

wasn't even around; he was in France as our ambassador. He didn't have to be around. He had done his work and made his contribution in the statutes already operating in Virginia. Such are the wondrous ways in which leaders do their work—when they know who they are and resolve to be their own persons and will accept making their way to their goal by one action at a time with a lot of frustration along the way.

Knowing who one is, establishing one's identity, is essential for leadership, but it is not leadership itself. Knowing who one is before one becomes a leader is more likely to elicit trust than if one seeks to be a leader as a means of establishing one's identity.

Healing and Serving

Twelve ministers and theologians of all faiths and twelve psychiatrists of all faiths had convened for a two-day off-the-record seminar on the one-word theme of *healing*. The chair, a psychiatrist, opened the seminar with this question, "We are all healers, whether we are ministers or doctors. Why are we in this business? What is our motivation?" There followed only ten minutes of intense discussion and they were all agreed, doctors and ministers, Catholics, Jews, and Protestants. "For our own healing," they said.

This is an interesting word, *healing*, with its meaning, "to make whole." The example above suggests that one really never makes it. It is always something sought. Perhaps, as with the minister and the doctor, the servant-leader might also acknowledge that his or her own healing is his or her motivation. There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.

Alcoholics Anonymous is regarded by some who know as recovering more alcoholics from this dreadful illness than all other approaches combined. Legend has it that the founding meeting to incorporate the organization was held in the office of a noted philanthropist, a very wealthy man. In the course of the discussion of the

principles that would guide the new organization, the philanthropist made a statement something like this: "From my experience I think I know about the things that can be done with money and the things that cannot be done with money. What you in AA want to do cannot be done with money. You must be poor. You must not use money to do your work." There was more conversation but this advice profoundly influenced the course of AA. A fundamental principle that has guided the work of AA over the years was born at that meeting: they will be poor; no one but an alcoholic can contribute money to AA's modest budget; AA will own no real property; the essential work of AA, one recovered alcoholic helping another toward recovery, will not be done for money.

In an affluent age with burgeoning professionalism and institutionalism, AA stands as a clear sentinel that gold does not always glitter, that the need for a person to heal himself or herself may be an adequate motive to serve, and that an unpaid amateur with dedication to service may excel the most gifted (and expensive) professional.

Institutions

Unless we turn back the clock, get rid of 190 million people in this country, and become a nation of isolated, subsistence farmers and hermits living in caves, we are all going to live with and be deeply involved in institutions.

At the center of every institution is the notion of compromise. The nature of any institution that goes beyond the very small mutual self-help arrangement or something exceptional like AA, is that it employs people to render a service to other people—usually a larger number. The first compromise is that the institution must meet the requirements of those who work for it. For instance, a university must set up the conditions that attract a faculty and must operate so as to serve their needs. In addition, governments pass laws, communities impose customs, donors or other funding agencies have wishes. All of these may combine to shape the services offered students—and the result is a compromise that may not be the very best for the student.

Then there are many students, each one having unique needs. Even if the university were not limited by other commitments, it probably could not adjust completely to every student's need. Some compromise would be necessary.

Thus in the nature of any institution is compromise. And a fatal error for the leader is to see his or her role as largely the mediator of the compromise, the keeper of peace. Clearly a leader must do some of this. But there is a larger role—to excite and stretch the institution with demanding goals, larger goals than the machinery of compromise would postulate. The larger role includes reaching to make the impossible possible, insistently demanding it at times, and venturing to challenge mediocrity and injustice.

The leader maintains some detachment from the action so that he or she can see the whole of it. In a large institution a leader has the services of a staff that does the detailed analytical studies of what is going on. These resources help him or her see and foresee better than can those who see only part of the whole.

The leader must be in communication with *all* those involved. In a large institution this requires a system. But *every single person* must hear and be heard, and must feel that the communication channel is adequate.

An able leader who uses these resources and is trusted can build an esprit de corps, maintain an ethical climate, and sustain an institutional performance that is accepted as better than any individual or segment of the institution can achieve for itself. For the many who can accept some compromise with having things wholly their own way, a strong, well-led institution will take them farther faster than they could go on their own. For most people, over a life span, some compromise with the requirements of institutions is the price of optimal achievement.

The quality of a modern society is determined largely by the quality of its institutions, and institution building is the process by which a highly organized society moves along. Forward movement generally results from the "pull" of a pacesetter. Something or somebody moves out ahead and the rest emulate the model. Retrogression is inevitable when there is no pull from a pacesetter.

Who will be the pacesetter in institution building that marks a

substantial movement toward the better society that is reasonable and possible with available resources? The *university* is nominated because there resides the largest share of good, intelligent, vital people who *could* make the university an institutional model for all of society—the pacesetter.

