

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZER

by Walt and Carol Shepperd

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## THE WAR OF THE FLEA

The organizer is a non-violent guerrilla. He fights what Robert Taber calls "The War of the Flea", and his enemy "suffers the dog's disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with." If the war continues long enough--this is the theory--the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anemia without ever having found anything on which to close his jaws or rake with his claws.

But this may be too oversimplify for the sake of an analogy. In practice, the dog does not die of anemia. He merely becomes too weakened...overextended...too unpopular...too expensive...to defend himself.

The parallel between organizer and guerrilla is more than metaphoric. Both are moved to action by a realization of the necessity for revolutionary changes in society. Both recognize that these changes cannot be brought about within the framework of existing institutions. Both seek an over-all redistribution of power and access to decision-making. And both realize that the most important, and most difficult task they face is not the achieving of the end goal, but creating the conditions which will move the people in the community to translate feelings into action.

Taber describes the role of the guerrilla in this process; he is also describing the role of the organizer, for in this case their roles are identical: "The will to revolt, so widespread as to be almost universal today, seems to be something more than a reaction to political circumstances or material conditions. What it seems to express is a newly awakened consciousness, not of "causes" but of potentiality. It is a spreading awareness of the possibilities of human existence, coupled with a growing sense of the causal nature of the universe, that together inspire, first in individuals, then in communities and entire nations, an entirely new attitude toward life.

The effect of this sudden awareness, this sudden fruition of consciousness, is to produce all at once, a pervasive and urgent desire for radical change, based on the new insight, startling in its simplicity, that the conditions of life that had seemed immutable can, after all, be changed.

Limitations that were formerly accepted all at once become intolerable. The hint of imminent change suggests opportunities that had not been glimpsed until now. The will to act is born. It is as though people everywhere were saying: "Look, here is something we can do, or have, or be, simply by acting. Then what have we been waiting for? Let us act!"

This, at any rate, describes the state of mind of the modern insurgent, the guerrilla fighter, whatever his slogans or his cause; and his secret weapon, above and beyond any question of strategy or tactics or techniques of irregular warfare, is nothing more than the ability to inspire this state of mind in others. The defeat of the military enemy, the overthrow of the government, are secondary tasks, in the sense that they come later. The primary effort of the guerrilla is to militate the population, without whose consent no government can stand for a day.

The guerrilla is subversive of the existing order in that he is the disseminator

agreement, he must abide by the decisions of the organization when they are made.

In Milwaukee a neighborhood organization got immobilized when meetings began to be taken up by a discussion of personal problems which were arising between some of the members. These discussions began to take all the meeting time and left no time for discussion of community problems, and action for solving them. The organizer explained that the meeting was no place for personal arguments and gossip, and if the organization didn't want to address itself to dealing with community problems they would lose their organizer because the staff was small and other neighborhoods needed organizers. The members persisted in taking up meetings with personal problems, and the organizer was withdrawn.

In Syracuse a neighborhood organization, after a few early victories, broke down into squabbling between two small power factions. Both factions wanted to control the organization, install its leader as president, and determine the direction which the organization would take. Since the organizing staff in Syracuse was large, and the organization in question was located in a key housing project, the organizers stayed and tried to get the organization back together. But the situation only became more complicated because each faction tried to use the organizers against the other. Finally, after members of the organization began to turn on the organizers, there was no choice but to withdraw.

The question arises: Can you afford to write off an organization because of an internal breakdown? What if the organization has already won significant victories? What if it contains key leaders for a combined effort with other organizations? What if it is situated in a key geographic location? Foresight will go a long way toward eliminating the need to deal with these questions. The more clearly defined the working relationship is the less likely it is that an internal breakdown will occur. The only rule of thumb to use if these questions have to be confronted is: How best can the organization be put in the proper perspective, that of building for power.

#### THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP

What goes into making up the working relationship? What is the role of the organizer? What skills must he possess? What roles must the people in the neighborhood take on? What skills must they develop?

