the Working Centre

Experiment in Social Change

Kenneth Westhues

foreword by Gregory Baum

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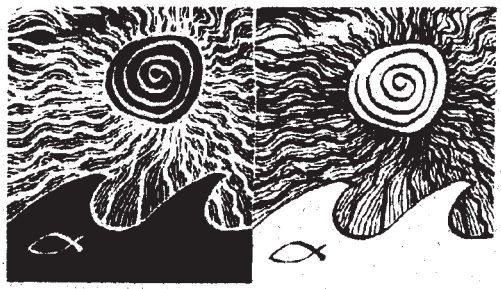
What I admire—and where I see God's hand—is that the social movements at the base continue to be bearers of a utopian vision, the vision of a peaceful, cooperative society where all can eat and where all can be friends. My hope is that in the present culture of anti-solidarity, the efforts of these communities will not only help a growing number of people to live a life of dignity in difficult circumstances, but also promote a countercultural undercurrent in society spreading the ideals of cooperation and solidarity.

from the foreword by Gregory Baum

By its classic definition, sociology has room for many kinds of linkage to social action. I have found the Working Centre an especially worthwhile linkage, because it is relatively free of sectarian, partisan, or specialized interests, and can therefore serve the goal of community development in an admirably dialogic, democratic, and holistic way.

from the first chapter by Kenneth Westhues



ISBN 0-9680189-0-4

The Working Centre
EXPERIMENT IN SOCIAL CHANGE

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with chapters by
Jane Addams, Moses Coady, Dorothy Day,
Dave Conzani, Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini,
Arleen Macpherson, and Caroline Williamson Montgomery

and a foreword by Gregory Baum

Working Centre Publications
1995

Cover design, *The Marriage of Connaître and Savoir*, by Andy Macpherson, Kitchener, Ontario.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Westhues, Kenneth
The Working Centre: Experiment in Social Change

Includes bibliographical references
ISBN 0-9680189-0-4

1. Working Centre (Kitchener, Ont.).
2. Unemployed—Services for—Ontario—Waterloo (Regional Municipality).
3. Social work with the unemployed—Ontario—Waterloo (Regional Municipality).
4. Poor—Services for—Ontario—Waterloo (Regional Municipality).
5. Social work with the poor—Ontario—Waterloo (Regional Municipality). I. Title.

HV1 10.K57W48 1995 362.5'8'0971344 C95-900951-5

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FOREWORD

By a happy coincidence I heard about the Working Centre in Saskatoon. In June 1995, at a conference at St. Thomas More College on the future of Canada with special reference to the Native peoples, Kenneth Westhues gave a talk that introduced the participants to the Working Centre at Kitchener. The talk was a short version of the first chapter of this book. I was greatly impressed by the imaginative, cooperative effort of Joe and Stephanie Mancini, aided by their friends, to provide help, encouragement and involvement to the unemployed men and women of their area. The Working Centre does more than help people find jobs: it introduces people to an alternative culture. Instead of competition, the Working Centre fosters cooperation; instead of consumerism, it promotes a simple lifestyle; instead of conformity to patterns offered by the mass media, it encourages an independent imagination about what can be done and how to live one's life.

The reason I was so moved by Ken Westhues's talk was that I had just given a talk myself in which I analysed destructive trends in contemporary society. I had painted a gloomy picture of Canada's future, but mentioned as signs of hope neighbourhood mobilization and cooperative efforts at the community level talking place in many parts of the country. Let me quote a few paragraphs of my talk, in which I summarize destructive trends.

"We are at this time located within the globalized market economy where the decisions affecting people's well-being are made by a corporate elite who have not been elected and

whose power has become greater than that of nation-states. Today governments must be obedient to the corporations, attract them with privileges, help them to get established, promise them tax breaks and bail them out when they get into trouble. This dependence on government subsidies, we note, makes the current rhetoric of the free market quite fraudulent. The global economy is not governed by the laws of the market but by the interplay of the giant corporations and the international financial institutions.

"While poverty is growing, the new, neo-liberal orthodoxy demands that countries deal with their national debt not by policies that distribute the economic sacrifices justly and evenly in society, but by cutting social and educational programs affecting the low-income sector, the poor and the vulnerable. The technical name for this is 'structural adjustment policies.' The international financial institutions impose these policies on the poorer countries of the South; and forced by capital and the new orthodoxy, the governments of the North do the same thing in their own countries.

"The economic consequences of the globalized competitive market must not make us overlook its cultural consequences, which are in a sense even more devastating. The present system cultivates ambitious personalities, individualists, for whom competition is more natural than cooperation and whose values are self-serving. The omnipresence of the market separates people from their community, weakens their sense of solidarity, undermines their traditional values and destroys their regional culture. The entire society becomes an appendix to the market. And because people have lost the sense of social solidarity, they have almost become incapable of envisaging a common political effort to create a more just society."

Toward the end of my talk I indicated very briefly where

I see signs of hope.

"No one in our day has a blueprint for an alternative Society; the socialist societies we have known have all been failures; our constructive imagination seems to be paralysed. What I admire—and where I see God's hand—is that the social movements at the base continue to be bearers of a utopian vision, the vision of a peaceful, cooperative society where all can eat and where all can be friends. My hope is that in the present culture of anti-solidarity, the efforts of these communities will not only help a growing number of people to live a life of dignity in difficult circumstances, but also promote a countercultural undercurrent in society spreading the ideals of cooperation and solidarity."

Ken Westhues's presentation of the Working Centre delighted me. I greatly admired the boldness of spirit of its founders, their love of neighbour, their willingness to make sacrifices and their nonconformist imagination. The social involvement of the Working Centre strengthens my faith in God's presence in human life. For according to the theology I have inherited and continue to explore, God is redemptively present in people's (ever faltering) efforts, transcending many obstacles, to build communities of love and justice. As we used to sing in the Holy Thursday liturgy, "Ubi caritas et amor, ibi Deus est."

Gregory Baum
McGill University

PREFACE

By now, the summer of 1995, the Working Centre has come of age. It has survived for more than a decade as an independent instrument of self-help community development, and woven itself into the fabric of Kitchener-Waterloo. It has also achieved a certain maturity, coherence and confidence in its approach to work and unemployment, and in its conception of itself. Both as a member of its board of directors and as a sociologist, I believe the time is right to acquaint the public beyond Waterloo Region with this experiment in social change, and with the hopeful alternative it represents for building a just, caring, democratic, and sustainable society.

This is the smaller of two books intended for this purpose. The larger one is an anthology of classic and recent articles about work that collectively capture the Working Centre's way of thinking about current economic problems and possible solutions. Entitled Reclaiming Work, the anthology will offer the most relevant insights and the highest priorities for personal action and public policy, that have been learned from 13 years of grass-roots engagement with the poor and unemployed.

The focus of the present, smaller book is the Working Centre itself, its methods and techniques for understanding the status quo and acting effectively to build a brighter future. The subject here is not so much what the centre hears as how it listens, not so much what it knows as how it learns: in a word, its methodology for acquiring practical knowledge that will enhance the quality of people's working lives.

Part One describes the Working Centre's approach, Con-

trasting it to the more detached approaches that predominate in university departments of sociology and related social sciences. Here I draw on my own 25 years of experience as a professor. The result is a portrait of the Working Centre "through a wide-angle lens—that is, against the background of professional, "scientific" methodologies. The Working Centre, I argue, is authentic sociology, in the classic, activist sense of the term.

Part Two, entitled "Close-Ups," brings to life my own more abstract analysis. It consists of reflections on the Working Centre's activities and purposes by the three staff members—Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini, and Arleen Macpherson—who currently form its collective leadership. Also in Part Two is Dave Conzani's perceptive appraisal of what the centre's soup kitchen means in the lives of many who take meals there.

Finally, Part Three ("Flashbacks") offers brief descriptions of earlier experiments in community-based research, education and civic action, in the words of the activist intellectuals who led them. Dorothy Day describes the Catholic Worker, Moses Coady the Antigonish Movement, Caroline Montgomery the settlement movement as a whole, and Jane Addams the single most influential settlement, Hull House.

In combination, the three parts of the book provide a contextualized depiction of what the Working Centre is, and of how it produces knowledge and action in an effort to improve somehow the city and community to which it belongs. This depiction is offered for the critical reflection not just of students in sociology, social work, and similar fields, but of all citizens on the lookout for sound and effective methods of addressing at the local level the problems of work and unemployment in our increasingly global economy.

I wrote the initial draft of the paper that forms Part One for the conference on "Community, Modernity, and Religion:

Eurocentric/Aboriginal Dialogue," held at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, in June of 1995. I am grateful to the conference organizers (John Thompson, Wilfrid Denis. Ron Griffin, and Dolores Poelzer) for inviting my contribution, and to all the participants for their encouraging feedback. J. R. Kelly of Fordham University, Alan Auerbach and Anne Westhues of Wilfrid Lauder University also gave me much appreciated comments on an earlier draft.

This book is not just a commentary on the Working Centre, but also a product of it. Scarcely a single idea herein cannot be traced to conversations, classes, discussion groups and workshops at the storefront on Queen Street. Volunteers like Dorothy Duffy and stalwart staff like bookkeeper Darol Seigmiller helped with physical production. Andy Macpherson contributed his considerable talent for the cover design. In some sense, this book belongs to everybody in the Working Centre community. Even, so, I accept sole responsibility for the interpretations presented here, and gladly acknowledge the diversity of viewpoint that makes the centre an open, lively, dynamic organization, ever in process of transforming itself.

I owe thanks also to the administrative authorities of the University of Waterloo, for allowing us to build a serviceable bridge between the academic and public worlds, in the form of regular credit courses taught at the Working Centre.

Finally, I thank Jim Crawford, Gord Crosby, Mary Graham, and Maurita McCrystal, my colleagues on the centre's board of directors, for the monthly lessons they have given me in what community means. Our wise elder on the board, John Wintermeyer, died before this book could appear. I dedicate it to his memory.

K. W.

PART ONE

THROUGH A WIDE-ANGLE LENS

1

THE WORKING CENTRE IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Kenneth Westhues

"Sociology is highly developed," Elton Mayo wrote half a century ago, "but mainly as an exercise in the acquisition of scholarship" (1945, p. 20). The Harvard business professor recalled William James's distinction between the two words most languages have for knowledge: on the one hand *savoir, saber, wissen*, the erudition that results from reflective and abstract thinking, and on the other hand *connaître, conocer, kennen*, the awareness or intimate acquaintance that comes from direct experience. Sociologists, said Mayo, excel in erudition but lack awareness of real life: "They dwell apart from humanity in certain cities of the mind—remote, intellectual, preoccupied with highly articulate thinking. They have developed capacity for dealing with complex logic, they have not acquired any skill in handling complicated facts" (1945, p. 21).

Mayo fired his salvo from the right, on behalf of his applied, engaged, policy-oriented research into ways of reducing employee turnover and increasing industrial productivity. Fifteen years later, C. Wright Mills attacked the social-science establishment on similar grounds but from the left, lambasting both "grand theorists," whose arcane generalities are Out of touch with what is going on, and "abstracted empiri-

cists," who shrink from engagement to real life in a different way, by preoccupying themselves with statistical measurement of trivialities (1959, pp. 25-75). Mills's ideal for sociology was a marriage of *savoir* and *connaître*, a connecting of the broad sweep of history to the particularities of biography, for the sake of understanding one's personal predicament in the context of the overall rush of our species through time. Mills himself displayed this sociological imagination by illuminating class and power relations in books written for the American public (1951, 1956; see Horowitz 1983).

My purpose here is to describe a social and intellectual experiment that the critiques of practice-oriented thinkers similar to Mayo and Mills have inspired. The Working Centre is a 13- year-old, independently incorporated, nonsectarian, nonprofit organization in Kitchener, Ontario. Physically, it is a three-storey storefront building in the heart of Kitchener's downtown, along with the rented gymnasium of St. John's Anglican Church a few blocks away, where the centre serves free noontime meals to about 225 people each weekday. Organizationally, the Working Centre consists of seven salaried staff, an eight-member board of directors, about a thousand people who regularly take part in activities at the two locations, and the six thousand recipients of the centre's quarterly newsletter, *Good Work News*. Charitable donations from the latter provide about half of the centre's operating costs, currently $400,000 per year. The centre has no capital assets except the mortgaged storefront, furniture and fixtures.

In describing the Working Centre and my own activities there, my intention is not to contribute yet another study based on participant observation to the already voluminous literature on organizations and associations. To read the present account as such a contribution would miss the point, as

if sociology at its core were a body of knowledge set down in academic journals and books, to which members of the profession add the results of their latest researches for the sake of developing the science. This is the narrow, detached, scholastic, art-for-art's-sake conception that I argue against.

Sociology is more than knowledge. It is the interplay between disciplined, empirical social thought, and social action. I am not aiming here to make a conventional "contribution to the sociological literature," but to report on how sociology is actually being done in a particular context, against the background of the dominant methodologies founded on disembodied intellect. The Working Centre does not figure here as the object of detached analysis, but as one expression of the interplay that defines sociology itself. The organization is at once a way of acting and a way of knowing. I invite you, the reader to approach this analysis in the same holistic way: not only gaining knowledge about this social experiment but also responding to it personally and critically, from the point of view of your own experiments in social action and change.

The Resilience of Scholastic Sociology

Sociology in North America was created out of intimate, democratic engagement in practical affairs. The early practitioners were not, in the main, professors sequestered in academia but public men and public women, activist intellectuals whose books were intended to reshape for the better the theaters of conflict and politics out of which they were written. Social reformer and sociologist were at that time almost synonyms, as examples like Lester Frank Ward, Albion Small, Jane Addams, Franklin Giddings, and George Herbert

Mead attest. William Buxton and Stephen Turner capture succinctly the difference between what sociology means now and what these founders of the profession understood it to be: "for us, 'sociology' is a body of knowledge that, incidentally, is taught; for them, it was a public teaching that, incidentally, was a body of knowledge" (1992, p. 373).

The transition from mixing *connaître* and *savoir* to *savoir* alone, from applied theory and activist empiricism to grand theory and abstracted empiricism, was underway even as the twentieth century began, as part of the institutionalization of sociology in universities.[1] Little by little, sociologists retreated from the fray of history-making into the safety and security of apolitical professorships. The status of heroic founder was withdrawn from public intellectuals like William James and Jane Addams, and transferred to academicians like Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, who could more easily be remembered only for their books. An ever higher and thicker wall arose, separating the professors and their students from engagement in democratic action, and even from the newer

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[1] Inge Bell (1985, p.55) correctly identifies the cultivation of *savoir* to the neglect of *connaître* as a kind of hallmark of university culture: "The academic version of 'knowledge' involves a strict separation between pure, disembodied intellect on the one hand, and the emotional/experiential life of the scholar on the other. These are two very different kinds of 'knowing." Her book is a laudable effort to help students overcome this separation. Parker Palmer, while recognizing the fact that the *connaître* kind of knowledge is parochial and biased, cautions that "when we deal with that fact by ignoring autobiography, we create educated monsters who know much about the world's external workings but little about their inner selves" (1990, p. 13). I thank Glenn Goodwin, Pitzer College, and John Thompson, St. Thomas More College, for acquainting me with, respectively, Bell's and Palmer's work.

profession of social work, which was explicitly concerned with easing the lot of the poor.

Sociology has been a tragic example of what Russell Jacoby (1987) has called the academization of the intellectual life. Carrying on open dialogue with fellow citizens for the sake of reforming and improving society came indeed to be frowned upon, except as an after-hours activity outside one's professional rote. The new, increasingly routinized measures of career success were frequency of publication in peer-reviewed journals and university presses, laudatory citation by other professors in these media, acquisition of peer-reviewed research grants, election to office in learned societies, and similar indicators of status within what Mayo called cities of the mind. Commenting on my own pack of scholarly reprints when I came up for tenure at the University of Western Ontario in 1974, an anonymous external assessor wrote: "If Westhues continues this rate of productivity, he may well end up in one of the top ten departments in North America"—as if such an end would be the crowning glory.

Scholastic sociology, purged of social concern and point of view, has reached in our time an awesome degree of resilience.[2] Volumes of piercing critique have been hurled at it, not only by Mayo and Mills but also by Thorstein Veblen (1918, 1919), Robert Lynd (1939), Pitirim Sorokin

[2] By *scholastic sociology* I mean not just the kind that is for practical purposes limited to the college or university campus, but also the kind that resembles medieval scholasticism in its preoccupation with formalities of method. John Ralston Saul (1995) describes scholasticism as a way of conducting the intellectual life in which "Ideas cannot be addressed until you address everything that everybody else has said. All the available time and intellect is used up on intellectual procedure and interpretation."

(1956), Stein and Vidich (1963), Alvin Gouldner (1970), Jack Douglas (1970), Ernest Becker (1971), Alfred McClung Lee (1973), Peter Berger (1992), Irving Louis Horowitz (1994), and many others. Their effect has been slight. The profession is like the Castillo de San Marcos, a fort the Spanish built in St. Augustine, Florida, in the late 1600s. Its walls, three metres thick, were of the soft local limestone called coquina, composed of decayed seashells, which simply absorbed the cannonballs shot by attacking forces. Hostile missiles harmlessly disappeared into the walls, lodging themselves permanently in the very structure they were intended to destroy. In a similar way, critiques of scholastic sociology have been incorporated into the scholastic literature, and rendered innocuous by inclusion in the material students memorize for the sake of passing tests and earning academic credits.[3] The

[3] The clearest example I know is from my own experience. In 1972, I published an article urging a more critical, policy-oriented approach to the teaching of social problems, a standard component of the undergraduate curriculum. At the start I deplored the common practice of turning this course into a review of competing theoretical approaches to the subject matter, instead of grappling with the subject matter itself, and I cited Rubington and Weinberg's 1971 textbook in illustration of the practice I deplored. The aim of my article, I wrote, was 'not to be included ultimately in some reader on social problems but to urge the practitioners of this field in a different direction from what is customary (1972, p. 420). As things turned out, Rubington and Weinberg edited out the initial paragraphs of my article and reprinted the rest in subsequent editions of their textbook (1977, 1988, 1994), literally incorporating my attack into the course structure it was aimed against. I could have refused permission to reprint, but that would have been peevish. Better to take their request as a kind of compliment, and as a chance to cultivate a sense of irony.

hegemony of grand theorists and abstracted empiricists has strengthened over time, as the books of Nikias Luhmann and current issues of the major journals attest.

My personal location in the history of sociology reflects Jacoby's general characterization. "The full weight of academization," he writes, "hit the generation born after 1940; they grew up in a world where nonuniversity intellectuals hardly existed. As earlier generations of intellectuals seldom considered university careers, so the obverse became true: this new generation barely considered an intellectual life outside the university" (1987, p. 17). In fact I did consider it. I did not arrive in graduate school in 1966, with a distinction at all clear between *social reformer* and *sociologist*. My conception of the field at that time was drawn in great part from a little volume entitled *Twentieth Century Sociologists*, in the series of Monarch Notes and Study Guides (Christodoulou, 1965). That book was divided into two parts, the first profiling eminent thinkers who engaged the public in action-oriented dialogue (Mills, David Riesman, and Max Lerner), the second part devoted to those writing mainly for other professors (Lundberg, Merton, Parsons, and so on). Sociologists of the first kind were the ones I most admired and wished to emulate.

Like other aspirant intellectuals however, I found almost no opportunities to earn a livelihood outside academia. While in graduate school, I published a trade book and some articles in magazines, but the prospects of making a living as a writer of serious social analysis were bleak. My sister sent me a cartoon that showed a bank teller addressing an author at her wicket. "Oh yes, your royalty cheque," the caption read, "do you want it in nickels or dimes?"

In accepting a faculty appointment at Fordham in 1969,

I entered into the scholastic economy, wherein scholarly publications and research grants are the currency with which to purchase salary increases, tenure, promotion, and mobility to institutions higher in the pecking order. This economy was tempered at Fordham by Catholic traditions that left room for values in social science and encouraged dialogue with non-academic publics through magazines like *America* and *Commonweal*. When I migrated to Canada in 1970, professorships in the then expanding universities were by far the most attractive jobs open to holders of a sociology Ph.D. In the secular settings of Guelph, then Western Ontario, and finally Waterloo in 1975, 1 encountered the scholastic economy in purer form, and played the academic game to win. Like many ambitious youth, I felt a need to prove that I could make it in the system at hand, regardless of what meaning the system might or might not have in the larger scheme of things. That my heart was not altogether in it is obvious from even a cursory reading of the journal articles I published during this period.

By 1978, as I completed a three-year term as chair at Waterloo and looked ahead to my first sabbatical, the cleft between the engaged intellectual I wanted to be and the academic professional I was turning out to be had become too wide and deep to tolerate. I decided it was time, as we say now, to get a life. Declining a further term as chair, I fled for two years to New York, which for all its grime and crime remains the closest thing to an intellectual mecca in America. There I came out of the closet, so to speak, openly broke with scholastic sociology, read Ivan Illich, E. F. Schumacher, Albert Schweitzer, Christopher Lasch, Martin Buber, Joseph Weizenbaum, Ashley Montagu, and others outside the boundaries of professional sociology, and reflected in light of these authors about my own upbringing on a Missouri

farm, desperately trying to connect *connaître* and *savoir* within myself. I committed myself to trying to fulfill the promise of our discipline as Mills and his pragmatist progenitors understood it, but from an academic base, this being the most propitious context available to me, as to most other would-be intellectuals in the real world at hand.

