

REVOLUTIONS OF OUR TIME

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of the ASTD*

To put "Revolutions of Our Time" into perspective, I think we first ought to ask ourselves whether "revolutions" is the right word. It's not a word to be used loosely — it's not a word to be used lightly — and the imprecise use of words, I have found, as both a writer and a lawyer can cause more trouble than silence itself.

A revolution is a rare occurrence. I realize that the word is popularly used — people talk about a revolution in plastics or a revolution in clothespins, or a revolution in one phase of life or another. But, I think before we use it as it's used here today and will be used this week we should examine what revolutions we're talking about and make certain they are revolutions — and not toss the word around lightly. If it's something that's temporary, if it's something that's common, if it's something that's modest in proportions, I would not call it a revolution.

THE CAMPUS REVOLUTION

The four areas we're talking about primarily as we read the newspapers are four overlapping revolutions — if indeed they are revolutions. The first is taking place on our college campuses where the outbreaks of student disorder, demonstrations, violence, threats and coercion spread from a handful to dozens of college campuses not only in the East, but in all parts of the country. There are no doubt some who would say this is not a revolution — this is a fad, we've had these before.

College students at one time were swallowing goldfish. At another time they were overcrowding into telephone booths. Every spring we have panty raids or parking riots on college campuses. Boys will be boys and soon they will be brokers and bankers and lawyers and we shouldn't worry about it very much.

I think we make a great mistake if we dismiss the present unrest on campus in those ways. I think we are faced with a revolution. We are faced with a deep-seated, long-lasting scale of disorder and unrest that will be with us for some time.

THEODORE C. SORENSON

Those who are committed to a course of violence, I agree, are very few. They do not represent the majority opinion on campus; they do not have a legitimate program of goals or policy changes of their own; they do not have any hesitation in shutting down and wrecking universities instead of trying to improve them; and, in my opinion, they have no business being on a college campus. But they are the small, very small, minority.

And there is a much larger group of students who from time to time join with that small group — either because they sympathize not with the treatment they have received from university authorities or from outside police, because outside police rarely know how to deal effectively and discriminately with student behavior — or, because they sympathize not with the means used by the violent few but with the grievances which they hold. Because that majority of students is dissatisfied with the society they are about to inherit, with the institutions that are preparing them for that society, and with the whole spectrum of morality, value-judgment and decision-making that faces them as young Americans.

Black students are in a special category — concerned not so much with the sickening aspects of too much affluence, but with the sickening aspects of not enough affluence for themselves and for their people — concerned with the fact that they feel resented and used in a white man's environment while they are trying to find their own identity.

These disorders will be with us — they will spread to high schools, they will spread to some of the sleepier campuses that have not yet been affected until we learn how to cope with what I regard as a serious revolution.

THE BLACK REVOLUTION

Secondly, we are faced with disorders and unrest in our black communities. Some people would say that this is not a revolution that's taking place in the ghetto today — this is a form of evolution. They would say that we had unrest

over the years among our minority populations (understandable in view of the treatment to which they have been subjected) — that disorders will break out from time to time — but there is nothing sufficiently unusual about what is going on now to deserve the label “revolution.”

And there again, I must disagree. Because what is taking place in the black community today is too far-reaching, too long-lasting, and too unlikely to be turned back or repressed under any circumstances to be categorized with incidents of similar unrest that have happened before. This is a revolution. It has many different leaders. It has many different labels.

Blacks have listened for a long time to white liberals as to just how they should run their lives, how they should improve their lot, but they are now starting out on their own and they are talking about black power or black studies or black capitalism or black culture or one plan after another.

There are a variety of leaders sometimes competing with each other to see who can make the most exaggerated attacks on the white establishment — partly to gain publicity and following in the black community, partly to antagonize and frighten the whites who have antagonized and frightened them and their people for so long.

But, in the final analysis, their goals are not really so different from one another or so different from what this country has stood for for a long time. A decent education for their children, that is, equal to the education received by any other American; a decent place to live, to grow up, to play, that is, give them the same opportunity, flexibility as any other American, a job that has some dignity as well as a reasonable income to it, opportunity to stand up in life, to stand up in American society and be treated and regarded as anyone else.

The fact is, however, that since this revolution began some six or seven years ago the gap between the average white man's affluence and the average black

man's affluence has grown larger instead of less, and this revolution is with us until we can reverse that trend and narrow that gap until there is no gap at all between the way peoples of different races live and are treated in this country.

THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

And these are all overlapping revolutions because the black student represents both the campus and the black revolution, and both the revolution of the young and the revolution of the blacks are reflected in the third area of unrest and change that confronts us today and that is the area of politics. Some would say, this is not a revolution that we are seeing now — only a new form of factualism, that new splinter groups are arising, abrogating unto themselves the right to say that they have all the wisdom and they are going to have their own way about politics in this country or else.

