

## THE SPIRIT OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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What is happening to OD? It seems clear to me that practice is changing and that opportunities are changing. But changes nowadays come so rapidly that they become part of the past before I discover that they had been part of the present. I'll talk a little about the present, hoping I am not really talking about the past. But I want to talk mostly about the future.

I will tell you today that the opportunities for OD people will be greater during the next decade than they have been during the last. I will tell you that people in organizations will be asking you to help them use their human resources better and to help them design new forms of organizing to do that. I will tell you that you already know a lot about how to do those things--a lot that most other people do not know. And one key idea will run through what I say. Namely, most people, most of the time, want to do things for themselves. And they'll make a lot of trouble for you if you don't let them.

### The Coming Opportunity

Some big changes are going to occur, during the next decade, in the numbers and kinds of people showing up at the doors of employers. Listen to these shimmering statistics.

As early as 1987, a year from now, more people will be leaving the labor force than will be entering it (statistic from Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1985, p. 17; all further references only to page numbers will be to that same book). The population figures predict an important labor shortage in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Those figures alone should start your imagination bubbling.

The distribution of ages in the population of the U.S. is changing, too. The number of 18-year-olds will have declined by 25 percent from 1977 to 1993 (p. 142). There will be six million fewer teenagers in 1990 than there were in 1980. Think of the adaptation facing the fast-food chains such as McDonald's.

For the first time in U.S. history, the number of high-school graduates is decreasing. In 1977, about 3.2 million persons graduated from high school. The estimate for

1993 is about 2.3 million, a decrease of about a third (p. 174). Fewer people will be enrolling in college. And the proportion of high-school graduates choosing college will surely dwindle as high-school students find out that the financial rewards of going to college are not what they were. In 1969, the advantage in starting salary a college graduate could expect over other members of the work force was 24 percent. In 1977, it was only 6 percent (Education USA, 1977, October 3, p. 34). Think of the adaptation facing colleges and universities.

At the same time that the labor force is shrinking, new jobs are being created. During the 1970s, 20 million new jobs came into being. During 1983-84 alone, 7 million new jobs appeared (p. 15). Most of the new jobs are created by entrepreneurs and small businesses in information, electronics, and services. The trend toward that kind of occupation will continue. As long ago as 1974, occupations in non-business service institutions accounted for one-half the Gross National Product, not to mention similar occupations in business (from Drucker, 1974, pp. 7-8). By 1990, more than 80 percent of the work force will be in jobs requiring more thinking and decision making than has been required by the traditional blue-collar jobs. Even manual work will require high-technology tools and advanced skill (p. 102). Think of the new kinds of management those new kinds of workers will demand.

Other demographics are changing, too. In 1984, white males became a minority, if I may be allowed to stretch that term; they comprised only 49.3 percent of the work force in June of 1984 (p. 81).

And about males and females. Only 27 percent of women worked in 1940 and only 38 percent in 1960. Now, 55 percent of women are in the labor force. Among women with college educations, 70 percent are in the labor force. Indeed, nearly all women in their 20s and 30s who do not have small children are in the labor force, and even among those with small children, about half work (pp. 207-208). As the labor shortage develops, many women will be moving into kinds of jobs previously reserved for men.

In contrasting the figures for women with the figures for men, remember that only about 75 percent of all men are in the labor force (p. 208). Some are officially unemployed, and some are not listed as unemployed, because they are not seeking jobs. Some, for example, are disabled, some are part of the underground economy, and some are in prisons.

The proportion of the population over 65 years of age, too, is growing, and the proportion of those people still employed is beginning to grow. The labor shortage will keep more of them working. The labor shortage will also draw more

blacks and other ethnic minorities into employment. Judging from history, however, I suppose that members of those minorities will be among the last to be drawn in.

Think of the changes in attitudes and interpersonal practices that will be demanded of those dwindling numbers of white males as they find themselves dealing with greater numbers of women, oldsters, and ethnic minorities. And remember that those white males will need those other people to keep their organizations running.

