## The Communitarian Riddle

*Socialism in general has a record of failure so blatant that only an intellectual could ignore or evade it. – Thomas Sowell*

In November 1998, the Industrial Areas Foundation's (IAF) local Chicago affiliate, United Power for Action and Justice, sponsored a Public Life Forum.[1] Chicago's Archbishop, Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. and Dr. Jean Bethke Elshtain, professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, addressed the forum.  George, who spoke solidly on the topic of justice, said, among other things:

> As a people covenanted, namely restored, to right relationship to God, the Israelites were concerned necessarily with the relationships of their own society, among themselves, among their neighbors.  The guarantor of this right relationship of justice is, of course, the God who makes us.  God is the judge, therefore, of the whole earth because He created the world.  He establishes justice and equity.  And there is a traditional sense, therefore, to the prophetic' call.  They are not innovators.  As traditionalists, they call us back to the right relationships that were there before the Fall.
>
> ….Religion is a virtue, a cardinal virtue in the Catholic scheme of things….Today we would call that virtue – that internal virtue that sustains this set of connections, this network – solidarity…. Solidarity presupposes three things.  First, it presupposes a common destiny….**This solidarity as a virtue presupposes not only a common destiny but also a common nature that is capable of knowing the truth.** [Emphasis added.][2]

Dr. Elshtain's remarks concerned another central theme of IAF organizing – power.  After stressing the need for people of various religious backgrounds to bring their convictions into the public arena, Elshtain, very rightly, made the distinction between power that is used to control or dominate and power that enables one to efficaciously accomplish a given end.  She said:

> If politics is reduced to a zero-sum power game, things get crude and ugly very fast.  An unseemly power struggle is likely to ensue as I busily try to steal someone else's power and make it my own.  And **anything goes in this effort.  We call such politics "Machiavellian" because it is explicitly amoral,** not tethered to any higher purpose or human good or goods other than gaining

and holding power for the elite few….To me it means that relational power works from within an ethical framework…. **United Power for Action and Justice cannot be drawn into the usual "power game" at the risk of losing its soul.** [Emphasis added.][3]

These are magnificent points.  Cardinal George's emphasis on truth, as a condition for human solidarity – and therefore as a precondition for any real justice – and Dr. Elshtain's condemnation of Machiavellian politics as an amoral abuse of power could hardly be better expressed.

However, both points explicitly contradict the philosophy of the organization these two speakers had come to support.  The IAF is grounded on Machiavellian politics.  Its founder, Saul Alinsky, wrote in the opening sentences of his book, Rules for Radicals:

> What follows is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be.  *The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power.  *Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away.[4]

The book then goes on to develop, at great length, the immoral axiom that ends justify the means.  It also outlines the highly manipulative methodology of "popular education" that his people's organization will use to bring people into the "revolution."

The IAF, having shifted in recent years from confrontational to conversational tactics, has not only never repudiated Alinsky's ethics, but continues to teach them:

> All participants in the Industrial Areas Foundation national training programs are given a reprint of a 1933 article by John H. Randall, Jr. titled "The Importance of Being Unprincipled"...The thesis is that because politics is nothing but the "practical method of compromise," only two kinds of people can afford the luxury of acting on principle...everyone else who wants to be effective in politics has to learn to be "unprincipled" enough to compromise in order to see their principles succeed.[5]

> One of the worst things you can be is overly principled.  Everybody has got to compromise, adapt, change.  So one of the hard things we've always had to learn in the world as it is, is that there are no permanent enemies and no permanent allies.[6]

Nor does the IAF view the matter of "truth" in quite the same way as Cardinal George.  Alinsky writes: "An organizer working for change...does not have a fixed truth - truth to him is relative and changing."[7]  This is echoed by the contemporary IAF.   Peter Skerry writes: "Through their organizations they [the IAF congregations] learn to speak the truth where it is not spoken and to create the truth where it never was, for all to see." [8]

Communitarian Harry Boyte also notes the "created truth" of the IAF: "Ernie Cortes, a key figure in [the IAF] network, pointed out, the IAF methodology bears resemblance [to the] 'critical method' of Karl Popper, philosopher of science, who argued for a view of 'truth' not as a positive assertion, but as theories formulated out of practice and aimed at problem solving that had not yet been refuted." [9]  Karl Popper coined the term "open society," which refers to a form of social organization in which "nobody has a monopoly on the truth."

Villanova religion professor, Susan Toton makes this point, as well.  She writes: "In short, the process of building Poor People's Organizations reminds the church over and over again that it does not own 'The Truth'." [10]

It is startling, therefore, to discover two people, of such obvious integrity and intelligence, preaching ideas to an organization that run counter to the organization's fundamental philosophical structure.

### Why do Elshtain and George Lend Their Moral Capital to the IAF?

The intensely curious observer of these developments must ask a difficult question.  Why are Cardinal George and Dr. Elshtain, who appear to come from such a fundamentally different framework than the IAF's, affirming the work of this organization?  Three possibilities come to mind.

1. Perhaps George and/or Elshtain are well-intentioned dupes who have no idea what sort of organization the IAF is.

   The IAF is not above "using" a morally respectable person for his social capital (his capacity to draw other people into the organization).  "The tenth rule of the ethics of means and ends is that you do what you can with what you have and clothe it with moral garments," Saul Alinsky writes. "Moral rationalization is indispensable at all times of action whether to justify the selection or the use of ends or means....All effective actions require the passport of morality."[11]

What further moral garment would an unscrupulous organization require than the endorsement of a good cardinal? What better passport into the trust – those coveted relationships that bring their social capital to any venture – than the high-minded encouragement of a respected ethicist?