Toward a Practice of Humanist Sociology

Three priorities emerged from that turning point of 1978, three ways of trying to practice a humanist, as opposed to a scholastic, sociology in my own work and life. Initially, these were all on-campus activities, in the sense of being carried out within the conventional scholastic boundaries. Truth to tell, having concentrated for nine years on upward professional mobility, moving from city to city in the process, I had few ties outside the academic world. Relatives and in-laws scattered across North America were almost my only personal connection to life beyond universities. Not until 1988 did I become associated with the Working Centre, which since that time has facilitated and strengthened the priorities that I began to serve a decade earlier.

First, it dawned on me in New York that undergraduate students need not be treated as neophyte professionals, as empty vessels to be filled with sociological erudition, that few of these students become sociologists anyway, and that they therefore constitute a kind of public with which a professor can engage in truly public dialogue. Most of them are young, impressionable, lacking life experience, as yet personally unacquainted with wedding rings, diapers, mortgages and payrolls. On the other hand, they have touched and been touched by the varied dimensions of real life in their com-

munities and families of origin. Most have held summer and part-time jobs. Many, living- on their own, have budgeted for clothes, rent and groceries. Why not quit treating my undergraduate courses as a diversion from the core of my career (see Rau and Baker, 1989) and start addressing my students as citizens, start telling them who I am and inviting them to tell me who they are? The place to begin connecting *connaître* and *savoir*, I reasoned, is the classroom.

I did not write *First Sociology* (1982) as an introductory text. I disguised it that way, and let McGraw-Hill disguise it further, so that citizens in the guise of students might be induced to read it. In substance, the book was my characterization of the historical context of our time, interwoven with personal anecdotes intended to elicit readers' own personal reflections on what I wrote.

The book sold well and got positive reviews. Some students to whom the book had been assigned wrote me gratifying letters, obviously having taken my work seriously and pitted their *connaître* against the book's *savoir*. On the other hand, I got the impression that in the standard format of large introductory courses, the textbook disguise was working so well that the underlying substance was escaping the majority even of my own students. In terms of the earlier analogy, the painstakingly crafted cannonball I had lobbed at the structure of scholastic sociology seemed to have disappeared with minimal effect into the rampart of intro texts.[4] An editor was on the phone to me not six months after the book came out, urging a new edition. He said it was the only way to kill the used book market. I could not bring myself to oblige him, and still cannot. My goal of restructuring undergraduate courses so as to engage students as citizens has found expression more recently in other kinds of pedagogical innovation,

especially at the Working Centre, as later pages describe.

A second way I sought to practice a humanist sociology was by writing papers that set forth the theoretical and methodological foundation of an activist approach to scholarship, trying thereby to ground my own thinking in the humanist tradition (Westhues 1983, 1984a, 1984b, 1985). This was partly just to get my own intellectual bearings, but also because I became increasingly mindful that no intellectual, however hardworking, can accomplish much except through embeddedness in a network of likeminded colleagues and in a tradition extending across the generations. The most tangible outcome of this conviction was a conference I organized in Kitchener-Waterloo in 1986, entitled "Basic Principles for Social Science in Our Time." The sponsoring committee consisted of eleven humanistically inclined social scientists from the three Waterloo universities (St. Jerome's, Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier). The featured speakers were a dozen prominent proponents of engaged scholarship from nine distinct disciplines: Christopher Lasch from history, Kenneth Gergen from psychology, Yi-Fu Tuan from geography, David Gil from social work, and so on. The 150 invited participants

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[4] The disappearance occurred in more ways than one. An altogether false rumour arose among friendly colleagues who grasped the intent and meaning of the book that, as Rau and Baker reported in Teaching Sociology, "McGraw-Hill withdrew First Sociology from the market after one year. Westhues wanted to make students sociologically as well as culturally literate. McGraw-Hill wanted to make a buck. Both fell victim to academe's organized contradictions" (1989, p. 171). Perhaps that is what should have happened, but in fact the book was still in print and being used as a textbook thirteen years after its publication and four years after publication of my argument against using textbooks (Westhues 1991).

were intellectuals young and old whose work displayed the same unashamed commitment to public values with which I wanted to imbue my own work.

Like the McGraw-Hill book, the conference was only a qualified success. The network of would-be public intellectuals was strengthened, and the volume of conference proceedings (Westhues 1987) indeed laid out the foundation of timely principles promised in its title. On the other hand, a half-dozen critiques published afterwards called into serious question the "Centre for Advanced Studies in Humanist Social Science" that the conference was intended to inaugurate. Jon Darling (1986) raised the spectre of an "abstracted humanism," deplored "forums for merely talking to ourselves," and urged "more attention to taking social science further into the lives of people in various societies and subsocieties—those out-of-house, so to speak." Doug Lorimer (1986) questioned the idea of the centre itself: "The phrase, Centre for Advanced Studies in,' may say it all, for the institutional form may well determine the outcome regardless of whether it practices positivist or humanist social science."

The comments by Darling, Lorimer, and others sapped my enthusiasm for continuing to work toward the planned centre. Administrative support for the project in the local universities was guarded, and as cynics could have predicted, directed more toward the "Centre for Advanced Studies" than toward the "Humanist Social Science." I feared that the outcome of years of work on my part in fund-raising and organization might be yet another innocuous cannonball lodged in the thick scholastic walls of the academy. No one else undertook to fire the ball in my stead, and the project went on hold. For me, the inaugural conference had by itself demonstrated the reality and value of a kind of social science that

consists more of honest practical dialogue with publics than of arcane discourse within the social scientific professions. After editing the conference proceedings, I was less keen on demonstrating further the legitimacy of an activist sociology than in actually doing some. The following year, the Working Centre offered me an opportunity no centre for advanced studies could have matched.

My initial contact with the Working Centre grew out of the third priority I had begun to serve through the 1980s, namely assisting and often supervising those graduate students in my department who wanted their M.A. or Ph.D. theses to be not just contributions to the academic literature but works intelligible and useful to public audiences for the amelioration of our common life. My own graduate work at Vanderbilt had been subject to evaluation by the conventional and narrow scholastic standards, the priority there being on what Mills called abstracted empiricism: complex statistical analyses of quantitative data informed by positivist philosophy and publishable in learned journals. It had taken me almost a decade after finishing my Ph.D. to recover the aspirations that had brought me to sociology in the first place. One way of practicing a humanist sociology now in my professorial role, so I judged, would be to allow graduate students at Waterloo, if they chose, to commence their careers with research projects founded on the kind of principles articulated at the 1986 conference.

About a dozen such students, at least half of whom attended that conference, sought me out for this purpose during the 1980s. It was a period during which my department as a whole was moving in a more scholastic and narrowly professional direction. Securing legitimacy of these students' work and acceptance of their theses required effort on both their

part and mine, but it has borne fruit in the careers they are pursuing now, as stellar teachers of undergraduate citizens and competent, practical minded researchers on public problems.

One of these students, Norine Verberg, completed her M.A. thesis under my supervision in 1988. It was a critical evaluation entitled "The Kitchener-Waterloo Working Centre: a Verstehen Study of a Canadian Social Justice Response to Unemployment in the Eighties."[5] From that thesis, as well as from meeting the people who had founded the Working Centre, I gained so positive an impression of the organization that I accepted an invitation that fall to join its board of directors. I was encouraged by having read in Verberg's report that the aforementioned Doug Lorimer was then sitting on the same board. Involvement in such a nonacademic community setting seemed to promise me a way of doing the classic kind of sociology to which I had committed myself in 1978, and a more effective way of doing it than most of my activities in the ten intervening years, which had still been confined to the university campus. That promise has been more than satisfied.

The Working Centre's Guiding Orientation

Like the early Protestant reformers rebelling against the established Church of Rome, sociologists who rebel against today's academic establishment face the hard task of deciding upon some alternative. Having abandoned the pretense of

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[5] I have drawn heavily upon Verberg's thesis for the description in the following pages of the Working Centre's first five years, before my own involvement there began.

standing outside of history, building a value-free science for its own sake, humanist scholars face the question of defining their own position in the historical process. Howard S. Becker suggested one alternative in his presidential address to the Society for the Study of Social Problems in 1966, entitled "Whose Side Are We On?" The answer he proposed was identification with subordinate groups: we should take the side of the underdog. Two years later, Alvin Gouldner published a sharp rejoinder to Becker, arguing that in seeking to speak for the disadvantaged, sociologists would play into the hands and become tools of a welfare state tightening its control over citizens' lives. Gouldner suggested service instead to a "vision of a larger 'public' whose interests and needs transcend those of its component and contending factions." His closing line was a memorable statement of his basic point: "It is to values, not to factions, that sociologists must give their most basic commitment" (1968, p. 116).

Having majored in other fields, having read neither Becker nor Gouldner, and deriving their conception of sociology from the dominant scholasticism, the founders of the Working Centre hardly saw themselves as practicing sociology in any sense of the word. Yet a commitment "to values, not to factions" has been the organization's hallmark from the start, and signals its noteworthiness in our time. In the quarter century since Gouldner wrote, service to the common or public good, even belief in the possibility of such service, has increasingly given way to factional allegiances: to the corporation against cut-throat competitors, to the profession against intruders on its turf, to unions or management, to the pro-life movement or the prochoice movement, to visible minorities or the objectively best qualified, and most chillingly, to women or to men. The Working Centre, by con-

trast, while broadly identified with the unemployed, poor, and marginalized, has so far escaped capture by churches, unions, or government ministries, and has cultivated cooperative relations on all sides, including employers and local elites. This has been no small feat. Its self-conception for thirteen years has been as a grass-roots organization seeking to develop the community as a whole.

In part, the Working Centre grew out of university student participation in what was initially conceived as a missionary effort in Tanzania by the Precious Blood Fathers, an Italian-Canadian religious order in Toronto, in the late 1970s. For many of the student volunteers who travelled to Tanzania, ostensibly to help install windmills, the trip was a lesson in the complexities of social and economic inequality, serving to deepen a commitment to social justice that would later find expression in initiatives within Canada. Two of the students later got married. Joe and Stephanie Mancini returned from a summer in Tanzania intent on continuing their social-justice work in Kitchener-Waterloo, where both lived as students. Their commitment came to be focused on unemployment, which reached a post-depression peak in the 1982 recession. The theory underlying their aspirations was drawn from the anticapitalist, communitarian social teaching of the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council, a teaching that spawned a variety of theologies emphasizing consciousness of and participation in the historical process for creating more humane structures of common life. The Mancinis' thinking was also shaped by their first-hand acquaintance with Nyerere's attempt at socialist development in Tanzania, on which Joe wrote his M.A. thesis in history at the University of Waterloo after their return.

The particular formula, if one can call it that, on which

the Mancinis and a few friends decided to base their effort at community development was the "pastoral circle," a plan of thought and action that has been touted often in statements on social affairs of the Canadian bishops (see Holland and Henriot 1980). Step One of the circle involves getting in touch with the impressions, the feelings, the lived experience of people in the target community—their connaître, in Mayo's terms. Step Two is collective social analysis of the experienced reality, making an account or explanation of it by connecting it to broader social processes—much like relating biography to history, as Mills proposed. Step Three is theological reflection on this analysis in light of Christian faith, church teaching and tradition—in less sectarian terms, a surrender to the possibility of becoming more, what Bergson called the *élan vital*. Step Four, finally, is an active response to the foregoing, some kind of planned social change for the sake of developing the community—what Marx had in mind when he wrote, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (quoted in Gil 1987). Social change, however, brings fresh experience to be reflected upon, and ideally at least, the pastoral circle spirals to a higher plane.

This conceptual frame was employed in the funding application in March of 1982, that led to the establishment of the Working Centre two months later. The Mancinis and two friends, Margaret Nally and Patrice Reitzel, applied for a start-up grant of $6000 from PLURA, a joint initiative of five major Canadian churches (Presbyterian, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic and Anglican) promoting grass-roots projects aimed at redistributing power, knowledge, and resources. That initial application summarizes the goal and orientation that has guided the Working Centre ever since:

Establishing a centre where the following can occur:

A. Encouraging employment opportunities in the community through a self-help employment centre;
B. Bring unemployed people together to
    1. Share and discuss their experiences;
    2. Learn how to analyze their experiences in a societal framework to understand how structures in society perpetuate and escalate their situation; and
    3. Propose and design action-oriented responses which bring about solutions;
C. Understanding, exploring and developing a system of support, decision-making, and participation that reflects in a creative. way, the needs of the unemployed in the Kitchener-Waterloo community.

By the language of the initial application and by the fact of its submission to an interdenominational funding source, the Working Centre separated itself even in 1982, from the do goodery of many church-sponsored social agencies. There was no preset agenda of proselytization or of serving the interests of a particular church. The knowledge for planning and implementing programs and projects would be generated from the bottom up, through collective discussion and analysis of their own experiences by the Mancinis and other staff with the unemployed.

By its initial statement, the Working Centre also separated itself from scholastic sociology and from the social engineering sometimes derived from it, as in many programs of the welfare state. Secular knowledge of how to solve another's problem, even if based on volumes of social scientific research, is also a preset agenda, serving most of all the professional or organizational interests of those "in the know." But the Mancinis did not claim to have data-based any more than faith-based truth. They rejected from the start (and over

time more pointedly) any model that would define them as expert service- providers and the unemployed as clients. Their stated objective has been to facilitate the on-site pooling of experience and analysis, in order to arrive at effective and democratic solutions.

What defines the Working Centre as sociology in the classic humanist understanding of the word is this openness to the data of human lives, in all their diversity of viewpoint and texture, along with constant effort to analyze these data dialogically in light of larger historical structures and processes, and on this basis to design and execute plans of action. Hegel would have understood the pastoral circle well. So would the founders of pragmatism in the United States. Gregory Baum, a prolific steward of humanist sociology and one of the few sociologists properly so called on whose writings the Mancinis and their co-workers have relied, was a featured speaker at the 1986 conference that was intended to inaugurate the centre for advanced studies in the Waterloo universities. Shortly afterwards he wrote of his dream that one day people might speak:

> of a Waterloo Critical Theory. Such a Waterloo Theory would differ from the Frankfurt Theory by a greater sense that tradition and community must not only be critiqued but also be revised, enhanced and promoted.

Unbeknownst to him or me, Baum's dream was even at that time being better realized at the Working Centre, in Kitchener's core area, than would ever have been possible in the suburban academic setting of the Waterloo universities.

Programs and Projects

The challenge facing any project of activist sociology (however it is called, whether pastoral circle, community education and development or grass-roots social change) is finding money to support the people who would carry the project out. The pre-

ferred source of funds has historically been heirs of wealth so secure in their inheritances or otherwise altruistic as to be willing to risk the public arousal of critical thought. The Frankfurt School, indeed Marx's own career, depended on private philanthropy. In the absence of well-heeled benefactors, the common alternative is to piggy-back on established institutions (like churches, universities, and large labour unions), accessing their resources by somehow justifying change-oriented programs in terms of the standard organizational goals of stability, growth, and legitimacy. This is what the Working Centre did, in securing initial funding from the mainline churches.

Churches, however, are relatively poor. The Working Centre was able to survive beyond infancy only by successfully plugging into the ample resources of the welfare state. In the face of massive unemployment in the 1982 recession, the federal government established the Industrial Labour Adjustment Program (ILAP). Its purpose was to provide temporary jobs to unemployed workers who had exhausted their employment insurance (UI) benefits, enabling them to subsist, requalify for UI, and hunt for permanent jobs. The Mancinis responded to ILAP with a successful proposal to set up three 'unemployed workers centres" in Kitchener-Waterloo.[6] Grants of $278,000 for the period January 1983 to August 1984 allowed 54 unemployed workers to be hired in what were essentially self-help, mutual-aid activities: exchange of information, sharing of job-search skills, employment counseling, craft, fitness, and other recreational programs. Nine unemployed auto workers designed, carried out, and published a study on the experience of unemployment. Others produced a newsletter entitled

[6] For a description of similar centres operating at this time in London, Ontario, and for an excellent ethnography on the experience of unemployment, see Burman 1988.

Joe and Stephanie Mancini, both graduates of St. Jerome's College, University of Waterloo, were at the core of the group of social-justice activists who founded the Working Centre in the winter of 1982-83. In 1986, St. Jerome's College named them co-recipients of the Father Norm Choate, C. R., Distinguished Graduate Award. This photograph was taken for that occasion.

Through the Eyes of the Unemployed. Still others formed a short-lived union of unemployed workers.

What brought the Working Centre into existence as an organizational entity was another federal governmental subsidy in January 1983, a one-year grant of $50,000 from the Canadian Community Development Project. This allowed for the establishment of a research and resource centre in a storefront on Queen Street, near the city-centre. Both there and in the three Unemployed Workers Centres, the Mancinis worked dialogically and nonhierarchically with an ever-expanding network of friends who were attracted to the logic of the pastoral circle and the cause of empowering the poor.

By adapting to the requirements of successive governmental programs targeted on unemployment and by keeping their own lifestyle to a subsistence level, the Mancinis were able to keep the Working Centre open, with a paid staff of three to six employment counsellors, until 1986. In that year the centre successfully piggy-backed on the Ontario Federation of Labour, gaining recognition and money from the Ontario government as one of about 15 "unemployment help centres" across the province, one of three not directly controlled by organized labour. This core funding has continued to the present (currently at $80,000 per year), providing a relatively secure financial base for the Working Centre's most basic activity: providing a well-equipped but informal and unthreatening environment where unemployed people can meet one another, share experiences, use telephones, pick up messages, prepare resumés, read news and analyses of the local and Canadian economy, and give each other emotional support during the personal trauma unemployment constitutes.

While maintaining mutually supportive ties with other

grass-roots community organizations (Global Community Centre, Waterloo Public Interest Research Group, Mothers and Others Making Change, and organizations concerned with refugee settlement, adult literacy, and environmental preservation), the Working Centre has directly spawned two organizations as means of furthering its goals. One is the drop-in centre and soup kitchen open five days a week at St. John's Anglican Church. This was organized initially by a member of the Working Centre team in 1985, sponsored in the first instance by a coalition of downtown churches, and gradually incorporated into the Working Centre itself. Since 1989, the centre's leadership has formally consisted of Joe Mancini as director, Stephanie Mancini as coordinator of the help centre, and Arleen Macpherson as coordinator of the soup kitchen. The kitchen reflects the same values as the help centre, offering not only food but an easy-going, accepting atmosphere conducive of conversation and mutual support. No questions are asked of those who come for meals. No payment is expected. Food is prepared and served collectively by Maepherson, her assistant, an assortment of volunteers, and patrons themselves. A first-time visitor to St. John's Kitchen would have trouble distinguishing the paid staff from the patrons—one sign that the Working Centre's goals are being met.

The second spin-off organization was a separate legal entity that operated under Joe Mancinis management from November 1988 to May 1991 as Tri-Tech Recycling. The project had been conceived five years earlier, as the first of an intended series of community economic development projects. The idea was to create small, worker-controlled enterprises that would produce marketable goods and services (that is, be profitable), while at the same time creating jobs

and serving publicly useful goals. Buying, sorting, baling and reselling waste materials, mainly paper and cardboard otherwise destined for the local landfill, seemed an ideal initial venture: it would create jobs requiring little training while contributing to a more sustainable society. These objectives were fulfilled: Tri-Tech averaged ten people on its payroll, and diverted from the landfill some 5000 tons of recyclable materials, instead selling them for $1.2 million. By the spring of 1991, however, market forces had caught up with the little company. Undercapitalized from the start and intent on creating jobs, it had failed to invest in the most advanced, labour-saving technology. More capital-intensive corporations and municipal governments entered the market as stiff competitors. Then, in April 1991, came the recession-induced collapse of the market for waste paper and corrugated cardboard. Tri-Tech found itself unable to sell twelve tractortrailer loads of inventory, and unable to meet its payroll. There was nothing to do but admit insolvency and bid the workers good-bye.

Any business failure is painful, but Tri-Tech's failure was traumatic for the Working Centre leadership. For five years before it opened, Tri-Tech had been envisioned as the centre's primary way of completing the pastoral circle, the culmination of its effort to put critical thought into action, a worthy implementation of the theory of community economic development. Social-justice-minded investors had provided interest-free loans. Trying to get the company on its feet had been for two years Joe Mancini's unpaid full-time job, on top of his work at the storefront. But in the end, Tri-Tech's undeniable social and economic achievements meant nothing in the face of red ink on the bottom line. With brutal but at the same time refreshing candor, banks

TRI-TECH RECYCLING

March 1990 Economic Justice Newsletter

NOW YOU CAN RECYCLE OFFICE PAPER!

If your office generates paper and:

- Has about fifty employees
- Has first floor door dock access
- Can store paper in burlap bags
- Can sort Colour Ledger and Computer Print Out

Then Tri-Tech Recycling can help you set up a no-cost Office Paper Recycling Program with a scheduled weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly pick-up service.

Even for smaller offices our Office Paper Recycling Program can encourage recycling with very little cost.

We charge a $20 pick-up fee, and in return we will pay you:

- $.03 per pound for Colour Ledger paper
- $.05 per pound for CPO (Computer Print Out)

The more paper you save, the less your pick-up fee. If you collected 350 pounds of Colour Ledger paper ($10.50) and 200 pounds of CPO ($10.00), then Tri-Tech Recycling would owe you $1.50 once the pick-up fee is deducted.

