

THE INFLUENCE OF SAUL ALINSKY ON THE CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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[Editor's note: The author argues that the Campaign for Human Development, founded in 1969, is U.S. Catholicism's most significant and longest social experiment in the 20th century. A postconciliar response to an America in crisis, the campaign is a unique theological resource in the development of an indigenous North American theology. Central to its uniqueness was the bishops' embrace of the dean of community organizing, Saul David Alinsky.]

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS initiated in 1969 the most significant and longest-running experiment of 20th-century U.S. Catholic social action. The founding resolution for this project read as follows: "There is an evident need for funds designated to be used for organizing groups of white and minority poor to develop economic and political power in their own communities. . . . Therefore be it resolved that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops establish a National Crusade Against Poverty. The crusade will commit the Church to raise a fund of 50 million dollars over the next several years."¹ This crusade came to be known as the Campaign for Human Development (CHD).² Twenty-nine years and over \$225 million later,³ the experiment became an official department of the United States Catholic Conference.⁴

What was the origin of this experiment? Why would Catholic bishops approve funds for the poor to organize for power, much of which went

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¹ "Resolution on the Crusade against Poverty," adopted by the National Catholic Conference of Bishops, November 14, 1969, in *Daring to Seek Justice*, ed. James Jennings (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1986) 69.

² The Crusade against Poverty was eventually renamed the Campaign for Human Development.

³ Timothy Collins, "Campaign for Human Development Press Release," September 8, 1997, United States Catholic Conference.

⁴ The CHD became an official department within the USCC in 1989.

to the community-organizing projects associated with Saul Alinsky?⁵ Was there a theology behind the CHD? Why was the original \$50 million permitted to expand to over \$225 million? What was validated within the experiment that led to the conclusion that providing funds for organized power groups was an official function of the U.S. Catholic Church, or perhaps more clearly stated, a constitutive dimension of U.S. Catholic life. By answering these questions one can show how the CHD became a unique theological resource in the development of a North American theology.⁶

The origins of the CHD have not yet been definitively researched and established.⁷ Former NCCB President Bishop James Malone identifies two forces as foundational to the CHD: "the crisis of human needs and aspirations which was being experienced with peculiar urgency in American society," and the "impact of the Second Vatican Council."⁸ I shall briefly examine Malone's two forces here, and then, in the body of this article, deal with third force in the development of the CHD, the underrecognized influence of Saul Alinsky (1909–1972), the "dean of community-organizing."⁹

At first glance, such a claim about Alinsky and Catholics may seem preposterous. How could the U.S. bishops be influenced by an agnostic Jew popularly known as "Machiavelli in modern dress"?¹⁰ Yet Alinsky organized his first community organization in Chicago's Back of the Yards in 1939, and critical to the success of Alinsky's first organization and all subsequent organizations was the foundational participation of the Catholic Church.¹¹ Despite its foundational role, however, the relationship between the Church and Alinsky has not been the subject of theological reflection within the Catholic community.¹² Here I wish to provide some background for engaging in such reflection.

⁵ Rael Jean Isaac and Erich Isaac, *The Coercive Utopians* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983) 210.

⁶ This project is part of the broader North American theological projects of the John Courtney Murray Writers Group and within the argument developed by John A. Coleman, S.J., *An American Strategic Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1982).

⁷ To date, two texts have summarily addressed the origins of the CHD: *Daring to Seek Justice*, and *Empowerment and Hope: 25 Years of Turning Lives Around*, ed. James J. Jennings (Washington, D.C.: USCC Campaign for Human Development, 1996); the second text addresses the history of the CHD after 1985.

⁸ See his speech at the 15th-anniversary celebration of CHD in 1985, in *Daring to Seek Justice*, Introduction.

⁹ Harry C. Boyte, *Community Is Possible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983) 34.

¹⁰ Wayne A. R. Leys, "Machiavelli in Modern Dress," *The Christian Century* 76 (November 11, 1959) 1308–09.

¹¹ More than 90% of the Back of the Yards population was Catholic. See Saul D. Alinsky, "Community Analysis and Organization," *The American Journal of Sociology* 141 (1941) 797–808. For a description of Catholic involvement in Alinsky organizations during the 1940s through the early 1970s, see P. David Finks, *The Radical Vision of Saul Alinsky* (New York: Paulist, 1984). From the early 1970s to the early 1990s, see Cynthia Perry, *IAF: Fifty Years* (Franklin Square, N.Y.: Industrial Areas Foundation, 1990).

¹² Charles E. Curran, "Saul D. Alinsky, Catholic Social Practice, and Catholic Theory," *Directions in Catholic Social Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1985) 147.

Human Needs in America in the 1960s

The decade of the 1960s has been described variously as “the most eventful and tumultuous decade of the twentieth century,”¹³ “a period of crisis,”¹⁴ “a profound cultural upheaval,”¹⁵ and as a “revolutionary moment.”¹⁶ This was the decade of Neil Armstrong’s walk on the moon, the Cuban missile crisis, the escalation of the Vietnam conflict, and the Civil Rights movement. It was the time of the “New Frontier” and the “Great Society,” a time influenced by the powerful oratory of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., and then shattered by their deaths. These were years marked by an ever expanding national obituary: June 1963, NAACP leader Medgar Evers murdered; September 1963, four children die in a church bombing; November 1963, President John Kennedy assassinated; August 1964, three civil rights workers found dead; February 1965, Malcolm X murdered; March 1965, “Bloody Sunday”; March 1965, Viola Liuzzo murdered; April 1968, Martin Luther King assassinated; June 1968, Robert Kennedy assassinated. These deaths, combined with nightly TV news stories of the thousands of American GIs killed in Vietnam, made the 1960s a decade of vision and hope buffeted by death.

For U.S. Catholics, the decade began with national recognition and leadership of one of their own. The 1960 presidential election of John F. Kennedy symbolized U.S. Catholic assimilation into the mainstream of American society. Until then Catholics had understood themselves as an immigrant community intent upon building, serving, and cultivating separate communities and civil institutions.¹⁷ Kennedy’s election showed that U.S. Catholics were no longer standing on the immigrant margins of society but had arrived within the cultural mainstream and were among the power elite of U.S. public life. A partial list of prominent lay Catholics involved in public life included Robert Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, Peter Grace, William Buckley, and William Shriver. Kennedy’s election confirmed what Catholic theologians were heralding in significantly titled books such as *The Emerging Layman* and *A New Generation*.¹⁸

¹³ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969) xiii.

¹⁴ David J. O’Brien, *The Renewal of American Catholicism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1972) xii.

¹⁵ Philip Gleason, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism, Past and Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1987) 82.

¹⁶ James J. Hennesey, *American Catholics* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1981) 307.

¹⁷ For good overviews of the acculturated changes and symbology within American Catholicism, see Patrick W. Carey, *The Roman Catholics in America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996) 112–14; Coleman, *An American Strategic Theology* 167–83; Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985) 421–55; Ellis, *American Catholicism* 124–63; Hennesey, *American Catholics* 307–33.

¹⁸ Donald S. Thorman, *The Emerging Layman* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962); Michael Novak, *A New Generation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964).

Catholics had not only attained national leadership among the rich and powerful, but were also leaders among the poor and powerless. In 1965, the first strike of the United Farmworkers of America began in Delano, California. Led by Alinsky-trained organizer and devout Roman Catholic Cesar Chavez, the United Farmworker Movement took on national significance.¹⁹ As the grape boycott gained prominence, the twin symbols of the Virgin of Guadalupe and farmworker flags were carried by supporters across the nation. Catholic involvement with farmworkers was supported by yet another lay movement, the Catholic Worker. Led by Dorothy Day, this primarily urban movement lived the gospel's works of mercy among the homeless and destitute.²⁰ With houses in major Midwest and Northern industrial urban centers, the Catholic Worker provided a valuable network. Chavez and Day witnessed that lay Catholics were making contributions not only within the power elite but also among the marginalized. In the 1960s lay Catholics came of age in America.