In schools, the shortage of teachers is already here (Education USA, 1980, 23(2), pp. 1, 9). The shortage of teachers in some subjects is already severe. That shortage, too, will be exacerbated as young people thinking about becoming teachers find out that college does not pay off in money as well as it used to.

Not only are demographics changing, not only are the kinds of jobs changing, but so also are the expectations and aspirations of the new labor force. The baby-boom generation will supply 54 percent of all workers by 1990 (pp. 6-7). The baby-boom generation is the best educated in American history. Most of its members are accustomed to affluence. More than previous generations, they are entrepreneurial, independent-minded, self-reliant, socially liberal, and knowledgeable about threats to their health.

Even today, about 40 percent of the work force has the attitude that work should be fun (p. 80). In 1983, a study found that the ten most-often mentioned qualities people wanted in a job did not include high pay, good benefits, or job security, though those qualities did appear among the next five in the list (pp. 85-86). What did they want most? You know what they wanted. They wanted to work where they could act like full-fledged humans. They wanted to do things for themselves. Think of the changes in interpersonal practices and personnel policies those people are demanding--and are going to demand with even surer voices as the labor shortage grows.

I have been pointing out some perplexities and difficulties that employers will encounter as the work force shrinks and changes--perplexities and difficulties with which OD people can help. Let me sharpen the picture.

I have mentioned three portentous trends: (1) the shrinking labor force, (2) the increase in jobs calling for special knowledge and interpersonal skill, and (3) the increasing demand for self-management and the full use of one's capabilities. Those three trends will bring about strong competition among employers for workers who have that knowledge and that skill but who are in no mood to be treated like cogs

in the machine or to be limited to a job description.

In that competition, employers--manufacturers, service companies, governmental agencies, even schools eventually--will increasingly take two kinds of action. Both kinds should make OD people prick up their ears. First, employers will look for ways to make working in their organizations more attractive. Second, employers will increase the training they offer within their own organizations to give employees the knowledge and skill they do not have when they are hired.

To attract members of the baby boom, it will not be enough to offer high salaries. That is not at the top of their list. Furthermore, in a tight labor market, employees who do not like working conditions at one place will be able to find an equal salary at another place. And employers are learning about the high cost of turnover. To make their organizations more attractive, therefore, more and more employers will be looking for ways to make life at work more satisfying, more fulfilling. They will want their employees to get up in the morning eager for the gratifications of the day's work, not merely willing to put in another day toward the paycheck at the end of the month. They will want, in brief, to be able to offer the kind of life that OD people value and know how to bring about.

That kind of life is no longer pie in the sky. There are now books and magazines that list the good organizations to work for and tell why. The reasons they give are the reasons you, as OD people, would expect. I must note, sadly, that I have not yet seen a school district or a university named in any of those lists.

To give an example, a shining example, of the kind of life that is now possible in our workaday world, let me tell you, or remind you, of W.L. Gore and Associates, the makers of the fabric called Gore-tex (p. 35). The word "associates" does not refer to the board of directors, but to the employees. That is the title of all of them. They work in plants about the size of a primitive clan. No factory is allowed to grow larger than 200 people. When a factory grows to 150 people, the company puts architects to work on a new one.

A new employee, often, is given time to wander around the plant, learn what is needed, and then design his or her own job. But all work assignments are voluntary. Employees make their own commitments to the work they want to do and believe they can. And of course they are then expected to carry out their commitments. Objectives, says Mr. Gore, are set by those who must make them happen. Does that sound familiar to you?

For me, the most inspiring feature of W.L. Gore and Associates is that the company is reported to have no formal

positions of authority. Some people become leaders by attracting others to join them in a line of work. Think of that.

The new employee gets a sponsor who, with two others, decides after three months whether the new employee is worth his or her salary. The decision is made jointly by the Starting Sponsor, the Advocate Sponsor, and the Compensation Sponsor. Since turnover is expensive, the sponsors obviously have a heavy responsibility to help the new employee become productive. And think of the ties of communication and affection that are built through that kind of support.

