

III. Mass Education and Communication

1. Introduction: Reaching People

Self-education and mass education are two aspects of a single, interacting process. The task of the leaflet writer and canvasser is not to deliver "the correct line" to the people, but to respond to their problems and to help organize the fight for immediate demands in such a way as to transform it into a struggle for a new social order.

The easiest and probably most effective communication is therefore with one's own age, class, and occupational group. Even here, it helps to know how to argue so as to open minds to new ideas rather than close them around old prejudices. How much more essential, then, to know the basic principles of persuasion when, for example, middle-class students address themselves to members of oppressed minorities, industrial workers, and older people generally.

It is not only a question of countering the mass media's daily barrage of propaganda and misinformation, but of helping people to draw from their own experience of oppression the conclusions that will lead to action for change. If this were primarily a matter of glossy P.R. or selling techniques, it would be hopeless. The movement can learn something from the media, but a mimeographed leaflet can't compete with national TV.

The strength of our communication rests in its truth. We, and not the exploiters, warmakers, and pigs, speak to the real situation: to the frustrations and sufferings of the people, to their determination and hope to win a better life.

Fundamental change will not come until masses of people are in motion, demanding it. And people are impelled to move, not by theory or abstract visions, but by recognizing

that their immediate conditions have become intolerable and by determining to correct them. Through such struggles—for jobs or community-controlled schools or the release of a political prisoner or the withdrawal from a war—and through drawing the lessons of such struggles, they learn that the ruling system will not and cannot meet, in any basic or permanent way, even their most elementary needs.

It is the central work of the movement to achieve this consciousness and to communicate it to the people at all levels of the struggle. This means addressing ourselves first to immediate, concrete problems; acting and drawing others into action; evaluating victories and defeats in terms of the ultimate perspective, so that we may build a permanent movement that learns from its own mistakes and creatively brings forth new forms of struggle. This must be the aim and content of our communication with ourselves and all people. To further this we can learn some persuasive techniques that will help transform communication into organization and action.

Before you call a public meeting, canvass, write a leaflet, or plan a mass campaign, let the group ask itself questions like these:

Whom are we addressing? (Be precise: not "the workers," "the community," but the workers of what trade and shop, the people of what ethnic, religious, and economic group, in what neighborhood?) What do they know about the issue at hand and how do they feel about it? Are they directly or only indirectly affected? Are they already in motion on the issue or are we trying to make them aware of it? Are we addressing a united group or are there differences and conflicts within it? What traditional attitudes or prejudices are involved? In what terms do the people talk about the issue?

If you don't have answers to all these questions, seek them in the course of the action. Listen more than you talk; be open and alert—and patient. People do not change their minds or adopt new ideas simply because they are *told* to do so. The individual must work things out for himself, in the terms of his partly unique, partly common life experience.

Therefore, begin *where the people are*, with local manifestations of the larger issues: e.g., with the layoff in a particular shop, not the whole economic recession. You are more authentic if you can call the boss or landlord by name and if

you know about the local Vietnam casualties than if you lean on phrases like "capitalist exploiters," "oppression," "American imperialism."

People are not mere representatives of a class or race. To treat them as such smacks of manipulation, no matter how essential to their own deepest needs your message is. Respect their interests, beliefs, loyalties. An argument that shows how the Vietnam war harms the U.S. is more persuasive to the patriot than spitting on the flag.

Many workers yearn for consumer gadgets that you may scorn. If they join an anti-inflation demonstration because they can't meet the payments on their color TV, don't romanticize about starvation. You had better be clear which is more important to you—your own anticonsumerist life-style, or the organization of people who may still be reaching for capitalism's goodies.

Don't come on heavy with politics to a man whose mind is on baseball scores. Talk baseball scores and wait for an opening—or save your message for next time, when you are no longer a stranger. Remember that you, too, are a human being and not a mere political phonograph. The easiest, most natural contact with people in speech or writing is politically the most effective, though not always the speediest or most direct.

This suggests an approach to the sticky question of haircuts and clothing styles. Stereotypes being what they are, visible evidences of the new life-style may initially turn off workers and community people who have been brainwashed into feeling menaced by them. If your contact is of the quick, one-shot sort, your appearance may close some minds to your message altogether. But *what* you say and *how* you act will cancel initial doubts if you work consistently and modestly, helping people in their day-to-day struggles.

When you have moved beyond the first-contact stage, you will engage increasingly in argumentation and persuasion. Few people see themselves as abstractly "oppressed" although they are acutely aware of the daily struggle to eat, make a happy home, educate their kids, keep their draft-age boys alive, hold onto some hope for the future—in short, to live like human beings. Starting with the *particular* way each one experiences his oppression, you will deal mostly with countering the lies and evasions which are the stock-in-trade of the schools and the media, attempting to show how the individ-

ual's problems are neither isolated nor necessary nor hopeless, if the many join to fight the class system that is their source.

You will get into arguments. The people you meet are not stupid; they have ideas of their own and they will tell you. Let them. Your task is not to "win" an argument, but to provide a sort of catalyst for the development of political awareness—your own and another's. You can't really change another person's mind. You can only provide the occasion, the questions, perhaps some facts, that may help him to change his own. While you should never flatter with false agreement, you will seldom succeed with contradiction. It is not necessary to debate every small point of difference. Try to identify and seize on a point of partial agreement and develop its ramifications. Many people blame their troubles on "corrupt politicians." You can start here with agreement, then go on to the real sources of corruption in society, the ineradicable corruption of the system itself.

To be persuasive, in speech or writing, you must know your audience's attitude toward you and your subject, then adjust your appeal accordingly. Here are some rule-of-thumb approaches:

For the ignorant or the indifferent: The most direct, concrete demonstration by *immediate experience* is best: "Why this is important to you," etc. Facts, events, and straightforward, reasoned arguments go further than emotive appeals.

For the hostile: If possible, let them give their views first. In writing, present the opposing view first, respectfully and fairly. Agree with anything you can. Then answer with facts and logic (*not* invective), point by point, giving a chance for rebuttal where possible. With the person too hostile to listen, your best tactic is simply to preserve your manners and your cool. The way you act may neutralize hostility more than an argument can.

For the doubtful, uncommitted, or partly opposed: Again, listen to their position first. Concentrate on points of agreement and try to develop them, with facts and reason, so as to answer or question the points of disagreement. Assume a common ground, be friendly, don't try to high-pressure people.

For those already convinced and on your side: The point of your persuasion may be to transform belief into action or commitment. Here, in addition to reinforcing the facts, you can use emotive appeals to develop a sense of urgency and solidarity.

Good persuasion and communication add up to common sense and uncommon sensitivity. Know your audience. Know what you are talking about. Use a language the people understand. Respect your audience and yourself as human beings. Concern yourself with the individual and his particular life as the first evidence of your concern for all men and all lives.

2. Publications

a. Leaflets

The leaflet is ordinarily a one-page, one-issue, one-action affair. It can range from the simple "hand poster" advertising a demonstration to the "educational" discussion of an issue, with or without proposals for immediate action. The leaflet planned for street distribution should be laid out and written so that its central idea can be quickly grasped. Even the longer, educational leaflet should be broken up and headed so that its general message is apparent at a glance.

Production. Use, as a rule, letter-size (8½ x 11) paper and double-space. If you single-space, make short paragraphs and double-space between them. Whatever printing method you use, be sure your leaflet is clean and clear. A smudgy, semi-legible leaflet implies a subtle lack of respect for your reader and for your own message. Print headlines and outstanding information by hand and leave plenty of white space—the more the better.

Getting your message across. Size of type alone does not create emphasis. The most important parts of your communication should come at the end and the beginning. Be sure that the time and place of any action is clearly stated, even repeated. Sign all leaflets with the name and address of the group. People like to know who is talking to them.

Try to head your leaflet with a slogan or phrase that refers directly to the issue or action involved. Use the language of the people you want to reach. Avoid vague phrases like "Fight Unemployment!" The same goes for the body of the leaflet. Use down-to-earth, interest-catching subheads for each paragraph or begin each with a clear, strong topic sentence.

Try to stick to *one issue per leaflet* and to develop it con-

cretely, factually, and as simply as possible. Take a single grievance like a price increase and explain, step by step, its connection with the war. Don't try to link up *every* relevant issue at once. Simply to mention grievances does not establish their connection with the class struggle as a whole. Avoid grab-bag terms like "imperialism," "ruling class," and "repression," unless you are prepared to nail them down with flesh-and-blood examples.

Timing. Short, frequent leaflets are usually more effective than long, infrequent ones. Try to discuss your first leaflet with the people you gave it to, then respond to their questions or objections in a second. Plan a series of leaflets in the same neighborhood, factory, or school, starting with gut issues and developing their broader political ramifications, one at a time. A series of leaflets relating local events and issues to national and international ones can later evolve into a regular newsletter, covering a variety of questions each week.

b. Newsletters

The newsletter can play a role in organizing the group itself, or the wider community, or both at once. At its most primitive it is a single sheet, differing from the leaflet in that it appears periodically and carries a variety of materials, announcements, etc. At its most elaborate it approaches the newspaper, with reports of events and editorial comment, but is usually addressed to a more limited audience.