Tri-Tech Recycling will also sell or rent plastic caddy carts, blue boxes, fibre drums, and burlap bags to help you start up your program.

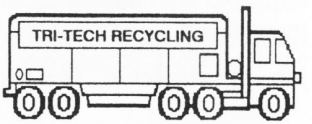
CALL FOR YOUR ON-SITE CONSULTATION - **747-2226**. See the attached Paper Sorting Guide. □

Tri-Tech Recycling is a community economic development project established by The Working Centre. We presently employ 13 full and part-time staff.

In its first year, Tri-Tech Recycling has provided comprehensive recycling services to industry and households. In the first twelve months of operation, we recycled 3,680,000 pounds of material.

In January and February of this year, Tri-Tech Recycling has already recycled 1,360,000 pounds of material. □

RECYCLING
TRI-TECH
RECYCLING



Reprinted from ECONOMIC JUSTICE NEWSLETTER (Mar/90)

and other creditors descended at the end on the remains of Tri-Tech to carry off what chattels they could and devour the outstanding receivables.

Tri-Tech's failure was a stern reminder of the singularity of profit as the guiding principle of the established system of mature, transnational capitalism. Community economic development is premised on meeting capitalism half way, tempering the profit motive with concern for workers' rights and substantive improvement of the commonweal. The Tri-Tech experiment showed that tempered commitment to profit is not enough, that the system discourages pursuit of multiple goals. In the long run, survival and success belong to firms with a single- minded fixation on the bottom line.

This hard fact was brought home to the Working Centre, in the recessionary period of Tri-Tech's demise, by a further, broader development. One by one, a series of large local manufacturers closed up shop, transferring operations to other jurisdictions where labour is cheaper, capital freer, and profits higher (see Ziedenberg 1995). The closure of the local Uniroyal Goodrich Tire Plant by itself threw a thousand people out of work, and toppled the pillar tire-making had been for the Kitchener economy throughout the twentieth century. Two of Waterloo's oldest firms, Seagram's Distillery and Labatt's Brewery, demolished their buildings and moved production elsewhere. The number of workers represented by the Waterloo Region District Labour Council declined from 24,000 in 1988 to 17,000 in 1994 (Ziedenberg 1995). The conclusion was inescapable: that capitalism had reached some higher threshold where truly nothing is sacred, where no community holds are barred, and where no loyalties are allowed to inhibit efforts to maximize eco-

nomic return.

Sadder but wiser for the Tri-Tech experience, the Working Centre responded pragmatically to the harsh new economic realities. Its budget grew to a peak of $680,000 in fiscal 1992, mainly as a result of contracts received to counsel workers affected by the plant closings and help them begin searching for new jobs. The budget surplus from that year, along with a decline of 50 percent or more in the value of core-area real estate, enabled the centre to purchase the storefront building in 1995. From 1992 onwards, however, the centre sought to reduce its dependency on governmental contracts and grants, and instead try to win financial support directly from citizens in the local community. This was in part out of necessity, as some grants became harder to secure. Queen's Park lost interest in subsidizing soup kitchens, for example, so that the grant to St. John's was gradually reduced from $73,000 in 1989 to $29,000 in 1994. But the Working Centre leadership also grew weary of applying for and administering highly bureaucratic, service- oriented job-search and retraining programs when so few good jobs are available. The programs seem, in actual effect, to raise false hopes in the short run and to induce despair in the longer run. Fortunately, the local citizenry has reacted with favour to the Working Centre's shift in direction. Individual donations and fund-raising events currently pay for about 50 percent of the centre's operating costs.[7]

Since 1992, the centre has sought to redefine its path around the pastoral circle in less formal, less bureaucratic ways, even apart from the mainstream economy. What began as the "help centre" continues to offer assistance in preparing resumés and searching for conventional jobs, and the storefront is open as before for mutual sharing of experience

and giving of support. Increasingly, however, unemployment is understood as loss of opportunity to produce. Hence the emphasis increasingly is on learning how to lessen the dependence of unemployed people on the money economy: on growing food in individual and community gardens, on preserving homegrown food for winter consumption, on establishing community kitchens where families take turns preparing meals, on bicycling instead of driving a car, on sewing at home so that fewer clothes must be bought, on exchanging services in informal systems of barter, and on otherwise lessening peoples need to spend money. Against the ethic of mass consumerism, the Working Centre pits the ethic of "producerism," drawn from thinkers like Schumacher, Illich, and Lasch. It means acquiring skills and seizing opportunities to produce many necessities and luxuries of life on one's own or in small groups. Unemployment from this perspective need not mean deprivation, the loss

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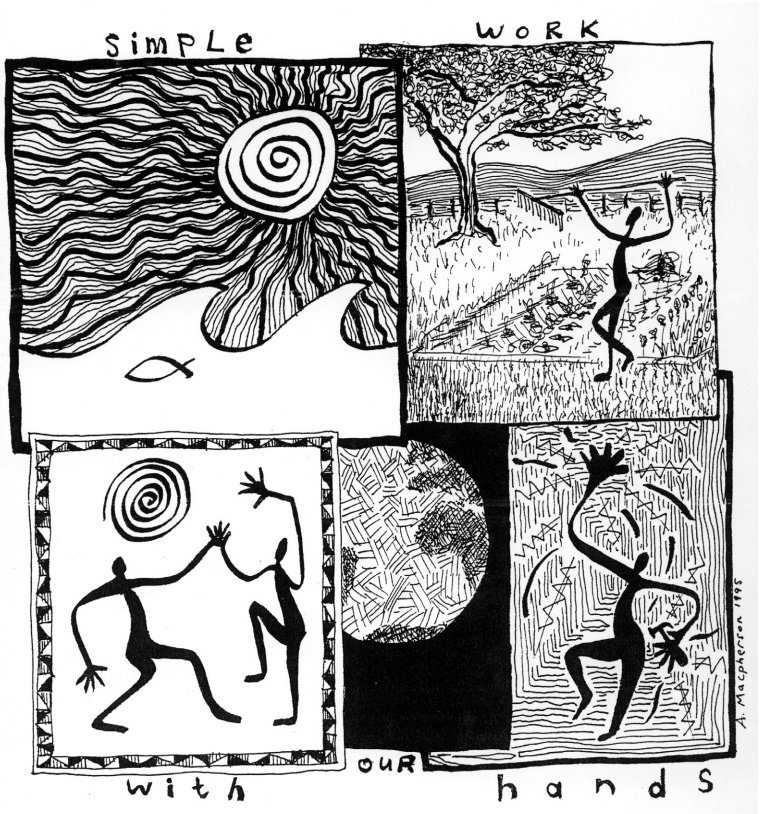
[7] The centre's chief annual fund-raiser, what is called the "Mayor's Dinner," dovetails nicely with its substantive goal of cultivating a sense of community. The centre chooses each year one citizen who has served the community in some noteworthy way, and sells tickets to a celebration of this person's contributions, held under the sponsorship of Kitchener's mayor. The event includes an auction of donated items, especially work by prominent local artists and artisans. Honorees have ranged from wealthy but civic-minded businessmen to a citizenship judge active in resettling refugees and a nun who established innovative social programs with and for the elderly. In 1993, shortly before his death, the honoree at the Mayor's Dinner was John Wintermeyer, a local lawyer and former leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, who became active in the social-justice movement following his retirement from politics and served as a moral and intellectual anchor on the centre's board of directors.


simple
work
with
our
hands
A. Macpherson 1995

of the good life, but a chance to redefine the good life in a more genuine, joyful and sustainable way, more in terms of *producing* power than of *purchasing* power.

The Working Centre has applied the ethic of producerism not only to questions of food, clothing, transportation, and other requirements of physical subsistence, but also to questions of culture. The good life is understood to be less a matter of acquiring useful or entertaining ideas from the commercial or state media (TV, radio, museums, and so on), than of producing one's own ideas in personal, reciprocal, dialogic relationships with other people. Accordingly, the Working Centre enlarged its quarterly newsletter to an eight- page tabloid beginning in June 1994, allowing publication of signed contributions from diverse members of the Working Centre community. Shirley Rennie's (1994) account of her first efforts in a community garden, Dave Conzani's (1994) perceptions of St. John's Kitchen from a patron's point of view, and a profile of a carpenter involved in the Kitchener-Waterloo Local Employment Trading System (Rinehart and Mancini 1994) have been highlights of recent issues, connecting the *connaître* of this community to the *savoir* of articles reprinted from the work of well-known producerist thinkers ranging from Peter Maurin to Robert Bateman, Wendell Berry to Brewster Kneen.

The single project that has reflected most vividly the application of producerist ideas to the cultural realm was an exhibition of art on work and unemployment mounted at the Working Centre in February 1993. Two dozen mostly unemployed workers associated with the centre expressed their images of work in the southern Ontario economy. Their media ranged from photography and sculpture to paintings in watercolour and oil. Evaluating the extent to which such a

project meets its goals, or even specifying what goals it has, is hard. “We try not to do that,” Joe Mancini once told a class of mine. But if success be measured by the poorly concealed pride of the artists on opening day, the appreciation of hundreds of viewers both at the centre and after the exhibition elsewhere, by the social bonds nourished between artists and viewers, or even by the scenes from the show still lodged like cameos in my own mind, the event must surely be rated high.

Bridges from Scholastic to Public Sociology

My involvement in the Working Centre has been as one who had no part in its founding and barely knew it existed during its first five years. My supervision of Norinc Vcrberg’s thesis from 1986 to 1988 acquainted me with the centre and the centre with me. The centre’s staff and I learned of each other also through mutual friends at St. Jerome’s College on the UW campus, where I was at that time teaching a course in Catholic social thought that included several authors (Illich, Schumacher, Baum, Canadian -Bishop Remi de Roo) who were read at the Working Centre. Against this background, I was invited to join the Working Centre’s board in the summer of 1988. I wrote back that I was not sure what contribution I could make but that I would try it for a year. At minimum, involvement with the centre promised an opportunity to escape what seemed to me, in the wake of the 1986 conference, a kind of scholastic quarantine and to root my own practice of sociology in my home community.

In the years since then, the monthly board meetings have themselves been an experience of community sociol-

ogy. I do not doubt that part of what lay behind my invitation to join the board was the Working Centre's need for legitimacy, and the modest contribution anybody called *Prof.* or *Dr.* might make toward that end. But by the time I joined, a kind of "board culture" was already in place, according to which no one spoke on the basis of credentials or as a spokesperson for some body of expertise, profession, or constituency. The board did not come across as in any sense a coalition of representatives of interest groups, but simply as a group of citizens concerned for developing the community in such a way that nobody is left out. This was a new and refreshing experience for me, since most of my previous memberships on policy-making bodies had been as a voice *on behalf of* the profession of sociology, my department, faculty or university. Here I felt able and obliged to speak more in my own voice, from somewhere deeper inside myself, but on behalf of the public, collective good. That was indeed what I saw already happening: board members conversing as independent homespun intellectuals from varied walks of life, joined by engagement to the commonweal. As of 1995, we range in occupation from travel agent to owner of a car dealership, from union official to secretary, from a self-employed former restauranteur now in the business of selling scales to a politician, elected to the 1993 federal Parliament. Sitting at meetings with the board, the centre's three-person leadership, its bookkeeper, sometimes its accountant, and often the Mancinis' youngest child, I have felt part of the Kitchener-Waterloo community in microcosm, at least to the extent that is possible in a group of this size.

The sense of community undoubtedly derives in great part from the value on human equality entrenched in the

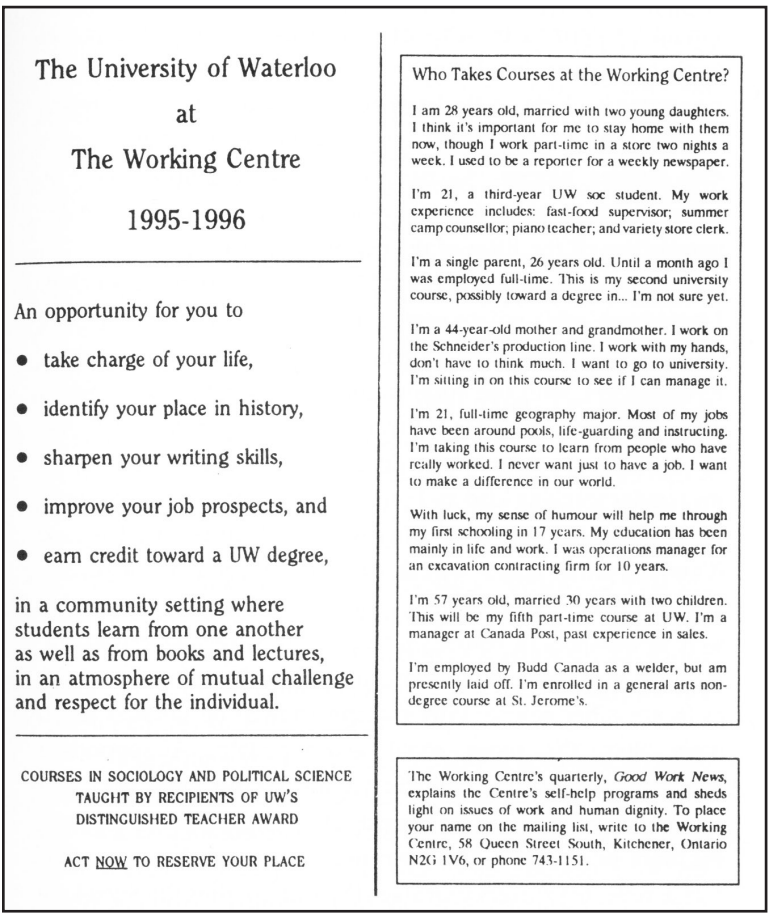
Working Centre's programs and extending to staff-board relations. I have not yet witnessed a single tug-of-war between the board, despite the ultimate legal power it holds, and the centre's leadership. There has not in my tenure even been an effort to give precise definition to board versus staff domains of responsibility—a common bone of contention between boards and executives jockeying for power (see Carver 1990). The meeting agenda typically proceeds from reports on the Help Centre and St. John's Kitchen to an update on the budget and consideration of any matters requiring action or decision. Disagreements are not unusual, but attempts to "pull rank" on some basis or other are rare. An aversion to one-upmanship and respect for reciprocity are apparent even in small matters, such as who gets coffee for whom or where people sit. It helps that all board members also take part as volunteers in other activities at the centre. The relative unconcern with hierarchy permits meetings to remain focussed on the issues to be addressed and the organizational problems to be solved.

My first assignment as a board member confronted me with the basic challenge facing any activist sociology: how to design and implement social practices that improve on the existing ones. By the fall of 1988, the Working Centre had twelve people on its payroll but no satisfactory policy for deciding salary differences among them. A five-member staff-board committee, with me as chair, was therefore struck to devise such a policy. It was a hard task. Funds were insufficient to pay people the "going rate" or their "market worth"—what employment counsellors, community workers, agency directors and managers were being paid in public-service bureaucracies. Besides, in successive statements of goals and objectives as well as in its newsletter and other

literature, the centre had rejected the mainstream economy as the measure of its own policies. But what was the alternative? Nobody favoured paying all twelve people at the same rate. That would be utopian and unworkable, too radical a departure from the culture at hand. On the other hand, an attempt the previous year to decide salary differentials by a procedure from organizational psychology, whereby jobs are assigned numerical scores according to their functional importance, had satisfied no one and fostered invidious comparisons.

I felt awkward in the role of committee chair not just because my own salary as a professor is higher than any at the Working Centre but also because the university's salary policy is founded on market principles and collective bargaining. My role therefore was to affirm, facilitate, and give practical expression to the dynamic of this categorically different organization as understood by those who had created it and now depended on it for their livelihoods. The outcome was a policy accepted by the board in February 1989, with the following provisions:

1. In keeping with the centre's value on alliance and identification with the unemployed and the poor, the salary of the highest-paid position (the director) is set annually at the level of the average industrial wage in Canada, or as close to it as funds permit.
2. In keeping with the centre's value on reducing hierarchy, the salary pyramid is relatively flat, its five levels starting at 86, 80, 74, 68, and 66 percent of the director's salary.
3. Within each of the five levels there are seven steps, defined in increments of two percent of the director's salary; each staff member advances one step each year, to a maximum of 98, 92, 86, 80, and 74 percent of the



The University of Waterloo
at
The Working Centre
1995-1996

An opportunity for you to

- take charge of your life,
- identify your place in history,
- sharpen your writing skills,
- improve your job prospects, and
- earn credit toward a UW degree,

in a community setting where students learn from one another as well as from books and lectures, in an atmosphere of mutual challenge and respect for the individual.

COURSES IN SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
TAUGHT BY RECIPIENTS OF UW'S
DISTINGUISHED TEACHER AWARD

ACT NOW TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE

Who Takes Courses at the Working Centre?

I am 28 years old, married with two young daughters. I think it's important for me to stay home with them now, though I work part-time in a store two nights a week. I used to be a reporter for a weekly newspaper.

I'm 21, a third-year UW soc student. My work experience includes: fast-food supervisor; summer camp counsellor; piano teacher; and variety store clerk.

I'm a single parent, 26 years old. Until a month ago I was employed full-time. This is my second university course, possibly toward a degree in... I'm not sure yet.

I'm a 44-year-old mother and grandmother. I work on the Schneider's production line. I work with my hands, don't have to think much. I want to go to university. I'm sitting in on this course to see if I can manage it.

I'm 21, full-time geography major. Most of my jobs have been around pools, life-guarding and instructing. I'm taking this course to learn from people who have really worked. I never want just to have a job. I want to make a difference in our world.

With luck, my sense of humour will help me through my first schooling in 17 years. My education has been mainly in life and work. I was operations manager for an excavation contracting firm for 10 years.

I'm 57 years old, married 30 years with two children. This will be my fifth part-time course at UW. I'm a manager at Canada Post, past experience in sales.

I'm employed by Budd Canada as a welder, but am presently laid off. I'm enrolled in a general arts non-degree course at St. Jerome's.

The Working Centre's quarterly, *Good Work News*, explains the Centre's self-help programs and sheds light on issues of work and human dignity. To place your name on the mailing list, write to the Working Centre, 58 Queen Street South, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 1V6, or phone 743-1151.

Two panels from the brochure announcing university courses at the Working Centre. The program commenced in 1991. By 1995-96, more than 200 students had taken part, 90 percent on a credit basis.

director's salary, respectively, in the five levels of the pyramid.

4. Staff members make periodic reciprocal evaluations of each other's work, but advancement through the steps of the salary scale is independent of these evaluations.
5. Compensation for overtime is in the form of time off, not additional earnings.

The 1989 salary policy is hardly the last word, but because it was developed dialogically in coherent relation to the goals and character of this particular social-change organization, it has endured with minor modifications for six years. For 1995- 96, the director's salary was set at $30,118 per annum, and the salary pyramid had become even flatter than originally planned, no current positions being pegged in Levels 4 or 5. The salary structure is an explicit practical reflection of the Working Centre's rejection of consumerism and its commitment to egalitarian values. It has proven to be an effective instrument for putting into action what Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini, and Arleen Macpherson called the "spirituality of simple living" in a 1994 statement prepared for the board of directors:

The one concept that we hope will increasingly tie all our projects together is an understanding of and respect for voluntary poverty. In a context where large bureaucracies control most money and influence change according to their centralized vision, the happy result might be that new ways of working, living, respecting the environment, will come from those who can develop real self- reliance outside the domain and tutelage of the main institutions.

The salary policy is one of many activities of the Working Centre board that exemplify sociology as the interplay between social research and social action. Indeed, meetings

essentially consist of trying to devise ways of embodying in effective organizational policies and programs the analysis and reflection that engendered the centre in the first place, and that continue on the basis of more recent experience. This activity, at once intellectual and practical, embraces not only me, of course, but all the other board and staff participants: people who do not call themselves sociologists and who have never been ordained as such, through conferral of degrees in the field. No matter. The main argument of this report is that sociology neither need nor should be defined by scholastic ordination, but by the actual work of coming intellectually to grips with the social fabric, reweaving it a little on the basis of careful thought, then gripping it again, reweaving it further, and so on in the dialectical process that defines history. As one context where this process is ongoing, the Working Centre is sociology in an elemental sense, irrespective of the titles of the people involved.

But in addition, because I hold a sociology professorship, I have been able to place some activities at the centre under the rubric of sociology in its formal, scholastic sense. In the winter term of 1991, with the approval of the university authorities, I offered an undergraduate elective course, the Sociology of Work, in the physical setting of the storefront. The course was part of my regular teaching load and carried the normal academic credit. From the university's point of view, the only difference between it and any other course was that in this case, the instructor and students met in an off-campus location downtown (announced well in advance, of course) instead of in a regular classroom. Reading requirements, assignments, tests and grades were much as in any other course. Fifty students showed up the first night, more than the room could ac-

commodate. A supportive department chair allowed me to divide the class into two sections, each of which met weekly at the storefront throughout the three-month term. The experiment was so much a success that I have repeated it every year since then, alternating the Sociology of Work with my course on how biography and history intersect. Since the first year, enrollment has been set at 30 students, this being the maximum number the room comfortably holds and the minimum number necessary for the course to be economically viable in the university's accounting scheme.