I do not know whether Mr. Gore had any help from OD people in designing his company, but he has certainly shown us what is possible. I could describe other examples, but I won't. You can read about many of them in the book by Naisbitt and Aburdene (1985).

The second tactic I mentioned for attracting and keeping valuable people is in-house training. Corporations and even governmental agencies are doing more in-house training than ever before. Corporations now spend about 60 billion dollars per year on education and training, and about 8 million people are enrolled. For a comparison, that is about the same amount of money spent by all our four-year colleges and universities and about the same number of students (p. 166). And adults want continuing training and education. The number of adults enrolled in some kind of part-time education went from 13 million in 1969 to 20 million in 1982. That number for 1982 was four times the number of full-time students (p. 142).

I have heard of one company that employs half again as many workers as it needs to keep the wheels turning. At any time, two-thirds of the employees are performing their on-the-job duties while the other third are learning new things, discussing better ways of doing things, and running trials of the new ideas. If you were an employee there, you would spend a third of your time improving your own capabilities and those of the company. Does that sound attractive to you? It does to me.

In carrying out all the in-house training that is more and more becoming necessary, organizations will want to do a lot better than simply moving the traditional classroom inside their walls. They will want their employees to learn how to teach themselves what they need to know. And the members of the baby boom will want to learn how to do it for themselves. You can find that kind of teaching set forth in the recent book by Mouton and Blake called Synergogy (1984). You will recognize the techniques described there as a powerful application of OD methods to learning just about anything you might need to learn. Mouton and Blake are busy as bees with their

"synergogy." You can be busy as bees, too.

You may ask why you will be needed for making organizations more attractive and for in-house training. Why won't companies and agencies and schools discover on their own the new ways of doing things, as many have already done?

Well, I'm sure many of those already moving in the new direction have indeed had OD help. At this Conference last year, for example, you heard Fred Fosmire tell about Weyerhaeuser. Some organizations will not know how to get started and will need your help. Some will start, but take wrong steps. Many will mistake paternalism or permissiveness or quality circles for participative management. Many will mistake need assessments and job redesign, too, for participative management. Many will mistake espoused theory for theory in practice. Many will be ignorant about the intact group, the subsystem. Many will try to make women into men, Hispanics into Anglos, blacks into whites. Many will underestimate the time it takes, especially when converting an existing organization. And so on. You will be needed.

In the competition for the new and scarcer employee, I fear that schools are going to have an especially hard time. The chief reason, in my mind, is that their profit margins are too low. They have too little loose money to finance innovation to cope with the demographic changes now under way. Imagine them allowing a new teacher three months in which to design his or her own kind of teaching job and fit it into the rest. Imagine them breaking out time for three other people to act as collaborating sponsors for a new employee. Imagine them allocating a third of the time of teachers--that means a third of their salary money--to in-house training and innovative experiments. Those imaginings do not make me happy.

I think, however, there are two sources of hope. One lies with school boards. As the new ways of organizing become more frequent, it will become easier to find candidates for school boards who understand the necessities of innovation in organizations. Even two years ago, in 1983, a member of one of the study groups of the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission was an officer of an innovative industry. Almost alone, he argued that standards and curricula for Oregon's schools should not issue from the State Department of Education. I am sorry to say that he was voted down by the educators on the study group and the commission. But I am confident that he will have more people on his side in the near future. So recruiting the right people to run for school boards is one way that schools can improve their chances.

The other way schools can move in the new direction even without much money is to make use of cadres of organizational specialists--employees of school districts who

spend part time providing help of the OD sort. Since I am sure you are not surprised to hear me say that, I will spend no time here extolling cadres. If you are not familiar with peer cadres, as Dick Schmuck likes to call them, you will find them described in Chapter 11 of the Handbook by Schmuck and Runkel (1985).