This scenario is not highly probable. It requires that these two well-read, well-educated speakers be unfamiliar with the underpinnings of an established organization.

2. Perhaps George and/or Elshtain think they may outfox the foxes.

More than one IAF-associated cleric has confided his confidence in the ability of stout moral leadership to shape the faith-based organization. After all, it would seem reasonable that good people, with a clear sense of right and wrong, would make certain that an organization in which they have a leadership position steers a straight course and keeps its nose clean.

Unfortunately, the cleric – or professor – who ascribed to such a hope, would betray a meager understanding of how relational power operates. There is a double agenda at play in the organization: the agenda of the organized and the agenda of the organizer (who is not one of the local leadership of supportive clerics and professors, but is a trained, outside professional). The IAF not only has its local goals, tailored to the self-interest of local people, but its own organizational goals. Ernesto Cortes, the southwestern regional IAF director writes: "[The organizer's] issue gets dealt with last. If you want your issue to be dealt with first, you'll never build anything. So you lead with other people's issues, and you teach them how to act on their issues. Then you model what is to be reciprocal, you model what it is to have a long-term vision." [12]

References to the IAF's organizational agenda abound:

> In places like San Antonio and Baltimore, we are as close to being a political party as anybody is. We go around organizing people, getting them to agree on an agenda, registering them to vote, interviewing candidates on whether they support our agenda. We're not a political party, but that's what political parties do…. Generally, our hope is that by 1996 we would be in twice the strategically located states as we are now and that would give us the capacity to develop either the regional or national base to look at national politics. If we were in the right fifteen or sixteen states, we wouldn't have to be in all fifty states. That would give us enough clout to be able to affect policies, whether it was through political parties or corporations. [13]

The Chicago locals will not be invited to develop the bigger agenda, which is already determined, but merely to participate in implementing it. If they oppose the predetermined platform, they are free to leave and the "relationship" ends. However, whether they leave or remain, they have served the organizational need. They have been used for the "moral passport" the IAF seeks.

3. Perhaps George and/or Elshtain are more philosophically compatible with IAF philosophy than is apparent at first glance.

While George has eschewed relativism, his address has nothing to say about Macciavellianism, a central IAF tenet. Might he, as a man who holds considerable power, be an admirer of coercion and manipulation? One must presume that a man of God would have profound moral disgust at such tactics.

Elshtain, however, who eloquently opposes Macciavellianism, has no similar requisite opposition to relativism. Quite the contrary, Elshtain is a communitarian:

> Perhaps it is this urge "to do justice" that has placed Elshtain at the forefront of communitarianism – a movement that has emerged in the past decade as a response to the limits of liberal theory and practice. …For several years, Elshtain has headed the board of the Institute on [sic] American Values and served as co-chair of the Council on Families in America, both of which support a communitarian agenda.[14]

**Meet the Communitarians**
Examining the philosophical compatibility between the IAF and communitarianism

The Oxford dictionary defines the communitarian as a member of a community formed to put into practice communistic or socialistic theories.[15] Contemporary American communitarians use no such loaded language, however; a word like "socialism" has ugly connotations. Rather, communitarians present an examination of social problems against the vision of

a more ideal world, which they believe can be fashioned by application of communitarian theories.

In 1991, the sociologist Amitai Etzioni prepared a policy platform for The Communitarian Network, a "coalition of individuals and organizations who have come together to shore up the moral, social, and political foundation of society."[16]   To create a culture in which "both individual human dignity and the social dimension of human existence" are properly recognized, the communitarian platform asserts that culture must develop several essential components: [17]

- Common Values: The communitarian vision of civil society requires "building on shared values, habits, and practices that assure respect for one another's right." These communal values, the platform is quick to point out, cannot develop from individual communities, which may be tyrannical or prejudiced, but "must be judged by external and overriding criteria, based on shared human experience." [18]
- Citizen Participation in Political and Civic Matters: A citizenry must build on its common values by "regular fulfillment of personal, civic, and collective responsibilities."[19] Government, it is felt, should be more representative, more participatory than it is at present.
- Moral Solidarity: All the institutions of civil society – the family, the schools, the religious bodies, institutions that oversee governance, public safety and health – must provide a unified, moral voice and must be interconnected to one another.  "Education must be reorganized to achieve better integration between work and schooling," the platform admonishes. It also insists that education must include moral training.[20]
- Common Geographic Territory: A community presupposes a common geographic territory.  In the case of the communitarian platform, it is the entire world – the "human community" – that is under discussion.  "…[W]e believe that in the multiplication of strongly democratic communities around the world lies our best hope for the emergence of a global community that can deal concertedly with matters of general concern to our species as a whole."[21]

The platform, however, gives no specific information about *how* these components are to be achieved.  This is also true for Etzioni's most prominent book, The Spirit of Community.  The reader is presented with all too familiar examples of a society in crisis, and then reminded of the "traditional" values that once held society together. These values include a respect for law and order without the creation of a police state.  They include deference to stable nuclear families.  They include recognition of the need for children to receive both quality and quantity guidance from their parents (but insist that a return to good parenting will not cost society the strides it has gained by genuine

feminism). They include the need for strong schools that can reinforce essential moral education and the need for strong individual rights to be balanced by a strong sense of individual responsibility. They include a restored respect of the moral law, and for governance to apply the principles of subsidiarity and social justice. In short, the communitarian world Etzioni paints is – at least on the surface –quite similar to the ideal world the Catholic envisions when the state and all its individual members obey the natural law.