The organizer has many roles in the building of powerful neighborhood organizations: he is catalyst, resource person, teacher, agitator, and interpreter. The organizer must perform any functions: he must put people in touch with each other and constantly present the organization with new alternatives. There are many traits which the organizer must display: he must always be seen by the people in the organization as honest, reliable, loyal, and morally superior to the enemies of the organization.

#### The organizer puts people in touch with each other

An organizing project in Philadelphia decided to find out the attitudes of the people in a neighborhood before they began to organize. They took door-to-door surveys and found that 80% of the people on a given block did not know anyone else on the block. They found also that 80% of the people on a given block said that they would work to change the conditions in the neighborhood, but they didn't think that anyone else would. When Mrs. Brown was told that Mrs. Jones felt exactly as she did, she said, "That's funny, I never would have guessed it. I guess I just never



took the time to find out." The next time she saw Mrs. Jones she stopped to strike up a conversation about the possibility of changing the conditions in the neighborhood, and a new friendship pattern developed.

If a majority of the people in a neighborhood aren't really communicating with each other you will find what is mistakenly called apathy in talking about community problems. What is really operating is fear, etc. People are afraid to commit themselves to action because they don't think anyone else in the neighborhood will act with them. A SNCC worker in rural Mississippi states: "The organizer must overcome the fear by getting the people together. Then they will see that they're not alone. When they associate with one another, through the conversations on community problems, the apathy will disappear. At first people educated the organizer about problems in the community; now together they are educating each other.

There are many ways of getting people together and the organizer must decide which method will be most relevant to the community he wants to organize. But the organizer must be careful to choose not the best method for getting people together, but the best way for getting people together to build a powerful organization.

In Syracuse organizers talked first to individuals in each neighborhood, finding out what problems existed in those neighborhoods and introducing the idea of forming an action organization to get those problems solved. When they found individuals who were interested in the idea, they got them together in house meetings. And when a large number of individuals at a large number of house meetings expressed the desire to form an organization, they brought everyone together for an organizational meeting. If an organizer uses this method of getting people together, he can make clear to the people in the neighborhood right from the beginning that what is needed in an action organization, and can make sure that this is the kind of organization which is set up.

In Philadelphia a project organizing around the issue of education found that many of the parents in the neighborhoods where they were working would not condemn the schools for their children's failure to do well in the classroom. It was only after tutorials and block schools were organized in the neighborhoods and the parents asked to supervise them, that the parents could really come to grips with the problem of education. They saw their children learning in the tutorials and block schools what the public schools were failing to teach them. They also saw their children learning things which weren't even being taught in the public schools. At this point they were willing to come together to talk about taking action to bring change in the public schools.

In Trenton an organizer developed a food-buying cooperative to bring people in the ghetto together. The cooperative appealed to two different elements in the community. It attracted people with fairly stable jobs who wanted to go into business for themselves, but were prevented by discrimination or lack of capital. They participated in planning and administrating roles. It also attracted welfare families who were interested in making the welfare check stretch to meet family needs. They participated in consumer roles. Having brought the people together in a cooperative effort, the organizer saw two main difficulties in developing an action orientation. First, the basic difficulty to introducing the concept of the need for an action orientation when the thing which brought them together had been a service developed for them by an already existing agency. Second, there were two elements of self-interest working: those interested in developing their own business, and those interested in reducing their cost of living. When the concept of action-orientation



is introduced, and the co-op shown to be an organizing tool, those who wanted to develop the business would say that time should be spent growing to the point where the co-op could compete with existing stores, and if action became the dominant theme, they would probably fall away.

Occasionally an already existing organization which is not action-oriented will ask for an organizer to work with them. But this situation usually presents the organizer with more problems than any other approach as the following example will illustrate:

