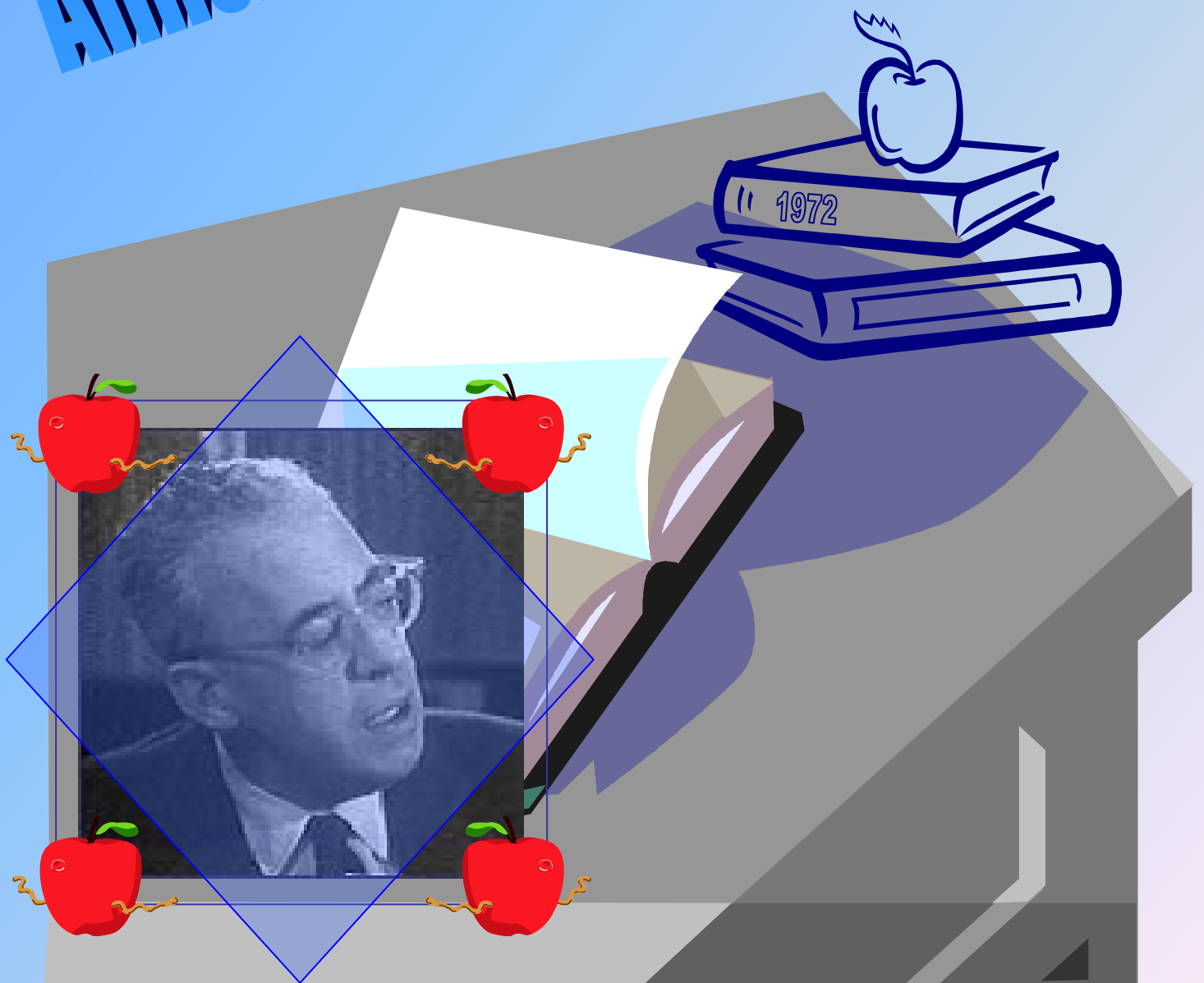


Ainsky for Teacher Organizers



Alinsky for Teacher Organizers was written in 1972 for use in the training of teachers. If many recognize it as the facilitative process, the Delphi technique, to which they have been exposed, such is because they are one and the same. This process has been around for a long time, being perfected and fine-tuned, awaiting the time when it would be implemented extensively in the interests of transforming America.

This document, except for some minor corrections, is the exact wording - in total - of the original document, complete to underlining.