Etzioni's dream-weaving has reached high places. By 1993, reporters had spotted his book on President Clinton's desk.[22] Direct access to the Executive Branch is no accident, of course: Etzioni's cofounder of the Communitarian Network is William Galston, policy advisor to the White House.

What's the problem? The values of communitarianism appear to be traditional and reasonable. Communitarians use terminology that is immediately recognizable by any one familiar with the principles of Catholic social justice. Furthermore, communitarian ideas about governance appear to offer a viable alternative to the brutal excesses of laissez faire capitalism and right-wing socialism, both denounced by Catholic social justice teachings.[23] For these reasons, the platform has received strong endorsement from a number of prominent "conservative" Catholic intellectuals. Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard professor of law, a staunch and persuasive pro-life advocate, and a Vatican delegate to the United Nations was one of the Platform's endorsers. Richard John Neuhaus, President of the Religion and Public Life Institute and editor of "First Things" was another.

The best intentions, however, are defeated by ill-conceived means. A closer examination of communitarian praxis, as opposed to its wish-list, provides some understanding of what communitarian restructuring actually brings.

How Do We Get There?

I. Cooperative Enquiry – The End of Truth as We Know It

One of the essential components to achieving a healthy community life, according to communitarian thought, is to find and build on society's shared values and history. Etzioni argues in his platform that "those who would impose civic or moral virtues by suppressing dissent (in the name of religion, patriotism, or any other cause), or censoring books…" will be ineffective, if not downright hurtful. Far more effective, he says, is the identification of the shared aspirations (values) among divergent moral positions – shared aspirations that reflect the basic human needs of all mankind.[24]

The question arises, then, of *how* these shared aspirations and common values are to be identified. Does God announce them from the sky?  Communitarian theorist Henry Tam describes the dialogue process, which he calls *cooperative enquiry,* in detail:

> The communitarian principle of cooperative enquiry requires that any claim to truth be judged to be valid only if informed participants deliberating together under conditions of cooperative enquiry would accept that claim.  No individual can, in isolation from the independent cross-checking of evidence and reasoning which can only be carried out by other people, legitimately declare any claim to be indisputably true.   The objectivity of claims to the truth can only be secured through open communication between people engaged in a common enquiry....[25]

Tam is not the only writer to point out that communitarians define "truth" – and therefore a true value – as a product of human consensus, rather than an independent entity that simple exists (and which the mind discovers or acknowledges).  Raymond Boudon states:

> Relativistic theories of values are widespread among intellectuals.... Communitarianism is an influent variation of these theories....Of course, it cannot be stated that value relativism is generally endorsed.   But still, there are many signs of its influence, diffusion and progress, notably among intellectuals in the broad sense of the word....Communitarianism is represented by several writers, as C. Taylor, A McIntyre [sic], M. Walzer, A. Etzioni or R Rorty, and has attracted a good deal of attention, notably in the U.S.  Roughly, it states that values, far from being entitled to objectivity and eventually universality, are embedded in concrete human communities and have no other ground than being cultural elements endorsed by such and such community.[26]

Such a philosophical approach is utilitarian: it believes that in promoting the common denominators among disparate groups of people one can eliminate conflict.  Consensus building, it reasons, establishes a bonded community.

This is irrational, of course.   If morals (and truth) are to be humanly determined and left open to possible change, the "truth" of such a consensus is not therefore less oppressive than other arbitrary systems.  Dissenters – who are those affirming objective and universal values – must be brought to heel.

Catholic teaching consistently affirms the error of such beliefs. Truth "is indicated by the 'divine law,' *the universal and objective norm of morality.*"[27]

II. Citizen Participation in Political and Civic Matters – Myth Makers and Power Brokers

The issue of citizen participation in political and civic affairs is really a practical discussion about power. The hierarchical structures of certified experts, elected representatives, ordained leaders, or divinely appointed rulers all assume an authoritarian model that communitarianism would like to see replaced by a non-authoritarian process of public deliberation, consensus building, and democratic decision-making.

The vision "requires all members of inclusive communities to develop the understanding and abilities to participate as equals in determining how decisions affecting them are to be made."[28] In other words, citizens must be educated to their new role. "It is the educative function of communities to develop the understanding of each new generation of citizens to enable them to engage in cooperative enquiries, evaluate knowledge claims that affect their well-being, and pursue common values. This function is carried out, not just by schools, colleges, and universities, but also by research institutions, the mass media, and, above all, parents."[29]

Enquiry-led education is different from fact-based education. "Instead of positing a set of truths on any subject for children to receive passively, the children themselves are encouraged to participate openly in what would or would not be an acceptable claim….the process introduces them to the epistemological reality that knowledge is embedded in discursive communities."[30] That is to say, education of the young communitarian will teach him that "truth" is dependent on consensus.

This raises serious questions.
- What sort of education will inure citizens against the cheap rhetoric of sound bytes and psychologically manipulated images produced by the mass media – the very folks to whom one has looked for help in education and information?
- Would "improperly" educated or "ill-informed" citizens be excluded from the system? Are those who disagree with the system considered to be "ill-informed?"
- If people are to be educated to perform expanded and increasingly serious civic duties, who will oversee that education to assure that *it* is not ideologically skewed?

As the answers to such questions will not sought from the mouth of God, but from the intellects of communitarians.  It is the communitarian who is the final arbiter of morality, for it is he who decides whether a community's deliberative process has achieved the desired results.  It is the communitarian who must oversee that mass media tows the line.  It is the communitarian who must decide who has sufficient training to perform the work of a citizen.  It is the communitarian who will judge the ideological wholesomeness of educational programs.  In other words, the communitarians seek a society in which they function as an elite oligarchy, with power not only to control education and media, but also to control even the "truth."[31]

## III.  Moral Solidarity among Society's Primary Institutions

Communitarians envision restructured institutions of civil society to develop a unified, moral voice and to create interconnectedness among them. The Responsive Communitarian Platform has a number of general suggestions.

