

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

MEMORANDUM # 4

FROM: MILTON KOTLER

SUBJECT: THE ENTERPRISE OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

I closed the last memo with the crucial question of what "enterprise" can ground the Community Foundation. What common interest can focus the energies and enlist the participation of the citizens of the urban community (in representative body or direct assembly)? It must be a necessary task which can only be fulfilled locally, so as to rest authority in the urban community and legitimate its corporate structure.

It was a shared, local interest, namely material increase and religious communion, that the colonial corporation, and later, the township, served. The need to get and repay investment for colonial settlement required the common organization of the community for productive enterprise. This organization took the corporate form, and it was from this structure that political government grew. As investment was gradually repayed, economic enterprise became private and the common "enterprise" shifted to religious communion, and dissipated thereafter. By this time, however, the form of political government was already set, reflecting the influence of the original corporate structure for economic enterprise.

Granted, economic enterprise continued as the basis of town government, but with this important difference: the free men, once corporately bound by common economic enterprise for personal material increase now came to be joined by taxation, for necessary "services." Further, the bond of the general body narrowed, and special interests interlocked (business or land, politics and church) for power gain and economic interest through the use of the instrument of town government. That is to say, whereas before public power was used for public enterprise, now it was devoted to private gain.

It is in this ironic sense that the basis of the town and its government remained economic enterprise. This only supports the old rule that power governs "politics." As the original common enterprise passed so too did the principle of its organization, interest, and exchange. Political structure became abstracted from common public enterprise. With public enterprise no longer present, government came to be mechanically conceived, and used as an instrument for power in behalf of private interest.\*

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\*It is in this sense that the problem of democratic, responsible government is never settled mechanically, e.g. as it was so thought in the system of checks and balances and division of power, etc. Fundamentally it must rest on the intimate reality to all of the common enterprise which the political organization must serve for the community, through the community, and by the community.

The freemen of the old colonial plantation were all assembled by virtue of the relevance of their interrelated roles for the common economic enterprise. As economic enterprise became private, and later as religion became less cogent, less central, and diversified, government lost its civic foundation for general assembly,--which must ultimately rest on an equality of interdependent roles in common public enterprise.\*

The priority of liberty,-principally the protection of private property, severely limits public power and inhibits bases of common public enterprise (as opposed to "service"); and thereby the basis of assembly by the participation of all. Nothing is left to public power for which all can have a common interest and incentive to participate.

Thus abstracted from public enterprise government becomes professionalized. Between the privatization of public power and the professionalization of government, the public space contracts to fit only a few, and exclude the many. Or if not exclude, then at least deflect the many by its narrow or boring possibilities.

The Jeffersonian ideal of the "elementary republic" for the participation of all in public assembly, requires an ample public space. But such public space cannot exist without a publicly empowered common enterprise. What that public purpose could be, Jefferson could not quite determine. By his time the private structure was too strong and constitutionally protected to acknowledge the proper public capacity for any important "internal" common enterprise. While he mentioned occasionally "as one of the advantages of the ward divisions I have proposed" that it (ward government) would offer "a better way to collect the voice of the people than the mechanics of representative government," he was convinced that if one would "begin them (the ward divisions) only for a single purpose" they would "soon show for what other they were the best instruments."

Jefferson's problem of the "elementary republic" is the modern dilemma of democratic revolution. The significance of the general court of freemen of the colonial corporation, and later, the town meeting, was that it established the modern possibility of local government by direct assembly in the course of peace and even sustained it through war (even though it could not last the course of social and economic change). The achieve-

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\* This notion of political equality resting on interdependent roles is an essential issue. It is not the same thing as political equality resting on "persons." The interdependence of roles in community requires a public commitment to a public purpose. Thus, it is a foundation for assembly. Equality merely of "persons" bases community on private purposes or no public purpose. There is no common focus or standard for general assembly. This is an old paradox of democratic community. Can you have privacy and assembly at once? The ancient Greeks loved public scandal and personal attack. Do we love privacy more than assembly?

ment of this American precedent is fully appreciated when we realize that the only other direct assemblies in modern times, namely the commune, the council, the Soviet, etc.,-all arose out of war and revolution, only to dissolve by state repression and the restoration of civil peace.

The problem of realizing today the American precedent in local government based on "the participation of all" is whether there is some new common enterprise in which the community can share and which can become the proper subject of public community authority. And whether such an enterprise is of a continuing nature to sustain the institution of local assembly for more than the moment of its initiation. Several bases for such public enterprise seemed to have been eliminated by the process of time. Certainly in American society it is no longer material increase, as in the days of the colonial plantation. Nor is it religious salvation. Where indeed is that purpose upon which to build local assembly?

Here is it important to first go back to Jefferson for his hints; and then return to today's reality for signs. To Jefferson, the plan of the "elementary republic" based on ward government was the "salvation of the Republic." Such a warning deserves a clue as to what "the specific purposes of the elementary Republic "the ward government should be." A function is not a "purpose." It is not enough that the ward could have authority over "those portions of self government for which they are best qualified, confiding to them, the care of the poor, their roads, police, elections,..."\* Instead we best look to the primary object of the ward concept in a Jefferson's thinking.