U.S. Catholic clergy faced the same changing and unsettled realities. Among both the powerful and the powerless, the work of Catholic priests was headline news in the 1960s, work which further propelled U.S. Catholicism into the upheaval. Among the priests and their issues were Monsignor George Higgins and the labor movement,²¹ Monsignor Geno Baroni and ethnic urban neighborhoods,²² Fathers Philip and Daniel Berrigan and the antiwar movement,²³ Father James Groppi and the civil rights movement,²⁴ Monsignor Jack Egan and Alinsky's community organizations,²⁵ Thomas Merton and his social critiques from the monastery,²⁶ and John Courtney Murray and U.S. civil discourse.²⁷ The growing notoriety of these clergy witnessed the end of the immigrant Church and a clergy that was defensive, separate, and alone. Acculturation brought profound challenges to clerical self-

¹⁹ See John Gregory Dunne, *Delano: The Story of the California Grape Strike* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1967).

²⁰ For a good historical view of the growth of the Catholic Worker Movement see William D. Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love* (New York: Liveright, 1973); *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982).

²¹ See Gerald M. Costello, *Without Fear or Favor: George Higgins on the Record* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third, 1984).

²² See Lawrence M. O'Rourke, *Geno: The Life and Mission of Geno Baroni* (New York: Paulist, 1991).

²³ See *The Berrigans*, eds. William Van Etten Casey, S.J., and Philip Nobile (New York: Avon Books, 1971).

²⁴ For a summary of Groppi's work see James Finn, "American Catholics and Social Movements," in *Contemporary Catholicism in the United States*, ed. Philip Gleason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1969) 135-36.

²⁵ See Margery Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago: The Ministry of a City Priest* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1991).

²⁶ See Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image Books, 1965).

²⁷ See John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960).

understanding. Andrew Greeley and James Kavanaugh portrayed the 1960s as a time of radical questioning and transition for clergy, a time of self-doubt, confusion, and acculturation.²⁸ A broader concept and theology of ministry was emerging from Vatican II, one which gave new status and recognition to lay Catholics. The role of the clergy within this emerging theology was less than clear and a massive exodus from the priesthood began. In the U.S. an estimated 3,413 priests resigned from diocesan and religious priesthood between 1966 and 1993.²⁹ The departure of large numbers of men and women religious paralleled the departure from the priesthood.³⁰ Thus the acculturation of U.S. Catholics occurred amid a time of profound uncertainty, crisis, and change.

The Impact of Vatican II

For U.S. Catholics, it was not only their identity and location within public life that were in transition but their identity and location within the Church universal as well. The end of the immigrant Church in America coincided with the convening of Vatican II. Pope John XXIII's goal for the council was *aggiornamento* and renewal. Lasting four years and producing sixteen major documents, the council's reforms touched virtually every dimension of Catholic life. The impact of this reform on U.S. Catholics was overwhelming. They were expected to be open to ecumenical dialogue with partners traditionally viewed as enemies, to use an English-language liturgy, to promote a Church that supported lay initiative and leadership within a democratic ethos, a Church that identified with the "joy and hope, grief and anguish . . . of those who are poor and afflicted in any way."³¹ The council challenged them to move beyond acculturation within America to a broader acculturation within the modern world.

The council marked a shift in the Church's self-understanding. Implicit in Pope John's *aggiornamento* was a constructive encounter with modernity. Under Pius IX and Leo XIII the Church had taken a defensive position against post-Enlightenment thought. The dominant grounding for that position was a neo-Scholastic synthesis between faith and reason, a synthesis that provided a unified Catholic worldview that collapsed at Vatican II.³² While there is some consensus about a postconciliar shift away from the primacy of natural law in

²⁸ See Andrew Greeley, *Uncertain Trumpet The Priest in the United States* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), James Kavanaugh, *A Modern Priest Looks at His Outdated Church* (New York: Trident, 1967)

²⁹ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* 436-37

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ *Gaudium et spes* no 1 (*Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed Austin Flannery [Northport, New York: Costello, 1975])

³² Gerald A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University, 1989) 230

theology to a more inductive, biblically based, interdisciplinary, democratic, and empirical theological methodology,³³ there has been substantial debate whether this shift has had a positive or negative impact and whether natural law itself remains a viable approach.³⁴ Still, as Langdon Gilkey recognized, "Catholicism . . . has really for the first time tried to absorb the effects of this whole vast modern development from the enlightenment to the present in . . . one frantic decade."³⁵

At the end of this decade, the CHD was launched in November 1969. The moment called forth a new acculturated identity, as both U.S. and Catholic, and a new way of doing theology. It was either a time, as Gleason argued, of "identity crisis,"³⁶ that contained fundamental contradictions and problems or, as Dolan viewed it, a time that offered an opportunity for a "new Catholicism" in America.³⁷

THE CAMPAIGN AND SAUL ALINSKY

On the occasion of the 25th-anniversary celebration of the CHD on August 25, 1995, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin delivered a keynote address in Chicago entitled "The Story of the Campaign for Human Development: Theological and Historical Roots."³⁸ He noted that, "as General Secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops at the time, [he] was directly involved in this exciting endeavor."³⁹ As general secretary, his direct involvement consisted in the executive oversight of the design, development, and establishment of the CHD. Bernardin had been brought to the NCCB in 1968 by Archbishop John Dearden of Detroit, the conference president at the time, with a man-

³³ See David Hollenbach, "Modern Catholic Teachings Concerning Justice," in *The Faith That Does Justice*, ed. John C. Haughey (New York: Paulist, 1977) 216, 224; Charles E. Curran, "Dialogue with Social Ethics: Roman Catholic Social Ethics—Past, Present and Future," in *Catholic Moral Theology in Dialogue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1976) 116–17, 128; Avery Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988) 165; John A. Coleman, "Development of Church Social Teaching," *Origins* 11 (June 4, 1981) 33–41; Michael J. Schuck, *That They May Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals 1740–1989* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1991); David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

³⁴ For a positive interpretation of the shift, see Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*; Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*; and Coleman, *An American Strategic Theology*. For a negative interpretation, see *Against the World For the World: The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Religion*, ed. Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus (New York: Seabury, 1979); Gleason, *Keeping the Faith*; and Michael Warner, *Changing Witness: Catholic Bishops and Public Policy, 1917–1994* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

³⁵ Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity* 35.

³⁶ Gleason, *Keeping the Faith* 59.

³⁷ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* 421–54.

³⁸ Joseph Bernardin, "The Story of the Campaign for Human Development: Theological-Historical Roots," the keynote address on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Campaign for Human Development, Chicago, August 25, 1995; the text, to date unpublished, is available through the Campaign for Human Development, USCC, Washington.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

date to restructure the NCCB according to Vatican II theology.⁴⁰ Bernardin's address began:

It is fitting that we are gathered here because since the beginning, Chicago has been important to the Campaign and the Campaign has been important to Chicago. As you may know, Msgr. George Higgins of this Archdiocese wrote a Labor Day message that pointed the way to the Campaign; Auxiliary Bishop Michael Dempsey of Chicago was the CHD's first spokesperson; Msgr. Jack Egan organized the "Friends of CHD" in the mid-1970s, and for decades has been an inspiration to the Campaign's work; the great work of community-organizing began in Chicago, and Chicago has many important networks and training centers; CHD enjoys a rich tradition of support here, both in the form of active and enthusiastic participation by people in organizations and projects funded by CHD, and in the generous donations to the annual CHD Collection.⁴¹

Bernardin's remarks indirectly highlight the influence of Alinsky on the CHD. Of the five individuals Bernardin mentions, only Michael Dempsey had had no connection with Alinsky.⁴² Higgins's 1969 Labor Day Message was authored by Alinsky protégé P. David Finks.⁴³ Msgr. Jack Egan had been Alinsky's first priest intern,⁴⁴ and the Friends of CHD organized in the mid-1970s by Egan was modeled after the "Friends of FIGHT" strategy developed by Alinsky ten years earlier in Rochester, N.Y.⁴⁵ Bernardin's reference to Chicago as the place where the great "work of community-organizing began" was a direct reference to the Back of the Yards Council, the first organization built by Alinsky in the late 1930s.⁴⁶ His reference to the "many important networks and training centers" also highlights Alinsky since all of these centers have direct roots within his approach and methodology. As Heather Booth of Chicago's Midwest Academy stated, "Alinsky is to community-organizing as Freud is to psychoanalysis."⁴⁷ At the time of

⁴⁰ Eugene C. Kennedy, *Cardinal Bernardin: Easing Conflicts and Battling for the Soul of American Catholicism* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 1989) 69.

⁴¹ Bernardin, "The Story of the Campaign" 1.

