



## EVOLVING LEADERSHIP: SERVANT-LEADERSHIP IN THE POLITICAL WORLD

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An interesting experience about how leadership can work in modern businesses occurred when I was a Member of Congress. It involved legislation entitled the Teamwork of Employees and Management Act (Team Act) that was introduced in Congress at the request of a group of employers. The employers sought to amend the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to allow teams of their employees to determine terms and conditions of their employment.

The Team Act was opposed by labor unions that argued that the NLRA allows only employers or duly elected labor unions, but not employees, to determine their own terms of employment. The unions were legally correct. Complaints filed by labor organizations with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) had resulted in substantial fines against employers for using “unfair labor practices” by delegating to teams of employees the powers to determine their own terms and conditions of work.

It may be difficult for some to understand how the granting of such rights by employers to employees could be deemed a breach of law, especially when applied within a non-union setting. But the law at its best is imperfect, and its imperfections deepen when Congress and unions are involved in the intense partisan politics of labor law.

In order to avoid these charges, concerned employers appealed to Congress for legislation to amend the NLRA to specifically allow employers operating a non-union business to delegate to teams of their employees enhanced powers to determine the terms and conditions of their employment, including the operation of entire departments, hiring, firing, wage



increases, and so forth. The legislation specifically preserved the traditional right of unions that had been elected by employees to be their exclusive bargaining agent to have the sole right to represent employees in the determination of their terms and conditions of employment.

Of course, unions were not unaware that allowing employees new freedoms to determine their own conditions of work might inhibit votes by employees to be represented exclusively by unions. It was not surprising, therefore, that unions, in general, opposed the legislation. President Clinton sided with labor unions. The majority of Democrats followed the President's lead, while many Republicans wanted no part of a bill that would threaten their political support by labor unions.

Yet the Team Act narrowly passed in both the House and Senate in the 104th Congress. But it was vetoed by the President. An override of the veto proved to be impossible.

#### NEW IDEAS OF LEADERSHIP

The employers and employees who supported this legislation believed that it was empowering for teams of employees to have the freedom to determine significant conditions of their employment. And it was here that I first heard of servant-leadership.

I found that servant-leadership was first proposed in the 1960s by Robert Greenleaf. This quiet and erudite Quaker was in a high executive capacity at AT&T corporation for many years, where his specialty was in management research, development and education. He took early retirement in 1964 because he was so taken by the promise of servant-leadership in business. He began his second career teaching and consulting at institutions ranging from Harvard Business School to the Ford Foundation to scores of churches and not-for-profit institutions. From 1970 until his death in 1990, Greenleaf wrote a remarkable series of essays and books about the viability of servant-leadership in businesses, especially large businesses. These essays are still influencing new generations of people who are interested in regenerating a loss of what Greenleaf felt was an integral part of



early America's success, that is, its agricultural setting with its strong sense of community, relationships, and connectedness among employers and employees.

The more I learned about Robert Greenleaf, the more I appreciated his ideas about servant-leadership and the importance of business being designed to validate the worth and dignity of employees, and the more I understood why those employers were asking Congress to pass the Team Act. However, I also realized how difficult it was for such new ideas to penetrate political minds, especially in the field of labor law. Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle are still aware of the historic and vitriolic battles over labor laws fought in the 1930s. And they still engage in those battles as though time has stood still.

Many years of political experience have also taught me that the architects of beneficial changes in society are seldom our political leaders. Usually, the real "legislators" of new and exciting ideas come from the private sector, from contemporary prophets and role models, like Greenleaf, that is, from ordinary people—employers, employees, teachers, artists, poets, writers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, educators—mostly non-political folks from all walks of life.

And during the tumultuous twentieth century, there were exciting examples of people who, like Greenleaf, began to tire of the old and often barbaric rules of command and control business leadership.

The beauty of the Team Act was that bosses who championed this kind of leadership found that their employees felt that their worth and potential were validated when they were granted control of the terms and conditions of their employment. Employees enthusiastically reported that they found this empowering. And what's more, employers discovered that it was also good for customers, shareholders and business profits.

I learned that Greenleaf (1977) encouraged managers of business to move from traditional direct, command and control and the supervisory approach of leadership to a servant-leadership that requires "the growth of those who do the work as the primary aim of business" (1977, p. 145).



