⁸³. *Socialism*....p 5-8.

According to a Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) flier, democratic socialism is no more supportive of “big government” than it is of having vast power in the hands of massive and monopolistic corporate bureaucracy. The DSA believes that the market must be permitted to drive the economy (demand determining supply) and that there need to be “democratic mechanisms” for major capital investments, that is, that the community decides if it needs a bridge, not a state planner. It supports “public” ownership for the largest, most essential industries (energy, basic steel, etc.), worker cooperatives for others, and would encourage private ownership possibilities for self-employment.²⁸⁴

The DSA, according to its flier, also says it wishes to debunk the “myth” that socialism is inherently “against religion” and includes many “deeply religious people of all faiths” as part of its movement. It condemns “efforts to deny and suppress religious beliefs and freedoms.”

Many students of socialism will be dissatisfied with the use of terms as defined above but, to further discuss the ideological underpinnings of Alinskyian organizing, some simple, common words are needed.

ALINSKY VERSUS MARX

Alinsky’s own Industrial Areas Foundation has waged a long-standing battle to fight popular perceptions that it is “communist.” Saul Alinsky, who had no compunction – up to a point – about working with communists, was investigated by the FBI in 1940 – 1941 and found innocent of any remarks or actions against the United States government or in favor of any foreign

²⁸⁴. Democratic Socialists of America, “What Socialism Is...And Is Not: Twelve Myths about Democratic Socialism,” 1987/88.

government.²⁸⁵

Alinsky certainly had tremendous sympathy with socialistic principles in general. In 1936 he helped to raise money for the International Brigade²⁸⁶ and approved of the Stalinists' work in Spain during the Spanish Civil War.²⁸⁷ Herb March, a member of the Young Communist League who worked for the CIO (Committee for Industrial Organization), became one of Alinsky's primary organizers in Chicago's Back of the Yards.²⁸⁸

Further, Alinsky was adamantly opposed to Joseph McCarthy's attempts to purge the United States of all communist influence and worked actively with Bishop Sheil to oppose McCarthyism, which had attracted large Catholic support. When asked point-blank by an Archbishop just precisely what *was* his position on communism, Alinsky claimed to have responded pointedly, "I'm agin' it completely, just as I'm opposed to any kind of totalitarianism, regardless, Archbishop, of what symbol it uses."²⁸⁹ One the other hand, when he boasted of accepting Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain's invitation to go to Italy and meet with Archbishop

²⁸⁵. Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), pp. 113-114.

²⁸⁶. Spain of the thirties was divided into several parties. The Loyalists were comprised of socialists, communists and extreme Republicans and liberals. Aided by the Soviet Union, they were opposed by the conservative Nationalists, led by General Francisco Franco.

While both sides were guilty of atrocities, the Loyalists were unspeakably antagonistic toward the Catholic Church, martyring thousands of priests and religious.

The International Brigades were an organizing effort of the Soviets to bring troops from various countries into Spain to augment Loyalist forces. Approximately 2,500 people came from the United States. (*Modern Times*, Paul Johnson, NY: Harper & Row, 1985, pp. 321-340.)

²⁸⁷. *Let Them Call Me Rebel*.... page 38-39.

²⁸⁸. *Let Them Call Me Rebel* p 59-60.

²⁸⁹. *Let Them Call Me Rebel* p 249.

Montini (who later became Pope Paul VI) to discuss organizing the Catholic workers as an alternative to watching them join the communists he let it drop that in the evenings, after his meetings with the Archbishop, he was having dinner with a communist union official.²⁹⁰

More revealing than any anecdote, however, are Alinsky's own words in *Rules for Radicals*. While the book is something of an organizer's textbook, permeated with practical advice on organizational tactics, it has numerous philosophical parallels to the *Communist Manifesto*.

Marx and Alinsky have similar perspectives about the world. Marx details the elements of class struggle, and is particularly concerned with efforts of the proletariat class in an industrial society to attain earthly "justice." Alinsky also outlines a class structure, concerning himself with providing the "have-nots" organizational tools to attain earthly "justice."

Both Marx and Saul Alinsky's views are predicated on a materialistic analysis of the world. Both seek to concentrate, engage, and harness worldly power to bring about equity of material goods and advantage.

Both Marx and Alinsky advocate "using" the middle class, which will ultimately be destroyed, in alliance with the poor as leverage for power. Both are convinced that a proletarian "revolution," whether violent or peaceful, is inevitable and deserves assistance.