About five years ago some clerymen and small business men in a ghetto neighborhood organized a Civic Improvement League. They were concerned about the image of their neighborhood, the physical appearance, the crime rate, and the bad influences on the children growing up in the neighborhood. They organized tutoring services for the children, charm classes for young girls, trips to the zoo and art museums, social functions, and every year sponsored a 'clear your block week.' Recently, some of the younger men in the organization began talking about the action-orientation of the civil rights movement and became vocal in meetings about the need for action in the neighborhood. The leadership of the organization set up an action committee and appointed all those who had spoken for action in the meetings to the committee. The committee decided that an organizer was needed and asked for one from a project which had been organizing in other neighborhoods in the city. The organizer was invited to attend a meeting and many of the members were very interested in what he had to say. The president thanked the organizer for coming and said that he knew that the organizer must be very busy so they shouldn't ask him to take up all his time with attending all the various meetings of the organization. The organizer can work with the action committee, he said, and then the committee can come back and report to all of us at our big meetings. But when the committee would recommend an action at the big meeting, the older leaders would talk about how they had more experience in these things, and suggest a more moderate course. When the committee asked for more time in a meeting to explain their recommendations the president would say, 'We have other things to discuss. There are other committee reports that are just as important as yours.' Sometimes the leaders would forget to tell the action committee that an important meeting was coming up. When the younger men on the action committee became angry at this they became more vocal in their demands for militant action, and in their frustration attacked the leaders as Uncle Toms. The leaders calmly told the members that "irresponsible hot-heads had no place in an organization dedicated to making a better community." Many of the members of the action committee quit the organization and tried to go it alone, but they failed to rally very many people and the organizer had to withdraw.

The organizer has to decide which method he will use for getting people together by analyzing what possibilities exist in a given community. Perhaps none of the methods mentioned would be possible in a particular neighborhood. It then becomes the role of the organizer to create the means of getting the people in the neighborhoods together. This will require a great deal of critical thinking and a thorough knowledge of the neighborhood on the part of the organizer.

In Albany, New York, for instance, a minister began playing street games with the children in a neighborhood where he had not had much success getting the people together. He taught them some new games and soon they all looked forward to seeing him. When the children talked about parties, he said that maybe they could have a block party, and that his settlement house could supply the food if they could convince their mothers to cook it. The children were so enthusiastic that their mothers could hardly refuse, and soon everyone on the block got into the spirit of

the thing. At the block party the minister talked to people about the need for an organization, and more important, people began to talk about it to each other

#### THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZER IS TO PRESENT ALTERNATIVES

Once the organizer has gotten people together there will be a lot of talking. Once people see that others feel the same way about community problems and the need for change, they will want to show themselves and everyone else that they are no longer afraid to deal with the problems. Once they hear others talking about how they are affected by community problems they will want to talk about how these problems affect them. Sometimes it will be hard for people to separate talking about community problems from talking about personal problems. Often early organizational meetings will be no more than general gripe sessions. Often the hardest problem of organizational work is to get people from just talking about the problems to actually doing something about them. This is because poor people have been denied access to the skills and information they need to affect change in their neighborhoods. In other words, they don't know what alternatives exist for solving problems. No one can choose a successful plan of action for anything unless they are aware of the alternatives which exist.

As Mike Miller has written: "An organizer doesn't like to do all the talking. He talks; listens; he asks questions. He operates on the principle that the people in the streets, in the neighborhoods, in the fields, in the plants, on the unemployed lines, on the welfare rolls know better than he what they want and need--but they don't know how to get it. He knows and creates other needs and wants."

What alternatives should the organizer present? How does he present them? When should they be presented? These questions demonstrate, as do most questions about organizing, the need for the organizer to have as thorough a knowledge as possible of the dynamics of the neighborhood and the people who live there.

Powerful organizations are built, of course, to get things done. But more important than getting them done is the way in which they get done. If the organizer does everything for the people, then he is no better than any other paternalistic charity or agent of welfare colonialism. The people in the organization must develop the skills and grow into the roles necessary for its operation or the organization will not be the people's organization. If the organizer does all the work, whatever power is built will be the organizer's and the people's. Therefore, if the organizer starts off by presenting all the alternatives that he sees and then the people discuss what he has laid out, they may choose a good alternative and get something done, but they will grow totally dependant on the organizer to lay things out for them all the time. As the organizer presents alternatives the people must see themselves as participating in the process and at the same time learning how to determine for themselves what alternatives exist in other situations. Timing is important too. If the people have never tried any alternatives, they will most likely want to try the least controversial or most conventional alternative even though the organizer knows that it won't get anything done. Only when people see for themselves that the more conventional alternatives do not work will they be able to consider a more radical alternative. In other words: They will probably choose to write letters to the mayor to see if that works first, before they will be able to relate to the discussion of picket-lines.

