

HANG-

UPS

some common problems of people

who organize other people into communities

50¢

© 1967 by Alan McSurely--All Rights Reserved

THE ORGANIZER'S LIBRARY SERIES
of the
SOUTHERN CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL FUND
3210 West Broadway
Louisville, Kentucky 40211

(Bulk Rates to Movement Groups)

HANGUPS

SOME COMMON HANGUPS OF PEOPLE WHO
ORGANIZE OTHER PEOPLE INTO COMMUNITIES

Two Definitions:

1. PEOPLE: Men, Women, girls, boys who need to breathe, eat, love, be loved, sleep, learn, forget, and grow the world over. Everyone who reads this paper is a people.

2. COMMUNITY: A group of PEOPLE (see above) which has discovered that all the people in the group have common interests, common experiences, and have developed a common language. Having these three things in common, all the people decide to trust, love, communicate and act as a solid unit in moving toward their community's common interest--whether it is food, fresh air to breathe, roads, better schools, or a more democratic form of government.

Two Kinds of Organizing

The process of organizing people into communities, as young people have come to know it, is new to most of us. It is much different from what paid social "agents" (not people) do to people they work on. Current books and college courses on "community organizing" have no relationship to what most young organizers are now doing in the field.

How Did This New Kind of Organizing Develop?

The student movements of the early sixties influenced, to a great degree, the development of this new organizing process. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and then the Students for a Democratic Society learned much from the techniques of the radical labor organizers of the thirties and forties.

These organizers

- * placed high value on treating people as people (not as "cases");
- * developed the style of complete personal commitment and honest communication;
- * adopted the method of organizing against local or national power blocks;
- * set the goal of building strong new leadership and independent political forces (i.e. a new community) in places where there has been self despair and no political activity.

Compare these values, styles, methods and goals with those promoted by college social work courses; the Government's anti-poverty program; and older liberal groups. These established groups teach their organizers to

- * maintain objectivity with their "cases;"
- * develop professional commitment and one way communication;
- * organize a consensus within existing political forces;
- * achieve more service programs to keep "those people" quiet.

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

The male or female organizer who subscribes to the newer style sees himself as no different from the people he works with. Therefore he has faith in their talents and leadership just as he has faith in himself.

The agency organizer sees a wide gulf between himself, as an agent, and the "cases" he works with. He has been taught to maintain his objectivity and professional detachment. Therefore he develops little faith in the talents or leadership of his "cases"--and usually loses what faith he has in his own creative talents.

The new organizer believes that some people are poor because of what the "system" has done to them—not because of their own personal "weaknesses."

Compare this view with the older, agency organizer who believes that the system is always right, but some people have just not been able to find their place in it. Therefore we should "organize" them into the system on to Community Action Boards (but just one third of "those people" on the Board, please!) settlement house programs ("Aren't the little girls' pigtails cute?") and so forth.

The new organizer believes in the definition of "community" which is at the beginning of this paper. He feels that there is no community until people with common interests and experiences develop a common language to express themselves. And it is his job to help them work out this common language.

The old organizer, on the other hand, feels that a community already exists. The problem is that some people have not become a part of it because of their own weaknesses.

The chart on the next page may help us understand why people have such a hard time talking about community organizing these days. They are usually talking about two totally different things!