There are differences between Marx and Alinsky's thought, however. Marx, for one, is philosophically motivated. He theorizes about what structure (and supplies the answer, "communism") will answer the needs of the poor. The *Communist Manifesto* is primarily a theoretical treatise on class

²⁹⁰ P. David Finks, *The Radical Vision of Saul Alinsky*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), p 114, taken from Marion Sanders *The Professional Radical: Conversations with Saul Alinsky*, 1970, p 9.

relationships and how the new, “just” order of society is to be arranged. Marx believed that the end or purpose of class-based revolution was the establishment of an attainable utopia.

For his part, Alinsky is *practically* motivated. He is primarily concerned, as expressed in *Rules for Radicals*, with specific actions that organizers can use to alter the power balance of society. Alinsky clearly has a “vision” of what the just society is like and develops a set of principles from which his organizing proceeds, but it is not his objective to describe an ideal structuring of society.

Alinsky, sees himself as living a life of contradictions, organizing “in and for an open society,”²⁹¹ consumed by an “ever-gnawing inner uncertainty as to whether or not he is right”²⁹² yet having faith that, given the right tools, people would work out for themselves, generally, what was best, fair, equitable. Alinsky’s “end” is personal and existential. “The human cry of the second revolution is one for meaning, a purpose for life – a cause to live for and, if need be, die for.”²⁹³

Alinsky was concerned with “process,” as he was too realistic to imagine that mankind would achieve a finished product but believed social change would occur “naturally” if groups of people were organized to solve immediate, local social problems. “Process and purpose are so welded to each other that it is impossible to mark where one leaves off and the other begins. The very process of democratic participation is for the purpose of organization rather than to rid the alleys of dirt. Process is really purpose.”²⁹⁴

As a final thought, Alinsky used the term “democracy” to mean organized groups of people seeking political solutions to attain

²⁹¹ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p 10

²⁹² *Rules for Radicals* ...p 11, quoting Justice Learned Hand.

²⁹³ *Rules for Radicals* ...p 196.

²⁹⁴ *Rules for Radicals* ...p 122.

group self-interest. While he wanted people to understand collective self-interest in a larger, “global” framework, he did not methodically set out to indoctrinate his organizations (which he left to themselves after they were on their feet). This trait of Alinsky’s has been abandoned by the networks developed from his ideas.²⁹⁵

REALIZING DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Marx, with a specific, ideal political and economic structure in mind, recognized that attainment of a “just” society would not occur by itself, in the normal order of political and social events. Movement towards an “ideal” social order would need to be “guided.”

Democratic socialists, pushing for national social planning “on a scale our present institutional arrangements will not tolerate,”²⁹⁶ have labored long and hard to develop the vehicles that can deliver this guidance. . . . and democratic socialism was the “worldview” under which Alinsky operated:

Fisher suggests that Alinsky learnt his militant, confrontational tactics from the Communist organisers he met when volunteering for the CIO, mirroring their tactics in his own work but without adopting their ideology or party structure. However, the group Alinsky identified with most closely was the non-statist democratic socialists.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ See “Not Grassroots,” chapter 38.

²⁹⁶ *Socialism*. . . . p. 332, 358.

²⁹⁷ Luke Bretherton, “The Origins of Organising: A Political and Intellectual Sketch,” Colloquium on Community Organising, 15th-17th June, 2009. The Fisher reference is to: Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighbourhood Organising in America*, updated edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994),

Besides sharing a basic “class analysis” of present social structures, Alinsky agreed that material power can only be overthrown by material power and that this was a desirable accomplishment. Marx and Alinsky both, in different ways, included in their scheme of social “reorganization” a deliberate manipulation of groups of people for their desired ends. The lower middle class, Alinsky wrote, “have their part to play in the essential prelude of reformation, in their acceptance that the ways of the past with its promises for the future no longer work and we must move ahead – where we move to may not be definite or certain, but move we must.”²⁹⁸

Like the social democrats, Alinsky saw his effort as “democratic,” that is, as an empowerment of “the people” to participate in civic activity. It was this effort of “citizenship” that Alinsky felt gave people their dignity, as opposed to any inherent essence intrinsically possessed by humanity. “We know that, to date, most of our pain, frustration, defeat, and failure has come from using an imperfect instrument, a partial democracy.”²⁹⁹

Alinsky was not an economist, but his instincts were no-nonsense socialism.

The revolution must manifest itself in the corporate sector by the corporations’ realistic appraisal of conditions in the nation. The corporations must forget their nonsense about “private sectors.” It is not just that government contracts and subsidies have blurred the line between public and private

p. 61. Where quotes are taken from British sources, British spellings will be retained.

