

FINDING AND MAKING LEADERS

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Leaders are found by organizing, and leaders are developed through organization.

The statement is so self-evident and so simple-minded that it is usually uttered only to be assented to and forgotten.

Instead of acting on the assumptions implicit in the observation, we begin the great hunt for the "natural leader", "the indigenous leader"; he is the great organizational nugget, whom we could find by panning for him if we only knew what the hell he looked like, and how he differed from the silt washed into our tin.

It's worth noting that practically everybody is looking for him. The civil rights movement, big business, big social work, church organizations, everybody finds it handy to blame their problems on expressions like the "dearth of leadership", the "problem we're having finding leaders", etc.

He does not exist. If he were there--that wonderous all-purpose leader that every organizer dreams about in his moments of exasperation with and anger at his would-be constituency, you would not be necessary. The all-purpose indigenous leader with the sharp tactical mind of Lenin, the forensic abilities of Demosthenes or F.D.R., and the general loveableness of your mother would have long since asserted himself.

The quest for the natural leader---the quest as it is actually carried on is like the quest for the natural man. There is no natural man; there is no natural leader. The ideas are important because they remind us in any group of men some can come to live by certain ethics and some can become leaders---given the occasion.

I am hammering at this point because I have seen so many ardent young people run into communities, zoom around frantically for eight or ten months, and then say they can't find any indigenous leadership. Now when it is put to them in so many words that this is what they are doing, they deny it. Nevertheless it is obvious that they are acting on notions of leadership that are wholly unrealistic.

Let's try and see why. Bear in mind, I am now speaking of the lower class Negro ghetto. In the main the same observations would hold for any community but in white areas there are certain differences in application.

The first objective in the ghetto is building an organization that wields power. That is in marked contrast to the flash-flood demonstration kind of thing that northern big-shots quickly get blase about. An organization that wields power as opposed to the kind that throws an intermittent stick-bomb, must be big, must be broad, must be quasi-institutionalized.

The kinds of leadership it must have to operate successfully are the kinds that cannot exist in the community because no one or almost no one in the community has had the chance to gain any experience with big organizations. Most of the community's people will not even have been in the army. The few that have will have served in such a low echelon that they will not have had the opportunity to acquire a sense or a feel for the big organization, how it is put together, how it stays together, and what you have to do to run it.

A few people in the community may work for a large corporation or the government but here again they are cut off from gaining experience with the big organization. For another few the church may begin to supply the experience, but most people aren't church members or are very passively so, and most churches aren't very big, and most big churches are not very organizationally run.

The long and short of it is we are speaking of people whose organizations are mostly small, and, consequently, whose leaders are schooled in techniques which work for small groups, but seldom for large ones. If they had the large enduring organizations they would have the leaders to run them, and you would be superfluous.

However, it is also true that every community has a few naturals, that is a few people who by accident of life experience, an exceptional intelligence and some other qualities can begin to move to the forefront almost as soon as the first organizational beginnings are under way. But who are they? How do you find them, and how do you make sure that they actually do begin to assume the major roles they are capable of? It would be so much easier if we could spot these people in advance---unfortunately that is impossible. At the beginning of organization you are the leader-natural or otherwise---because at least theoretically you know more about what you are doing--building an organization---than anyone else around. If any of these three conditions doesn't hold, by-the-by, get out and give the job over to somebody else.

Recognize the fact that the organizer who comes into the community for the first time is internally in a precarious position. He is afraid---or at least he should be if he has got any brains which he doesn't want beaten out.

He is afraid because he doesn't know the people, and we are all vaguely afraid of people we don't know. If he is white and he is going to work in a Negro community he is doubly afraid. If he is a middle class Negro, he is afraid too, for similar but not quite identical reasons.

