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Tactics

We will either find a way or make one.

— HANNIBAL

TACTICS MEANS doing what you can with what you have. Tactics are those consciously deliberate acts by which human beings live with each other and deal with the world around them. In the world of give and take, tactics is the art of how to take and how to give. Here our concern is with the tactic of taking; how the Have-Nots can take power away from the Haves.

For an elementary illustration of tactics, take parts of your face as the point of reference; your eyes, your ears, and your nose. First the eyes; if you have organized a vast, mass-based people's organization, you can parade it visibly before the enemy and openly show your power. Second the ears; if your organization is small in numbers, then do what Gideon did: conceal the members in the dark but raise a din and clamor that will make the listener believe that your organization numbers many more than it does. Third, the nose; if your organization is too tiny even for noise, stink up the place.

Always remember the first rule of power tactics:

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*Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.**

The second rule is: *Never go outside the experience of your people.* When an action or tactic is outside the experience of the people, the result is confusion, fear, and retreat. It also means a collapse of communication, as we have noted.

The third rule is: *Wherever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy.* Here you want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat.

General William T. Sherman, whose name still causes a frenzied reaction throughout the South, provided a classic example of going outside the enemy's experience. Until Sherman, military tactics and strategies were based on standard patterns. All armies had fronts, rears, flanks, lines of communication, and lines of supply. Military campaigns were aimed at such standard objectives as rolling up the flanks of the enemy army or cutting the lines of supply or lines of communication, or moving around to attack from the rear. When Sherman cut loose on his famous March to the Sea, he had no front or rear lines of supplies or any other lines. He was on the loose and living on the land. The South, confronted with this new form of military invasion, reacted with confusion, panic, terror, and collapse. Sherman swept on to inevitable vic-

* Power has always derived from two main sources, money and people. Lacking money, the Have-Nots must build power from their own flesh and blood. A mass movement expresses itself with mass tactics. Against the finesse and sophistication of the status quo, the Have-Nots have always had to club their way. In early Renaissance Italy the playing cards showed swords for the nobility (the word *spade* is a corruption of the Italian word for sword), chalices (which became hearts) for the clergy, diamonds for the merchants, and clubs as the symbol of the peasants.

tory. It was the same tactic that, years later in the early days of World War II, the Nazi Panzer tank divisions emulated in their far-flung sweeps into enemy territory, as did our own General Patton with the American Third Armored Division.

The fourth rule is: *Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.* You can kill them with this, for they can no more obey their own rules than the Christian church can live up to Christianity.

The fourth rule carries within it the fifth rule: *Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.* It is almost impossible to counterattack ridicule. Also it infuriates the opposition, who then react to your advantage.

The sixth rule is: *A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.** If your people are not having a ball doing it, there is something very wrong with the tactic.

The seventh rule: *A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.* Man can sustain militant interest in any issue for only a limited time, after which it becomes a ritualistic commitment, like going to church on Sunday mornings. New issues and crises are always developing, and one's reaction becomes, "Well, my heart bleeds for those people and I'm all for the boycott, but after all there are other important things in life"—and there it goes.

The eighth rule: *Keep the pressure on,* with different tactics and actions, and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.

* Alinsky takes the iconoclast's pleasure in kicking the biggest behinds in town and the sport is not untempting . . ." —William F. Buckley, Jr., *Chicago Daily News*, October 19, 1966.

The ninth rule: *The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.*

The tenth rule: *The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.* It is this unceasing pressure that results in the reactions from the opposition that are essential for the success of the campaign. It should be remembered not only that the action is in the reaction but that action is itself the consequence of reaction and of reaction to the reaction, ad infinitum. The pressure produces the reaction, and constant pressure sustains action.

The eleventh rule is: *If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside;* this is based on the principle that every positive has its negative. We have already seen the conversion of the negative into the positive, in Mahatma Gandhi's development of the tactic of passive resistance.

One corporation we organized against responded to the continuous application of pressure by burglarizing my home, and then using the keys taken in the burglary to burglarize the offices of the Industrial Areas Foundation where I work. The panic in this corporation was clear from the nature of the burglaries, for nothing was taken in either burglary to make it seem that the thieves were interested in ordinary loot—they took only the records that applied to the corporation. Even the most amateurish burglar would have had more sense than to do what the private detective agency hired by that corporation did. The police departments in California and Chicago agreed that "the corporation might just as well have left its fingerprints all over the place."

In a fight almost anything goes. It almost reaches the

point where you stop to apologize if a chance blow lands *above* the belt. When a corporation bungles like the one that burglarized my home and office, my visible public reaction is shock, horror, and moral outrage. In this case, we let it be known that sooner or later it would be confronted with this crime as well as with a whole series of other derelictions, before a United States Senate Subcommittee Investigation. Once sworn in, with congressional immunity, we would make these actions public. This threat, plus the fact that an attempt on my life had been made in Southern California, had the corporation on a spot where it would be publicly suspect in the event of assassination. At one point I found myself in a thirty-room motel in which every other room was occupied by their security men. This became another devil in the closet to haunt this corporation and to keep the pressure on.

The twelfth rule: *The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.* You cannot risk being trapped by the enemy in his sudden agreement with your demand and saying "You're right—we don't know what to do about this issue. Now you tell us."

The thirteenth rule: *Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.*

In conflict tactics there are certain rules that the organizer should always regard as universalities. One is that the opposition must be singled out as the target and "frozen." By this I mean that in a complex, interrelated, urban society, it becomes increasingly difficult to single out who is to blame for any particular evil. There is a constant, and somewhat legitimate, passing of the buck. In these times of urbanization, complex metropolitan governments, the complexities of major interlocked corporations, and the interlocking of political life between cities and

counties and metropolitan authorities, the problem that threatens to loom more and more is that of identifying the enemy. Obviously there is no point to tactics unless one has a target upon which to center the attacks. One big problem is a constant shifting of responsibility from one jurisdiction to another—individuals and bureaus one after another disclaim responsibility for particular conditions, attributing the authority for any change to some other force. In a corporation one gets the situation where the president of the corporation says that he does not have the responsibility, it is up to the board of trustees or the board of directors, the board of directors can shift it over to the stockholders, etc., etc. And the same thing goes, for example, on the Board of Education appointments in the city of Chicago, where an extra-legal committee is empowered to make selections of nominees for the board and the mayor then uses his legal powers to select names from that list. When the mayor is attacked for not having any blacks on the list, he shifts the responsibility over to the committee, pointing out that he has to select those names from a list submitted by the committee, and if the list is all white, then he has no responsibility. The committee can shift the responsibility back by pointing out that it is the mayor who has the authority to select the names, and so it goes in a comic (if it were not so tragic) routine of "who's on first" or "under which shell is the pea hidden?"