The best means of presenting alternatives is through questions. But the organizer must be sure that his questions are structured in such a way that they bring things out of people rather than imposing things upon them. Compare the following two examples of presenting alternatives by questions:

1. Organizer: What's with this store your're talking about?  
1st Person: They won't hire Negroes.  
2nd Person: Yeah, and all the meat they sell is rotten.  
Organizer: What do you think should be done about the store?  
1st Person: Doesn't seem like you can do anything about it...makes me so mad sometimes I feel just like burning the place down.  
2nd Person: Yeah!  
Organizer: Well, of course, we can't do that. But what if everybody in the neighborhood boycotted the store?
2. Organizer: What's with this store your're talking about?  
1st Person: They won't hire Negroes.  
2nd Person: Yeah, and all the meat they sell is rotten.  
Organizer: What do you think should be done about the store?  
1st Person: Doesn't seem like you can do anything about it...makes me so mad sometimes I feel just like burning the place down.  
2nd Person: Yeah!  
Organizer: I guess that would be the easiest way. Where would you buy food then?  
1st Person: That's the problem, there's no other store for 13 blocks.  
Organizer: Well, how do you get to a businessman, I mean where does he fell things most?  
2nd Person: (laughing) In his pocketbook.  
Organizer: How can you hurt him in his pocketbook?  
1st Person: Like I said, burn the place down; then he won't have no business.  
Organizer: Where does he get his business from?  
1st Person: Just around here, this neighborhood...mostly where the people in the organization live.  
Organizer: So if he couldn't sell to the people in the neighborhood he wouldn't have any business?  
1st Person: Yeah, same difference.  
2nd Person: Yeah! Like they did with the busses in Montgomery...what do you call that thing?...A boycott, that's it, a boycott.  
1st Person: How do you pull one of those things off?

What basic differences do you see in the two different lines of questioning? Most important of all, which line of questioning do you think would get the greatest feeling of involvement from the people in the organization?

Sometimes it is necessary to present alternatives by citing examples. Sometimes people in an organization will not have had the experience to be able to draw on their own examples, and will need to hear what has gone on in similar situations in other neighborhoods or other cities. Take this example for instance:

Organizer: It seems like everyone's agreed that we should fight this urban renewal thing. Any ideas?  
(long silence)

1st Person: Seems like you just can't fight urban renewal any way you try. They come in and tear down the houses no matter what you do. And they give you a list of places to go to find a place, but nobody on that list will ever rent to you.



2nd Person: Might as well tear down these rat holes anyway. I only live here because I can't get any place better.

3rd Person: Maybe we better work on something else. I don't think anybody will ever beat urban renewal.

Organizer: Remember that organization I talked about in Chicago?

1st Person: TWO? Did they fight urban renewal?

Organizer: Yeah, they had a plan and it took a lot of work. They found out that the federal government would help finance the building of a special kind of public housing in an urban renewal area. They call it 221-D3 housing. This housing is for the people who already live in the area so that they would only have to be relocated temporarily. For instance, TWO acts as the landlord for this housing and grants loans to the people who move in for the initial payment. If the people who move in want to stay there, they can buy the houses and take 35 years to pay. And the payments average out to be less than the rent they were paying before. If they don't want to buy, they can just keep on renting like they did before, only this time the organization is the landlord.

Sometimes the organizer will have to demonstrate an alternative to people. For example, many people in Philadelphia were not interested in fighting the school board because they thought that the fault lay not with the schools but with their children. It would be nearly impossible to make them think otherwise by asking questions and citing examples, while their children continued to fail in school (especially if some of their children had done well). They were enthusiastic, however, about getting some tutoring for their children, and when they saw the children begin to do well because of the tutoring, they could turn their attention to the schools to look for the problems.