Greenleaf talked about cultural changes in America and observed that “until recently, caring was largely person to person; now most of it is mediated through institutions—often large, complex, powerful, impersonal, not always competent, sometimes corrupt” (1977, p. 49). Greenleaf apparently saw these large and impersonal institutions as a labyrinth of limited-liability rather than of community, that is, as steeped in highly conditional love. That interested me.

Greenleaf reasoned that “if a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them” (1977, p. 49). He agreed that “the usual assumption about the (business) firm is that it is in business to make a profit and serve its customers and that it does things for and to employees to get them to be productive” (1977, p. 145).

He presented the novel idea, however, that the “new ethic requires that growth of those who do the work (the employees) is the primary aim, and the workers then see to it that the customer is served and that the ink on the bottom line is black” (1977, p. 145). He therefore saw businesses moving “from where they are, with the heavy emphasis on production and often greed, to where they need to be, with heavy emphasis on growing people” (1977, p. 143). That, indeed, struck me as revolutionary new thought.

In fact, without the ultimate adoption by business organizations of servant-leadership, Greenleaf saw exploitation of employees, stockholders, investors, customers, and clients, and ultimately disaster for society. Obviously, he was a business prophet ahead of his time, a man who knew the simple power of love. I imagine many people of his day thought him a bit odd. Yet there is an old saying that love makes you free, but first it makes you feel very odd. Greenleaf must have felt very odd at times about his ideas of servant-leadership.





## SERVANT-LEADERS, UTOPIAN THOUGHTS?—EARLIER BUSINESS PROPHETS

In 1970 Greenleaf asked himself whether his thoughts about servant-leadership and business entities ultimately embracing concepts of “growing employees” were “utopian” (1977, p. 147). That, of course, was, and still is, the view of the majority of business people. He answered by saying:

I don't think so. Most of our large American businesses have the capability and the resources to embrace a new ethic like this and act resolutely on its implications. And I believe that among them there are several that have sufficient foresight and creative drive that they will prefer to run ahead of the changing ethic rather than be run over by them. Such is the way that new ethics are made. (1977, p. 147)

Interestingly, in an essay in 1974, Greenleaf mentioned that he had received “the first unequivocal response” from an institution inquiring about how it could become a servant-leader. Greenleaf observed: “This response did not come from where the casual observer might guess—a church, a university, a hospital, a social agency. It came from where I expected it: from a business, a large multinational business” (1977, p. 158).

Here is how Greenleaf referred to servant-leadership in 1970 when there were few adherents to his views:

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant (manager) first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and most difficult to administer, is this: *Do those served grow as persons?* (emphasis mine) 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? (1977, p. 13)

That's a pretty tough challenge for practical business people to accept. But that is always true of the prophet's message.

Greenleaf writes that the challenges were great also in the seventeenth



century, when an earlier prophet of new business values, George Fox, gave English Quaker business people a new ethic (truthfulness, dependability, fixed prices, no haggling). Fox did it, according to Greenleaf, “because his view of right conduct demanded it, not because it would be more profitable” (1977, p. 143). However, it did, in fact, become practical and more profitable, Greenleaf reports, “because those early Quaker businessmen quickly emerged out of the seamy morass of that day as people who could be trusted. But the new ethic was a radical demand on those people and they must have had apprehensions about it when it was urged upon them” (1977, p. 143).

In 1970, six years after Greenleaf had taken early retirement from business and when he began to publish his thoughts about servant-leadership and how validating the worth and dignity of people would build communities of trust even in big business, his thoughts were scoffed at as being “love and kisses,” not practical, and nothing but unsubstantiated theories. Few people, in or out of business, took his ideas seriously

They were especially unthinkable in the rough and tumble business and labor markets I remember as a young lawyer in the ‘50s. Or in my earliest days of working my way through college, when I labored in the construction trades in the late ‘40s as a member of the Building and Construction Trades Council of the American Federation of Labor. Few people in business management in those days talked about love or cultures of trust being an integral part of competitive business organizations. No way! It was a hard-nosed sink or swim, dog-eat-dog, command and control attitude that prevailed in business. Love—especially unconditional love—was something one kept at home, or maybe exercised in church or on special occasions, but it was no part of highly competitive businesses and the rigors of capitalism.