The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), founded by Saul Alinsky, is alive and well in the United States, organizing and expanding its power base in many states under various names. The IAF is associated with the Interfaith Alliance in many communities, also churches and schools. The organization's religious philosophy is that of Paulo Freire as put forth in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, what has become known as *liberation theology*: the "haves" are the oppressors, the "have nots" are the oppressed; the "have nots" must rise up against the "haves", if by violent means, so be it.

The IAF is an implementation partner in the National Alliance for Restructuring Education (NARE), now known as America's Choice™, in the area of community organizing. NARE was one of the original design teams funded by the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). NARE is owned by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), of which Marc Tucker is the head.

Saul Alinsky was a self-avowed Marxist, his books Rules for Radicals and Reveille for Radicals are reflections of his beliefs and organizing strategies and tactics, alive and well in the IAF of today. Hillary Rodham Clinton, at one point, was offered a position by Alinsky in his organization. When Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas, he brought Marc Tucker into the state to redesign or transform their education system around the systems governance philosophy. Tucker would later pay Mrs Clinton over \$100,000 to promote America's Choice: high skills or low wages! – the product of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (CSAW), another program of NCEE. Many of the people who served on NCEE's Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce would become participants on the Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS).

The strategies, tactics and beliefs of Saul Alinsky find basis in the Hegelian Dialectic developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. His philosophy would be furthered by Karl Marx.

Alinsky for Teacher Organizers

By

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Introduction

The Industrial Areas Foundation is a training institute for community organizers. The IAF was run by Saul Alinsky until his death in June of 1972. Edward Chambers is its Associate Director, and Richard Harmon is Director of Field Operations. In January of 1972, Alinsky, Chambers and Harmon conducted a training program for UniServ personnel in the State of Kentucky, and in February a training program for Illinois UniServ personnel. The material enclosed is drawn from those training programs in the "Principles of Organizing."

The reader will note that the text makes constant reference to Alinsky, but not to Chambers or Harmon. This is merely a convenience. Alinsky, Chambers and Harmon all contributed to the views which we identify here as Alinsky's. Their conceptualization of the task of organizing is identical in all substantial regard. This is why a combination of views can be described as Alinsky's. It should be noted, however, that selection of material for inclusion in the article, as well as phraseology, is the author's, and is not the responsibility of the IAF staff.

CONCEPT OF ORGANIZING

June 1972

Alinsky has a well defined concept of organizing. When he talks to teacher organizers, he talks community organizing. Alinsky believes that the teacher association's real power base is not in the teachers, but in the community. He does not see our task of organizing them as any different from those of his own community organizers.

Because he sees the teacher's power base outside the membership and in the community, Alinsky offers a straight line route to organization of that power base:

1. Forget the older teachers four or five years from retirement. They will fight organizing.
2. Find one or several local teacher leaders.
3. Get those teacher leaders to organize the community to put pressure on the superintendent or the school board to get things done for education. Develop a multi-issue base in getting to the community. Local taxes, for example, is an issue teachers could use to organize other community elements.
4. Organize the community by using the natural interest in the children to get into the homes. That is, send teachers into the homes. Once teachers show interest in kids by visiting homes, they develop a relationship with parents.
5. Once one or two teacher leaders begin to push and get near community wide success, the rest of the teachers will go along.

In other words, what Alinsky is looking at, is not the membership, but access teachers have to the community. He sees that as a powerful weapon with which to organize. He believes that if we were attempting to organize this power base, education could be translated into issues that people can get with. He would assert that if the teacher association is successful in organizing the community for education ends, it would have no problem getting or maintaining its membership. At the same time, the allies made by a multi-issue association will be valuable at contract time.

For reasons we will spell out in some detail later in this paper, there was a marked reluctance to accept this idea of community organizing. The UniServ Representative, like the Field Representative before him, sees himself as a problem solver. He solves problems for teachers which causes them to become members or to continue membership. They can agree with Alinsky that this might be a shortsighted view, but when do they have time to do the community organizing that Alinsky urges unless they spend all of their time doing that?

Alinsky refuses to accept that limitation. He asserts that you can't do organizing over the telephone, in jet planes, or in the role of a business agent. If you buy into Alinsky's concept of organizing – his concept of where the real power base is – you will have little problem beginning the task of organizing. If you can't buy into Alinsky's concept of who or how we should organize, there is still need to read further in order to understand why you will not be able to perform organizing tasks in the role of a business agent. It probably will also be helpful for your clients and your supervisors to understand.