The same evasion of responsibility is to be found in all areas of life and other areas of City Hall Urban Renewal departments, who say the responsibility is over here, and somebody else says the responsibility is over there, the city says it is a state responsibility, and the state says it is a federal responsibility and the federal government passes it back to the local community, and on ad infinitum.

It should be borne in mind that the target is always trying to shift responsibility to get out of being the target. There is a constant squirming and moving and strategy—purposeful, and malicious at times, other times just for straight self-survival—on the part of the designated target. The forces for change must keep this in mind and pin that target down securely. If an organization permits responsibility to be diffused and distributed in a number of areas, attack becomes impossible.

I remember specifically that when the Woodlawn Organization started the campaign against public school segregation, both the superintendent of schools and the chairman of the Board of Education vehemently denied any racist segregationist practices in the Chicago Public School System. They took the position that they did not even have any racial-identification data in their files, so they did not know which of their students were black and which were white. As for the fact that we had all-white schools and all-black schools, well, that's just the way it was.

If we had been confronted with a politically sophisticated school superintendent he could have very well replied, "Look, when I came to Chicago the city school system was following, as it is now, a neighborhood school policy. Chicago's neighborhoods are segregated. There are white neighborhoods and black neighborhoods and therefore you have white schools and black schools. Why attack me? Why not attack the segregated neighborhoods and change them?" He would have had a valid point, of sorts; I still shiver when I think of this possibility; but the segregated neighborhoods would have passed the buck to someone else and so it would have gone into a dog-chasing-his-tail pattern—and it would have been a fifteen-year

job to try to break down the segregated residential pattern of Chicago. We did not have the power to start that kind of a conflict. One of the criteria in picking your target is the target's vulnerability—where do you have the power to start? Furthermore, any target can always say, "Why do you center on me when there are others to blame as well?" When you "freeze the target," you disregard these arguments and, for the moment, all the others to blame.

Then, as you zero in and freeze your target and carry out your attack, all of the "others" come out of the woodwork very soon. They become visible by their support of the target.

The other important point in the choosing of a target is that it must be a personification, not something general and abstract such as a community's segregated practices or a major corporation or City Hall. It is not possible to develop the necessary hostility against, say, City Hall, which after all is a concrete, physical, inanimate structure, or against a corporation, which has no soul or identity, or a public school administration, which again is an inanimate system.

John L. Lewis, the leader of the radical C.I.O. labor organization in the 1930s, was fully aware of this, and as a consequence the C.I.O. never attacked General Motors, they always attacked its president, Alfred "Icewater-In-His-Veins" Sloan; they never attacked the Republic Steel Corporation but always its president, "Bloodied Hands" Tom Girdler, and so with us when we attacked the then-superintendent of the Chicago public school system, Benjamin Willis. Let nothing get you off your target.

With this focus comes a polarization. As we have indicated before, all issues must be polarized if action is to follow. The classic statement on polarization comes from

*Freeze
your
target.*

Christ: "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke 11:23). He allowed no middle ground to the money-changers in the Temple. One acts decisively only in the conviction that all the angels are on one side and all the devils on the other. A leader may struggle toward a decision and weigh the merits and demerits of a situation which is 52 per cent positive and 48 per cent negative, but once the decision is reached he must assume that his cause is 100 per cent positive and the opposition 100 per cent negative. He can't toss forever in limbo, and avoid decision. He can't weigh arguments or reflect endlessly—he must decide and act. Otherwise there are Hamlet's words:

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

Many liberals, during our attack on the then-school superintendent, were pointing out that after all he wasn't a 100 per cent devil, he was a regular churchgoer, he was a good family man, and he was generous in his contributions to charity. Can you imagine in the arena of conflict charging that so-and-so is a racist bastard and then diluting the impact of the attack with qualifying remarks such as "He is a good churchgoing man, generous to charity, and a good husband"? This becomes political idiocy.

An excellent illustration of the importance of polarization here was cited by Ruth McKenney in *Industrial Valley*, her classical study of the beginning of organization of the rubber workers in Akron, Ohio:

[John L.] Lewis faced the mountaineer workers of Akron calmly. He had taken the trouble to pre-

pare himself with exact information about the rubber industry and The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. He made no vague, general speech, the kind the rubberworkers were used to hearing from Green [then president of the A.F. of L.]. Lewis named names and quoted figures. His audience was startled and pleased when he called Cliff Slusser by name, described him, and finally denounced him. The A.F. of L. leaders who used to come into Akron in the old days were generally doing well if they remembered who Paul Litchfield was.

The Lewis speech was a battle cry, a challenge. He started off by recalling the vast profits the rubber companies had always made, even during the deepest days of the Depression. He mentioned the Goodyear labor policy, and quoted Mr. Litchfield's pious opinions about the partnership of labor and capital.

"What," he said in his deep, passionate voice, "have Goodyear workers gotten out of the growth of the company?" His audience squirmed in its seats, listening with almost painful fervor.

"Partnership!" he sneered. "Well, labor and capital may be partners in theory, *but they are enemies in fact.*"

... The rubberworkers listened to this with surprise and great excitement. William Green used to tell them about the partnership of labor and capital nearly as eloquently as Paul Litchfield. Here was a man who put into words—what eloquent and educated and even elegant words—facts they knew to be true from their own experience. Here was a man who said things that made real sense to a guy who worked on a tire machine at Goodyear.

"Organize!" Lewis shouted, and his voice echoed from the beams of the armory. "Organ-

izel" he said, pounding the speaking pulpit until it jumped. "Organize! Go to Goodyear and tell them you want some of those stock dividends. Say, So we're supposed to be partners, are we? Well, we're not. *We're enemies.*"

- *The real action is in the enemy's reaction.*
- *The enemy properly goaded and guided in his reaction will be your major strength.*
- *Tactics, like organization, like life, require that you move with the action.*

The scene is Rochester, New York, the home of Eastman Kodak—or rather Eastman Kodak, the home of Rochester, New York. Rochester is literally dominated by this industrial giant. For anyone to fight or publicly challenge Kodak is in itself completely outside of Rochester's experience. Even to this day this company does not have a labor union. Its attitudes toward the general public make paternalistic feudalism look like participatory democracy.