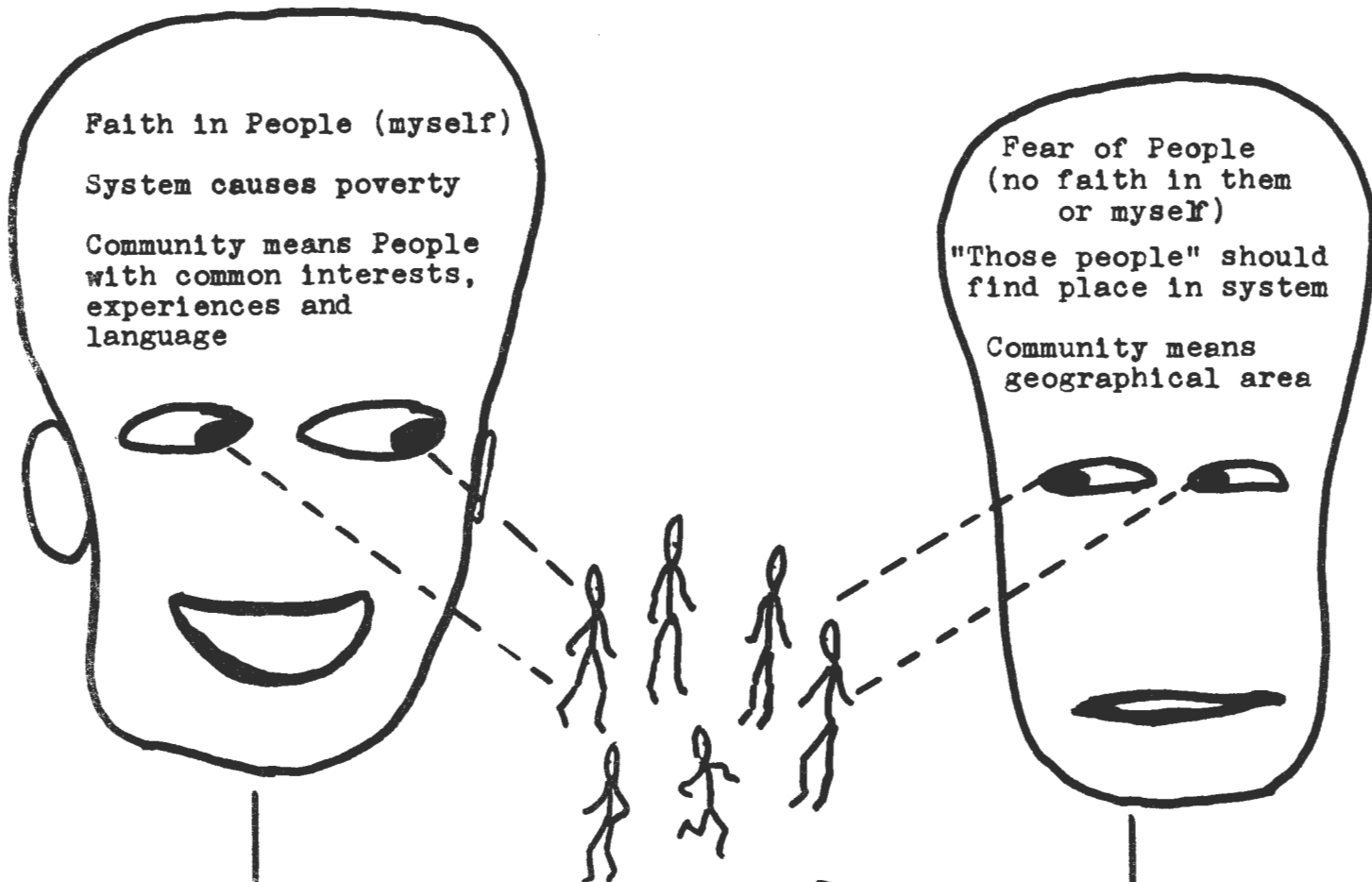
Hangups of People Who Organize

Even though the newer style of organizing allows the organizer to be more honest with himself, it still creates many problems for him.

This booklet is to help the new-style organizer prevent, understand and deal with some of these hangups. The nine hangups described in the booklet are:

INTRUDER..... MANIPULATOR.....
LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE..... BLUES..
ANTI-THEORY..... FORGET ABOUT ME..
JOHN JEHOVAH..... WE-THEY.....
..... JOLLY GREEN GIANT.....

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



LEAD TO TWO DIFFERENT

People are people

VALUES

People are "those people"

Personal commitment;
Best two-way communication; people-people

STYLES

Professional commitment;
Stilted, one-way communication
Agents-cases

Conflict organizing;
Organizing against power blocks; political organizing

METHODS

Consensus organizing;
Organizing within existing power blocks; non-political organizing

New leadership;
Independent political forces

AIMS

More services by same old political forces and leadership

INTRUDER and SHORT-TIMER HANGUP

One of the most common story plots is the intruder plot. A story with an intruder plot is usually about a town, family or some fairly stable grouping of people, coasting along in its own peculiar fashion. Then somebody intrudes. The story is about how this intrusion affects the town or family. SHANE, THE RAINMAKER, ELMER GANTRY (Burt Lancaster likes intruder roles), PICNIC and THE MUSIC MAN are all based on intruder plots.

Sailors call a man who is only going to be on board for a two-year-hitch a "short-timer." They say he has a short-timer's attitude toward the rest of the crew, the captain and the ship.