A note of caution should be added. Alinsky says training is in the doing: that is, getting into action and analyzing later what did and what did not work. "Alinsky" is also in the doing. All

the fantasies in the world built on reading Alinsky, or going to his training programs do not make an organizer. You become an organizer by organizing.

WHAT ARE THE ATTITUDES OF THOSE TO BE ORGANIZED

The education associations are beginning to learn most of the lessons that Alinsky has to teach in the area of people's motives and attitudes. For example, Alinsky's approach to organizing people is to appeal to their self interest. He does not believe people can be organized around altruistic motives such as the welfare of children or the good of education. It is self interest that makes people move. Alinsky believes we are mis-educated as to what makes people move. He believes that only if you involve people's self interests can you organize them for change.

Similarly, Alinsky does not believe that teachers are apathetic. Alinsky believes that teachers, like most other people, are simply resigned to being powerless. In other words, they don't think they can do anything about their situation. Also, Alinsky believes that the organizer can tap into the boredom and routine of the teaching profession by providing an active, exciting alternative in the association structure to this routine.

According to Alinsky, the organizer never has issues to begin with. People are resigned. The organizer has to touch the person's self interest to find the issues around which the person is willing to organize. This means the organizer must take some chances in the beginning.

In organizing, however, Alinsky has a cardinal rule: Never do for others what they can do for themselves. The principle here is simply that if you, the organizer, do it for them, you take away their freedom. You make them as powerless as the system now makes them. A corollary principle is that an organization must have activity to survive. You cannot do it for them, but neither can your organization exist if it is not engaged in activities which make it an ongoing, rather than an organization which exists on paper. People who belong to organizations want action, and the organization can no more survive in inactivity than it can if the organizer is doing everything for the members.

The complaint came back from UniServ trainees that teachers will not approve of some of the organizer's activities. The response from Alinsky was that when members get mad at the organizer it means the organization has no leaders. Real leaders can tell you before hand what their people want or will tolerate. Real leaders sell the tactics or strategy to their people and take the guff if there is any.

In any event, the organizer is to blame, not for the tactic or strategy that makes people mad, but for failing to develop real leaders.

What if teachers don't want power? Organize the ones who do.

WHO TO ORGANIZE

Alinsky's advice is quite simple – organize the leaders, not everybody, just those with a following. Don't treat all teachers as equals. The organizer's job is to organize and develop leaders. If you have 2200 members in your jurisdiction, the job is to find the 50 leaders among them.

The first questions, of course, is how do you know who the leaders are? Alinsky does not try to answer that. The assumption is that if you are trying to organize, your instinct will be to look for people who have already demonstrated some capacity for leadership – that is, those people who already have some kind of constituency, whether it is ten people or ten thousand people. The people with the constituencies, whether it be in a building, or in a department, or a subsection of the department, are the leaders. Alinsky says the job is to organize those people. What the organizer needs is local power units to act to get the organization acting. Those power units are those few leaders. Once they start moving in constructive ways, the patterns of activity will change in the organization and they will gather more followers about them.

Alinsky is not glib on this subject. The assumption here is that if you are taking his advice - that instead of trying to organize all one thousand members of a local association you are going to organize the three or four people who can move the others to action and you will have problems searching out those people who can do you the most good in terms of leading that group to action. This particular issue raised a number of questions in the minds of people dealing with already established associations. That is, how is a man dealing with fifteen associations going to be able to walk in and find out who the leaders are in those associations? Alinsky's response was genuine. He simply would not get hung up on that particular question. He would look for the people with the constituency and begin to train them to organize. If he ended up with the wrong people, he would find out about it as soon as the action started and then look for the right people. Initially, the organizer is probably going to look for leaders like himself. That can be defeating unless he is flexible enough to search for other types too, especially for potential leader types who begin emerging in the middle of the action.

The teacher association experience with negotiations suggests Alinsky is right. In most locals, a group of people got going on negotiations, and convinced other people to come along with them. Staffers who moved in initially to get the negotiations going simply found people with whom to begin and developed leaders as they emerged. This is all Alinsky is saying about any local association or any community.