The university, as an institution, is currently the most troubled, the most fragile, and the least certain of its goals. By reversing this and becoming the strongest, the most serene, and the surest footed, the university could become the pacesetter for the next great social advance. Although the university has the resources, the autonomy, and the know-how to do this, at this writing it seems one of those impossible things. Yet some university must do this, the impossible, for its own self-preservation and for the preservation of all universities.

The university *must* become the institution-building model because nearly half the university-age people in the United States are now college or university students, and the influence of the university, through its students, on the shape of society is enormous. Furthermore, the university is currently imposing a stereotyped academic education on this large group of young people for whom such an approach is suitable for an estimated 15 percent or less. And this must be changed.

Opinions differ as to how moral the present generation of young people is, but their zeal for honesty and for the reduction of injustice is at an exceptional level. Their restlessness, sometimes destructively manifested, is the principal current driving force for institutional integrity in the university. They are crying out to be led, but there is not much response. Mostly they are experiencing a defensive reaction. It is no wonder that some of them seem "difficult."

Adlai Stevenson's "It is time to talk sense to the American people" in 1952 was wasted on that generation. But it would not be wasted now, in the universities, with this student generation. Saul Bellow in an interview commented simply, "Somehow I feel that truth is very attractive to a tremendous number of people." There is nowhere any greater need for dependable servants to emerge as great leaders and say it like it is than among those who guide the destinies of contemporary American universities.

Trustees

The only prediction made in these essays is that in the future society (if one survives) there will be institutions and there will be leaders.

Institutions need two kinds of leaders: those who are inside and carry the active day-to-day roles, and those who stand outside but are intimately concerned and who, with the benefit of some detachment, oversee the active leaders. These are the *trustees*.

The trustee is what the title implies, a person in whom ultimate trust is placed. Because institutions inevitably harbor conflict, the trustees are the court of last resort if an issue arises that cannot be resolved by the active parties. If tangible assets are involved, they legally hold them and are responsible to all interested parties for their good use. They have a prime concern for goals and for progress toward goals. They make their influence felt more by knowing and asking questions than by authority, although they usually have authority and can use it if need be. If, as is usual, there are several trustees, their chair has a special obligation to see that the trustees as a group sustain a common purpose and are influential in helping the institution maintain consistent high-level performance toward its goals. The chair is not simply the presider over meetings, but must serve and lead the trustees as a group and act as their major contact with the active inside leadership. Although trustees usually leave the "making of news" to active persons in the enterprise, theirs is a tremendously important leadership opportunity.

Unfortunately, trustee appointments are too often used for honorary purposes, to give the institution status by having high-status trustees, to give representation to special groups and ideologies, to secure gratis counsel from persons with special talents like bankers and lawyers, or simply to comply with the legal requirements of the charter. Also the really able ones sometimes accept too many trusteeships and therefore cannot put enough time into any one of them to be effective. Consequently, in the current wave of criticism of institutions, it is no cause for wonder that one finds the suggestion that trustees be dispensed with or made entirely honorary and stripped of all power. Nor is it surprising that other constituencies sometimes maneuver to render trustees powerless.

Trustees carry a critical leadership role that cannot be dispensed with. Because theirs is not the active leadership, their influence (or lack of it) is long run. But it is, in the end, absolutely determining. Therefore, the most exacting requirements of servant-leader should be placed on trustees. It matters not what is the age, color, sex, economic status, or political persuasion of the trustee. There should be only one requirement: he or she must be an able, dedicated servant-leader who will work hard to assure distinguished performance of the institution in trust. If one finds oneself a member of a trustee group where this one requirement is not substantially met by a majority of the trustees, and if one is unable to change it, one should weigh whether this particular board membership is a good use of his or her time.

So conceived, the role of trustees provides an unequalled fulfillment opportunity for those who would serve and lead. And no one step will more quickly raise the quality of the total society than a radical reconstruction of trustee bodies so that they are predominantly populated by able, dedicated servant-leaders. Two disturbing questions: Is there now enough discerning toughness strategically placed to see that this change takes place, in the event that able, dedicated servant-leaders become available in sufficient numbers to do it? Are enough high-potential young people now preparing themselves for these roles so that this change *can* be made in the event that it is possible to make it?

Power and Authority— The Strength and the Weakness

In a complex, institution-centered society, which ours is likely to be into the indefinite future, there will be large and small concentrations of power. Sometimes it will be a servant's power of persuasion and example. Sometimes it will be coercive power used to dominate and manipulate people. The difference is that, in the former, power is used to create opportunity and alternatives so that the individual may choose and build autonomy. In the latter the individual is coerced into a predetermined path. Even if it is "good" for the person, if the

individual experiences nothing else, ultimately his or her autonomy will be destroyed.