When we go into a community, most of us are not as sure of ourselves as Burt Lancaster when he plops into the middle of a town and announces, "Here I am to save the day!" First, we're not sure how long we're going to be there, and we feel that the rest of the community is saying that we have a "short-timer's" attitude toward them. And, second, we're not sure if and how we'll save the day.

Burt never seems to worry about the fact that he will only be there for a short time. And he always seems to know exactly what needs to be done.

When we worry about how long we'll be on board, it prevents us from making personal promises to people we're not sure we can keep. And it makes us feel guilty for being able to leave the poor community anytime we want to (particularly if we are from a comparatively rich background), and we know the people we are working with are "stuck" there forever. (Of course they may not feel stuck—it's we who feel stuck.)

When we worry about if and how we'll save the day, we are really worrying about our own skills as organizers. In the case of the young organizer, much of this is based on his youth. He is just not sure of what he wants to do with his own life. And even if he is, he is not sure how to do it because he is still learning.

Now anybody that has ever watched Burt Lancaster come boppin' into a town knows that he doesn't have intruder hangups. And he doesn't have short-timer hangups. Because he knows what he wants to do and he knows how to do it. Of course he is an intruder. Of course he is a short-timer.

All organizers are intruders, just as a grain of sand is an intruder in an oyster. The oyster must deal with this intrusion—and sometimes it does so by coating the grain until it becomes a pearl.

Of course organizers are intruders. Our objective is change, and if we do not intrude on the existing systems which are operating to keep a community from forming, then we are not doing our job.

So part of the solution to the intruder and short-timer hangup (besides deciding about our own values and goals) is to:

1. Accept our role of intruder.
2. Figure out what our job is.

This leads us to the next two hangups, "Let the People Decide" and "Anti-Theory."

LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE HANGUP

If just one-tenth of the time that has been spent by "organizers" telling each other to "let the people decide" had been spent out in the field talking with "the people," the poor of this country would probably be organized by now. "Let the people decide" became a motto of SDS shortly after it was formed and began to work in poorer areas. But it soon became popular as an excuse for not making decisions, not dealing with our own insecurities, not dealing with our lack of knowledge about how our country runs, and not dealing with our inexperience as organizers.

It was always much easier for us to say, "Well, we can't make any decisions here because there are no people here," (we're people, aren't we?) than it was to say, "I feel scared because I don't understand what I'm supposed to be doing."

Of course the people will decide. We don't need to let them. The people, including you and me, will decide, in the long run no matter who lets us. The problem is getting accurate information to make decisions from. The problem is understanding how power works in this country so that decisions can be carried out after they are made--by people.

Perhaps the real problem is developing the courage to make and carry out the hard decisions.

Sometimes "let the people decide" was given as a piece of wise advice from a "veteran organizer" to a new organizer who was teaching new ideas to the people he was working with. Sometimes organizers with good ideas which "the people" had every right to know about, but which they had been consciously prevented from knowing by the schools, churches, press and other brain-washing institutions in this country, have been scared into not talking about these ideas.

We, as human beings and brothers and sisters to the other people in this world, do not have the right to keep our ideas to ourselves. If we know a life-saving fact (such as where to find a poison antidote) we have a moral obligation to tell our brother or sister whose life is in danger (someone who has been poisoned) that fact.

Rather than claiming we are not "people" and therefore can't decide anything, we should analyze more closely the reasons why we young organizers have been afraid to talk and write about our ideas.

ANTI-THEORY HANGUP

Why have organizers in their 20's and 30's been so afraid of studying political, social, economic, organizing and revolutionary history and theory? Why are we afraid to talk and write about these ideas?

It is not because we don't believe in scientific theory. Our generation has learned the usefulness of studying a system, developing an explanation for how forces within that system interact (that is, a scientific theory) based on the evidence from our study, then continuously updating the theory as new evidence is discovered or developed in scientifically controlled settings.

We know that it is quackery for one person, whether he is a doctor, lawyer, or teacher, to mess with the life of another person, unless the "expert" has some theoretical training and understanding. And yet there are many of us who have begun organizing other people, deeply messing in their lives, without any kind of theory about how our own social system operates.

Why has our generation accepted the theory of non-theory?

the radical chromosome Radical comes from the Greek word meaning "root."

