Uncommon Wisdom at 1994 International Conference on Servant-Leadership
by Don Frick

Participants at the 1994 conference were treated to uncommon wisdom by Peter Block, author of The Empowered Manager and Stewardship, and Dr. Ann McGee-Cooper, author of You Don’t Have to Go Home From Work Exhausted! and Time Management for Unmanageable People. Both are national leaders in management circles.

The Cathedrals of our Times

Peter Block opened his keynote address with a provocative statement. “The cathedrals of our times are office buildings. The tallest buildings in our towns are the businesses. This is the place we’re going to live out our values, longings, and spiritual dimensions.”

Claiming that we have little experience in organizing human beings in ways that live out our desires, Block identified choice as the issue which ties together democracy, institutions and spirit. He noted that, “The forms and structures of most organizations make it hard for choice, and therefore the spirit, to survive.”

Block identified three characteristics of patriarchy, which is a way of controlling institutions rather than a description of gender: it denies self-expression, preserves authority, and calls for sacrifice. He asked how we could change large systems based on such values, then answered the question. “All I can do is manage the room that I’m in. When large systems try to reform, the reform itself is usually a defense against transformation. True transformation works from the inside out, like a microwave which cooks from the inside out.”

In contrast to patriarchy, service and servant-leadership is characterized by three clauses of a renegotiated contract between us and our colleagues:

(1). “Partnership means whatever we’re in, we both created.”

(2). “We’re both responsible for our own emotional well-being.”

(3). “We’re both responsible for creating tomorrow. This means you have the right to say ‘no’."

Block suggested his own test for servanthood. “Ask low-power people if they have more control, more power, more choice, if they own anything today they didn’t before.” In tandem with empowerment must come accountability. “Power is not entitlement. If people misuse it, take it back. Share control, don’t give it away or abdicate it.”

Block’s final words: “Don’t start at the top. Start with yourself. Ask yourself, ‘What is it I have to surrender?’ Stop caretaking and start serving.”

Joy, Genius, and Servant-Leadership

Beginning with a meditation of the heart and ending with a standing ovation, Dr. Ann McGee-Cooper addressed the 1994 Conference with an invitation to participants to live out their own genius. Ann, who was introduced to the writings of Robert Greenleaf by Jack Lowe, Sr. of TDIndustries in Dallas, told of her own emergence from being someone

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A Conversation With Tom Chappell
by Don Frick

In the early 1970’s, Tom Chappell and his wife founded Tom’s of Maine, a company which specializes in natural personal care products. By the mid-1980’s, Mr. Chappell, a lifelong churchman, decided to intensify his exploration of his relationship to God, his personal mission, and his future role in Tom’s of Maine. He attended Harvard Divinity School and brought back to his company ideas which, over time, have revolutionized the company culture. The compelling story is told in his book, The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good, published by Bantam and sold by the Greenleaf Center (paperback, $11 plus $3.50 shipping). In the fall of 1994, Mr. Chappell visited with the staff of The Greenleaf Center. Following are excerpts from the conversation.

On Multiple Aims

During the 1980’s I was questioning whether or not the point of an enterprise was to maximize shareholder gain. After my time at Harvard, I decided that was the historical viewpoint, but it did not necessarily have any claim to legitimacy, and that one could re-examine the purpose of an enterprise. Two insights gave me the courage to challenge that presumption.

One was Jonathon Edwards’ discourse on the ends for which God created the world. Edwards talks about ultimate means and subordinate means. I decided that, for myself, commerce is necessary. It’s a transaction granted by free enterprise. Profit is something we are allowed to make. But ultimately, since we’re drawing on the common goodness of life and communities and

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The Philanthropist as Servant-Leader

by Douglas M. Lawson, Ph.D.
Chairman & CEO, Douglas M. Lawson Associates, Inc.

Over the course of my more than 25 years as a fund-raising consultant to non-profit organizations, I have had the great privilege to meet many truly exceptional people. These people are exceptional not simply because of their wealth or even because of their generosity. They are exceptional because they embody certain characteristics that set them apart from others. The traits they possess weren’t necessarily acquired along with their fortunes. Rather these qualities come from within them; from a spirituality of life that empowers them to rise above the crowd to become leaders of people while also seeing the need to be of service to people.

Of the many characteristics these philanthropists possess, there are three significant ones I find they hold in common. First, they are attentive listeners; second, they are enablers; and third, they are evangelists.

Philanthropists, in general, are busy people. Because they are successful, they are in demand. Their time is precious, as they have so little of it for themselves. Organizations ask them for their assistance; ask for their presence on committees, at events and at meetings. A good philanthropist has numerous commitments to juggle. Yet the great ones are never too busy to listen to another’s concerns in a caring and receptive way. By their attentive listening, they say that you, your dreams, your projects are important to them and worthy of consideration. For a philanthropist to aspire to be a servant-leader, receptive listening is a requisite.