He is afraid because he is the bearer of a new idea. Mankind does not cotton to new ideas in general, but especially not to the new ideas that organizers bring. This is so because they may mean trouble and because the organizer's mere presence in the community is a tacit insult. The organizer, merely by his presence, is saying effect to the people, "You are so dumb that you need me to think your way out of this mess you are in." Don't kid yourself about this. I shouldn't have to remind you here-who have actually organized-of this reaction. (Nor I might add does blaming the white man or the status quo or anything else absolve the organizer of the sin.)

The organizer is also afraid because a failure is a crashing blow to his ego or his self-respect. Even a bad organizer puts a tremendous part of himself on the line when he goes into a community. In his own eyes, he is being tried as a person, as a huge test of his own worth. To fail is to be adjudged a capon, a sexless, impotent thing by one's self, or so I always found it.

These fears work on most organizers to make them very susceptible to thinking that people they meet in the community who are sympathetic are the people to listen to and work with. I can't count the number of times I have wandered into communities to find the people who were supposed to be building a mass organization mucking around with pious, middle class clergyman or teenagers.

Or, of course, there is the organizer who sees the weakness in himself, and overcompensates by finding a bunch of social outcasts, usually winos, addicts or semi-criminal types, the kind that talk a good fight but lack the self-discipline to make hard-core organizational material. This kind of organizer may also be playing to a gallery of middle class friends (often white) who will be mightily impressed by his acquaintance in the demi-monde. It's nice to have one's outside friends think you are "in", but the question is, in what?

For the organizer who gets beyond acting as a reaction to himself-- in my experience, few do--plucking out "natural leaders" by dint of casual observation and conversation is very chancy. I recall having picked a number of these on-first sight gems and I also recall spending months kicking myself for having done so.

The guy who is indeed the natural small group leader may turn out to be the guy who gets hopelessly and permanently confused by committees or simply by having to keep in mind that now instead of dealing with ten old faithfuls in the block club he's got to worry about what 400 people think. The guy you met at the barber shop, who seemed so articulate and understanding, may turn out at second meeting to be a dogmatist of the first order or a flannel-mouthed idiot. The guy with the big line about how "its about time the black man showed those "m-f's" can turn out to be one great big chicken, or what can be worse yet, a lazy bum who only comes to meetings to make long theatrical monologues.

Those of you who may recognize your own experiences in some of these words will say, "Don't tell us what won't work, tell us what will."

To you I repeat, leaders are found by organizing and leaders are developed through organizations. So let's discuss organizing and organizations.

But before we get to that, I want to set down two of the observations I have made where leadership has developed. They are: the leaders in the third month of an organization's life are seldom the leaders in the third year; a few leaders, ourselves included, are really all-purpose; and the best organizations create a "collective leadership".

Why should so few of the leaders in an organization's infancy be around as it grows to maturity?

The first leadership is usually the closest leadership at hand. It is selected usually in the enthusiasm of the first campaign, because it is available. You don't have a choice and you have to go with what you've got.

It may be a rent strike, a school demonstration or what have you. Reverend So-and-So says he'll be the spokesman, and you want him because he's a clergyman and you figure he'll cut more ice because he's respectable. Maybe it's Mrs. Jones, because she's the only one of the tenants who shows signs of being able to speak out in front of a judge. Or, perhaps, it's So-and-So else because he has a reputation (with you anyhow) as a regular freedom fighter.

Note that all these people were picked on the basis of what they could do in a one-shot affair. And the beginning of every viable organization smacks of being a one-shot affair, for the simple reason that theorists who fiddle around waiting and delaying until they've got a full blown across-the-board organizational program set are never ready to commence swinging into action.

But you will notice, too, that the reasons for your picking the first leaders (and you know it's you who pick them) say nothing about how they will wear over a period of time. That respectable clergyman can turn out to be a timid jerk; the lady who was so good at sounding off in front of the judge may be good for nothing else, and that big freedom fighter can look like a vain egomaniac living off the reputation of the deed done many years ago.