The fact is that we thereby mistake the New Politics as it is called for the New Left as they like to call themselves, and the two are very different indeed.

The New Left with their militants — and their high ideological tests that admit no one but a few of their friends, their resort to demonstrations and profanity, their willingness to factionalize our existing political parties — do not represent the New Politics.

The key word to the New Politics is participation. It's encouraging rank and file members of political parties, amateurs and students, housewives, to take part not only in the envelope-licking and the doorbell-ringing but in the real decision-making that goes on in our political world. And Participatory Politics, as it is called — that movement toward broadening the base of political decision-making in this country — is here to stay regardless of whether the New Left succeeds or fails.

THE MORAL REVOLUTION

And finally, there is a revolution — or suggested revolution — in morals in the United States. The young people have

had a hand in it, the Negro population has had a hand in it. It's even related and reflected at times in the changes in political picture. Someone said it is not a revolution — that only a few sensation seekers were trying to obtain publicity or a profit by means of the exploitation of sex or other immoral behavior.

It is a revolution. It could be a very dangerous revolution that affects how we live, how we dress, how we drink. It affects young people not only of college age but of high school age and their attitude toward drugs, toward tobacco, toward alcohol and toward pornography. It affects what it is we see on our television screens and on our movie screens, what we read in books, and what we see on stage. It affects what we wear and how we conduct ourselves in public.

It has, as is true of all these revolutions, some positive possibilities, some liberating potentiality. We could use more frankness and more freedom in some areas of American life that have too long been restricted by inhibitions. But like each of the other revolutions, it also has grave dangers that could undermine, produce a deterioration in those values from the past which will well serve us in the future.

SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

So we have four revolutions in American life today — four overlapping revolutions that ought to be of concern to every American. Each one of these revolutions can be an opportunity or it can be a danger. Each one presents us with opportunities for enriching the lives of our students, for improving the lives of blacks, for upgrading politics in America, for enlivening and enlightening our moral scene — or it presents grave dangers or wrecking our colleges, dividing black vs. white, destroying our political system and devaluing the morals that have been important to us.

To understand these revolutions, however, we have to look beyond and beneath them. Each of them, in its own way, is really a symptom. One can treat

symptoms. One must treat symptoms at times just as we must treat a fever to make certain the patient does not die. But, if we treat only symptoms, if we only repress these revolutions, if we do it only with the violence and the other ill effects we see from time to time, then we have cured nothing. We have gotten to the bottom of nothing. And, we are likely to find ourselves faced with even worse diseases by forcing a repression of dissent, of sapping growth and losing out on the opportunities which are presented in each of these.

Because, underneath those revolutions, which are symptoms, are other revolutions which are causes; revolutions which are taking place in this country that sometimes we don't think of in terms of revolution because they don't incite violence, they don't bring about the same kind of headline, but they are going on nevertheless.

REVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY

Let me simply mention four such underlying revolutions to you. First, is the revolution of technology. Automation has moved from the farm to the plant and now to the office, to the stockbroker's office, to the bank, to the business office, to the retail office. It has made considerable inroads in government.

We are moving rapidly from the Nuclear Age to the Space Age, from the era of the transistor to the era of the laser. This has given us more affluence than ever before, this has given us more leisure time than ever before, and our young people are saying "affluence for what?" — "time to do what?"

This requires us to have higher skills than ever before, requiring young people to stay in school far longer than they did previously. It's requiring more high school graduates to go on to college, more college graduates to go on to post graduate training, and this puts pressure on those who have not shared in the affluence and on those whose skin color has excluded them from those benefits, and this puts pressure on institutions of education and higher learning themselves.

The revolution in technology underlies each of the others. For people are asking in this society, what kind of country is it that has the technological ability to put a man on the moon but does not have the ability to get him out of the ghetto?

REVOLUTION IN COMMUNICATIONS

And, secondly, there is an underlying revolution in communications. It's a part of young people who are raised and weaned on the television set. Go back to 1940 or 1950 when their parents placed them in front of a television set as a babysitter instead of leaving them on their own, teaching them about books or sending them out to the streets to play.

The change in communications is rapidly accelerating even now. The use of satellites for television, telephone, radio and international communications is just beginning.

The tremendous increase in the mass media, in the use of the printed word and its distribution has flooded us all in a sea of print that comes not only through the traditional newspapers, magazines, books and paperbacks but is now beginning to come through computers and new devices as well.

And, this has made a difference. This has affected each of the symptomatic revolutions to which I've referred. The individual citizen who can sit at home and watch the candidates on television is not going to be delivered by a union boss or a world leader or an ethnic group chairman when he can deliver his own vote.