In every society there are radicals--people who believe in and work toward changing the roots of its social system so that it operates for the well-being of everyone, not just a privileged group. Radical ideas and methods are carried from generation to generation by what we'll call an "r-chromosome." It usually needs three favorable conditions to carry on the radical strain to the next generation.

- 1) A number of people setting examples by acting on their radical convictions
- 2) Availability of written radical ideas
- 3) Some respectable sanction of these activities and ideas.

Here we are interested in why this r-chromosome has had such a rough trip from our parents' generation to ours.

HEADLINES OUR PARENTS READ

(To serve as a quick reminder of the ups and downs of radical ideas and activities during our parents' days, 1917-1941.)

1917-19 NEWS

WORKERS-FARMERS REVOLT in RUSSIA

U.S. ENTERS W.W.I.	1918 Armistice Day	Set Up Socialism
Against Germany, Turkey, Bulgaria, Austria, Hungary	War Over	Led by Lenin, Trotsky, & Stalin
	UNIONS RAIDED	Tsar SHOT
	U.S. Justice Dept. Decries & Imprisons Radicals	

1929-32 TIMES

STOCK MARKET CRASHES

BOND MARCH ROUTED	FDR ELECTED	Thousands Unemployed
Unarmed W.W.I. Vets. Chased	Brings "New Deal" to U.S.	Breadlines
Ike, Mac lead armed troops		World-wide Depression
		Capitalism Shaken

1933-4 TIMES

HITLER TAKES OVER

U.S. Recognizes U.S.S.R.	LONG MARCH in CHINA	Begins Fascism
FDR also sets up TVA	6,000,000 millions flee China	Boycott of Jews
Ends Prohibition	Kai-Shek Prepare for peasant Revolt	Arrests Social Democrats & Communists.

1935-36 NEWS

U.S.S.R. to side with U.S. In Fight against Fascism	HITLER SLAPS JEWS	SPANISH CIVIL WAR
	Denies Citizenship	Many Americans Join Rebels
	He signs Anti-Communist Treaty with JAPAN	Against Franco
SOCIAL SECURITY SIGNED		UPrisings ALL over Spain
FDR Plans		

1938-39 NEWS

MUNICH SELL-OUT

Hitler Seizes Czechoslovakia	GERMANS Occupy AUSTRIA	ENGLAND FRANCE Divide Czecho-Slovakia
Poland Divided		with Hitler + Mussolini
Britain-France Declare War 1 Year after Munich		Chamberlain says "Peace in our Time" 1938

1940-41 TIMES

PEARL HARBOR

CHURCHILL ILL PM	HITLER Attacks U.S.S.R.	U.S. Declares War on Japan
Chamberlain Out	Also take Underside of Paris	U.S. (Germany + Italy)
Winnie says: V for Victory	AND ATHEN	

LIFE UNDER A MUSHROOM CLOUD

HEADLINES YOUNG ORGANIZERS READ DURING OUR FORMATIVE YEARS

1941-44 NEWS

TRUMAN SAYS LET REDS AND NAZIS KILL EACH OTHER OFF

ATOM BOMB RESEARCH BEGUN

Gen. Groves in Charge
Says in 1954 "Russia was the enemy and the project was conducted on that basis."

Russians Defeat Germans
Stalingrad

Turning Point - 2/43

FDR Forced to take HST as V.P. - '44
Preferred Wallace

Getting old

Senate Speech
7/23/41

"Let them kill as many as possible" Strategy of U.S. Established indiscreetly revealed

(Note the military reactions of our government to the "peace" after WW II)

1944-45 TIMES

FDR. DIES; TRUMAN TAKES OVER

VE-Day

Mussolini killed
Hitler Dead

Truman, Churchill, + Stalin PLAN Postwar Germany

"Iron Curtain" COINED

Hitler's chief Propagandist J. Goebbels
2/25/45 EDITORIAL

U.N. Set-up

"To Practice tolerance and live together in peace"

Vows to CARRY ON FDR's Policies; END WAR QUICKLY

OK's A-Bombs on JAPAN

THOUSANDS of women, children killed + maimed

1946-8 TIMES

TRUMAN DOCTRINE OUTLINED

Churchill says "Iron curtain" In 3/46 Speech in U.S.A.

FIRST COLD WAR BILLS PASSED
\$500,000,000 to Greece + Turkey

Cold War Policies MADE OFFICIAL

INDIA gains Independence
British Empire breaking up.