The therapist and author Carl Rogers postulated that people need a climate of ‘unconditional positive regard’ to enable them to make much-needed changes in their lives. The philanthropist who embodies servant-leadership enables that same atmosphere to take hold within the communities and organizations in which he or she lives and works. By fostering those conditions, a philanthropist frees people from fears of judgement or reprisal that could stifle their thinking creatively and acting courageously. The philanthropic servant-leader then becomes an agent for change, leading the community and individuals to a new and wider vision of life with each other.

What vision has ever become reality, what mission has ever succeeded, what task ever completed without the burning passion and total commitment of at least one person who brings life and energy to that which he has set heart and mind to? Like a prophet of old, the philanthropist is an evangelizer who touches the hearts and souls of people, rallying them to his cause, stirring them to action. To be a credible witness, rather than an in-credible one, the philanthropist embodies the values and vision of the organization for which he speaks. The messenger becomes the message he delivers.

Leadership without service to others is hollow and self-serving. The philanthropist who aspires to be a leader of people and causes within the community, must first become the servant of that community. Few people follow self-serving leaders. But many join with servant-leaders as catalysts for change in their communities.

Message from the Executive Director

by Larry Spears

The following are brief excerpts and commentary on servant-leadership from selected articles, essays and interviews which have appeared in recent months:

"I would like to put forward the idea that those of us who are involved in philanthropic endeavors act as 'servant-leaders' for our institutions. Through our work we both serve and lead others, and thus have a unique opportunity to enhance the quality of those institutions which we serve."


"The servant-leader idea has grown into a number of areas, including: its use as a working philosophy and model in for-profit corporations; as the foundation for what has come to be called 'trustee education'; the bringing together of servanteadership and experiential education in the off-shoot are of 'service-learning'; the use of servant-leadership within community leadership programs; the growing use of Greenleaf's writings in both formal management/leadership courses and by independent consultants working directly with institutions; and as a core idea for several diverse areas of personal growth and transformation."

From "Servant-Leadership: Quest for Caring Leadership," by Larry Spears, Inner Quest, #2, 1994

"Servant-leadership, to me, has always been an expression of the spirit, a commitment to perform, to give oneself beyond our more selfish needs," says Henry Rosso, director emeritus of The Fund Raising School.

Although the servant-leadership movement has grown slowly, it has planted its roots throughout society. In the past several years, for example, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Lilly Endowment Inc. and the Sisters of St. Joseph Health System have either implemented the ideas internally or offered support for implementation of servant-leadership in other organizations."

From "Of Servants and Leaders," by Larry Spears, Advancing Philanthropy/Fall, 1994, National Society of Fund Raising Executives

"People are not just leaders or followers," says Larry Spears. "We are all, in various parts of our lives, leaders and followers of others. People move back and forth between leading and following. It's important to recognize that those who seek to integrate both leading and following are ultimately more whole as people, as human beings..."

From "To serve, to lead," by Terri Horvath, Circle K/November-December, 1994, Kiwanis Club International

"There is a deep and growing hunger in our society for a world in which people truly care for one another. We long for a world in which people are treated humanely and helped in their personal growth. We long for a world in which our institutions treat workers and customers fairly. We long for a world in which our leaders can be trusted to truly serve the needs of the many, rather than the few... As we approach the 21st Century, we are beginning to see that traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership are slowly yielding to a newer model—one which is based upon teamwork and community. It seeks to involve others in decision-making. It is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior; and, it is attempting to enhance the personal growth of workers, while at the same time improving the caring and quality of our many institutions. This emerging approach to leadership and service is called, servant-leadership..."


Who is the Servant-Leader?

The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant — first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?"

--- from The Servant as Leader by Robert K. Greenleaf

The Greenleaf Center's Mission

"The Center's mission is to fundamentally improve the caring and quality of all institutions through a new approach to leadership, structure, and decisionmaking. Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decisionmaking."

The Greenleaf Center's Goals

1. To help deepen an understanding of the original ideas of Robert K. Greenleaf and the principles of servant-leadership, via the preservation and promotion of his writings.
2. To nurture colleagues and institutions by providing a focal point, and opportunities to share thoughts and ideas on servant-leadership.
3. To produce and publish new resources by others on servant-leadership.
4. To connect servant-leaders in a network of learning.

Originally founded in 1964 as the Center for Applied Ethics, Inc., the Center was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985. The Center is an international, not-for-profit institution headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Servant Leader Books in Review

Leadership in a New Era: Visionary Approaches to the Biggest Crisis of Our Time

Edited by John Renesch.