⁴² Bishop Dempsey was a classmate of Msgr. Egan and at the time of his appointment to CHD had no relationship with Alinsky or with his organizations. Monsignor John Egan, taped interview by the author, August 6, 1995, Chicago.

⁴³ Monsignor George Higgins to P. David Finks, September 14, 1995. Transcript in the hands of Higgins, Finks, and the author. The text reads "Dear Dave: It has just come to my attention that Joe Bernardin, in his keynote address at the Campaign for Human Development Anniversary celebration in Chicago, credited me with the 1969 Labor Day Statement. I have sent word hither and yon that this Statement, which I was honored to sign, was actually written by you."

⁴⁴ See Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago*.

⁴⁵ Finks, *The Radical Vision of Saul Alinsky* 194.

⁴⁶ Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky: His Life and Legacy* (New York: Knopf, 1989) 67–87.

⁴⁷ As quoted in Harry C. Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1980) 39. For a good description of Chicago training centers and their relationship to Alinsky, see Gary Delgado, *Organizing the Movement: the Roots and Growth of ACORN* (Philadelphia: Temple University,

the founding of the CHD in 1969, there was only one training center in Chicago, Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). Finally, Bernardin's fifth and last point directs our attention to years of collecting and distributing its funds in Chicago, years in which hundreds of thousands of CHD dollars had gone to support Alinsky-style organizations.⁴⁸ As Cardinal Bernardin's remarks highlighted, Alinsky had an impact upon the founding of the CHD. I will now illustrate the nature and scope of Alinsky's influence.

The Influence of Alinsky

Cardinal Bernardin did not address an earlier and pivotal role that the Archdiocese of Chicago had played at the outset of modern community-organizing. Alinsky's Back of the Yards Council in 1939 was a new type of organizing, an enterprise focused on institutional power, in which the capacity of the poor to act was built through their leadership in neighborhood institutions. When these institutions were organized as a single vehicle, the poor had the power to effect social change. Catholic parishes were crucial neighborhood institutions. In 1941 Alinsky wrote that "two basic social forces . . . serve as the cornerstone . . . to effect constructive changes in the life of the Back of the Yards neighborhood. These two elemental social institutions are, first, the Catholic church and, second, organized labor."⁴⁹ The Back of the Yards neighborhood was 90% Catholic, an immigrant neighborhood organized into national parishes. Each parish had its own national identity: Irish, Lithuanian, Slovak, German, and Mexican.⁵⁰ Alinsky observed that "the Catholic religion [was] the common spiritual denominator for the people of the community" and that Catholic parishes were organized "through the medium of the Back of the Yards Council . . . as a solid bloc."⁵¹

Catholic involvement was led by Bernard J. Sheil, auxiliary bishop of Chicago and honorary chairman of the Back of the Yards Council. Sanford Horwitt states that "Sheil's imprimatur gave Alinsky and Meegan's campaign added visibility and luster."⁵² John L. Lewis also gave his imprimatur to the campaign. Lewis's Congress of Industrial

1986). A partial listing of centers includes the Industrial Areas Foundation, Gamaliel Foundation, Midwest Academy, National Training and Information Center, and the Mid-America Organizing Institute. The Industrial Areas Foundation is the oldest center, having been established by Alinsky in 1940. See Perry, *IAF: 50 Years Organizing for Change*.

⁴⁸ "Summary of Archdiocese of Chicago Grants by Internal Program, 1970-1994," unpublished report of the CHD, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C., August 9, 1994.

⁴⁹ Alinsky, "Community Analysis and Organization" 799.

⁵⁰ Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel* 61.

⁵¹ Alinsky, "Community Analysis and Organization" 799.

⁵² Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel* 70.

Organizations was in the midst of a bitter organizational drive in Chicago's stockyards, and Lewis was scheduled to speak to the packing house workers to announce a national strike against the Big Four packers: Armour, Swift, Cudahy, and Wilson.⁵³ By engineering the public appearance of Sheil with Lewis and the founding convention of the Back of the Yards Council within three days of each other in May of 1939, Alinsky crafted a public linkage of organized labor and the Catholic Church, the two cornerstones of Chicago's Back of the Yards. *Time* reported that Sheil's involvement and his application of a papal encyclical (*Rerum novarum*) to Lewis's organizing drive "was making not only Chicago, but U.S. history."⁵⁴ Hours after the Lewis and Sheil appearance and immediately before the deadline of the strike threat, the meat industry capitulated.⁵⁵ The surrender of the meat-industry Goliath meant that Alinsky's David-like slum-neighborhood organization was publicly recognized as a power broker, an influential community organization. This was exactly the image and perception Alinsky wished. During these July days in 1939, as Bernardin remarked, "the great work of community-organizing began in Chicago."⁵⁶

On the eve before the Back of the Yards Council's founding convention, the *Chicago Daily News* announced that "something new in community organization is about to happen in the Back of the Yards. . . . [T]he council is the conception and individual project of Saul D. Alinsky. . . . The residents of the district . . . are almost completely stockyard workers and Catholics, and on this basis the sociologist [Alinsky] has enlisted churchmen and the CIO leaders to form the main pillars of the neighborhood council."⁵⁷ At the CHD's 25th anniversary, Bernardin would have been more historically precise if he had stated that the great work of modern community-organizing in America began in Chicago with the Catholic Church and organized labor.

Alinsky's success with the Council propelled him into national recognition as the organizer of what Agnes E. Meyer of the *Washington Post* called the "orderly revolution."⁵⁸ Alinsky's fame was bolstered by publication of his book *Reveille for Radicals*,⁵⁹ which became a national bestseller.⁶⁰ Jacques Maritain called it "epoch making."⁶¹ Alinsky was

⁵³ *Ibid* 71

⁵⁴ Sidney James, "Meat and a Bishop," *Time* (July 24, 1939) 12

⁵⁵ Finks, *The Radical Vision* 18

⁵⁶ Bernardin, "The Story of the Campaign" 1

⁵⁷ Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel* 71

⁵⁸ Agnes E. Meyer, "Orderly Revolution," *Washington Post* (June 7, 1945)

⁵⁹ See Saul D. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946)

⁶⁰ Saul Alinsky to Jacques Maritain, November 23, 1945, in *The Philosopher and the Provocateur*, ed. Bernard Doering (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994) 21-23

⁶¹ Draft of a review sent to Alinsky by Maritain, October 9, 1945, in *The Philosopher and the Provocateur* 18, the review was subsequently published in the *New York Post and Commonweal*

a featured speaker at national Catholic convenings from this time through the 1960s.⁶² Invitations to organize came from cities throughout the nation, and within every campaign Catholics played a prominent role.⁶³ Through these activities Alinsky developed hundreds of relationships with Catholic leaders. Alinsky's friendship with Thomistic philosopher Jacques Maritain is perhaps the most fascinating Catholic connection. As Bernard Doering has shown, Maritain and Alinsky were close friends and influenced one another's work. Doering's articles "Jacques Maritain and America-Friendships" and "Jacques Maritain and His Authentic Revolutionaries" raise fascinating questions and issues within and about this friendship, questions still to be answered.⁶⁴ Maritain was so enthralled with Alinsky's writing and organizing that in 1958 he personally urged Archbishop Montini of Milan, the future Pope Paul VI, to meet with Alinsky.⁶⁵ The Archbishop met with Alinsky in 1965 to explore whether community-organizing could work in Italy.⁶⁶

Toward the end of his life Alinsky reminisced that "the biggest change I saw in the first twenty years or so that I was involved in social action is in the role of the churches. . . . In the 1960s they really moved into the social arena, the political arena. They took over the position organized labor had a generation ago."⁶⁷ That remark, coming from one who had written a biography of John L. Lewis, who had been involved in the coal battle between Lewis and Roosevelt, and who had organized in cities nationwide,⁶⁸ underscored the profound cultural upheavals of the 1960s.

As the churches took over the position of organized labor in the political arena, a new type of church minister appeared to succeed

⁶² A partial listing of Alinsky's speeches includes "Catholic Leadership" (to the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, Kansas City, Mo., September 28, 1942); "A Note on Community Conservation and Community Organization" (to the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, St. Louis, Mo., September 29, 1953); and "The Morality of Power" (at a Notre Dame Symposium, June 28, 1961). Each address can be found in the Alinsky Papers, the Alinsky Archives at the University of Illinois in Chicago. Alinsky also taught courses on mass-based organizing at the Catholic University of America (Finks, *Radical Vision* 75). A full listing of Alinsky's speeches and engagements has not been developed as yet.

