

Towards a Humane Society

ACTION: Reorganisation of Social Reality

*- Self-Organisation of Humane Society
by Authentic Immediacy within a Sensitive Social Web*

*Balance of Individual Autonomy and Social Integrity
- Chance for Global Transformation, Liberation and Healing of the World*

by Globally Unified Alliances for Emancipation of Humane Potentiality

That Way Never More!

- Egalitarian Alternative to the Pyramid of Political Party Power

by Olek Netzer, Israel

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The Contract

In the muddy waters of politics let the purpose of this work be crystal-clear from the outset: The author assumes the role of an organizational consultant, practitioner of Applied Behavioral Science, specifically OD (Organizational Development). He offers his professional know-how and experience in organizational behavior and interpersonal dynamics. He is politically active too; however, in his capacity as a consultant his political sympathies should not play a role. He has his personal and political values and ethics of course and, as any conscientious professional, he had taken care not to cross his own value-lines when he agreed to become bound by this contract with his hypothetical client, in reality you, the reader. If you become convinced that this radical organizational proposal could indeed serve *your* personal and political values and objectives you would have to apply it yourself in your real life situation.

The first step in establishing the consultant-client relationship is agreeing on a working contract. I therefore need to spell out now what are the needs of the hypothetical clients that this organizational blueprint comes to serve. I assume that those clients are well aware that, so far, all attempts of well meaning people to organize politically degenerated into power-corrupted politics and resulted either in regimes no less oppressive than the old ones, or failed to make any real difference in any political system. Those clients, nevertheless, specify their needs:

- We need an organization that demands and rewards decency in interpersonal relations. *We reject machinations, manipulation of others, being influenced by rhetoric of mind-manipulators, all sorts of Machiavellian politicking - all aspects of power-corruption.*
- We want our organization to be not only truly democratic but also egalitarian: association of free and equal people who freely collaborate for achieving their political goals. That means, we demand that the organizational processes prevents, as much as possible, unequal distribution of organizational power. Each of us should feel empowered in making decisions that affect our entire organization, without preventing all

others to be equally empowered. *We equally reject bossing others, and feeling powerless and insignificant in relation to some party leaders, ideologues, or functionaries.*

- We need to be effective and productive in making a difference in our world. We are not interested in spending energy and time on turning our political experience into some kind of social club or a summer camp.

- We demand high quality of our political life; we want our political experience be humanly positive. We want our organizational life to allow that each individual among us has rights and opportunity to be really listened to, respected, and valued. Our organized political experience should keep us personally fulfilled, energized rather than exhausted, motivated to continue our involvement in it, and able to become an attractive model for others; we demand that our political life minimizes being or seeing others being devalued, manipulated, used.

As you can see, this contract is signed with a client who is seriously committed to democratic, humanistic, person-centered values. The author, in his capacity as the professional consultant, provides the best solutions to the client's needs and problems he could find in validated theories and research on the organization experience.

So, against this background of needs and personal values -- what would be the organizational structure that would best promote person-centered values and most effectively prevent power corruption and psychological exploitation in anyone's political experience? First, we shall briefly overview the entire organizational structure. You will find that is no less than a revolutionary departure from known structures of any political party or organization; in fact, it inverts them upside down. Then we shall clarify how each part of that alternative structure promotes equality and empowerment of individuals, and prevents deterioration to organizational incompetence and power corruption.

The Person-Centered Political Organization: an Overview

The whole organization is designed like a web rather than structured like a pyramid of ascending authority. It is designed as a voluntary partnership of small groups. The organizational body will be made of small cells, like all living organisms. Each cell will contain a number of members not higher than that which allows personal knowledge, personal relationships, and meeting in an average private home where each person can talk and listen to all others rather than address an audience.

*Web Decision-making:
Demolishing the Pyramid of Power*

The main task of the small groups would be making decisions. The Web will make its decisions by all member-groups on a regular basis. The person-centered political organization will be a network of small groups, each group with equal access to the highest level of organizational power. The groups will be interconnected by the delicate web of their free will to belong to the organization rather than by any chains of bureaucratic dependence.

The regular democratic process of decision-making in the person-centered political Web will be *direct* by all groups, not by representation. It will be realized by a constant flow of organizational decisions in which all members will be able to take active part. Decision-making will take place once in a week or once in two weeks; no less often than once a month, because, like life in a living organism, it needs minimal pace of heartbeat and breathing, otherwise it cannot really be alive. The decisions will be immediately communicated to a communication center and the ones made by a majority of groups will become the organization's decisions.

The Web's Executives will not make Decisions for the Organization.

Their role will be to implement the decisions made regularly by all members. That stands in contrast to the common political party routine, by which the elected leaders make decisions and members are given only a formal access to the decision-making process, once in a couple of years, by electing their representatives to the Party's convention.

The organization's agenda, that is, the decision what would all groups decide upon in any given time, will also be set by all groups. The executives could put issues on the agenda too, but with no preferential treatment of their agenda. The agenda setting could be arranged in more than one way. One possible way would be as follows: A group that would want to raise an item onto the organization's agenda will send its motion to a communication center. People of the communication center will arrange all items suggested for the organization's decision-making on a list and send it back to all groups. Members in all groups would then rank-order the items for urgency in decision-making. The highest ranked items will be put on the agenda first in the next round of decision-making. Another possible arrangement: The right to put issues on the organization's agenda will be rotated among the groups.

*Membership in the Primary Group:
On a Personal Basis.*

Membership in a Primary Group will be the only personal connection to the Web organization. It will be granted by the group to its members based on their participation. It will not be sold for money, as it is the accepted way of getting the Party membership card in political organizations. **THAT WAY NEVERMORE!** People who would want to become members will have to share something of themselves with the group, communicate with others, accept the group's regulations and become members of the group's small community. Members of the Primary Groups - they only and no one else - will have the power of decision regarding acceptance, membership, and termination of membership of individuals. Neither any institution nor any leader outside of the Primary Group will have the right to interfere with accepting and rejecting membership of persons in it. **Nevermore personal dependency on any Party apparatus!** In fact, there will be no Party membership in the same sense as today. Individual belonging will have meaning only within the small group where each person is known as a person and not just as "party member" (usually not more than a name on a list with an address and a telephone

number). The person-centered Web will be an organization of such human-size groups, not of people isolated from one another.

Belonging of a Primary Group in the Web will be based on its activity and complying with the Web's conditions. Decisions regarding acceptance, belonging, renewal of membership, or cessation of membership of a group, will be made by a committee of people from other groups, on a basis of geographic proximity, not by the central executive organs of the organization.

*Leadership in the Person-Centered Political Web:
Good Riddance!*

The living experience that our humanistic client demands - Equality in sharing organizational power -- is incompatible with an organizational climate that includes institutionalized leadership. Life in an organizational environment of personal independence and equality cannot, by definition, be realized in a climate of leaders and followers, party bosses and rank-and-file. Either we are equal or we divide into Indians and Chiefs. Organizational power-pyramid which, by definition, is designed to rank-order rather than equalize power, reflects the authoritarian patriarchal experience and, by that, rules out any possibility of realizing the historical aspiration of people for "Brotherhood" in their political-social experience.

Institutionalized leadership authorizes some people to use power and denies that authority to others, regardless if it is justified by property rights, like in a corporation, or by the right of representation, like in a political party or a democratic nation. By force of deeply rooted drives in the human nature itself, institutional leadership becomes a breeding ground for power corruption, dependency, alienation, and spiritual-psychological exploitation. Therefore, at long last, for the first political time - this organizational design abolishes institutional leadership. **NEVERMORE OF THAT**, not in our organization... We want to leave that particular cause of dehumanization of organizational experience behind once and for all. The abolition of political leadership as it is known will be accomplished through the following organizational arrangements:

1. All executive roles, without exception, will be rotated. No person could stay in any "leadership" executive or representative position more than the minimal necessary period of time - one term. **NO BEHIND WILL BE STUCK IN AN EXECUTIVE ARMCHAIR EVER.**

„In their impatience, in their despair, people secretly long to cast the burden of their own regeneration upon a savior: a president, a pope, a dictator - vulgar counterparts of a divinity debased or a corruption deified. But such a leader is only the mass of humanity writ small: the incarnation of our resentments, hates, sadisms, or our own cowardices, cofusions, and complacencies.“ -

Lewis Mumford: *The Condition of Man* (1)

2. Executives and functionaries of the Web will abstain, when in office, from using their positions for participation in the Web decision-making on matters of "ideology", "party line", etc. For example, if the Web would have a newsletter or a newspaper, the contributions of executives will not be preferentially treated for publication. If the Web would send representatives to national, state, or local political positions, they would not use their positions as springboards for influencing the Web's internal discussion and decision-making. They would be able, of course, to have equal access to influence the Web decision-making through their organic small groups, like everybody else.