The lesson I draw from this is that at the beginning keep the organization very loose, spread the responsibilities and the conspicuous places around. This permits you and the new membership which you are supposed to be recruiting to judge the talent, and it keeps things sufficiently porous so that new talent isn't blocked off. Nothing is more absurd than an organization that's six months old, without a dime in the treasury and a membership that can fit in a Volkswagen, having a cemented-in, piggy leadership. Vested interests are only tolerable when they are protecting something of value, not fancy organizational charts, letterheads and research programs.

Don't laugh. This kind of thing is a clear and present danger. Vain men frequently prefer to be members of obscure executive committees where they can spend years expounding doctrine. It is safer and easier than the realities of making and using power.

Men with the most to lose or men with the most to give in talent, money and experience are often not the first to join an organization. They will never join if they see there is no room for them in the top leadership.

Why should some of the most talented people hang back? One reason, of course, is that they want to check you and the incipient organization out. If they are worth having, they won't be the kind who must bet on a guaranteed winner, but also, by the same token, they don't want any part of a born loser.

A big northern city is not like the south. In one sense the people are all in the same boat thanks to skin pigmentation, but not quite. People can and do make a variety of deals with life. In the north there are a lot of Negroes who may have cause to think that they have more to lose than to gain by signing on with you. They will be those who fear loss of jobs, prestige, business or such - and many will fall into that category. But there will also be those who think they can make a better deal by joining with somebody or something else, and those who just may not think what you're driving at is worth it OR that you can deliver the goods.

The varieties of reactions have to be tackled in a variety of ways, but all the people who fall into these groupings - your potential second generation of leaders - must not be driven away gratuitously. They must not be allowed to dismiss the organization out of hand at the very beginning.

Yet in fact many organizations are killed off by their organizers even before they get close to a second leadership generation. It is pure charity of course, to speak of such preliminary groupings as organizations at all. Most of these endeavors never grow to look like much more than an aborted six-month foetus. They have been murdered by their own parents, the organizers who were supposed to give them life.

In the case of young organizers, their youth is enough to do it. People may admire youth, they may praise, they may believe that youth is showing the way in which age should follow, but they are very, very reluctant to trust youth with anything of immediate value. Youth is not an insuperable handicap, I rush to add. I have known top-notch organizers in their twenties.

The good ones know, however, that they must pick up more in the way of membership than the people with the least to lose, the people who are willing to put themselves under guidance to unreliable appearing strangers. Beware of the groups lead by a couple of college students, composed of a membership of teenagers, ministers without serious institutional responsibilities and a few desperate mothers, driven to trying anything to get their kids into a decent school. Anyone who has been around knows the type of enterprise I am talking about. Yet such is the look of the organizational endeavor which has failed to bud a second generation of leadership; it is also the characteristic profile of the collegiate organizer's botched job. It is as recognizable as the insulated, dessicated organizational product put out by the professional social worker.

At the risk of sounding like mother, may I say that impressions do count. I'll mention clothes. It is one thing to wear overalls in Mississippi where many of the people actually do wear them - it is another to wear them as an occasional stunt in a big northern city, but to indulge

in peculiarities of dress and speech simply makes you look like faddists. I apologize for saying this to those of you who know better, but those will also know it has to be said. Faddism makes you look like a horse's ass. White middle class girls from Des Moines, to be extreme about it, did not grow up referring to males as "cats" and when they do it on the south side of Chicago they sound either patronizing or idiotic - take your pick.

Nothing is so reassuring as a person who acts like himself. If you don't know who you are, stay out of organizing until you do and are willing to accept yourself as yourself. When you do, you will find that other people will.

Next, may I urge you to drop as much of your excess ideological baggage as you can outside the place where you are organizing. You are building a power group, a mass organization to serve a particular constituency, one that has certain paramount demands to be met. The demands are remote from "peace" or from any number of other, perhaps laudable, but irrelevant interests.

In other words, don't act like cultists. If you are a vegetarian, keep it to yourself, hide it, because there are a certain number of butchers in the community and you want them in the organization too.