Rochester prides itself on being one of America's cultural crown jewels; it has its libraries, school system, university, museums, and its well-known symphony. As previously mentioned we were coming in on the invitation of the black ghetto to organize them (they literally organized to invite us in). The city was in a state of hysteria and fear at the very mention of my name. Whatever I did was news. Even my old friend and tutor, John L. Lewis, called me and affectionately growled, "I resent the fact that you are more hated in Rochester than I was." This was the setting.

One of the first times I arrived at the airport I was surrounded by reporters from the media. The first question was what I thought about Rochester as a city and I replied,

"It is a huge southern plantation transplanted north." To the question why was I "meddling" in the black ghetto after "everything" that Eastman Kodak had done for the blacks (there had been a bloody riot, National Guard, etc., the previous summer), I looked blank and replied, "Maybe I am innocent and uninformed of what has been happening here, but as far as I know the only thing Eastman Kodak has done on the race issue in America has been to introduce color film." The reaction was shock, anger, and resentment from Kodak. They were not being attacked or insulted—they were being laughed at, and this was insufferable. It was the first dart tossed at the big bull. Soon Eastman would become so angry that it would make the kind of charges that finally led to its own downfall.

The next question was about my response to a bitter personal denunciation of me from W. Allen Wallis, the president of the University of Rochester and a present director of Eastman Kodak. He had been the head of the Department of Business Administration, formerly, at the University of Chicago. He was at the university when it was locked in bitter warfare with the black organization in Woodlawn. "Wallis?" I replied. "Which one are you talking about—Wallace of Alabama, or Wallis of Rochester—but I guess there isn't any difference, so what was your question?" This reply (1) introduced an element of ridicule and (2) it ended any further attacks from the president of the University of Rochester, who began to suspect that he was going to be shafted with razors, and that an encounter with me or with my associates was not going to be an academic dialogue.

It should be remembered that you can threaten the enemy and get away with it. You can insult and annoy

him, but the one thing that is unforgivable and that is certain to get him to react is to laugh at him. This causes an irrational anger.

I hesitate to spell out specific applications of these tactics. I remember an unfortunate experience with my *Reveille for Radicals*, in which I collected accounts of particular actions and tactics employed in organizing a number of communities. For some time after the book was published I got reports that would-be organizers were using this book as a manual, and whenever they were confronted with a puzzling situation they would retreat into some vestibule or alley and thumb through to find the answer! There can be no prescriptions for particular situations because the same situation rarely recurs, any more than history repeats itself. People, pressures, and patterns of power are variables, and a particular combination exists only in a particular time—even then the variables are constantly in a state of flux. Tactics must be understood as specific applications of the rules and principles that I have listed above. It is the *principles* that the organizer must carry with him in battle. To these he applies his imagination, and he relates them tactically to specific situations.

For example, I have emphasized and re-emphasized that tactics means you do what you can with what you've got, and that power in the main has always gravitated towards those who have money and those whom people follow. The resources of the Have-Nots are (1) no money and (2) lots of people. All right, let's start from there. People can show their power by voting. What else? Well, they have physical bodies. How can they use them? Now a melange of ideas begins to appear. Use the power of the law by making the establishment obey its own rules. Go

outside the experience of the enemy, stay inside the experience of your people. Emphasize tactics that your people will enjoy. The threat is usually more terrifying than the tactic itself. Once all these rules and principles are festering in your imagination they grow into a synthesis.

I suggested that we might buy one hundred seats for one of Rochester's symphony concerts. We would select a concert in which the music was relatively quiet. The hundred blacks who would be given the tickets would first be treated to a three-hour pre-concert dinner in the community, in which they would be fed nothing but baked beans, and lots of them; then the people would go to the symphony hall—with obvious consequences. Imagine the scene when the action began! The concert would be over before the first movement! (If this be a Freudian slip—so be it!)

Let's examine this tactic in terms of the concepts mentioned above.

First, the disturbance would be utterly outside the experience of the establishment, which was expecting the usual stuff of mass meetings, street demonstrations, confrontations and parades. Not in their wildest fears would they expect an attack on their prize cultural jewel, their famed symphony orchestra. Second, all of the action would ridicule and make a farce of the law for there is no law, and there probably never will be, banning natural physical functions. Here you would have a combination not only of noise but also of odor, what you might call natural stink bombs. Regular stink bombs are illegal and cause for immediate arrest, but there would be absolutely nothing here that the Police Department or the ushers or any other servants of the establishment could do about it. The law would be completely paralyzed.

People would recount what had happened in the symphony hall and the reaction of the listener would be to crack up in laughter. It would make the Rochester Symphony and the establishment look utterly ridiculous. There would be no way for the authorities to cope with any future attacks of a similar character. What could they do? Demand that people not eat baked beans before coming to a concert? Ban anyone from succumbing to natural urges during the concert? Announce to the world that concerts must not be interrupted by farting? Such talk would destroy the future of the symphony season. Imagine the tension at the opening of any concert! Imagine the feeling of the conductor as he raised his baton!

With this would come certain fall-outs. On the following morning, the matrons, to whom the symphony season is one of the major social functions, would confront their husbands (both executives and junior executives) at the breakfast table and say, "John, we are not going to have our symphony season ruined by *those people!* I don't know what they want but whatever it is, something has got to be done and this kind of thing has to be stopped!"

Lastly, we have the universal rule that while one goes outside the experience of the enemy in order to induce confusion and fear, one must not do the same with one's own people, because you do not want them to be confused and fearful. Now, let us examine this rule with reference to the symphony tactic. To start with, the tactic is within the experience of the local people; it also satisfies another rule—that the people must enjoy the tactic. Here we have an ambivalent situation. The reaction of the blacks in the ghetto—their laughter when the tactic was proposed—made it clear that the tactic, at least in fantasy,

was within their experience. It connected with their hatred of Whitey. The one thing that all oppressed people want to do to their oppressors is shit on them. Here was an approximate way to do this. However, we were also aware that when they found themselves actually in the symphony hall, probably for the first time in their lives, they would find themselves seated amid a mass of whites, many of them in formal dress. The situation would be so much *out of their experience* that they might congeal and revert back to their previous role. The very idea of doing what they had come to do would be so embarrassing, so mortifying, that they would do almost anything to avoid carrying through the plan. But we also knew that the baked beans would compel them physically to go through with the tactic regardless of how they felt.