Whether your newsletter consists of one or many pages, mimeographed or printed, regularity of publication is important to build its influence. During a crisis it may appear daily; in a long-term organizing drive perhaps weekly or biweekly.

A newsletter should live up to its name, and this requires news gathering. One or two reporter-editors can get out a simple "house organ" for the group, but a newsletter addressed to a community or a large plant needs many news sources from among the people.

Don't make up for a lack of news by exhortations or long excursions into theory. Better keep it short. Concentrate on the political analysis of local events and issues, linking them with national and world struggles.

Check your news and beware of rumor and garbled facts. To write credibly for a community or a shop, you must know who is who and how things work. If you can't be sure, don't

pretend to be an authority. Try to get signed articles from community people and workers themselves.

People are news—and a lot goes on in their lives that is not strictly "political." A well-established community or shop newsletter may include items like marriages, retirements, deaths, and vacation trips. You should, as a rule, get people's permission to use their names or to quote them.

Announcements and advertisements of local events are usually a free service in a newsletter. You can broaden your community base by extending this service to various organizations of the people.

Give your newsletter a name—preferably one that reflects the community. Design a permanent heading; date each issue; always include a masthead to show who is publishing it.

Observe the rules of clarity, cleanliness, and openness, whether you reproduce by mimeo or have it printed. You may use 8½ x 11 or 8½ x 14 paper for a mimeo newsletter and set up your copy in double columns. If you do, its appearance will be greatly improved if you "justify" it. (See "Mechanics.") Break up long columns with line drawings or subheads.

The newsletter may be hand-distributed outside shop gates, on the street, inside the factory, or through community centers, stores, etc. The most effective distribution is usually done by the workers or community people themselves. In any case, try to establish regular spots, as well as regular days and hours, so that your readers will begin to anticipate its appearance. The mailed newsletter is a valuable device for keeping in touch with your own members, as well as with community people, especially in cases where many of them do not attend meetings.

c. Newspapers

Whether your newspaper is addressed to the campus or to a wider community, its effectiveness depends on regularity of publication; access to news and accurate reporting; orientation on particular events and people; a familiar name and format; a lively, well-illustrated, open layout; and above all, a content that raises the level of the struggle by linking immediate with ultimate goals. Since the newspaper ordinarily seeks a larger, more varied audience than the newsletter, it needs a considerably more elaborate organization of office, staff, and funding, and a higher level of

journalistic expertise. The people are used to the practices of the establishment press; you should adapt at least some of these to spreading your antiestablishment message.

Content and Style

1. Journalists usually construct the news story on an "inverted pyramid" pattern, the lead paragraph followed by details of descending importance. A reader can thus grasp the central facts at once and an editor can cut an article from the bottom without loss of its essentials.

2. The first paragraph should be short. It should state WHO did WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW—and sometimes WHY. Be concise, but try to avoid a mechanical recital of statistics. Use concrete, graphic language and get the issues up front.

Example: "Mrs. Jane Doe and her six children narrowly escaped eviction into the snow from their home at 1234 Jay Street, Chelsea, on Tuesday, January 20. When Sheriff John Roe arrived with the city van at 9 A.M. he found the steps of the crumbling tenement blocked by Mrs. Doe's neighbors, members of the East End Tenants' Council."

3. Use lots of names and spell them correctly. Quote often and accurately. Check quotations with the people concerned. Let participants in an event see your draft story and suggest improvements. Wherever possible, have a participant write the story himself.

4. If you plan an attack or exposé, check your basic information with several people in a position to know the facts. If the situation is unclear or disputed, say so and print the differing versions of it. All opinions should be properly attributed. If an informant must remain anonymous, you can credit "a member of the Dean's Council" or "an individual placed high in the Pentagon," but try not to overuse this "reliable source" gimmick.

5. Erroneous or distorted facts, sensationalism, gross exaggeration, ad hominem attacks (i.e., attacks on persons rather than issues), and "radical" clichés fail to convince most people and can undermine your credibility. It is your business to expose and counteract such manipulative brain-washing by the commercial press, not to imitate it.

6. The successful newspaper—campus, aboveground, or underground—tends to develop a "personality" that reflects its writers and illustrators, on the one hand, and its readership

on the other. The more the two are fused through sensitive reporting, signed articles and other contributions, "letters to the editor," "letters to the people," and a calendar of community events, the more effective a political instrument your paper will be. Its style and tone can mark it as academic and elitist or as voice of the people, almost apart from its political content. This does not mean that you should "write down" to your audience. Rather, avoid the temptation of many good writers to be cynical or too clever, especially when dumping on the system or its lackeys. Well-aimed invective is a first-rate weapon if your reader agrees with its premises; it does not by itself persuade. Avoid "in-group" terms and references unless your paper is addressed only to an "in" readership. Economical, concrete, muscular English prose is best to open the minds of new readers and to break up elitist modes of communication in your own group or staff.

7. Answer attacks with facts and reason while vigorously exposing the lies and distortions of the mass media. Open your columns to your opponent and all who wish to debate with him. A running controversy is a means of education and self-education, and a prime circulation builder. Play fair: do not edit or cut your critic's copy. Prepare a strong, skillful reply and run it beside his attack. A "letters to the editor" column encourages your readers to get in on the act. Don't publish anonymous letters, though you may print a signed letter and withhold the author's name, when he so requests.

8. If you make an error, correct it promptly and apologize, but try not to make errors. You can avoid some hassles (though perhaps not a libel suit) if you use mostly signed articles and print in each issue the statement that the opinions of the authors are not necessarily those of the paper.

9. As you begin to involve contributing writers, you will meet the delicate problem of editing. If a community leader gives you a poorly written article, you must decide whether it can be used as is, or whether its printing may subject him or the paper to ridicule. Confer with the author if you propose major changes or cuts. Try to involve him in the editing process. You can always plead lack of space, but it is usually better to print even an inadequate contribution than to discourage participation. You should work toward having community organizations supply you with their press releases or

designate a reporter to keep in regular touch with your paper. Give extra copies to all contributors.

10. Feature articles and special issues provide means for handling background material, discussing theory, and raising broad political issues in your paper. Through them you can channel to the people the work of research projects or of the experts in your group. You can devote one issue to multiple articles on a single topic or carry a regular feature on each important subject area in every issue. Take care that your research features are not too heavily academic.

11. Apart from your own local news resources, you will need an interchange with the movement as a whole. Subscribe to important activist publications or exchange with them. (See Bibliography.) Reprint material when you have permission or where the copyright allows you to. Be sure to credit the paper and author. Once you can afford it, join Liberation News Service (160 Claremont Ave., New York, N.Y. 10027). Rates vary, but it costs about \$15 per month. LNS supplies one or more weekly packets of ready-to-use photos, graphics, and news items collected from the movement as a whole. HIPS (530 Brainards St., Naperville, Ill. 60540) is a high-school press service. Inter-Tribal News (P.O. Box 26, Village Sta., New York, N.Y. 10014) serves underground and hip radio stations.

Staff, Office, Distribution, Funds

1. Staff organization depends largely on the number, ambition, resources, and wishes of the people involved, and the size and frequency of the paper. It takes many people to publish a regular paper. If a small, closed staff attempts all the writing and production, look for the early death of staff or newspaper or both.

2. The larger and more frequent the publication, the more need to specialize and departmentalize. If possible, the whole group should make the paper an extension of its activities, each individual becoming adept at all functions. Though publication requires a division of labor, a rotation of editors, typists, reporters, and street hawkers can train members in all parts of the process and avoid hierarchies. The masthead can carry the names of the editor and contributors responsible for each particular issue, rather than those of a permanent board.

3. If a greater degree of specialization becomes necessary, be sure to have regular meetings to work out group policies and areas of responsibility. There should be no invidious distinction between "editorial," "business," and "technical" staff in a paper dedicated to fighting bureaucracy and class distinctions. The group should meet not only to agree on the contents of the forthcoming issue, but should also hold post mortem sessions to evaluate the journalistic and political quality of the last issue, so that weaknesses ranging from politics to proofreading and distribution can be corrected.

4. Set deadlines for individual stories well in advance of the printing deadline. You will need time for editorial improvements, checking, etc. A close deadline and multiple phone calls help overcome a reporter's tendency to procrastination. Encourage the inexperienced or timid writer by discussing his story with him in advance, offering ideas for the lead, suggesting points of emphasis. Keep folders with filler articles and pictures, in the event a promised story fails to materialize on time.

5. The size and complexity of your office setup will depend on the size of your paper, but in any case it is best to have separately designated spaces for editing, typing, graphics, composing, business, etc. Have a clearly marked tray or box for the receipt of outside articles and notices. You may need multiple phone numbers or an intercom system in a large office. Phones should be manned every day and message taking well organized. Have a bulletin board near the phones.