3. The organic-personal character of organizational life will be maintained in appointing members to executive and representative positions. The small group will choose a member for any organizational job if it had found it has a suitable candidate. The

candidates representing some groups will themselves convene as a small group together, for a weekend or, if they decide so, more. There they would get to know one another, their views, aspirations, plans, skills, etc., and on the basis of that interpersonal data and impressions will choose, by consensus or vote, their candidate or candidates for the post. If there will be more candidates, the next level of selection will involve those who were chosen in the previous level, in the same interpersonal, direct, open and democratic way. That way the corrupted "primaries" system will pass away with all its primitive tricks of self-advertisement, self-aggrandizement, scheming, fund-raising for "contributions", wasting of money, coning or bribing pressure groups for support, etc. NEVERMORE lies of the of the "Public Relations" genre, no more "image-makers"...(The author reflects the conditions in his country Israel, but, to the best of his information, the corruption-ridden processes by which political parties elect their leaders are not much different anywhere in the "Free World"). NEVERMORE will Psychological Exploitation (that is what ad-men regularly do in consumerism and politics alike) be tolerated as means to influence members of the humanistic organizational Web.

That has been the complete general outline of the humanistic, Person-Centered, political organization. Now you know how it is designed to make coordinated decisions, govern itself, divide authority, conduct its daily life. We shall presently go into detailed description of each part of it, supporting our proposals with the existing evidence and earlier experience as we go along. My intention is to suggest a recipe you can try for organizing in a way that has realistic chances to lead you into a position of political power in the community or even in the country, without compromising your human values, and with good chances to preserve solidarity and affinity with other members. It is designed, as well, to keep you going and make you feel good about your political experience. At the very least, this recipe is guaranteed to contain the strongest antidotes to the power corruption and interpersonal conflict that has poisoned the lives of most idealistic and conscientious reformers or revolutionaries, and resulted in their paving the road to hell with their good intentions.

The Living Experience in a Person-Centered Organization: Why choosing small groups.

In light of the evaluated experience and knowledge in the area of organizational dynamics, the small group structure should be the best alternative for organizational effectiveness that goes along with democratic decision-making, personal freedom and high quality of interpersonal life. This conclusion rests on organizational characteristics such as sharing of information and openness in problem solving as well as in conflict resolution (2). The framework of a small group is required to break the viscous cycle of idealization-disappointment-alienation into which blunder most conscientious individuals in the modern affluent society.

Some Background Past and Present

Historically, the small group has been the chosen organizational alternative of person-centered thinkers. In humanistic philosophy it is found in Martin Buber's "living units of relations"(3). In applied behavioral science, it builds on small-group theory, research, and experience (4, 5). In social-political theory, it has been forwarded during the "New Left" era of the 1960's by Erich Fromm (6), a prominent pioneer in humanistic political psychology. Contemporarily, it is advocated and practiced in the U.S., as the framework for making Democracy really work, by groups such as National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, The Co-Intelligence Institute (7), and others who are becoming increasingly aware that without person-to-person dialogue and deliberation democracy could become empty of human contents. Democracy in the rich countries is seen by many social critics as a system by which the ruling elite manipulates most people to become alienated from the political process and not able to think of alternatives. But some active alternatives, like the NCDD, do

exist. So far they have abstained from partisan-politics and not intended to replace the existing political system. In deliberating national issues, they make decisions only to advise and influence the public and its representatives, not to assume political power. I still do not know of any existing political party in the world, which is not organized as a pyramid of power. However, among politically active people a feeling is growing that those who enlist as party members should become empowered by more means than just being allowed to cast their ballot once in a number of years.

If our goal were only to insure equal access of all members to organizational decision-making, with no intent to change the alienated condition of political experience, another arrangement would also be possible. Modern means of communication allow unlimited numbers of people to participate in decision-making by sending their votes by telephone or electronically. Indeed, an effort to "take back our sovereign legislative power" is already under way in the U.S., where the National Institute for Democracy works for adding a Democracy amendment to the Constitution that would allow citizens to vote on laws of their own making without having to participate in any interpersonal process other than going through the legal procedures.

Direct individual voting on legislation, or a "Government by Polling", would technically serve the values of majority rule, equality in power sharing and participation, better than the existing system of political parties and their representatives. However, without genuine and high-quality process of dialogue and deliberation public opinion would lack most of what is valued in its wisdom. That value comes from passing one's opinions through the testing ground of human congregation, interrelation, discussion, process, growth and change. Without interpersonal processes, minority opinions or any new and creative ideas would not have the chance to be listened to and discussed. In the absence of a genuine dialogue, decision-making would become the result of computation rather than deliberation, like in public polls. The democratic process would be reduced to counting hands of isolated and most often alienated people. It seems technically possible, though, that people form small discussion and decision-making groups electronically, writing or even talking and seeing one another. If that experience works, people involved in such medium-mediated interpersonal communication could then decide for themselves if and how often they would meet face to face.

Some background considerations are due here. The ideals of freedom, social justice, human rights, such as had found expression the American, French or the Socialist revolutions, belonged to people who lived in societies of absolute oppression, organized terror and fear, and abysmal destitution. Violence in their world was an inseparable part of political life, like the air they breathed. Those revolutionaries said, in perfect faith, Liberty - Equality - Brotherhood and ended up on the guillotine or, later, concentration and death camps. Some become tyrants, slave-owners, totalitarian oppressors and murderers of entire peoples. Most of their former supporters, many millions, became physically their victims, in many cases also the victims of their own ideas. We are not under any such threat, not even the threat of famine. We are protected by the modern affluent western democratic society - let us not forget to count of our blessings.

However, our Freedom and our aspirations for Brotherhood (or as it is now politically *correcter* to say "Siblinghood") - not to mention Equality which is happily sacrificed on the altar of material affluence-are constantly affected by isolation, alienation, escapism, merciless competition, violence... Most of us pass our lives engaged in a compulsive, competitive "pursuit of happiness", e. g. money and entertainment. The system grants us a plethora of easy substitutes for a life of freedom and inner independence, political equality, and human relatedness. Many of our heads are guillotined pleasantly without separating from shoul-

ders; empty of motives and ideas such as would befit free spirits and independent minds of persons who take charge of their destiny and the destiny of their society.

The American Co-Intelligence Institute, which supports and trains facilitators for small-group of citizens practicing democracy by deliberating issues, introduces itself quoting Alexander Hamilton in Federalist No.71: *The deliberative sense of the community should govern*. It makes you think, what would become of the deliberation process that led the American Founding Fathers to draft their Constitution, if they each had a TV set with 54 channels at home? Our community, as described by many humanistic social thinkers, is populated by willing conformists. The system does not touch our physical tissues, it only short cuts the energy needed for establishing a meaningful dialogue between individuals and their fellows, society, world. And all this "unfreedom" (as Herbert Marcuse, one of the ideological idols of the New Left, coined it) - most of us willingly accept.

What steps could be taken toward humanization of individual political experience? - We as others suggest the small group as the primary setting of organization, not only as an alternative to a built-in organizational corruption by institutionalized inequality and internal conflict, but also as an alternative to political alienation, virtually political non-existence of so many people! The human-sized political structure is suited for establishing meaningful contacts with others around political issues toward making effective group decisions on those issues. Furthermore, the person-to-person environment is the logical arrangement for liberation from psychological exploitation by mind-manipulators using media and in the loudspeakers of leadership positions. Yet more, based on current knowledge, it is the logically best setting for supporting individual self-expression and personal growth.

„The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each, considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction. The individual is a fact of existence insofar as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence insofar as it is built up of living units of relations. The fundamental fact of human existence is man with man.“

Martin Buber. (8)

To meet the needs of individual freedom of active participation the small size of primary groups is necessary for reasons of space and time. You may justify that assertion with your personal experience, beginning with your experiences as a child in a school's classroom. Your freedom of self-expression in public had been necessarily limited by the need to share with others the space, time, and attention. The more people are gathered the more individuals must be limited and restrained to make communication possible. Above a certain limit, a division of roles between speakers and audience becomes necessary, so equality in affecting the decision-making process becomes less and less possible.

With all the "cold" professional objectivity I am capable of, I see no organizational person-centered alternative to the empowerment of small groups, small enough to be a living web of interrelations among equal individuals. To date, the validated experience in human behavior offers no better alternative for supporting the values we seek to realize.