I must emphasize that tactics like this are not just cute; any organizer knows, as a particular tactic grows out of the rules and principles of revolution, that he must always analyze the merit of the tactic and determine its strengths and weaknesses in terms of these same rules.

Imagine the scene in the U.S. Courtroom in Chicago's recent conspiracy trial of the seven if the defendants and counsel had anally trumpeted their contempt for Judge Hoffman and the system. What could Judge Hoffman, the bailiffs, or anyone else, do? Would the judge have found them in contempt for farting? Here was a tactic for which there was no legal precedent. The press reaction would have stunk up the judge for the rest of time.

Another tactic involving the bodily functions developed in Chicago during the days of the Johnson-Goldwater campaign. Commitments that were made by the authorities to the Woodlawn ghetto organization were not being met by the city. The political threat that had originally

compelled these commitments was no longer operative. The community organization had no alternative but to support Johnson and therefore the Democratic administration felt the political threat had evaporated. It must be remembered here that not only is pressure essential to compel the establishment to make its initial concession, but the pressure must be maintained to make the establishment deliver. The second factor seemed to be lost to the Woodlawn Organization.

Since the organization was blocked in the political arena, new tactics and a new arena had to be devised.

O'Hare Airport became the target. To begin with, O'Hare is the world's busiest airport. Think for a moment of the common experience of jet travelers. Your stewardess brings you your lunch or dinner. After eating, most people want to go to the lavatory. However, this is often inconvenient because your tray and those of your seat partners are loaded down with dishes. So you wait until the stewardess has removed the trays. By that time those who are seated closest to the lavatory have got up and the "occupied" sign is on. So you wait. And in these days of jet travel the seat belt sign is soon flashed, as the airplane starts its landing approach. You decide to wait until after landing and use the facilities in the terminal. This is obvious to anyone who watches the unloading of passengers at various gates in any airport—many of the passengers are making a beeline for the men's or the ladies' room.

With this in mind, the tactic becomes obvious—we tie up the laboratories. In the restrooms you drop a dime, enter, push the lock on the door—and you can stay there all day. Therefore the occupation of the sit-down toilets presents no problem. It would take just a relatively few people to walk into these cubicles, armed with books and

newspapers, lock the doors, and tie up all the facilities. What are the police going to do? Break in and demand evidence of legitimate occupancy? Therefore, the ladies' restrooms could be occupied completely; the only problem in the men's lavatories would be the stand-up urinals. This, too, could be taken care of, by having groups busy themselves around the airport and then move in on the stand-up urinals to line up four or five deep whenever a flight arrived. An intelligence study was launched to learn how many sit-down toilets for both men and women, as well as stand-up urinals, there were in the entire O'Hare Airport complex and how many men and women would be necessary for the nation's first "shit-in."

The consequences of this kind of action would be catastrophic in many ways. People would be desperate for a place to relieve themselves. One can see children yelling at their parents, "Mommy, I've got to go," and desperate mothers surrendering, "All right—well, do it. Do it right here." O'Hare would soon become a shambles. The whole scene would become unbelievable and the laughter and ridicule would be nationwide. It would probably get a front page story in the *London Times*. It would be a source of great mortification and embarrassment to the city administration. It might even create the kind of emergency in which planes would have to be held up while passengers got back aboard to use the plane's toilet facilities.

The threat of this tactic was leaked (again there may be a Freudian slip here, and again, so what?) back to the administration, and within forty-eight hours the Woodlawn Organization found itself in conference with the authorities who said that they were certainly going to live up to their commitments and they could never understand

where anyone got the idea that a promise made by Chicago's City Hall would not be observed. At no point, then or since, has there ever been any open mention of the threat of the O'Hare tactic. Very few of the members of the Woodlawn Organization knew how close they were to writing history.

With the universal principle that the right things are always done for the wrong reasons and the tactical rule that negatives become positives, we can understand the following examples.

In its early history the organized black ghetto in the Woodlawn neighborhood in Chicago engaged in conflict with the slum landlords. It never picketed the local slum tenements or the landlord's office. It selected its blackest blacks and bused them out to the lily-white suburb of the slum landlord's residence. Their picket signs, which said, "Did you know that Jones, your neighbor, is a slum landlord?" were completely irrelevant; the point was that the pickets knew Jones would be inundated with phone calls from his neighbors.

JONES: Before you say a word let me tell you that those signs are a bunch of lies!

NEIGHBOR: Look, Jones, I don't give a damn what you do for a living. All we know is that you get those goddam niggers out of here or you get out!

Jones came out and signed.

The pressure that gave us our positive power was the negative of racism in a white society. We exploited it for our own purposes.

Let us take one of the negative stereotypes that so many whites have of blacks: that blacks like to sit around eating watermelon. Suppose that 3,000 blacks suddenly

descended into the downtown sections of any city, each armed with and munching a huge piece of watermelon. This spectacle would be so far outside the experience of the whites that they would be unnerved and disorganized. In alarm over what the blacks were up to, the establishment would probably react to the advantage of the blacks. Furthermore, the whites would recognize at last the absurdity of their stereotype of black habits. Whites would squirm in embarrassment, knowing that they were being ridiculed. That would be the end of the black watermelon stereotype. I think that this tactic would bring the administration to contact black leadership and ask what their demands were even if no demands had been made. Here again is a case of doing what you can with what you've got.