⁶³ For a description of these invitations and organizing drives, see Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel* 390-516.

⁶⁴ See *The Philosopher and the Provocateur*, ed. B. Doering; also "Jacques Maritain and America-Friendships," in *Understanding Maritain*, ed. Deal W. Hudson and Matthew J. Mancini (Mercer University, 1987) 27-55; "Jacques Maritain and His Two Authentic Revolutionaries," in *Thomistic Papers III*, ed. Leonard A. Kennedy, C.S.B. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1987) 91-115.

⁶⁵ See Alinsky to Maritain, February 17-June 20, 1958, in *The Philosopher and the Provocateur* 72-79.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 78-79.

⁶⁷ Marion K. Sanders, *The Professional Radical: Conversations with Saul Alinsky* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 39-40.

⁶⁸ For Alinsky's understanding of organized labor a generation ago and the Lewis/Roosevelt struggle, see his volume *John L. Lewis* (New York: Putnam, 1949).

“labor priests” such as Fathers Owen Rice and George Higgins. The growth of community organizations in the 1960s was accompanied by “community organization priests” trained as leaders in organizing political and economic power. At the head of the movement of the U.S. Catholic Church into community-organizing was Alinsky’s friend and priest protégé, Monsignor Jack Egan of Chicago.⁶⁹

Alinsky and Monsignor Egan

In a 1954 letter, Jacques Maritain introduced John Joseph Egan to Alinsky.⁷⁰ Maritain asked Alinsky to meet with Father Voillaume of the Little Brothers and Sisters. Egan served as his Chicago host. Three years later Egan became Alinsky’s first priest-intern and “took on a public role.”⁷¹ Egan’s public role went beyond that of a traditional pastor serving an immigrant parish to that of an organizer serving the broader U.S. society. Up to this point, Egan had had no training in organization. He remarked that “nothing in our training enables priests to be administrators or organizers.”⁷² Alinsky personally provided the training, one focused on power, leadership development, personal relationships, strategy, tactics—the skills of democratic organization for power. The internship with Alinsky had an enormous impact on the career of this young cleric. It was financed by Cardinal Stritch who gave Alinsky \$40,000 a year for a three-year study of Chicago’s racially troubled neighborhoods.⁷³

Egan developed the first Office of Urban Affairs in Chicago with a mission to “focus the power of the Church on the problems of the city.” With this institutional credibility, Egan recalled, “Saul and I began working very closely.”⁷⁴ The pair “worked together promoting community organization in Chicago, with the result that by the early 1960s three major neighborhood organizations were in operation; the backbone of the organizations was the Catholic Church.”⁷⁵ Alinsky’s organizing was the “centerpiece of Egan’s urban strategy.”⁷⁶ Egan’s pivotal role within these organizations deserves deeper recognition than current literature provides. Like Bishop Sheil in the Back of the Yards 20 years earlier, Egan gave community-organizing a Catholic mantle of credibility, accessed funds, motivated people, and articulated the theological premises for church involvement in community organization. There was significant difference between the two. Unlike Sheil, Egan

⁶⁹ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* 370

⁷⁰ Alinsky refers to Maritain’s January 27, 1954 letter to him regarding Egan (a letter that has not been published) in Alinsky’s letter to Maritain, February 8, 1954, in *The Philosopher and the Provocateur* 61–62

⁷¹ Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago* 89

⁷² *Ibid* 91

⁷³ Finks, *The Radical Vision* 111

⁷⁴ *Ibid* 116

⁷⁵ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* 370

⁷⁶ Steven M. Avella, *This Confident Church: Catholic Leadership and Life in Chicago, 1940–1965* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1992) 238

held a full-time archdiocesan position devoted exclusively to community organization, the first of its kind in the U.S. Catholic Church. Egan was the first person to develop community-organizing as an official mission and function of diocesan life. For this reason Richard McBrien is correct when he calls Egan a "pioneer in the urban ministry apostolate, . . . a pioneer in inner city ministry, a pioneer in community organization, a pioneer in priestly ministry as a ministry to the whole Church and to the whole society."⁷⁷

Egan accessed archdiocesan funds for each of Alinsky's three Chicago organizations in the 1960s. To raise funds for the Woodlawn Organization, Egan and Alinsky met with Cardinal Albert Meyer. Egan recalls, "I was alone with the Cardinal and Alinsky. The Cardinal made a commitment for 150,000 dollars for three years, 50,000 dollars a year."⁷⁸ In his anniversary keynote, Cardinal Bernardin stated that he was personally involved in the Chicago Metropolitan Sponsors, an Alinsky Industrial Areas Foundation organization that received \$116,000 from the campaign in 1995. CHD guidelines state that the campaign funded organizations for three years.⁷⁹ These are fascinating parallels: two Chicago cardinals more than 30 years apart, both supporting Alinsky organizations with Catholic money for a three-year period.⁸⁰ The striking difference is that Meyer committed local archdiocesan Catholic funds whereas Bernardin committed national CHD funds.

In 1968, when Cardinal John Cody became the archbishop of Chicago, the Office of Urban Affairs was discontinued. Suddenly, archdiocesan financial support for Alinsky and the mantle of credibility for community organization were gone. Egan had been laid out "on the canvas."⁸¹ With these events, President Theodore Hesburgh invited Egan to the University of Notre Dame for a sabbatical, an invitation that led to Egan's staying there for 14 years.⁸² The work in Chicago had established Egan as the "unchallenged leading Catholic priest in the urban ministry"⁸³ and the "dean of urban ministry."⁸⁴ With Notre Dame as a base, Egan built a national Catholic network of socially active clergy, the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry.⁸⁵ Founded in 1967, the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry had an impressive

⁷⁷ As quoted by Theodore Hesburgh in the Introduction to Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago* ix.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 139–41.

⁷⁹ "CHD Criteria and Guidelines," in *Daring to Seek Justice* 71.

⁸⁰ The three-year funding request by Alinsky was an early and standard IAF procedure. CHD guidelines have a three-year funding limitation, a fact that appears to show Alinsky's influence.

⁸¹ *The Philosopher and the Provocateur* 62.

⁸² Theodore Hesburgh, Introduction to Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago* x.

⁸³ O'Rourke, *Geno* 120.

⁸⁴ Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* 448.

⁸⁵ For an introduction to the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry and its mission, see John J. Egan, Peggy Roach, and Philip J. Murnion, "Catholic Committee on Urban

membership: Monsignor Geno Baroni of the Archdiocese of Washington's Urban Office; Father Eugene Boyle of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, active with the United Farmworkers of America; Father Patrick Flood of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, active in race matters; Father P. David Finks of the Diocese of Rochester, active in Alinsky's FIGHT organization; Father John McCarthy who was assistant to labor priest George Higgins; Father Phil Murnion of New York who was to direct the National Institute on Pastoral Life; Father Marvin Mottet of Davenport who was to become the director of the Campaign for Human Development, and other clergy.⁸⁶ These priests were at the forefront of Catholic activism and had experience in organizations focused on self-determination: community organizations, economic development organizations such as worker cooperatives or credit unions, housing initiatives, and neighborhood associations.

Egan organized these priests into the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry and together they began to influence the national Church. According to Finks, the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry put two members on the U.S. Catholic Conference social-action staff in Washington, built a lobby to work on church social programming (Network), developed urban-ministry offices in dioceses nationwide, implemented social-action projects in seminary education, created the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, and organized a theological conference that brought together priest activists, theologians, and bishops.⁸⁷ Finks failed to mention that Egan's Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry was also directly involved in developing the CHD. As I will show, however, although Egan influenced the CHD, he cannot be considered its principal founder, as some have asserted.⁸⁸

Alinsky and the Priests of the CHD

On April 25, 1968, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops passed a "Statement on National Race Crisis" committing the Church's "full energies to the task of eradicating the effects of [such] racism on American society." On April 4, 21 days earlier, Martin Luther King had been murdered in Memphis and urban rioting intensified throughout the nation. The bishops' statement was a Catholic response to the urban chaos and directed the "various departments of the United

Ministry: Ministry to the Ministers," *Review of Religious Research* 20 (Summer, 1979) 279-90.