> "What we need is a change of orientation by both parents and work places"[32]
> "Education must be reorganized to achieve better integration between work and  schooling." [see FN 17]
> "Vulnerable communities should be able to draw on the more endowed communities when they are truly unable to deal, on their own, with social duties thrust upon them."[33]
> "There is a great need for study and experimentation with the creative use of the structures of civil society, and public-private cooperation, especially where the delivery of health, educational, and social services are concerned."[34]

It is not the suggestions themselves that are a matter of concern, but the manner in which the communitarians seek to accomplish them.  Restructuring the institutions of civil society to develop a unified, moral voice and to create interconnectedness among them has serious ramifications.  It can only be accomplished one of two ways:

1. The institutions of civil society can develop a unified, moral voice and a genuine interconnectedness if the individuals within them have experienced a deep conversion of heart, are committed to serving genuine truth, and are of good will.  Obviously, such a conversion can't be imposed externally, but must be freely embraced as a response to grace.
2. The institutions of civil society can develop a unified, moral voice and an external interconnectedness if some external force imposes

its will on them.  An example of such an external force was provided to Eastern Europe by the Soviet régime throughout most of the 20th century. However, the "peace" it enforced was purely cosmetic.  When the force was removed, old hostilities resurfaced.

Contemporary communitarianism endeavors to create an external restructuring of institutions, and assumes that this in turn will produce a desirable internal moral response.   This entails that social institutions are manipulated to force ideological cooperation.  Far from eliminating the bureaucratic nature of these institutions and democratically shifting their power into the hands of their "clients," which is the ideal being presented to us, creation of a unified, moral voice by means of external pressures and external interconnectedness creates an additional bureaucracy of enforcement and accountability.

If, as the communitarians argue, healthy institutions of family, worship, politics, education, policing, etc., are the backbone of a society, those institutions, imperfect as they are, must be permitted to do their work with minimal outside interference.  Once they have been externally restructured to conform to an external ideology – even a beneficent ideology – they carry within the seeds of their own destruction.  They cease to be a natural product, responsively developed by a community to answer the needs of the community, and are, instead, artificial creatures of the communitarian ideology.  Despite the communitarian use of the concept of subsidiarity, an institution so dominated from the outside is violated in its essence.   It is a caricature.

IV. Common Geography – Global Ethics

As with the creation of unified social institutions, the global "community" envisioned by the Communitarian Platform and its endorsers is not based on natural human affinities (a common religion, common language, and the like), but is imposed from without, by the visionaries.

Citizenship, which has meant the privilege and protection from, as well as duties to, a particular political entity, means something new in the communitarian lexicon.

> But how can civil society be constructed in an international arena?  Those wishing to try – not just in Russia and Germany where patience and civic cunning are imperative, but in an America and Western Europe that have grown complacent about the civic domain – need both to recall the story of democracy's founding,  and  at  the  same  time  invent  new  institutions

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appropriate to novel global conditions....To prepare the ground for democracy today either in transitional societies or on a global scale is first to recreate citizens who will demand democracy: this means laying a foundation in civil society and civic culture.[35]

## IAF as Communitarian Vehicle

I. Assault on the Faith – Faith-based community organizing:

Given the above communitarian tenets, its affinity to institutional-based organizing, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation provides, becomes obvious. In the first place, institutional-based organizing taps directly into the spot from where communitarians see social health and sickness emanating. To the degree the larger organization exercises influence or control over its institutional members, it can impose its remedies. Acting from within schools and churches, the communitarian organization can begin to train its new citizen to do the work of his restructured body politic. Acting externally, the collective power of these institutions is used to create that restructured polity.

The religious institution has a particular attraction. One IAF publication states the matter frankly: "...one of the largest reservoirs of untapped power is the institution of the parish and congregation. Religious institutions form the center of the organization. They have the people, the values, and the money."[36]

It is not the religious values of spiritual and moral reality of faith-based institutions that are useful to the community organization. It is that passport of morality, the social capital of trust and respectability that religious institutions give to the community organization, which is so very valuable.

However, the ramifications for the religious institution are serious. The *religious values* of its faith-based members are actually an impediment to the community organization. Therefore, one discovers the IAF actively engaged in changing those religious ethics and religious sensibilities. For example, the IAF conducts a national project called "IAF Reflects." IAF Reflects is a series of "intense, 2-week seminars for veteran organizers.[37]" These retreats for the congregational leaders of IAF locals are designed to put (quote) *"leaders in touch with the biblical tradition that might give deeper insight into their work together, bind them more closely, and empower them to go forward to build God's reign.*[38]*"*

According to the descriptions of one observer, participating clerics are guided through the personal pain and frustration they suffer over their impotence to

tangibly and materially relieve the poverty of their congregations. From that pain, they are led to the understanding that the collective action of the IAF is not only their solution, but is a biblically sound solution.[39]

Another researcher labels this organizational technique of guiding an individual from his painful past experiences to the political positions of the organization as "values clarification." She writes: *"It was from this group of "natural" leaders that people were chosen to attend Industrial Areas Foundation workshops. Once these leaders returned to the Valley, they, along with Cortes and Drake, conducted sessions in communities throughout the Valley. The sessions began with a talk about the Valley's historical background, which was followed by value clarification exercises."[40]*