Another example of doing what you can with what you've got is the following:

I was lecturing at a college run by a very conservative, almost fundamentalist Protestant denomination. Afterward some of the students came to my motel to talk to me. Their problem was that they couldn't have any fun on campus. They weren't permitted to dance or smoke or have a can of beer. I had been talking about the strategy of effecting change in a society and they wanted to know what tactics they could use to change their situation. I reminded them that a tactic is doing what you can with what you've got. "Now, what have you got?" I asked. "What do they permit you to do?" "Practically nothing," they said, "except—you know—we can chew gum." I said, "Fine. Gum becomes the weapon. You get two or three hundred students to get two packs of gum each, which is quite a wad. Then you have them drop it on the campus walks. This will cause absolute chaos. Why, with five hundred wads of

gum I could paralyze Chicago, stop all the traffic in the Loop." They looked at me as though I was some kind of a nut. But about two weeks later I got an ecstatic letter saying, "It worked! It worked! Now we can do just about anything so long as we don't chew gum."

—quoted in Marion K. Sanders' *The Professional Radical—Conversations with Saul Alinsky*.

As with the slum landlords, one of the major department stores in the nation was brought to heel by the following threatened tactic. Remember the rule—the threat is often more effective than the tactic itself, but *only* if you are so organized that the establishment knows not only that you have the power to execute the tactic but that you definitely will. You can't do much bluffing in this game; if you're ever caught bluffing, forget about ever using threats in the future. On that point you're dead.

There is a particular department store that happens to cater to the carriage trade. It attracts many customers on the basis of its labels as well as the quality of its merchandise. Because of this, economic boycotts had failed to deter even the black middle class from shopping there. At the time its employment policies were more restrictive than those of the other stores. Blacks were hired for only the most menial jobs.

We made up a tactic. A busy Saturday shopping date was selected. Approximately 3,000 blacks all dressed up in their good churchgoing suits or dresses would be bused downtown. When you put 3,000 blacks on the main floor of a store, even one that covers a square block, suddenly the entire color of the store changes. Any white coming through the revolving doors would take one pop-eyed look and assume that somehow he had stepped into Africa. He

would keep right on going out of the store. This would end the white trade for the day.

For a low-income group, shopping is a time-consuming experience, for economy means everything. This would mean that every counter would be occupied by potential customers, carefully examining the quality of merchandise and asking, say, at the shirt counter, about the material, color, style, cuffs, collars, and price. As the group occupying the clerks' attention around the shirt counters moved to the underwear section, those at the underwear section would replace them at the shirt counter, and the personnel of the store would be constantly occupied.

Now pause to examine the tactic. It is legal. There is no sit-in or unlawful occupation of premises. Some thousands of people are in the store "shopping." The police are powerless and you are operating within the law.

This operation would go on until an hour before closing time, when the group would begin purchasing everything in sight to be delivered C.O.D.! This would tie up truck-delivery service for at least two days—with obvious further heavy financial costs, since all the merchandise would be refused at the time of delivery.

The threat was delivered to the authorities through a legitimate and "trustworthy" channel. Every organization must have two or three stool pigeons who are trusted by the establishment. These stool pigeons are invaluable as "trustworthy" lines of communication to the establishment. With all plans ready to go, we began formation of a series of committees: a transportation committee to get the buses, a mobilization committee to work with the ministers to get their people to their buses, and other committees with other specific functions. Two of the key committees deliberately included one of these stoolies

each, so that there would be one to back up the other. We knew the plan would be quickly reported back to the department store. The next day we received a call from the department store for a meeting to discuss new personnel policies and an urgent request that the meeting take place within the next two or three days, certainly before Saturday!

The personnel policies of the store were drastically changed. Overnight, 186 new jobs were opened. For the first time, blacks were on the sales floor and in executive training.

This is the kind of tactic that can be used by the middle class too. Organized shopping, wholesale buying plus charging and returning everything on delivery, would add accounting costs to their attack on the retailer with the ominous threat of continued repetition. This is far more effective than canceling a charge account. Let's look at the score: (1) sales for one day are completely shot; (2) delivery service is tied up for two days or more; and (3) the accounting department is screwed up. The total cost is a nightmare for any retailer, and the sword remains hanging over his head. The middle class, too, must learn the nature of the enemy and be able to practice what I have described as mass jujitsu, utilizing the power of one part of the power structure against another part.

COMPETITION

Once we understand the external reactions of the Haves to the challenges of the Have-Nots, then we go to

the next level of examination, the anatomy of power of the Haves among themselves.

But let us go deeper into the psyche of this Goliath. The Haves possess and in turn are possessed by power. Obsessed with the fear of losing power, their every move is dictated by the idea of keeping it. The way of life of the Haves is to keep what they have and wherever possible to shore up their defenses.

This opens a new vista—not only do we have a whole class determined to keep its power and in constant conflict with the Have-Nots; at the same time, they are in conflict among themselves. Power is not static; it cannot be frozen and preserved like food; it must grow or die. Therefore, in order to keep power the status quo must get more. But from whom? There is just so much more than can be squeezed out of the Have-Nots—so the Haves must take it from each other. They are on a road from which there is no turning back. This power cannibalism of the Haves permits only temporary truces, and only when equally confronted by a common enemy. Even then there are regular breaks in the ranks, as individual units attempt to exploit the general threat for their own special benefit. Here is the vulnerable belly of the status quo.

I first learned this lesson during the 1930s depression, when the United States experienced a revolutionary upheaval in the form of a mass labor-union-organizing drive known as the C.I.O. This was the radical wing of the labor movement; it espoused industrial unionism while the conservative and archaic A.F. of L. clung to craft unionism. The position of the A.F. of L. excluded the masses of workers from union organization. The battle cry of the C.I.O. was "organize the unorganized." Very quickly the issue was joined with the gargantuan automobile industry,

which was at that time an open shop, and completely unorganized. The first attack was against the behemoth of this empire, General Motors. A sit-down strike was launched against Chevrolet. John L. Lewis, then the leader of the C.I.O., told me that at the height of this sit-down strike he heard a rumor that General Motors had met with both Ford and Chrysler to advance the following proposition: "We at General Motors are fighting your battle for if the C.I.O. beats us, then you're next in line and there will be no stopping them. Now we are willing to let the C.I.O. sit in at Chevrolet until hell freezes and suffer that loss in our profits *if* you will hold your production of Fords and Plymouths [the price-class competitors to the Chevrolet] to your present market. On the other hand, we cannot hold out against the C.I.O. if you boost production in order to sell to all potential Chevrolet customers who will buy your products because they cannot get Chevrolets."