⁸⁶ A list of the participants at CCUM meeting at Moreau Seminary, University of Notre Dame, November 10-11, 1970 is found among the Urban Task Force Papers, United States Catholic Conference Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁷ As quoted in Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago* 243. A scholarly investigation of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry and its impact on both Church and society has yet to be accomplished.

⁸⁸ S. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* 449, and Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 1990) 180.

States Catholic Conference, in collaboration with other interested Catholic organizations, to set up an Urban Task Force to coordinate all Catholic activities and to relate them to those of others working for the common goal of society.⁸⁹ The author of the draft of the statement about race was a member of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry, John McCarthy.⁹⁰ On June 5, two months after the McCarthy statement, Attorney General Robert Kennedy was assassinated.

The other pastoral letters of the conference in 1968 reflect the intensity of the time. At their April meeting, the bishops had also passed a "Resolution on Peace" that addressed the need for negotiations in Vietnam as the war intensified. In September, a "Statement on Human Suffering in Nigeria-Biafra" spoke to the magnitude of suffering in the wake of that civil war. In November, "Human Life in Our Day" responded to the impact of *Humanae vitae* among U.S. Catholics. Finally, also in November, a "Statement on Farm Labor" defined the Catholic position on legal protection with regard to Cesar Chavez and his United Farmworkers of America.⁹¹ Challenges to Catholics came at every level, from the bedroom to the supermarket, from the national scene to the international.

In the summer of 1968, John J. Wright, bishop of Pittsburgh and chair of the USCC Social Action Department, announced the formation of a 45-member urban task force, assigning it responsibility for the design and implementation of the charge given by "A Statement on the National Race Crisis." The task force included Jack Egan and fellow members of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry, Baroni, Finks, Flood, Boyle, and McCarthy.⁹² By November of that year, the task force had established a national office within the USCC Department of Social Development. Bishop Wright asked all ordinaries in the country to designate one individual or agency to "coordinate the diocesan task forces," and 101 coordinators had already been appointed.⁹³ A national network of Catholic dioceses focusing on the urban crisis was initiated. At the center of the coordination was Alinsky's protégé Egan and the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry.

In June 1969, Father Baroni, now chairman of the Urban Task Force Advisory Board, presented the "Agenda for the 70s" to the bishops. The report read: "The NCCB could establish an annual collection for human development in the United States. A national response by the U.S. Church would be a concrete initiative in leading the nation by way of example to develop new priorities and new efforts in meeting human needs in our society. This would be expended mainly at a diocesan level

⁸⁹ "Statement on National Race Crisis," issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, April 25, 1968, in *Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops*, ed. Hugh J. Nolan (Washington: USCC, 1983) 3.157.

⁹⁰ *Daring to Seek Justice* 4.

⁹¹ *Pastoral Letters* 156-97.

⁹² *Daring to Seek Justice* 6.

⁹³ "Task Force on Urban Problems," November 1968, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

for practical programs aimed at self-determination of all our citizens."⁹⁴ The report does not specify what types of programs would be funded by such a collection. For example, no mention was made of housing initiatives, economic development projects, organized groups of white and minority poor. Later, the need for a "national fund" was mentioned briefly during the Urban Task Force executive committee meeting on July 31, 1969; again, however, the specifics were not developed. Baroni chaired the meeting. The minutes recall a discussion of a "position paper regarding goals for the Task Force prepared by Fr. Finks."⁹⁵ Baroni and Finks are thus the first documented figures associated with a national fund for human development.

Egan recalled that "a few of our people who gathered together in Cumbermeare, Canada, where the Baroness [Catherine] de Hueck [Doherty] was, after Lyndon Johnson declared the War on Poverty, put together the fundamentals for the Campaign for Human Development."⁹⁶ In August 1969, Baroni had called the Cumbermeare gathering to come up with ideas on how the Church through the Urban Task Force could respond to the urban crisis.⁹⁷ Attending the meeting with Baroni were McCarthy, Finks, Michael Groden of the Archdiocese of Boston, Patrick Flood, and his assistant Dismas Becker.⁹⁸ In the aftermath of the riots of 1967 and 1968, these priests feared an urban revolution in America. Their fears were intensified by the "Black Manifesto," a demand from James Forman that U.S. churches make "reparation for injustices suffered by blacks during and since the slavery period."⁹⁹ Forman, who headed the National Black Economic Development Conference, initially asked for \$500 million, but later raised his demands to \$3 billion. Response from Protestant Churches was notable. In July, 1969, the United Church of Christ had voted to allocate \$1.1 million for racial justice programs; in September, the National Council of Churches voted to allocate \$500,000; in October, the United Methodist Church voted to allocate \$1.8 million. The Catholic Church had passed a "Statement on National Race Crisis" in April of 1968, but had not yet committed funds.

The Cumbermeare participants possessed impressive credentials. McCarthy was assistant to George Higgins in the Social Development Department of the NCCB/USCC. Finks worked as a pastor in inner-city Rochester, was a leader in the Industrial Areas Foundation FIGHT organization, and was the first diocesan episcopal vicar of urban ministry. Groden was active in housing and economic development issues in Boston. Flood was an inner-city pastor active in neighborhood

⁹⁴ Geno Baroni, "Agenda for the 70s," a document of the USCC National Task Force on Urban Problems, June, 1969, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

⁹⁵ "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, USCC Urban Task Force," July 31, 1969, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

⁹⁶ Frisbie, *An Alley in Chicago* 244.

⁹⁷ O'Rourke, *Geno* 74.

⁹⁸ *Daring to Seek Justice* 7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 6.

associations in Milwaukee. His assistant, Becker, was a Carmelite priest working on similar issues. Baroni, the best-known of the group, was active in economic and housing development as well as in political organizing in Washington. McCarthy recalled that "we met in Cumbermeare because of frustration that the Catholic Church did not seem to have any type of national mechanism by which to respond to the urban crisis manifested by the riots and looting in the central cities of this country."¹⁰⁰ As McCarthy's "Statement on National Race Crisis" enunciated, "millions of our fellow Americans continue to be deprived of adequate education, job opportunity, housing, medical care, and welfare assistance"; it further stated that "the Gospel of Christ and the good of the nation must motivate us to encourage, support, and identify with the efforts of the poor in their search for self-determination."¹⁰¹ The statement did not contain any reference to community organization or to economic development. Its most pragmatic assertion was that "there is an evident need for funds to be designated to be used for organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power in their own communities."¹⁰² Yet, in the spring of 1969, months before the Cumbermeare experience, the absence of a pragmatic plan was not surprising since, as McCarthy recalled, "I had no experience of community organization."¹⁰³ McCarthy had brought the discussion as far as his experience and training would allow. He had identified the need for a national mechanism to respond to the urban crisis and the need to establish a task force to implement whatever vehicle was necessary to realize the response.

Groden and Baroni knew the issues confronting urban America. Groden directed the Office for Housing Development for the Archdiocese of Boston, an office that supported low-income-housing construction and community-development corporations. Baroni's experience as an inner-city priest in the District of Columbia included a wide range of involvements: development of the V Street Service Center, civil-rights protests, governmental advocacy and lobbying, and housing development. These involvements had already won him a national reputation. As one commentator in the mid-1960s wrote, "if Baroni had a union, it would be called something like the Amalgamated Association of Low-Income Families."¹⁰⁴ Both Groden and Baroni knew inner-city organizations and how desperately they needed money.

Flood and Finks had both been trained by Alinsky, as had Egan. Flood recalled that "all of us at Cumbermeare had a recognition that Alinsky had a unique contribution to community organization . . . , to

¹⁰⁰ Bishop John McCarthy to Lawrence Engel, January 31, 1995; transcript held by the author.

¹⁰¹ *Pastoral Letters* 156-58.

¹⁰² "Resolution on the Crusade against Poverty," in *Daring to Seek Justice* 69.

¹⁰³ Bishop John McCarthy, interview by author, August 26, 1995, Chicago; tape recording held by author.