I want to mention one more feature of the coming demographic changes. Namely, the numbers of jobs in middle management are becoming fewer. In the U.S., there are 15 percent fewer middle managers now than there were in 1979 (p. 12). You heard Fred Fosmire last year tell about the example of Weyerhaeuser. But the numbers of men and women of the ages that have in the past provided the middle managers--the ages between 35 and 46--will increase by 42 percent between 1985 and 1995 (p. 14). What will we do with all those people who in earlier years would have become middle managers?

Some of them will start their own businesses. Indeed, people are starting new businesses at double the rate 10 years ago and at eight times the rate in the 1950s (p. 106). Some of those people start private schools.

If we learn to act like W.L. Gore and Associates, other people who would have become middle managers can be put to work as entrepreneurs on salary, not so much managing as leading. Those "excess" people between the ages of 35 and 46, it seems to me, will very likely be a spur to innovation. They will comprise a pool of talent that organizations simply cannot afford to waste. And you can start now to figure out how to make use of their talents in new ways.

Aside from W.L. Gore, maybe the cadre of organizational specialists has some hints for you. Those people, when acting as cadre members, do not act as managers or administrators. They do not even have full-time jobs as specialists. But they sort out problems in a way for which bureaucracy has been unable to write job descriptions. They bring renewed commitment to replace frustrated time-serving. They show to their colleagues the way to the new kind of life at work.

Eventually school districts will also come round to reducing the numbers of administrators. I don't think they will abolish the principalship, but they will wonder whether all the people in the central office have the right job descriptions. Maybe they will find ways to let those people invent jobs that can make the district more attractive to teachers and students. Maybe they will look to cadres for clues.

I have told you now about the opportunities that will be opening before you during the coming decade. I should remind you that I have given you the statistics for the nation

as a whole. You can write to the Census Bureau to get the forecasts for your state or metropolitan area.

If you don't care to remember much of what I am telling you, please remember just two things. First, inevitable demographic changes during the next decade are going to bring you opportunities in numbers and kinds that you have never enjoyed before. Second, as OD people, you will have exactly the kinds of knowledge and skill those opportunities will demand.

### What Humans Are Like

In the second part of my talk, I want to tell you why I think you have the knowledge and skill to exploit the opportunities coming your way. To do so, I will make use of a theory of human functioning (Powers, 1973) I have come upon recently, though belatedly. The key idea in the theory is that humans act to control their inputs, not their outputs. They act on their environment, yes, they alter their environment, yes, they make things and transport things and grow things and push other people around, yes, but they do those things to bring themselves what they need and to make room in their lives to do the things for themselves that they want to do. I think OD people know that.

Like every living creature, humans are cybernetic systems, otherwise known as control systems. That is, they have interior standards that they act to maintain. They maintain certain levels of temperature, blood pressure, muscle tensions, and many more subtle and complicated kinds of interior conditions. The interior standards are sometimes called reference signals or reference values. I'll call them interior standards--standards inside ourselves that we must maintain by our actions.

Humans contain a hierarchy of interior standards. The standards higher in the hierarchy often set the standards to be used lower in the hierarchy. For example, if you are absorbed in a fascinating task, your standard for carrying out your program of work may reset your ordinary tolerance for hunger, and you may postpone lunch.

The theory I am using here, written by W.T. Powers (1973), sets forth ten levels in the hierarchy--ten kinds of control system that we use in acting to control our inputs. I am going to describe them all to you, because I want to remind you in ten different ways just how much you do know about how humans function.

Now. Touch a fingernail to the palm of your other hand,



like this. Go on, do it. Press hard. Hard! HARDER! There. That is intensity.

Now put the fingertips of one hand against the fingertips of the other, with your hands wide apart as if there were a big ball in the cage of your fingers. Press hard. What are your fingertips telling you? I don't mean in words. Don't talk to yourself. Just be aware. Just let the sensation from your fingertips flow up your arms, up the back of your neck, and into your marvelous brain. Now take your attention to the biceps muscles in your upper arms. What are they telling you, without words? Your fingertips and your muscles are sending you sensations--the second level of control system.