Lewis, who was an organizational genius with a rare insight into the power mechanics of the status quo, dismissed it with a perceptive comment. It doesn't matter whether this is a false rumor or true, he said, because neither Ford nor Chrysler could ever agree to overlook an opportunity for an immediate increase in their profits and power, shortsighted as it might be.

The internecine struggle among the Haves for their individual self-interest is as shortsighted as internecine struggle among the Have-Nots. I have on occasion remarked that I feel confident that I could persuade a millionaire on a Friday to subsidize a revolution for Saturday out of which he would make a huge profit on Sunday even though he was certain to be executed on Monday.

Once one understands this internal battle for power within the status quo, one can begin to appraise effective

tactics to exploit it. It is sad to see the stupidity of inexperienced organizers who make gross errors by failing to have even an elementary appreciation of this pattern.

An example is to be found just a couple of years ago when during the height of the rising tide of the struggle for civil rights certain civil rights leaders in Chicago declared a Christmas boycott on *all* the department stores downtown. The boycott was a disastrous failure, and any experienced revolutionary could have predicted without any reservations that this would have been the case. Any attack against the status quo must use the strength of the enemy against itself. Let us examine this particular boycott—the error was in trying to boycott *all*, instead of *some*. Few liberals, white or black, would forgo all Christmas shopping in the most attractive shopping places. Even if it had not been the Christmas season, we know that picket lines are relatively ineffective today in stopping the general population. There is a low degree of identification on the part of the general population with the labor movement or with picket lines in general. However, even that low degree can be exploited by placing a picket line in front of only one department store. If the same merchandise can be purchased at the same price at another department store across the street, the slight uneasiness that the picket line creates can affect a significant number of customers—they have an easy enough, visible enough alternative: they will cross the street. The power squeeze comes when the picketed department store sees a number of customers going across to its competitors.

This calculated maneuvering of the power of one part of the Haves against its other parts is central to strategy. In a certain sense it is similar to the Have-Not nations playing off the U.S.A. against the U.S.S.R.

THEIR OWN PETARD

The basic tactic in warfare against the Haves is a mass political jujitsu: the Have-Nots do not rigidly oppose the Haves, but yield in such planned and skilled ways that the superior strength of the Haves becomes their own undoing. For example, since the Haves publicly pose as the custodians of responsibility, morality, law, and justice (which are frequently strangers to each other), they can be constantly pushed to live up to their own book of morality and regulations. No organization, including organized religion, can live up to the letter of its own book. You can club them to death with their "book" of rules and regulations. This is what that great revolutionary, Paul of Tarsus, knew when he wrote to the Corinthians: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth."

Let us take, for example, the case of the civil rights demonstrations of 1963 in Birmingham, when thousands of Negro children stayed out of school to participate in the street demonstrations. The Birmingham Board of Education dusted off its book of regulations and threatened to expel all children absent for this reason. Here the civil rights leaders erred (as they did on other vital tactics) by backing off instead of rushing in with more demonstrations and pressing the Birmingham Board of Education between the pages of their book of regulations by forcing them to live up to the letter of their regulations and statements. The Board and the City of Birmingham would have been in an impossible situation with every Negro child

expelled and loose on the streets—if they didn't reverse themselves before they acted, they would have reversed themselves one day later.

Another dramatic failure to understand tactics came during the second Chicago public school boycott, in 1964, a struggle against a de facto segregated public school system. We know that the efficacy of any action is in the reaction it evokes from the Haves, so that the cycle escalates in a continuum of conflict. Lacking any reaction from the Haves (except public notice of the numbers of children involved), effects of the boycott were significantly over by the next day. This boycott was what I call a terminal tactic, one that crests, breaks, and disappears like a wave. Terminal tactics do not arouse the reaction that is essential for the development of a conflict. A terminal tactic is to be exercised only to finish a conflict, for it is ineffective in the development of the rhythm of give and take that one must have while stepping up the war and building the movement.

Civil rights leaders could console themselves with the "psychological carry-overs," "public display of support," and similar prayerful hopes, but as for carrying on the conflict for integration, that was over and done with by the next day. Nice memory.

In Chicago the Haves slipped badly when both a judge and a district attorney muttered that the book of regulations banned attempts to induce the absence of public school students, and growled ominously about an injunction against all civil rights leaders taking part in the development of the boycott. Here, as always, whenever the Haves start living by their book they present a golden opportunity to the Have-Nots to transform what had been a terminal tactic into a sweeping advance on

many fronts. The children wouldn't need to be absent—the leaders would be the only people who needed to act. Now was the time to start an intensive campaign of ridicule, insults, and taunting defiance, daring the district attorney and the judge either to live up to their regulations and issue the injunctions or stand publicly exposed as fearful frauds who were afraid to put the law where their mouths were. Such behavior on the part of the Have-Nots would probably have resulted in the injunction. But by this time the boycott tactic would have had shaking consequences. Immediately following the boycott every civil rights leader in the city of Chicago involved in it would have been in violation of the court injunction. But the last thing that the establishment wants is to indict and imprison every single civil rights leader (which would have included leaders of every religious organization in town) in the city of Chicago. Such a step would have shaken the power structure of Chicago, and certainly put the entire issue of school segregation policy on the line. Without any question, the district attorney and the judge would have had to depend on postponements in the hope that everybody would just forget about it. At this point, now that the civil rights leaders had the powerful weapon of the book of laws of the Haves, they would have to stand fast publicly—once again taunting, insulting, demanding that the judge and the district attorney “obey the law,” charging that the district attorney and the courts had issued an injunction which they had publicly, willfully, and maliciously violated, and that they therefore must be compelled to pay the penalties for this action. If the civil rights leaders insisted that they be arrested and tried, the Haves would be on the run and in complete confusion, caught in the strait jacket of their own book.

Enforcement of their injunction would have resulted in a citywide storm of protest and a rapid growth in the organization. Non-enforcement would have signaled a breakdown and retreat of the Haves from the Have-Nots, and also resulted in swelling the size and force of the Have-Not organization.

TIME IN JAIL

The reaction of the status quo in jailing revolutionary leaders is in itself a tremendous contribution to the development of the Have-Not movement as well as to the personal development of the revolutionary leaders. This point should be carefully remembered as another example of how mass jujitsu tactics can be used to so maneuver the status quo that it turns its power against itself.