The Revolutionary Meaning of Planting a Person-Centered Web on Ruins of the Power-Pyramid

The organizational network/web of small groups is not my original contribution. As I already mentioned, the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm suggested it and he too was not the first one but followed at the footsteps of thinkers and social movers like Gustav Landauer, who are considered utopians, because they did

not have the benefits of scientific knowledge about interpersonal processes and group-dynamics that we have. I do not claim credit for that organizational scheme, so I need not be shy about expressing my enthusiasm about it: It could make possible what has so far been proved impossible - a decent, human, democratic and egalitarian political power organization. Becoming a member in an organization that puts the power in the hands of all members at all time, rather than in the hands of the top leaders, should be seen as a radical, revolutionary, departure from all earlier attempts that failed. I see it as an opportunity for individuals in our lifetime to participate in the birth of something new in the world. All radical reformers and leaders of revolutions, that had failed or will fail in the future, only upturned the power-pyramid from side to side to stabilize it with themselves on top. The suggested web-organization however, has the chance to break the historical curse, because it demolishes the power-pyramid completely. On its ruins something new, humanly organic and living, has a realistic chance to grow.

The total demolition of the power-pyramid is not *sufficient* for making the person-centered organization achieve its goals without compromising its values. However, it is a *necessary* condition for it. In a power-pyramid organization, there is no real chance to succeed because, regardless of the best of intentions of the founders, corruption of the democratic-egalitarian values by power is built-in. The division between management and workers, leaders and followers, people with power and people with no real power works and perpetuates itself for all political, military, bureaucratic and economic organizations. For them that is a good solution but for us that is our *problem*. Now, you must face the truth that the solution you are seeking for a democratic and truly egalitarian effective political organization-- cannot live with institutionalized hierarchy of power and stay true to its intended values. In a political party as we know each member "shares" in organizational power as a small share-holder in a giant corporation, -- sharing power is an illusion if not outright deception. However, having reversed the decision-making order, we give a truly equal share of organizational power to each member. We create something new under the political sun with a built-in understanding of, and a counter-mechanism against, our natural drive to overpower and control others regardless of the ideological rationalization systems we might build to justify it.

Our scheme takes the time-honored idea of checks-and-balances some steps further and into the living fabric of a voluntary political organization. And please, bear in mind that the higher the ideals and loftier the goals and stronger the belief of the idealists in their ideology, their cause, their leaders and themselves - the more logically justified becomes the corruption manifested in manipulation of others, aggression towards "deviants" who think differently, violence, and other "means" that justify the "ends". That is the real dynamic of paving with good intentions the way to hell. That is what we *must* avoid by building-in the logically strongest system of checks and balances, signposts and barriers, around the precipices of power-corruption.

As I see it - and see no realistic alternative - the very nature of person-centered values leads to a conclusion that their realization in an organization must involve maximum empowerment of each individual and maximum equal sharing of power. Our own nature, as well as all available historical precedents, lead to the conclusion that not less than a total demolition of the pyramid of power is necessary -- if the organization should avoid becoming yet another conflict arena in which, under the ideological veneer, individual chieftains and followers compete for power by climbing on each other rather like rivals or enemies rather than working together as brothers/sisters for their common goals.

So let us pause for a minute and contemplate the meaning of the Web concept in the beginning of this century and this millennium. I believe, that whoever will manage to find her or his way to a political organization, structured as a web of small groups that

make decisions for the whole organization, will participate in a completely new political experience. In the frame of mind of a humanist such as our hypothetical client or reader - he or she is offered participation in the birth of something new and liberating in the world.

Person-Centered Political Organization for what?

"Take part in the birth of something new in the world" sounds exciting - but for what political purposes? - For *your* purposes, of course. The author, as your organizational consultant, has offered an alternative for those of you who reject the presently existing political party experience as inadequate or incompatible with your values. Now each reader may use this organizational scheme toward reaching her or his own goals, in his or her time and place. My responsibility is to ensure, to the best of my ability, that you experience a democratic-person-centered *quality of life* in your organization. For that goal, we will be going now into precise and even minute details, everything that may help avoid trouble for those who would move from this "prescription" to real life.

The quality of organizational life is something that it is difficult to cheat on or have illusions about. People who experience it feel it. We must ensure that the organizational corruption we avoided by abolishing the pyramid of power and arranging for the decisions to flow from all member-groups, would not infect the group itself with inefficient, unequal, unfair, non-democratic communication and behavior patterns.

Power-pyramids attract people with stronger power and competitive drives and fewer scruples. They repel the more sensitive, independent, and conscientious ones, who are neither natural pushers nor ready followers of leaders and crowds. Our suggestions aim at creating such organizational climate in the web-organization that would be suited for the latter types and repel the more conflicted on issues of power and control of others. In contrast to all our predecessors we possess today the sources of practical knowledge about interpersonal dynamics that make it possible to conduct the decision-making processes differently, in ways that do not cause the usual burnout afflicting sensitive and conscientious people in hierarchic and conflict ridden organizations. The alternative ways are characterized by open resolution of conflicts and open communication, and by having the quality of life of the group itself as a regular item on its agenda. Upon suggesting them, we may responsibly claim, that today we know how to narrow the gap between good intentions and organizational reality, as we had never known before.

Dedication: *I dedicate this section to two then young women from the American radical "Movement" (nowadays referred to as the "New Left") in 1960's and early 1970's, Betty Doerr and Vicki Legion. They wrote the following "Letter to the Movement" in its periodical "Liberation". Since reading their article, I have had those two women and their experience on my mind, seeking to find an alternative way of being a "Movement", but making sure that what had happened to them, and to many thousands of others, would never happen again.*

„The women's movement experience pushed us into some fruitful struggling against our competitive upbringing, but the old ways are hard dying. Correct-lining, snap judgments and labeling make us lose the exploration of real differences in a haze of rhetoric, personal attack and counterattack. When we're preoccupied with our fear of being labeled, our ability to think critically gets suspended.

Right\wrong thinking impedes critical thinking and creativity. I am sad at how often I have seen this dynamic play itself out in discussions. Marx, or Third World revolutionaries, or the Panthers or some other authority is defined as "Right". Anyone who questions what the authority says is at best

"wrong" and at worst "counterrevolutionary". The discussion degenerates into a biblical exegesis, with different sides swapping quotes and impressions. Facts and experiences that don't fit "the line" are ignored.

Real differences are obscured in barrages of rhetoric, while new events are jammed into old categories. So much for our ability to respond creatively to changing conditions".

- Betty Doerr and Vicki Legion, "Letter to a Movement", Liberation, July-August 1974.

The above text says it all. *Nevermore of that!*

Life, regulations, and organization: basic considerations.

When we approach organizational rules and regulations, we have to keep in mind some basic considerations regarding the interrelation of individual freedom, conduct, and the public interest. By rules and regulations, we mean all that governs and regulates conduct in institutions such as states, corporations, schools, even families: institutional norms, contracts, laws, by-laws, in short - all that limits free interaction between individuals.

Rules and regulations can be compared to roads and tracks that people opened in the territory of their living in order to avoid bumping into or trampling on one another. On both sides of those tracks there are pitfalls easy to fall into: hierarchy on the right and anarchy on the left.

Watch out on your left:

Anarchism and anarchy can be very attractive to people who value their personal freedom above all, and that attractiveness lasts as long as they do not try to practice it in large numbers. Knowing many anarchistic spirits from personal experience and having myself similar sentiments, I believe that many of the good-intentioned rebellious people will not oppose to the organizational program suggested here. Anarchism as a political strategy is, for conscientious people, a default option in a world in which they do not see better alternatives. Just recently, I read a message from one of the leaders of the British radical scene, in which he clearly admitted "we don't know how to organize effectively" and in that he justified his suggestion that we'd be better off not to try. Here, I believe, is the way conscientious people like him might consider trying.

Anarchy is great and sounds great in art and artistic spheres, for example in concerts of Rock music bands. However, on stage, anarchy is an illusion created by much hard and well-disciplined work in rehearsals. And below the stage-level it would quickly become a disaster-area were there no regulations and people of authority who enforce them: sell tickets, control the entrance, and generally take care that the masses of young anarchistic spirits will not be trampled or suffocated in their crowd.

A state with no effective police will be ridden by savagery more than a police state because, when all limitations on free interpersonal interaction are lifted, interaction of gangsters with others becomes also free. Unlimited and unregulated freedom caters to the violent drives in people (think of the anarchistic principle in relation to the free selling of firearms), and therefore anarchy is necessarily ineffective as a political strategy in an open society. The bulk of normal humanity fears anarchy and tries to escape out of it as soon as it can. Look back to the last decades: Hippies have generated Yuppies. The French overwhelmingly supported the authoritarian De Gaulle in the wake of the fabled student anarchistic "revolt" of 1968. In that revolt, the most celebrated (by the media, how else) figure was "Danny the Red", who specifically opposed to formal organization, and who later, as he grew up, got organizationally "square" and became an elected parliamentarian in Germany. One of the similarly celebrated figures in

the U. S. at the time was Abbie Hoffman. His fabled bestseller "*Revolution for the Hell of It*", written under the nom de plume "Free", inspired the "masses" (mostly of adolescents) with wishful-thinking "observations" such as "The stable middle-class home is falling apart". He himself became, predictably, stable-middle-class-home type, an insurance agent, as I heard. The important political fact of life remains the victory of Nixon in 1972 presidential elections in all states but one, and the emergence of the "moral majority" in the U.S. It must have occurred, at least to a certain extent, as a backlash to the anarchistic "counterculture", of "flower-children", the "New Left" of the 1960s, which swept America with merry slogans such as "Screw the System" - end of the short historical detour.