Physical setting by itself matters more than might initially be thought. In a conversation with me in 1977, Donald Cressey, the prominent criminologist now deceased, recalled his years teaching at Indiana University, where, so he said, the sociology department was initially housed in the basement of a campus building. "We lost our soul," he said, "when we moved out of the basement." The implication, so I understood, was that a plebeian physical location had reinforced sociology's founding orientation as a discipline in touch with the plebs, the common people, and that with relocation to a more patrician physical environment, the earlier democratic sensibility had been lost. Cressey's line came back to me often when I began to hold classes at the Working Centre, initially in a basement room. The building is not tawdry but it is old and creaky. With a nightclub next door, the Goodwill store across the street, and Kitchener's main hotels a block away, the storefront exudes a public, plebeian, open-to- everybody quality. The feel is in marked contrast to that of sociology's building on the UW campus, a massive, 25-year-old concrete structure set amidst manicured lawns and trees. The University of Waterloo does not

convey a patrician air to the extent that many older universities do, but the Working Centre does not convey such an air at all.

The setting makes a difference also in nonsymbolic ways. I was teaching the Sociology of Work during the term the centre's art exhibition on work and unemployment was held, and could therefore incorporate a tour and discussion of the exhibition into the course. I have devised an hour-long exercise, now part of the course each term, in which students walk through two adjacent blocks of Kitchener's downtown, having in hand a map and a listing of the businesses in those two blocks 70 years ago—it is a way of appreciating at first hand the change over time in the city's economic life. The Working Centre is not equipped with desks, of course, so that students sit around tables during lectures—an arrangement that encourages them to react, speak out, and question. Since the Working Centre lacks a custodial department, the students and I have responsibility for arranging the room where classes meet, and afterwards for straightening things up, turning out the lights, and locking the doors. It is a homey, human, nonintimidating setting, especially appreciated by students who, on account of their class background, feel a little out of place on campus.

More than any conventional academic setting, the storefront has allowed me to make my classes something resembling occasions for public dialogue. About two-thirds of those enrolled are adult part-timers 30 to 70 years old, people with too much life experience to treat the course as an academic exercise even if I tried to make it so. In addition, the class includes half a dozen noncredit students who register only through the Working Centre and are not required to pay fees. These more mature members of the class tend

to see themselves as citizens, parents, and workers much more than as students. For about a third of each two-and-a-half-hour class meeting, participants disperse to the centre's smaller meeting areas in eight-person groups for self-directed critical discussion of course material. Essay assignments require each student to pit his or her own experience (*connaître*) against readings and lectures (*savoir*), and to draw implications therefrom. Final grades depend not just on demonstrating an understanding of other people's ideas but on the skill and insightfulness with which they relate other people's ideas (from books, articles, and lectures) to their personal situations and current issues of public policy. We take up a collection at the start of the course, to pay for the coffee and juice available at each meeting, and each of us contributes a dish of something for a social gathering on the last night.

When students are allowed and encouraged to intrude their own biographies on "course material," the intellectual calibre of class discussions and of individual written submissions goes up, and I have often been astounded by the quality of work done in courses at the Working Centre. Many students have surprised themselves. On anonymous course evaluations at the end of each course, I have asked students what difference, if any, they perceive between the course at the Working Centre and courses on campus. About 20 percent perceive no difference, or none beyond convenience of travel or parking. About 80 percent have reacted with extraordinary enthusiasm. Following is a representative sample of their responses.

> This was my first course and I enjoyed taking it at the Working Centre. I didn't feel out of place.
>
> I hope there are more courses like this. No one person is

elite. We are all on common ground.

It seems I got to know more people in the class than on campus. People are more relaxed, willing to socialize.

The atmosphere could not be reproduced in the more sterile environment of UW. This is simply the best course I have ever taken.

The Working Centre is a perfect backdrop to the course. I especially enjoyed the "moving around" we did—goes to show that the real world is not perfect like the academic world thinks it is. Please, never move such a course to campus.

Big difference It makes you feel like a human being and less like a student. Thanks for that.

This course could (should) not be taught in any other location. It provides a comfortable forum for discussion.

I loved the casual atmosphere. Learning should be like this more often.

A lot of difference. More comfortable, inviting. I experienced more autonomy as a student.

The UW courses have been the chief but not the only way in which the Working Centre has bridged the gap between scholastic sociology and the public world. In the 40 issues so far of the quarterly newspaper, especially the more recent ones, abstract ideas from the academy have been discussed in practical 'terms, and communicated to a sizable public readership. Examples are Illich's tools for conviviality (1973), Schumacher's idea of good work (1979), Neil Postman's critique of technopoly (1993), George Grant's lament for Canada (1965), and Lasch's interpretation of recent history (1991). Reciprocally, dozens of professors and students visit the Working Centre each year, even apart from the formal courses, and carry back to the university some greater acquaintance with the community at hand. In my own varied

Serving more than 200 meals each weekday, the Working Centre's soup kitchen is located at St. John's Anglican Church near the city centre.

forms of participation in the centre's work, I have never felt myself to be stepping outside my professional role into 'community service,' nor even to be doing double duty as sociologist and citizen. I have simply not experienced the bifurcation of self implicit in the term participant observation, as textbooks describe it. The Working Centre has instead become an integral component of my work and life as a sociologist, indeed one of the main components by which I am joined to the larger process of history-making, apart from which sociology makes no sense and has no worth.

Precedents for the Working Centre

The Working Centre is an original institution, in the sense of having been created afresh out of the encounter between on the one hand the Mancinis and their friends in the social-justice movement, and on the other hand the realities of Kitchener-Waterloo in the 1982 recession. The founders were not consciously trying to copy some pre-existing organizational form, much less were they mandated to do so by some established authority. When space was first rented, letterhead printed, and a sign hung out, it was as a pure, authentic, and therefore groping expression of commitment to the community—in the manner of a boy and girl who, having found each other and discovered between them a love that is historically new, present themselves shyly but publicly as a couple, or in the manner of an artist who, having been struck by some experience, commits it with paint to canvas for all to see. This is a categorically different process from deciding to fit oneself into a pre-approved pattern—as when a boy decides to get married and goes looking for a bride, or when a person chooses painting as a career and

then searches for appropriate subjects.

In retrospect, of course, even the most original of human creations resemble earlier ones. Not in the sense of duplicating them: no genuine love is exactly like any other, and no authentic work of art is a copy of some previous one. But since physical realities and cultural legacies are the only available materials out of which humans can create, all creations bear similarities to earlier ones, and cannot be understood except in light of them.

As it has developed since 1982, the Working Centre resembles three noteworthy previous expressions of the encounter between activist intellectuals committed to democracy and those people on the margins of urban life. First is the Catholic Worker movement, founded in New York in 1933 by U.S. journalist Dorothy Day and French philosopher Peter Maurin (see Day 1952). In response to widespread unemployment and homelessness during the Great Depression, Day and Maurin opened a house in Lower Manhattan where the destitute could find food and shelter, serving there a social function much like that of the Working Centre's soup kitchen. Loosely affiliated Catholic Worker houses later opened in several dozen other cities in North America; some were still in existence in the 1990s.[8] The thinking behind the movement

[8] Of the same organizational genre as the Catholic Worker was the community in Combermere, Ontario, led by Catherine de Hueck, in the postwar period. Eugene Cullinane, an activist sociologist and Basilian priest who was expelled from St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon in 1948, following his public support for the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, later joined the Combermere community. Baum (1980, p. 174) describes it as a place where "Christian men and women lived out their judgment on capitalism in the spirit of voluntary poverty, simplicity and trust, identified with the helpless and disadvantaged in society."

was spelled out in *The Catholic Worker*, a monthly newspaper from which the Working Centre has reprinted articles in its own newsletter, especially with respect to voluntary poverty and personal identification with the poor.

The Catholic Worker movement differed from the Working Centre, however, in its more utopian, sectarian character, its self-definition as an ethical elite. Unlike nearly everyone involved in the Working Centre, Day and Maurin were without families of their own. They and their co-workers lived communally, without maintaining separate households. Their pacifist, anarchist, socialist politics was so radically at odds with prevailing thought as to cut them off from established institutions and define their historical place as moral exemplar rather than as practical guide. In orientation and priorities for action, the Working Centre has been closer to Michael Harrington than to Dorothy Day. Harrington lived at the Catholic Worker house for a while, respected what it stood for, admired its provision of food to the hungry and shelter to the homeless, but defined his own vocation in more intimate grappling with the social and political realities of his time. In 1970, in an obituary for Ammon Hennacy, his former roommate at the Catholic Worker, Harrington wrote:

> It has always seemed to me that the unique genius of the Catholic Worker movement to which he devoted the last period of his life is that the ultimate vision of people like Dorothy Day and like Ammon never comes to pass but that people in the most diverse, contradictory organizations find ways to use parts of it.

Kitchener's Working Centre is better understood as one of these latter organizations than as a replica of the Catholic Worker itself.

Nova Scotia's Antigonish Movement is a different

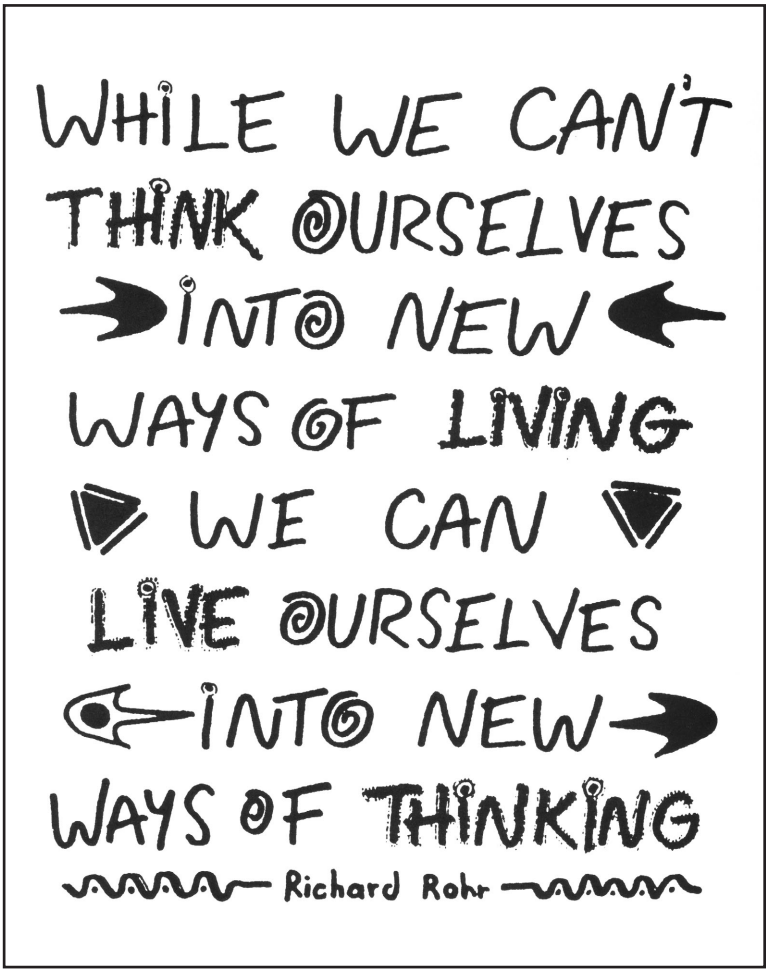
kind of precursor (see Baum 1980, Laidlaw 1971). The movement began in 1928, with the establishment at St. Francis Xavier University of an Extension Department charged with promoting social and economic development through adult education.[9] With funding from the Carnegie Foundation and under the leadership of two activist professors, Jimmy Tompkins and Moses Coady, the department became an instrument of grass-roots formation of producer and consumer cooperatives. The common technique was to organize study clubs in villages of farmers or fisherfolk, trusting that the outcome would be collective economic action whereby citizens would become, as the title of Coady's book proclaimed, *Masters of Their Own Destiny* (1939). The technique worked. By 1940, several hundred credit unions and cooperatively owned stores, lobster factories, fish plants, and small-scale industries were operating in the Maritime provinces, most of them traceable to Antigonish. After World War II and especially after Coady's death in 1959, the movement lost much of its vitality, and shifted away from indigenous community development in Atlantic Canada toward the training of community developers for

[9] The movement of "extension education, which began in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century and flourished especially in the land-grant universities of the United States, has been a major bridge between the academic and public worlds. The Antigonish Movement and Hull House in Chicago are among those instances in which university extension programs have provided a context for democratic, dialogic experiments in adult education, even though the concept itself has the regrettable connotation of a one-way transfer of knowledge from the academic setting to the "common people" off campus. For an excellent critique of extension education, see Freire 1973, pp. 91-164.

work elsewhere.

If the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier was like the Working Centre in its promotion of economic change from the bottom up and on the basis of the social gospel, it differed in other ways. It was moored by the established anchors of the university, the Catholic Church, and the Carnegie Foundation, whereas the Working Centre is nonsectarian and far more independent. More important, the centre is situated in a starkly different social and economic milieu, one in which people are less able to produce for themselves than Cape Bretoners were in the thirties. The city-dwellers of Waterloo Region lack tools (like garden plots, fishing boats, and sewing machines) for satisfying basic subsistence needs; many skills by which people used to help themselves (in carpentry, for instance, food preservation, or folk music) have been lost; the centralized forces of consumer capitalism have penetrated into more aspects of life. Macpherson (1985) attributed the demise of the Antigonish Movement in part to road improvements and the arrival of TV, which made it harder to gather people into local study clubs. But by now TV is a way of life, and so is driving far from home to shop at Walmart, Price Club, and similar megastores. Advanced capitalism allows less room for little grass-roots experiments in producerism than did earlier stages of our economic system. The failure of Tri-Tech was a painful lesson in this respect.

The organizational ancestor the Working Centre resembles most, especially from the aspect of sociology properly so called, is Hull House, founded in Chicago by Jane Addams and her co-workers in 1889. It was the most famous of the several hundred settlement houses operating at the turn of the century in British and American cities. Most were rooted in the social gospel and in the philosophy of



This drawing by Andy Macpherson, reprinted here from Good Work News, disputes the common call for more research' as the solution to current social and economic problems. The quotation from Richard Rohr's book, Simplicity, is a jarring reversal of the commonly understood relation between thinking and doing. Rohr works at the 'Institute for Contemplation and Action" in New Mexico.

university extension, just as the Antigonish Movement was some decades later, but like the Working Centre, the settlement houses tended to be urban, independent, nonsectarian, and funded by voluntary contributions. Addams (1908, p.587) described the founding orientation in her case as

> the belief that the mere foothold of a house, easily accessible, ample in space, hospitable and tolerant in spirit, situated in the midst of the large foreign colonies which so easily isolate themselves in American cities would itself be a serviceable thing for Chicago. Hull House endeavors to make social intercourse express the growing sense of the unity of society, and may be described as an effort to add the social function to democracy.

The Working Centre's storefront is much the same kind of "foothold" as Hull House, a tangible and serviceable reminder that people on the political and economic margins nonetheless belong to this society and have a right to participate in its ongoing development.

Addams was among the most prominent members of the founding generation of American sociologists, an activist intellectual who made many of her more professorial colleagues uncomfortable, but who epitomized the combination of insight and engagement to which the Working Centre aspires in our own time. Addams was the first sociologist to receive the Nobel Prize (for peace, in 1931), unless one counts Henri Bergson, who had won the prize for literature four years earlier. Addams was a major influence on the thinking of Christopher Lasch, who is among the authors most esteemed at the Working Centre, and she has been appropriately celebrated in recent years as an exemplar of feminist sociology (see Deegan 1988).

For Addams, Hull House was a window on the real-

life experience of Chicago's immigrant community, and research into that experience was central to the institution's work—the topics ranging from dietary habits to garbage collection, from protection rackets to sweatshops. These studies were planned and executed from the bottom up, as intellectual instruments of self-directed community improvement, and on the basis of a pragmatist epistemology similar to the Working Centre's pastoral circle. Addams's colleagues at the University of Chicago and the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (among them John Dewey, Charles Henderson, and George Herbert Mead) taught extension courses at Hull House. These courses, along with public lectures and study clubs, constituted an ongoing program of dialogic community education. Hull House provided space for trade union meetings, concerts, dramatic performances, and other media for the production of culture by and for residents of the settlement. There was a day nursery for children of wage-labouring mothers, a cooperative boarding club for young women and another for young men, a community kitchen and coffee house. One gets the sense that the concept of service delivery was utterly alien to what Hull House meant. Among the residents, Addams wrote, there is "a distrust of the institutional and a desire to be free for experiment and the initiation of new enterprises" (1908, p. 589).

Hull House has particular relevance to the Working Centre because one of its most famous alumni was Kitchener's most famous native son: William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada in the 1920s and again from 1935 to 1948. King was born just a block from the centre's storefront, and grew up with passionate commitment to the social democratic ideals of his grandfather, William Lyon

Mackenzie, a leader of the rebellions in Upper Canada of 1837. While an undergraduate at Toronto in 1895, King heard Jane Addams speak, and the next year moved to Chicago to live at Hull House and do graduate work in sociology (see Dawson 1958, pp. 47-60). He aspired at that time to follow Addams's footsteps as an activist scholar serving democratic ideals. Even if tempered and compromised by his own ambition, this aspiration persisted after his transfer to Harvard and subsequent career as an advisor to the Rockefeller family. In his main book, Industry and Humanity (1918, pp. 480- 81), King harshly criticized a conception of education as simply a means to commercial or occupational success: "It should teach men and women how to live completely, how to recognize and observe duties as well as rights. It should inspire the community sense and teach the art of cooperation." This was the educational ideal King had seen being put into practice at Hull House, an ideal now being pursued in quite a similar way at the Working Centre, in the city of King's birth and upbringing.

The Working Centre remains, of course, no more a replica of Hull House than of the Catholic Worker in New York or Coady's Extension Department. Unlike the Mancinis and their co-workers, Jane Addams was personally wealthy and had a network of wealthy friends, in this way she possessed the resources necessary to construct and maintain a sizable building, to initiate community programs, and to make Hull House an object of discussion in elite circles and in the public press. On its hand-to-mouth, shoestring budget of governmental grants and donations that average $50, the Working Centre is a more modest initiative. The grants, moreover, which are made from a service-delivery model and require justification in terms of number of "clients" served in spe-

cific ways, impose constraints from which Hull House was free. There is the further, crucial difference that in the century that separates Hull House from the Working Centre, society as a whole has become more tightly controlled, integrated, rationalized, even straightjacketed, by coalitions of big business, megaversities, mass media, and the state. That the Working Centre has managed to carve out for itself a bottom-up niche in this top-down society testifies not only to the dedication and hard work of those who run it, but also to their political skill and ingenuity.

Conclusion

This chapter began by citing varied, mostly unsuccessful efforts over the past half-century to restore to sociology the community engagement it had at the start, before it withdrew behind scholastic barricades. Reflecting my determination to reconcile *savoir* and *connaître* in my own career, I traced my intellectual biography in terms of these efforts to recover the founding vision, and recounted my personal journey toward connecting the academic and public worlds as the early sociologists did a century ago, and as I hoped to do when I took up sociology thirty years ago. The middle sections of this paper described the community-based institution where my journey in part has led: one organization in one city, where one professor has been able to take part in the interplay of thought and action that defines sociology, and thereby to fulfill, however modestly, the promise of the field as understood by classic thinkers, from Ward and Addams to Mills and Horowitz. The Working Centre as a whole, including my particular work there, is vibrant evidence that the academization of the intellectual

life is not total, that the scholastic kind of sociology is not the only kind even now.

There is diverse additional evidence, brought home to me by ties of friendship and mutual support with colleagues using other escape-routes from the scholastic fortress.[10] Some of these have rooted themselves in denominational communities, and engage in more or less public dialogue through the media of church-related presses, newspapers, magazines, and programs of pastoral action (see Fitzpatrick 1990, Fretz 1989, Kelly 1994a, 1994h, or Redekop and Bender 1988). Others lead a practice- oriented intellectual life through participatory, policyoriented research in international development (see Cebotarev 1986). Still others (among them Lasch, Illich, and Baum), against high odds, continue to find a public readership for works of social analysis and criticism: in the appendix to *Habits of the Heart* (1985), Robert Bellah and his colleagues sketch a hopeful methodology for sociology as public philosophy. Peter Rothe (1993) represents the alternative of doing contract research dialogically, on issues of public import: a recent introductory text (Guppy 1994) holds up Rothe's work on traffic sociology as an exemplar

[10] Even for me, of course, the Working Centre has not been the only context for trying to join my intellectual work to the realm of practice. In recent years I have served on the board of a local alternative school, written occasional articles for the public press, been involved in efforts to create more participatory structures of governance in my university, and edited and published volumes of autobiography by my mother and sister, thereby giving the voices of these nonacademic women some greater chance to be heard. With a little imagination, maneouvering, and acceptance of risk, a tenured sociology professor finds many opportunities to cast his or her lot with the larger community.

of observational studies. Many sociological researchers (for a close- to-home example, see J. Cohen and A. Westhues 1990) work in faculties or departments of social work, planning, gerontology, and similar fields identified with practical professions, in this way forging links with the nonacademic world. Perhaps most important, hundreds of sociology professors whose names seldom appear in print use their classrooms for the not wholly academic work of connecting their own and their students' biographies in an action-oriented way with larger historical processes.