Jailing the revolutionary leaders and their followers performs three vital functions for the cause of the Have-Nots: (1) it is an act on the part of the status quo that in itself points up the conflict between the Haves and the Have-Nots; (2) it strengthens immeasurably the position of the revolutionary leaders with their people by surrounding the jailed leadership with an aura of martyrdom; (3) it deepens the identification of the leadership with their people since the prevalent reaction among the Have-Nots is that their leadership cares so much for them, and is so sincerely committed to the issue, that it is willing to suffer imprisonment for the cause. Repeatedly in situations where the relationship between the Have-Nots and their leaders has become strained the remedy has been the jailing of the

leaders by the establishment. Immediately the ranks close and the leaders regain their mass support.

At the same time, the revolutionary leaders should make certain that their publicized violations of the regulations are so selected that their jail terms are relatively brief, from one day to two months. The trouble with a long jail sentence is that (a) a revolutionary is removed from action for such an extended period of time that he loses touch, and (b) if you are gone long enough everybody forgets about you. Life goes on, new issues arise, and new leaders appear; however, a periodic removal from circulation by being jailed is an essential element in the development of the revolutionary. The one problem that the revolutionary cannot cope with by himself is that he must now and then have an opportunity to reflect and synthesize his thoughts. To gain that privacy in which he can try to make sense out of what he is doing, why he is doing it, where he is going, what has been wrong with what he has done, what he should have done and above all to see the relationships of all the episodes and acts as they tie in to a general pattern, the most convenient and accessible solution is jail. It is here that he begins to develop a philosophy. It is here that he begins to shape long-term goals, intermediate goals, and a self-analysis of tactics as tied to his own personality. It is here that he is emancipated from the slavery of action wherein he was compelled to think from act to act. Now he can look at the totality of his actions and the reactions of the enemy from a fairly detached position.

Every revolutionary leader of consequence has had to undergo these withdrawals from the arena of action. Without such opportunities, he goes from one tactic and one action to another, but most of them are almost terminal

tactics in themselves; he never has a chance to think through an overall synthesis, and he burns himself out. He becomes, in fact, nothing more than a temporary irritant. The prophets of the Old Testament and the New found their opportunity for synthesis by voluntarily removing themselves to the wilderness. It was after they emerged that they began propagandizing their philosophies. Often a revolutionary finds that he cannot voluntarily detach himself, since the pressure of events and action do not permit him that luxury; furthermore, a revolutionary or a man of action does not have the sedentary frame of mind that is part of the personality of a research scholar. He finds it very difficult to sit quietly and think and write. Even when provided with a voluntary situation of that kind he will react by trying to escape the job of thinking and writing. He will do anything to avoid it.

I remember that once I accepted an invitation to participate in a one-week discussion at the Aspen Institute. The argument was made that this would be a good opportunity to get away from it all and write. The institute sessions would last only from 10:00 to noon and I would be free for the rest of the afternoon and the evening. The morning began with the institute sessions; the subjects were very interesting and carried over through a luncheon discussion, which lasted until 2:30 or 3:00. Now I could sit and write from 3:00 to dinner, but then one of the members of the discussion group, a most interesting astronomer, stopped in for a chat. By the time he left it was 5:00 P.M.; there wasn't much point in starting to write then, for there would be cocktails at 5:30, and after cocktails there wasn't much point in sitting down to start writing because dinner would be served soon, and after dinner there wasn't much point in trying to start writing because it was late and I

was tired. Now it is true that I could have got up immediately after lunch, told everybody that I was not to be disturbed, and gone to spend the afternoon writing. I could have gone back to my quarters, locked the door, and, hopefully, started writing; but the fact is that I did not want to come to grips with thinking and writing any more than anyone else involved in revolutionary movements does. I welcomed the interruptions and used them as rationalizing excuses to escape the ordeal of thinking and writing.

Jail provides just the opposite circumstances. You have no phones and, except for an hour or so a day, no visitors. Your jailers are rough, unsociable, and generally so dull that you wouldn't want to talk to them anyway. You find yourself in a physical drabness and confinement, which you desperately try to escape. Since there is no physical escape you are driven to erase your surroundings imaginatively: you escape into thinking and writing. It was through periodic imprisonment that the basis for my first publication and the first orderly philosophical arrangement of my ideas and goals occurred.

TIME IN TACTICS

Enough of philosophical cells—let's get back to the business of the active essentials of organizing. Among the essentials is timing.

Timing is to tactics what it is to everything in life—the difference between success and failure. I don't mean

the timing of the start of a tactic—that is important certainly, but as has been stated repeatedly, life does not usually afford the tactician the luxury of time or place when the conflict is engaged. Life does permit, however, that the skilled tactician be conscious of the utilization of time in the use of tactics.

Once the battle is joined and a tactic is employed, it is important that the conflict not be carried on over too long a time. If you will recall, this was the seventh rule noted at the beginning of this chapter. There are many reasons of human experience arguing for this point. I cannot repeat too often that *a conflict that drags on too long becomes a drag*. The same universality applies for a tactic or for any other specific action.

Among the reasons is the simple fact that human beings can sustain an interest in a particular subject only over a limited period of time. The concentration, the emotional fervor, even the physical energy, a particular experience that is exciting, challenging, and inviting, can last just so long—this is true of the gamut of human behavior, from sex to conflict. After a period of time it becomes monotonous, repetitive, an emotional treadmill, and worse than anything else a bore. From the moment the tactician engages in conflict, his enemy is time.

This should be kept in mind when one is considering boycotts. First, any consideration of a boycott should carefully avoid essentials such as meat, milk, bread, or basic vegetables, since even selective buying weakens after a period of time as the opponent cuts his prices below his competitors. With non-essentials—grapes, bananas, pistachio nuts, maraschino cherries, and the like—many liberals can make the "sacrifice" and feel noble.

Even so, any skilled organizer knows that he can push this negative over into a positive: he can compel or maneuver the opposition to make the mistake themselves. The drama of continuous involvement builds up an immunity to any further excitement. The consequence is that the opposition will finally, out of their own tedium, give in.