Reviewed by Jeff McCollum

(From time to time, review of books relating to the idea of servant-leadership are included in The Servant Leader. This review is written by Jeff McCollum, a member of the Greenleaf Center’s Board of Trustees. Jeff is Director of Organization Development for Warner-Wellcome, a consumer health products manufacturer.)

A nthologies can be both a blessing and a curse. This one is no exception. The blessing is that John Renesch has brought together and deftly edited a rich diversity of 23 insightful and provocative voices (including that of Larry Spears, Executive Director of the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership) calling for a new form of leadership to guide organizations and, in turn, society in a tumultuous period. To the extent possible Renesch has woven a number of individual threads into a whole cloth. The curse of this anthology is that I experienced it like a receiving line. There are people here whose thinking I would have liked to explore more deeply, but they moved on before that could happen.

The volume is business-oriented but not to the extent that those from other types of organizations will feel excluded. Renesch is affiliated with the World Business Academy, an advocacy organization for values-based and spirit-driven businesses. The reason for a business focus comes startlingly clear in Stewart Emery’s interview with legendary television producer Norman Lear, one of the most compelling chapters in the book. Lear observes, “A lot of years ago, Walter Lippman was contemplating which of the institutions in American life had the most impact on Americans. He identified what he called the ancestral order of institutions based on their influence: the family being number one, religion being number two, civil authority being number three and education being number four. He called that the old ancestral order which we have seen, in our time, totally destroyed. . . . I think because nature abhors a vacuum, we have seen the institution of business move in and take the place of the combinations of all these institutions.”

Lear, whose comments are in the concluding chapter of the book, is also hard on politicians (lacking in moral courage) and his own industry, TV which he describes in these words, “Relentlessly consistent, utterly single-minded and focused, the clear, dominating influence of commercial television is, ‘You are what you consume’.”

The other chapters in this book offer an abundance of ideas which people, inside our institutions, can use and are using to create organizations which are hospitable to the human spirit and capable of thriving in a chaotic world. Three themes recur throughout Leadership in a New Era: the requirement for comfort with paradox, the idea that organizational change flows “inside out” from leaders toward those who give them their trust, and the belief that leaders are developers of people and organizations.

The notion of paradox emerges in many of the essays. Carol Sanford, whose essay on the ethics and practicality of incentives I found especially enlightening, sets the stage by presenting leadership as an act of creation as opposed to one of coping, as being purposeful versus reactive. That theme is echoed in essays by Charles Kiefer and Warren Bennis. Susan Campbell writes of the need for leaders to let go of “either/or” thinking and be comfortable with “both/and” thinking. Meg Wheatley (chaos and order) and John Adams (long and term orientation, global and local perspective, coping with what is and building what can be) offer additional aspects of paradox. Spears writes of the inherent paradox in the term “servant-leadership.” The idea that change starts with the leader and flows out to those who are led is embedded in several of the essays, including Tina Rasmussen’s “Leading from Within: Taking a Leap of Faith,” and Martha Spike’s, “For Radical Change: The Buck Stops Here.” Spike observes, “Owning up to one’s collusion, albeit unintended, with unwanted results is a matter of character.” Rasmussen, quoting Charles Handy, argues for leaders in the for-profit sector to develop a clear sense of purpose in their organizations which is modeled by them and which transcends profits. Robert Rabin, Adams, Bennis and Wheatley also work with this theme. All speak of service to society. Barbara Shipka, in her essay, “A Sacred Responsibility,” writes, “At this time in human history, business is the most powerful institution on earth and it represents a mushrooming, interconnected infrastructure that blankets the earth and, for the most part, works.”

The leader as developer of people and organizations, one of Robert Greenleaf’s fundamental tenets, is discussed by Ed Oakley, Bennis, Rasmussen, Spears, Wheatley and Carol McCall. Charles Krembs (“Leadership Challenges in Technical Organizations”) describes the practice of dual career paths, technical and managerial, as “propagating a dangerous myth.” Leadership is, they argue, natural and must emerge naturally in response to the situation at hand. It can come from anywhere in the organization.

Krembs and Emery dive into one disturbing shadow element of leadership—the tendency of others to give up their own autonomy and invest the responsibility for their well-being on the leader. Krembs argues that the concept of leadership “becomes a giant projection screen for people to play out whatever they are most worried about.” Emery adds, “The need to believe in salvation through some separate and thus external source runs deep in the human psyche. Accompanying the historical procession of ideologies is our endless willingness to attribute the power to a charismatic leader.”