According to this researcher, the organizers believe that values clarification and controlled, channeled surfacing of anger "*provide the momentum for action*".[41] She continues, *"Emphasis is placed on understanding individual values through value clarification exercises, how to use power, the difference between self-interest and selfishness, relationships, especially the differences between public and private relationships, how to organize meetings, and how to use the media. These training sessions are intensive, week-long workshops where IAF professional organizers utilize many forms of human relations development techniques.[42]*

This values clarification "education" is not designed simply to help an individual to recognize his own personal, philosophical backbone, but is intended to develop another sensibility -- specifically **political** sensibility -- in him. The IAF-led values clarification exercises seek to effect a transformation from the generalized "Judeo-Christian" and American "traditions" of cooperation, participation, integrity, free expression, concern, reciprocity, justice, etc., and guide those values into political activism.[43] This is not simply teaching a man to put his faith into practice. It is teaching him to redefine what that faith means.

The technique of values clarification – also called "popular education" or conscientization" – actually changes the values of its participants and replaces them with the values of the organizer. A New Republic article states: "*…[The] IAF seeks to teach groups like Mexican/Americans of San Antonio to build on and then transcend natural ties of family and ethnicity*" [44]

Another writer says: "*Cortes [head organizer for IAF, SW region] knew that Mexican parents willingly sacrificed for their children – and often for their church. By talking about family values, could you motivate and organize people to act politically in their own genuine self-interest?...[T]he new*

*organization had to reach into the heart...The idea of protecting and enhancing families might make that possible."*[45]

The implication of these passages is that the religious and family values of religious people are used to spark a conversation between them and the IAF. The IAF then uses the relationship built from those values to introduce another set of values – those of the IAF. Harry Boyte writes: "*In St. Timothy's Church [in San Antonio], for instance, new catechisms connected **biblical and Mexican historical and cultural** themes with the current issues COPS [the IAF local] was working on....From such experiences, the [the IAF] developed an ongoing process of community and parish renewal.*"[46]

II. Restructured citizens – popular education and education reform

The IAF works on many fronts. Its efforts to change the religious sensibilities of its faith-based institutions and to mold their congregations into supportive political activists is one front. Another front is the creation "new citizens" through the training of young people in their schools. The end goal is not simply a citizen who participates more actively in public affairs, but a citizen who actively applauds a comprehensively altered system.

The National Center for Education and the Economy [NCEE], the think-tank that produced the rough draft of what became the Work Force Development Act of 1995 (HR 1617; SR 143), was well aware that public support for the Work Force Development Act required nursing. Reaching the goals of the Work Force Development Act would "*require a transformation in virtually every important aspect of the American system of education.*"

A NCEE proposal for the legislation stated: "*It will require thoughtful and sustained communication with the citizens of these states to build the public consensus needed to support these revolutionary changes.*" [47]

Weeks-long media campaigns and town meetings were suggested to "increase public discussion" and "focus daily news coverage" on education. [48] Parents would have to see themselves as "collaborators" in their children's education. The proposal then explained how this might be accomplished: "*The Industrial Areas Foundation, perhaps the most experienced agency in the United States in the arena of community organizing, will help us think through the parent engagement and organizing issues.*"[49]

The NCEE, in "partnership" with other groups, supports educational experimentation around the country.[50] One of these experiments, called originally the National Alliance for Restructuring Education, includes the States

of Arkansas, Kentucky, New York, Vermont, and Washington, as well as the cities of Rochester, NY (which has been one of the major educational scandals of our time), Pittsburgh, PA, San Diego, CA, and White Plains, NY.  This design team serves roughly 12% of the nation's school children. [51]

The Alliance educational "design" is considered to be "*the sole systemic design which emphasizes change to all elements and the need for collaboration among many partners.  Rather than focusing on the school as the intervention point, this design focuses on changing the systems that surround the schools including the central office, state legislation, professional development providers, social services providers, and the community*." [52]

Vital to operating an Alliance school is "*identifying those strategies that will foster sustained public support for world-class student performance standards and the revolutionary changes in policy and practice needed to meet them*."[53] To assist the Alliance school in "*fostering public support*," the design team contains two "*public engagement*" partners: *The Public Agenda Forum, which is to "provide research, media campaigns, [and] polls" and the Industrial Areas Foundation, which will "assist with community organization [and] parental involvement."* [54]

An example of the IAF's work to generate parent involvement in educational restructuring can be documented in a vision paper called "Community of Learners."  It was produced by a network of nearly a dozen Texas IAF locals in 1990.   However, it was "facilitated" into being by a Sonia Hernandez, an educational consultant on the NCEE board of trustees. [55]  In the early 1980s, she was also the president of the IAF San Antonio local, Communities Organized for Public Service. [56]

Ms. Hernandez, in her capacity as an education consultant, provided *"…a larger framework for people to think about their own schools and the troubling questions about whether their children were being prepared for the work of the future.  Schools are about political power, Hernandez explained*." [57]

The  "Community of Learners" paper recommends "*shattering the paradigm of school*" as it has been popularly conceived and replaces it with "communities of learners," which are schools characterized by "*collaborative relationships among all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders*." [58]

Despite the creation of what has been termed "school-based decision-making" boards, the collaborative relations created by the IAF Alliance schools are, in reality, a federally controlled project that seeks to link health care, work, and

education into a single system. Employment, graduation, and even a driver's license become dependent on the individual's connection with "the system."