It is the role of the organizer to present alternatives, and to create the conditions in which the people will choose what seems to be the best alternative. But it is even more important to remember that it is the process of choosing and not the choice which is important. And if the organizer is really on the side of the people, then he must work just as hard with them if they choose an alternative which he thinks is appropriate, as when they choose the one he thinks best.

#### THE ORGANIZER IS A CATALYST

Any discussion of change must include several elements. What is it that needs to be changed? Why does it need to be changed? What will it be changed into? Who or what is going to bring about the change? The last element, that which is going to bring about the change, is called the change agent. Some organizers feel that they are change agents. But this is a mistake. When change is brought about the power is attributed to the change agent. If the organizer is seen as bringing about the change, then the power will not be attributed to the organization. A catalyst enables elements which already exist to come together to produce a change. All the necessary elements for change already exist in a given community: the problems, the potential power of the people, and the alternatives. The organizer must be the catalyst which brings these elements together so that they can act upon each other and bring about the change.

#### THE ORGANIZER IS A RESOURCE

The organizer is a resource in that he brings something into the neighborhood that was not there: his organizational background and thinking. This does not mean he is smarter or knows more about the problems than the people in the neighborhood. It simply means that he has taken the time to do some reading and some thinking and has some experiences that the people in the neighborhood haven't had chances for. He acts as a resource when he presents alternatives by citing examples. He is also a

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resource in that he possesses the skills necessary for performing the tasks himself. He involves people in these tasks and lends his skills so that the people will develop the skills themselves.

#### THE ORGANIZER IS A TEACHER

The organizer is a teacher in that the process of building organization is a learning process for the people in the neighborhood. The organizer teaches skills, from how to run a mimeograph machine to how to do research on land titles or corporate holdings. He teaches people how to put out a newsletter, how to run a meeting, how to pull off a rent strike. Sometimes organizing situations have looked very much like classroom situations. In Milwaukee organizers distributed copies of The Other America and The Poor Pay More, and people in the neighborhood had discussions about the problems of poverty in a way they had never talked about it before. The organizer makes sure that people's involvement in the organizational process is a constant learning process. But the organizer is not the kind of authority figure teacher found in most public schools. The organizer must teach like Socrates did, by asking questions and getting people to think for themselves.

#### THE ORGANIZER IS AN AGITATOR

Organizers are frequently labeled as 'outside-agitators' by the press. Most people place a negative connotation on the word agitator. But the organizer must do a lot of agitating or the people in the neighborhood won't move. People have to get pretty angry about something before they'll work to change it, and unless a lot of people get angry about the same thing at the same time, whatever it is won't get changed. As Jim Foreman once said, "An agitator is the thing in the washing machine that shakes all the dirt loose."

An organizer must exercise extreme care in asking agitational questions. There is a big difference between agitating and 'just mouthing off' or intimidating people. Mike Miller gives us examples of agitational questions and then explains their significance:

"Who decided that Negroes couldn't vote?" "Where did he get the money to run his campaign?" "Why did they give him that money?" These are clearly not neutral questions. They make people begin to think about what democracy means, and what one-man one-vote means. The organizer uses the techniques of asking questions because he knows that if he gives the answers, people won't have to struggle to come to their own answers; and, when people don't have to struggle for something it doesn't mean much to them. But when they grasp it themselves because they found it out, then it can never be taken from them.

Agitational questions must move people to make connections. And they must show a tie between a problem and the need for action the context of building a powerful organization. Sometimes agitation can be accomplished with a short statement rather than a question. Malcolm X explains the effectiveness of such agitation: "The white man is the devil. You tell that to any Negro...He may take a day to react, a month, a year; he may never respond, openly; but of one thing you can be sure--when he thinks of his own life, he is going to see where, to him, personally, the white man sure has acted like the devil."