This work demands self-discipline in every way. It means you either get your rest or hide the fact that you haven't because people who arrive at sixes and sevens and announce they haven't slept for 26 consecutive hours give the impression of being unstable. It also means that you recognize that you have no private life, or put differently, you do not offend against the public morals of the community. Why? Not because the morals are necessarily correct, but because organizers who do not seem to be observing them alienate potential members for no good reason.

Some people may read what I have just said and think, "Ah Ha! White man's conventional middle class values - ethnocentrism, etc., etc." To which I reply, these are the public values held by substantial portions of the people you hope to organize.

Whether they practice them is as beside the point as whether middle class whites do. The cultist will say that there can be no surrender and that freedom of the individual is involved. Perhaps it is, but he who wastes time debating such abstractions, or, worse, insists on making it clear by his behavior that he believes otherwise is enjoying a luxury that is organizationally ruinous.

As organizers, apostolic vegetarians can only organize and inspire confidence among other vegetarians.

The best organizers have single track minds. They care only for building the organization. When they alienate a potential member, they do so out of organizational need, not out of the egotism of irrelevant personal values. The best organizers stifle their tastes, their opinions, their private obsessions.

Now at least we have taken a few preliminary precautions to prevent killing off the leadership before it even arrives and we can turn back to the question of finding and developing it.

From what I have seen, most of the organizational life in the ghetto is the small group, usually no bigger than the number of people that make up an extended circle of acquaintance. This usually figures out to twenty-five or less and rarely more than fifty. Numbers that get larger than that have to be held together by different, written, systems of book-keeping and communication.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this: 1) Building a mass organization in the ghetto is the tedious job of stringing beads on a necklace, and 2) self-evidently, most of the available indigenous leadership will only be practiced in the arts of the small organization.

I have in mind the block club, the local janitors' association, the multitudinous sororities, the choirs, the teenage groupings, the local political and business associations, the perennial members of the local pool tournament. I am sure you can name many more. Everyone of these groupings has some kind of leadership. So the quest for leadership is abruptly over. There is, for practical purposes, no other leadership to be found, because there exist no vehicles for leadership to drive.

What this boils down to, then, is your discontent with what the leadership can do - namely, lead the groupings you find in the community. Your dissatisfaction with the leadership has real enough basis in fact. It is a narrow leadership mostly interested in what concerns the small group; it has little save only the most conventional understanding of the great issues which brought you into the community in the first place.

Great issues absorb the interest either of small highly specialized groups, as for instance many a chapter of SANE or CORE or the NAACP, or of a great organization. The small group can make mischief and propagandize in a diffuse way, but power, power is the property of the big organization. All this you know, for it again is what brings you to the community.

At every turn the leadership is unsuited for your purposes. And so it will remain, changing only as the big organization emerges. The same holds true for the leadership you "find", that is, people who enter the organization without a following, but create one in and by means of the organization. The character of leadership, to put it in other words, is determined by the character of the organization that trains it and which it leads. The making of an organization and the making of leadership are inseparable.

The proposition is not presented to you as a new great truth. It is no more than another application of the ancient observation that a man finds both his limits and his growth in his own personal experience. I have the temerity to advance this old bromide yet one more time, because it is often ignored. The fact that you are still thinking of leadership as

an isolated category, one meriting its own workshop, shows how far people are from treating the leadership question as integral to the making of an organization.

This said, we can now spend some time talking about organizing as it fits into leadership.

The organizer's first job is to organize, not right wrongs, not avenge injustice, not to win the battle for freedom. That is the task of people who will accomplish it through the organization if it ever gets built. When things are looked at through the glass of organizational calculation, they assume new shapes.

A couple of examples may help to explain my meaning:

1. When the cops pick up a whore, shake her down and beat up her pimp, they have done wrong. Both the whore and pimp have rights, which have been grossly violated, but a thinking organizer may wonder how good an idea it is to commit his new group to their defense. What will the public at large say? More important, what will the different segments of the community say?