Taft-Hartley Law to cripple unions, expel radicals

GHANDI Killed
5 months after victory

Military Aid to Greece, Turkey, China, N. Korea

BRITAIN NATIONALIZES Coal Mines

Peace-time Draft to maintain 2 million Armed Forces

...the policy of containment is therefore a coalition of... disorderly nations... around the perimeter of the USSR

1949-50 HEADLINE JOURNAL

NATO SET UP WITH 12 NATIONS

Socialist Revolution IN CHINA
9/49 led by Mao

McCarthy says "Communies every where." 3/50

Array of Countries around U.S.S.R. - 7/49

Korean War Starts 6/50

Original Mundt-Nixon Bill passes
- Provides for Registration + Internment of reds

Begin \$10 billion Military Aid

H-Bomb Ordered

FORRESTAL LOSES MIND. - 4/49 - Sec. of Defense Obsessed

1953-58 VOICE of the TIMES

McCarthy Holds Army Hearings

SEATO FACT signed. 9/54

COURT ORDERS School DE-SEGREGATION

Communist Party Outlawed 8/54

MacArthur fired Because he wanted to Bomb North

5/54 Decision

Concentration Camps Prepared for "subversives" UNDER M-M Bill (McCarran Act)

USSR Orbits SPUTNIK 10/57

5/55 Decision Leaves Desegregation to Regional Federal Courts

FBI Ready to Act

JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY FOUNDED

Note: The Cold War and Its Origins, by Professor D. F. Fleming of Vanderbilt Univ. is a good source

our Cold-War Pabulum

These military reactions on the part of our government to the post-war situation became part of our daily childhood diet. During our early school days and puberty we read and heard our parents talking about the "Iron Curtain," "the Cold War," "Brinksmanship," and then the violent McCarthy poison of the early '50's.

Although our country's Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights have inspired radicals all over the world; although radicals led the fight for the abolition of slavery, for the improvement of mass education, the defeat of fascism, and the guarding of civil liberties; during the 1950's when most of us were reading our first newspapers and books we did not hear about any radical activities in this country.

Instead, we read about a United States Senator named Joseph McCarthy going on a "commie-hunting" campaign across the country. We did not know that a "communist" was a radical who believed that the economic system of our country forces vast numbers of people here and all over the world to live in terrible poverty, and that the way to fight poverty was to change the economic system. We never were told what communism was all about. All we heard was that it was bad.

And we saw on TV official blessings given to book-burning, book-banning, and the imprisonment of radical teachers and writers. Even certain folk songs and singers became suspect. Hollywood was under attack. Terrorism increased. Old friends became suspicious of each other--then turned against each other. We saw, but we didn't understand, the three conditions for the successful passing on of the "r-chromosome" get picked off--uh-one, uh-two, uh-three.

During our adolescence we could not know that this madness may be caused by the people who make money from our large corporations, who did not like the ideas that were being spread around the world by "radicals." All we knew was that it was better to keep our mouths shut, don't use certain words, and don't read certain books.

And so there was a generation of radicals that did not happen. And we, the children of this silent decade, thought we had to provide our own radical history, since we had none to go on. We started this in the student civil rights movements of the early sixties, and the anti-war and campus movements that are picking up steam now.

But we are not the first radicals in history. And we do not need to learn everything by experience. We can also learn some things from books--books about the great labor struggles in America, Marx and Engels' economic analyses and theories, Lenin's theories of imperialism and organization, and Jefferson-Jacksonian theories of democracy and histories of revolutions around the world will all help us to develop our own theories to explain what we experience daily in the field.

Of course we have hangups about reading certain theories and histories--because we have been raised during a decade in which, in spite of the First Amendment, dissent in this country was socially and legally outlawed.

But freedom is a constant struggle. And just because the words that most of the world uses to talk about radical activities and ideas have been declared off-limits, it does not mean that we should regress to some primitive sign language, or some beautiful, smiling, loving, flower-tossing stage.

JOHN JEHOVAH HANGUP

God is all-knowing, all powerful, ever-present. So are some organizers. At least they see themselves this way.

It is easy to fall into this trap. If one goes into an area where people have been isolated from new ideas, methods and people, an organizer can meet all these needs. He starts driving people around, playing with their children, answering their questions, and solving their problems. Pretty soon, people want to name their children after him. Husbands/wives become jealous of him/her.