By its classic definition, sociology has room for all these kinds of linkage to social action. I have found the Working Centre an especially worthwhile linkage, because it is relatively free of sectarian, partisan, or specialized interests, and can therefore serve the goal of community development in an admirably dialogic, democratic, and holistic way. But I willingly applaud many other linkages, and hope that publication of this book will encourage others to reciprocate with accounts of them. The occasional publication of such accounts in sociological journals would bring these academic media to life, make them reflect more accurately what sociologists actually do, and contextualize the more purely intellectual contributions.

Resistance must be expected, of course, from those many sociologists behind the scholastic barricades, the ones living in what Mayo called cities of the mind. Harvard's much-publicized denial of tenure to Paul Starr, despite his having won a Pulitzer for his book on American medicine, illustrates the risk of practicing a public sociology to the neglect of publishing "contributions to knowledge", as Daniel Bell put it, "in the itty bitty academic journals" (quoted in *New York Times* 1985).

The risk is worth taking, since scholastic sociology does not provide its promised security anyway. Not only does it continue to be threatened by activist, policy-oriented teaching and research, and by financial cutbacks inspired by doubts about sociology's public worth. Even within its own confines, theoretical and methodological conflicts have put professors at each other's throats, causing in many departments an utter breakdown of the norms of civilized life (see Horowitz 1994 and Lipset 1994 on the general state of the profession, or Fekete 1994 on the crumbling of academic life into biopolitics). This internal strife is much like the wars over doctrinal purity in religious and political sects, where isolation from sanity-sustaining practicalities encourages fanatic disputes over issues of no real consequence. Explaining his own decision to abandon doctoral studies at Toronto, Hanus (1995) comments wryly: "I never left sociology; sociology doesn't exist." Set against the alternative of nihilism and civil war in the academy, a place like the Working Centre looks attractive indeed, if only as a way of keeping one's feet on the ground, the basic challenge confronting any intellectual.

The Working Centre is much more, of course. The human encounters that take place there, the meals that are shared, the conversations that ensue, and the projects that result have made life more worth living for thousands of people already. This powerfully fermentive interaction is also yielding, I believe, practical guidelines toward the more general economic and social reform we urgently need.

PART TWO

CLOSE-UPS

2

TOWARDS WORK AS GIFT

Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini,
and Arleen Macpherson

Intense, critical, ongoing self-reflection defines the Working Centre as not only a practical but also an intellectual initiative. Why are we doing this? What are we here for? What difference do we make? Where are we headed? How can we do better? Questions like these are addressed again and again, as in the document below, a memorandum from the centre's leadership to the board of directors in January of 1994. The memorandum gives a good sense of the centre's direction in the first years of its second decade. Joe and Stephanie Mancini cofounded the centre. Natives of Hamilton, Ontario, both are graduates of the University of Waterloo, he in history, she in English. They are married and have three children: Christina born in 1983, Rebecca born in 1985, and Thomas born in 1993. Arleen Macpherson joined the staff in 1988. A registered nurse, she also holds a degree in religious studies from the University of Waterloo. She is the mother of five children, all of them now adults.

Introduction

The Working Centre's goals have been described as countering our bureaucratized world by giving people "the dignity and respect they deserve, to help people take charge of their own lives, to enable us all to escape the doldrums of consumerism and find our way to the joy of producing

for ourselves". To make these goals come alive it has been necessary for the organization to take off some of its old garments and put on new ones.

We have recognized that the assumptions of bureaucratic work—self-justification rather than honest self-giving—are just as dangerous and insidious at the Working Centre as in any government bureaucracy. It is also true that government grants tend to entangle us in bureaucracy.

Our first step over the last year has been to challenge some assumptions by refusing government contracts that were outside our core Help-Centre work. This has freed up energy, space, and time to think about where we are going. It has forced us to reduce expenses. This has resulted in one layoff—with 16 weeks notice—and we have left other positions unfilled.

The trimming has resulted in substantial savings and a budget that can be balanced by maintaining our fundraising and the three core grants. It means nine to ten staff. This is down from a high of 17-18 two years ago. Several long-term issues must be considered (rent/location, benefit plan, number of staff) as we increasingly rely on work as gift.

To establish the long-term direction there are still many short-term projects to keep us on track. Looking at each project individually will help.

Help Centre

In the short term, the Region and Province are providing us with four salaried positions (one administrative) to provide job search support to 600-700 people, most of whom are on social assistance. This will mean a continuation of what we have always done, especially our basic front-area services of phone, messages, typewriter, library and newspaper. There

are two major changes: (a) volunteers running the front area; and (b) fewer outside projects to distract us.

The first change is the most important in the whole centre. It was designed to change us. It means more than substituting an unpaid for a paid receptionist. We want the centre to feel like a place where those who use it are valued, so that if they choose, they can become participating members. We want to break down the perception that we have clients to be serviced. We recognize that clienthood suppresses citizenship. We still have much work to do to change our attitudes and approaches. The combination of recognizing the problem, changing the way we do things and reflecting and analysing on the result will take us closer to our goals.

As unemployed people using the centre become more comfortable and learn how it operates, we can encourage more and more opportunities to become part of the centre through volunteers taking leadership roles in: job search groups; skills exchanges; places to get together; coffee hours; discussion and clarification of thought; and tools-for-living groups. At this point, most of these activities can be accomplished with just a few paid staff. One or two full-time volunteers may be needed—see below.

As we move away from bureaucracy and government grants, we must decide how valuable Help Centre and MEP funding is. These grants cover a substantial portion of rent, administration and salaries. However, the programs demand clients and case loads—something we see as detrimental to our long-term goals. We try to minimize these effects but do not completely succeed. Both programs will be funded by the provincial government for a while yet. It makes sense to work with these programs in the short term while strengthening the involvement and participation of the volunteers

who will set the real agenda for the centre. At each stage we will have to evaluate the impact of these government grants.

St. John's Kitchen

St. John's is a model for where the Help Centre can move. Over the last three years it has shed three full-time positions while serving more people in a nicer way. Of course, St. John's is a much simpler project, but each individual who comes to St. John's is treated with dignity and respect. St. John's was forced to shed positions because its government grant was cut substantially. This has made us less dependent on government and more driven by the spirit of volunteerism. Ongoing reflection will yield ever newer ways to do more with less at St. John's.

The Working Centre

The Working Centre wants to lead the way to the joy of producing for ourselves. It wants to establish itself just slightly ahead of the pack in finding ways for individuals and society to embrace conviviality. It has a number of projects and activities in mind. Fundamental to all of them is that no project should depend on paid staff except for basic coordination, and every project should more or less pay for itself.

General Philosophy: the Spirituality of Simple Living

The one concept that we hope will increasingly tie all our projects together is an understanding of and respect for voluntary poverty. In a context where large bureaucracies control most money and influence social change according to their centralized vision, the happy result might be that new ways of working, living, respecting the environment, will come from those who

can develop real self-reliance outside the domain and tutelage of the main institutions.

Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker, identified the main social problem as our inability to celebrate the spirit of poverty. By this he meant the conscious choice of simplicity and frugality in a way that helps us remember and welcome the stranger, that makes us creatively dependant on the work of our hands and mind, that respects the natural ecology us and helps us manifest God's presence in the world. Maurin sums up his idea of personal responsibility in this "Easy Essay,"

> The world would be better off
> if people tried to become better,
> and people would become better
> if they stopped trying to become better off.
> For when everyone tries to become
> better off
> nobody is better off.
> But when everybody tries to become better
> everybody is better off.
> Everyone would be rich
> if nobody tried to become richer,
> and nobody would be poor
> if everybody tried to become poorest.
> And everybody would be what they ought to be
> if everybody tried to be
> what they want the other fellow to be.

Clearly, this ideal is hard to realize in our world. As a centre, we must have an attitude of respect for the real constraints that people work within.

Increasingly, our work needs to be linked with the need to recognize human limitations. Ken Westhues (1992) has described the need to link religion and the environment

through two basic but contradictory truths. The first is "the goodness of reason and the importance of an active, disciplined, economic attitude," and the second is "the goodness of unreason, and the importance of a peaceful, compassionate religious attitude". Joan Chittister (1983) brings these two ideas together when she describes "creative and productive work as simply meant to enhance the Garden and sustain us while we grow into God."

The Working Centre has operated as an essentially secular organization in that it has not explicitly stated any religious beliefs. Slowly and consistently adopting some of the images and language of a spirituality of simple living will be a challenge. While our society is not anti-religious, it gives little credence to the spirituality of the beatitudes.

Staying in Touch with Mainstream Canadians

It is increasingly apparent in our work that it is mainstream Canadians who need to embrace a message of simplicity. Many think and plan ahead to free themselves from bureaucratic work. The Working Centre has always had a constructive dialogue with the mainstream. Our newsletter has been generally well received. We need to ensure that we do not alienate this group from supporting us and we need to find interesting ways to reach out to this group, particularly the jobless.

The Board of Directors

Our board is one of the treasures and gifts of this organization. Over the past four years it has functioned with a minimum of formality and a maximum of integrity, honesty and common sense. We need to nurture and protect the style of a small board composed of hopeful and faithful people.

Newsletter to Newspaper

Expanding our newsletter into a newspaper is an exciting step for the Working Centre. We will need help in setting up an attractive and readable layout. This work will continue to be done on site. The format will include regular guest articles and columns, Working Centre, Help Centre and St. John's news, articles on producerism and practical suggestions and initiatives, letters to the editor, editorials, pictures and graphics, community news and history. Over time we may need to add some issues to keep it vibrant. A good newspaper will attract subscriptions.

The newspaper will seek to he local and speak to local issues, and so far as possible it will seek to affirm things that are happening which are building community, rather than constant critiquing. Over time the newspaper will have a list of patrons who have prominently promoted "Small is Beautiful" ideas.

Community Exchange

The ethic of producerism requires expanding the concept of local trading. One idea would be to create an insert in the newspaper that would expand the promotion of LETS [Local Employment Trading System] activities like bartering, buying from local artisans, home production, promotion of locally made useful tools. The format would encourage local trading.

The Institute for Good Citizenship and Good Work

Some people who gather in community through a prayer group have asked the Working Centre to sponsor an Institute on producer ideas and themes. We plan to do this in the spring.

Building an Atmosphere for Round-table Discussions and Lectures
One way for the Working Centre to become vital is to sponsor continuing informal discussions—for example, following up newspaper articles with discussion groups, and inviting intellectuals, volunteers, people looking for work, activists and religious figures to the regular Friday morning talks we already have. Readers, donors, and students will be regularly invited. Building a hospitable, informal and friendly atmosphere will encourage all who are interested to take the opportunity to clarify ideas and outlooks, In this way the Working Centre can continue building community support for its work, and at the same time provide a wider opportunity for discussion and action.

Volunteerism and Housing
The long-term goals of The Working Centre will need to be sustained by the spirit of volunteerism. Peter Maurin put it another way, "People do not have to work for wages, they can offer their services as gift." We need to explore ways to make this easier. We are thinking here of full-time volunteer commitments not unlike what the Mennonites call voluntary service. The role of the Working Centre would be to sustain a community of volunteers. There are many ways this can be organized. People not looking for wages (often young students) basically need a room and meals. The Working Centre could own a house to build a faith community of individuals volunteering to assist our work. The Working Centre can interest friends to offer rooms and meals to volunteers. Stephanie and Joe are interested in working on creating a community in their own or another house.

We think we can offer some interesting volunteer

work on the newspaper, community exchange, tools for living, Help Centre and St. John's. Building a community of volunteers who can share faith and service will add spiritual strength and new dimensions to our work.

Conclusion

It is clear that overall, these ideas deemphasize money and government funding, and work towards long-term organizational stability. Pursuing these ideas will transform all aspects of the centre toward looking increasingly to communities of dedicated volunteers: people working together to develop a sustainable organization through the ideas of work as gift, home production, faith and simplicity.

3

REFLECTIONS ON OPPORTUNITY PLANNING

Joe Mancini

The Ontario Government responded to the plant closings and lay-offs of the early 1990s with a series of programs for retraining unemployed workers, bolstering their self-confidence, and aiding them in job searches. Like other social agencies, the Working Centre was invited to help administer these programs. One of them, Opportunity Planning, was targeted on social assistance recipients. The Working Centre took part in the planning phase but in the end withdrew, for reasons made clear in this 1993 letter from Joe Mancini to the other participants. His job title at the centre (for bureaucratic purposes) is Director.

The contradictions in Opportunity Planning are worrisome for the Working Centre. We know we cannot solve them, but because they affect us, we must point them out, even if as a result we are labelled or ostracized. This is not surprising in a society so centralized that it cannot deviate from the bureaucratic method of organization. The comment is sometimes made: if you do not want to play the game, then leave.

This is what happens to non-conformists with creative ideas, also to those who arc on social assistance and know

that the only way to be accepted is to go along with the status quo. When power is asserted against those who have no real power, then "creative alternatives are paralyzed, equity declines and total satisfaction diminishes."

This is the difference between hierarchy, bureaucracy and power on the one hand, and on the other hand use-values: the ability to do or make without the interference of experts and in a decentralized mode of operation. The latter is powerless against administered power.

The Monetarization and Bureaucratization of Everyday Living

Not all social-service agencies are the same, and the difference is not just in "programming." The difference is that most operate from the perspective of the monetarization and bureaucratization of everyday living. Through their organizational style and their relations with the community, these agencies accept today's status quo. (I am not talking about all people who work in these organizations. Some work from the inside to change the structure, but most give in or give up over the long-term. Administered organizational power is very effective when tied to monetary rewards that people believe they are dependant on, so that they can buy more and more goods.)

The heart of the issue is centralization: the ability of private and public organizations to control our mindsets and actions. Bureaucracy is the lynchpin of centralization—the ability to subject individuals to written rules, policies and procedures designed to achieve goals outlined by planners. If bureaucracy barely existed outside of government and a limited number of organizations 100 years ago, why is it so pervasive today?

When the activities of home production were mon-

etarized, people (in most cases men, with women cheering them on) readily accepted jobs, in exchange for money to buy what they once made for themselves or purchased from close by. This was the modern way. But the increase in jobs created a more pervasive market and a new form of tyranny that would be imposed on people by professionals. The money that used to go to the local baker went instead to multinational corporations. This is described more fully in the two articles of our March 1993 *Newsletter*, "Producers, Populists and Early Opposition to Wage Labour," and "The Fun and Joy of Small-Scale Capitalism."

At the same time, these private and public organization men or bureaucrats became incredibly self-serving. (See our October 1992 *Newsletter* article, Why Are Bureaucracies Strangling Us?) They devised ever newer ways of organizing and dispersing bureaucracy. MBA and MSW programs allowed this self-justifying elite to also be self-perpetuating.

Government embraced this mentality. The last 40 years of government are an example of bureaucracy breaking all bounds, and it infects an ever growing number of agencies that receive government contracts. They are like franchises, their contracts spelling out the narrow confines of government policy. Opportunity Planning is one of thousands of such contracts, except for particular reasons, here the noose is tighter.

The result is that social-service organizations, large and small, have become formalized mini-bureaucracies, mere extensions of government policy and money. The underlying but unspoken goal of the managers is to achieve sameness in management style, and the growing industry of bureaucrat trainers promotes the same thing. Non-profits are being barraged by business-management training that is

not only about managing an organization better, but about ensuring that everyone plays the same game to get money from government. No one notices the surrender of community autonomy to governmental rules.

Communities want government money, thinking that it creates jobs. Government only gives money to those it trusts, those who speak government language, those it controls. Managers demand organizational sameness to get government money. This vicious spiral helps bureaucracy grow bigger, and ironically, our taxes pay for it. The result is that jobs are created for an educated elite who are taught to follow bureaucratic instructions. This does nothing for those who have no jobs. The question is: In the face of government directives, where is the community autonomy that social workers believe in?

Working Our Way Out

The Working Centre is entangled in bureaucracy in many ways. These past three years we have been trying to reduce our entanglements. This is the major reason why we rejected much of the Opportunity Planning model.

Bureaucracy is also a symbol of how work has become solely related to the money economy. People do not want to recognize that most work is polluting (endless car driving), wasteful, greedy, autocratic, and disruptive of families. For money people will do anything. Our economy is being driven by the desire for more, regardless of the consequences. The insidious monetarization of family activities has deepened our dependence on money. But the more we need money and the more we compete to make money, the more we open the sores of racism, sexism, violence and environmental degradation. Competition for scarce dollars breaks

up neighbourhood living.

Dependence on bureaucratic work is at the heart of the problem. We seek solutions that, while threatening to our organization and others, are practical, achievable, and necessary.

We start from Ken Westhues's critique of bureaucracy in "Building Relationships Where People Are Real" (Newsletter, December 1990):

> If words could capture everything human beings want, if the goals of life on this planet could be spelled out and listed in relative priority, then a society consisting of well-functioning bureaucracies would be ideal. If the quality of life could be reduced to the attainment of ten objectives—or a hundred or a thousand—then we could establish bureaucracies for these various ends and devote our energies to improving material and social technologies for reaching them. But life is not like that.
>
> The reasons people come together in this way or that are never completely specifiable. Biological cravings for food or sex are usually involved, So is previous learning; the reality of biography and history. So also the uniquely human ability to do something new. Why one is drawn to these other people but not those, this kind of interaction but not that, comes down to an ever shifting mix of motives that words capture only partially.
>
> Bureaucracy straitjackets this process, and thus must be kept within bounds. Bureaucrats cannot behave as whole people, only as functionaries. They meet one another, and those they are supposed to serve, within the confines of rules, fixed in print and non-negotiable. They go by the book. Their jobs depend on it.
>
> There is a further way that bureaucracy kills reciprocity; it requires a hierarchy of authority, a chain of command, a pecking order such that those from whom one takes orders

> are different from those whom one gives orders. Reciprocity requires countervailing power, the giving and receiving of orders from the same folks. In the moment that one person is deemed superior and the other inferior, reciprocity between them is forfeited.

At the Working Centre, we ask the question, "If this is the way of bureaucracy, then what can we do to minimize it?" As an organization, we have taken important steps like trying to listen to the unemployed, resisting structure and formality, capping wages, and creating a place to be rather than "client services." These are not just cute little pastimes.

Second, we are questioning the ways we ourselves are propping up the centralized system. We know we are doing this every day. We hold no illusions. There is no escaping this manufactured world. But we are directing increased energy towards putting forth a different set of ideas. We are starting small, using the *Newsletter*, speakers series and library to build our own knowledge and that of others willing to look further into the issues of centralization. Personal learning and reading combine with round-table discussion. By attention to these issues we expect we will change, but only if we are committed to reflection—not just on other people's problems but on how we as individuals and organizations perpetuate bureaucracy.

Third, we object to bureaucracy being thrust at us. The Help Centre program is far less intrusive than the "partnerships" of Opportunity Planning. Partnership cannot be built by government-directed bureaucracy or government money. Where did the idea come from that partnership means one organization having responsibility while the others have only a little say? Partnership in this sense is how "bureaucracy kills reciprocity".

Fourth, we are trying to clarify terms that have become very muddied through the imposition of wide-scale bureaucracy. Partnership is an example. At one time it meant trust, the agreement on general ideas which each party is free to pursue in their own way. Under Opportunity Planning, the concept is mostly self-serving. This is especially true when you have to answer to higher-ups who demand that the letter of the project be followed through each piece of paper and through extensive monitoring. This is the price of accepting big-money government projects where the real intent is to socially engineer acquiescence to the labour market.

Partnerships built on power relationships reinforce the status quo, because those who believe in the centralized status quo are more numerous. The powerful use words like partnership, communications, networks, and community economic development to give the effect of power and status. This was our experience with Opportunity Planning last June.

Our goal is to ensure that our organization is not assimilated into the petty bureaucratic structures that are attempting to infiltrate every social problem. We have no interest in having our history used in this way.

Increasingly, Jobs Are Not The Answer

It is no longer believable that there can be enough "jobs" for everyone. No amount of government debt or packaged pollution can maintain this illusion. On the contrary, increased centralization and the narrowing of the concept of work to paid employment will keep the number of people on welfare high.

When presented with the evidence, most people instinctively recognize the effects of centralization. But it is

hard to do much about it, given that most people are dependant on this system that produces food laced with chemicals, transportation that chains people to their cars, education that equalizes incompetence, work that celebrates Friday afternoon, and recreation that becomes a treadmill similar to work.

At the Centre we have two approaches. The first is to offer assistance with job searching and career planning. The second is to stimulate discussion and action on alternatives to welfare. We want to talk about use-values: the ability of people to look after their own needs by relying on the natural fruits of the earth. This entails knowledge of soil, seed and compost. It means relying on walking and biking. Attuning ourselves to the natural environment is part of it. It means pursuing areas where skills and people are more important than money.

This line of thinking in North America has never been taken very seriously. Recently, we summarized these ideas for a discussion series: Can you imagine a way of living in which work is done to satisfy the basics? Is it possible over time to develop the skills to live well with less money? What can we do to open up land for home food production, to work closely with family, friends and neighbours, to learn the skills of sewing, knitting and weaving, to get around on bicycles, to make use of woodworking and pottery tools, to build an effective barter system?

There are enough agencies around that will continue to stress jobs, jobs, jobs. Meanwhile for those without jobs, the frustration grows. Who is committed to recovering the independence of the homesteader who combined hard work with the ability to produce a living out of very little? This is what the Working Centre is committed to. We think Oppor-

tunity Planning had the ability to incorporate such diversity, but it comes with a price. A program designed with excessive monitoring will contradict what we are trying to achieve.