Those who resist any organizational rules and regulations would, first, never to be able to organize. Therefore, they would indeed be free only of means to control their destiny; not free from the danger of living for the rest of their and their children's lives under the social system or regime they would so much wish to change. Or, they could become free riders on the system's back, allowed to sing and dance, watch anarchy on TV and go around free to grumble, protest and demonstrate, in the system's public gardens as long as they do not cross those limits.

Watch out on your right:

On the right-hand side of regulated roads there lie the pitfalls of hierarchy leading first to corruption of the person-centered-egalitarian-democratic values and then, further down, to authoritarianism, and still further all the way down to Animal Farm tyranny. Therefore, in order to avoid them, we need such rules and regulations that would ensure good work and generate good feelings in the free-spirited participants about doing the work together. For that, our rules and regulation must avoid deterioration to power relationships, maintain human relationships among equals, and leave enough space for free activity, spontaneity and creativity. Rules and regulations need to assist personal freedom rather than hinder it; they need to be at the *minimal* level but *not less*.

In suggesting the rules and regulation for the life of the Primary Group our point of departure is, that the meaningful difference between any good and bad system, be it as big as a state or as small as a family, is not between having rules and regulations and being free of any rules an regulation. **The difference between hope and despair, freedom and oppression, equality and exploitation, lies, like in a Democracy, in the difference between good laws and regulations well administered; and bad laws and regulations or any laws and regulations poorly administered, resulting in oppression, confusion and conflict.**

To sum it up: No Organization, so far, has led to Liberation - sad but true. However, the fact of political life is, *No Liberation without Organization*. -- As long as good-intentioned and decent people do not learn how to organize effectively for gaining political power without compromising their values of equality in power-sharing - the free spirits who wish to change the political reality are destined to live in a world of one or another political system of domination, exploitation, or oppression.

Rules/regulations are like a recipe; we do the cooking

Another point regarding rules and regulations is important to keep in mind: They are human inventions that become, like signposts, part of our social environment. But human life and behavior can never be completely regulated, signposts can forever be misunderstood or ignored and could never regulate every aspect

of human life. Even in total institutions, such as prisons or concentration camps, prisoners have some space for behaving according to their inner self-regulation systems, for better or worse. The success of a society or an organization is overwhelmingly dependent on the rules governing it, but never independent of the people's will and ability to follow, interpret, and apply the rules in any new situation in the ever changing reality. Organizational rules and regulations are necessary but never sufficient.

The United States has a Constitution and it is impossible to imagine it could survive as a nation without it. But even such beautiful constitution must be interpreted and amended if needed, and could be distorted and even emptied of meaning. All religions have rules, and yet their leaders must do the interpretation, changing, and adaptation work of their, however divine, regulations. The country may be formally democratic, but most citizens may lack democratic education, mentality, skills. Laws and regulations can be seen as means to translate values into patterns of living. They could be values we share, like individual rights and equality before law, or values we oppose, like class, religion, or ethnic group dominance. In any case, rules in themselves would not insure the realization of any values. And regardless of how nice sound the values, absence of rules will result in conflict that could lead only to either disintegration or to realization of the dominant patterns by force.

The power of any social contract is dependent on the willingness of people to uphold and the ability of the society to enforce it. Since the Primary Group of the organizational Web suggested here is a voluntary association of free individuals, effectiveness of its rules and regulations would depend only on the willingness and ability of the group members to abide by them. We will presently suggest the best rules and regulations for the group process we know of as of today. They are based mainly on the experience of group training in interpersonal skills development. They would be like a recipe for you. The results will be dependent on your "cooking". In practice, you have all the freedom to change that recipe to suit your needs, change the rules, and devise different ones as you get the taste of it.

* * *

Equality and Power-Sharing in the Process of Decision-Making

In contrast to all known political organizations, the Web gives its Primary Groups the right and the power to make the decisions for the whole movement on a regular basis. Now we need to suggest to individuals how to use that power in the best way and not waste it. Life in a political group is not just socializing. It is work. Our work is making decisions for our own group and for the entire organization, and carrying them out. If we do not make decisions, or make decisions and do nothing to implement them, the group will become a social club or a discussion group. For members who want to make a political difference such group would lose its purpose for being. Democratic decision-making is a conscious human endeavor. It requires proper physical conditions for enabling people to communicate and discuss their issues, and then make their decision by an accepted procedure. That was so even in the Athenian Democracy. The necessary but limited physical resource for democratic decision-making is *Time*: time to respond, time to influence, time to argue, time to listen, time to think, to answer, to make one's mind, etc.

The *quality of life* in decision-making is largely a function of how time is shared and used. The lower the quality of life in decision-making the more aggression could be observed in people's fighting for time: shouting, cutting each other off, trying to take possession of the greatest possible amount of time. If they snatch the mike from each other, you can see the physical character of such aggressive behavior more distinctly. We must therefore find arrangements that would ensure maximum quality of democratic life in sharing the precious common resource for decision-making: **time**.

In light of the physical constraints of time, and in light of your needs and values, you may evaluate the following rules for conducting the regular meetings of the Primary Groups. The following is the “recipe” by which you would be able to treat one another to a life experience that will be truly democratic, not putrefied by incompetence and not corrupted by power. The solution to our problem of democratic high-quality decision-making would be called “**Egalitarian Group Working Process**”.

Think of the small Primary Group as the way to humanize the organizational **space**. Think of the Egalitarian Group Working Process as a way to humanize the organizational **time**.

Egalitarian Group Working Process

- 1. Appointment or election of a chairperson.**
- 2. Deciding on time limit for the decision-making process.**
- 3. Ratification of the agenda.**
- 4. Division of the group’s time (as set in No. 2.) among the agenda items.**
- 5. Appointment of a “Time Keeper” who’d remind the speakers, if needed, that the time decided upon is finished or is about to be finished.**
- 6. Discussion and decision on each of the agenda’s items, within the time limit decided upon beforehand (No. 4).**
- 7. With each agenda item, display of the decision made in writing, including assignment of the people responsible for carrying it out.**
- 8. Feedback.**

That is the “recipe” of rules for decision-making in a small group. We know that people do not like to be ruled and regulated. Perhaps it would be more pleasant if we referred to the **Egalitarian Group Working Process** as “rules of the game”. However, the truth is that it is not a game. That is our political life in its most significant manifestation. Changes, improvements, adaptations of the process, would of course be possible and would be natural. No professional solution based on a scientific approach claims perfection or shuns improvement and no recipe wants to come in place of the actual cooking. This Egalitarian Group Working Process is the best we know as of today; now we are going to clarify and justify its particular elements.

1. Appointment or election of a chairperson

The “chairperson” is the person authorized by the group for managing the shared working time according to the group’s decision, dividing and portioning time among members and the items on the agenda... Why do we have to have a formally appointed chairperson? Why having one person more “equal” by making her or him authorized more than others? - Well, that chairperson would have much responsibility going along with whatever authority he or she would have; that person could exercise all the authority she or he has, right in front of the entire group, nowhere else. But the most obvious reason for having to have a chairperson can be seen in the process of decision-making in other groups. In that rare instance, we can follow the good example of parliamentary procedures. Just imagine what would have happened if the discussion and decision-making processes in political assemblies, congresses and parliaments, were not conducted according to the strict procedure imposed by the speaker, the chairperson.

If the number of members is not greater than six; and if those members are exceptionally skilled in interpersonal communication (listening, self-control, sensitivity, clarity of expression, empathy, constructive behavior in conflict, awareness of passing time and of sub-text or non-verbal messages sent by others, etc., etc.), they could make decisions democratically with no formal structure, freely and spontaneously, like friends over a cup of coffee, without a chairperson or any formally assigned roles. However, reality has its laws too: the personal freedom with which

each participant can use time for presenting, substantiating or defending his or her position in order to convince others, is limited by the very presence of other participants. Time for it must be shared rightfully for people to feel good about it. So in reality it would occur, that only if each and every one of the participants is exceptionally good in the art of interpersonal communication, only then they could get along well without a chairperson or other formal rules and regulations. If, for example, even one fellow among them were a well meaning bore that would become impossible.