The student who has grown up for eighteen years with television finds that he is an articulate critic of his time, aware of the imperfections as well as the graces of our society and able to talk about them sharply, succinctly — sometimes lengthily.

The black man has seen on television the affluence and opportunity that is available to the white man. He has heard on television and in this mass of printed

words, an escalation of promises and campaign rhetoric that has made each individual citizen of this country feel that he has inalienable rights, that he has opportunities that are due him, that he has reasons to be dissatisfied with his lot, that he lives at a level less than that he constantly sees on television and through the other kinds of media.

And, these media are not only producers, but they are, in a sense, consumers of information. They gobble up personalities and news stories and information as rapidly as they can be turned out. Because they conceive of themselves as entertainment media they want something new, something exciting. They're tired of yesterday's stories and yesterday's heroes. Each day and each week and each year they want something that is greater and more exciting. As a result, in outdoing each other and competing in that fashion, they use up people and ideas and escalate the level of expectations in this country.

And yet, people ask . . . young people ask . . . thoughtful citizens ask, "What kind of society is it that has the means to say so much and yet, at times, seems to be saying so little?"

REVOLUTION IN EXPECTATIONS

And that leads really to the third underlying revolution which I'm talking about, which is a revolution in expectations. We are the wealthiest country in the world today. Indeed, we are the wealthiest country in the history of mankind.

It is known that we have the power — we have the wealth to do away with all economic inequality and injustice and indignity in this country. Partly because of the revolution in technology — the voices on television and in the mass media escalate their promises. As the citizens living still in despair and degradation respond to those promises, their expectations are raised.

The young and affluent white students expect more from that society than they are seeing performed. The poor, the black, expect more from that so-

ciety than they are receiving.

I could not help but notice on the weekend before Palm Sunday when the New York State Legislature, because of the budget squeeze which is so familiar to most legislatures, found it necessary to cut back on the funds available for hospital care, for those on welfare, for aid to the cities. It cut back the food allowances for those on welfare to something like 15¢ a day.

And, on the same weekend, in Beverly Hills, there was a five-day party to launch a new motion picture attended by the jet-setters and the royalty and the high society people from this country and others. And one lady who was present said, "This is the most wonderful weekend in the history of mankind."

You have to stop and think about what kind of society it is that can spend three billion dollars a month fighting a war thousands of miles away in Vietnam but cannot find even one billion dollars a year to feed those suffering from hunger and malnutrition in our own country.

REVOLUTION AGAINST AUTHORITY

And each of these three revolutions, then, leads to a fourth, which in a sense is the one revolution that sums them all up . . . and that is a revolution against authority. There's a feeling on the part of most citizens, rich or poor, black or white, young or old, that we live in such an age of "bigness" that no one can do anything about it.

Government has become so big, so centralized, so far away, so remote, so impersonal.

Students feel that the universities have become so big that the individual student, much less his grievances, cannot be identified.

Corporations have become so big. The organizations, the unions have become so big. Every aspect of life seems to involve massive institutions that do not seem to yield to change.

Because there is this articulateness that has developed through television, be-

cause there is this new sense of affluence, because there is a feeling of, on the one hand powerlessness, but on the other hand high expectations, we find this revolt against authority. It affects almost every aspect of our life.

Children revolting against their parents, students revolting against their teachers, laymen and clerics revolting against their church. We see it overseas where small nations refuse to have super powers dictate to them. We see it at home where union members refuse to abide by the settlements worked out by their union leaders. We see it in politics where the rank and file members, on their own, insist upon overturning the decisions that have been made.

Presidents and popes and premiers and even military leaders are finding their authority challenged as never before. But this is because the combination of these revolutions has convinced a large proportion of our population that they cannot accomplish change in the usual peaceful way. They are convinced that they cannot work through the system — that the system itself won't change, that those in charge of the system are unwilling or unable to change it. They have no confidence in what they call the establishment, they have no belief that those who are in power will use that power to improve the society, to relieve their sense of helplessness and powerlessness.

The student wonders how it could be that a colleague of his who is opposed to an immoral war is in jail while those perpetuating immoral war are in office. The black man wonders how that if he breaks through the barriers and makes the struggle and goes to college, the average black college graduate still earns less than the average white high school dropout. The political idealist wonders why it is that he can mobilize energy and talent in 1968 as has never been mobilized before, only to find that both conventions in the national election in the long run are still controlled and settled by those who practice politics in the old way. Even the hippie who symbolizes the so-called revolution in

morals wonders what kind of society it is that appears to break down on every side.

I said to one young man, who I thought was dressed disgracefully, "Why do you dress that way?" I knew he came from a good family, I knew that he was an intelligent, bright student. He said, "I dress the way I feel, and I don't feel so good." I'm not so sure anyone could blame him for not feeling so good in the society which he is about to inherit.