A comprehensive state system, then, is one level of a shattered paradigm of school.  As with the organizing of religious institutions, communitarian

III.     Comprehensive and sustainable – The New Governance

Is it fair to identify these systemic educational reforms as reflective of communitarian thought?  Discussing an essay about IAF activity in Texas, one writer says: *"…Warren investigates the 'relational organizing' strategy utilized by the Industrial Areas Foundation in San Antonio. In this independent non-partisan strategy, new forms of cooperation capable of uniting diverse communities divided as they are in the U.S. by profound inequalities of class, race, and gender are reached in part only through conflict.  Warren critiques the communitarian strategy, implicit in much of the recent social capital debate, for avoiding conflict…"[59]*

This "communitarian strategy" of "relational organizing" is only one way in which the IAF serves to bring about the communitarian vision for a restructured society.  Dr. Benjamin Barber, a political scientist out of Rutgers University, during a radio interview, identified the Industrial Areas Foundation as working out *"Practical experiments to empower people in their own lives."* He considered the IAF to be among those who don't *"simply talk about citizenship and democracy, but are engaged in working for it."*

Those experiments have reached influential levels. One finds the same themes of "new citizenship" among the "new Democrats" and the "Reinvent Government" proponents.   At the 1995 Democratic Leadership Council's (DLC) Annual Conference, the DLC proposed a "third way" or a "third wave"  (depending on the speaker), which was neither Republican nor Democrat, but "a wholly different governing philosophy."[60]  This "third way" supposedly "decentralizes" government, yet, for example, replaces welfare with an employment system that "both requires people to work [and] also makes it possible, that enables then to work." The "third way" admittedly "redistributes income", supports guaranteed, "100% health care" and social security programs, and feels that community and citizenship values can be reconstructed through the action of citizens groups, such as the church-based IAF, which draws a segment of the population back into public engagement. *"In Texas, a church-based group, the Industrial Areas Foundation,"* explained one speaker, giving a specific example, *"is working to reconnect low income parents with their children's schools….So the Industrial Areas Foundation is teaching parents the political tools they need to connect with their schools and make them better."* [61]

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This was the political vision the DLC wished to shape future Democratic Party activity with, and ultimately the United States government.  The IAF is already at work.

IV.  Global IAF – the socialist goal

A Texas newspaper article described the IAF's training as a new social movement. *"This is the equivalent of a nonviolent revolution,"* a representative from the Ford Foundation was quoted to have said.  Tapping into "feelings of powerlessness" and a "helplessness to change" the way government works, community organizations, the news story explained, are finding that they can direct that frustration into community activism. [62]

The article described some of these community organizations, including the Industrial Areas Foundation, and their collaborative networks around the nation, such as Harry Boyte and Benjamin Barber's "American Civic Forum".[63] In 1994, *"...President Clinton and Al Gore spent six hours talking with leading scholars about the need for citizen involvement, the promise of grassroots activism and the federal government's possible role in i*t."  There were subsequent meetings held in Santa Fe and Washington, DC, of civic, political and foundation leaders to discuss "*how the movement can be lifted to national prominence*".

The communitarian goal, however, is global, because, in the words of Benjamin Barber: "As a framework for democracy, the nation-state is twice impaired."

> [D]emocracy  demands new post-nation-state institutions and new attitudes more attentive to the direct responsibility people bear for their  liberties.   To  be  sure,  global  government,  above  all democratic global government, remains a distant dream; but the kinds  of  global  citizenship  necessary  to  its  cultivation  are  less remote.[64]

What is required, Barber posits, is reconstructing "civil society," that "mediating domain between private markets and big government."[65]

> To re-create civil society on this prescription does not entail a noble civic architecture; rather, it means reconceptualizing and repositioning institutions already in place, or finding ways to re-create them in an international setting.  In the United States, for example,  this  suggests  turning  again  to  schools,  foundations, voluntary  associations,  churches  and  temples  and  mosques, community movements and the media, as well as myriad other civil

> associations and **removing them from the private sector and repositioning them instead in a civil society.**[66] [emphasis added]

The religious institution, then, in the hands of a communitarian, is no longer the "private domain" of sectarian groups, but is public property.   The communitarian school gives lip service to "local control" but educates to the prevailing consensus of those who are determined to belong in the larger "civil society."  The lone voice of an individual can never speak "truth" or represent "right." [67]

As this "civil society" takes increasing control over individual nations, those nations can then import their "democratic" concept on an broader scale: *"The character of the public voice is thus essential in defining the citizen.  For a public voice is not any old voice addressing the public.  The divisive rant of talk radio or the staccato crossfire of pundit-TV are in fact perfect models of everything that public talk is not."[68]*

Envisioning a global structure in which such a civil society creates, sustains, and controls the world's people is no threat.  Recognizing that faith-based organizing, supported by religious institutions, is spreading globally, becomes of greater concern.  The IAF, only one organization to restructure civil society among many, is itself international, with local branches in Great Britain and South Africa.

## Back to George and Elshtain…

We began by wondering why Francis Cardinal George of Chicago and Communitarian Jean Bethke Elshtain presented addresses supportive of the Industrial Areas Foundation. The Cardinal's case is the most interesting, as Catholic core values are directly contradictory to IAF core values.

1. Catholicism affirms a fixed, knowable, eternal truth.  One man, operating on that truth, may construct a ship in the desert against all collective odds and save the world.
2. Catholicism affirms that there are fixed, unchangeable moral principles.  It cannot teach otherwise.
3. Catholicism affirms that each individual human person is created in the image of God and *"therefore possesses a sacredness that can never be simply subordinate to the good of society as a whole."[69]*
4. Catholicism can never be satisfied with utopian efforts.[70]

Dr. Jean Bethke Elshtain, as a communitarian, has more areas of philosophical intersection.  The IAF fosters the creation of a communitarian society.  Therefore, despite differences, both Elshtain and the IAF are predictable allies.