If Opportunity Planning wants diversity, then our approach will be of continued interest to you. If you are worried that others will think we get a better deal, or that our stats are not the same as everyone else's, or that we are not monitored enough, or that our project is just too different, then you will have to conclude that you can do without us. But I submit that you need our ideas more than you need our stats!

I hope that you will consider, as we do, that there must be room for compromise. Thank you for hearing us out.

4

WHAT HELP DO PEOPLE NEED?

Stephanie Mancini

From the start, the core of the Working Centre has been the storefront Help Centre for the Unemployed. But what does "helping people" mean? For the December 1994 issue of Good Work News Help-Centre Coordinator Stephanie Mancini offered this reflection. She was at that time completing a substantial reorganization, working with Job Counsellors Mary Lou Emburgh and Sandra Kuhi, and dozens of volunteers. Co-founder of the Working Centre, Stephanie Mancini was its chief financial officer in the initial years.

The Working Centre is a different place these days. Anywhere from 50 to 160 people come in each day, making use of its many resources. Twenty to 30 people at a time can usually be seen using the books, newspapers, telephone, phone message service, information on community events, services and training, typewriters, work tables, computers, and photocopier. The place is lively and informal as people gather to share stories, frustrations, suggestions and friendship.

Volunteers (that is, people who use the services and also help others use them) greet people coming into the centre, helping them to get oriented, learn about the centre, sign up for computer time, and make photocopies. Most people will also meet individually with counsellors and volunteers

to help respond to specific requests. These include developing a resumé together, practising for an interview, talking through a multitude of career and job-search decisions that must be made, finding out about training, participating in workshops, discussions and groups, and learning the basics of WordPerfect.

Where once we would have seen "individualized" attention as the way to "help" people, we have come to see that the most important thing we can do is to help people to meet each other in a cooperative setting and all work together to respond to each other as individuals.

In a recent CBC Ideas program by David Cayley entitled *Beyond Institutions*, David Schwarz stated, "I've become convinced that if you look at a truly alive neighbourhood—I'm not talking about a sterile suburb or a sterilized piece of city, but somewhere where life is actually taking place—I've become convinced that you can sit there and ... you can find all sorts of people that might ordinarily be served by social services who are actually being supported by the web of relationships—by ancient traditions of hospitality of people for each other."

Government program descriptions have lately taken to using many of these words to define services, but the tendency in employment services is to increase the professionalism of care giving, to provide more services, more information, and increase the level of monitoring and record keeping in order to evaluate these interventions. This is viewed as being "accountable" to the tax-payer or the funder.

The new "jobLink" program proposes to define a one-stop shopping model for people to find information and develop a plan that will help them to become "self-sufficient" (that is, no longer dependent on social assistance). What

results is an increase in monitoring of people on welfare. While it may seem that information is always in short supply in our rapidly changing world, it is too easy to imagine the "Information Highway" as the key to helping people find work.

The challenges in getting off assistance are great. Everyone understands that no one can support a family or even run a car (necessary to get most jobs) on a minimum wage. Increasingly, people are turning away from manual-labour jobs and this bias stretches throughout our society. There is a growing stigma attached to physical work. Nevertheless, people want to find a job and want to be working.

There has been a drastic reduction in middle-wage manufacturing jobs that the majority of workers once depended on for family income. Without these jobs, and with most of the available jobs being low-wage, part-time or contract, barriers are created to getting off social assistance.

People are now struggling to survive on very small incomes. Since the 1950s, we have lost many of the skills for sustaining a household that doesn't depend on expensive mass manufactured products. These skills have been traded for "job" skills. Now that many of the middle-wage jobs are not available, and with the remaining jobs rapidly changing, there is a great deal of confusion that will not easily go away.

Governments' solution to these problems is service systems. These in turn create large, expensive, bureaucratic structures that simply increase the monitoring of people.

When confronted by these problems, many of us see only great barriers and resign ourselves, saying, "That's where the political will is these days. We might as well take advantage of a program like jobLink." What we really need to be saying--urgently--is, "Enough is enough!" As is stated in our

brochure on the university courses offered here: "More than gadgetry is required if current crises in politics, the family, the economy, and the environment are to be overcome."

People need less hand-holding by professionals and more opportunities to break through the isolation of unemployment. We need to pay less attention to providing programs. What people are looking for is real answers to the larger questions of work and its meaning in their lives, and how they can support themselves practically and financially. A dependency on professional assistance limits the kinds of exchanges between people that can lead to truly creative ideas and the building of basic support systems that are sustained beyond working hours.

Again I quote David Schwarz: "I picture this metaphor that on the one side of the river is the world of professional, bureaucratic, structured human services, and on the other side of the river is the world of messy communities. And what we're trying to do is help people come out of their exclusive existence as clients within the professional world and take them across the river into the world which has existed since the beginning of time. That's the world in which people relate to each other in the good and bad ways by which they've always related to each other. We've tended to forget that world because of our historically recent devotion to developing all these systems that can care."

Our challenge at the Working Centre is in learning more of the ways that people can do things for themselves and to help each other rather than depending on a social-service model to meet these needs. Every day at the Working Centre is unpredictable, lively and exciting as we seek to be a supportive, comfortable and practical place.

5

TEN YEARS AT ST. JOHN"S KITCHEN

Arleen Macpherson

As previous chapters have shown, questions are almost constantly being raised at the Working Centre—about work, unemployment, the environment, the centre itself; and much more. There is, however, a time to question and a time to cook. At the centre's soup kitchen in St. John's Anglican Church, whoever shows up for food gets it, no questions asked. No matter that in theory, a rationally planned welfare system has eliminated the need for soup kitchens in Canada. The system has cracks, and nothing human is altogether rational. By 1995, paid staff at St. John's Kitchen had been reduced to two, Coordinator Arleen Macpherson and Gretchen Jones, working with a corps of volunteers. What follows is Macpherson's report on the kitchen's tenth anniversary, as it appeared in Good Work News.

January 14, 1995 will mark the tenth anniversary of St.John's Kitchen. The number of meals served daily slowly grew from 60 to an average of 220 during the first five years and has remained constant since that time.

We are often asked questions relating to statistics in the news. How has the recession affected the people at St. John's Kitchen? Have the recent recovery and the lower unemployment figures affected our work? A few years ago people asked if the increase in General Welfare Assistance

and in Family Benefits had improved the lives of recipients? Did the election of an NDP government in 1990 make any difference?

The truth of the matter, for the people who come regularly to St. Johns Kitchen, is that changes like these have no impact on their daily lives. Minor increases to incomes which are already substantially below the poverty line do not suffice to change anything. Life goes on as usual for most low-income people and it really doesn't matter which party is in power or what its economic policies are.

But once in a while we meet someone at SJK who never ever expected to find themselves in a soup kitchen. The new style of doing business characterized by policies such as downsizing, rationalization, belt-tightening and staffing with part-time help— this has definitely changed some lives.

Some People

"Bill" is one such person. Until recently he lived comfortably in his own home in a small town nearby with his wife and three children. They were respected members of the community and were active in their local church. Their children took music lessons and belonged to the usual organizations. Then Bill lost his job. The company could no longer keep him on even though he had been a long-term, honest hard worker. Bill's family managed for a few months on Unemployment Insurance, and his wife was able to get retraining and start a small home-based business. But Bill has been unable to find another job. He is 45 years old and does not have the skills to compete in today's high-tech workforce. He perceived a change in his status in the community. Instead of respect he was now experiencing pity from townspeople. When he turned to his church, it had no support to offer him, just ad-

vice to "get a job." Tension developed in his formerly peaceful home. He has become very depressed and feels that he is a drain on his family. Not wanting his presence to be a constant reminder of his failure and a source of ongoing tension, he chose to come to the city to look for a job. So far he has been unsuccessful in his search. If he does not soon find a job, he and his wife will divorce and the family will be permanently broken up. We don't often hear about the impact that a job loss has on a family, but we may well wonder how many others are similarly affected.

Then there is a young single man, "Don," who finally found a part-time job after a long period of unemployment. He works less than 20 hours weekly for minimum wage, and therefore doesn't qualify for any benefits. Even worse, the 20 hours he works are spread over all seven days of the week. What are his chances of fitting another part-time job into this schedule? What about the daily travel costs for just a few hours' work? What about a day of rest? These are not the employer's concerns, but they seriously limit quality of life for people who are desperate, above all, for jobs. Yes, changes in government policy and in business practices do affect some people.

Producing

In a more positive vein, we plan at St. John's Kitchen to involve more people in producing food. Several people baked bread, after hours one day, using the ideal space and equipment available. It was a most satisfying experience for all. We hope to repeat it and to include more people in future.

We look forward also to having more people sharing the daily cooking of meals. Our full-time cook is retiring this year, but he is leaving us with a well-organized kitchen,

well-established safety and health habits, and many good recipes. We will encourage groups of people to get together at home or at the kitchen to make large quantities of food.

An interest is developing around garden production for St. John's Kitchen. Links have been made with farmers and would-be gardeners. Perhaps by next summer donations and our own produce will satisfy our need for fresh vegetables.

All cardboard, glass and metal are being recycled. We expect to begin composting vegetable peelings and other food waste soon.

Celebrating Ten Years

Our greatest cause for celebration is the wonderful and generous support that we receive from volunteers and from donors in the community. Individuals, schools, churches, service clubs, businesses and other groups make us feel that we are in partnership with a caring community.

We celebrate also the lives of all those people who, for one reason or another, have availed themselves of the services of St. John's Kitchen. Their lives are definitely poor from a material standpoint. But, from many individuals, we have learned a lot about courage, simplicity, generosity, gratitude, perseverance, survival and even joy!

We welcome all visitors to St. Johns Kitchen. It is the best way to experience the reality of a soup kitchen and to get to know a significant gathering place for many citizens. We have had visitors from all the provinces and the North West Territories as well as from England, Australia, Belgium, the United States, Yugoslavia and Japan.

Thanks to all who support St. John's Kitchen.

6

MIRACLE AT DUKE AND WATER

Dave Conzani

It is easier to give people food than to help people find their own voices. In Dave Conzani's case, St. John's Kitchen, located at the corner of Duke and Water Streets in Kitchener, did both. His article is reprinted from Good Work News *of December 1994.*

My name is Dave and I am a recovering alcoholic. I have been coming to eat at St. John's Kitchen for many years and I am very grateful for the warm nutritious meals I have eaten here. I am equally grateful for the encouragement, support and dignity I have also received here during my long battle with the bottle.

I spent several years on skid-row here in downtown Kitchener, enslaved to alcohol, with no place to sleep and very little food to eat, and an encouraging word was a very rare thing.

In 1986, 1 came back to Kitchener after my marriage had collapsed in ruin and I had lost my precious two-year-old son. In grief and despair I crawled into a bottle of wine down in Victoria Park and stayed good and drunk for six years. I was 23 years old. It is nearly impossible to describe the anguish, the shame, and the loneliness of those dark years. I was in so much emotional pain and grief over the loss of my son that I thought I would go insane. The only way I could find any relief at all was in an alcoholic oblivion.

I am a clinical alcoholic, which is to say that when I take alcohol into my system I develop an overwhelming abnormal biochemical craving for more. Combined with the deep pain and the extreme low self-esteem I suffered, my trap seemed complete. I was hopelessly hooked and I couldn't quit no matter how much I wanted to.

Every morning I would "come to' out on the streets somewhere and the only things that mattered were: "I need a drink, I'm dying of starvation, and I have to find a new place to hole-up in and sleep tonight." I could never get in to the local hostels near the latter part of my drinking because I would have alcohol on my breath, or I would already have drunk away my welfare money that month and couldn't qualify until next month. Indeed, those were dire days. It was so easy to fall through the cracks in the system. Sometimes when I was drunk, my pain and frustration would manifest itself in very obnoxious, antisocial verbal tirades, and I was forever getting punched out and "coming to" with black eyes and broken ribs and no recollection of what had happened. I was even barred from the local Detox centre near the end, and often I would be turned away. (Don't get me wrong: they did everything they could for me, I was just so far gone and obnoxious there that sometimes I really didn't leave them much choice.)

In those days food was scarce and I was literally starving to death out there on the streets. I remember what a dilemma it used to be. My physical hunger ran neck and neck with the overwhelming withdrawal cravings for another drink that only the truly desperate know. Some mornings I would wake up in Victoria Park in a pool of my own vomit and pray for release from this terrible affliction, yet before the day was out I had invariably begged, bummed

and borrowed yet another bottle. Were it not for the Grace of God as He expressed Himself through the good people of St. John's Kitchen, I know for a fact that I surely would have starved to death.

When I first came down here I noticed immediately that there was something very refreshing and unique going on. By that stage in my life, like so many of my "street" siblings, I had run the whole gamut of treatment centres, rehabs, hostels, detoxes, and food-lines. But I noticed right away that something very central to the philosophy of so many of these other services was missing at St. John's—that overriding you-guys-are-losers, condescending attitude was not here! It's hard to put your finger on it. It's an unprojected gut reaction one develops on the streets. You can feel it when someone is helping you out of genuine altruism or when they're doing it because it's their job or they want you to know that they're the "sainted samaritans" and you're the lowly scum they've condescended to help.

I'll never forget how in one hostel we were all lined up for a meal and handing our ticket to "the staff' at the front when someone at the back went "Moo! Moo!" in the best imitation of a Holstein I had ever heard. We all burst out laughing (to keep from crying). We all knew exactly what that guy meant, all of us that is except "the staff' at the front with the puzzled look on his sainted brow. Don't get me wrong. I shall go to my grave with gratitude for any and all who fed me during those dark times. As I say "the hand that feeds me I'll not bite—though its other hand may smite."

What I'm really trying to say is how refreshing it was and still is at St. John's not to feel that condescension from on high and to actually *talk* to those wonderful ladies who day in and day out serve us our meals, and to actually have

them *talk* back to you and give you a *genuine* smile from the heart. I have never felt such love in any other "soup kitchen" in my life (I speak as one who has been to quite a few).

I remember in my early days at St. John's I'd be too drunk to carry my tray and instead of booting me out like a dog, Darryl or John would actually carry it for me and help me to my table! When they asked me how I was doing, they really cared how I was doing!

Now, at this point, some may protest that this kind of behaviour only enables alcoholics to keep drinking, but I would argue that they were enabling me to stay alive. I'm a big believer that you can't rehabilitate a dead person!

Later on I came to meet two of the dearest women I have ever known. I can't count how many times I sat at my table drunk and cried my heart out to them about grief over my lost son, my inability to quit drinking, and the cold stark horrors of my life on skid-row. They sat and heard my pain for hours, and though I reeked of alcohol, and hadn't bathed for God knows how long, and had only that one filthy change of clothes I was wearing, they gave me a hug of encouragement and never batted an eye of disgust. I know because I'd look for it, and it wasn't there.

As it was, I survived six long years on the streets in that condition on that one meal a day from St. John's, and on the weekend I had to go without because the "other places" would turn me away for being drunk. That is why I say that I know St. John's kept me alive.

On January 25, 1992 I finally "hit bottom" when I came to in a jail cell yet again. I screamed out to my Maker the alcoholic's prayer "God help me!" and I was led to a supportive understanding group of people and began my long journey back to the land of the living. I am eternally grateful

to say that that was nearly three years ago now, and I haven't had a drop to drink since.

I continued to receive encouragement and support at St. John's. During the first few months of my recovery, I stayed behind as a volunteer and swept and mopped the floor and put chairs away. It was the least I could do. I had scraped up a welfare cheque again and gotten off the streets and into a humble little room in a rooming house. After the streets it was a palace. Yet I had nothing. Alcohol had reduced me to the clothes on my back, a welfare cheque, and a meal at St. John's. Yet each day I volunteered, Gretchen gave me a beautiful stoneware plate and I slowly was able to go from paper plates and plastic forks to the dishes I still eat from today. Those plates are very precious to me today. They are a constant grateful reminder as I eat each meal at home now.

A few weeks before my first year anniversary of sobriety God blessed me with a miraculous reconciliation with my long lost son that alcohol had stolen from me. At my one-year birthday party my son and his mother sat in the front row, and what a thrill it was to see there also in the back none other than Gretchen and Arleen from St. John's, who had stood by me and believed in me during those long dark, cold days on skid-row.

I returned to school and made the honour roll in all my courses, including a special award for highest academic achievement in parenting (from the same principal who kicked me out of high school 16 years before). And my son looks forward to his visits every weekend with his sober Daddy.

A year ago my sister was raped and murdered and it was a real shocking tragedy. But I never forgot how Arleen

had encouraged me when I had poured out my drunken grief over my lost son those years before at St. John's. This time she was there for me again, and every day for weeks I sat in her office and cried and wept and grieved. I wasn't alone, I didn't have to take my pain to the park with a jug of wine. I remain forever grateful to her for the time she took for me.

If anyone wonders why I am so eager to praise St. John's, it is because I made a deal with myself when I was still drunk that, if I ever made it out of that terrible trap, I would never forget where I came from or those who helped me. I thank God, who heard my desperate cry, and I thank His unsung servants at St. John's Kitchen. You know, I never thought I would survive to see this day. It is an honour to finally have this chance.

One final note to anyone who has ever been approached by a panhandler and been offended. I know we don't look pretty and that we make you uncomfortable. All is not well in this fair land, even though I believe still that we are blessed above all nations. But we are not your immediate problem, so why should you care? After all, isn't it us "welfare bums" who are the cause of all our country's economic woes? Don't we take, yet give nothing in return? I would challenge you to rethink this stance. One of those welfare bums is a little boy's loving father, a straight-A honour student, a lay-worker in the field of alcohol recovery and an extremely grateful member of society. With the help of welfare and places like St. John's, I am able to work toward my educational goals and pursue a career in social work where I can make use of my experiences and help others in similar dilemmas find hope. What better place would I be suited to contribute to society? I am not a bum. I am contributing in my own way, blooming where I'm planted. I am

by no means alone!

"Have you no shame?" I was asked one day by a passerby. "Shame?" I replied, "Do you think this is fun for me? I have shame that would make your toe-nails curl.' That is a great part of the problem. When we are put down and shamed and blamed and vilified, it's hard to find any incentive to try to get back up again one more time. No, where shame and blame have never worked, love, encouragement and self-esteem have worked wonders. In the end our own personal desperation and willingness must become activated, but I believe I have a strong case for saying that a word of genuine encouragement along the way can sometimes be a crucial deciding factor.

I would beg anyone of means who may read this article to come down and see for yourself the miracle at Duke and Water Streets, and support it as you can. I can assure you that you'll receive food not only for your stomach but for your spirit as well.

Yours in everlasting gratitude.

PART THREE

FLASHBACKS

7

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Dorothy Day

Socialist, anarchist, pacifist, and devoutly Catholic, Dorothy Day (1897-1980) joined with French-born Peter Maurin in New York City in the early 1930s, to found a house of hospitality for the poor and homeless. The movement Day and Maurin led was called the Catholic Worker, which was also the name of the more or less monthly newspaper that first appeared in 1933, to promote the movement's goals. About three dozen Catholic Worker Houses were eventually established across North America. Day's thinking can best be understood from her columns in the newspaper, from which Joe Mancini has selected the following excerpts.

January 1936

For those who have put to us the question, "What have you to offer in the way of a constructive program for a new social order?" we have replied over and over, "Peter Maurin's three- point program of *Round-table Discussions, Houses of Hospitality, Farming Communes*," This program is so simple as to be unsatisfactory to most, who look for something to be complicated before it can be successful. Remembering the words of St. Francis that we cannot know what we have not practiced, we have tried not only to publish a paper but to put our program into practice. From the very beginning we have sought clarification of thought through The Catholic

Worker, through round-table discussions, forums, through circulating literature. We have had a workers' school where the finest scholars of the Church have come to teach. We have had a House of Hospitality now for two years, where we gave shelter to the homeless, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and cared for the sick. We have tried, all of us, to be workers and scholars, and to combine work and prayer according to the Benedictine ideal. We have tried to imitate St. Francis in his holy poverty. Our aim has been to combat the atheism of the day by our devotion to the liturgical movement, to combat the bourgeois spirit by the Franciscan spirit, to oppose to class-war technique the performance of the works of mercy.

We have not altogether neglected the farming commune idea, inasmuch as we had a halfway house in Staten Island where children were given vacations, weekend conferences were held and the sick cared for, and a garden cultivated.

March 1 will see the start of a serious attempt to put into practice the third point in our program. We are going to move out on a farm, within a few hours of New York, and start there a true farming commune.

We are making this move because we do not feel that we can talk in the paper about something we are not practicing. We believe that our words will have more weight, our writings will carry more conviction, if we ourselves are engaged in making a better life on the land.

This does not mean that we are going to abandon the city, which we realize is above all the home of the dispossessed, of the forgotten. We shall keep a group in New York City and the work of the apostolate of labor will go on. We shall also be sending out apostles of labor from the farm,

to scenes of industrial conflict, to factories and to lodging houses, to live and work with the poor. The columns of the paper will be filled as usual with industrial news, discussion of unionism, the cooperative movement, maternity guilds, relief, public and private. But there will be more space devoted to rural life problems, and you will hear from month to month how the work of the farming commune is progressing, the difficulties, the mistakes, and the progress of the work.