The caballeros on the street hustling will love you, but what about the solid family types? Should the solid family types be taught the relativity of all human values, and will they consent to learn? Six months from now, will the caballeros think enough of the organization to support it by coming to one meeting, by contributing one dollar?

2. Rent strikes. They are very popular now, but as with leadership they are seen as something that is good to do merely if you can do them. However, as anybody who has ever run one can tell you, they gobble up an organizer's time - which should be a valued asset - and may produce very few organizational dividends.

How might an organizer look at a rent strike proposition? (I am spinning this example out to illustrate the mentality which we might call organizational calculation.)

Of course he looks at the building. He does this for two reasons - the first is defensive; he wants to make sure the tenants aren't lying to him. Who doesn't think his landlord is a louse? Nothing is worse than getting into a fight in which the enemy can publicly prove your facts are wrong - note I said publicly prove.

The second reason he looks is to see how the building will photograph and will strike the eye of the often not very sympathetic press. I recall once having an argument with a photographer from the Saturday Evening Post as to whether a dead rodent in a slum building was a rat or a mouse. In short, the rats should look like rats.

If it still appears that a strike is feasible, he must ask what it will do for the organization. I will list a few possible things it might do, again by way of illustrating the organizational mentality.

If the political climate is right and you know local government is with you it may provide a quickie victory - something every organization needs on occasion.

2. It can be a device to show people via face to face confrontation that a big, important white man like a slum landlord can be humiliated and beaten.

3. It may be a way to force a municipal government to begin rigorous enforcement of minimal housing standards.

4. It may be useful in building up general organizational cohesion. I recall one rent strike during which the landlord retaliated by such tactics as failing to buy coal for the building. The organization responded in its turn by taking a portion of the sequestered rents to buy coal. The coal truck was decorated with appropriate signs; the gentleman from the teamsters union who customarily drove the truck was replaced by several local leaders in the cab, while other people from the organization surrounded it as it paraded around the neighborhood before finally coming to its destination. Humor, color, the relish of a small triumph and greater organizational solidity came out of the little episode.

5. The strike may also be a useful method for organizing the people in the immediate locals around the building in question. Unless you have all of officialdom on your side, a rent strike is liable to be a protracted contest of nasty little surprises which each side springs on the other. The landlord's surprises are usually legal ones, bailiffs, court orders, etc. If the whole area is mobilized and organized into a big warning system, the landlord can't pull off much.

But if the fight is really you and a few tenants versus the landlord in the midst of an indifferent populace, you are likely to invest hundreds of hours of time keeping the tenants morale up, with little to show for it but some publicity.

There are other reasons, good organizational reasons, for having rent strikes, but the point to bear in mind is having some reason other than the pure injustice of it all. It is, of course, very hard for an organizer to know when he has a valid reason for doing something, and when he is conning himself.

By nature most organizers are optimists - they have to be or they wouldn't be doing what they do. Optimists tend to be credulous. They get so fascinated by the putative advantages of a proposed line of action they never seriously examine either its drawbacks, or - and this is just as important - how they might be better spending their time.

I found in my own experience that my ego was incessantly trying to sabotage my judgment. For instance, I would argue in favor of striking a slum on the basis of organizational advantage without ever realizing that actually I was in a rage over the conditions the people in the building were living in. A good organizer cannot afford to vent his anger, anymore than he can use his position to push miscellaneous irrelevant pet social beliefs.

The ego works in other ways to deform the organizer's powers of judgment. Promising young organizers are prone to come up with clever ideas - and in their pride of invention, or in the egotism of mischief-making, to attempt to carry them out in circumstances that are neither propitious nor even apropos.

The calculating organizer is forever suspicious of himself, forever mistrusting his analysis of the situation, and his plan of action. He is always asking himself questions like, "What am I doing? Why am I doing it? What if I succeed in doing what I am trying to do, will we really have gained anything worth gaining?" However, the organizer with a calculating mentality shall assuredly fail if he is trying to do the undoable.