Therefore, the moment you’d feel what in organizational theory is called “a pinch”, like feeling that the atmosphere becomes tense, dense or heavy; or realizing that it becomes difficult to contribute to a discussion without forcing one’s talking on some others; that people occasionally lose patience, erupt, block one another, do not listen, etc.; - then it should be understood that a formal procedure for conducting the session has to be agreed upon and adopted, as means of regulating how and by who and how much the group’s shared working time is going to be used. The general rule in working groups is, “Agreement on Process should Precede Agreement on Contents”.

Chances are you would need a chairperson and a formal procedure in decision-making. In the same time, egalitarian values and people’s individual well-being require a sensitive application of the rules. The idea should be, that the more members rotate the chairperson task among them the better. Each member, particularly when serving as the chairperson, should think of the job as if he or she was a treasurer, and the group’s working time its cash treasure. The chairperson has to see to it that time is not squandered or appropriated by unauthorized persons. The group’s time is a treasure that belongs to all. It must be shared in view of the imperatives of equality and fairness.

2. Deciding on the amount of time for working: when do we begin and when do we finish.

All that is needed is, that the chairperson announces when the decision-making session is going to be finished and the group agrees. This procedure is natural and innocent enough, and it could be applied in any session of any group that makes decisions. But readers who, like this author, spent hundreds of hours of the best years of one’s life, in boring, tedious, tense and irritating group sessions; had a different experience more often than not: The top-job holder comes, says what is the agenda and begins to talk right away. Nobody knows when exactly this is going to be over, except for the comforting notion that at some not-too-distant time in the future, there is going to be a coffee break and, sometime later, there is going to be going home. If the participants care and have real personal stake in what is being decided, such sessions could be compared to disorganized sports competition, like a ball game in which the players don’t know when the whistle, signaling the end of the game, is going to be sound and how much longer they need to play for winning. Such players would not know for how long to plan their strategy, save their energy, what is going to happen next; and so they would become exhausted and aggressive, and kick at each other’s shins.

Decision-making, too, is inherently a competitive situation. In the absence of clear rules governing time, it is more than likely that when the issue becomes hot, the discussion heats up. Every one is trying to “score” the decision, so they keep the “ball” (the floor) as long as they can to themselves. Often the result remains zero: zero decisions, zero positive energy left, and zero good will to go on like that next time...

In such conditions the stage is set for the more energetic (that sometimes mean “brutal”) - less democratic persons, usually the natural manipulators of people, who become the real makers and movers of decisions. The actual decisions, if any, will be made by one person or some persons, either in the group session in the

last moment, under strong pressure and with total exhaustion of all who had resisted, or quietly after the session for the same reason, as a default decision.

Nevermore of that! - The shared decision-making process, in contrast, gives the group full control over the use of its time. Therefore you must decide (explicitly agree and write down) when the time for making the decision will come and the decision made. Efficiency, even in machines, is defined in terms of work done per a unit of time. Only if the group takes full responsibility and full control over the use of its time for doing its work of decision making it could use and divide its energy well and accomplish its task. That accomplishment will make participants feel good: feel that the "game" they played was decent and fair; that they all could be listened to; that, because they participated, the decisions made are really theirs, even when they themselves ended up with a minority opinion on a particular decision.

3. Ratification of the agenda by the group

We want to minimize the possibility that anyone would have to participate in a group decision-making while feeling that the issue is not worth it, or has not been sufficiently prepared for making a decision; or that other topics are more important and urgent; or that the issue that is important in the individual's mind has again been blocked out of the group's agenda. Situations, in which some individuals would not be happy with what the group is talking about, cannot be entirely avoided, but they will occur less frequently and be easier to bear if each person has an equal opportunity to set the agenda before the group gets into it.

Think of making decisions as deciding, "*What do we do next?*". Think of ratifying the agenda as deciding, "*Where do we go next?*". Whoever has the power to decide where everybody is going next, has the decisive organizational power. That power we want to share equally, so we put it in the hands of each and every individual in the group by prior ratification of the agenda. Our values demand that no human "bulldozer" would be able to pass decisions without firsts getting the OK of the whole group for putting them up on its agenda for a specified duration of time and no more.

The organizational structure of the Web would make most of the Primary Groups agenda to contain the movement's political items. Groups will have their own agenda too. All constrains notwithstanding, we strongly suggest that the principle of ratifying the agenda first be followed. Individuals at this stage of the group's work would be able to motion for adding items on the agenda and taking items out for that session.

We suggest that the ratification stage would be brief with no discussion permitted. Persons suggesting a change in the presented agenda could explain their suggestion in one or two sentences, with no time for others to raise objections. Then the group will decide whether admit or reject the change.

In a regular work of decision-making groups, it is advisable that the first item on the agenda should be a report on implementation of previously made decisions by those responsible. It is the requirement of effectiveness in work, but it could be made more time-effective if the reports are prepared in writing and handed to members ahead of time. Soon we shall delineate in more detail what can be built into the decision-making process to make the decisions effective in terms of making a political difference.

4. Division of working time among the agenda items

This particular item of the Egalitarian Group Working Process would make a big difference for those who had ever participated in group meetings, sessions, committees, etc. It requires that, prior to the beginning of working on the agenda, the group makes its decision how much of its total working time will be dedi-

cated to each of the items. The best way to go over this part of the process is the clearest one: write down the agenda on a board or a flip chart for all to see and write down next to each item how long it will be discussed before a decision about it is made.

We see this step in the process as absolutely necessary, based on the same reasons that made us to decide when do we start and when do we finish. The actual decision-making process is a cycle of the group's life that focuses around each issue: introduction, discussion, suggestions for resolution, decision (by consensus or voting), and putting on the record for implementation. The same needs for control of the precious resource - time, that apply to the whole session apply to each such cycle: when opening the process of deciding on an item we should be agreed on how long it could take of our time to make that decision. By structuring our working time to be portioned among the agenda items, we ensure that we are not 'sucked' into one item and left with no time to take care of others. That way we provide for meeting our goals: efficiency in work, equality in time-sharing, and generating good feelings that come with high quality of organizational life.

5. Appointment of a "Timekeeper" who'd remind the speakers, when needed, that the time decided upon is finished or is about to be finished.

This suggestion is optional, to be applied if needed. Perhaps you could use the time wisely and divide it justly without the services of a "time-keeper". In any event, the chairperson can be assisted by another person who would sit with a watch in hand and concentrate on carrying out the decisions the group had made about its use of time. If there will be need to limit the time of each speaker, the Timekeeper will have the duty and the authority to tell speakers things like "you have one minute to finish" or "your time is out"...

The basic datum from the accumulated experience of group decision-making that prompts us to suggest the Timekeeper function is that democratic groups have a tremendous psychological difficulty to deal openly with problems of individual use-and misuse-of time. Much good will and many excellent ideas get lost forever because of that little thorn in the group's flesh: the difficulty to share time justly and use it effectively in a way that would not feel insulting to many dear people whose egos are much more sensitive than their biological clocks. It is difficult to overstate the extent to which practical skills in democratic decision-making are dependent on time and on sound procedures to cope with conflicts inherent in sharing time.

Therefore, we suggest that the most important principle in determining whether or not to appoint a Timekeeper should be, that *time is what is actually distributed in the distribution of power during decision-making*; therefore, the group has to be very careful, open, and determined, in maintaining full control over its time whatever it takes, including a Timekeeper.

6. Discussion and decision on each of the agenda's items, within the time-span decided upon beforehand.

When the time, allotted for discussion on an item of the agenda, is nearing its end, the chairperson or the Timekeeper has to inform the group that the time for arguing is up and a time for decision-making has come. From that moment on there is no more time for persuasion, explanation, clarification, or any form of trying to influence someone else's mind. From that time on, the time is dedicated only for exact formulation or wording of the proposed decisions to be made.

Additionally, it is strongly advised that the proposed decisions be written and displayed clearly for all to see in front of their eyes.

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At this point, you might feel that we have gone too much into details and lost touch with the broader context. So let us take a rest

from the details and lift our eyes again up to the broader horizon of relationships between organizational rules-and-regulations and life. That relationship is like having maps to guide us in the territory. It is relatively easy to prove that the conceptual maps that have guided people in the political organization territory toward human decency, equality, efficiency and personal freedom, were wrong, very wrong in face of human reality. People who espoused such values simply could not reach their destinations. We believe that our "maps" are correct enough in face of human reality, and we hope that we can reach our destination and not sail our organizational vessel onto a shoal. But it is equally easy to see, that no map can cover all of the territory with all its intricacies and human manifold moods, passions, thinking, behavior. **The Map is Not the Territory**; the recipe is not the food. The movement in the territory depends on the navigator, not only on the map.

Kurt Levin, the man who is considered to be the founding father of Applied Behavioral Science and of "Group Dynamics" (he coined the term), suggested the formula **Behavior = Personality + Environment**. Our rules and regulations as any rules-of-the-game, regime, constitution, law; are factors in the environment that will have a tremendous impact on behavior. However, the actual behavior of people in the Primary Groups, as anywhere, would also be dependent on the personality of each one of them. This has been a disclaimer in the context of assessing your level of trust in the Egalitarian Group Working Process now, when you know enough of it to begin evaluating it.