6. You will need a set of files and a system of ready reference for important phone numbers, community organizations, movement addresses, other papers, etc. Keep a subject file and index of back issues, along with records of the date, number, and cost of each issue and a file of copies. Establish clipping files of articles from and about the underground press, or subscribe to and keep a collection of movement papers for reference.

7. Your method of distribution will depend on the scope and intended audience of your paper. If you can support publication by advertising, subsidy, or membership dues and distribute it free, so much the better. If you must sell it, price it as low as possible. Tell your street hawkers where to pick up bulk packages and send them to designated spots. Check on their sales or distribution: who has leftover copies

and who runs short. The hawker and the paper usually split the proceeds. If you distribute free, check to see that the papers are being taken and read. Ask local stores and organizations to carry a pile on the counter.

8. Solicit subscriptions, starting at just above production and mailing costs. Check your local post office for the rules for a second-class mailing permit. Offer special prices to students, the elderly, GIs, teachers, etc. Solicit sponsorship subscriptions from friends.

9. Check out Internal Revenue Service rules for nonprofit organizations, so as to save certain taxes on supplies, etc. Check with a lawyer on incorporating for mutual protection. Start a bank account where you can cash or deposit checks made out to the organization or the paper.

10. Ads, sales, and subscriptions are the basic means of supporting a paper which is not subsidized by a dues-paying organization. Of these, advertising is the best source of funds. Mail out to prospective advertisers a sheet giving information on circulation, your readers' interests, advertising rates, etc. Learn the competitive rates for similar papers in your area. Be selective: solicit advertising from local businesses that cater to the needs and interests of your readers. You may have to offer a merchant a free ad as a come-on.

11. Don't become so dependent on ads that it affects your style or crowds out your political content. Better ask people to pay for the paper, turn to them for financial support, run fund-raising campaigns, or attempt a less ambitious publication. Be sure to include in every issue your mailing address, phone, circulation figures, advertising rates, and a plea for funds, contributors, and volunteer workers.

Legal Hassles

Printers, because of community pressure or their personal political views, are often reluctant to print an underground. Try this approach: First make an appointment with a printer by phone. Go and see him with the copy. For the first few issues tone down the rhetoric so that he will accept the job. Try to talk to him and explain the material in his terms; the manner in which a printer is approached may be more important than what is actually being said in the paper. Upon refusal to print, you must (1) stop printing, (2) change printers, or (3) sue for breach of contract. (A phone call

arranging a time to print the paper is a verbal contract and is legally binding.) But talk to a lawyer first so as not to say something which will void the contract.

The police may step in directly to quash your publication. Unpublished material may be seized (illegally) by police or the printer may turn it over to them. Street hawkers may find themselves arrested for trespass, loitering, disturbing the peace, failure to have a license, obscenity, etc. Have a lawyer available. The American Civil Liberties Union is sympathetic in cases involving freedom of speech and freedom of the press. A political reason for suppressing publication will not stand up in court. Because of the strong Supreme Court decisions, it is difficult to prove a paper obscene, since it must be found so in its entirety, and there is usually some "socially redeeming value" in undergrounds. If your printer is subject to harassment, find out who is behind it and fight back. Even if a suit sets you back for a while, precedents established in a legal hassle will help struggling undergrounds in other parts of the country.

d. Posters

Posters and signs serve two broad purposes in the movement: to announce or advertise actions, meetings, and other events; to keep certain slogans, pictures, quotations, or other political reminders constantly before the eyes of the people and of the group itself.

Design. The sign to advertise a demonstration, meeting, or benefit performance will be posted, presumably, in public places—streets, storefronts, transport stations, walls, etc., where many people pass. It should be designed to catch the eye and deliver its message at a glance.

Include only the *essential information*: a brief slogan indicating the purpose of the event; the event itself (including speakers, etc.); the place; the time; the sponsorship. (If the place is unfamiliar, directions may be added in small type.) Decide in advance what is most important and make it stand out by size of letters or change of colors or placement on page. In general, one or two colors are sufficient. Many bright colors tend to compete for attention. Any illustration should be relevant to the action, simple and eye-catching. Abstract designs should call attention to the words, not compete with them. *Leave lots of empty space around your copy—always.*

Production. The simplest and probably cheapest method of poster printing is by hand with magic markers or broad grease pastels. Once the design and copy is set, you can produce a large number quite fast by an assembly-line technique. Printing block letters is harder for untrained people than italics. A large, clear handwriting is usually more attractive than inexpert printing. Attractive small posters can be made by mimeograph, if you learn the technique of hand printing by stylus on a stencil.

When the copy is large and brief, or when you want to include a simple design (like an explosion flash, a flower, a star or circle, or the silhouette of a building), cut a stencil out of stiff paper with a razor blade or knife. Place the stencil over your poster board and spray with a can of quick-drying paint (available at art stores). When your design is dry, you can print over it, if you wish, with another color.

When you need a quantity of posters and a professional-looking job, silk screen is your best bet. Unless you are blessed with an activist art school nearby where you need only supply the paper, ink, and copy, it will pay you to make the modest outlay required for silk-screening and to have several members train themselves to do it. The complete process, including making the screen itself, can be learned from such paperback manuals as: Biegeleisen and Cohn's *Silk Screen Technique* (Dover); Biegeleisen's *Complete Book of Silk Screen Printing* (Dover); Serle and Clayton's *Silk Screen Printing on Fabric* (Watson)—if you want to expand your artistry to T-shirts, banners, etc.

If you plan to plaster your entire city with posters, get them printed. Block out your copy and choose your lettering from among the printer's fonts and sizes. Be sure to read proof before the run is made. There's nothing like a "typo" in 48-point type on five thousand posters!

Distribution. There are good poster spots and bad, for visibility and for your relations with the public. There are no prescriptions for these save observation, experimentation, and consideration. Make a list of the centers most frequented by the people you want to reach, and the best spots in those centers.

Whether you observe "post no bills" warnings will depend on whom you are trying to reach and what your relationships with the community are. Indiscriminate sign posting can create hostility as well as support, so evaluate the local

situation. Ask a storekeeper's permission to use his window and avoid covering up his own display. Don't deface nature or hammer nails into trees. Remove obsolete posters to make way for your new ones.

White glue is expensive but virtually unassailable once it is set. Flour and condensed milk make cheaper tough adhesive. Small signs and stickers can be ordered with the adhesive already on. Scotch tape is expensive, dries out fast, won't hold on rough surfaces. A stapling gun is good for affixing heavy cardboard to wood.

If you plan to paint on walls, a cardboard stencil and a spray can will add dash to a well-phrased slogan—but think twice about using hard-to-remove paints or adhesives for signs which will soon be out of date. Oil-based paints soak into stone or cement and have to be sanded off. Scotch tape will mar interior paint.

e. Mechanics

Every activist should know how to reproduce a leaflet or newsletter by the cheapest, simplest, most available means like ditto and mimeograph. Do not let one or two become slaves to the machine: let the experts train others and pass the job around so that in a crisis any member can step into the breach.

The "ditto" type of reproduction (blue purple) is perhaps the easiest and involves the cheapest machine and supplies (stencil masters, fluid, and paper). A new hand-operated machine will cost \$75 and up; electric models run from \$400 to \$575. Material can be typed or drawn on the stencil master with ball-point pen. Errors can be corrected by scraping the ink off the back of the stencil master with a razor blade, inserting a fresh scrap of the inked backing, and typing over the error. For under one hundred copies, ditto reproduction is adequate, if not elegant. The stencil wears out and becomes too faint to read if you go much beyond a hundred.

The *mimeograph machine*, which is available in several models and makes at prices running from about \$100 to \$900 new, has a far greater range than the ditto and, properly handled, can produce clear copies up to one thousand or over on a good stencil. Imported machines are somewhat cheaper than domestic, but if you buy one be

sure that you have a steady source for repairs and supplies nearby; many imported machines take a special stencil. If your group cannot afford a new machine, check out the secondhand office-supply houses for both mimeo and ditto machines—but have a mechanic look over anything you plan to buy. Prices should be about half to two-thirds. For large editions, an electric machine is worthwhile, but many an organizing drive has been ground out by willing arms on an old hand-turned machine. If you can't afford any machine at all, ask a sympathetic church, school, or community organization for the use of theirs—and leave it clean and in order when you finish! The approximate cost of operating a mimeo is 20¢ per stencil and \$2.50 per ream of paper. Some hints for mimeographing:

1. Cut a mimeo stencil according to the manufacturer's directions, with the typewriter ribbon lowered. Proofread as you go and have correction fluid handy for your errors. Be sure to keep within the limit lines on the stencil.