Now look at my face. Do you recognize me? I'm Phil Runkel. Now I turn my head. Whom do you see? I turn my head the other way. Whom do you see? Though the patterns of light on your retina were very different, your third-level control systems enabled you to see the same "thing" every time: good old Phil Runkel. That is configuration.

The fourth level contains the control systems that permit, for example, flicker fusion. Here is another example. Stretch out your arm in front of you. Close your eyes. Now lift your arm above your head, as if you wanted permission to ask a question. What happened? Did you have your arm in one position, then another, then another, and so on, until you got it jerked into position over your head? No! Your experience was one of movement, of flow, of a smooth stream of action. That is transition. Maybe you also noticed changing sensations in the muscles of your arm. That's transition, too.

Is there someone leaving the room at this moment? Well, if there were, you might think maybe the person was going to the toilet. That's the fifth level: relationship. For another example, consider your understanding of persons and doors. (I don't mean the frame of the door; I mean that big flat thing that swings on hinges.) You expect a person to be on one side of the door or the other, don't you? You don't expect a person to be on both sides of the door at the same time. You don't expect a person to be within the door--unless the person tries to crash through the door without opening it. That idea you have of the limitation to one-side-or-the-other is relationship.

Now look around you. You see people in sitting positions. And what do you know, every time you see a person in that position, you see a chair underneath. That's relationship. Look at me and at yourselves. You see me standing before you. You see yourselves sitting facing me. You think there is some connection between the one and the other. A woman from Mars might think that you had merely found a convenient place to rest and that I had merely found a

convenient place to talk to myself. But you think there is some connection. That's relationship.

I once saw Dick Schmuck get everyone in a large room to lie on the floor, each person's head on the next person's belly. Dick started laughing. Before you could say "Ha! Ha!" all the heads in the room were bouncing on laughing bellies. I think every person there was aware of control systems from sensations to relationships. You might call it a sensational configuration of transition to relationships.

I'll pause now, in my recitation of levels, to remind you of some of the ways you are in touch with the first five levels at which humans control their inputs. You will be able to think of examples beyond the few I will give here.

Level one is too obvious for further description. At level two, sensations, OD people sometimes ask their clients to stare at the peel of an orange, hoping they can learn the power of words by putting them aside and experiencing pure sensation, if only for a few seconds. At level three, configuration, OD people sometimes use optical illusions and other kinds of visual exercises to remind clients that expectations--that is, standards set at higher levels--can determine even what you can see with your eyes.

At level four, transition, you ask your clients to look for bodily movements, and at level five, relationships, to associate those movements with persons, situations, and meanings. We call that becoming sensitive to non-verbal communication. At the same time, at level five, we warn against letting perceived associations lead us, when we interpret them at higher levels, into false conclusions. The person who leaves the room is not necessarily bored and not necessarily going to the toilet.

Now let me return to my recitation. Look around you again. You see males and females. The fact that you distinguish them comes from level three: configuration. If you were to reach out and feel them, the distinction could come from the second level: sensation. Or it could come from level four or five; I'll leave it to you, as an exercise, to think how that could be. But your classifying the people into two groups (male and female) on the basis of the similarities of shape and action you see, your similarities of behavior toward members of one group, and your differences in behavior between members of the two groups--all that comes from level six: categories. Just now, to take another example, you are putting me into the category of lecturer and yourselves in the category of audience. Later on, when I stop this talking and join you for coffee, I hope you will put yourselves and me in the same category--that of friends.

Now the seventh level. When you walked in here, your clever brains took care of your walking without your having to think about it. Imagine what would have happened if you had tried to take two steps with your right foot without taking one between them with your left foot. Or if you had pushed yourself forward with your left foot without stepping forward with your right foot. But you performed all the parts of walking in exactly the right order. That is sequence.

But you had to choose one place or another to walk to. Should you walk toward a friend or toward the refreshment table? If you chose one goal, you put a certain series of sequences into operation. If you chose the other, you put a different series into operation. Choosing the sequences that will get you to your goal is the business of the eighth level: control of programs.