Having made the disclaimer, much is left to be claimed about applying this process in the group's life. Navigating your way with this map, you avoid shoals you would sail into otherwise. Let us review the process so far and see how it would make it extremely difficult for a group to fail in making its decisions and turn into just a discussion group or a social club. Going along the stages of the process one after one, the group will have to become aware that time is limited and that its work ends at a certain hour. That awareness would work for effectiveness in using time and impress on members the difference between their task as a group with time to *work*, and that of any informal gathering. Then they would be directed by their rules to ratify openly their agenda and reach agreement on it. That would help people "own" the agenda and ease the disappointment of those who raised issues for deliberation and decision that were not accepted by the group as items on the agenda for that meeting. Then they would have to reach agreement on when to start and when to finish each working assignment (an item on the agenda), and by that the awareness of people that they have a work to do and finish doing will be strengthened. They would be obliged, by their rules, to stop the usual talking on and on when the time they decided upon is up. They would find it difficult to forget or disregard their rules, because the chairperson and the timekeeper will be responsible for not letting that happen. Then, following the Process, they will *have to* make decisions!

End of detour, back to the Egalitarian Working Process. It is to be expected that, when the time for discussion and item is out, members would want to add argumentation, clarify points, and press their opinion a little more. It would be natural that members would manipulate others one way or another, consciously or not so consciously, for getting more time and more attention to themselves. However, the procedure that excludes argumentation and persuasion at this stage, would not allow anyone to manipulate others far beyond the set limits. The process - let us hope that a competent chairperson and timekeeper are responsible for it - will allow them to focus the energy that motivates them to influence the decision-making only in formulating the propositions to be decided upon. Then the group will choose one proposition by vote or consensus.

Adherence to the Egalitarian Decision-making Process at this stage will introduce a small "revolution" in the life-experience of

most working groups, committees, etc, as we have known them. The familiar situation, by which people's interest has been flared up around some topic, often in inverse proportion to its significance, to the point that they forget all the rest until their time and energy are spent - that experience will become very unlikely to occur.

7. Display of the decision made in writing, including assignment of the people responsible for carrying it out.

In going through the stages of the process so far, we took care that the group *works*, that is makes decisions. Now is the time for taking care that the work be good, the decisions made be carried out. The greatest danger, according to the accumulated experience in our disposition, is that the decisions would be just verbal formulations with a life span stretching between the group's decision and the group's protocol records. There the decisions would find rest for all time without ever becoming action in reality. In light of our experience, it is difficult to overstate that danger even when people have the best intentions, are very sophisticated, and are highly skilled in interpersonal communication including decision-making.

The core of the problem here is not in disharmony among people, not even in lack of good correspondence between people and the demands of time. The problem arises from the very foundations of perception and orientation. The lack of correspondence concerns words and things, concepts and the reality they are about, the cognitive Map and the Territory.

*Watch out for the pitfalls of
Over-abstraction / Mind-Fucking*

The root of the problem is in the tendency to over-abstraction ingrained in the human condition. It is a facet of any culture that we tend to regard concepts that populate our inner space, the "mind", as if they were things in the outer space, the "Territory". The first famous example coming to my mind is John Kennedy's "*Don't ask what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country*". "You" are real enough, but "Your Country" is a huge abstraction, not any Thing. "Your Government" is less abstract, more close to the ground of reality, so the meaning of that phrase is more like "*Don't ask what your Government can do for you - ask what you can do for your Government*"... Meaningless abstract language could easily find its way to decision-making, but it needs not. Some conceptual systems, like politics including radical politics, do it a lot and even do nothing else; other conceptual systems, like science, do it much less. Our political predecessors struggled with abstract concepts (take for example any word\concept that ends with an "ism"), fought over concepts, killed for concepts, very often not knowing what, if anything, they were thinking and talking **about** (in the Territory).

The Tragedy of Abstract-mindedness (MF): a personal Case Study

When I was studying in the U.S. in the 1970's, I was eager to find out whether there were political groups there that were organized differently, more along the lines suggested here. Looking for organizational models that could replace a political Party, I studied Applied Behavioral Science (Organization Development - OD), that was a predominantly American branch of science, and I naturally wanted to know whether it has been applied anywhere in a political organization.

And indeed, I found one such group that, judging by its written materials, appeared humanistic, sane, and realistic more than any political organization I had known or had ever heard of. It was called Movement for a New Society (MNS). They were writing that they were committed to ac-

tualize among themselves, here-and-now, the values of the new society they visualized in the future. The term “here-and-now” belongs to the terminology of OD and the experience of T-groups, groups for experiential learning of group dynamics and the development of interpersonal communication skills. There were more indications of the influence of OD on that movement, like the value they saw in an open resolution of conflicts and in conscious regard for people’s feelings, as well as the terms “personal growth” and “a climate of trust”. They had written down the words that so closely corresponded to my own conviction then as now: *“There can be no radical change without radically changing our own behavior”*.

A quarter of a century later I still don’t know of any political party or movement the members of which would not feel threatened by that idea, *“There can be no radical change without radically changing our own behavior”*. MNS was genuinely radical, different. Organizationally it constituted of some small groups around some big universities. The organization was decentralized and made of self-directed groups, as I thought it should be. I took part, as an observer, in one of their meetings that was about formulation of a position paper, or as it is called in party politics a “Platform”. Here is an excerpt from the draft they discussed:

“We believe that the present exploitative economic system - Capitalism - is a major barrier toward creating a just society capable of meeting human needs.”... “We believe that a democratic socialistic society is crucial to ridding ourselves of the irrationality and dehumanization of Capitalism.”

The discussion was heavy. Tension, controlled anger, impatience, could be felt in the tone and the body-language of the participating people. It dragged on, however, on the highest abstraction level of the big words: socialism, capitalism, democracy. People behaved themselves very well and made efforts to listen more than I had ever seen in party meetings before. They worked very hard, some of the speakers were “heavies” and bored others, as they sunk into the world of their terms and ideas without being sensitive to what was going around “here-and-now”.

However, to me, the most obvious thing in that meeting was that nobody asked practical questions, such as why they needed to formulate and agree on those formulations? Why did they need to decide “here-and-now” whether or not capitalism is a “major barrier” toward creating a “just society”, what was that for them and what they were going to do about it tomorrow and in the following month or so, and how exactly and when they meant to “rid themselves” of the irrationality and dehumanization of “Capitalism”, etc.

They behaved like sleepwalkers, enveloped in the web of their verbal images without questioning it and without, apparently, considering neither its appropriateness nor some alternatives for spending their time together. Other parts of the draft they discussed contained the same very high level of abstraction. The section ended with the following text on which quick consensus was reached:

“The terms racism, sexism, classicism, heterosexism, and ageism should be available in some form in our literature for those who are struggling with these terms.”

The above is a “classical” example of the intellectual fault that enables Psychological Exploitation do its work by over-abstraction. People invent terms (words, verbal or other symbols) for designating something in reality (racial relations, economic realities, etc.). Then they are “struggling with terms”, not with anything they sense directly in their reality but with the terms they borrowed or

invented to represent it.

The Movement for a New Society did not take off, the ideological fire died down with no energy to feed it. Human energy needs the fuel of succeeding in reaching one’s goals and that could be achieved only in working together in reality, “here and now”. The MNS people knew that “There can be no radical change without radically changing our own behavior”, however their “ideological” behavior in the crucial area of perceiving, conceptualizing, and acting in reality, was not different from that of their good-intentioned predecessors who had burned to ashes in their ideological flames. In the interconnected reality of themselves, social reality, and the concepts they used to give meaning to their reality, the New Left was not different from the Old Left and that - I firmly believe -- was its undoing, not anything external by any force. At least, as far as my political associates and I are concerned, I have made an oath: NEVERMORE OF THAT.

In a separate cover, I intend to publish a self-help manual for **Liberation from Psychological Exploitation** of which over-abstraction is an essential ingredient. Here, within the framework of the Egalitarian Group Working Process, the suggested procedures could be compared to pegs driven in the ground of reality for tying-down the group lest it soars on the hot air of its words and loses contact with the ground. One such procedure is, that next to each decision taken, formulated in writing and displayed, it would be written and displayed who is going to implement it, how soon it has to be accomplished, and with the help of what, in case the group’s resources are needed for it.

Each decision made has to be a synopsis of an action-plan, as clear as possible in terms of people, resources, area and time. If it is not so, the decision will be like a map-exercise: a certain point on the Map is chosen as the destination but no steps are actually taken to move there in the Territory.