2. A small collection of styluses, a straightedge, and a plastic stencil of letters and numbers—all available reasonably in office-supply stores—are useful to make line drawings and headlines on the stencil. If you do much stylus work you will need a "light table." Either purchase one or cobble up a homemade model out of a box lined with foil, punched with ventilation holes, and covered with a piece of glass, preferably frosted. Place a 25- to 40-watt bulb inside the box and your stencil on the glass so that the light shines through and lets you see what you're doing.

3. Many newsletters are set up in double columns and are reproduced by mimeograph. Appearance and readability are enhanced by "justifying" the copy so that both margins of the columns are straight, like type. Set your typewriter for thirty-three letters and type up your column on a piece of paper. At the end of each line type an *x* for each space left unfilled up to thirty-three. Then retype your copy on the stencil, transforming the *x*'s into an equal number of extra spaces distributed between words. A ruled line drawn down the center between columns gives a further professional touch. A proportional space typewriter will "justify" copy without all this bother, of course.

Offset printing is the fastest, most economical method of reproducing large numbers of copies. Find, if possible, a

printer who works for the movement; he is apt to be cheaper. Where the movement is strong it can practically keep a printer going.

The offset process involves photographing your copy and projecting the negative onto a lithographic plate for printing. It will therefore look in print very much as it does when it leaves your hand, except that it may be photographically reduced or enlarged. For a leaflet or release, you can simply give the printer copy typed exactly as you wish it to appear. For a more elaborate newsletter, you will need to prepare a layout. Ask the printer for complete instructions.

A letterpress shop will set your copy in type, either to be printed in quantity, or to produce proofs which will be pasted down on an offset layout. Line drawings can also be reproduced by letterpress. Remember that typesetting is the most expensive element in any printing operation and that, once the copy is in type, you will be charged extra for any changes that are not printer's errors.

Copy to be set should be clean and correct, typed triple-space, about forty characters per line. The staff should be prepared to read proof before final printing and several should be trained in using the conventional proofreader's correction symbols (see the appendix of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

If your group wishes to set up its own printshop, get the advice of a movement pressman or write to: Omega Posters, 711 S. Dearborn St., Rm. 543, Chicago, Ill. 60605. Phone (312) 939-7672.

3. Canvassing

Canvassing, or the organization of systematic one-to-one discussion with people in and around their homes or jobs, is perhaps the most certain way to get to the grass roots, though by no means the easiest or quickest. The fact that it is a long-established method of the old-line parties, census and polltakers, Fuller Brush men, and Jehovah's Witnesses has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, people are accustomed to canvassers; on the other, they

may not believe that you simply want to talk issues with them and are not "selling something." In fact, a petition or referendum, a leaflet announcing a meeting, a survey of opinion, a newspaper to give away is usually needed to break the ice and give a point to your visit, even when your main aim is the discussion itself.

Preparation for Canvassing

Perhaps the less the better. Most neophytes are a bit uptight about knocking on strange doors. "Role Playing" and "Antagonism" sessions are not likely to give them confidence—rather, the reverse. You can practice how to handle thirty types of responses and meet a thirty-first, the first door you knock on. Common sense, courtesy, and commitment to what you are doing are the main requisites.

The inexperienced should go out with the experienced, in teams of two, preferably a woman and a man. If none are experienced, then let the inexperienced plunge ahead together. Making a few mistakes is not fatal. Talk them over afterward and try not to repeat them. Don't expect to accomplish miracles on one visit. You would not change your politics as a result of a few minutes' conversation with a stranger, so why expect others to? You will mainly hear from people the opinions they hold *now*. In a single visit you may only be able to raise certain questions in their minds.

Know what you are talking about—not just how you feel about it. Fact sheets and other readings, plus workshops and discussions, should prepare canvassers to handle a subject like the Vietnam war *in detail*. This means knowing the government's arguments and how to answer them; knowing facts about the war economy and its effect on prices, wages, taxes, employment, education, and social services, i.e., the points where it hits the people. If you are canvassing workers you will need facts and figures on their particular company's part in the complex. The point is not, of course, to spout academic information at everyone you meet. But if you want to answer a forty-year-old Korean vet, who has just lost his job, but who still believes in the domino theory, you'll need better ammunition than some ringing phrases.

Precanvassing sessions, in addition to beefing up general political education, should prepare your group on the composition of the community or plant, the traditional attitudes of

the class or ethnic group involved, the local politics and community or trade-union organizations, the current issues and problems that are stirring the people. Get a friendly resident or worker to take part in these sessions, if possible. If you must go "cold," try hanging around stores, bars, and lunch counters a bit to get the feel of the situation. If you have lists of names (voters, etc.), you can probably tell if the neighborhood is predominantly Irish, Polish, Italian, etc. Be aware of probable religious affiliations.

The principal foreign language you may need, both east and west, is Spanish. Use the Spanish speakers in your group for Puerto Rican and Chicano neighborhoods. If no one knows Spanish, get a phrase book and learn a few of the greetings and courtesies. It is a mark of respect that helps to establish rapport, even if you must converse in your own language rather than your host's.

Collect whatever material you need—leaflets, petitions, etc.—in a neat folder or envelope. If you plan to work from a list or cards, it is well to have them readily available, with a pencil for notations, in your pocket. Organize the names in advance by addresses and, where possible, by apartment numbers.

Your appearance matters, but not as much as what you have to say and how you say it. Straight clothing and short hair still go better in most places, but if you can't be yourself except as you are, stay that way. Cleanliness and a comb help a lot.

If your area of operations is distant from your base, ride to it and save your energy for canvassing. Wear comfortable shoes. If your work is inside a large apartment house or project, don't dress too warmly; you will probably not have a chance to take off your coat.

Knocking on Doors

Given a hot issue and a good approach, effective house-to-house canvassing still depends on finding the person you want to see and getting him to open his door. Canvassing everybody in a house is simpler than locating contacts or registered voters, etc., since it eliminates fiddling around with lists, names, and apartment numbers. In either case, here are a few hard-won principles on which to proceed:

A. At projects and large apartment houses: If the outside

door is locked get a kid (or adult, if possible) to let you in. If there are doorbells, get a name on your list (if any) to buzz you in, then visit him first. Or punch any bell and hope for the best. In face of a doorman, one name and apartment number is almost essential (invented ones have been known to work).

If you are working from a list of names, you can usually match them with apartment numbers on doorbells or mailboxes. If not, ask anyone you see—in fact, start your canvass with him or her.

Ride in the elevator or walk up to the top floor and work down. (You'll be tired later.)

B. Single houses are easier if you have a list, harder if you don't. Ask kids and neighbors and get names. Keep off the grass and go to the front door.

C. Knock or ring and wait a decent interval before repeating. Don't pound on the door like a posse of pigs. If you stumble into a high-decibel family fight, tiptoe quickly away.

D. Many people, perhaps most, won't open the door until you've identified yourself. When someone calls "Who is it?" the woman canvasser should answer. Address the householder by his name, if you know it, and give your own. If you use a friendly, confident tone he may think he knows you. If he asks your business, state it generally, emphasizing words likely to catch his interest. Many people will open the door to sheer double-talk, out of curiosity, if your voice sounds friendly. Don't try to discuss anything through a closed door—it's a waste of time from several points of view.

E. Mean dogs are canvassers' nightmares. A loose, barking yard dog should be given the steady eye as you advance slowly, hands at sides. The chances are he's a harmless loudmouth, if you're brave. Chained or confined apartment dogs, especially where the people fear robberies, are meant to be dangerous and often are. Wait till the dog's master has OK'd you and restrained him.

F. Television programs can be a drag, not only because they blanket your knocking, but because they are competition. If you get no answer when you are pretty sure your knock has been heard, leave and try again. People pulled away from a favorite program are seldom receptive. If you're

invited into the middle of a program, you'd better sit it out till your host is ready to talk.

G. Whether you accept *an invitation to step in* or not depends on the focus of your canvass. Obviously, you will have a greater effect if you are able to sit down, exchange a few words on baseball or weather, raise the purpose of your call, listen carefully to your host's opinions, and at least suggest some possible solutions of his problems. You may develop an ally who will fill you in on local issues, introduce you to the neighbors, and join you in action. On the other hand, you may miss a referendum deadline or fail to reach a houseful of aroused tenants while you act as a sounding board for one lonely person. You will have to decide, as the case warrants, whether to stay or politely to disengage yourself. Don't promise to return unless you intend to. Be wary of involvement in personal grievances that can't be handled on the level of organized struggle, and keep out of neighborhood feuds.

H. If your canvassing aims at house or community organizing, try to turn it over to the people inside as soon as possible. Perhaps one or two active people will introduce you to others, canvass their neighborhoods, or call small meetings in their apartments.

I. If someone is *aggressively hostile*, you are usually wasting your time if you stick around. Listen briefly. If the man who opens the door seems bent on converting or abusing you, don't bother arguing. Disengage as smoothly as possible. In such cases, your self-control and good humor may be more impressive than any words could be.