¹⁰⁴ As quoted in O'Rourke, *Geno* 40.

having people have power and participation.” Eight years earlier, in 1961, Flood had met Alinsky through a nine-to-ten-month-long organizing training in Chicago to which Egan had invited him. The training used the three Industrial Areas Foundation’s organizations as laboratories. Flood remained in contact with Alinsky through the 1960s and still refers to Alinsky as “my mentor.”¹⁰⁵

Finks had met Alinsky in 1965. At the time Finks was a pastor of an inner-city parish in a neighborhood devastated by the riots the year before. In his first inner-city assignment, Finks “had no idea what to do.” He recalls that Alinsky came along and said, “you can’t do it alone. Come and help us work with the black churches in putting together a city-based black community organization [FIGHT]. We’ll help Rochester’s black citizens develop the power and political savvy needed to change the face of Rochester forever.” Finks joined with his parishioners and later wrote: “MY LIFE WAS CHANGED.”¹⁰⁶ The Rochester organization is famous for its employment-negotiation victories with Kodak—successes that, while won by the leadership of the black churches, were spurred along by Alinsky’s imaginative wit and talent for headlines. His famous quip, when asked by reporters at the Rochester airport what he thought about Kodak’s race-relations record, was “the only contribution Kodak has made to race relations is their invention of the color film.”¹⁰⁷ Finks then went to work for Higgins at the USCC in May of 1969, replacing McCarthy. In 1975, Finks had completed his doctoral dissertation, “Crisis in Smugtown: A Study of Conflict, Churches, and Citizens Organizations in Rochester, New York, 1964–1969.” The dissertation focused on his experience with FIGHT and was dedicated to “the late Saul D. Alinsky, who preserved his faith in the people’s preeminent place in the American democratic experiment.”¹⁰⁸ Finks writes that “the most fascinating of all the characters in the cast of the Rochester drama, however, remains the ‘professional radical,’ Saul D. Alinsky. . . . [H]e fought for an organized, informed, politically conscious citizenry to fight for a just society.”¹⁰⁹ Nine years later, after extensive research and interviewing, Finks published *The Radical Vision of Saul Alinsky*. Thirty years later, Finks recalled his own work during the late 1960s: “[T]he NCCB Urban Task Force, the Catholic Committee for Urban Ministry, my years on staff at USCC/NCCB, the organization and selling to the bishops of the Campaign for

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Flood, interview with the author, April 25, 1995, Austin, Texas; transcript held by the author.

¹⁰⁶ P. David Finks to the author, October 28, 1994; transcript held by the author.

¹⁰⁷ Finks. *The Radical Vision* 206. The organizer for the Rochester Campaign was Edward Chambers. A review of Chambers’s and Alinsky’s work in Rochester will show that Chambers was the actual organizer and Alinsky the charismatic figure.

¹⁰⁸ Finks, “Crisis in Smugtown: A Study of Conflict, Churches, and Citizen Organizations in Rochester, New York, 1964–1969” (Ph.D. diss., Union Graduate School of the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, 1975).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 301–2.

Human Development—all were an attempt to make available and find support for Alinsky's approach to community organization, empowerment of USA citizens from the bottom up, and what his IAF successors now call church/congregation-based organizing. As for me, I loved Saul. He stood me on my head and showed me a radically different way to see the world, the church, and democratic politics."¹¹⁰ The influence of Alinsky is evident in Finks's own words and is also confirmed by the priests who worked closely with him in the 1960s. John McCarthy recalls that Finks "idolized Alinsky" and that community organization was "all Finks would be able to talk about."¹¹¹ Charles Burns of the Urban Task Force staff remembers that "Finks worshipped the ground Alinsky walked on," and that Alinsky was "his father."¹¹²

At Cumbermeare in August 1969, the foundational elements of a national Catholic campaign were agreed upon. The campaign would be a national mechanism responding to the urban crisis, one similar to Protestant efforts committing financial resources. The Catholic commitment would be \$50 million, a sum matched by no other denomination to that date. Funds would be designated specifically for "organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power in their own communities," "self-help funds" for such "projects as voter registration, community organizations, seed money to develop non-profit housing corporations, community-run schools, minority-owned cooperatives and credit unions, capital for industrial development and job training programs, and setting up of rural cooperatives."¹¹³ In other words, the money would be used to support the kind of initiatives that the organizers and their fellow members of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry had been involved in throughout the U.S. Egan's network of "community organization priests" had conceived of a new resource for Catholic social action. However, Egan himself was not present at Cumbermeare.

O'Rourke states in his biography that "Baroni admired Alinsky and his tactics but could not use them himself. Baroni was not an Alinsky person, not confrontational." O'Rourke often discussed Alinsky with Baroni. Baroni had met Alinsky, read *Reveille for Radicals*, and was aware of the influence of Alinsky on fellow Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry members. With regard to the CHD, O'Rourke recalls that "Baroni knew he was putting money into the hands of activists. He didn't have a problem with Alinsky. He recognized that these groups would shake up city hall and was comfortable with that."¹¹⁴

Baroni, Finks, Flood, and the men of Cumbermeare understood with

¹¹⁰ Finks to the author, October 28, 1994.

¹¹¹ Bishop John McCarthy, interview by author, August 25, 1995.

¹¹² Rev. Charles Burns, interview by author, May 2, 1995, Oakland, California; transcript held by the author.

¹¹³ "Resolution on the Crusade against Poverty," in *Daring to Seek Justice* 69.

¹¹⁴ Lawrence O'Rourke, interview with the author, May 8, 1995; transcript held by the author.

Alinsky that poverty meant “not only lacking money but also lacking power.”¹¹⁵ They recognized that one solution for the urban crisis of the late 1960s would be for the powerless to organize, to achieve economic strength through worker cooperatives and minority businesses, to attain community stability through housing development, to gain power through community organization. All were solutions already within their own pastoral experience. As Gary Delgado recognizes, “of one fact there can be no doubt: Alinsky was the first organizer to systematically project a purpose for community-organizing, the obtaining of power.”¹¹⁶ Alinsky would say, “we are concerned with how to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people, to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace, cooperation . . . the creation of those circumstances in which man can have the chance to live by values that give meaning to life.”¹¹⁷ McCarthy called this self-determination.¹¹⁸ Finks recognized organizing for power.¹¹⁹ Baroni called them self-help organizations.¹²⁰ Under whatever title, the common focus on power for the poor among these Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry priests was reflected three months later in the 1969 resolution to assist “organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power in their own communities.”¹²¹ Their recognition that the poor needed organized power sprang directly from their respect for Saul Alinsky.

The Founding of the Campaign

With the basic elements of the CHD agreed to at Cumbermeare, the next steps were to draft a proposal and to work it through the Social Action Department Committee and General Secretary Bernardin, to implement a campaign among the other bishops, and finally to call for a vote at the bishops’ meeting in November 1969. Work had to be accomplished within three months. The bulk of that job was left to the Washington-based priests, Baroni and Finks.¹²²

Cardinal Bernardin later recalled that the 1969 Labor Day Statement from the office of George Higgins “pointed the way toward the

¹¹⁵ Alinsky, “War on Poverty—Political Pornography,” a speech prepared for the Institute of Policy Studies, Washington, May 26, 1965, Alinsky Papers, University of Illinois at Chicago.

¹¹⁶ Gary Delgado, *Organizing the Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1988) 21.

¹¹⁷ Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* 3.

¹¹⁸ “Statement on National Race Crisis” 154.

¹¹⁹ Bishop John McCarthy, interview by the author, August 26, 1995.

¹²⁰ *Daring to Seek Justice* 13.

¹²¹ “Resolution on the Crusade against Poverty,” in *Daring to Seek Justice* 69.

¹²² The Urban Task Force staff was Baroni, Finks, and Charles Burns. No evidence has been uncovered, either through literature review or interviews, to show that Burns played a role in the development of CHD.