Ultimately, Elshtain and George's motives for supporting the IAF can only be guessed.  Their actions, however, have grave consequences for local, regional, and ultimately global politics.  Socialism isn't dead yet.

[1]NOTES:

 The November 21, 1998 Public Life Forum was titled: "Religion, Democracy and Organizing."

[2] Francis Cardinal George, remarks at the November 21, 1998 Public Life Forum: "Religion, Democracy and Organizing."

[3] Dr. Jean Bethke Elshtain, remarks at the November 21, 1998 Public Life Forum: "Religion, Democracy and Organizing."

[4] Saul Alinsky, Rules for Radicals, Vintage Books, 1971, p 3.

[5] Mary Beth Rogers, Cold Anger, (p. 210, footnotes for chapter 16, #4)

[6] Ernesto Cortes, SW Regional Director IAF, "Organizing the Community."

[7] Saul Alinsky, Rules for Radicals, (p. 10-11).

[8.] Peter Skerry, "The Resurrection of Saul Alinsky: Neighborhood COPS", The New Republic, February 6, 1984.

[9.]Harry Boyte,  Commonwealth: A Return to Citizen Politics, 1989 (chapter 6 notes).

[10.] Suzanne C. Toton, "Moving Beyond Anguish to Action: What Has Saul Alinsky to Say to Justice Education," published in Religious Education, summer, 1993.

[11] Saul Alinsky, Rules for Radicals (chapter: Of Means and Ends,  pp. 36, 43, and 44)

[12.] "Organizing the Community: The Industrial Areas Foundation Organizer speaks to farmers and farm activists," Ernesto Cortes, The Texas Observer - A Journal of Free Voice, July 11, 1986.

[13] William Greider, quoting Arnold Graf (an IAF organizer), Who Will Tell the People.   The IAF did as Graf had predicted.  Between the time of Greider's publishing Who Will Tell the People (in 1993) and 1996, the IAF did double the number of its local affiliates.

[14]  Debra Shore, "The Trials of a Public Intellectual," University of Chicago Magazine, June 1996.

[15] Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1979.

[16] "Frequently Asked Questions about the Communitarian Network," from a 1996 webpage of the Communitarian Network.

[17] "The Responsive Communitarian Platform: Rights and Responsibilities," prepared for the Communitarian Network by Amitai Etzioni, 1991.  These four components of an ideal community as envisioned by communitarian thought are also included in the writings Robert Bellah, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Michael Sandel.

[18] Ibid., "Not Majoritarian but Strongly Democratic" section.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., " Restoring a Moral Voice," and "Schools, the Second Line of Defense" sections particularly, but see also the sections on "Start with the Family," "Duties to the Polity," and "Cleaning Up the Polity."

[21] Ibid., "The Human Community" section.

[22] Susan Cohen, "Missing Links: We know we want it, but does everybody know what 'community' really means?" Washington Post, July 31, 1994.  The book in question is The Spirit of Community.

[23] For example, John Paul II, "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concerns)," Encyclical Letter, 1987, section 21: "This is one of the reasons why the Church's social doctrine adopts a critical attitude towards both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism."

[24] "The Responsive Communitarian Platform…" section  "Within History."

[25] Henry Tam, Communitarianism: A New Agenda for Politics and Citizenship, New York University Press, 1998, p. 13.

[26] Raymond Boudon (professor at the University of Paris-Sorbonne), "The Sense of Values," lecture delivered the Eilert Sundt seminar on October 29, 1998.

[27] John Paul II, "*Veritatis Splendor (The Splendor of Truth),"* Encyclical Letter, 1993, section 60.

[28] Communitarianism, p. 57.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p. 64.

[31] One example should suffice.  The liberal apologist, Derek Phillips, has written a book to debunk what he terms the "myth of community" created by communitarians.   "An idealization of the past as a reaction to what are seen as the ills of modern society, insufficient attention to relevant historical research, and a reliance on inadequate evidence…are three factors that help explain the mistaken historical claims of communitarian scholars." Derek L. Phillips, Looking Backwards, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 151.
      Communitarian Henry Tam (in Communitarianism) also describes the revisionism – and its despotic character – of communitarian education: "Through working in communities of enquiry, young people learn that although questions in life do not always have ready-made answers, possible solutions [are] discovered by cooperating with others in their search.…people who refuse to comply with the rules of cooperation cannot be allowed to override the wishes of others; and that the most acceptable course of action at the present time could still be subject to revision in the future (p. 65).…Curriculum development would need to look beyond the contents to be taught for different subjects…This approach would not rule out, for example, the teaching of key historical dates or standard chemical equations.  What it would require is that, in teaching such facts, the context in which they gain their significance comes through in associated conversations.  A consequence of this is that the importance of such facts cannot be declared to be indispensable for social cohesion (p 67).…Moving education in this direction could be attacked as undermining traditions.  If the traditions concerned are those which hinder the development of inclusive communities…then it is just as well that those traditions are undermined (p 69).…Instead of allowing individual parents to do as they please, regardless of the consequences of their behavior may have on their fellow citizens, inclusive communities must ensure that clear duties are linked to the role of becoming a parent…citizens seeking to become parents should acknowledge that how they bring up their children would have an impact on the lives of others, and they must therefore accept their need to behave as responsible parents (p 71)."

[32]  "The Responsive Communitarian Platform…" section  "Start with the Family."