Some coercive power is overt and brutal. Some is covert and subtly manipulative. The former is open and acknowledged; the latter is insidious and hard to detect. Most of us are more coerced than we know. We need to be more alert in order to know, and we also need to acknowledge that, in an imperfect world, authority backed up by power is still necessary because we just don't know a better way. We may one day find one. It is worth searching for.

The trouble with coercive power is that it only strengthens resistance. And, if successful, its controlling effect lasts only as long as the force is strong. It is not organic. Only persuasion and the consequent voluntary acceptance are organic.

Since both kinds of power have been around for a long time, an individual will be better off if he or she is close enough to raw coercion to know what it is. One must be close to both the bitterness and goodness of life to be fully human.

The servant must be fully human. The servant-leader is functionally superior because he or she is closer to the ground and so hears things, sees things, knows things. Because of this a servant-leader is dependable and trusted. He or she knows the meaning of that line from Shakespeare's sonnet: "They that have power to hurt and will do none . . ."

Who Is the Servant?

For those who follow, and this is everyone—including those who lead—the really critical question is who is this moral person we would see as leader? Who is the servant? How does one tell a truly giving, enriching servant from the neutral person or the one whose net influence is to take away from or diminish other people?

A distinguished rabbi and scholar had just concluded a lecture on the Old Testament prophets in which he had spoken of true prophets and false prophets. A questioner asked him how one tells the difference between the true and the false prophets. The rabbi's answer was succinct and to the point, "There is no *way!*" he said.

Then he elaborated, "If there were a *way*, if one had a gauge to slip over the head of the prophet and establish without question that he is or he isn't a true prophet, there would be no human dilemma and life would not be worth living."

So it is with the servant issue. If there were a dependable *way* that would tell us, "this person enriches by his or her presence, is neutral, or takes away," life would be without challenge. Yet it is terribly important that one *know*, both about oneself and about others, whether the net effect of a person's influence on others enriches, is neutral, or diminishes and depletes.

Since there is no certain way to know this, one must turn to the artists for illumination. Such an illumination is in Hermann Hesse's idealized portrayal of the servant Leo whose servanthood comes through in his leadership. In stark modern terms it can also be found in the brutal reality of the mental hospital where Ken Kesey (in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) gives us Big Nurse—strong, able, dedicated, dominating, authority-ridden, manipulative, exploitative—the net effect of whose influence diminished other people, literally destroyed them. In the story she is pitted in a contest unto death with rough, gutter-bred MacMurphy, a patient, the net effect of whose influence is to build people up and make both patients and the doctor in charge of the ward grow bigger, stronger, healthier—an effort that ultimately costs MacMurphy his life. If one will study the two characters, Leo and MacMurphy, one will get a measure of the range of possibilities in the role of servant as leader.

None of us is perfect and in the test of real life few of us will come off as well as Leo or MacMurphy. Furthermore, in an imperfect world in which the imperfections seem a necessary part of the reality and in which a contemporary theologian can say, in all seriousness, "The capacity to find one's own seriousness absurd is a sign of grace," not all who lead will be servants. But it will be a better world if more of those who arrive at their mature years aware of some measure of the servant in them consciously try to lead, which means simply that, by going ahead to show the way, their enriching influence may go further than if, as servants, they accept a more passive role and miss being the whole people they might become.

Some of them will become leaders without consciously trying.

Those who try to become leaders run the risk of acquiring an artificiality that defeats the effort.

This has been written to help sharpen awareness of the opportunity and to help minimize the risk for those who try.

In Here, Not Out There

A king once asked Confucius's advice on what to do about the large number of thieves. Confucius answered, "If you, sir, were not covetous, although you should reward them to do it, they would not steal." This advice places an enormous burden on those who are favored by the rules, and it establishes how old is the notion that the servant views any problem in the world as *in here*, inside himself or herself, not *out there*. And if a flaw in the world is to be remedied, to the servant the process of change starts *in here*, in the servant, not *out there*. This is a difficult concept for that busybody, modern human being.

So it is with joy. Joy is inward; it is generated inside. It is not found outside and brought in. It is for those who accept the world as it is, part good, part bad, and who identify with the good by adding a little island of serenity to it.

Walt Whitman put it succinctly when he wrote (in the *Song of the Open Road*), "I and mine do not convince by arguments . . . we convince by our presence." And Hermann Hesse dramatized it in the powerful leadership exerted by Leo, who ostensibly only served in menial ways but who, by the quality of his inner life that was manifest in his presence, lifted men up and made the journey possible. Camus, in his final testament quoted earlier, leaves us with, "Each and every man, on the foundations of his own sufferings and joys, builds for them all."