At this level, the eighth, we get at last to thinking and language. Language is full of sequences that we use without awareness. A word is a sequence of letters. A sentence is a sequence of words. Planning is full of sequences. Part of a plan might be to go and talk to the boss. We make a written note of it that way: "Talk to the boss." We do not write, "Stand up; put out left foot; now the right; steer for the door," and so on. We know we can call upon well rehearsed sequences to get us to the boss's office. We know we can substitute other sequences to get us to the shop floor if we find that is where the boss happens to be.

Talking, thinking, and planning are wonderful abilities, and we could not be human without them. But like all tools, we can hurt ourselves with them. When we let words from level eight control our perceptions at lower levels, we can get into awful trouble, as Powers (1973) points out and as Korzybski (1948) did before him. (To get acquainted with Korzybski's ideas, the book by Bois, 1973, is much easier to read than Korzybski's of 1948.) OD people know about this. We know that words and habits of thought can control the perceptions people have.

Now, again, I'll give a few examples of the ways you are knowledgeable about controlling input, this time at levels six, seven, and eight.

At level six, categories, we offer clients some new ways of sorting out their experiences in organizations: expressing versus describing emotions; task versus process; situation, plan, and target; and so on. We also warn people about categories. If you see some configurations, transitions, or relationships by which you can divide people into males and females, blacks and whites, Hispanics and Anglos, teachers and students, managers and workers, oldsters and youngsters, or Americans and Russians, we say you should not conclude that

those people are divisible into the same groups by other configurations, transitions, or relationships that you have not yet observed.

At level seven, sequences, we deplore some of the sequences our clients have built for themselves. Often people train themselves into certain sequences in response to norms, either norms that actually exist (you'll know what I mean here by a norm "existing") or imagined norms stemming from pluralistic ignorance. We point out commonly used habits of asking, answering, confirming, confronting, or not doing those things, that get people into trouble when they are trying to solve problems in groups. We offer ways of training people to use better sequences, hoping the new habits will replace the old.

At level eight, programs, we have lots of advice about choosing among sequences and routines. We think we know what kinds of action people can choose when they have the new oral communication skills and when they do not; when people trust one another and when they do not; when people have a common goal and when they do not; when they have one kind of problem to solve or another kind; when they find themselves in one kind of conflict or another kind; when they work on an assembly line, as clerks in an office, as salespersons, as teachers, or as managers. We have advice to give about choices of action, and for some of them we have simulations to show people what they can expect when they make one choice or another.

What I hope I am showing you, by brief examples, is the powerful array of technique and knowledge you have. I hope I am showing you how the methods of OD can touch people at every level of their being, to use an old phrase that fits with new meaning into the new theory. I hope I am showing you, too, how you can use Powers's list of levels to check your plans for consultations--to see whether they have in them all the levels of awareness that you want. I do not know of any tradition of consultation other than OD that encompasses all these levels.

Now we come to the ninth level, that of principles or values. Here we span longer time periods. We also deal with evidence from the environment that is usually much less immediate and precise than that used at lower levels. Consider yourselves again. Here you are. Why did you come here? Was it a choice you made as part of a program that you have adopted to reach a particular goal? I doubt, for most of you, that your decision was that precise.

Some of you may have come hoping for a few particular kinds of benefits, but most of you will be satisfied with the Conference if you get one of them or even if you leave with a benefit or two that you didn't have in mind when you arrived. I myself do not come to this Conference with a goal in mind

beforehand. I come simply because I think the Conference is a good thing. I come because of my values: that it is a good thing to keep in touch with my OD colleagues, that it is a good thing to keep in touch with my friends, that it is a good thing to find out in what ways, this year, my colleagues are agreeing or disagreeing with my point of view about OD and the world we live in. For me, the Conference is a Good Thing, with capital letters, in all those ways and more, and here I am. I think most of you are like me.

Of course, if I find the Conferences ceasing to be a good thing, I'll stop coming. But I won't stop coming after the first disappointment. One of the characteristics of input control at the ninth level is that it takes the long view. It calculates averages and trends and probabilities. It holds doggedly to a principle until mounting evidence drives one to revise it. That sometimes gives us, it is true, obstinacy, dogmatism, and bigotry. But it also gives us perseverance, trustworthiness, loyalty, and honor.