In short, during the organizer's honeymoon period, he becomes God.

This adoration sometimes goes to an organizer's head--and he becomes John Jehovah. He bops all over the place, doing things for people. Then, on the seventh day, he rests. He looks around and discovers he has organized his own little community--in His own little image.

Remember the definition of community--a group of people with common experiences, common interests and a common language. Well, when an organizer creates a community in

his own image, it usually is not based on the two basic foundations of common interests and common experiences. Everyone may be talking John's language, but John Jehovah has not had all the experiences and interests of the rest.

We sometimes become John Jehovahs because we rarely get the opportunity in other settings. And we all like to be loved and depended upon.

But we can't teach anybody anything by doing it all ourselves. And we can't help develop a common language for a community until we discover what its common interests and experiences are.

FORGET ABOUT ME HANGUP

Many inexperienced organizers throw themselves into their work so completely that they physically and emotionally burn themselves out in one or two years. This is caused by

- 1) Not understanding our own importance to the movement.
- 2) Never having done anything so important before in our lives.
- 3) Getting too wrapped up in other peoples' problems.
- 4) And sometimes, because we don't like ourselves. We want to destroy ourselves or become "workhorse martyrs."

"Forget about me, I'll work all night on this pamphlet.... I'll go here....I'll do that."

Signs of the "forget about me" hangup are easy to spot. Organizers usually begin to dress sloppily and come later and later to meetings, as they lose their self discipline.

We have become so used to submerging ourselves, to constantly working for the interests of others, that we have forgotten that we have bodies, minds, and souls which need to be taken care of.

We are important. We must take care of ourselves. We must rest, recreate, read, and ruminate. It is important to our sense of balance. And we do nobody any good by burning ourselves out.

MANIPULATOR HANGUP

Manipulation is one of those words that has developed a very evil connotation, like propaganda and social planning. It used to mean the "artful management of people" but more recently manipulation means the "tricky, deceitful management of others."

Many good organizers of the new school, who have seen the results of our social system's manipulation of poor people, have sworn a vow against manipulation (instead of the social system). Their fear of deceiving someone has sometimes been carried to ridiculous extremes--to the point where they are afraid of influencing people.

These organizers believe that anytime they do anything they must tell all the possible alternatives and give a completely balanced and objective view. If such an organizer is talking to someone who has not read much, he must be even more careful. In fact, maybe he shouldn't tell them any ideas, because he doesn't know about the opposite viewpoint and it should get a fair hearing. Maybe he shouldn't even be in the same room with somebody else because his presence may influence him.

Some organizers get so hung-up about manipulation they never say a word. They gradually retreat into a corner which becomes darker and darker. Their silence, of course, is very manipulative.

If we were to analyze our social actions we would find we are continually planning, propagandizing and artfully managing people. All we can do is to try to understand our own blind spots and be honest about our own goals and values.

The people will take care of themselves.

WE-THEY HANGUP

"We're in the same boat, brother
And if you shake one end
You're going to rock the other
It's the same boat, brother."

The folks, the local people, the beautiful people are they. We are staff, field men, goof-offs, young people, field secretaries, neighborhood workers, outsiders, professional community development specialists, whites, Northerners, agitators, foreigners, intruders and, most important non-people.

We adore they. They are so lovely and strong, living in their poverty. Let's sit and listen all night to their problems. Don't show them how to get organized to solve their problems. Rather, let us admire them.

Get off it! They're people. We're people. We're all people. Communities are made up of people, remember? After we find out what our common interests are--after we have some common experiences, and after we have been able to construct a common language which will make sense out of these experiences and interests, then we'll have a community.

But this can't happen as long as we keep perceiving, thinking talking and acting as if they were our children, parents, cops, therapists, criminals, or patients--or as if we were their parents, children, cops, therapists, or criminals.

JOLLY GREEN GIANT HANGUP

This is also sometimes called the Sargent Shriver Hangup. It is characterized by a constant, nagging thought about "the money might get cut off." It is particularly prevalent in the U.S. Government's War Against Poverty, but it is also found in areas in which organizers get their money from some of the larger foundations--such as Ford, CIA, Field, Southern Regional Council, etc.

It seems particularly stupid to labor under this hangup, since the idea of organizing is to free people from having to worry about this hangup--such as getting cut off welfare if they speak out.