Dick Harmon's work in Buffalo is illustrative. He went in to build a community organization that did not then exist and had no more leads on real leaders than the names of people who helped raise money to support the project. He got a handful of dimes and began making calls for appointments. After each meeting he made a 3 x 5 card indicating the person's self interest, relationships with existing institutions, relationships with other people and what type of "action" they had been in previously, i.e. civil rights demonstrations.

He gathered data and also began building a trust relationship. In three weeks he was no longer a stranger; he knew who his potential leaders were, and he understood the power networks operative in Buffalo.

In other words, in the building of a power base, a leader initially is more important than the number of people that you have behind him. Among others, Martin Luther King, Ho Chi Minh, and Fidel Castro, suggest the wisdom of this advice.

HOW TO TRAIN LEADERS

Alinsky realizes that the central problem is how you train these local leaders – these people you have identified as leaders – to amass and to use power. He says of people the organizer trains, what he says of the organizer's training: leaders are developed in action, not in training. Give the trainee the philosophy, send him into action, bring he back to see what he's done.

He offers this advice:

1. You cannot organize over the telephone, you must work with the leaders you are going to train on a face-to-face basis because the amount of training they will get will depend very much on the relationship of trust you establish with them. Once the trust level has been established with a few, other people with the same kinds of grievances turn up.
2. The real training does not take place with words, but only with actions, which means that in order to train leaders the organization must set enough brush fires to keep them active and to keep the action going.
3. Everything is in the action. The organizer must use his imagination to set his people into action in order to train them. (Many teachers have already had this experience with negotiations – they began to negotiate and teachers with real complaints against the system rallied around.)
4. In getting your people ready to deal with power people like the superintendent and the school board, the best method is to role play with them in order to cover the kinds of setbacks and the barriers they're likely to encounter when they are dealing with the power people.
5. After sending leaders in to the power people to express grievances, you must get hold of them as soon as they come out to keep them from getting off alone and scared about the future. Leaders may conclude they should never go back in again unless they are immediately reinforced.

What you can't train, but which is very much a part of the Alinsky method of organizing, is to seize the moment. If your job is to train leaders, Alinsky says, you must be lucky enough to have your people insulted or assaulted (verbally) by the other side. This helps to accomplish your training task. One can't count on the other side insulting your people, but the idea is that if you keep your people in action, if you are constantly assessing, constantly pushing, eventually the other side is going to help by insulting them.

Action is critical, especially with the white middle class. This group is not used to action. It will want to quit after the first time, which means the training of leadership stops.

How you develop the rage to change things in the middle class? Analyze your own life and see what it was that got you into organizing. There you might find a clue to what will turn the middle class on.

After an action, the organizer asks himself the following questions in order to keep himself going. He might train and reinforce leaders by getting them to ask the same questions of themselves and one another: Why did we win? What do we do next? What did I learn about myself?

ORGANIZING TACTICS

Alinsky has a very simple method for preparing your people tactically. He advises that you go into little battles you can win first, in order to build up your people's confidence. He advises that later you make alliances that get you bigger battles.

In fact, this is very much akin to what he talks about in the training of your people. His primary tactic is to get into action to stoke the brush fires, to get your organization alive, and keep it alive. Again he says everything is in the action – the organizer must use his imagination to get them into action. The worst thing the organizer can do in terms of tactics is to get together with his people and lay out a structured campaign because the structured campaign allows you to rationalize failure and to stop the action any time you run into a barrier. He is not saying here that you do not have a plan. He is saying that you would not reveal that to your people because the chief tactic you would use is the flexibility of changing directions or stride anytime you need to.

In the matter of tactics, Alinsky is very much for developing tactics that are so exciting your people want to get involved in them. His books on the subject of organizing suggests the kind of tactics he is talking about.

Certainly Alinsky would not recommend exchanges of letters or private discussions with the superintendent as a way of building the organization. Such meetings, or such correspondence might solve the problem, but they would not provide the kind of action that is exciting and what makes your people want to get involved with the organization to participate. Going to court is likewise a local anesthetic; it freezes the action and prevents exploitation of the issue.

You must also be able to seize upon the development of the other side's tactics. This corresponds to the idea of training people by making the other side insult or assault your people so that they can learn what the other side is really like. This is very much a tactic of Alinsky's. In fact, getting the superintendent to insult or to assault your people, he would regard as of higher value than ten weeks of formal training. The tactical essence, Alinsky says, is to figure out what reaction you can provoke that will best suit your needs.