We argue among ourselves about principles. Should we accept the goals and principles of the client without question? What price should we charge and what price do we pay for pragmatism? What kind of life are we building for ourselves and our clients when we smooth out this week's or this month's difficulty? When should we, when can we, insist that clients learn the wider views and the new skills to become their own diagnosticians and generate their own new norms for mutual help in their own organizations--in short, the knowledge and skill to do organizational renewal for themselves?

We spatter our journals with worries of this sort. The recent article by Azzaretto (1985) is part of the spatter. He says we should not undertake to renovate other people's organizations for them. He says we should help them discover how to do it for themselves. If you look in our Handbook, any edition, you will find that Dick Schmuck and I side with Azzaretto.

It is harder to cope with difficulties and conflicts at the ninth level than with those at lower levels. It is true that any OD project that affects norms also affects the principles of at least some of the participants. But I think most of us are less sure-footed at the ninth level than we are at lower levels. I hope we will see advances soon in the theory and practice of dealing with principles.

Now the tenth level, that of conceiving patterns in our environment as forming entities--as forming complex but unitary systems. When you go beyond principles to a view of what makes the world go round, you get to system concepts. They include concepts of what my school is like, or my company, or my nation, but they go on to views people have about what ties

everything together: maybe free enterprise, or power, or love, or the superego, or belongingness, or God. We know that it is important, in OD work, to find out the conceptions people have about their places in an organization and what makes them a part of it in a systemic way.

Consider this Conference again. Many of us perceive it as a thing having a boundary, an internal organization, and a more or less specifiabile relationship to the outside world. Is it good or bad to think that way?

It may not matter much whether you think this Conference is a thing, a delimitable system. It does matter, however, where you draw the boundaries around your client, how you map the client's internal organization, and how you choose the connections with the outside world to which you draw the client's attention. Much of the strife in the world has come from conflicting views of just those matters.

The emperor decides that his boundaries are too small. Hitler decides that the Jews are weakening the internal organization of the nation. The general manager decides to repair the company's relationship with the local community (which he thinks of as a labor supply) by shooting some striking workers. Another general manager decides not to tell the community that the dump is filling up with poisonous wastes. A father decides that the honor of his family is threatened by his daughter's friends.

Those are simplifications, I know, but they illustrate an important component of our difficulties. If a few people in the U.S. and the USSR persist in the wrong conceptions of our two nations as systems and subsystems in the world community, human life on earth may vanish.

Most OD people, I think, conceive pretty well the systemic character of groups and organizations, and I think they are smarter about it, most of them, than they were ten years ago and certainly smarter than they were twenty years ago. I think, however, that we need to be smarter than we are about interfaces among groups and organizations, and smarter, too, about the connections between organizations and society. L. David Brown in his book of 1983 has made a very good start.

What you think a group or organization can do or ought to do depends on where you think its boundaries are and how you think it is organized. Is a company a subsystem of a community or a nation, or it is merely located there geographically? Are parents in some way components of schools? Are federal agencies components of the local community, or are they intrusions from Washington D.C.? As Drucker (1974) would have us ask, what is the organization's business, and who are its customers?

The answers you choose can make a difference in some surprising ways. A few months ago, by treating the Colgate-Palmolive company as a part of the Eugene community, I got them to send me a dozen bottles of after-shave lotion free of charge.

### Individual and Group

Those ten levels comprise the hierarchy of interior standards to which we try to match our inputs. That matching can occur only within individuals. Although we can see some similarities among our interior standards from person to person, in the end our individual standards are ours uniquely. But if we must all act individually to match our individual standards, how can we ever act together toward common goals?

The only way to do that, Powers (1973, p. 262) says, is to invite people to help us reach our goals in ways that do not prevent them from reaching their own goals. That, lo and behold, is cooperation. That is collaborative problem solving. That is what participative management should turn out to be like. It seems to come pretty close to that at W.L. Gore and Associates. That kind of behavior in a group requires clear, strong norms, and it requires trust. Once again, you hear me describing OD.