J. Try to be sensitive to the *situation of old people* who are often lonely and timid in our big cities and who feel menaced by the young. If you address yourself to their problems and learn to listen courteously, you will find that many older workers and community people are anxious for a contact with you and can bring to the struggle much valuable experience from the organizing days of the thirties.

K. Unless you are forced to cover ground rapidly, as in a petition or election campaign, the best way to canvass is to *work in depth in a single neighborhood*. From the first, keep your ears open to information about schools, local housing hassles, traffic conditions, political lineups, etc. Take notes on your visits—after each one, but *not* in the presence

of your host, unless you are frankly taking a survey or poll. Supplement what the people tell you with facts and figures from city hall and from various agencies. Visit the schools if possible. By the time you have become a familiar figure in the neighborhood it will have become familiar to you. You will be then launched in the kind of day-to-day work where you can help raise the level of the immediate demands to a struggle for a fundamental restructuring of society.

At Factory Gates

The techniques of canvassing on or near a job location are obviously different. The soundest method is, of course, day-to-day discussion with one's fellow workers. Next best is to support workers inside who, in turn, keep you supplied with information, news, etc. If you have to start from the outside only, your place and time of approach will depend on answers to questions like: Where and when are the workers at leisure to talk? What sort of surveillance is there and is it dangerous for a worker to be seen talking to you? Can you work on company property or only on public streets? Diners, lunch wagons, and coffee-break wagons are often good locations. Acquaint yourself with the schedule of each shift. Learn who the guards and stooges are, if the situation is tense. Morning factory-gate distribution gets your leaflets into the plant for discussion. In general, lunchtime and breaks are good if you can meet the workers then. In cases where any canvassing around the plant may endanger the workers' jobs, your contact may have to begin with an inside organizer or two who will give you the home addresses of others, whom you can then visit.

4. Information Centers

An information center may be temporary or permanent; aimed at organizing the community or the movement itself; concerned with education or with the coordination of activities, or with a combination of these. At its simplest it may consist of a table of pamphlets, buttons, etc., set up at a mass demonstration or at a street corner during a com-

munity organizing drive. At its most elaborate it may involve an office or storefront with files, bulletin boards, literature for distribution or sale, and several telephones. In either and any case, an effective information center must be accessible and must be manned during the hours that the people need it. In a crisis, this probably means around the clock.

A permanent center, especially one that aims to gather and transmit news of the movement, should be run by a regular committee, so that each member knows the answers or knows where to find them quickly. The center should keep ready files of movement addresses and phones, community organizations, places where people can stay, fact sheets and pamphlets—especially of the practical, informational sort (e.g., *The Abortion Handbook* by Linda Thurston; *The Poor Man's Housing Almanac* by John Marcy. These can be obtained at cost from the Student Union, Boston University, 775 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, Mass. 02215). With adequate space an information center can double as a reading room and a meeting place. A table of movement newspapers, a directory of vocations for social change, a skills and tools bank, a map of the region, a source for posters, buttons, and news of what's happening—these are ingredients of a well-equipped center. Above all, its value to group and community rests on a staff of friendly, devoted, knowledgeable people who keep the bulletin boards up to date, know what's going on, and pass the news along.

5. Speakers' Bureaus

A group that sets up a speakers' bureau can perform a free community service and at the same time extend its own educational and organizational influence. Many clubs, churches, schools, youth and women's groups, etc., want speakers and panel discussionists, but can neither find them in their own ranks nor afford paid lecturers. With the movement constantly and controversially in the news, more people than you may suspect are eager to hear from students and other organizers. Your pool of potential speakers should

therefore include trained members of your own group, as well as sympathetic people of special competence from the university, the churches, the labor unions, the ranks of the professionals, and the community at large. Here are some steps and suggestions for establishing a speakers' bureau:

Basic Organization

First discuss and decide on your objectives. These will depend on your politics, on the major issues of the moment, on the composition and sentiments of the community you wish to serve, and on your group's relation to that community. You may be able to present your political position directly, hence to supply speakers mainly from your own group and its close sympathizers. On the other hand, the situation may require you to work along very broad educational lines. In the latter case, you would probably seek out clergymen, professors, specialists in various fields, community and union leaders—who might not agree with you in toto, but whose opinions and knowledge can help open people's minds. (E.g., a priest who did not fully agree with your analysis of American imperialism might well be an effective advocate of the immediate withdrawal of troops from Southeast Asia.) For debates and panel discussions you could even supply representatives of the establishment view—though this is not as easy as it sounds.

A small committee is sufficient and best for organizing a speakers' bureau. The work mostly consists in making individual contacts and arrangements, attending to a multitude of details, keeping an up-to-date central file. A single devoted person with a telephone can operate the bureau, once it is established. Members of the committee should be able to communicate clearly in speech and writing and to function in a systematic manner.

The committee's job is twofold: to develop a list of people who are competent and willing to speak on issues of major concern, and to discover the community organizations that want to hear them. You can advertise your bureau even before your roster of speakers is complete, but be sure you are "covered" from the beginning, in case you get a quick response. Leaflet your potential "customers" by distribution or mail. Telephone chairmen or program directors of organi-

zations and members whom you know. Offer your service as a contribution to them and to community education.

Speakers

If you plan to depend primarily on your own speakers you may need training sessions, on both the background of issues and the techniques of public speaking. Ask a friendly professor or graduate student to run a short seminar and to suggest appropriate readings. An experienced lecturer or a member of the speech department can help improve a speaker's style even in one or two sessions. If your speaking crew is large enough, its members should specialize in various issues (e.g., the U.S. in Southeast Asia; inflation, taxes, and unemployment; housing, landlordism, and urban renewal; black liberation, etc.), so long as they understand how each relates to the general crisis of the system.

If you expect to use community and university speakers outside your group, be sure you are acquainted with their views and their platform effectiveness. You cannot establish a "political purity" test, so if you decide to ask a pacifist (rather than a Viet Cong supporter) to speak to the local Lions Club on the war, don't try to control what he says or criticize him for not saying something else. Your outright enemies will hardly agree to speak under your auspices. Find out your potential speaker's special competence so as to match him with an audience interested in his topic. The committee member who recruits community volunteers for the speaker's pool should be a person of tact and social presence. Remember, you are asking someone to give of his time and effort free. The chances are he will do so because he believes in your cause, but don't fail to express your appreciation, to be helpful about arrangements, directions, transportation, etc., and to discuss his impressions with him after an engagement.

Keep an up-to-date card file of the names and special competence of your speakers. Requests to speak and the dates of actual speaking engagements should be noted on the file cards, along with pertinent comments or evaluations. As your operation grows, you will need a folder file of brief biographies and perhaps a glossy photo of each speaker, for publicity purposes.

You cannot do much to control your speakers' appearance and level of language, unless they are of your own group. Community speakers are usually fairly "straight," which presents little problem save perhaps with youth groups. If you find that a certain speaker has "turned off" a certain audience, try to find out why, note it on the file, and avoid repeating the mistake. With speakers from your own group discuss the probable composition of the audience and advise accordingly. Long hair will not cancel the effect of a good speech. Some audiences may, indeed, expect a young speaker to appear in feathers and beads. If you agree to play to the stereotype, try to show them that there is an informed and thoughtful head under that thatch of hair.

Programs

Give serious consideration to the debate and the panel discussion as forms for presenting the pros and cons of an issue. Where it is not possible to come on heavily with your full political position, an open discussion can help to open minds. It is not easy, however, to find qualified and willing spokesmen for the establishment. Active military and government men are under some restrictions in talking policy. Try to get conservative professors, retired career military men, ex-politicians, newsmen, etc. You may be surprised to find how few people wish to argue for the government's policies under conditions where they must debate or answer questions.

A dialogue with the audience can often accomplish more than a straight lecture. This means more than simply fielding a few questions. An experienced speaker can, after a brief presentation, get a genuine exchange going with even quite a large audience, but generally it is best to break a big meeting into smaller workshop groups—in which case your speaker will need to bring along a couple of assistants or to recruit them on the spot.

Backup

The chairman of the organization inviting the speaker usually introduces him, but in the case of small or grass-roots groups a speaker may simply identify himself or take along

should take advantage of bulk mailing rates. For this and for information on classes of mail, go to your local post office and ask for their booklet of regulations. If your list is too big to address by hand or typewriter, you should consider investment in an addressing machine. The best is a Scriptomatic, which in the large size costs \$1,200 new.

To get used equipment, place ads in religious and/or pacifist radical publications, also newspapers like *The Guardian*—in other words, magazines read by older movement people. Ask established groups, churches, or schools to let you use their machines, and offer to pay a small maintenance fee. Then you only need to buy your own blank address plates or cards.

7. Mobile Units

A mobile unit is a happening on wheels packed with people, information, and political mobility. It can serve as an information center, a wandering workshop, a guerrilla theater base, a hassle-free office, a home for nomad organizers.