Visionary leadership, strategic leadership, participative leadership, even servant-leadership, if reflective of a deep wish on the part of those led to give away personal responsibility, can not be accepted. That is why Greenleaf’s test, (“do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous?”) is so critically important.
people, we need to be restorative and transformative of the common good. If we’re not, we should not presume it will always be there. It has always been there because it has been in such abundance, but never with such institutional power that we attacked and consumed goodness as we do today.

It doesn’t matter whether you agree that one aim is ultimate and one is subordinate. It only matters that there is more than one aim—more than profitability. And, so I constantly work with the multiple aims perspective as the new vision for leaders of the company. They cannot justify taking time, talent, and treasure to support common good if the aim of the business is maximizing shareholder gain. But, if you change the purpose of the business and say there is a social end, a financial end and a marketplace end, then you will allocate objectives and resources accordingly.

The second insight was from liberation theology, the idea that we need not review history as a sole means of authority. We can simply re-imagine the outcome. Then, we can set up a system of responding to those new outcomes that has adequate accountabilities.

For me, the key word is intentionality. If you can be intentional about building the common good and market share and profit, and if we can do all of those things and still take market share away from our competition, and serve our relations in the way they expect to be served, then who says we can’t have multiple aims as the purpose of the business? That’s what the liberation argument would be.

As a servant-leader, managing for profit in “the middle way” is a balancing act of managing all those competing aims. If your system gets out of whack and you’re losing money for a sustained period of time, you’ve got to decide what you’re going to do about that.

On Transforming an Organization
The reason the first section of my book is all about beliefs and mission is because that’s where the work begins, institutionally. It’s hard to give up on something you really believe in. If we’re only giving up our management idea, we haven’t lost anything, but if we’re giving up something we care about, we’ve lost a lot.

If you build into the business a respect for common beliefs that you can all articulate and be committed to, and if you can then manage to some degree an ability to walk the talk—believe me, that’s hard to do—then when it comes time to balance the relationship wheel (such as cutting expenses), you’ve still got to keep up your volunteerism effort. You’ve still got to keep up your giving program, because you’ve got people depending on it.

On Recruiting Servants
I’m constantly thinking about how we go about the process of recruiting so we have people who know what serving means, if that’s what they really want to do. I’ve been concerned that we live in an age where professionalism is a matter of operating within walls. We somehow set up these walls we decide we can’t pass through, go over, or whatever. I’d like to have people who can manage without walls. I’m not suggesting there aren’t boundaries. There are. There are clearly defined roles and accountabilities, but moving from one role to another should be motivated by whatever it takes to solve a problem or to collaborate. What that is about is a creative process. So, I want people who can recreate, as opposed to managing the flow.

On The Freedom to Serve
Autonomy is the freedom to serve with responsibility, not license. I find that people don’t generally feel free to serve. If there’s anything we can do as leaders, it is to instill in them the idea that, if they’re not willing to share what’s in their gut, we’re not going to have answers.

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Conference
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who wished to stimulate genius in others to one who embarked on a lifelong journey to claim it for herself, and find the courage to design workplaces congruent with her deepest values and beliefs. Ann believes answers are to be found in processes rather than systems, in the heart rather than in books.

“Find a picture of yourself as a vulnerable little child and let that little kid be your leader, your voice, your heart, your conscience, your teacher. That will be one of the centering points if you choose to find your genius and let it grow through your life.”

Joy is one of the values which Ann believes can open our lives to deeper and higher dimensions. It’s a quality not often discussed in the work world.

“I believe in joy. I think it gives us the courage to come out from behind our blocking assumptions.” McGee-Cooper sought to find and consult with a company that values joy in the workplace. She found it in Southwest Airlines.

Ann shared stories from Southwest Airlines, how employees are chosen for their ability to work in teams and serve others, how they are integrated into the culture, taught whole-brained thinking, mentored, encouraged to unleash their creativity, and rewarded for “outrageous customer service.”

Ann explained a mysterious illness called “Hurry Sickness” and showed how it can interfere with our efforts to serve. She then introduced an original Servant-Leader Journal which uses quotes from Greenleaf’s work to stimulate personal reflections about servant-leadership and personal growth.

The next International Conference will be held in Indianapolis on October 19-21, 1995. This very special conference will celebrate the 25th anniversary of The Servant as Leader. Featured speakers will include: James Autry (Love and Profit, Life and Work), Tom Chappell (The Soul of a Business), Robert Kelley (The Power of Followership), Margaret Wheatley (Leadership and the New Science), and David Whyte (The Heart Aroused). Early-bird registration will be available in January. Plan now to attend this once-in-a-lifetime event!

The Greenleaf Center has moved. Please note our new address and phone numbers. Thank you!

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