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Executive Director's Message

LANCE C. BUHL

I suppose it is appropriate—symbolic, really—that this issue of the *Quarterly* is a double one. It would be convenient to gloss the matter over, to hype the fact that this is POD's first "double issue." Make the most of it; let everyone know how "innovative" we are. That would do an injustice to the deeper truth and to the frayed nerves of Glenn Nyre, who has been ready to go to press for a long time.

No. The fact is that the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education is still struggling to keep its head afloat in a rising sea of costs. Therein lies the symbolic nature of the double issue of PODQ. Those who speak for instructional, organizational and professional development in the collegiate world and the instruments through which they address the transitional, nay, transformational issues the academy faces are marginal. This is so culturally as well as fiscally.

It is true that POD continues to grow, a sign that "development" is still alive and that there are quite a few of us committed to realizing some important values in the organizational life of colleges and universities. I was very heartened to discover shortly after the 1980 Annual Meeting of the Network that the Northern Rockies Consortium in Higher Education (NORCHE) was not only thriving but was dedicated solely to professional development. NORCHE covers an immense area, one which its members seem gladly to cover in order to meet together.

I intend no disrespect nor belittlement to them and their spirit, nor to any of us, by advancing the thesis of our marginality. This is a theme I've raised before and, laying claim to executive privilege, I'll do it again. There are precious few academic institutions in this land which stand as models of a living commitment to the democratic promises of education. In too few of our classrooms is liberation a possibility accorded to any but the fifteen to twenty percent whose learning enthusiasms and skills are so advanced as not to require faculty encouragement in the first instance. In too few of our institutions do relations among and between faculty, administrators, and staff with other duties amount to health-producing community, intellectual or social. Our observance and celebration of the civil libertarian tradition seems to extend no further than individualism, avoiding reciprocity or mutuality altogether. In such en-

vironments, I submit, professional development and its advocates are a remnant at the margins.

If we hope to be a part—a shaping force—in the response of academics to a future that is almost certain to be disruptive, there are three questions we need to address, in my judgment.

1. Are our values to ourselves and to others? Do they guide our practice of development? Reinhold Neibuhr, in *Moral Man and Immoral Socity,* reminds Americans of the persisting conflict between the needs of society and the imperatives of a "sensitive conscience." Loosely translated, Neibuhr was suggesting that men and women in their collective identities get caught up in survival questions while, as individuals socialized in western traditions, each is concerned with liberty and justice. The message of the perceptual psychologists, underscored at the Annual Meeting by California State Assemblyman John Vasconcellos and personal "transformation's" advocate and philosopher, Roger Gould, is that our actions bely our real belief structures or, probably more accurately, the degree of environmental press we are responding to.

We must come to grips with a ruling question: to what experience, tradition, literature, do each of us consciously refer in our professional practice? I would urge that each of us engage in the following six-stage exercise: Write a statement of purpose for the developmental activities which you direct or are involved in. List the assumptions or beliefs you hold about people and human interaction you want your work to serve. Identify the sources of your values and assumptions. List the strategies you use (or would like to use) for influencing the academic culture. Decide whether your strategies are consistent with your values. Decide, further, what you need to do to adjust values and practice if and where they clash. (If you haven't already used it, refer to Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness,* 1975.)

2. How do we use our marginality? Can we overcome it—get ahold of institutional power—without losing the special vision which, as Herman Blake spoke of it at the Annual Meeting, marginality creates? We tend, like good Americans, to discount power or see in it abuse only. That is a mistake and helps sustain ineffectual marginality. Harold Bridger of the Tavistock Institute of London in 1978 called for a "relevant OD" (organizational development), one that can adapt to new conditions and direct institutions toward becoming open systems. The key issue, he said, is institutionalizing innovation. The chief challenge for that is for developers to "have the courage to act in relation to their own development." I submit that our greatest challenge today is to develop an inclination toward acquiring and using power.

The work of Kenneth Eble, another of the key speakers at the Annual Meeting, is instructive. His *Art of Administration* (1978) is particularly apt. He focuses on leadership, for which power is a necessity, and argues that the leader must be "at the moral center" of the college or university. Eble does not specifically include developers among the leadership group,

but I do. As leaders, we have got to address power—its moral dilemmas and, just as insistently, the futility of powerlessness. If we need power to do our jobs, we must confront our values, understand them and let them inform our acquisition and use of power. As we do so, we would do well to consult James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (1978 Pulitzer Prize Winner); Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (1977); David McClelland, *Power: The Inner Experience* (1975); and Carl Rodgers, *On Personal Power: Inner Strength and Its Revolutionary Impact* (1977). Together, these works amount to an important reconsideration of the nature and role of power.

3. How do we relate to one another and learn from one another within POD? Harold Bridger, again in his 1978 paper, noted the fractionalized nature of the profession of developers. We tend, in my view of things, still to get trapped by the instructional, faculty, organizational and professional development categories. Is separation our paradigm of organization and, if so, is it really functional? Can we be a powerful force if we fail to accord one another due respect, as Bridger calls for? My best hope is that there will be a pulling together for the sake of mutual support. My fear is that we will simply smooth over the differences and achieve little learning from a continuing dialogue, one that looks to the sort of "paradigm shift" that Marilyn Ferguson alluded to in her presentation at the Annual Meeting. Like her, I think that we are really part of the "Aquarian Conspiracy." Its quietude—almost an undercover operation—is exciting, but holds high potential for leading to a little bit of nowhere unless jointly we take steps to overcome powerlessness.

I leave off by posing the fundamental paradox which the truly democratic leader understands: the more you empower others, the more powerful you become.