This hangup often gets mixed up with the anti-theory hangup we discussed earlier. This has led some of us to believe that the U.S. Government is not completely serious in its War Against Poverty.

BLUES HANGUP

Everyone gets the blues. But the organizer's blues are the worst blues of all.

Organizing has more disappointment, more discouragement, more knock-out blows to one's ego than any other job you can think of. Organizing against the system that brain-washes and hog-ties people in our country is particularly frustrating.

Usually we are strong enough to ride through these blues. If we have people we can talk freely with, and if we have some social theory to help us understand the long view of where we were, where we are, and where we're going, we can usually get over the blues in a day or two.

But sometimes the organizer's blues hang on. Then we look for answers inside a bottle or pot; or we go on more and more frequent vacations "to get ourselves together." Except we always feel twice as bad when we get back to work.

When blues hang on, it is usually because we have been dishonest with someone close to us. Sometimes they have done something that made us mad--but we never said anything about it.

Sometimes the blues hang on because we are plumb scared to death. But we don't tell anyone about that.

COURAGE TO BE FREE

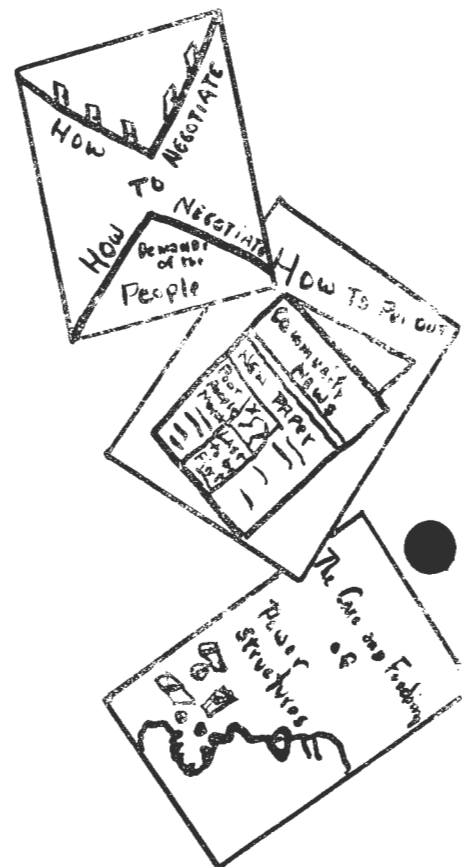
In fact, all the hangups are caused because we are scared. And the only known antidote for fear is the courage to work in spite of the fear.

movement organizers

if you work with...

students,
workers or
civil rights

middle class,
peace or
poor whites



you need to read...

The Organizers Library Series

of the

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL FUND

3210 W. Broadway

Louisville, Kentucky 40211

THE ORGANIZER'S LIBRARY SERIES

<u>Title of Pamphlet</u>	<u>Price*</u>
1. <u>Getting and Keeping People Together</u> by Alan McSurely Bringing People to Your First Meeting, How to Run a Meeting, Duties and Responsibilities of Officers and the Organizer, Agenda, Minutes	25¢
2. <u>HANGUPS--Common Problems of People who Organize Other People into Communities</u> By Alan McSurely Including "Let the People Decide," Anti- Theory, John Jehovah, Jolly Green Giant Hangups	50¢
3. <u>The Care and Feeding of Power Structures</u> .. by Jack Minnis Revised	50¢
4. <u>How to Put Out Community Newspapers</u> by Alan McSurely What Makes a Good Community Newspaper, Some Precautions and Examples	25¢
5. <u>Common Group Problems</u> by Alan McSurely Leadership, Needs of Group Members, Competition within Group, Hidden Interests, Dealing with Despair, Group Techniques	50¢
6. <u>Lowndes County Freedom Organization</u> by Jack Minnis The Story of an Independent Political Movement on the County Level	50¢
7. <u>How to Negotiate</u> by Alan McSurely Including How to Prepare for Negotiations, Role Playing, Making Threats Believable, and Where to Meet Your Opponent	25¢

And MORE.....

*Special Rates for Movement Groups are 10 for \$2.00 25¢ Pamphlets
10 for \$4.00 50¢ Pamphlets

Order Today FROM

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC. 3210 West Broadway Louisville, Kentucky 40211
--

Please specify number of pamphlet and quantity