#### THE ORGANIZER IS AN INTERPRETER

Interpreting is one of the most important roles of the organizer. He must be able to interpret everything from the weather to the war in Vietnam in terms of building organi

He must enable the people in the neighborhood to learn to interpret things in these terms for themselves, from the newspapers to the promises of politicians. In evaluating every action undertaken by the organization, he must help them interpret whether it went well or poorly, and why: whether it affected any significant change: whether it helped to build a powerful organization. He must help them interpret community problems in terms of the alternatives for action open to the organization, so that they can focus on what actually can be done. He must at the same time be able to objectively interpret the effectiveness of his actions. This will probably mean that he needs to take some part of each day to reflect on what he did and how it related to the building of organization.

Outsiders have been working in low-income neighborhoods ever since there have been low-income neighborhoods. But they have never been a part of the community. They do not stay after working hours, and when they leave they always take things out of the community, like money and votes. They never put anything into the community except inferior quality products and broken promises. They never take the time to really get to know the people and have no concern for community problems (except when they interfere with business). Their motivation is clear: to make a profit, or to gain political power by using the people's votes. Historically, these outsiders have always been there.

After these outsiders have made the low-income neighborhoods into an economic colony, the neighborhood is invaded by a second wave of outsiders. These are the welfare colonialists, and their intentions are basically good. They are the charity-minded friendly visitors to the poor, the paternalistic social workers, the moralistic teachers. They labor under the false assumption that they know what the people in the neighborhood need, like hand-outs, or lessons in how to raise children, or lessons in how to 'talk right.' They are mistaken too in that they think that they really know the people in the neighborhood. Their actions have given rise to the saying: the hand of kindness kills slowly and more painfully than the hand with the knife.

If the organizer is going to build powerful organizations, he must clearly show that he is not the kind of outsider that poor people have been used to. These are traits which an organizer must display if he is to get and keep his license to operate.

The organizer is honest in all his dealings with the people. He is especially honest when he has made a mistake, and has no hesitation to talk about his mistakes; often a discussion of mistakes speeds the learning process. He is particularly honest in admitting that he doesn't know everything, and admitting his own ignorance of certain things. (Real knowledge is being able to figure out how to find out what you don't know). He is also honest in evaluating people's work and ideas. He doesn't say: "Hey, that's really good," when everybody knows its not. But he is careful not to reject the person when making honest criticism.

The organizer is reliable. He can always be counted on when he gives his word. This means that when he gives his word he must be able to deliver. Trust is hard won and easily lost. The organizer cannot prove himself trustworthy in any way other than his natural behavior. He especially can't do it by talking and his behavior has to back up everything he ever says. The people in the neighborhood must be able to count on the organizer in any situation from keeping appointments to facing howling mobs and getting arrested. The working relationship must make clear what the people can rely on the organizer to do and what they must do themselves.

The organizer is loyal to the people in the organization and the concept of organizing.

There must never be any visible conflict of interests for the organizer, either organizationally or personally. But again this must be a natural thing for the organizer. For example: if the members of the organization vote to physically restrain people who try to cross their picket line, and the organizer is personally committed to non-violence, then the organizer must decide whether in good conscience he can participate. If he decides that he can't, then he must make this clear to the organization and discuss with them whether or not he should remain as their organizer. If the people violate the working relationship in some way, then the organizer must remain loyal to the concept of building powerful organization. He must remember that if he takes up a task which they fail to accomplish, he lessens the need for them to do it themselves and makes them dependent on him.

The organizer is morally superior to the enemies of the organization. This means very simply, that the organizer consistently refuses to play The Man's Game. If the people in an organization decide to fight dirty because The Man fights dirty, then they are saying that the way the Man fights is the only way to get anywhere. If they feel this way, then they don't need an organization because The Man's Game is to trample all over everybody for his own personal gain, and this contradicts the basic concept of working together in an organization.

The organizer may be attacked personally by the press or powerful people in the community, and often by his 'so-called allies.' But his attacks on them must not be personal but rather to demonstrate their ineptness or their lack of ability to serve the community. If the organizer doesn't demonstrate a moral superiority to the enemies of the organization then he can easily be lumped in the minds of the people as part of the 'same old stuff.'

The role of the organizer contains so many elements that it is easy to add things that shouldn't be there or to think many acts are fulfilling certain roles when they're really doing something quite different. In other words there are certain things an organizer cannot be if he is to build powerful organization.

