

Here is the list of the ideal elements of an organizer - the items one looks for in identifying potential organizers and in appraising the future possibilities of new organizers, and the pivot points of any kind of educational curricula for organizers. Certainly it is an idealized list - I doubt that such qualities, in such intensity, ever come together in one man or woman; yet the best of organizers should have them all, to a strong extent, and any organizer needs at least a degree of each.

Curiosity

What makes an organizer organize? He is driven by a compulsive curiosity that knows no limits. Warning clichés such as "curiosity killed a cat" are meaningless to him, for life is for him a search for a pattern, for similarities in seeming differences, for differences in seeming similarities, for an order in the chaos about us, for a meaning to the life around him and its relationship to his own life - and the search never ends. He goes forth with the question as his mark, and suspects that there are no answers, only further questions. The organizer becomes a carrier of the contagion of curiosity, for a people asking "why" are beginning to rebel. The questioning of the hitherto accepted ways and values is the reformation stage that precedes and is so essential to the revolution.

Here, I couldn't disagree more with Freud. In a letter to Marie Bonaparte, he said, "The moment a man questions the meaning and value of life, he is sick." If there is, somewhere, an answer about life, I suspect that the key to it is finding the core question.

Actually, Socrates was an organizer. The function of an organizer is to raise questions that agitate, that break through the accepted pattern. Socrates, with his goal of "know thyself," was raising the internal questions within the individual that are so essential for the revolution which is external to the individual. So Socrates was carrying out the first stage of making revolutionaries. If he had been permitted to continue raising questions about the meaning of life, to examine life and refuse the conventional values, the internal revolution would soon have moved out into the political arena. Those who tried him and sentenced him to death knew what they were doing.

Irreverence

Curiosity and irreverence go together. Curiosity cannot exist without the other. Curiosity asks, "Is this true?" "Just because this has always been the way, is this the best or right way of life, the best or right religion, political or economic value, morality?" To the questioner nothing is sacred. He detests dogma, defies any finite definition of morality, rebels against any repression of a free, open search for ideas no matter where they may lead. He is challenging, insulting, agitating, discrediting. He stirs unrest. As with all life, this is a paradox, for his irreverence is rooted in a deep reverence for the enigma of life, and an incessant search for its meaning. It could be argued that reverence for others, for their freedom from injustice, poverty, ignorance, exploitation, discrimination, disease, war, hate, and fear, is not a necessary quality in a successful organizer. All I can say is that such reverence is a quality I would have to see in anyone I would undertake to teach.

Imagination

Imagination is the inevitable partner of irreverence and curiosity. How can one be curious without being imaginative?

According to Webster's Unabridged, imagination is the "mental synthesis of new ideas from elements experienced separately. . . The broader meaning. . . starts with the notion of mental imaging of things suggested but not previously experienced, and thence expands. . . to the idea of mental creation and poetic idealization [creative imagination] ..." To the organizer, imagination is not only all this but something deeper. It is the dynamism that starts and sustains him in his whole life of action as an organizer. It ignites and feeds the force that drives him to organize for change.

There was a time when I believed that the basic quality that an organizer needed was a deep sense of anger against injustice and that this was the prime motivation that kept him going. I now know that it is something else: this abnormal imagination that sweeps him into a close identification with mankind and projects him into its plight. He suffers with them and becomes angry at the injustice and begins to organize the rebellion. Clarence Darrow put it on more of a self-interest basis: "I had a vivid imagination. Not only could I put myself in the other person's place, but I could not avoid doing so. My sympathies always went out to the weak, the suffering, and the poor. Realizing their sorrows I tried to relieve them in order that I myself might be relieved."

Imagination is not only the fuel for the force that keeps organizers organizing, it is also the basis for effective tactics and action. The organizer knows that the real action is in the reaction of the opposition. To realistically appraise and anticipate the probable reactions of the enemy, he must be able to identify with them, too, in his imagination, and foresee their reactions to his actions.

A sense of humor

Back to Webster's Unabridged: humor is defined as "The mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating ludicrous or absurdly incongruous elements in ideas, situations, happenings, or acts. . ." or "A changing and uncertain state of mind..." The organizer, searching with a free and open mind void of certainty, hating dogma, finds laughter not just a way to maintain his sanity but also a key to understanding life. Essentially, life is a tragedy; and the converse of tragedy is comedy. One can change a few lines in any Greek tragedy and it becomes a comedy, and vice versa. Knowing that contradictions are the signposts of progress he is ever on the alert for contradictions. A sense of humor helps him identify and make sense out of them.

Humor is essential to a successful tactician, for the most potent weapons known to mankind are satire and ridicule.

A sense of humor enables him to maintain his perspective and see himself for what he really is: a bit of dust that burns for a fleeting second. A sense of humor is incompatible with the complete acceptance of any dogma, any religious, political, or economic prescription for salvation. It synthesizes with curiosity, irreverence, and imagination. The organizer has a personal identity of his own that cannot be lost by absorption or acceptance of any kind of group discipline or organization. I now begin to understand what I stated somewhat intuitively in *Reveille for Radicals* almost twenty years ago, that "the organizer in order to be part of all can be part of none."