²⁹⁸. *Rules for Radicals*. . . . p. 189.

²⁹⁹. *Rules for Radicals*. . . . p. 39.

sectors, but that every American individual or corporation is public as well as private; public in that we are Americans and concerned about our national welfare. We have a double commitment and corporations had better recognize this for the sake of their own survival. Poverty, discrimination, disease, crime – everything is as much a concern of the corporation as is profits.³⁰⁰

Alinsky's first book, *Reveille for Radicals*, also says that "hope for the future is when the means of production will be owned by all the people instead of a comparative handful."

This thought compares strikingly with democratic socialist theory. "We cannot accept capitalism's conception of economic relations as 'free and private' because contracts are not made among economic equals and because they give rise to social structures which undemocratically confer power upon some over others."³⁰¹

Like the democratic socialists, Alinsky was not concerned about eliminating all private property, but about "socializing" governmental and productive power. He was content to allow organized religion to function in its own spheres, but expected it to put its resources at the disposal of his people's organizations. And finally, like the social democrats, Alinsky repudiated "right-wing" Marxism that tended toward dictatorship of the proletariat. He preferred the idealism of a "free society," that had no ruling elite. And, he wanted revolution:

[W]e are concerned with how to create mass

³⁰⁰ *Rules for Radicals*... p 195.

³⁰¹ Joseph Schwartz (member of the DSA National Political Committee and DSA National Executive Committee), "Toward a Democratic Socialism: Theory, Strategy, and Vision," undated paper.

organizations to seize power and give it to the people; to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace, cooperation, equal and full opportunities for education, full and useful employment, health, and the creation of those circumstances in which men have the chance to live by the values that give meaning to life. We are talking about a mass power organization which will change the world ... This means revolution.³⁰²

THE INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

The prototype of Alinskyian organizing, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), has struggled with accusations of “Communist leanings” since Alinsky’s day. One of its early affiliates, the Chelsea Community Council in New York City disbanded, in the early 1960s, in part due to such allegations.³⁰³ In Syracuse, which was organized by the IAF for a short time, a city agency director was quoted as saying, “I thoroughly distrust any program that identifies two distinct classes of society; in this case the ‘poor’ and the ‘affluent.’ The social action program follows all the old patterns of class distinction and hate so easily identified with Marxism.”³⁰⁴

Later examples of confusion over the IAF’s perceived political position similarly abound. Journalist Kaye Northcott, following IAF southwest regional director, Ernesto Cortes, for four months, writes that he and the IAF are frequently considered Marxist:

³⁰² *Rules for Radicals* ...p 3.

³⁰³ Joan E. Lancourt, *Confront or Concede: The Alinsky Citizen-Action Organizations*, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1979), p. 8.

³⁰⁴ *Confront or Concede* ...p 62.

I tried to remember what made [Cortes] laugh. He laughed at politicians a lot, but he had the good sense to put me off record before doing an imitation of some sputtering councilman flailed by one of his groups. Earlier in the drive he had described a meeting with a delegation of right-wing Catholics and business people who are convinced that he and the IAF are Marxist revolutionaries or some such nonsense.³⁰⁵

Another writer, whose master's thesis examined *Valley Interfaith*, a Texas IAF local, bemoaned that "professional organizers and members must continue to deal with the establishment and those who are opposed to Valley Interfaith who have polarized the community by charging that the tactics used are communistic and Marxist in nature."³⁰⁶

The thesis also describes a talk sponsored by the Concerned Citizens, an "anti" IAF organization, given by Father Enrique T. Rueda, a priest whose father had been imprisoned by Castro and immigrated to the United States during the 1960s to escape communist persecution. "Father Rueda stated that the IAF had the same 'goals as the Christian Marxists' and that the IAF was part of a 'Marxist master program to manipulate churches for radical social change through revolution.'"³⁰⁷

These charges are often complicated by terminology. IAF

³⁰⁵. Kaye Northcott, "To Agitate the Dispossessed...On the Road with Ernie Cortes," *Southern Exposure*, July/August 1985; See also Rogers, *Cold Anger...* p 162.

³⁰⁶. MaryAnn Eklund, *Structure and Function of the Rhetoric of Valley Interfaith*, Master Thesis University of New Mexico, 1987.