What is an attainable organization in the working class ghetto? It is an organization of perhaps two percent of the people. Those who talk about organizing "all the people" or "the masses" or "the great majority of the people" are talking unrealizable balderdash.

In the first place it cannot be done. The only way all the people or most of the people can be organized is by drafting them into the army. On the rare occasions when large percentages of a population are directly "participating" in the affairs of the community, they are probably having a riot. But this form of mass participation - I use the word that is fashionable - hardly gains much. Moreover, if you stop and reflect a second, you will see that any non-governmental organization comprising huge portions of the population would be so completely unwieldy that it could never achieve anything.

The purpose of organizations is, I remind you, at least in this discussion, power. As a practical matter the organizing of two percent of the population is more than sufficient for the purpose of power. This you know from the history of modern revolutions - or if you look around, from the composition of the most effective present-day political machines. Indeed, even two percent of a population actively in an organization is an immensely formidable number. With two percent of a district's population closely organized, the organization should have an unbreakable control over things.

When the problem is viewed this way, it becomes more manageable intellectually and actually. To begin with, it now becomes possible to see where are the plausible places to start organizing and to sort out what elements in the community demand organizational attention and which are purely optional, to be courted provided the occasion arises and you have the time.

An organization needs three things: 1) a network of people spread out and in position to reach and mobilize the inert majority; 2) continuity, and 3) money.

The majority of small groups in the ghetto districts I am familiar with turn out to be potentially strongest in one of these three qualities. Thus a block club adds a good deal to the mobilization network, has some money potential, but is usually quite low in supplying

continuity. The same can be said of the sorority or the poolroom gang, while a business group scores higher on the money and may bolster an organization's continuity.

Obviously what is needed is the right mix of groupings to make up the sinews of organization. Sometimes this is accomplished by finding what the textbooks call the most common denominator. But the catch is, the most common denominator evokes the least general interest. Everybody is against juvenile delinquency, but who cares enough about it to do anything? An issue which lines a whole community up on one side is most often so innocuous as to be organizationally useless.

There is an exception to this, and that is the outrage, the atrocity, the bad slum fire, rat-bites-child, bombing the Sunday school. However, such crises are of limited organizational value. The shock and anger they cause are soon dissipated. Furthermore, they are of much greater value to an existing organization than they are to building an organization.

Where an organization exists, the emotion the momentary crisis causes to be released can be harnessed to well-thought out political maneuvers and demonstrations; it can also be exploited for money raising and recruiting in sections of the district where you are organizationally weak. But where there is no organization, there is no way to capitalize on the opportunity. There may be a few indignation meetings, or even a riot, and then all collapses back into its previous shape.

The foregoing should suggest that the right balance of network, continuity and money is engendered by an organizational program containing a balance or mix of goals or would-be pay-offs (which organizationally is all that a goal is) for the various groupings you need to recruit. For homeowners the program may be defense against venal building inspectors, for the unemployed it may be pressure on some well-known local firm that discriminates, for the church group or local civil rights sentiment it may be some sort of an assault on the local educational system. Hence, it has been said that organizing of this nature is, at least in part, building up a community-wide set of interlocking log-rolling agreements: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, but if we don't combine, nobody's back'll get scratched."

Purists may find such a procedure intolerable. For example you don't put pressure on the white small store owner past a certain point - even if he can hire an extra Negro clerk. The reason is you need his money which you will get if he fears you, but not if he hates you. You will also get his money, I hasten to add, if the organization's program includes objectives that are worth something to him. Purists will find many, many of the things the individuals and groups which you are courting want, to be picayune. Yet these "picayune" wants are the stuff of which organizations are built. They are the things that must of necessity most occupy people and which move people to action as great abstractions seldom do. Moreover, it is by meeting through organizational

conquest the picayune demands that the great issues are made immediate and divested of their abstract distance. The mother learns about segregated education by fighting for school books for her child, the homeowner struggling with urban renewal learns about the society's huge engine of residential segregation by battling to save his property - the people learn these lessons and the most important lesson about how the world that bears down on them actually functions. However, the organizer is there to draw the lesson, to make the experience valuable, to lead on into the next and larger round in this match which will only be won by those adaptable enough to use victorious methods.