A bit of a blurred vision of a better world

Much of an organizer's daily work is detail, repetitive and deadly in its monotony. In the totality of things he is engaged in one small bit. It is as though as an artist he is painting a tiny leaf. It is inevitable that sooner or later he will react with "What am I doing spending my whole life just painting one little leaf? The hell with it, I quit." What keeps him going is a blurred vision of a great mural where other artists – organizers - are painting their bits, and each piece is essential to the total.

An organized personality

The organizer must be well organized himself so he can be comfortable in a disorganized situation, rational in a sea of irrationalities. It is vital that he be able to accept and work with irrationalities for the purpose of change.

With very rare exceptions, the right things are done for the wrong reasons. It is futile to demand that men do the right thing for the right reason - this is a fight with a windmill. The organizer should know and accept that the right reason is only introduced as a moral rationalization after the right end has been achieved, although it may have been achieved for the wrong reason - therefore he should search for and use the wrong reasons to achieve the right goals. He should be able, with skill and calculation, to use irrationality in his attempts to progress toward a rational world.

For a variety of reasons the organizer must develop multiple issues.

Not only does a single- or even a dual-issue organization condemn you to a small organization, it is axiomatic that a single-issue organization won't last. An organization needs action as an individual needs oxygen. With only one or two issues there will certainly be a lapse of action, and then comes death. Multiple issues mean constant action and life.

An organizer must become sensitive to everything that is happening around him. He is always learning, and every incident teaches him something. He notices that when a bus has only a few empty seats, the crowd trying to get on will push and shove; if there are many empty seats the crowd will be courteous and considerate; and he muses that in a world of opportunities for all there would be a change in human behavior for the good. In his constant examination of life and of himself he finds himself becoming more and more of an organized personality.

A well-integrated political schizoid

The organizer must become schizoid, politically, in order not to slip into becoming a true believer. Before men can act an issue must be polarized. Men will act when they are convinced that their cause is 100 per cent on the side of the angels and that the opposition are 100 per cent on the side of the devil. He knows that there can be no action until issues are polarized to this degree. I have already discussed an example in the Declaration of Independence - the Bill of Particulars that conspicuously omitted all the advantages the colonies had gained from the British and cited only the disadvantages.

What I am saying is that the organizer must be able to split himself into two parts - one part in the arena of action where he polarizes the issue to 100 to nothing, and helps to lead his forces into conflict, while the other part knows that when the time comes for negotiations that it really is only a 10 per cent difference - and yet both parts have to live comfortably with each other. Only a well-organized person can split and yet stay together. But this is what the organizer must do.

Ego

Throughout these desired qualities is interwoven a strong ego, one we might describe as monumental in terms of solidity. Here we are using the word *ego* as discussed in the previous chapter, clearly differentiated from egotism. Ego is unreserved confidence in one's ability to do what he believes must be done. An organizer must accept, without fear or worry, that the odds are always against him. Having this kind of ego, he is a doer and does. The thought of copping out never stays with him for more than a fleeting moment; life is action.

A free and open mind, and political relativity

The organizer in his way of life, with his curiosity, irreverence, imagination, sense of humor, distrust of dogma, his self-organization, his understanding of the irrationality of much of human behavior, becomes a flexible personality, not a rigid structure that breaks when something unexpected happens. Having his own identity, he has no need for the security of an ideology or a panacea. He knows that life is a quest for uncertainty; that the only certain fact of life is uncertainty; and he can live with it. He knows that all values are relative, in a world of political relativity. Because of these qualities he is unlikely to disintegrate into cynicism and disillusionment, for he does not depend on illusion.

Finally, the organizer is constantly creating the new out of the old. He knows that all new ideas arise from conflict; that every time man has had a new idea it has been a challenge to the sacred ideas of the past and the present and inevitably a conflict has raged. Curiosity, irreverence, imagination, sense of humor, a free and open mind, an acceptance of the relativity of values and of the uncertainty of life, all inevitably fuse into the kind of person whose greatest joy is creation. He conceives of creation as the very essence of the meaning of life. In his constant striving for the new, he finds that he cannot endure what is repetitive and unchanging. For him hell would be doing the same thing over and over again.

This is the basic difference between the leader and the organizer. The leader goes on to build power to fulfill his desires, to hold and wield the power for purposes both social and personal. He wants power himself. The organizer finds his goal in creation of power for others to use.

These qualities are present in any free, creative person, whether an educator, or in the arts, or in any part of life.

Communication

One can lack any of the qualities of an organizer - with one exception - and still be effective and successful. That exception is the art of communication. It does not matter what you know about anything if you cannot communicate to your people. In that event you are not even a failure. You're just not there.

Communication with others takes place when they understand what you're trying to get across to them. If they don't understand, then you are not communicating regardless of words, pictures, or anything else.

People only understand things in terms of their experience, which means that you must get within their experience. Further, communication is a two-way process. If you try to get your ideas across to others without paying attention to what they have to say to you, you can forget about the whole thing.