Even in non-political organizations, most group decisions end up in the book of protocols or in general declarations and in political organizations even more so. If you ever listen to speeches of candidates, read political platforms and programs, and ask yourself, “what would they do if I elect them for that office”, you’d find hardly any answers. They are generally piles of abstract generalization constructed of attractive words (our side) and repulsive words (the opponent). “The Party will strive to... act for... develop, ensure, provide...” - nothing, or almost nothing that could be understood as a commitment to do something specific in a specific time. That is the character of political rhetoric; that is why they love to write those programmatic “platforms” in abstract terms, in contrast to the nitty-gritty language they use when they make real decisions, like who is going to take what position of power, what place in the Party list of candidates, etc. Then their words become sharp and aggressive, or bone-dry and punctilious like the language of formal legal documents. The separation of word and deed is the bread and butter of the politics we want to leave behind. It is sweet poison for many well-meaning idealists, and therefore we must resolve NEVERMORE OF THAT. It is absolutely necessary that our decision-making would not soar on hot air into the upper spheres of abstraction, because, at best, it would be self-deception or else regular deception. In a group that is relatively open and honest about itself, the gap between words and deeds would cause demoralization. If the group will not find ways to bridge that gap, it would lose its “raison d’etre”.

Another element of the group working process designed for narrowing the gap between words and deeds, intentions and results, would normally be the procedure of putting on the agenda, as the first item, reporting on implementation of decisions made in previous meetings. We must avoid wasting our time and energy on decisions formulated in phrases such as “We shall examine ways...”, or “work for” or “improve our...”, etc. Such decisions

would end with the comfortable feeling we overcame our differences and are in agreement on what to write down for the protocol (for the next generations?)... NEVERMORE OF THAT. The person-centered organization needs only realistic action plans by which it is clear who does what, how, how soon, and what exactly should happen in reality that would tell us to what extent we succeeded in carrying out the decision we had made.

Another suggestion in this context is the following: Do not present just one proposition to accept or reject. Preferably, present two or more options, to avoid feeling of two-valued sharply conflicting situation. If there is only one proposition rejected, it should mean that another option is accepted, namely, the unexpressed "proposition" that things stay as they are, no change, which could imply doing nothing. It is important that we be aware of that. For example, if the group votes on a proposition raised by another group that would affect the whole organizational Web, I suggest that it would be presented and displayed as proposition A against proposition B, and the decision will be made between them rather than for and against A. Proposition B, in that case, will be displayed as some version of "Things remain as they are". And if proposition B is accepted, even that should not be understood as doing nothing, but be followed by posting next to it who is going to carry it out how and how soon, that is, for example, who is going to inform the Web's office of the group's decision.

8. Feedback

The term "Feedback" originated in computer work. It does not carry any political associations. It would serve us well in conveying the idea of something new and unprecedented in political life as we've known it. It is, in this author's opinion, the single most important contribution that Applied Behavioral Science can raise for improving the quality of life of people engaged in working together and making decisions democratically as equals..

Within the framework of the Egalitarian Group Working Process, feedback has to be listed and ratified as the last item on the agenda. However, *it is not a decision-making process*, not all elements of the working process apply to it. Feedback-time is not for regular decision-making, but rather a reflection on it. The group does not discuss issues out of itself, only issues that are vital for its own life. It needs feedback for its human survival as a living organism needs oxygen and water. Members need it for overcoming difficulties and conflicts between them and for giving support to one another. Things said during the feedback session have to find their way to hearts and minds, not to the book of protocol or other records.

Feedback is the information people get about their own behavior here and now. The decision whether to accept that information and change something in one's behavior as a result is the individual's, not the group's or anyone else's. Only when one's personal problem is put as a separate item on the working agenda the group can make a decision on it. If it is raised during feedback time nobody, except the person to whom it is directed, can make the decision regarding it.

Feedback, structurally, is that period at the end of the group's working time during which the group discusses the session that has just ended while the interpersonal events, which are the substance or evidence of Feedback, are still fresh in memory. Participants in a Feedback session can express openly their opinions and feelings about the part others played in the events that took place and affected the process for better or worse. "Feedback" is talking openly on what is going on among us, who and what helps and who and what hurts the group's work and individuals' feelings. All this is done with the goal of solving personal and interpersonal problems, easing conflicts, clarifying misunderstandings, finding constructive channels for expressing anger and frustration, positively and honestly. All that regularly is held

back, or said behind one's back, or accumulated until it poisons the atmosphere and the relationships, or erupts in aggressiveness at the least proper time - is channeled to the open and fresh in memory channel of feedback.

Feedback in groups has a very strong effect. By the mechanism of feedback, grownups can receive information about reality they would never know otherwise. That information is among the most important information one can get in life: the information about how others really perceive, understand, and evaluate us. Feedback is a conscious effort to do something about the cultural situation by which we all tend to be very keen in spotting the dark spots on others and tend to be blind in spotting them in ourselves. Authoritarian people, bosses, leaders, do not need that their dark spots be pointed out in order to get the "respect" (in politics, it is mostly based on calculation of self-interest and fear) of their subordinates. They effectively inhibit it. Hence, the language of political criticism is aggressive and primitive, such as can hardly ever be helpful. But as far as the person-centered organization is concerned -- NEVERMORE OF THAT! One thing seems to us sure: if feedback sessions were held by the end of meetings of any political power body, on any level from a local Party branch to the national government, political experience as we know it would be radically changed.

Let it not be misunderstood: feedback takes a high level of intellectual and emotional effort and requires considerable skills in interrelations, listening, and self-expression. For the group members it will function as a formidable weapon against individual tendencies to dominate, manipulate, depreciate or control others. Psychologically conflicted people who need very thick walls of defenses to protect them against the truth about themselves would be particularly offended and may choose to leave. But it would be the real test of quality in the group's life. Less conflicted people, who are more open and willing to learn and change, will find group-feedback as their most valued tool for personal growth. True feedback is likely to hurt the recipient, personal change in a relationship does not come easy. But it could be given and received as an act of true love and generate wonderful feelings in people. A democratic-egalitarian group that would succeed in integrating feedback into its life's processes, could consider itself as enjoying an incomparably higher quality of life than any conventional group, political or other. It would then have chance to attract good people, overcome its difficulties, and succeed in reaching its goals without deterioration to power and conflict relationships.

The Practice of Feedback

Group feedback is a structured behavior based on theory, research, experience, and know-how that requires learning and practice, in particular of what is called "experiential learning" by participation in "T-groups"(4) and experiencing "group-dynamics". Many professional and paraprofessional people can help with it, and their intervention is very much recommended in the initial stage of the group's life, particularly for one major reason: feedback runs against the most deeply rooted social habits in working interrelations. Normal interpersonal relations rest on conventions built around the principle that one should not voice personal remarks directly in face of other persons, and if one does, it must take a form of a personal attack. Feeding back personal remarks directly is associated with the use of aggressive force, while our "feedback" should be the opposite of it. It is intended to serve as an instrument for helping, mending, solving problems, taking care of personal casualties of the interpersonal process and easing the pain. Feedback is for learning about oneself in relation to others, a most significant learning that leads to "personal growth" and, in groups, to "Organization Development" toward a high quality of organizational life .

The profound change of attitudes and habits, associated with turning from the usual patterns of interpersonal dealing to feedback,

is the reason why professional help should be welcomed. In case the Primary Group in its initial stages of life does not have experienced people on board, we present here some of the accepted techniques for conducting feedback sessions. We briefly mention the commonly given reasons for using these techniques:

- Better ask for feedback than give it to a person who had not asked for it. At the opening, in particular, it is good to start by having a person **ask** for feedback. For example, a natural and good way is that the chairperson asks for feedback that would evaluate his or her recent performance on the job, what could be done differently, better, etc.

- Better suggest feedback than force it on a person. The following rule-of-thumb is recommended: whenever person A wants to criticize person B he/she first asks B if she/he wants or can receive feedback here-and-now. If B is not up to it, he/she has to be given the option not to hear it at that session. If feedback is given to whoever is not ready and willing to receive it the chances of it being helpful would be considerably less.

- Give "positive" supportive feedback, such as comes to commend and strengthen another person's behavior, if she or he truly deserves it. Criticism and praise derive from contrasting emotions and elicit contrasting emotional response. For the sake of balancing the atmosphere of feedback, if not for its own sake, it is advisable to remember the full half of the proverbial half-empty glass. People need to be reinforced and appreciated; this is an important element of what amounts to good social climate and organizational quality of life. It also helps to open peoples' hearts to constructive criticism, though even the most constructive criticism, or "negative feedback", might hurt.

- In groups where open personal feedback might seem too threatening, a not-personal group feedback may be utilized. It could begin by each person responding to a short feedback form in writing, could be anonymously. For example, the low point of that group meeting, the high point, who contributed most, what impeded progress most, etc. Then the forms are summed-up and the results are put out as a basis for a general discussion.