Implications

These little essays were written in the belief that in the 1970s both serving and leading may be radically different—perhaps in ways yet

to be discovered, but different from what has been before. To the extent that the quality of society, then or now, is not all that it reasonably might be (and ours is not), natural servants with potential for leadership have failed to prepare for and consequently to perform as leaders. They have chosen less creative roles. And they have suffered. And society has suffered. And so it may be in the future.

The future society may be just as mediocre as this one. It may be worse. And no amount of restructuring or changing the system or tearing it all down in the hope that something better will grow will change this. There may be a better system than the one we now have; it is hard to know. But, whatever it is, if the people to lead it well are not there, a better system will not produce a better society. Many people finding their wholeness through many and varied contributions make a good society. These essays are concerned with but one facet: able servants with potential to lead must lead. Not much else counts if this does not happen.

If an able young person is aware of his or her servant stature and leadership potential, what does that person do to prepare to lead? A few suggestions:

Begin by seeing the pervasive mediocrity in positions of influence for what it is—one individual at a time, not the “system.” See the mediocre individual as not necessarily evil, but simply a person in a leadership spot who has no “lead,” who does not see what needs to be done any more clearly, if as well, as the people he or she is trying to lead. Every time you see such a mediocre performer, say to yourself, “That fellow is there because a few years ago someone like me failed to prepare for that job.” Don’t blame the mediocre individual. Don’t blame the system. Blame the right person for not being there and resolve that, a few years hence, such blame will not be heaped on you.

If you have the potential to lead, you have the ability to foresee events better than others, and, by using your “lead,” by acting on your foresight while you have the freedom to act, you can provide some shelter from the shock of the unexpected for those less capable of foreseeing. This is not all that leadership is about, but it is an indispensable first condition. Why should anyone willingly follow

another except that the other better sees the path and better anticipates the dangers as well as the opportunities?

There is no better way to further one's ability to know the unknowable and foresee the unforeseeable than to practice constantly on every observable event. Ask, what is going on here? What motivates this individual? Where is this tending? What are the future consequences? If another present action would bring a better consequence, what would it be? In this circumstance, what is required of one in a responsible position of leadership?

Even though you may be young and inexperienced and you are in a school rather than in the world of affairs, open your awareness to what is going on around you, make your own estimates and predictions, monitor the progress of events and check the accuracy of your assumptions and store it away as your experience. Read the philosophy of leadership: Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Henry Taylor's *The Statesman*, Alexander Leighton's *The Governing of Men*. Avoid the how-to-do-it books; avoid any stereotyped leader model. Rather, choose your own role, the one that best fits your nature, and allow your own best leader style to emerge out of your own experience.

Realistically, we know that we have too few able leaders today, and fewer still are servants. Otherwise we would not hold contemporary society to be mediocre. And even if the future holds a better promise, a higher proportion of able, dedicated servant-leaders in homes, schools, businesses, governments, labor unions, society may still fall short because of the number who presume to lead who do not measure up. Knowing this, what does the servant-leader do? Two things. First, he or she makes the very best contribution regardless of the prevailing condition. No one person is responsible for the whole society, only for what he or she achieves inwardly and how he or she deals as an individual with opportunities. This is the first approach of a servant-leader to a mediocre society.

The second possible action is to move to demythologize leadership. The prevailing myth holds that we respect the position even though we cannot respect the ability of the person who occupies it. This cannot be. Respect goes only to persons. What then do we do? We ask all leaders to be honest, because honesty can be respected even in the inferior person. Then the inferior person in a leadership

spot, be he or she a parent, teacher, judge, pastor, manager, president, or king, will admit to not seeing the path any more clearly than anybody else and ask for the help of those he or she is presuming to lead. In fact, it is better for all leaders to admit this, partly to leave those who go with them free to judge whether the leader's vision of the path is really superior, and partly because there will be times—no matter how prescient or perceptive the leader—when someone else does see the path more clearly.