Buy an old hearse, mail truck, school bus, VW bus, or any reasonable facsimile. Your supplies and housekeeping arrangements will depend on your purposes and range, political and personal. You may want to park regularly at certain busy corners in your city where your well-postered and -painted vehicle will become a symbol of the movement while you distribute its literature and rap with the people. Or you may carry leaflets, films, music, craft stuff, and workshop discussions into remote towns where you are the first they have seen of the movement.

A good-sized mobile unit can carry a mimeograph or ditto machine and supplies, as well as your food, utensils, and bedding. You will travel more happily and carry your message more effectively if you stow your equipment systematically and keep your unit reasonably neat.

Apart from its instant availability for demonstrations and neighborhood campaigns, the mobile unit increases your range in being where the action is and makes you difficult to locate as you go about expanding and linking up the activist

network. Make any trip you take a political trip. Keep lists of friends wherever you go and let them know you are coming, whether you plan a mobile unit "blitz" to spark local interest or want advance publicity.

If a town is unfriendly, be careful not to embarrass your contacts; they have to live there long after you have gone. Try wherever possible to involve local people in your discussions or presentations so that you leave behind you a new nucleus from which the movement can grow.

8. Coffeehouses

A coffeehouse can become a center for the political education of young working people, street people, and students; a focal point for mobilization of the movement; a haven for GIs to meet one another and to gain community support for their resistance to daily oppression. To be all these things it must first be a place people like to go to meet people they like. It is a considerable undertaking, fraught with potential landlord and police hassles, but decidedly worth it if your group is large enough and well financed enough to undertake it. Community support in the form of actual participation is the prime condition for success.

Setting Up

Try to get the initial cooperation of local groups like churches and youth clubs. If possible, let them find and choose the place. You will need money for rent and renovation at once, so you should have enough to carry through for several months until fund-raising activities can take over. Buying a house eliminates landlord hassles, but gives the owners some heavy responsibilities. A group in Cambridge limited individual liability by forming a corporation.

Check local zoning ordinances and health and safety regulations. Get from the Government Printing Office or the local Small Business Administration their pamphlets on starting small enterprises. Find out about licenses: live entertainment sometimes requires a separate license. You may need a lawyer. You may also want to take out public liability

insurance. If you plan to invest in extensive renovations, get the landlord's written consent and get a lease. This won't, however, save you if the authorities try to close you down as a fire or health hazard or as a public nuisance. Your only real protection lies in the support of the people of the community.

It is therefore *essential* that you understand the local situation before you start. If ethnic tensions, street violence, etc., already exist, your coffeehouse may help to create unity, or it may become a new locus of conflict.

Even if members of your own group make the initial arrangements, try to involve neighborhood people in renovating, decorating, and building tables and benches from secondhand materials. Give your and their imagination a free rein with murals, collages, posters, and a catchy name for the house. Let as much come from the people as possible. If they feel it is their own place, they will be there and you can increase its political content as you work with them.

Day-to-Day Operation

If your coffeehouse advertises particular days and hours, be sure you have enough staff from your own group and the community to open up on time and keep open. Provide coffee; food if possible. Keep charges at a minimum. It is unlikely that a coffeehouse can pay for itself out of normal income. Support it with fund-raising affairs, the sale of posters and crafts, etc.

Avoid liquor and dope. Try to make your rules persuasive rather than coercive, but they had better be clear and firm on this. Excessive noise also gives the authorities an excuse to close you down, so it's worthwhile to tone it down. In any case, you don't want to sacrifice political discussion to mere racket.

Leaflets, pamphlets, posters, books, and records should be on hand for distribution or sale. According to the interests of your supporters, activities may include folk music; chess; athletics; films; draft and drug counseling; discussion groups and classes; workshops in arts and crafts and in leaflet writing and silk screen; Sunday dinners; poetry readings; and always a lot of informal rapping. If you have space enough, a mimeo machine and a poster shop are good for involving your "customers" in speaking to their own community. With a

really good setup and the participation of neighborhood mothers, you might start a child-care center, but check health and safety regulations carefully before you try this.

GI Coffeehouses

One of the most needed, and therefore successful, versions of the coffeehouse is the GI coffeehouse. "GI dissent manifests itself across a broad spectrum; the coffeehouses and papers are only the visible center; the invisible bands are sabotage at one end, a quiet but paralyzing disaffection at the other" (Fred Gardner, *Hard Times*, No. 63). A coffeehouse near an armed forces base gives the GI an opportunity to express himself and to work with others against his immediate day-to-day oppression, besides providing an alternative to the clip joints.

The general procedures for setting up a GI coffeehouse are the same as those for a community venture, with a few modifications.

Community and GI involvement from the beginning is *essential*, since it is not only the landlords and town authorities who may try to wipe you out, but the military brass of the post you serve. Try to get clergymen, professionals, and local service organizations to support the venture; you may even get endorsement from local politicians, etc. Have GIs and ex-GIs help you plan it. Let it be staffed mainly with GIs once it gets going.

A place with several rooms is desirable so that simultaneous activities can go on: political workshops, classes (use your university people), films, the publication of a GI newsletter, meetings of the American Servicemen's Union, military counseling (including interviews with shrinks, doctors, and clergymen), folk music, a reading room with political and general literature, etc.

The approach should be broad, including an appeal to many different interests and levels of political awareness. Arranging activities which gradually raise the political level is a sounder method than coming on "heavy" at once. Broad community support is the only way to counter attempts to close you down and punitive measures by the military against your GI patrons. (See *Hard Times*, No. 63, for the defense of the Shelter Half Coffeehouse at Fort Lewis, Washington, by the people of the area.) Keep in touch with other GI coffeehouses—the soldiers will tell you about them—and for further infor-

mation contact the United States Servicemen's Fund, (212) 677-2290 (135 West 4th St., New York, N.Y. 10012).

9. Films

Film is one of the most effective media available to small groups for the education of their membership and the public. Shown alone or as part of a community meeting or workshop, pictures such as *The Year of the Pig*, *The War Game*, *High School*, *The Survivors*, and *The Salt of the Earth* can initiate political discussion and even inspire action. Since many community groups are unaware that such films exist, you can make their introduction a part of your speakers' bureau program. Discussion will be encouraged if the presentation is preceded by a brief introduction of the issues involved and followed by well-thought-out questions. Discussion leaders should, therefore, see the film in advance.

Single showings or festivals are good money raisers for your political activities. The cost of most noncommercial films is low enough so that even a modest admission charge can reap a surplus. Unless you plan frequent showings, buying a projector is a luxury. Many individuals, churches, schools, and audio-visual departments own 16-mm projectors and will lend them to you. Failing this, you can rent one when you need it from a camera store. Two or three of your members should be trained as projectionists, if you do not already have a film buff in your midst.

Many campuses and communities boast talented moviemakers, amateur, student, and semiprofessional, and the private collection of film libraries is a growing hobby. Try to make contact with such people. Encourage them to make films of events such as demonstrations and marches, and of conditions in the communities of your region. For those who wish to learn filmmaking, Edward Pincus's *Guide for Film-Makers* (Signet, 1969) and *Creative Film Making* (Collier, 1969) are good all-around texts. Ask a skilled filmmaker to start a workshop in your group.

You can rent noncommercial films for prices ranging from \$10 to \$75. Some old commercial films are almost as cheap, but the most significant ones and the more recent films are

likely to start at about \$75 a showing. If your school or college has an audio-visual department, borrow its catalogs. Some excellent films, such as those of the Canadian Film Board and BBC, are available through conventional companies. (You can also call the Canadian and British consulates about outlets for these films.) The best catalog for feature-length films is the *Feature Film General Guide*, EFLA Publishers, obtainable through Walter Reade Organization, 241 E. 34th St., New York, N.Y. 10016. Best for general shorts is *Contemporary Films*, McGraw-Hill, 330 W. 42d St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

For radical films there are several "Newsreel" distribution headquarters:

Atlanta Newsreel
P.O. Box 5432, E Sta.
Atlanta, Ga. 30307
(404) 373-7903

Boston Newsreel
595 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, Mass. 02139
(617) 864-2600

Chicago Newsreel
2440 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago, Ill. 60614
(312) 248-2018

New York Newsreel
322 Seventh Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10001
(212) 565-4930

San Francisco Newsreel
451 Cortland Ave.
San Francisco, Calif. 94110
(415) 826-2989

For radical films including the "Newsreel" productions contact American Documentary Films at 336 W. 84th St., New York, N.Y. 10024, (212) 779-7440; or at 379 Bay St., San Francisco, Calif. 94133, (415) 982-7475.

All regional offices of the American Friends Service Committee supply films on Vietnam, War and Peace, War and Conscience, Poverty and Prejudice, Marches, Boycotts, The Nuclear Age. They charge only \$4.

For both political and just plain far-out films: Grove Press, 214 Mercer St., New York, N.Y. 10012. (Grove is also the repository for the "Old Cinema 16" collection, which has many political films from the fifties and early sixties. Prices on this collection are unfortunately high.)