The organizer who merely sees the people's day-to-day problems as the proof that oppression demeans men, and not as the chance to be exploited, lacks the patience, the ingenuity and the opportunism that makes success. The I-can't-be-bothered-with-that attitude is self-important, and the organizer who is mostly concerned with "big issues" will never meet success outside the debate room.

Again I am speaking of the ability to see with calculation and act with calculation. It is not easy, particularly once you have sensitized yourself to the importance of little favors, little worries, little preoccupations, to know which are the organizationally useful ones and which are heart-rending but profitless. I remember a newly founded organization that was offered several thousand dollars worth of Christmas baskets by a group of terrified local businessmen hoping to placate the popular wrath. First we battled with the local sufferers-for-humanity about putting whiskey in the baskets. They wanted the money spent on extras for the children. After that we argued over who should get the baskets. They wanted to give them to the needy! The organizers wanted to give them to the strategic, the flat janitors and other key people whom it is good to have obligated to the organization.

If I may, I would like to advert to the stringing of beads on the necklace one more time. The beads, it turns out, are not all of one shape and color. They are a variety, and as you pick them out and string them, the necklace will have a correspondingly different pattern.

The bead pattern analogy holds with leadership also. Too many money beads - that is organizations brought in primarily for the dough they can contribute - and you will find yourself with a lot of money, but a soggy, conservative leadership. Too little money, too many youth groups, and you will get an organization that's always broke, that's short on continuity, and always undertaking more than its organizational base can carry out.

A big organization demands a variety of leadership talents. Money raising leadership, oratorical leadership, tactical leadership, leadership for routine, leadership that can measure community sentiment, that knows when to move and when to stay put. The different kinds of groups that come into your organization train up their natural leaders with greater skills in one area than in another. You need them all, and

for that reason, I spoke earlier about collective leadership. It is just unrealistic to expect a big organization to produce more than a few all-purpose leaders who can perform most of the various leadership tasks exceptionally well.

When you do find the all-purpose leader, you would do well to beware of him. More often than not his domination leads to organizational despotism. And it is nice to think that social change can be more than the replacement of undesirable despots with more commodious ones. I confess, though, this may not be the lesson which history teaches.

I have an addendum. It concerns the use of white organizers, and I bring it up because it is obvious to you and to me that the growth of black nationalist sentiment has put a lot of them on the hot seat.

Like it or not, white men have their uses. Organizationally, an astute pretty white boy with an ivy league manner can run circles around anybody else in certain kinds of highly proper middle class situations. White organizers can be useful in dampening the often destructive battle for prominence that has wrecked many a promising Negro endeavor. Remember, your white organizer has no political future in the ghetto, therefore he can be used as neutral absorbent material for out-of-control ambitions which are emitting dangerous rays. The white organizer sometimes can be a reassurance when making deals with outside white groups -- and I hope there is no one here in such retarded political babyhood as to think such deals are not necessary.

On the other hand it grates in this time of rising independence to see the old dependence on whites -- to see the old razzamatazz of whites leading Negroes. But for the good organizer this should be no problem because the good organizer should never -- or virtually never -- make a public speech, never get his name in the paper, never enjoy any formal authority in the organization. The big deal organizer who becomes a figure in his own right was never serious about developing leadership. He is the man who always meant to be the leader himself; when this type asks how do we find an indigenous leadership you can translate his words to mean, "How do I get myself a personal following?"

The good organizer is the self-effacing mentor who judges his work a success when he can leave the organization without even being missed. He is rare, rarer than first-rate leadership, but he exists and he comes in a variety of colors and he can work in almost any situation.