In order to handle these kinds of tactics, the organizer must protect himself against getting trivialized and distracted by actions and tactics which don't further the ends of the organization. What the organizer wants to do is to keep one or two leaders fighting the big fights.

Generally, the Alinsky advice on tactics is guerilla war advice. To win, know the enemy, divide the enemy. Know who all the players are, conduct the action on several levels and personalize the conflict.

It is hard to deal with an enemy with whom you have a personal relationship. You should not let your people fraternize with enemy. Distance helps you to polarize the issue - to make it an us - them affair.

When you are starting with little issues, you can't afford too many losses. This means you must "fix" the outcome of these fights. Find out what the establishment will give you without

a fight and then send your people in to take it from the establishment. If the superintendent tells you the teachers can have a lower class size send a delegation to the superintendent demanding the class size he has conceded. The superintendent will say, "but I already agreed to that." And the leaders say, "well, if that's true you won't mind putting it in writing." They can then say to the teachers, "he says he was giving it to us anyway, but we made him put it in writing." That's a victory in a fixed fight.

The organizer must not resolve issues even though he might be able to. His people gain experience and confidence from dealing successfully with issues.

TREATMENT OF ISSUES

The organizer organizes around issues, not around problems.

A problem might last three to four years. An issue lasts 3 to 14 days. The absence of due process in a school system's dismissal procedure is a problem. A respected teacher who has just been fired is an issue. An issue is near at hand, it is controversial, it has caused a reaction among your people. You organize around the firing - the issue - and the due process procedure will come. You solve problems by breaking them down to a series of issues. An issue is action.

What characterizes an issue then?

1. Immediacy - close at hand (something done by Congress is not immediate).
2. Specificity - something that's concrete, real, seeable (ideology is not an issue). What specifically do you want, when specifically do you want it?
3. Controversial - you can only mobilize around controversy - you can't move people on issues which all sides already agree on.
4. Winnable - self respect is based on winning, so an issue must be winnable. Organizations can't get involved in issues that aren't realizable.
5. Be on the right side - organize around small issues first, win consistently on these before you take on the large issues. When you're ready to take on the large issues find allies. Your record on small issues will convince your allies you are for real. If you're going to get the superintendent fired, win small child oriented battles against his administrators. Once your people see you winning and are together you can go to parents groups, church groups, community groups for their support in taking on the superintendent.
6. Be fixed - since you can't afford losing on small issues and still hold your people together you must not enter into any fights you are not sure of winning. (See Organizing Tactics for example).

Once you have an issue with these characteristics you "cut" it. "Cutting" an issue means: 1) polarizing it by creating an us-them situation in which your people believe they are 100% right, 2) personalizing it to a point where you are fighting a person rather than the system (the school board).

Alinsky does not believe teacher organizations can generate enough issues internally. As pointed out earlier he would advise them to become multi-issue people, moving beyond the teacher contract issue to community issues.

An example for teacher organizations of a good issue is local tax assessment. Using the interest on tax held in escrow is a way to get money for education. That makes those taxes held in escrow a community issue.

Banks get the extra interest or taxes you pay to them, which they in turn pay to the state. The banks get the interest from you and from holding your money twelve months or six months. Why not force the bank to give that accumulated interest to the community for education.

Alinsky believes you could train your leaders to go after under-assessment of tax rates. He

believes you train your leaders to hit at the interest issue and who's holding on to the interest. Alinsky believes you could raise issues around property owned by the school board members in terms of how it is assessed. Alinsky would war - don't go after the properties of the little guys because you'll get a backlash. But you can go after the properties and assessment rates of the big boys, the steel companies and the chemical companies or the big land owners.

By sending researchers in to check local tax rules and assessment books, you can find out how and what to pursue in tax rate issues in your own community. This, Alinsky would say, is a good issue. You can make that issue a gut level issue by talking about those tax monies that should be going to the education of children. In other words, the issue is specific, it is immediate, it is something you can do something about. It is an issue which you can polarize, and it is an issue which you can personalize.

Alinsky is not saying that you can do that with every issue. He is saying that things like education aren't often translated into issues people can understand. If you approach an education issue through the tax issue, that is something people can understand.