I hope you can see how opportunities and ideas and your skills are coming together. The members of the baby-boom generation are demanding to do things for themselves, to act to control their inputs to match their own internal standards. But they must find out how to do that through cooperation. They must find freedom by learning how to help one another find freedom. They must learn the skills and the discipline that you have to offer.

One of the ways, by the way, that you can build your own future is to offer your services to schools, especially to students in high schools. In only a few years they will be your clients in other organizations. If you can show them that there is a way of working based not on competition and threat, but on comradeship and trust, they will welcome you when they see you again.

I have described to you, too briefly, the ten levels of control system that you use to make your way around in the world. But there is one more idea I must add. Overall or throughout the ten levels, says Powers, there is another function that ties them all together and enables adaptations at one level to bring about changes at several or all other levels. Although the higher levels do shape our perceptions at

lower levels over long periods of time, they do not do so unalterably or permanently. If they did, we could never learn anything from experience. So there is a function that enables us to reorganize our internal standards up and down the levels. You might call it self-preservation. If you prefer the current lingo, you might call it survival. Powers calls it reorganization. It is a special kind of learning.

In ordinary discourse, we use the word learning for several different operations. One is simply memorizing; we say that we "learn" someone's name. Another is finding our way to a goal by using a program with choice-points in it. When we have made the correct left and right turns and have used the correct up and down elevators, we say we have "learned" the way to the boss's office. You could as easily say that we have found it and memorized it. But the program and its choice-points remain the same.

Reorganization, in contrast, revises what is worth memorizing, what goals are worth pursuing, what programs are worth building--what internal standards, in short, are worth matching by controlling input. This kind of learning, reorganization, is the kind that shows us new meanings: new relationships between ourselves and others, new programs for organizing our routines, new boundaries and new vistas for the systems within which we work, even new meanings among the bumps on an orange peel. It is the kind of learning through which we transcend the mechanical, the routine, the stimulus-response effects of experience. It doesn't necessarily require conscious thought. It can occur quietly, while we are not looking, so to speak, or it can occur like the blast of trumpets or the singing of angels--as insight and aha!

This kind of learning, reorganization, is what OD in its fullest flower can bring about. It is the juncture, the transition, at which participants feel regenerated, enlarged, inspired, in command of new powers.

This kind of learning is not something to be taught. It is not a lesson to be learned at nine o'clock on Thursday morning. It comes to you--to you, personally--at that terrible and wonderful and magical moment when you find that your categories, your programs, your principles have been playing you false and will no longer serve. You then pull yourself up by your bootstraps and find in yourself a newness--a newness that you didn't plan and that no one could plan for you, a newness that your marvelous brain made for you while you weren't even expecting it to happen. It is the crowning glory of the OD consultant, I think, to be able to arrange a synergy among people so that this kind of learning, this renewal, can blossom among the participants.

Once again, then, think what a glory you hold in your



hands--the gift of helping people to make a new world for themselves. Not a world that you or anyone else designed for them, not a world to squeeze them into, but a world of their own making for their own living and their own renewing.

### Summary

What have I told you? I have told you that you are entering a decade of unprecedented opportunity for your talents. Employers will no longer find it easy, during the coming decade, to think of employees as a labor supply to be screened from an inexhaustible pool. They will have to come to think of employees as people, as full-fledged humans with internal standards of their own. And that is how you have been thinking of them all along.

I have told you that people want to do things for themselves. They want to act more knowledgeably and more surely to control their inputs. And you knew that all along. And the best way they can do that is to help one another do it. They can do that at work if they can redesign their ways of working, and even their organizations, to make cooperation, mutual helpfulness, the norm. You knew that all along, too.

Opportunity is opening before you. Reach out to it! The knowledge lies in your grasp. Apply it! The skill inspires your hands. Use it! The future is yours. Seize it!

### References

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