"At the first session of our legislature after the Declaration of Independence, we passed a law abolishing entails..Primogeniture..these laws, drawn by myself, laid the axe to the root of Pseudo-Aristocrace. And had another for which I prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been compleat. It was a bill for the more general diffusion of learning. This proposed to divide every county into wards of five or six mile square, like your townships; to establish in each ward a free school for reading, writing and common arithmetic:... worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts. Education would have raised the mass of the people to the high ground of moral respectability necessary to their own safety and to orderly government; and would have compleated the great object of qualifying them to select the veritable aristoi, for the trusts of government..I have great hope that some patriotic spirit will, at a favorable moment, call it up, and make it the key stone of the arch of our government."\*\*

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\*Letter to John Adams from Jefferson, October 28, 1813

\*\*Ibid

"Divide the counties into wards. Begin them only for a single purpose; they will soon show for what others are the best instruments."\*

Here Jefferson gets to the heart of the matter. He realized two important things. First, the transformational nature of political organization,--from "single purpose," or enterprise to government. Second, he saw education as the public enterprise from which war government could grow, and "save the Republic."

The question for us today is whether such a basis, or any basis for public enterprise exists now, which could ground the "elementary Republic" and fulfill the ward concept. This depends on the signs of reality around us and "in the air." I think such an "enterprise" does exist and I suggest its nature is the rapprochement of the generations. And this means the education of all the ages, and the upbringing of the young by new common meanings. Looking around at the urban condition today the most dominant phenomena is the war of the generations and estrangement of age groups. Its expressions are many: from private analysis to public violence;--in thought, action and passion. Its manifestations are more: generational discontinuities of social behavior and cultural norms. Its verification rests on the universalization of generation styles in the Western world (e.g. from the Wild Ones to the English Modes and Rockets); the closed system of the generations world (the independence of adolescents' heroes from adult heroes and absence of any transition from one to the other, etc.); the rejection of institutions of socialization and maturity (absence of family counsel, drop-out problem etc.); and also the break-down of generational distinctions and the competition between generations for common styles (for example, everybody's twistin', the fifty year old crew cut, etc.). Rejection, distance, anti-pathology, mockery, violence, mark the interaction of the generations; and thereby mar the social and cultural continuity which an ongoing society requires.

The family system has become structurally incapable of performing a healthy, sufficient parental function. The urban home, in so many instances can no longer train the young for adequate social roles and personal being. By structural incapability I mean, that the social forces of technology and automation, disenployment, race prejudice, the constriction of status mobility, career anxiety, sexual differentiation in the context of cultural asexuality, etc.,--incapacitates the mother and father from fully being parents. By what prescription shall we train our children? And do our social necessities and requirements allow this? So many of the young cannot be trained through the family system in its present form of private organization. This incapacity is not accidental but a function of the social imperatives and pay-offs in the social system. The problem of the young and the warring of the generations therefore is not only public by virtue of its effects but also

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\*Letter to Joseph C. Cabell from Jefferson, Monticello, Feb. 2, 1816.

by virtue of the required public responsibility and function necessary to its solution.

By evidence of public projects, government and private, concern for the youth is a major objective of public attention. Urban violence, educational experiments, manpower training, community organization, etc., is the center of today's political innovation. The public consensus is that the problem of youth training and education and the rapprochement of the generations are not only public responsibilities, but indeed can only be fulfilled through public capacity and public enterprise.

As for the intimacy and personal involvement of this interest on the part of all citizens the case is obvious. It is no less a ground in personal interest and motivation than were material increases and religious salvation in an earlier day.

The problem of the young and the integration of the generations, for the sake of social and cultural continuity, is indeed the "common enterprise" today of local community. Upon the basis of this enterprise the community can be bound by common organization and function through corporate structure, and act in behalf of this enterprise by direct assembly or a truly representative body. Further, because of the local nature of this public problem, due to family residence, it crucially accommodates to the conditions and capacities of the "elementary Republic." Like land ownership and religious communion, so too is education and generational integration a local function. It is essentially a face to face, or as-far-as-the-eye-can-see, function. The new local community based on assembly, direct representative, can operate through the organization of the community foundation around an institutional structure of education. Such an educational structure as I am considering would not be as limited as we are familiar with today. It would be a school of tomorrow; with a scope as rich as public life can be.

It is this single purpose around which community structure can develop, and grow from public enterprise into fully ward government. Beginning through the corporate structure of the community foundation, its enterprise can enlist the economic, social, cultural, intellectual, and religious resources of the urban neighborhood and community. It can generate endless public roles, common interest, and power, to set the political foundations of local community and build new political roles for each citizen. Out of this beginning, through the public enterprise of education and the sharing of values between generations, the urban neighborhood can move to community and the urban community develop into truly local, and hopefully ward government.

I will develop this organization of the Community Foundation around the enterprise of community education in the next memo.