"If I understood you correctly..." - The master-key technique for repairing broken lines of interpersonal communication. It goes like this: before B talks back to A, B has first to repeat the essentials of what A had formerly said and has to get OK from A that A feels understood. B is not supposed to speak his/her own mind before she or he got that confirmation from A.

In direct personal feedback that rule is highly recommended. That means, that if B agreed to accept and receive personal feedback from A, B has first, before responding, to summarize the feedback of A and get A's confirmation that A has been well understood. Only after the receiver of feedback had gotten that confirmation from the provider, the receiver can respond. It is recommended that persons who receive feedback do not respond immediately, but take time to reflect on the feedback and become less defensive.

I hardly ever experienced that using the "master-key" technique had had bad effects or was not beneficial for all parties. The technique can be compared to a brake we can always engage in danger of collision or accident. The **"If I Understand You Correctly..."** broadcasts openness and real willingness to listen. It is as if the person communicated, "It is important to me to understand you well before I respond". To the person who gets such confirmation that she or he was really listened to, it gives a feeling of being humanly valued, which is crucial for productive criticism. Not *really* listening is how people devalue one another most frequently and feeling not really listened to is the most common experience of feeling devalued.

The "master-key" is only a technique, but it compels the user to

listen. You cannot fake it, if you were not listening you'd not be able to summarize what the other person had said, and you'll not get his or her confirmation that you understood what she or he had said. Listening is the oxygen in the atmosphere of human communication... By the same imagery, political interpersonal communication as we know it runs on pure carbon dioxide, listening is considered a weakness, forcing your mind on the other person is the rule. Let us leave this atmosphere behind once and for all.

The Right to affect a Short Period of Silence - a Communication Safety Valve:

The right to affect a short silence of 30 seconds or more is given to every group member once or twice in a meeting, at any time as the individual wants, with no right to object by other members. We strongly recommend this procedure, which also requires courage for breaking, for the first time, a lifelong cultural habit. Then it becomes easy. The purpose of it is to give yet more respect and power to individuals. Individuals are bound to feel it. The purpose, in terms of the group process, is to tap every source of human energy in each one of us for directing it, in tense moments, back to the sources of self-control, reflection, rationality, listening, and awareness of self and others here-and-now. This technique would help in stopping the outbreak of noise characteristic of defensiveness, aggressiveness, and anxiety. The flow of discussion will be discontinued for a short time (30 silent seconds feel very long, though, in such circumstances...) that is insignificant in comparison to all the time dedicated to decision-making, but could be very significant in avoiding dangerous collisions or preventing derail of the discussion off its tracks.

A Reflection on Chances that a Person-Centered Political Organization materializes.

„In presenting the idea I must face a danger. If I refrain from divulging any of my thoughts about its chances to materialize in the future, it could be taken for an indication that I myself have no faith in it. And if I take the opposite course, and firmly claim my faith in its materialization, I might be taken for a spinner of an imaginary web.“

- Theodore Hertzl

As the organizational development consultant of the person-centered political organization, I have at this point finished my intervention. Now you have the entire recipe in front of your eyes. You can begin your journey in the territory, knowing that you are equipped with the best road map available in Applied Behavioral Science and some related fields, for making decisions while preventing inequality in the distribution of power. You have the means of avoiding the pitfalls and the slippery areas that can take you off the person-centered road into the party-politicking hell of power corruption. I am completely assured that the suggested group process can work well for people of person-centered spirit; I have experienced group-work myself in what I regard as the best times of my life, full of personal growth and achievement, creativity, and human affinity.

In suggesting the application of some ideas and tools, that were developed in the scientific field of human behavior but so far not applied in political organizations, I have already met the characteristic expressions of resistance to change, a well documented phenomenon in the professional field: "Say, do you think that it can work here, in *our* situation?" "Can it work in the Middle East?" "Is it compatible with human nature/ modern life/ our culture?" "Has it really worked in America?", etc., etc... - endless variations on the theme of resistance to change into something new which has not yet been established.

Though I cannot predict what would be the fate of the idea of political web-organization in the future anymore than anyone, I shall address briefly this subject matter, as I do not wish to be

thought of as trying to avoid the issue which for me is so crucial.

It always makes one feel good to be able to associate one's situation with that of great personages who *did* make it. So I like to remember what had said a man whose vision then seemed utterly fantastic: Theodore Hertzl, the one quoted at the opening of this section. The quotation appeared in his introduction to a little brochure that no respectable publisher in Vienna was willing to publish by the end of the 19th century: "*The Jewish State*". Hertzl put it simply, "*The actualization of the idea is dependent only on the number of people who would follow it*". Paraphrasing his most famous saying, "*If you will that is not a fairy tale*" - I could say to you, "if you *won't* - that is a fairy-tale..." -- a 'fairy tale' which, however, will not pass from the face of the earth but in this or other form be transfigured and await its time.

Secondly, it can be said with objectivity, that when one living example of political web-organization would exist, its chances of expanding and catching up many more people will be better than our present chance to see it come to life. It is a well known finding, that it is much easier to persuade people to follow a path which somebody had opened and got somewhere than start cutting their own new path in the terrain, particularly such dangerous terrain as politics. In fact, we suppose (no objectivity in sentiment here) that when the Web Organization of small groups becomes an option, it would take a very peculiar kind of an idealistic youth to join a political party or a movement as we know them today.

We may take the Israeli Kibbutz movement as a case in point. Some hundreds thousands people, five generations, living in economic and social equality incomparably greater than their surroundings, comparatively happy, free; practically free of the severe problems which plague societies such as unscrupulous competition, violence, poverty, racism, crime.. If they had not existed - would anyone believe that such an idea of communal living could exist? And if they *were* organized as a person-centered web of independent communes - would they ever fall into the value crisis they experience now, which make their future so uncertain? - Based on my personal inside knowledge and experience -- they would not, but would rather expand and attract many more people in many countries in the world who would see in their existence a living example of person-centered life of social equality and individual freedom.

I dedicate therefore this section, about the chances of a better, more humane political future, to this unique human venture in social equality and justice, the Kibbutz movement, with which I have been associated for most of my life. I dedicate this very personal part, about chances to see a better world in my lifetime, to the members of my lost Kibbutz tribe, people whose names ended with an "ek" like mine. They - Julek, Dolek, Wilek, Henek, Benek, Mietek, Tushek, and others; alongside their spouses Salka, Ludka, Nushka, Friedka, etc., rest today at the foothills of Nazareth and witness the tractor of their humanism immobilized, stuck deeply in the heavy mud of the valley below. They were all young and idealistic, and humanists if you asked them, and they had made a drastic revolutionary change in their lives. They changed their country and language and social system, and created something completely new in the world, never seen before... (And their revolutionary achievement was financed by outside sources! Please do not forget that prosaic fact and the generalization of which it is an instance: The chance of any idea is dependent of that kind of environmental support too. If you judge the idea of Person-Centered Groups Web Organization not by its intrinsic value but in proportion to its chances of practical success, it would not be fair to ignore the fact that with so much more money its chances would be so much better).

However, these members of the communal movement were tragically oblivious to the iniquities, injustice, and *psychological* exploitation inherent in *unequal* distribution of influence and

power, even while their distribution of material goods was equal. Feeling that they could not really share in decision-making that would shape their destiny, many opted out. In the blessed absence of physical coercion (such as afflicted their siblings and cousins who stayed in the Soviet Union), alienation and powerlessness settled, breeding indifference and passivity. The kibbutz society lost its belief in self-direction and begun drifting along with everything around.

My Kibbutz-family members had never had much of realistic concepts about the dangers of being true believers, about organization dynamics, political power, political influence... Mentally they remained disciples of ideological idols like their parents the Hassidim or their cousins the Communists. If, in the place from which they look on us now, they were finally free of their rationalizations, fears, tribal-nationalistic passions, and institutionalized ideology thinking patterns - they could see the chances of our political Web, such as they are, as the chances that their tractor, which they had attempted to drive toward a better world, would be pulled out of the mud in which it is stuck. In my inner feelings, that is what matters most...

I feel intellectually indebted and close in heart to the pioneer of humanistic political psychology Erich Fromm who propagated the idea of the Web Political Organization constructed of small face-to-face groups. He died without seeing it materialize but passed the torch on. He had written the words that, one by one, express my feelings about the future even while I work to publish his ideas again:

"I believe no man can save his fellow man by making the choice for him. All that one can do for his fellow man is presenting the alternatives faithfully and lovingly but without sentimentality or illusion. The confrontation of people with the real possibilities in their lives might awaken the potential powers of a person and enable him to choose life rather than self-destruction. If he is not able to choose life no one can breathe life into him."

-Erich Fromm: *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*.(8)

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