³⁰⁷. *Structure and Function...*, page 126. Eklund also mentions that the anti-EPISO group, *EPISO No! Christo, Si!*, out of El Paso, Texas, also expressed the opinion that the IAF was "Marxist." (pp 116-117)

organizers and leaders, who view themselves as promoting “participatory citizenship” and “democracy” and who have expressed their own opposition to totalitarian “right-wing” Marxism, under the term of “communism,” are exasperated by what seems, to them, pervasive ignorance and fear. Andres Sarabia, the first president of San Antonio’s IAF local, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) once said, “Once we were accused of being communist. This fellow talked about Alinsky and communism. I told him I never met Alinsky. ‘Why don’t you worry about Jefferson and those guys? They’re the ones who wrote the basics for this stuff.’”³⁰⁸

Yet, there is a basis for the charge that goes beyond Alinsky’s writing. Ernesto Cortes has said that the IAF wants to affect “terms of work and wages.” He “envisions that, as the Texas network develops a strong presence, it can begin addressing large economic issues from the perspective of the workers.” Further:

We can [once the IAF has a national or regional power base] raise questions about work, which raises questions about investment patterns. Can we create some fundamental institutions that allow reinvestment in communities? If we all come to the conclusion that the cost of capital is a serious impediment to economic development, then we’re going to have to have a new institution to provide low-cost capital.³⁰⁹

Comments made by Ed Chambers, who succeeded Alinsky as

³⁰⁸. Harry Boyte, *Community is Possible: Repairing America’s Roots*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 139, 141.

³⁰⁹. William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People, the Betrayal of American Democracy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) chapter 10.

executive director of the Industrial Areas Foundation, are equally confusing – or enlightening:

It's hard to get young men and women in this culture to drop the markets-driven vision. I'm a little bit discouraged, but I'm not quitting, I'm not giving up. I still got the hope that the next re-founder of Industrial Areas Foundation can take it into a better future. The purpose of life isn't truth; the purpose of life is meaning. The struggle of meaning that keeps you going, and a hope that you are about to get something greater than anything you've got. If anything keeps me going, it's building the future of these institutions on a broader base, so they can take on corporate America. That which you possess isn't as great as that which you are about to possess.³¹⁰

Then, in the United Kingdom, the IAF network, London Citizens, were among the speakers for a national Socialist Worker Party conference.³¹¹ These alliances and articulations belong to democratic socialist thought.

“PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY”

One of democratic socialism's tenets is “gradualism.” Stemming from an analysis given by the Italian theoretician and a founder of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci, “gradualism” recognized that a proletarian socialist revolution in the West was unlikely. Gramsci urged socialists to pursue a

³¹⁰ Studs Turkel, “Hope Dies Last,” *In These Times*, 1-2-04.

³¹¹ National conference of the Socialist Worker Party, “One Society Many Cultures,” www.swp.org.uk

systematic agenda of slow but increasing socialization in capitalist societies. This would allow socialists time to develop a “critical mass” of popular support, an “educated” majority in moral solidarity with their aims.

To accomplish this, popular support was not seen to be a merely political work. An ideological foundation would need to be laid on many different levels if the prejudices against socialism, particularly in the United States, were to be overcome.

The left would have to organize not only in the formal political arena, but in the workplace, the neighborhood, the church, and the PTA. Though whoever holds state power sets the boundaries within which political struggle occurs, organizing in ‘civil society’ (at the grassroots) is critical for the growth of the left.³¹²

Steady encroachments “upon the prerogatives of capital, will involve creative experiments in workers’ buy-outs, democratic control over pension funds, mandated consumer representation on corporate boards”³¹³ can only be achieved in a growing atmosphere of popular acceptance.

Democratic socialism advocates removing healthcare, childcare, education, and housing from the “private market” and financing them through the state. The goods themselves would be accessed through community-based institutions. Democratic socialists refer to this as “democratic control over consumption.”³¹⁴

³¹². *“Toward a Democratic Socialism...”* For a more detailed analysis of the work various Alinskyian organizing networks are doing with religious institutions, see chapter 17 on Liberationism.

³¹³. *“Toward a Democratic Socialism...”*

³¹⁴. *“Toward a Democratic Socialism...”*

Its corollary requires that there also be a “democratic control over production.” Borrowing from Alec Nove’s *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, Joseph Schwartz describes a vision of the economy which “combines democratic planning and the use of market mechanism to ensure the greatest amount of workers’ control compatible with a high level of economic efficiency.”³¹⁵ This vision argues for state-run monopolies of larger industries, having serious worker management components, and protects the private market system for small business and the self-employed.

Alinskyian organizations are, among other things, putting into place the necessary structures to enable a “democratic control over consumption.” As the United States federal government increasingly legislates comprehensive service systems of health care, childcare, housing, employment, and education, “community-based institutions” to coordinate and supposedly “humanize” deliverance of benefits are an essential part of the package.