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53d St., New York, N.Y. 10019, has the most extensive collection of 16-mm films around (especially good for background material).

Inquire of all movement organizations whether or not they

have a film rental library. Also contact local radical or underground newspapers and local or regional headquarters of the movement.

Additional sources:

Anti-Defamation League of
B'Nai B'Rith
72 Franklin St.
Boston, Mass. 02110
(617) 542-4977

Film Industry for Peace
817 Broadway, Rm. 1506
New York, N.Y. 10003

Films for Social Change
5122 Waterman Blvd.
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

Massachusetts "Pax"
65A Winthrop St.
Cambridge, Mass. 02138
(617) 491-0650

New York Cinetract Co.
40 E. 7th St.
New York, N.Y. 10003
(212) 598-2406, 2409, 2413,
2414

Shell Oil Co., Film Library
450 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, Ind. 46204 (esp.
"The Mekong")

Wholesome Film Center
22 Melrose St.
Boston, Mass. 02116
(617) 426-0155

10. Guerrilla Theater

Although it has antecedents at least as ancient as the Roman mimes, guerrilla theater emerged as a self-conscious form of political education out of mass demonstrations of the late sixties like the Pentagon in '67 and Paris in '68. It is theater performed not in theaters but in the streets; not by actors but by political activists; not, as a rule, before expectant customers but before passers-by.

With as many definitions of guerrilla theater abroad as there are troupes, the common denominator is political impact. From the crude reenactment of a single incident to the fairly sophisticated scenario linking issues with sources and solutions, guerrilla production aims at "gut" reaction rather than at intellectual persuasion. Hence it relies less on verbal symbols than on physical: violent gesture, slapstick, horseplay, ritual dance, music, noise; grotesque, exaggerated, shocking masks, props, and costumes. Such dialogue as accompanies the action may be similarly extreme, comical, and vulgar; the words may be sung or chanted.

The political strategy of guerrilla theater is the awakening of the people to the rule of brutality and injustice behind the illusions fostered by the establishment and its media. Its primary tactic is shock, used so as to shake confidence in the status quo and to set people doubting the official fairy tales of a class society. A group that plans to make guerrilla theater a regular part of its political arsenal should first acquaint itself with the theory and practice of established troupes and clarify its own theatrical and political objectives. For a successful troupe, the two are inseparable.

The aim of guerrilla theater (perhaps of all theater) is to create a metaphor or symbolic revelation of reality that will force people to see and to think about the world in new ways. The metaphor seizes upon the *essence* of everyday events and, through exaggeration, distortion, and change of context, strips them of their familiar aspects—"blows them up" to expose the shocking truths within. Its purpose is neither to shake people up for the mere "hell of it," nor to create panic and hostility. A performance that masks itself as an actual occurrence is normally neither good theater nor good politics. When people feel personally threatened they react defensively, i.e., conservatively. When they find that they have been upset by a hoax they are usually angry. Neither fear nor anger tends to open minds. Nor does a confusion of representation with reality permit the audience to penetrate beyond the individual and accidental to some universal truth beneath the surface of the action.

The successful metaphor stands on its own feet, not as a threat to the viewer's primitive sense of self-preservation, but as a challenge to the security of his whole intellectual-emotional socialization. He is forced to question his image of the world, which is the first stage of radicalization. When Father Daniel Berrigan drenched the Catonsville draft files with blood he created a theatrical metaphor of the war more shocking than the casualty lists themselves.

Forming the Troupe

The primary resource is *people*—to brainstorm ideas; think up scenarios and act them out; make masks and costumes; paint scenery and placards; collect junk and transform it into theatrical props. Don't wait to find an "experienced" crew; create one. Use the members' special talents without limiting

their functions. A guerrilla troupe works best with jacks-of-all-trades.

Beginning with people and place, your own group and the community, effective use of your resources will depend upon your analysis of the concrete situation before you. The scenario for a strike mass meeting can assume an audience already in motion, hence employ language and symbolic action quite different from the piece designed to awaken a neighborhood to a new issue. Ideally, even the personnel of the troupe should differ, for your aim is a theater in which workers play for workers, students for students, Puerto Ricans for Puerto Ricans, blacks for blacks—about their own world and how to change it.

You probably won't need a playwright, but you can't get along without a sharp focus on a single political objective and a fund of ideas about how to put it "onstage." Hold a brain-storming session and let the group create the "play." Even a longer, more complex scenario should unfold as a series of theatrical cartoons rather than emphasize a story line. Sketch a minimal outline of action and dialogue, but leave room for your performers to improvise. The French students of Vincennes were able to spark hour-long street-corner discussions with a cast of four archetypal characters (Third World Peasant, Revolutionary Peasant, Ugly White Man, Capitalist Army Officer or Policeman) in a repertoire of two-minute slapstick improvisations. As sources of inspiration for more elaborate productions, consult the Bibliography for works which include sample scenarios and commedia dell'arte techniques. Adapt freely from old and modern drama: Molière, Büchner, Jarry, the dadaists and expressionists, Brecht, etc.

Equipping the Troupe for Action

A permanent group of players (as against one organized for a single demonstration) needs a workshop-rehearsal place and warehouse. Try to find a loft, garage, barn, or storefront that combines all these and can even double as a small theater. When you buy basic materials, think how you can use them over and over. Inventiveness, not a big inventory, is the key to guerrilla versatility and mobility.

If you plan performances in parks and playgrounds or expect to hit the countryside (see "Mobile Units") you might invest in a portable stage made in demountable sections.

A painted backdrop can be strung on a pole hung between goalposts. Scenery should be minimal, simple, bold, symbolic; music loud, popular, even naïve (folk, rock, children's songs, circus marches, etc.). Sound effects can include everything from bells and drums to the barking dogs and police sirens of the neighborhood.

Street-corner guerrilla theater takes the city for its backdrop and makes the most of it. Props and costumes—grotesque, striking, symbolic and easily transportable or expendable—are almost the whole arsenal of effects for the street corner. Masks, placards, stilts, bullhorns, gongs and whistles, balloons, confetti, food, animals, symbolic objects (weapons, blood, whips, clubs, tools, papier-mâché computers and missiles, etc.)—these are the sort of props you may use. Costumes should be outrageous, or should clearly identify the character (the Landlord, Nixon, the VC Peasant, Uncle Sam). An appropriate hat, mask, pair of glasses, or loose garment thrown over street clothes can transform you. If you operate without a permit, design masks and costumes for quick change, in the event you must split and disappear in the crowd.

Choosing an Audience

Since guerrilla theater can be performed almost anywhere, the places you select become a part of your political statement. Except when you perform by invitation or for political friends, be prepared for any eventuality—in order fully to use your opportunities or to defend your troupe if necessary. If you are focused on reaching people, you will usually seek locations where the audience is neither strongly on your side nor strongly against you. Most groups do, of course, play before movement gatherings to raise spirits and funds. Some groups have also invaded hostile territory (board meetings, graduations, ROTC exercises, Wall Street). It is a question how much this frightens the power structure, but if you undertake it, know in advance where the nearest exits are and prepare a very short script. The usual, and usually most fruitful, arena for guerrilla theater is what may be called the "neutral" or "mixed" place, which it is your purpose to transform into a friendly place.

If police interference is likely, try the system developed by French students in the post-'68 period of repression. While four or five actors perform, have a half-dozen more

kneel in a circle around them to clear a small playing space, another group leafleting, and several standing by in the crowd. If all goes well, these will help initiate a discussion after the "play." If the police come, the supporting group can create diversions (arguments, stupid questions, fainting fits, chases, sudden bursts of music—whatever works) while the actors get out of costume (or into transforming costumes) and split in several directions. A ready vehicle is useful. Plan where you will meet in such an event—and open the show again on another corner.

Keep your pockets clean when performing. If you do get arrested, let it be for political work.

The presence of the media at a guerrilla production sometimes reduces blatant police harassment. If it doesn't, try to use them to publicize your group and the reasons why it is attacked.

If "disturbance of the peace" is a gimmick frequently used against you, try silent pantomime. Here, especially, you must depend on visual means—masks, costumes, props, gestures, placards, and leaflets to make your point. This will not, of course, take care of "unlawful assemblage" or "blocking a public thoroughfare." Your only real protection lies in community support.

Such support, and your own effectiveness, are greatly enhanced if you can include the audience's friends and relatives in your cast. Repeated performances in a single neighborhood are therefore better for building a base than onetime blitzes in transient downtown areas. When you begin to "belong" to a community, both heckling and police attacks tend to disappear.

This article is indebted for some information and ideas to prepublication copies of materials to appear in Erika Munk's forthcoming *Guerrilla Theater* (Bantam Books), particularly the writings of R. G. Davis of the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

11. Zaps

A zap is symbolic shock therapy aimed against the status quo. A zap pits irrationality against hardened rationality. Zaps undermine the confidence and composure of the self-

satisfied and complacent. They break old patterns of predictability and offer new avenues of communication.