MOTIVES AND ATTITUDE OF THE ORGANIZER

Alinsky has two key lessons to teach us. First, he tells us we must concentrate on training a few people. Second, he tells us the organizer has got to conduct himself like an organizer rather than a business agent. An organizer builds the organization because a strong organization can help the maximum amount of people. To spend time with individual services, or righting individual injustices with no organization payoff, is a waste of resources because you can never serve everybody on an individual basis.

The organizer's concern for his personal security deters the conflict that brings about change. In other words, if you are worried about your economic well-being, or your social well-being, or your political well-being, you will probably not stimulate conflict and there will probably not be any change.

Talk about tactics, communication, etc. is worthless, if you're hung up on the security issues. Alinsky maintains that people cannot learn tactics and strategies they will never use. They know they will never use conflicts tactics if they're worried about their jobs or their social position or political position.

How do you see yourself as a person? Is your organizing work only in your fantasies? Do you actually perform in and value the role of the business agent?

Organizers - teacher organizers - tend to blame teachers for being too worried about their own security. Alinsky alleges that this security question that organizers ask of teachers, the organizers should ask themselves. Too often, according to Alinsky, we blame the teachers when the first security problem is our own. That security problem is not only a job security problem, but all of those insecurities, such as professionalism, that many of us have. In the same way, Alinsky says that the staff must define their own self interest.

Organizers are not clear on their own mission, if they are hung up on their own security problems. Consequently, the needs of the organization will not be served.

UniServ, as Alinsky sees it, is a cover role. The real role is that of an organizer for educational problems and issues. The organizer must distinguish between the real role and the cover role in assigning his priorities and going about his tasks. UniServ is a business agent role. But a business agent or social worker does not plug everyone into grievances in order to build the organization. An organizer does this. The organizer doesn't want to get trivialized and distracted with business agent functions. The organizer wants to keep one or two key leaders fighting the big fights. He cannot do this by simply answering the telephone or dealing with small needs that a secretary might take care of.

The way you get away from some of the business agent duties is to train teachers to pick up some of those duties. In other words, if you're spending all your time working on grievances then the way to handle the job is to train teachers to handle those grievances.

Neither can the organizer get ego satisfaction from his people and continue to develop the organization. If the organizer has to get ego satisfaction from his people, it means he will submerge their interest to his own. The ego satisfaction to the organizer, is in seeing people he trained begin to move. The organizer who can only get satisfaction from doing it himself ought to be back in the classroom as president of the local association.

Finally, Alinsky recommends that if the organizer is afraid, then what he must do is take it - get involved in a civil rights demonstration for example - or he must take a close look at people who are really getting hurt by the system or by the establishment in order to develop a feeling for them and about them. These are two ways people can go about overcoming the fear of becoming an organizer.

CRITERIA FOR THE ORGANIZER

The organizer must have:

1. Imagination:
 - A. This means the ability to get inside of another person's skin and at the same time maintaining the emotional stability to be able to listen to people.
 - B. The ability to plan with the enemy.
2. Singleness of purpose:
 - A. The ability to build a power base.
3. A liking for people.
4. Ability to communicate with people within their experience. (This is why Alinsky uses so many sexual and toilet references.)
5. Ability to take risks.
6. Ability to clarify his self interest so that people he is going to organize trust his reasons for being there in the first place.
7. Belief in self – know what he is doing as an organizer.
8. Ability to get the satisfaction from creation of worthwhile and effective organizations.

USE OF CONFLICTS

Alinsky's strategic and tactical essence is built around conflict.

He uses confrontation much as teacher groups have used confrontation at the negotiations table in order to buy a piece of the power. Alinsky does not believe you can reason away from the power groups slices of their power. He believes they will attempt to buy you off by giving you, in exchange for real power, apparent power. Confrontation is then a way to apply pressure until you get real power.

Conflict does not bother Alinsky. He does not even bother to explain that conflict is the basis of his approach to organizing. He believes that using conflict to build organizations is a means by which you build protection for people against institutions which overwhelm them.

We talk about conflict models. Alinsky sneers at conflict models. When you say conflict model, it means that real conflict is not a part of your psyche. It means that you play at the idea of conflict.

Conflict, Alinsky says, begins with people raising questions about accepted ways of doing things. Socrates was a questioner, that made him an agitator and that led to conflict.

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