June 1949, just after Peter Maurin's death

"We need to make the kind of society,' Peter had said, "where it is easier for people to be good." And because his love of God made him love his neighbor, lay down his life indeed for his brother, he wanted to cry out against the evils of the day—the state, war, usury, the degradation of man, the loss of a philosophy of work. He sang the delights of poverty (he was not talking of destitution) as a means to making a step to the land, of getting back to the dear natural things of earth and sky, of home and children. He cried out against the machine because, as Pius XI had said, "raw materials went into the factory and came out ennobled and man went in and came out degraded"; and because it deprived a man of what was as important as bread—his work, his work with his hands, his ability to use all of himself, which made him a whole man and a holy man.

Yes, he talked of these material things. He knew we needed a good social order where we could grow up to our full stature as men and women. And he also knew that it took men and women to make such a social order. He tried to form them, he tried to educate them, and God gave him poor weak materials to work with. He was as poor in the human material he had around him as he was in material goods. We are the

offscourings of all, as St. Paul said, and yet we know we have achieved great things in these brief years, and not ours is the glory. God has chosen the weak things to confound the strong, the fools of this earth to confound the wise.

Peter had been insulted and misunderstood in his life as well as loved. He had been taken for a plumber and left to sit in the basement when he had been invited for dinner and an evening of conversation. He had been thrown out of a Knights of Columbus meeting. One pastor who invited him to speak demanded his money back which he had sent Peter for carfare to his upstate parish because, he said, we had sent him a Bowery bum, and not the speaker he expected. "This then is perfect joy," Peter could say, quoting the words of St. Francis to Friar Leo.

He was a man of sincerity and peace, and yet one letter came to us recently, accusing him of having a holier-than-thou attitude. Yes, Peter pointed out that it was a precept that we should love God with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength, and not just a counsel, and he taught us all what it meant to be children of God, and restored to us our sense of responsibility in a chaotic world. Yes, he was "holier than thou," holier than anyone we ever knew.

"Don't forget," Mary Frecon, head of the Harrisburg house said before she left, "don't forget to tell of the roots of the little tree that they cut through in digging his grave. I kept looking at those roots and thinking how wonderful it is that Peter is going to nourish that tree—that thing of beauty." The undertaker had tried to sell us artificial grass to cover up "the unsightly grave," as he called it, but we loved the sight of that earth that was to cover Peter. He had come from the earth, as we all had, and to the earth he was returning.

November 1949

Well, when it comes down to it, do we of the Catholic Worker stand only for just wages, shorter hours, increase of power for the workers, a collaboration of employer and worker in prosperity for all? No, we want to make "the rich poor and the poor holy," and that, too, is a revolution obnoxious to the pagan man. We don't want luxury. We want land, bread, work, children, and the joys of community in play and work and worship. We don't believe in those industrial councils where the heads of United States Steel sit down with the common man in an obscene *agape* of luxury, shared profits, blood money from a thousand battles all over the world. No, the common good, the community must be considered.

April 1964

On Holy Thursday, truly a joyful day, I was sitting at the supper table at St. Joseph's House on Chrystie Street and looking around at all the fellow workers and thinking how hopeless it was for us to try to keep up appearances. The walls are painted a warm yellow, the ceiling has been done by generous volunteers, and there are large, brightly colored ikon-like paintings on wood and some colorful banners with texts (flow fading Out) and the great crucifix brought in by some anonymous friend with the request that we hang it in the room where the breadline eats. (Some well-meaning guest tried to improve on the black iron by gilding it, and I always intend to do something about it and restore its former grim glory.)

I looked around and the general appearance of the place was, as usual, home-like, informal, noisy, and comfortably warm on a cold evening. And yet, looked at with the eyes of a visitor, our place must look dingy indeed,

filled as it always is with men and women, some children too, all of whom bear the unmistakable mark of misery and destitution. Aren't we deceiving ourselves, I am sure many of them think, in the work we are doing? What are we accomplishing for them anyway, or for the world or for the common good'? "Are these people being rehabilitated? is the question we get almost daily from visitors or from our readers (who seem to be great letter writers). One priest had his catechism classes write us questions as to our work after they had the assignment in religion class to read my book The Long Loneliness. The majority of them asked the same question: "How can you see Christ in people?" And we only say:

It is an act of faith;, constantly repeated. It is an act of love, resulting from an act of faith. It is an act of hope, that we can awaken these same acts in their hearts, too, with the help of God, and the Works of Mercy, which you, our readers, help us to do, day in and day out over the years.

On Easter Day, on awakening late after the long midnight services in our parish church, I read over the last chapter of the four Gospels and felt that I received great light and understanding with the reading of them. "They have taken the Lord out of His tomb and we do not know where they have laid Him," Mary Magdalene said, and we can say this with her in times of doubt and questioning. How do we know we believe? How do we know we indeed have faith? Because we have seen His hands and His feet in the poor around us. He has shown Himself to us in them. We start by loving them for Him, and soon love them for themselves, each one a unique person, most special.

In that last glorious chapter of St. Luke, Jesus told His followers, "Why are you so perturbed? Why do questions

arise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself. Touch Me and see. No ghost has flesh and bones as you can see I have." They were still unconvinced, for it seemed too good to be true. "So He asked them, 'Have you anything to eat? They offered Him a piece of fish they had cooked which He took and ate before their eyes."

How can I help but think of these things every time I sit down at Chrystie Street or Peter Maurin Farm and look around at the tables filled with the unutterably poor who are going through their long-continuing crucifixion. It is most surely an exercise of faith for us to see Christ in each other. But it is through such exercise that we grow and the joy of our vocation assures us we are on the right path.

Most certainly, it is easier to believe now that the sun warms us, and we know that buds will appear on the sycamore trees in the wasteland across from the Catholic Worker office, that life will spring out of the dull clods of that littered park across the way. There are wars and rumors of war, poverty and plague, hunger and pain. Still, the sap is rising, and again there is the resurrection of spring, God's continuing promise to us that He is with us always, with His comfort and joy, if we will only ask.

The mystery of the poor is this: That they are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him. It is the only way we have of knowing and believing in our love. The mystery of poverty is that by sharing in it, making ourselves poor in giving to others, we increase our knowledge of and belief in love.

December 1969

Actually, we here at the Catholic Worker did not start these soup lines ourselves. Years ago, John Griffin, one of the

men from the Bowery who moved in with us, was giving out clothes, and when they ran out he began sitting the petitioners down to a hot cup of coffee or a bowl of soup—whatever we had. By word of mouth the news spread, and one after another they came, forming lines (during the Depression) which stretched around the block. The loaves and fishes had to be multiplied to take care of it, and everyone contributed food, money, and space.

All volunteers who come, priests and lay people, nuns and college students, have worked on that line and felt the satisfaction of manual labor, beginning to do without, themselves, to share with others, and a more intense desire to change the social order that leaves men hungry and homeless. The work is as basic as bread. To sit down several times a day together is community and growth in the knowledge of Christ. 'They knew Him in the breaking of bread."

We have said these things many times in the pages of The Catholic Worker, but it is to reassure these dear friends that I write this again. Perhaps it is easier for a woman to understand than a man. Because no matter what catastrophe has occurred or hangs overhead, she has to go on with the business of living. She does the physical things and so keeps a balance. No longer does the man sit as a judge at the gate, as in the Old Testament where the valiant woman is portrayed. Now there is neither bond nor free, Greek nor Hebrew, male nor female—we are a little nearer to the heavenly kingdom when men, as well as women, are feeding the hungry. It is a real action as well as symbolic action. It is walking in the steps of Jesus when He fed the multitude on the hills, and when He prepared the fire and the fish on the shore. He told us to do it. He did it Himself.

March-April 1975, when Day was almost 80 years old
Buddhists teach that a man's life is divided into three parts: the first part for education and growing up; the second for continued learning, through marriage and raising a family, involvement with the life of the senses, the mind, and the spirit; and the third period, the time of withdrawal from responsibility, letting go of the things of this life, letting God take over. This is a fragmentary view of the profound teaching of the East. The old saying that a man works from sun to sun but woman's work is never done is a very true one. St. Teresa wrote of the three interior senses, the memory, the understanding, and the will. So even if one withdraws, as I am trying to do, from active work, these senses remain active.

I am, however, leaving everything to the generous crowd of young people who do the editing and getting out of The catholic Worker, seeing visitors, doing the work of the Houses of Hospitality, and performing, in truth, all the Works of Mercy. Day and evening and even nights are filled with "unprogrammed" work. One never knows what crisis is going to arise, what emergency is coming up next. Living in our slums is like living in a war-torn area.

And here I am living on the beach, writing, answering some letters, and trying to grow in the life of the spirit. I feel that I am but a beginner.

I remember a young woman who came to help us years ago who, after her first, early enthusiasm had worn away, used to sigh wearily and say, "What's it all about?" I am sure many of our friends and readers also pose, more seriously, the same question. For instance, what are Ernest and Marion Bromley all about? Why is this frail, elderly man in jail right now for "disorderly conduct," that is, for distributing leaflets about the nefarious workings of the Internal Revenue Ser-

vice and their ways of penalizing people for advocating tax refusal. Remember, it is the federal taxes paid by each of us that supply the arms that are keeping wars going.

What I want to bring out is how a pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. And each one of our thoughts, words, and deeds is like that. Going to jail, as Ernest Bromley has done, short though his stay may be, causes a ripple of thought, of conscience among us all. And of remembrance, too.

Ernest Bromley is sharing, in his (we hope) brief jail encounter, the sufferings of the world. And we hope, like the Apostles, he rejoices in having been accounted worthy to suffer.'

What is it all about—the Catholic Worker movement?" It is, in a way, a school, a work camp, to which large-hearted, socially conscious young people come to find their vocations. After some months or years, they know most definitely what they want to do with their lives. Some go into medicine, nursing, law, teaching, farming, writing, and publishing.

They learn not only to love, with compassion, but to overcome fear, that dangerous emotion that precipitates violence. They may go on feeling fear, but they know the means, they have grown in faith, to overcome it. "Lord, deliver us from the fear of our enemies." Not from our enemies, but from the fear of them. In jail, too, there is a very real sense of fear.

To be a prisoner, whether for a weekend or a month as many of us have, is never again to forget those walls, those bars, those brothers and sisters of ours behind them.

8

THE ANTIGONISH WAY

Moses M. Coady

Born on a Cape Breton farm in 1882, Moses Coady received his formal education at St. Francis Xavier University, Urban College in Rome, and Catholic University in Washington. A priest of the Antigonish diocese, he taught at St. F. X from 1910. In 1921, he assisted J. J. Tompkins in establishing a "People's School" for adult education. In 1928, Coady was appointed Director of the newly established Extension Department. The following summary of the approach used in the department's work is from a CBC Broadcast Series in 1943, earlier reprinted in A. F. Laidlaw's compilation of Coady's writings, Man from Margaree (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971). Reprinted by permission. Dr. Coady died in 1959.

The promoters of the Antigonish Movement were certain of two points. They had a clear-cut idea of their objective, and they knew that this objective was to be reached through some scheme of adult education. The objective was to give life to the people of the Maritime Provinces. This meant a better economic status, more culture and greater spirituality; it meant giving the people equality of opportunity to achieve the realization of all their possibilities through voluntary action in a democratic society.

It was not so plain how this could be done. The people were poor and a large number of them were illiterate.

Among those who were not technically illiterate, there was great functional illiteracy. By this is meant that people who had the technical tools of education did not have a chance to get the enlightenment necessary for achieving real life.

There were two ways of approaching the problem. Education up to this time had meant teaching, courses and credits. The idea prevailed that if people could not get a chance at formal schooling they would have to do without education. According to this idea, the University would have to employ a large number of lecturers and professors and put the people back to school. They could do this through actual teaching, through lectures and by correspondence courses. This was evidently impossible. St. Francis Xavier University was too poor an institution to carry out any such program. We think now that it was a good thing that we were poor. We found a better technique by facing the actual situation and planning a way by which the people could be mobilized to think, to study and to get enlightenment. We found the discussion circle. It did not involve teachers; it was in line with our cooperative idea; we would make education part of the self-help movement; the people would come together by themselves and discuss their problems.

The first logical step in this process was for someone to round up the people, so to speak. This involved the mass meeting. After some preliminary advertising, through press or pulpit, the people of a given community were brought together and addressed by a member of the Extension Department. At these first meetings fundamental, homely philosophies were placed before the people. They were shown that man made progress through the operation of his mind, and that the mind counted much more than muscle. The people were also shown the great possibilities for life around them

everywhere, if they would only condition themselves to the point where they could realize them. The story of what common people had done in other parts of the world was told.

The mass meeting features the human personality, and nothing can replace the person as an instrument for the dissemination of knowledge. True, people can be educated by books and the information they themselves gather, but philosophy and ideas come and go by human beings.

Out of this general mass meeting discussion groups or study clubs were formed. Sometimes a whole community would respond enthusiastically. In other places—and this was the general thing—only a few groups would be formed. A leader was selected for each group. He was not to be a teacher but rather a secretary of the group, whose business it was to round up the people, to see that they got the literature and that they attended the meetings. The next step was to get the people who formed the little discussion groups to meet once a month in a larger group called an associated or federated study club. This was done in the belief that the success attending the operations of some little groups would stimulate further interest in the members of all the groups. Furthermore it was a common meeting ground where people could talk about their difficulties and their problems. It afforded an opportunity for recreation and cultural activities, and it gave the people a chance to hear inspirational speakers who attended these rallies. This direct and purposeful organization of the people is a short-cut to results.

The success of this procedure depended upon a somewhat unknown quantity: the local leader. If he could be found, all would be well. Often he was the clergyman of the community. Sometimes a schoolteacher or other socially-minded individual would come to the fore. There were

instances, however, where no such individual was found but the people themselves successfully applied this technique.

It must be said, however, that in the experience of the Antigonish Movement, clergymen played a big role. Workers from the Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries were important to the scheme also. It thus happened that from the very beginning the St. Francis Xavier Extension, which had only two men officially connected with it for field work, had a large staff of hundreds of people scattered all over the country. This fact brought a new enthusiasm to the work. A great social and educational technique was thus accidentally discovered. The idea dawned upon everybody that all over Canada there were tens of thousands of free men and women with good education who could be involved in this work. It became clear to the Extension leaders that democracy could survive if its human assets could be organized to work for it. In all past time these human beings had not released their total energy for the good of society.

This plan was attended with some success from the beginning. It was this conviction of everybody that, if anything worthwhile were to be done to regenerate the people, a method had to be found which would make it possible to mobilize a large number over a wide area. In no other way could the social forces that were to change the life of the people be properly mobilized. In a comparatively short time many communities responded. They became numerous enough to carry on activities beyond their own boundaries. Out of this grew the conference idea, a technique that has proved of inestimable value. These conferences were of two kinds, vocational and general. The vocational conferences were meetings of representatives of all the groups engaged in a given profession. Thus, the fishermen had their confer-

ences, the farmers theirs, and the industrial workers theirs, where the problems confronting each group were discussed. Out of these grew the general conferences, where all the people met, generally once a year, to discuss common educational, social and economic problems. This finally culminated in a great institution, the Rural and Industrial Conference, which met annually at Antigonish until it was closed off by the present war. It attracted people from other parts of Canada, from the United States and a few from more distant countries. Some years as many as 1200 people attended. The general purpose was inspirational, and it sent people back to their homes with a new vision of the possibilities of education and social action by the people themselves.

The St. Francis Xavier Extension Department was fortunate that it found many ready-made leaders all over the country. The work was not going very long, however, when it became evident that something would have to be done to create a greater number of leaders. With the growth of the people it was necessary to develop educational techniques. Thus there came into being short courses for leaders. These courses, started in 1933, were first given on the campus. Men and women came in from all over the country for four weeks each year. In these courses the whole philosophy of cooperation and adult education was presented. The school was turned into a miniature society and all discussion techniques were tried out. The little discussion circle, or study club, was tried. Forum and panel discussions were added. The conference technique was featured.

These men and women went back to their respective communities fired with a new enthusiasm for the work. From 1923 to the time when it was discontinued the school trained 735 men and women. It is safe to say that no phase

of the adult education work carried on by the Extension Department produced greater results. Scores of men and women who have since figured prominently in the movement got their start and inspiration in these courses. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of the present war this procedure had to be discontinued, it was felt that, on account of war work and related activities, the people could not get away from their communities for such a long time.

As a consequence, the Extension Department went out to the people and put on four-day short courses in their communities. During this last year, seventeen of these courses have been carried on in various places in the Maritimes. These were attended by eight hundred prospective leaders. One of the great revelations of this short course was the finding of men and women who had only ordinary education, yet on account of their native ability and zeal they have gone on and educated themselves. Today they are holding important positions in the movement.

Another important phase of the educational movement must be mentioned here. We had hardly started to mobilize the people in this educational program when it became evident that a paper of some kind had to be created as an organ or mouthpiece of the movement. Consequently the Extension Department began in 1933 the publication of the Extension Bulletin. Later this paper was replaced by the Maritime Cooperator, a fortnightly publication which carried the philosophy of adult education and cooperation and the news and achievements of the movement to the people. One of our hardest experiences in connection with this whole movement has been the difficulty of making the people see the necessity for such an organ. One would think they would appreciate a publication to support their

cause and fight their battles. Every other group of people in the nation finds such publications valuable. The common people alone seem to fail to see the soundness of such procedure.

This was only one phase of the task of getting material to the people. In the beginning there was a scarcity of written material to interest them. If they were to be organized for study, material had to be found. It had to be such as to arouse their interest. This was, and still is, the most difficult part of the work. Right at the beginning, the promoters of the Extension Department prepared written material that was sent out in mimeographed and pamphlet form. In the intervening years scores of pamphlets and a number of books have been prepared by those connected with the Department.

In addition to this, small libraries were created in different parts of the country. These were only little kitchen libraries, so to speak, but they played their role. Some of them did exceptionally good work. The people gradually began to get acquainted with books and are being prepared for the new day when real library services will he made available to them. The educational and cooperative activities have gradually been giving them the will for other social institutions that will give them an opportunity to enjoy the good things in our social and artistic heritage. Moreover, they are getting themselves into a financial position to be able to create and pay for such services.

In recent years, all these techniques have been supplemented by a new one—radio. This marvellous invention of science has made it possible for people to remain in their own communities and yet enjoy the contact with inspirational teachers. Radio, with its listening groups, will make

it possible for teachers to do for the common people in this adult education movement what has heretofore been done in the classroom. It opens up vast possibilities for the education of all the people.

We think the Antigonish experience has made two things plain. First, that the discussion circle as a way of learning will endure for all time. Men can learn individually, but it will always be true that discussion with their fellows reinforces individual effort. The other great truth is that organization of the people for economic and social activities through cooperatives will always remain the physical basis of study. It matters not whether this organization be a housing group, a cooperative store, a producer plant or a credit union. It gives the people something to tie to; it keeps them together; they have to wrestle with it; it gives them a sense of togetherness which naturally issues in group learning.

In the beginning of adult education these institutions are necessary because they supply a concrete and specific purpose for study. This is important for common people. It is a good old pedagogical principle that men will study for specific purposes, but not for vague and general aims. Once having got the feeling of study, they are likely to be more prone to keep up intellectual activities. The day will come, of course, when people will pass this elementary stage and move into the general cultural field. They will grow out of the babyhood stage, so to speak, and be able to take the stronger philosophical and cultural food.

But even then, man will still be the problem child of creation. He will always need institutions in which he has a vested interest to stand on guard for him and to protect him from himself. If cooperative institutions could speak, they would say they are the new bulwarks of liberty—truly

on guard for the people. The more we increase these stores, credit unions and other establishments owned by the people, the more do men protect themselves by building future bastions of freedom.

These are the chief techniques that have been employed by the St. Francis Xavier Extension. They are definitely not final and iron-clad. Through these methods the people are being developed to make use of other educational instruments or institutions. As the people grow up intellectually, these techniques can be modified.

9

SETTLEMENTS

Caroline Williamson Montgomery

A century ago, the Working Centre would have been recognized instantly as a settlement. It can be understood today as an effort to recover that earlier ethic and practice. Following is Montgomery's capsule description of settlements in TV. D. P. Bliss, ed., The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform *(NY. Funk & Wagnalls, 1908).*

One of the earliest definitions of a settlement and one which still holds good is that given by Miss Ada S. Woolfolk in Johnson's Encyclopedia. She defines settlements as "homes in the poorer quarters of a city where educated men and women may live in daily personal contact with the working people." Here they may identify themselves as citizens with all the public interest of the neighborhood, may cooperate with their neighbors in every effort for the common good and share with them, in the spirit of friendship, the fruit and inspiration of their wider opportunities.