The pressure of time should be ever-present in the mind of the tactician as he begins to engage in action. This applies to the physical action such as a mass demonstration as well as to its emotional counterpart. When the Woodlawn Organization in Chicago decided to have a massive move-in on City Hall with reference to an issue on education, 5,000 to 8,000 individuals were to fill the lobby of City Hall in Chicago at 10:00 A.M. for a confrontation with the mayor. At the time the strategy was being developed, the function of time in the use of the tactic was examined and understood, and therefore the tactic was utilized to its fullest potential rather than turning into a debacle, as was the case with the recent poor people's march, Resurrection City, etc. There was a clear understanding on the part of the leadership that when some thousands of people are assembled downtown, the physical tedium of standing, of being in one place for a period of time, begins to dampen ardor rather soon, and that small groups will begin to disappear to go shopping, go sight-seeing, get refreshments. In short, the life of the immediate metropolitan area becomes much more attractive and inviting than simply being in City Hall in an action that has already spent the excitement of witnessing the opposition's shock. After a while — and by "a while" meaning two to three hours — the 8,000 would have dwindled to 800 or less and the impact of mass numbers would have been seriously diluted and

weakened. Furthermore, the effect on the opposition would have been that the mayor, seeing a mass action of 8,000 shrink to 800, would assume that if he only sits it out for another two or three hours the 800 will shrink to 80, and if he sits it out for a day there will be nothing left. That would have gained us nothing.

With this in mind, the leadership of the Woodlawn Organization made its confrontation with the mayor, told the mayor that they wanted action and quickly on their particular demands, and that they were going to give him just so much time to meet their demands. Having given their message, they said, they were now calling off their demonstration, but they would be back in the same numbers or more. And with that they turned around and led their still-enthusiastic army in an organized, fully armed, powerful withdrawal, and left this mass impression upon the City Hall authorities.

There is a way to keep the action going and to prevent it from being a drag, but this means constantly cutting new issues as the action continues, so that by the time the enthusiasm and the emotions for one issue have started to de-escalate, a new issue has come into the scene with a consequent revival. With a constant introduction of new issues, it will go on and on. This is the case with many prolonged fights; in the end, the negotiations don't even involve the issues around which the conflict originally began. It brings to mind the old anecdote of the Hundred Years War in Europe: when the parties finally got together for peace negotiations nobody could remember what the war was all about, or how it had begun — and furthermore, whatever the original issues, they were now irrelevant to the peace negotiations.

NEW TACTICS AND OLD

Speaking of issues, let's look at the issue of pollution. Here again, we can use the Haves against the Haves to get what we want. When utilities or heavy industries talk about the "people," they mean the banks and other power sectors of their own world. If their banks, say, start pressing them, then they listen and hurt. The target, therefore, should be the banks that serve the steel, auto, and other industries, and the goal, significant lessening of pollution.

Let us begin by making the banks live up to their own public statements.

All banks want money and advertise for new savings and checking accounts. They even offer premium prizes to those who will open accounts. Opening a savings account in a bank is more than a routine matter. First, you sit down with one of the multiple vice-presidents or employees and begin to fill out forms and respond to questions for at least thirty minutes. If a thousand or more people all moved in, each with \$5 or \$10 to open up a savings account, the bank's floor functions would be paralyzed. Again, as in the case of the shop-in, the police would be immobilized. There is no illegal occupation. The bank is in a difficult position. It knows what is happening, but still it does not want to antagonize would-be depositors. The bank's public image would be destroyed if some thousand would-be depositors were arrested or forcibly ejected from the premises.

The element of ridicule is here again. A continuous chain of action and reaction is formed. Following this, the

people can return in a few days and close their accounts, and then return again later to open new accounts. This is what I would call a middle-class guerrilla attack. It could well cause an irrational reaction on the part of the banks which could then be directed against their large customers, for example the polluting utilities or whatever were the obvious, stated targets of the middle-class organizations. The target of a secondary attack such as this is always outraged; the bank, thus, is likely to react more emotionally since it as a body feels that it is innocent, being punished for another's sins.

At the same time, this kind of action can also be combined with social refreshments and gathering together with friends downtown, as well as with the general enjoyment of seeing the discomfiture and confusion on the part of the establishment. The middle-class guerrillas would enjoy themselves as they increased the pressure on their enemies.

Once a specific tactic is used, it ceases to be outside the experience of the enemy. Before long he devises countermeasures that void the previous effective tactic. Recently the head of a corporation showed me the blueprint of a new plant and pointed to a large ground-floor area: "Boy, have we got an architect who is with it!" he chuckled. "See that big hall? That's our sit-in room! When the sit-inners come they'll be shown in and there will be coffee, T.V., and good toilet facilities—they can sit here until hell freezes over."

Now you can relegate sit-ins to the Smithsonian Museum.

Once, though—and in rare circumstances even now—sit-downs were really revolutionary. A vivid illustration was the almost spontaneous sit-down strikes of the United

Automobile Workers Union in their 1937 organizing drive at General Motors. The seizure of private property caused an uproar in the nation. With rare exception every labor leader ran for cover—this was too revolutionary for them. The sit-down strikers began to worry about the illegality of their action and the why and wherefore, and it was then that the chief of all C.I.O. organizers, Lewis, gave them their rationale. He thundered, "The right to a man's job transcends the right of private property! The C.I.O. stands squarely behind these sit-downs!"

The sit-down strikers at G.M. cheered. *Now* they knew *why* they had done what they did, and *why* they would stay to the end. The lesson here is that a major job of the organizer is to instantly develop the rationale for actions which have taken place by accident or impulsive anger. Lacking the rationale, the action becomes inexplicable to its participants and rapidly disintegrates into defeat. Possessing a rationale gives action a meaning and purpose.

The Genesis of Tactic Proxy

THE GREATEST BARRIER to communication between myself and would-be organizers arises when I try to get across the concept that tactics are not the product of careful cold reason, that they do not follow a table of organization or plan of attack. Accident, unpredictable reactions to your own actions, necessity, and improvisation dictate the direction and nature of tactics. Then, analytical logic is required to appraise where you are, what you can do next, the risks and hopes that you can look forward to. It is this analysis that protects you from being a blind prisoner of the tactic and the accidents that accompany it. But I cannot overemphasize that the tactic itself comes out of the free flow of action and reaction, and requires on the part of the organizer an easy acceptance of apparent disorganization.

The organizer goes with the action. His approach must be free, open-ended, curious, sensitive to any opportunities, any handles to grab on to, even though they involve other issues than those he may have in mind at that particular time. The organizer should never feel lost