Campaign.”¹²³ The statement was released August 29, 1969, three weeks after the Cumbermeare gathering. The audience was different from that of previous Labor Day Statements since it was addressed, “not to labor and management . . . , but primarily to our own Church. This is done because, at this turning-point into the ’70s, the Catholic Church is in the position to exercise strong moral leadership and take the first steps by making a generous portion of its limited resources available for the development and self-determination of the poor and the powerless.”¹²⁴ With these words, Finks, the author of the statement,¹²⁵ began to set the stage for the bishops’ meeting in November. As Bishop Sheil had done 30 years earlier in the Back of the Yards when he took the stage with John L. Lewis, Finks was forging a public image and vision of a partnership among “labor, church, and community organizations.”¹²⁶ Finks’s work was both reviewed and approved by then general secretary, Bernardin, prior to publication.¹²⁷

The August 1969 Labor Day Statement recalled the creation of the Urban Task Force mandated by the “Pastoral Statement on the National Race Crisis.” By acknowledging the charge to the Urban Task Force to develop an active program to respond to the urban crisis, Finks publicly situated the Cumbermeare proposal within both the bishops’ conference and the authority of the Urban Task Force. Finks went on to suggest a five-year practical strategy for the Church’s support of “human development,” a strategy that would “insure that available resources be properly utilized to advance the necessary self-determination and economic development of people in our society heretofore considered marginal.”¹²⁸ The campaign for “Human Development” was originally designed as a “five year” national crusade, and its funds were to be used for both social and economic self-determination. As the evidence shows, Finks played a major role in the origins of the CHD, a role equal to that of Baroni. In light of this, O’Rourke’s claim that Baroni was the founder of the CHD needs revision.¹²⁹

In the fall of 1969 the Urban Task Force was reorganized as a three-person operation within the Department of Social Development. The three new staff members were Baroni, Finks, and Charles Burns. Within a few months, the Urban Task Force was elevated from a di-

¹²³ Bernardin, “The Story of the Campaign” 1.

¹²⁴ “1969 Labor Day Statement” of the Division for Urban Life, Department of Social Development, USCC, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

¹²⁵ Monsignor George Higgins to P. David Finks, October 7, 1995.

¹²⁶ “1969 Labor Day Statement” (see n. 124).

¹²⁷ The statement had been through a number of drafts that had been reviewed and accepted by Bishop Bernardin. See the memorandum to Bishop Bernardin from Monsignor Hurley regarding Labor Day Statement, July 16, 1969, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives. Hurley was the executive assistant to Bernardin and was responsible for critiquing the drafts and then forwarding the critiques to Bernardin.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ O’Rourke, *Geno*; throughout the text, Baroni’s role in the CHD is overemphasized.

vision within the Department of Social Development to an executive staff office reporting directly to the general secretary, Bernardin. Burns became the director of task-force administration, Baroni the director of task-force programs, and Finks the director of task-force information and training.¹³⁰ This reorganization gave the task-force members increased visibility, authority, and responsibility within the conference. It also meant that these men had direct access to Bernardin as well as to the bishops and committees that conducted the work of the conference.¹³¹

During the autumn of 1969, as support for a national fund for human development made headway through the levels of conference administration, it was recognized that bishops needed to become more involved. Bishop Wright of the Social Development Committee requested that the conference president, Cardinal Dearden, appoint additional bishops to work with the Urban Task Force and the proposal. Dearden named Bishop Francis Mugavero of Brooklyn to oversee the proposal's development, along with Michael Dempsey, auxiliary bishop of Chicago, Bishop Joseph McNicholas of St. Louis, Bishop Raymond Gallagher of Lafayette, and Bishop Joseph Hodges of Wheeling.¹³²

On October 27, 1969, in a paper entitled the "Black Manifesto Strategy," written for general secretary Bernardin on James Forman's demands for financial retribution, Finks again prepared for the upcoming November bishops' meeting. He examined Protestant responses to the manifesto, various papers and articles on the urban crisis, and practical ways by which the Catholic Church at the national and diocesan levels could respond. One recommendation stated that "any statements or plan of action to meet urban human needs must be strategically done to encourage coalitions of minority poor and lower middle class in developing greater political and economic power."¹³³ This was language similar to that of the bishops' CHD resolution passed 18 days later, November 14, 1969.

At the November conference meeting in 1969, Geno Baroni addressed the bishops. Echoing Pope Leo XIII, Pope Pius XI, as well as arguments of John Courtney Murray, Baroni began his address by identifying the national crisis first of all as a moral issue, a spiritual problem. To respond to the problem, Baroni asked, "cannot we request that we establish in the United States an annual collection for human development? A national response by the United States Church would

¹³⁰ See the inter-office memorandum to Bishop Bernardin, John Cosgrove, and Msgr Higgins from Frs C Burns, G Baroni, and P D Finks on the "Position of National Task Force Office in USCC Structure," 26 November 1969, and the Minutes of the Executive Advisory Board of the USCC Urban Task Force, March 21, 1970, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives

¹³¹ See Thomas Reese, *S J. Archbishop Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church* (San Francisco Harper and Row, 1989)

¹³² *Daring to Seek Justice* 8

¹³³ Finks, "Black Manifesto Strategy," October 27, 1969, *Urban Task Force Papers*

be a concrete initiative in leading the nation by way of example to develop new priorities and new efforts in meeting human needs in our society."¹³⁴ His speech, however, did not address "community organization" or "political and economic power."

After Baroni's speech, Bishop Mugavero presented the national-fund proposal to the assembled bishops. The bishops had discussed the proposal at seven group meetings prior to the plenary session. Mugavero explained that reporters from the seven groups had identified two courses of priority action: (1) the "education of the total Catholic community in terms of a more generous, sympathetic and Christ-like attitude toward the poor and minority groups"; and (2) "to establish a special poverty collection."¹³⁵ The resolution he presented read: "There is an evident need for funds designated to be used for organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power in their own communities. . . . Therefore, be it resolved that the national Conference of Catholic Bishops establish a National Catholic Crusade Against Poverty. The crusade will commit the Church to raise a fund of 50 million dollars over the next several years."¹³⁶

The Cumbermeare proposal was accepted by the U.S. bishops three months after its formulation. The men of Cumbermeare, notably Baroni, Finks, and McCarthy, had conceived and implemented a strategy to respond to the urban crisis. McCarthy had developed both the framework and the vehicle for the U.S. bishops to respond to the urban crisis through the "Statement on the National Race Crisis." Baroni's leadership and national reputation carried both the moral urgency of the urban crisis and the practical necessity of the Church's mission within ethnic neighborhood economic and social development. Finks's writing and organizational skills crafted and shaped both the language and the discussion of the CHD resolution. At the Bishops' Conference, where there were more than 360 voting members, those who shaped the written word (namely, McCarthy and Finks) also shaped the agenda and the debate.

The resolution's wording that "there is an evident need for funds designated to be used for organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power in their own communities"¹³⁷ was language used for the first time in NCCB legislative history. Bishop James McHugh of Camden, formerly director of the Office of Family Life of the NCCB, recalls that "the night before Dave Finks and I drafted the language."¹³⁸ In the context of 1969, the one

¹³⁴ The address of Father Geno Baroni is given in "The Minutes of the Seventh General Meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops," November 10–14, 1969 (Washington: USCC) 107.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 7–12.

¹³⁶ "Resolution on The Crusade Against Poverty," in *Daring to Seek Justice* 69.

¹³⁷ *Pastoral Letters* 214.

¹³⁸ Bishop James McHugh, interview with the author, January 6, 1996; McHugh to the author, January 30, 1996; transcripts held by the author.

social theory that connected organized groups of white and minority poor with power was Alinsky's. As Finks said about drafting the resolution, "I was convinced that Alinsky's approach was the best there was. I didn't see anything else on the horizon."¹³⁹

Alinsky's Continuing Influence

With the bishops' approval of the November resolution, conference president Dearden named the members of the ad hoc Committee for the Crusade on Poverty Collection. The committee was to be chaired by Mugavero and its first charge was to make recommendations to the administrative board of the conference for the crusade.¹⁴⁰ Bernardin recalled that "the bishops voted in this collection and left it to me and staff to work out the details."¹⁴¹ In the coming months, two members of Bernardin's executive staff, Baroni and Finks, would continue to provide suggestions on the direction of the crusade.

On March 7, 1970, Finks wrote a memorandum to Bernardin entitled "Fact Sheet" for the Crusade Against Poverty. The three-page memorandum outlined the rationale for the crusade, suggested strategies for the implementation of the national collection, discussed staffing needs, and developed procedural recommendations for organizing the crusade within the conference. The memorandum proposes that the focus of the crusade must be twofold:

(a) To educate our people from kindergarten on to the extent of poverty within the United States. The poverty, affecting 22 million people, of whom 66% are white, is a problem of deep moral and spiritual consequences in a nation that is the wealthiest in resources since the beginning of man.

(b) To provide funds, probably in the form of a National Development Fund, to organized groups of white and minority poor to develop economic strength and political power in their own communities. This kind of funding is not available through government and major foundation sources because of political pressures. [Examples are included in the Resolution of November 1969 and in the USCC Labor Day Statement 1969.]¹⁴²

Finks's first recommendation regarding the educational focus of the

¹³⁹ Finks, interview with the author, August 26, 1995. Also of interest is a draft of the resolution entitled "Original Draft of Bishops' NCCB Resolution on CHD 1969." This document can be found in P. David Finks personal files. The document contains word changes, changes that are made in the final approved text, and a list of the Bishops' Committee working on the proposal.