ROLE FOR ASTD

Well, what does all this have to do with ASTD? I think it has everything to do with ASTD, because I think that it is training and development that offer a major key to the problems that we have been talking about today.

It is through training that these young people, black and white, can achieve some hope for change, some hope for improvement in their lives in the society they are inheriting. It is through training that they can learn the techniques of organization and management and budgeting and computers that will enable them to master the system that they fear is mastering us because of its complexity. It's through training that we will develop leaders that are badly needed if this sense of powerlessness and helplessness is to be overcome.

The new movement in the country today is for decentralization and for community control — for having local leaders play a much larger role in the operation of our schools, our hospitals, our other public services and, in time, our economy.

If we are to have decentralization and community control, we must have the leaders who are able to fill that vacuum, who will be able to handle those problems and who will be able to instill a sense of hope in their people. It is through training that you are going to develop managers and supervisors, leaders and other trainers who will be attuned to our times, who will understand these problems, who will be responsive to the needs with which we are dealing.

MUST TRAIN REVOLUTIONARIES

In short, your task, in my opinion, is nothing less than that of training revolutionaries. Yes, you must train peaceful revolutionaries if we are not to be taken over by violent revolutionaries. You must train those who will be in a position to move this country ahead, to modify and reform its system, to alter our society so that it meets this on-rushing stream of youth and technology and communications and economics, so that stream doesn't pour into the old narrow channels of American society, because if it does then we have even deeper troubles ahead.

President Kennedy once said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible make a violent revolution inevitable." He was talking about Latin America, but he could just as well have been talking about the United States today and tomorrow. If we do not make peaceful revolution possible, if you do not train men and women who will be revolutionaries who will bring about other peaceful revolutionaries then I'm very much afraid that violent revolution, in this country, is inevitable.

We need leaders who will listen to protests when they are peaceful. We need managers who will be responsive to demands that come from the rank and file. We need educators who will welcome participation by students and faculty in the decision-making process. We need administrators who are willing to move with the times and change their systems accordingly, because if we don't listen,

FREE COMPUTER MANAGEMENT STYLE PRINT OUT

if we don't respond, if we don't move, if we don't welcome this kind of innovation then we cannot very well protest or object when those who have been trying to move us, who have been trying to participate, who have been trying to bring about this change, give up on system and say the only way is to confront it and attack it with violence if necessary.

I don't think we should do this, however, just to prevent violence. Let's don't change our system at the point of a gun. Let's don't give in to force and coercion. I'm in favor of a peaceful revolution in this country because I happen to think it is right. Because, I think this country has to realize the last third of the twentieth century is a completely new era. I'm asking you to train the leaders and managers and educators of tomorrow who will recognize that most of our institutions today are anachronistic, who will recognize that much of what we say in this society is hypocritical, who will treat many of the old ways of doing things as irrelevant.

THE CONTINUING AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the founders of the country, was congratulated shortly after the last military success over the British on the successful completion of the American revolution. He said, "No, we have successfully completed the American war against Britain. The American Revolution is just beginning."

Professor William Reddin (of the 3-D Theory) is seeking an initial 1500 managerial sample for a new Management Style Test he is now in the final stages of developing. The project is funded by the Canada Council. This arrangement is offered only to those firms or training centers which can guarantee a minimum of fifty test results over a two month period. All managers who participate will receive an extensive computer print out of their style within 6-12 months.

The American Revolution is still continuing. The pace of that revolution is now picking up. We — each of us — have a responsibility to carry on that revolution to make certain that it is carried on peacefully. It is an enormous task. The pressures from the extreme left and the extreme right are getting larger every day. The difficulty of working with those people who are indifferent, who are still complacent, who are ignorant of these changes is one of the most difficult tasks that we will have at all. We must face those people who are angered by the violence as all of us are angered, and who refuse to change because of the violence.

We must allocate resources that we have become accustomed to pouring into military hardware and other less constructive outlets, and change the stream of resources into the development of our human resources here at home.

To change, to revolutionize a whole society, to bring a whole race of people up to a position of equality, to satisfy the urging and demands of frustrated young people, to channel into constructive means this tremendous energy that is confronting us, is a difficult and at some times impossible job. There will be occasions when we feel like sitting and letting someone else do it. But it was all summed up centuries and centuries ago by the Hasidic Jews Sayings of the Fathers: "The day is short and the work is great and the laborers are sluggish and the reward is much and the master is urgent."

The International Management Test measures the demands peculiar to a manager's position in terms of "Productivity," "Conflict," "Superiors" and 17 other categories. It also measures which style a manager uses with each, an overall style and flexibility. Those who wish to participate should write to Professor William Reddin, Room 312, Tilley Hall, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.