The range of leadership opportunities is very wide, wide enough to provide a congenial role for every servant who wants to be a builder (and every true servant wants to be a builder because there are no neutral roles and one must be a builder in order to know that he or she is not a destroyer). These roles range all the way from the conspicuous formal leader to the legions of opportunities for inconspicuous, subtle, and informal leaders. The latter usually do not go down in history as the doers of great deeds. But their role is indispensable and the conspicuous formal leaders cannot function without their unremitting effort. The freer the institution and the more scope for autonomy and initiative given to individuals, as in the university, the more important is the role of the many informal leaders among all constituencies: students, faculty, alumni, trustees, and administration. Unless the predominant informal influence throughout these constituencies is from servant-leaders, builders, the formal leader is likely to be presiding over chaos—of which we have seen several conspicuous examples in recent years. The university must demonstrate that an institution with as much freedom and autonomy for individuals can steer a steadier course. Otherwise it will forfeit its opportunity to be a model builder for society, and other less free institutions that might emulate its example will certainly be discouraged to try.

This brings us to that critical aspect of realism that confronts the servant-leader, that of *order*. There must be some order because we know for certain that the great majority of people will choose some kind of order over chaos even if it is delivered by a brutal non-servant and even if, in the process, they lose much of their freedom. Therefore the servant-leader will beware of pursuing an idealistic path regardless of its impact on order. The big question is, what kind

of order? This is the great challenge to the emerging generation of leaders: can they build better order?

Any older person who grew up in a period when values were more settled and the future seemed more secure will be disturbed by much he or she finds on close contact with young people today. But one firm note of hope comes through—loud and clear: we are at a turn of history in which young people are growing up faster, and some extraordinarily able, mature, servant-disposed men and women are emerging in their early and middle twenties. The percentage may be small; and, again, it may be larger than we think. And it is not an elite; it is all sorts of exceptional people. Most of them could be ready for some large society-shaping responsibility by the time they are thirty *if* they are encouraged to prepare for leadership as soon as their potential as builders is identified, which is possible for many of them by age eighteen or twenty. Preparation to lead need not be at the expense of vocational or scholarly preparation, but it must be the first priority. And it may take some difficult bending of resources and some unusual initiative on the part of these young people to accomplish all that should be accomplished in these critical years and give leadership preparation first priority. But whatever it takes, it must be done. For a while at least, until a better led society is assured, some other important goals should take a subordinate place.

All of this rests on the assumption that the only way to change a society (or just make it go) is to produce people, enough people, who will change it (or make it go). The urgent problems of our day—a senseless war, destruction of the environment, poverty, alienation, discrimination, overpopulation—are here because of human failure, individual failures, one person, one action at a time failures. Despite our massive education (or, alas, perhaps because of it) we are desperately short of talent everywhere. We will recover from this by growing people, one person at a time, people who have the goals, competence, values, and spirit to turn us about. We can and must turn about quickly and start solving problems faster than we create them. Large numbers of people in vast, complicated actions will be involved. But at the base it will be one person and one action at a time because there isn't anything else to work with. If we make it, and this is written in the belief that we will make it, the "system" will

be whatever works best. The builders will find the useful pieces wherever they are, invent new ones when needed, all without reference to ideological coloration. "How do you get the right things done?" will be the watchword of the day—every day.

* * *

What is given here is a collection of short essays that seem to me to be relevant to the preparation of a servant to become a leader. These come from my own searching and experience and the suggestions of friends, including students. They are offered as a sharing with those who are young enough in spirit that they are still searching, and whose lifestyles may yet be shaped by conscious choices.

Five concluding observations seem important to me at the time of this writing:

- True servant-leaders are artists in the deep meaning of being open to chaos. In their own personal theologizing (and they all do it) they set a limit on the *logic of the spirit* and acknowledge a threshold beyond which all is mystery. They set this threshold closer to conscious reality than most "religious" people do. They may receive intimations, but they stand too much in awe of the mystery to carry their feeble logic beyond that threshold. Such people will listen both to the flower people and to the Birchers—not because it makes any particular sense in their rational consciousness to do so, but because *they* (the flower people and the Birchers) *are here*. And one does not ask why they are here because the answer to that question is beyond the threshold of the mystery where one does not ask. Who knows; if one *could* ask and get an answer that one could understand, their reasons for being here might be better than for most of us. It is a sobering thought. And it helps make one accepting of all conditions of people.
- Not much that is really important can be accomplished with coercive power. Headship, the holding of a titular position or possessing coercive power, is not at all synonymous with leadership. Some things individuals think they want, like the

Pyramids, can be built with coercive power. But, mostly, such power can destroy; it usually does not build things of ultimate importance to human beings. In an imperfect world we will probably have coercive power around for quite a while and everyone had best be wary lest he or she be coerced. In acknowledging the presence of coercion, we should also note that its value is inverse to its use. When our country *used* atomic power in a war when only we had it, we forfeited the opportunity to be influential in its use when several have it.

- Nothing much happens without a dream. For something great to happen, there must be a great dream.
- To refuse to examine the assumptions one lives by is immoral.
- In the end, all that matters is love and friendship.