[33]  "The Responsive Communitarian Platform…" section  "Within Communities: A Matter of Orientation."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Benjamin R. Barber, <u>Jihad vs. McWorld,</u> Random House Books, 1995, p 277, 279.

[36] <u>Organizing for Family and Church</u> (pg. 18), IAF Publication

[37] Jim Rooney, <u>Organizing the South Bronx</u>, p 249, footnote #23

[38] Suzanne C. Toton, "Moving Beyond Anguish to Action: What Has Saul Alinsky to Say to Justice Education," published in <u>Religious Education</u>, summer, 1993.

[39] See Mary Beth Rogers, <u>Cold Anger.</u>

[40] Maryann Eklund, <u>The Structure and Function of Rhetoric of Valley Interfaith: A Case Study of a Contemporary Social Movement</u>, Masters Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1987. Page 83

[41] Ibid., p 13.

[42] Ibid., p 14.

[43] Ibid., p 84-87 gives a detailed description of the process.

[44] Peter Skerry, "Neighborhood COPS," *The New Republic*,  Feb. 6, 1984.

[45] Mary Beth Rogers, <u>Cold Anger</u>, pg. 97.

[46] Harry Boyte, <u>Community is Possible: Repairing America's Roots</u>, 1984, p 149.

[47] "A Proposal to the New American Schools Development Corporation" by the National Center on Education and the Economy, 1992.  The Proposal also recommends use of the Public Agenda Foundation.  One example of Public Agenda's work toward developing "public engagement" in education has occurred in California.  The California Higher Education Policy Center has hired Public Agenda "to conduct a series of focus groups and public opinion surveys on national and state attitudes toward higher education."

[48] The Ad Council prepared a 38-page "Special Informational Advertisement" which appeared in the June 1996 Readers Digest entitled, "Who Will Speak for the Children?"  Promotional material in the supplement says, "Over the next decade, the Ad Council will dedicate its most potent energies to...the war we need to start fighting on behalf of our children."  It also says that "several billion dollars worth of advertising will be dedicated to children's issues."

[49] See FN #43.

[50] "America 2000: An Education Strategy Sourcebook" US govt. publication, p 26.

[51] New American Schools Development Corporation Facts (and Synopsis) undated (around 1993).
Overview of the National Alliance for Restructuring Education design team states:
        "The believers [in "breaking the system, root and branch"] include the states of Arkansas,
        Kentucky, New York, and Vermont, and Washington, and Pittsburgh, Rochester, San Diego,
        and White Plains, all of which have signed on as participants."
Under the heading "Students Served," the overview says:
     "Currently, the states and school districts mentioned are        already working with the National Alliance and constitute        approximately 12 percent of the nation's school children."
The National Alliance projected that by 1995 it would have 243 initial school sites.

[52] "Designing New American Schools: Baseline Observations on Nine Design Teams," Susan Bodily, Susanna Purnell, Kimberly Ramsey, Christina Smith, 1995, RAND (Report commissioned by the NASDC to analyze its design teams).

[53] "New American Schools Development Corporation Facts," undated, reproduced in <u>America 2000/Goals 2000: Moving the Nation Educationally to a 'New World Order' - Research Manual</u>, ed. James R. Patrick, 1994.

[54] "National Center on Education and the Economy/ National Alliance for Restructuring Education: Proposal Funded by the New American Schools Development Corporation," fact sheet describing framework and design partners, undated.

[55] Letterhead of the National Center on Education and the Economy, January 1995.

[56] <u>Community is Possible</u>, Harry Boyte, 1984, p 126.

[57] <u>Who Will Tell the People</u>, William Greider, 1992, p 231.

[58] "The Texas IAF Vision for Public Schools: Communities of Learners," Texas Interfaith Education Fund, 1990, executive summary.

[59] Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, "Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and Social Capital in Comparative Perspective," *America Behavioral Scientist*, 42,2 (September 1998), Editors' Introduction, Special Issue edited by Foley and Edwards. The work to which they refer is by Mark R. Warren, <u>Social Capital and Community Empowerment: Religion and Political Organization in the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation</u>, Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1995.

[60] ... "Blunting the Conservative Surge: Ideas for a New Progressive Majority", DLC Annual Conference November 13, 1995. Panel chaired by Will Marshall, Progressive Policy Institute President.

[61] Kathleen Sylvester, Progressive Policy Institute Vice President for Domestic Policy, addressing the DLC Annual Conference, November 13, 1995.

[62] "People's Movement", Nancy Kruh, Dallas Morning News, March 5, 1995.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Benjamin R. Barber, <u>Jihad vs. McWorld</u>, Random House Books, 1995, p276-277.

[65] Ibid., p 285.

[66] Ibid., pp 285-286.

[67] Ibid., p 286.

[68] Ibid., p. 287.

[69] David Hollenbach, S.J., "Liberalism, Communitarianism, and the Bishops' Pastoral on the Economy," chapter V in <u>Church Polity and American Politics: Issues in Contemporary American Catholicism</u>, edited by Mary C. Segers, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990.

[70] "The Christian tradition recognizes, of course, that the fullness of love and community will be achieved only when God's work in Christ comes to completion in the kingdom of God. This kingdom has been inaugurated among us, but God's redeeming and transforming work is not yet complete. Within history, knowledge of how to achieve the goal of social unity is limited. Human sin continues to wound the lives of both individuals and larger social bodies and places obstacles in the path toward greater social solidarity. If efforts to protect human dignity are to be effective, they must take these limits on knowledge and love into account." "Economic Justice for All," Pastoral Letter of the United States Catholic Bishops, 1986, no. 67.