¹⁴⁰ *Minutes of the Seventh General Meeting* 12.

¹⁴¹ Bernardin, "The Story of the Campaign" 3.

¹⁴² Memorandum to Bishop Bernardin from P. David Finks, Geno C. Baroni, Charles D. Burns—USCC Task Force on the subject "Crusade Against Poverty," March 7, 1970, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives. While the memorandum is listed as from the three staff urban task force, the memorandum cc.'s show copies forwarded to Baroni, Burns, and Higgins with the secretarial identification listed as PDF:RMQ, which shows Finks's authorship.

crusade—to educate Catholics about poverty in the U.S.—was not part of the November 1969 Resolution, although Mugavero reported that the need for education surfaced within the regional meetings of bishops. The first time that the educational focus of the crusade was officially stated as policy was in the Finks's memorandum, that then in November of 1970 was approved in the Second CHD Resolution: "the second major goal of the Campaign for Human Development is educational."¹⁴³ Finks, organizing the components of the campaign, listening to the leadership of the bishops, was thinking through the components of the campaign and crafting the proposal for Bernardin. Finks's second focus in the March memorandum was on the fund for organized groups. In further developing the rationale for the fund, Finks referred to texts he had helped to write, namely the 1969 Resolution and the Labor Day Statement. Finks's influence was extensive throughout the creation of the CHD.

The week after Finks's memorandum to Bernardin, March 15–20, 1970, Fink, Baroni, Burns, Flood, and other priests of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry attended an Industrial Area Institute in Chicago run by Alinsky. In an April 3 "confidential" memorandum to Bernardin, the Urban Task Force reported on the Institute. The purpose was "to bring together a dozen or so priests to examine in some detail the practical process of group organization to effect social change based on the goal of a free and open society. It seemed clear after several years of investigation that Mr. Alinsky and his staff had developed the best process and rationale for organizing people." The memorandum endorsed the earlier Crusade Against Poverty directive when it recommended that "the N.C.C.B. mandate should earmark certain monies at the local and national level for an in-service training of Church organizers . . . to develop an effective social-pastoral mission."¹⁴⁴ Without a doubt, this meant that Alinsky organizations would receive CHD money.

While the archives contain no formal response by Bernardin to the letter of Chicago's Archbishop John Cody dated May 16, 1970 that charged the Urban Task Force with ties to Alinsky and with earmarking funds for Alinsky's organizing, it is clear that Bernardin recognized that Cody's accusations were true.¹⁴⁵ Bernardin knew about the relationship between Finks and Alinsky, between Alinsky and the Task Force, and was aware that Alinsky's organizing projects were the types of projects that the crusade would fund. Simply stated, Bernardin had no problem with the projects. Indeed, his position was in continuity

¹⁴³ "Resolution on the Campaign for Human Development," in the "Minutes of the Ninth General Meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops," November 16–20, 1970, 17.

¹⁴⁴ Memorandum: Report on IAF Seminar, April 3, 1970, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Archbishop Cody to John Cardinal Dearden and Bishop Bernardin, May 16, 1970, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

with the earlier episcopal approval of Bishop Sheil, Cardinal Stritch, and Cardinal Meyer. Archbishop Cody, on the other hand, was the only ordinary in the history of the Chicago archdiocese who decided against supporting Alinsky's work.

In July 1970, conference president Dearden, in a letter to the bishops, declared November 22 as the CHD collection date and named Bishop Michael Dempsey as the first national Campaign Director. This gave Dempsey five months to develop an organizational infrastructure for the Campaign; this included plans to raise and distribute the funds, to develop grant criteria, to handle public relations, to arrange for diocesan staffing, to produce promotion materials, to set in motion the processes of distribution, and education programming. Baroni and Finks continued to provide advice and recommendations to this new director.¹⁴⁶

Finks authored the June 1970 lead article in the Task Force on Urban Problems Newsletter entitled "Poverty Crusade: Getting It Off the Ground." It examined the educational component of the campaign and the types of organizations that the crusade was designed to fund. The "Suggested Readings" section includes *Reveille for Radicals* by Alinsky and *The Professional Radical: Conversations with Saul Alinsky* by Marion Sanders.¹⁴⁷ Finks's next article was "The Hellish Circle of American Poverty," a title that appropriated Paul VI's challenge to "break the hellish circle of poverty," and that would be quoted in the 1970 CHD resolution.¹⁴⁸ Finks wrote, "A clearer understanding of what organized groups are doing to break the cycle of inherited poverty could lead to a sharing of skills across class and ethnic lines on the basis of temporary coalitions of organizations and institutions. In one community such a sharing of expertise between the Xerox Corporation and the FIGHT Organization led to a successful black community owned industry, FIGHTON INC."¹⁴⁹ FIGHT was the Industrial Areas Foundation organization through which Finks worked with Alinsky in Rochester. Alinsky's theory and praxis were a constant influence on Finks during the early development of the crusade. Finks stated that "the organization and selling to the bishops of the Campaign for Human Development—all were an attempt to make available and find support for Alinsky's approach to community organization."¹⁵⁰

On the eve of the November 1970 meeting of the Bishops' Conference, Bernardin received a letter from Egan and the Catholic Commit-

¹⁴⁶ See *Daring to Seek Justice* 13. The text refers to Geno Baroni's role in the development of the grant criteria. The investigation into that development would also show the influence of Alinsky, specifically with regard to the three-year funding criteria.

¹⁴⁷ "Task Force on Urban Problems Newsletter" 2/1 (June 1970), Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

¹⁴⁸ As quoted in the 1970 Resolution, in *Daring to Seek Justice* 73.

¹⁴⁹ "Task Force on Urban Problems Newsletter" 2/3 (November 1970), Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

¹⁵⁰ Finks to the author, October 28, 1994.

tee on Urban Ministry. The Committee had just concluded its annual meeting. Twenty-seven priests attended the meeting, among them Cumbermeare participants Finks, Baroni, Flood, and McCarthy. Egan wrote, "We support and strongly endorse the courageous leadership of the U.S. Catholic Bishops in sponsoring the campaign designed to assist in breaking the cycle of poverty. By this action, you have given renewed hope to many in the Church and a new promise to the poor—which must be fulfilled."¹⁵¹ The letter went on to propose the qualifications for staff appointments. It advocated a strict focus on self-help programs and set forth the make-up of the fund allocation committee. It made clergy involvement a necessity. Bernardin's written response to Egan and the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry noted that he forwarded the letter's suggestions to the CHD staff and included the list of the newly appointed allocations committee.¹⁵² The correspondence shows that Bernardin both recognized the priests of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry and supported their involvement in democratic initiatives for power in the inner cities. He accepted their role in developing the CHD. For the general secretary of the Conference, a mandate to create a 50-million-dollar crusade was a major initiative. It unquestionably required his personal involvement and public endorsement.

On November 16, 1970, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the Resolution on the Campaign for Human Development. The following week on Sunday, November 22, a collection was taken up in Catholic parishes throughout the U.S. The result was \$8.4 million, the largest single collection in the history of the U.S. Catholic Church to that time.¹⁵³ McCarthy, Baroni, and Finks had succeeded. As Bernardin understood, Saul Alinsky had a profound if indirect influence on the origins of the CHD, a postconciliar Catholic response to an America in crisis. My evidence establishing Alinsky's influence on the CHD provides one component of the historical work necessary to undertake the project of theological reflection on the role of community organization in 20th-century America. Still to be further explored is the theology of CHD's founders, its North American option for the organized poor, the intellectual roots of Alinsky's theory, as well as the hermeneutical and interdisciplinary examination of the encounter between U.S. Catholic social thought and American Pragmatism. Without a doubt, the CHD is a unique resource within the North American theological enterprise.

¹⁵¹ Monsignor Jack Egan to Bishop Joseph Bernardin, November 12, 1970, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

¹⁵² Bishop Joseph Bernardin to Monsignor Jack Egan, November 25, 1970, Urban Task Force Papers, USCC Archives.

¹⁵³ *Daring to Seek Justice* 16.



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