The organizer cannot be a leader. Above all, this is the most important thing. If the organizer wanted to bring about change by being a leader he shouldn't waste his time forming an organization (it wouldn't leave him time to lead). Some organizers have tried to be leaders of the organizations they formed until new leadership developed. But in almost every case the organization has fallen apart when the organizer moved on to build an organization in another neighborhood. This is because the people in the organization became dependent on the organizer to supply the leadership, and the new leaders who were being developed did not have to constantly face up to the responsibilities and problems of leadership.

A leader is a spokesman, and the role of the organizer is to get people to speak for themselves. If the organizer becomes spokesman he is defeating his own purposes in building organization. The organizer must be a strong person with a great capacity for self-discipline, but he can never become a powerful person. He must be able to sit by and watch mistakes being made, for part of the learning process of building organization is learning by mistakes.

The organizer cannot be a protector. Organizers are in the business of working to bring about radical changes in society. But many times organizers forget that they are as much a product of the society they want to change as are the people who want to keep things the way they are. Therefore many times we see organizers acting toward poor people in the same way that they are accusing other people of acting toward them. The organizer must realize that poor people are kept powerless and denied access to the skills and information necessary to build power. But the organizer must avoid be-



coming a better protector of the poor. As long as people are protected from things there will be no motivation to deal with them.

The organizer cannot impose his own views on the people in the organization. It sometimes seems like a waste of time for the organizer to develop an analysis of the problems in a neighborhood and a plan for action, and a thorough knowledge of what an organization can do and how it can do it, and then not be able to just give all this information to the people in the neighborhood. But the organizer must always remember that even though he analyses things as objectively as he can, he has a personal point of view as to what should happen and how it should happen. And this may not be the same point of view of the people in the neighborhood or even the appropriate point of view for a given neighborhood. If the information is to mean anything in the end, the people in the organization will have to go through the same process of finding it out as the organizer did. Once the organizer is in a position to impose his views and values on the people in the organization it is a sure sign that they have dropped out of the organizational learning process, that they are dependent upon the organizer, and that they will no longer think things out for themselves.

The organizer cannot be a provider of services. Once a person or an agency starts to provide services for other people they become dependent. Whenever people in the organization are in need of services, whether personal: like babysitting or loans of money; or community: like tutorials for children, job placements, or cooperative enterprises, they must be seen as coming from the organization rather than from the organizer. For instance: in Philadelphia an organizer talked to a block club about the lack of summer programs in the neighborhood for the children. "Can you set one up for us?" he was asked. "No," he replied, "but you can." He then proceeded to help the block club plan and put together a summer program. It would have been easier and taken less time if the organizer had done it himself, but when the parents became involved in the process, they began to see the real importance of the program and could really feel good about it because it was their's. There are many little everyday problems that come up in the neighborhood which are brought to the organizer and which the organizer could easily take care of himself. But the organizer must make sure that all of these problems are turned over to the organization to solve, so that the organization will come to be seen as the vehicle for solving all the problems that arise in the neighborhood.

#### THE ORGANIZER'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMUNITY

The organizer must have a thorough knowledge of the community when he goes into a neighborhood and must continue to add to that knowledge as he builds organization. This must include knowledge of the institutions in the community as well as the prevailing attitudes of the people. He must be aware of and evaluate what resources are open to him in the community which might be used in the building or organization. How does he find this all out?

Although there will be some surces of facts and figures (such as already existing civil rights groups) but the organizer will have to do most of his homework by himself. There are several helpful guides for getting to know the dynamics of a community, the most important of which is The Care and Feeding of Powerstructures by Jack Minnis. This will mean a great deal of reading and searching through files and records. But a vital part of getting the lowdown on a community will be through contacts which the organizer may already have, or must develop if he doesn't already have them. These contacts, teachers, social workers, politicians who are interested in change and will give the organizer a true picture of what's going on in their particular institution. But the organizer must remember that just as the union organizer who was seen having a friendly chat with a boss, if he is seen on a questionable basis with the enemies of the organization, he will lose his liscence to operate.

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