In his book *Man and the State*, the philosopher Jacques Maritain, develops the thesis that democracy is the best form of government. Democracy, he teaches, is predicated on education and trust in people, who participate in the state’s functioning. The people can participate, in a democracy, by voting, by expressing themselves publicly, and by involving themselves in the structures that can bring pressure on the state to change. There is much in this description of democracy that Maritain believed paralleled the work of Alinskyian People’s Organizations. He wrote:

I recommend to you with deepest enthusiasm Alinsky’s book *Reveille for Radicals*. I feel the deepest affection for the author, whom I regard as a truly great man, a real son of the pioneers. He has discovered in his people’s organizations the creative

³¹⁵. *“Toward a Democratic Socialism...”*

sap of American life, and I believe that in them can be found the germ of an authentic renewal of democracy.³¹⁶

Modern Alinskyian organizations have refined their people's organizations and "citizen participation." Gone, for the most part, are those clumsy and offensive "confrontations" popularized in the 1960s and in their place are carefully crafted mechanisms by which community opinion can simultaneously be shaped and used, in its "guided" form, to propel the state into the direction of democratic socialism.

Lynn Stuter, an educational researcher and analyst, detailed an example of the "citizen participation" found in a Washington state IAF local of the 1990s.³¹⁷ Called the Washington Rural Organizing Project (WROP), the group worked with the Washington teachers' union and area school districts³¹⁸ to form the Parent's Organizing Project (POP), assisting and supporting educational restructuring efforts in eastern Washington schools. POP also organized, in member schools, an IAF trained "management" team.

Parent's Organizing Project was not a grassroots group of concerned citizens. It was established by the Industrial Areas Foundation with a core of hand-picked "leaders" who were identified as sympathetic with the IAF's educational goals.

³¹⁶ Excerpt from a letter by Jacques Maritain to Yves R. Simon, in the possession of Anthony O. Simon, dated July 20, 1946, as published in Deal Hudson, *Understanding Maritain: Philosopher and Friend*, Mercer University Press, 1987, p. 47.

³¹⁷ Lynn Stuter, "Putting the Puzzle Together," *The Christian Conscience*, May 1996.

³¹⁸ Specifically, the Washington Education Association (WEA), Nine Mile Falls School District, the Nine Mile Education Association (NMEA), the Mead School District, and the Mead Education Association, and WROP.

The IAF Washington-based organizer at the time, Joe Chrastil, received some of his funding for this organizing of regional public school parents by the Eastern Washington UniServe Council, as part of a contract between W. Patrick Dolman, labor consultant, and the Washington Education Association union. The contract's purpose was to provide "site-based management training" in twenty Washington school districts.

The Parent Organizing Project, later called the Parent Involvement Program, was established as an *organizing* body, not a decision making body.

When you've got interest and we're talking about sharing power and really doing something different, you've got to have a place for them [parents] to go. Critical study and learning about what's going on in school is important, but we are also now taking people into external action...you know...working on school levies or issues related to the delivery of social services.³¹⁹

The site-based teams in the Spokane area schools were IAF-controlled. They were not a return of parental control to public education, as was intended by the original Washington state site-based management legislation, but were entirely peopled by those who agreed with the IAF-supported educational restructuring process.

Washington teachers and administrators were given organizational training by the IAF and were permitted to bring certain, invited parents to some of these sessions. The sessions were not "open," and one uninvited parent was told she could not

³¹⁹. Joe Chrastil, speaking at an August 1995 Campaign for Human Development Conference in Chicago, Illinois. Tape of Chrastil's workshop as transcribed by Lynn Stuter.

come because she wasn't "supportive of the program" and "might sabotage the group."

In the spring of 1995, these individual school leadership teams (Learning Improvement Teams) were given the task of developing mission statements for their schools. The mission statement, crafted by the IAF-trained parents and teachers, was "then presented to the larger community for affirmation,"³²⁰ that is, to the Parent's Organizing Project.

This carefully orchestrated process gives an appearance of community support. There is no room, however, for open, public examination of planned structural changes. Opposition positions have been deliberately and systematically excluded. In the words of Stuter, the Alinskyian organization has created a ploy to "facilitate parents into ownership of the process of education restructuring," making the term "participatory democracy" farcical.

³²⁰. "Engaging the Public: One Way to Organize," A Concept Paper Produced by the Industrial Areas Foundation for the National Alliance for Restructuring Education, 1994.