Miss Jane Addams of Hull House, put concisely the social significance of settlements as

> a sustained and democratic effort to apply ethical Convictions to social and industrial Conditions in those localities where life has become most complicated and difficult The settlement movement is only one manifestation of that wide humanitarian movement which throughout Christendom,

> but preeminently in England, is endeavoring to embody itself not in a sect but in society itself. Certain it is that spiritual force is found in the settlement movement, and it is also true that this force must be evoked and must be called into play before the success of any settlement is assured. There must be the overmastering belief that all that is noblest in life is common to men as men, in order to accentuate the likeness and ignore the differences which are found among the people the settlement constantly brings into juxtaposition. It aims in a measure to lead whatever of social life its neighborhood may afford, to focus and give form to that life, to bring to bear upon it the results of cultivation and training; but it receives in exchange for the music of isolated voices the volume and strength of the chorus. The settlement, then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. It is an effort to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other; but it assumes that this overaccumulation and destitution is most sorely felt in things that pertain to social and educational advantages. (Addams 1893, 19-30)

The development of the settlement idea has been gradual. In 1860 Frederic Denison Maurice founded the Working Men's College, whose classes were taught by young Cambridge graduates in their leisure hours. In 1867 the university extension movement began in Cambridge. Owing to the influence of Rev. John Richards Green, vicar of St. Philip's, Stepney, and better known as the historian of the English people, Edward Denison made his home in 1867 in East London, but his health failed and he came to an early death. In 1875 Arnold Toynbee resolved to spend his summer vacation in assisting the Rev. S.A. Barnett of St. Jude's. In 1883 Arnold Toynbee died, but two years later, through Canon Barnett, who had already been ten years in Whitechapel,

Toynbee Hall, the first university settlement, was founded by Oxford men. In 1887 Dr. Stanton Coit established the Neighborhood Guild in New York. This became later the University Settlement. In 1889, at almost the same time, the College Settlement, with Miss Jean Fine (flow Mrs. Spahr) as head worker and with Miss Vida D. Scudder as one of its chief inspirers, was opened in New York, and Miss Jane Addams and Miss Ellen Gates Starr took up residence at Hull House, Chicago. From that time the growth has been rapid until there are over two hundred reported in the United States. Settlements are to be found in Australia, Japan, the Philippine and Hawaiian Islands, and in Austria, Germany, France, and Holland, as well as the mother country, Great Britain. There are also settlements for rural communities both in New England and Southern states.

Not only are there many houses which hear the name of settlement, but settlement methods have been adopted by missions, churches, and training-schools of various kinds, so that the name has lost much of its original significance. In spite of the looseness in the use of the name and idea, which is perhaps more or less inevitable, so much of what is good has permeated the life and activities of many institutions that it is evident that the indirect influence of settlements is a factor not to he ignored. There are settlements with no residents that have more truly the settlement spirit than many another with a number of resident workers. There are settlements with a definite propaganda which touch the life about them more closely than others that claim to hold themselves open to every desire of the neighborhood, regardless of creed, race, or sex. There seems, however, to be a growing tendency on the part of those longest interested in settlements to go back to the original spirit underlying their

beginnings and to deplore the tendency to institutionalism. A happy mean is struck by Canon Barnett in his Fifteenth Annual Report (June 30. 1899) when he says:

> Toynbee Hall exists that individuals may tell on individuals, that the knowledge accumulated in the universities and the experience accumulated in industry may move public opinion through the friendships formed between university men and the inhabitants of industrial neighborhoods. But such friendships are sure to lead to organizations. When two or three meet together and in the presence of the higher ideal in their midst see the ignorance or the suffering of the sin which is around, they cannot help starting the machinery by which that good-will may become effective.

Mrs. Simkovitch, of Greenwich House, New York, urges that settlement workers do

> not make of the home center a noisy clubhouse filled with various hybrid education and social activities that will gradually drive out the simple home life, without which a settlement is devoid of that spirit that alone can render it permanently useful in the neighborhood as a stimulus towards generally improved conditions; for a settlement is primarily a stimulus and only secondarily an institution. Institutional features should be undertaken only when it impossible for the settlement to get anybody else to undertake them. ... The essence of settlement work is freedom to meet a new opportunity, and this elasticity is difficult to combine with a highly developed institution. This does not mean that institutional work has not its place and value in settlement activities, but it does mean that the institution ought never to strangle the fresh opportunities that are constantly springing up from the social life of a neighborhood such as ours. The settlement is founded on a belief that the springs of beauty of character and of the best social development are to be found in the lives of our working people, and that, firm in that belief, it

> is our duty and privilege to work with them, so to change the outer conditions of their lives that those inner springs will have a change to develop. (Reports of Greenwich House, Jan. 1903 and Oct. 1900)

The number of settlements as now reported is as follows:Asia, 1; Australia, 1; Austria, 1; England and Wales, 56; France, 4; Germany 2; Holland, 11; Scotland, 10; U.S., including Hawaii and Philippines and representing 31 states, 207; a total of 293.

While there are settlements in a number of the smaller cities and towns of England, the movement has settled in London where it began. The chief inspiration has come in many instances from the universities (Oxford and Cambridge) whether shown in the first settlement, Toynbee Hall, in Oxford House, St. Margaret's House, Cambridge House, or in the settlements of the Congregationalists. The influence of Canon Barnett, who stands "for the way of life as distinct from the way of machinery," has been most marked, not alone in London and England, but wherever the settlement idea has taken root.

In Paris the settlements have tended to the educational side. As a rule, the residence plan has not been successfully carried out, but whereas at first sight the Paris settlements might seem to be allied to university extension yet they are "so primarily social and the relation between 'workers' and the people is so natural, wholesome, and mutually helpful," that they are really closely akin to settlements. In Holland there is but one residence worker in the eleven settlements, and those who are carrying them on are apt to protest that they are not really settlements. However, almost all the "people's houses" seem to have drawn their inspiration directly from Toynbee Hall and the teachings of Ruskin.

It is in the U.S., however, that settlements have had their most varied and largest growth. There are many institutions which have assumed that name without having much if any right to it. There are a number of interesting experiments in bringing the settlement ideas into rural communities. In spite of some feeble and unworthy efforts, the strength and wide influences of such settlements as the South End House, Boston; the group of settlements carried on by college women under the College Settlements Association in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; the University Settlement, Greenwich House, and the Nurses' Settlement in New York City; Whittier House in Jersey City; the University Settlement, the Commons, of Chicago, and many others throughout the country make the name an honorable one. Preeminent above all is Hull House, of Chicago, under the leadership of Miss Jane Addams, "the most successful settlement in the world," according to Canon Barnett. Hull House is not only one of the most important factors in the higher life of Chicago, but its influence has reached far beyond its own city.

> As regards the present status of settlements, several difficulties are met with in attempting to realize their ideals: (1) Many of the residents do not come to settle but to spend a limited number of months in the hope of doing little and learning much. (2) Nearly every settlement is compelled through periodical statistical reports to justify its existence in the eyes of outside subscribers. (3) From these facts of transient workers and tabulated reports there follows as a necessary evil the wide-spread tendency to employ machinery in order to product effects.... So long as 90 per cent of the residents turn their backs on the colony as soon as they have gained enough experience to be valuable, not very extensive results can be hoped for. (Ulwick 1903)

From another authority we have this opinion:

> Settlements are still experimental. They are far from having reached the clear waters of an assured position, but are a success if only because they have evidenced out the idea and given new form to the practice of neighbourliness and have thus made for social solidarity. They do not perhaps necessarily represent so high a personal ideal as that of Edward Denison, who lived alone in a poor street in East London; but they are more practical than isolated effort and in spite of the drawbacks of community life and the artificialities and partial separation from ordinary social life which are involved. They give scope for the very effective concentration of many minds on one general aim. Their stability in the future depends on the amount of personal service they can secure of the kind that is needed. (Booth 1902-1903)

10

HULL HOUSE

Jane Addams

More books and articles have been written about Jane Addams (1860-1935) than about any other American woman (Deegan 1990). Her compassion for the poor earned her the reverence reserved for saints. Her pacifism in World War I, and her advocacy of real democracy and women's rights, led to her vilification as a traitor and communist. Her relevance for present purposes is that with her friend, Ellen Starr, she founded a grass-roots community institution much like the Working Centre (albeit much larger), and made it the context for her activist kind of sociology. Following is her own description of Hull House, as published in W D. P. Bliss, ed., The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform *(New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908). Note the variety of ways in which the Hull House community created culture of its own in that pre-TV era. Note also the novel spellings* (altho) *in this article—in Addams's social circle, attempts at reform even of language were legitimate.*

Hull House, one of the first American settlements, was established in Sept., 1889. It represented no association, but was opened by two women, backed by many friends, in the belief that the mere foothold of a house, easily accessible, ample in space, hospitable and tolerant in spirit, situated in the midst of the large foreign colonies which so easily isolate themselves in American cities, would be in itself a serviceable thing for Chicago. Hull House endevors to make social intercourse ex-

press the growing sense of the economical unity of society, and may be described as an effort to add the social function to democracy.

The earliest activities of the settlement were the ordinary ones of children's clubs, kindergartens, receptions, and evening classes. From these larger activities developed which may be described under general headings.

Class Lectures

The College extension courses were established at Hull House before the University Extension movement began in Chicago, and are not connected with it, altho University extension courses are constantly given at Hull House and every Sunday evening for many years the Extension Department of the University of Chicago has donated a stereopticon lecture. These are attended by large audiences of men. A helpful supplement of the College Extension courses has been the Summer School, which was held for ten years in the building of Rockford College, at Rockford, Ill. The sum of $3 a week paid by each student for board covers the entire expenses of the school; the use of the buildings, including the gymnasium and laboratories, given free of rent.

Hull House hopes to develop a technic of teaching especially adapted to adults while utilizing the usual school and college type. Our experience with large classes of immigrants who wish to learn English has resulted in the collection of a special line of text-books and series of pictures.

Public Discussion

Organizations which are on the border-land between classes and debating clubs have arranged for a number of public lectures, such as the "Working People's Social Science Club,"

which was the first body including men to be organized at Hull House. This club was formed through the activity of an English workingman, during the first year of Hull House, for the discussion of social problems, and continued to meet weekly for seven years. The discussion was always animated, and every conceivable shade of social and economic opinion was represented, but radicals are so accustomed to hot discussion and sharp differences of opinion, that an almost incorrigible good nature prevailed.

Trade Unions

Closely connected with such discussions of economic subjects has been the formal connection between Hull House and organized labor, altho this may be fairly said to rest upon the foundation of personal relations with the organizers of various women's unions, who have lived in the house as guests of residents. Several unions hold their regular meetings at the house, and the Chicago branches of two well-known federal organizations of working women have been formed there: the Women's Union Label League and the Women's Trade-Union League.

Several of the Hull House educational enterprises have developed through the effort made to bridge the past life in Europe with American experiences in such ways as to give them both some meaning and sense of relation.

Labor Museum

The Hull House Labor Museum was in the first instance suggested by many people in the neighborhood who had come directly from country places in southeastern Europe in which industrial processes are still carried on by the most primitive methods. It was not unusual to find an old Italian

woman with her distaff again, her homesick face patiently spinning a thread by the simple stick spindle which had certainly been used in the days when David tended his sheep at Bethlehem. In the immediate neighborhood were found at least four varieties of these most primitive methods of spinning and at least three distinct variations of the same spindle put in connection with wheels. It was possible to put these seven into historic sequence and order, and to connect the whole with the present method of factory spinning. The same thing was done for weaving, and on every Saturday evening a little exhibit is made of these "various forms of labor" in the textile industry. Within one room the Syrian, the Greek, the Italian, the Slav, the German, and the Celt enable even the most casual observer to see that there is no break in orderly evolution, if we look at history from the industrial standpoint. The interest on the part of the classes in dressmaking, millinery, cooking, and sewing in this historic background has been most gratifying.

Arts and Crafts

Closely identified with the Labor Museum and the classes in pottery, metal work, enamel, and wood-carving, The Chicago Arts and Crafts Society was organized at Hull House and several members of this society live in the buildings on the Hull House quadrangle. The artists find something of the same spirit in the contiguous Italian colony that the French artist is traditionally supposed to discover in his beloved Latin Quarter. Successful classes in drawing, modeling, painting, and lithography are continued year after year, and the space given to the studies has been constantly enlarged. Miss Starr's bookbindery is in the same building with the other shops and is opened to those especially interested

in choice books or in the processes of making them. Occasional art exhibits have always been held at Hull House and the response to excellence in matters of art has always been gratifying.

Music School

The Hull House Music School was started in the fourth year of Hull House, altho Miss Eleanor Smith and Miss Hannig, who are its heads, had almost from the beginning held weekly classes there. The Music School is designed to give a thorough musical instruction to a limited number of children. From the beginning they are taught to compose and to reduce to order the musical suggestion which may come to them. They sometimes find folk- songs in the possession of their old-country relatives which have survived through the centuries.

Concerts

Two years ago a beautiful memorial organ was erected at Hull House, which has greatly added to the resources of the Music School and to the interest of the public concerts which have been given every Sunday afternoon for fifteen years.

Theater

Another method of education used more and more at Hull House is that made possible through dramatics, largely amateur, altho professionals have from time to time been most generous with their services. The first dramas at Hull House were produced in the gymnasium until they seemed to justify the erection of a well-equipped stage in a room erected for a theater.

In the immediate vicinity of Hull House is a large col-

ony of Greeks, who often feel that their history and classic background are completely ignored by the Americans in Chicago, and they therefore welcome an opportunity to present Greek plays in the ancient text. Two of these plays have been remarkably successful; they were carefully staged by Miss Barrows, and the "Ajax" of Sophocles was a genuine triumph to the Greek colony. The little Hull House stage has presented many Italian plays and a few in other tongues, but, of course, the Hull House Dramatic Association present their productions in English and have gradually built up a little clientele of admirers from all parts of the town, and the members have developed in the course of years some genuine dramatic ability. This association gives two carefully prepared dramas each winter. They have presented Ibsen and Shaw as well as melodramas and classic plays. There are also Junior Dramatic Associations.

Gymnasium

Gymnasium instruction, with the help of limited apparatus, was provided from the first years of Hull House, but not until 1893 was a separate gymnasium building erected, supplied with a complete system of shower-baths and a running-track.

Residential Clubs

The Jane Club, a cooperative boarding-club for young working women, had the advice and assistance of Hull House in its establishment. The original members of the club, seven in number, were a group of girls accustomed to cooperative action. The club has been from the beginning self-governing, the officers being elected by the members from their own number, and serving six months gratuitously. The two offices of treasurer and steward have required a generous

sacrifice of their limited leisure time as well as a good deal of ability from those holding them. The weekly dues of $3, with an occasional small assessment, have met all Current expenses of rent, service, food, and heat. There are various circles within the club for social and intellectual purposes. The atmosphere of the house is one of comradeship rather than of thrift. The Jane Club seven years ago moved into a house built expressly for its use. It provides bedroom space for thirty members, twenty-four of them single rooms, with a library and a living-room, and a dining-room large enough to use for social gatherings.

The Culver Club is a residential club of thirty working boys who occupy two upper floors of the Hull House Boys' Club Building. They are self sustaining and most generous in their services to the social life of the Boys' Club house.

The Hull House Men's Club was organized in 1893, and incorporated under the state law. They rent from Hull House a building for their exclusive use, which is open to members every day and evening. The club holds a monthly reception during the winter and arranges for occasional public debates.

The Hull House Women's Club is housed in a building of its own. It has exclusive control of the library and sewing- room, but the large hall, which seats 800 people, is used for many other purposes. The membership is 600. The "Year Book," which is issued in advance each September, shows a full program of lectures on current topics by distinguished speakers, discussions by club members, and musical afternoons by the club's own chorus. The club sustains a visiting-nurse, who lives at Hull House. The club contributes regularly to the Juvenile Court and to the vacation schools and other public undertakings.

Social Clubs

At present thirty-five social organizations meet weekly at Hull House, composed of young people who elect their own officers and prepare their own programs under the approval of their "directors." Some of these clubs are purely social, others do serious educational work. Dancing-classes, which are always well attended, are held in connection with the social clubs.

The Hull House Boys' Club of 1,500 members occupies its own building, equipped with bowling-alleys, billiard-tables, athletic apparatus, shops for work in iron, wood, and printing, library and class-rooms. The house is open to members every day from three to ten P.M., and its preservation and good order are carefully guarded by the club members themselves.

Afternoon Clubs

Every afternoon after school hours all the available rooms at Hull House are filled with children's clubs, which are designed to be social and recreative in character, altho some serious study is done by groups in sloid, in sewing, in clay modelling, in cooking, and in gymnastics. The membership of the various clubs and classes consists of 1,500 school children. Outings, moving-picture shows, and Christmas entertainments are arranged for them.

Coffee-House

The Coffee-House was opened in 1893 on the basis of a public kitchen. An investigation of the sweat-shops of the neighborhood had disclosed the fact that sewing-women during the busy season paid little attention to the feeding of their families, for it was only working steadily through

the long day that the scanty pay of five, seven, or nine cents for finishing a dozen pairs of trousers could be made into a day's wage; and that the women, therefore, bought from the nearest grocery the canned goods that could be most quickly heated or gave a few pennies to the children with which they might secure a lunch from a neighboring candy-shop.

One of the residents made an investigation, at the insistence of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, into the food values of the dietaries of the various immigrants, and this was followed by an investigation made by another resident into the foods of the Italian Colony, disclosing that constant use of imported products bore a distinct relation to the cost of living. The result of these studies led to the opening of a public kitchen modeled after the New England Kitchen of Boston. The sale of cooked foods, however, has never been popular altho the restaurant aspect of the Coffee-House developed rapidly. This performs a mission of its own and has become something of a social center to the neighborhood. Business men from the adjacent factories, and teachers from nearby schools, use it constantly. Every evening students and club members sup together in little groups or hold their reunions and social banquets, as do organizations from other parts of town. The Coffee-House has been self-sustaining from the beginning, and of later years has been able to pay rental to Hull House.

Day Nursery

A Day Nursery was opened because of the many mothers who were obliged to work and who quite simply asked the kindergartner to "keep the baby for the day." A small apartment was taken across the street and turned into a day-nursery, which was later moved into a cottage on the nearest side

Street, and altho a second kindergarten was started here, the earlier one in the drawing-room continued. Later a building called the Children's House was erected for the purpose of housing all of the activities of the children with special reference to the Day-Nursery and Kindergarten. The former averages thirty children a day, and because it is inadequate to the needs of the neighborhood, still another building is in process of erection in which the Chicago Relief and Aid Society will maintain a day- nursery. Facilities are also provided in this building for teaching immigrant mothers the beginnings of wage-earning occupations.

Public Utilities

From the beginning a constant effort was made to hand over to public authority every activity that had been initiated. Shower- baths had been maintained in the basement of the house for the use of the neighborhood and they afforded some experience and argument for the erection of the first public bath-house in Chicago, which was built on a neighboring street and opened under the care of the Board of Health. The reading-room and Public Library Station which was begun in the house is continued but a block away. The lending collection of pictures has been incorporated into the Public School Art Society of Chicago, of which Miss Starr was the first president.

Hull House has always held its activities lightly, as it were, in the hollow of its hand, ready to give them over to whomsoever would carry them on properly, for there is among the residents a distrust of the institutional and a desire to be free for experiment and the initiation of new enterprises.

It was, perhaps, significant that the only political office ever sought was that of garbage inspector for the

Hull House ward. The poor collection of refuse throughout the city made the greatest menace in the Nineteenth Ward, where the normal amount was much increased by the decayed fruit and vegetables discarded by the Italian and Greek fruit-sellers, and it seemed quite probable that this condition had some connection with the high death-rate so persistent in the ward. One of the residents held this office of inspector for three years, and while many of the foreign-born women of the ward were much shocked by this abrupt departure into the ways of men, they were finally convinced that if it were a womanly task to go about in tenement-houses in order to nurse the sick, it might be quite as womanly to go though the same district in order to prevent the breeding of so-called "filth diseases." Moreover, the spectacle of eight hours' work for eight hours' pay, the even-handed justice to all citizens irrespective of "pull," the dividing of responsibility between landlord and tenant, and the readiness to enforce obedience to law from both, was, perhaps, one of the most valuable demonstrations that could have been made.

Investigations have also been made into the causes of truancy and juvenile delinquency in their relations to housing. The moral energy of the community is aroused only when people realize that they may become part of the general movements which make for the reform and healing. In illustration of this theory the neighborhood cooperated most generously in a careful investigation of the sweat-shops of the neighborhood, which was made in 1892 by Mrs. Florence Kelly, one of the early residents appointed to do the work by the Illinois Labor Bureau. The report brought a special commission from the legislature to look into the matter, and the recommendations of this committee resulted in the passage

of the first factory law for Illinois, which dealt largely with the sanitary conditions of the sweat-shops and the regulation of the age at which a child might be permitted to work, and Mrs. Kelly was appointed the first factory inspector with a deputy and a force of twelve inspectors.

So far as Hull House residents have been identified with public offices, it has been in the attempt both to interpret the needs of the neighborhood to public bodies and to identify the neighborhood energies with civic efforts. This has been true of Miss Lathrop's long experience as a member of the State Board of Charities, with the work of another resident officer as a member of the Chicago School Board, and of four residents in their official connection with the Juvenile Court of Cook County.

Residents

No university or college qualification has ever been made in regard to residents, altho the majority have always been college people. The organization of the settlement has always been extremely informal. Residents are received for six weeks, during which time they have all privileges, save a vote at residents' meeting. At the end of that period, if they have proved valuable to the work of the house, they are invited to remain. The expenses of the residents are defrayed by themselves on the plant of a cooperative club, under the direction of a house committee. An apartment-house, which shelters twelve families, gives a chance of growth in the residential force, and provides quarters for old friends and neighbors of the house who are glad to occupy them. The residential force numbers thirty-four, equally divided between men and women. About 100 people from other parts of town contribute single days or evenings.

Total Attendance

It is estimated that 7,000 people come to Hull House each week, either as members of clubs or organizations, or as parts of an audience. The total attendance of the various clubs and classes varies from year to year, only as we are able to provide more room, and it sometimes seems as if nothing but available space could limit it. The residents, however, are convinced that growth either in buildings or numbers counts for little unless the settlement is able to evoke valuable resources of moral energy and social ability from the neighborhood itself.

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