A zap is contradictory. It can be humorous in content but deadly serious in intent. Anyone who comes into viewing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling distance can be zapped.

Spread ZAP graffiti around. Carry an ink marker and gummed graffiti labels with you everywhere. Use every available space to your advantage. Put political quotes on popcorn boxes and in right-wing books.

Experiment with political definitions and timely slogans. Print up "wanted" posters of your most dangerous opponents.

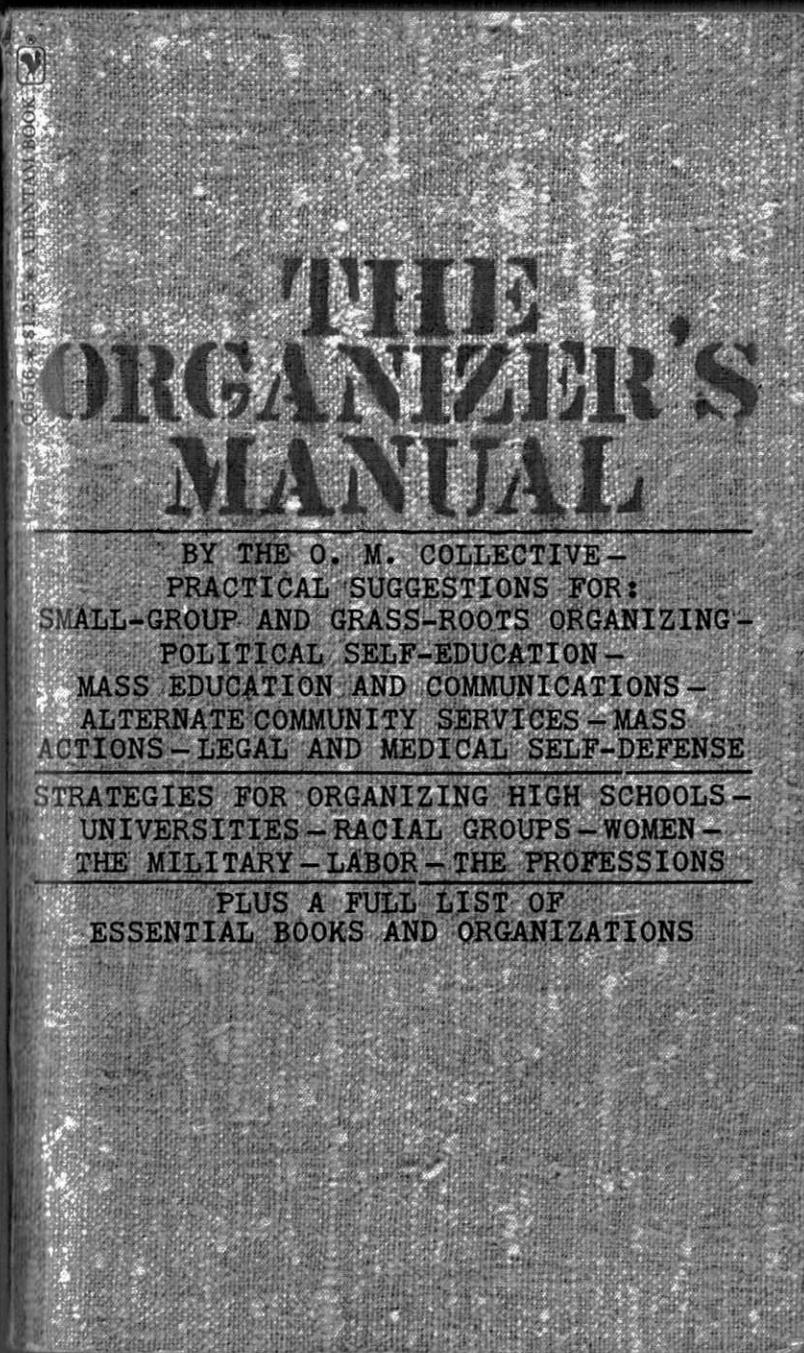
Mailed Zaps: Send roaches to slumlords.—Send dirt back along with bills to major pollutants.—Don't put stamps on bills at all. Postage will be due from receiver.

War Zaps: In your spare time, call the Pentagon, collect, and ask to speak to someone in the Intercommunication Center. Ask how the war's going.—Process draft forms using your dog's name.

Money-Economy Zaps: Give away free: money, posters, beer, etc.—Burn money.—Design dollar-bill toilet paper and distribute it.

Ecological Zaps: Wear gas masks in the streets.—If you can guarantee shipping and adequate grazing area, the government will supply you with your own buffalo (keeps the herds at a controllable level). Park it in front of the Department of Interior in D.C.—Call Hickel and ask for a personal, guided tour of his newly interior-decorated office (well, that is his job, no?). You'd like to see his \$55-per-yard carpet.—Call your local polluter and ask where you can purchase packaged, government-inspected air.

Miscellaneous Zaps: When filling out a job application (or other form), in the blank that asks for Race_____, write in Human!; where it asks for Sex_____, write Yes.—Call your TV station around 3:00 A.M. and tell them you were watching the test pattern on TV and ask them why they took it off. Tell them it works! Ask them who or what they are testing.—Sneak into a convention of liberal politicians. Cut the cord from the mike and insert a jack into the tape deck. Insert a recording of farts; or a recording of Country Joe and the Fish singing "Be the first in your block to have your son come home in a box."



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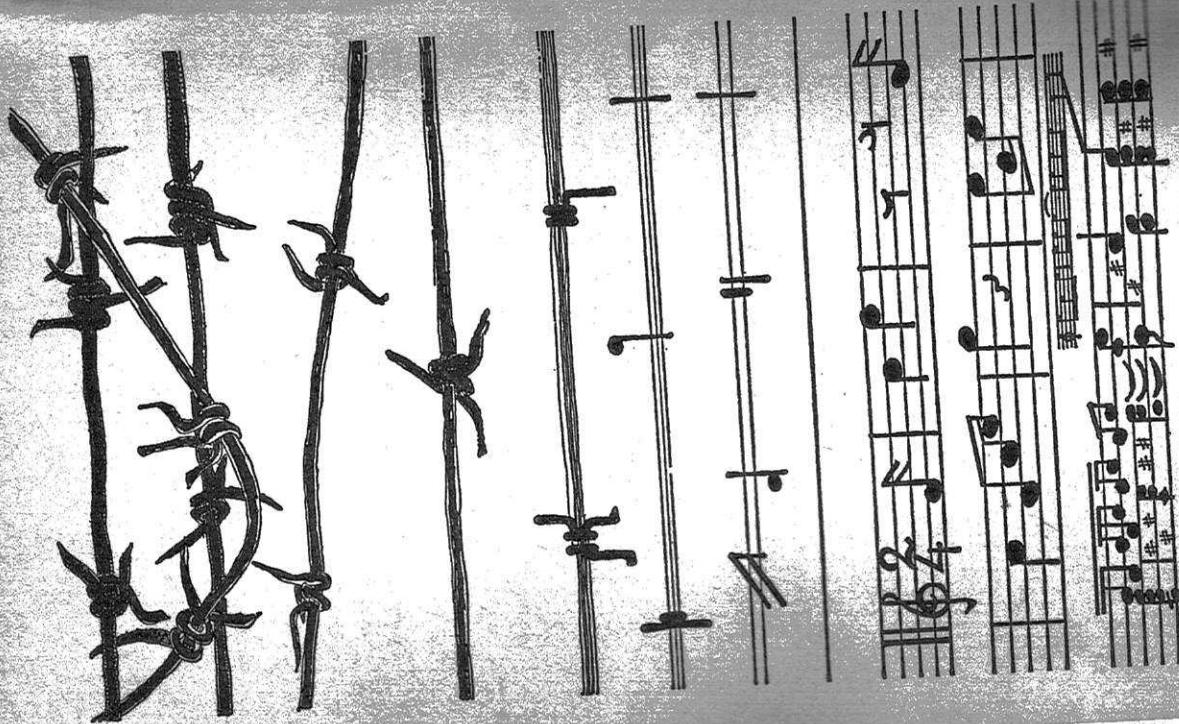
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THE ORGANIZER'S MANUAL

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Dedication

To all those who will make a better revolution
than we can prescribe

He who would do good to another must do it in Minute
Particulars:

General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite & flatterer,
For Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized
Particulars

And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power.
—William Blake, *Jerusalem*

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Supposing a bomb were put under the whole scheme of things, what would we be after? What feelings do we want to carry through into the next epoch? What feelings will carry us through? What is the underlying impulse in us that will provide the motive power for a new state of things, when this democratic-industrial-lovey-dovey-darling-take-me-to-mamma state of things is bust?

What next?

—D. H. Lawrence, "Surgery for the Novel—or a Bomb"