

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

SOME ELEMENTS FOR A "POSITION" REGARDING
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OF "THE MASSES"

The Lordship of Christ: for us, for our institutions and for our society is the crucial fact underlying our understanding of social goals, social conditions and the need for social change. That Lordship reveals the necessity for persistently de-idolizing and de-mythologizing our current roles and loyalties as well as our agencies for change. Reflection on the Word of God as it has come effectively to expression in time past and as it comes, now, to expression and action, is a necessary and continuing discipline for critical participation in Church and in society.

The response of faith involves both obedience and freedom to respond with sharp relevance, often in fresh ways. The participation of the institutional Church can be assumed to be constant in indirect involvement and variable in direct involvement, depending always upon what faith requires in a given circumstance.

People in our society are suffering from conditions that demand change. Every one is concerned with change: both people whose lives are affected by inhuman conditions and the people who are responsible for creating these very conditions. The conditions of life in most areas of our cities are also affected by a great variety and quantity of community organization. Moreover, a democratic society depends upon the participation of all of the people so far as possible, both in cooperation and in contention, as human need demands.

The movement of people into effective engagement with the forces either for or against the Good Society is a prerequisite -- if indeed there is to be progressive civic development as human need and condi-

tions change. It is assumed that such interaction of forces will move simultaneously in polar tension and cooperation. The role of the faithful is constant in working for the equitable distribution and possession of social power among all the people in the interests of proximate justice and equitable opportunities.

Each set of conditions, each community situation has multiple causes which need to be analyzed accurately, and analyzed in time to be dealt with effectively. Each community has a unique array of resistance to appropriate change, and a unique pattern of reactions to changers. Therefore, the points for specific readiness, among the parties to the community situation(s), must be assessed and acted upon with constant revisions for relevance and effectiveness. Issues must be defined for planning and for community interpretation, so that the dangers of over-simplification may be matched with faithful insistence on essential accuracy and a determination not to close the door to the light of new facts.

Actions flowing from such analysis will not be stereotyped. Engagement in change will itself afford new understandings. Constant effort will go into the stimulation of the people of the organization, their basic education in issues and processes, their motivation to take positions and to take costly action, to accept victory or defeat, to live with and endure conflict -- always aware of the competing interests and the will of each to dominate. Compromise on immediate goals especially in the issues that matter most, will become a necessity and require humane art. Social reconciliation will be seen as offered in the text of effective representation of the contending interests and of just treatment in the decision-making. Continuing negotiation among the

parties to social conditions will require the maintenance of strength for bargaining position.

We see community organizations based among the masses of the people both affirming and challenging, cooperating with and resisting established power structures and complexes, necessarily, as human conditions warrant. But the existence of the organization as an entity and in contra-distinction to the other organizations of the society, must be recognized if it is to become an effective vehicle for a more humane society. Commitment to the same democratic processes of arriving at a decision among contending interests will prevail within the organization and in its relationship to the larger community and its institutions.

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