But the consciousness of a free people armed with guarantees of human rights have an unfathomable way of altering our views and advancing humanity in often unobserved and unexpected ways. Greenleaf was a contemporary prophet and one who was far ahead of his time. He began



writing in the 1970s about how America was losing its social values of love and service to others that had been so important in a largely small-town, agricultural America of his early youth. He was not afraid to write and speak passionately, yet softly, about those regenerative values in, of all places, the workplace.

#### CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Today, more than three decades after Greenleaf first wrote about servant-leadership, listen to a contemporary analysis of servant-leadership by Dr. Stephen Covey, founder of the nonprofit Institute for Principle-Centered leadership and author of the best-selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*:

One of the things that's driving it (servant-leadership) is the global economy, which absolutely insists on quality at low cost. You've got to produce more for less and with greater speed than ever done before. The only way you can do that in a sustained way is through the empowerment of people. And the only way you can get empowerment is through high-trust cultures and through empowerment philosophy that turn bosses into servants and coaches. (in Spears, 1998, Foreword, p. xi)

Covey (1989) also, without apology, zeroes in on those seemingly theoretical words "unconditional love" as the root source of "high trust cultures" needed in business organizations that result in empowerment of employees.

[W]hen we truly love others without condition, without strings, we help them feel secure and safe and validated and affirmed in their essential worth, identity, and integrity. Their natural growth process is encouraged. We make it easier for them to live the laws of life — cooperation, contribution, self-discipline, integrity — and to discover and live true to the highest and best within them. We give them the freedom to act on their own inner imperatives rather than to react to our conditions and limitations. (Covey, 1989, p. 199)



Lest anyone assume that the power of love is too soft and not practical, Covey adds, “This does not mean we become permissive or soft. That itself is a massive withdrawal. We counsel, we plead, we set limits and consequences. But we love regardless” (Covey, 1989, p. 199).

Covey then writes,

When we violate the primary laws of love, when we attach strings and conditions to that gift, we actually encourage others to violate the primary laws of life. We put them in a reactive, defensive position where they feel they have to prove, “I matter as a person, independent of you.” In reality, they aren’t independent. They are counter-dependent, which is another form of dependency and is at the lowest end of the Maturity Continuum. They become reactive, almost enemy-centered, more concerned about defending their “rights” and producing evidence of their individuality than they are about proactively listening to and honoring their own inner imperatives. (Covey, 1989, p. 199)

The advice is good advice not only for employers, but also for teachers, parents—for anyone who has authority over others.

Covey concludes: “The key is to make deposits, constant deposits of unconditional love” (Covey, 1989, p. 199). That, of course, is deemed to be much too theoretical for most observers. But business people today are taking a second look. The world is changing and getting smaller. Leaders, all kinds, are beginning to listen to the prophets and role models who are bringing home the point that building community based on love is an essential in all human organizations because it is a basic law of the cosmos.

Greenleaf (1977) concurs, he agrees with the importance of those words, “unconditional love” and writes,

Love is an indefinable term, and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. But it begins, I believe, with one absolute condition: unlimited liability. As soon as one’s liability for another is qualified to any degree, love is diminished by that much. (1977, p. 38)

Obviously, neither Covey nor Greenleaf had any problems with uncon-



ditional love being impractical or beyond anyone's practical abilities. They both found it natural, powerful, pragmatic, and a very real law of human nature, one that could be of immense help to businesses in a world that worries about the effect of global competition.

In other words, effective leadership should recognize the pragmatic and common sense of cultures of trust that validate and empower people rather than demeaning and alienating them. In the view of Greenleaf and Covey, this is not theoretical for business leaders, but the opposite: very practical, necessary, synergistic, a "win-win" for employers, employees, stockholders, customers and society. If it's really applied there should be no losers—only winners.

The Team Act would have allowed employers and employees to rise above some of the impulses that create so much management-labor discord in America today because it's good for both management and labor, as well as for profits. Servant-leadership involves new and practical ideas about how the participative universe really operates. It is about de-conditioning the power of love in order to validate the worth of people, that is, of employees and customers.

Admittedly, that may not represent common thoughts about effective labor relationships today. Most employers and labor unions today would say that it is nice theory, but impractical in capitalism.

But then prophets are nothing if not ahead of their time.

#### THE PREDICTED DISCOMBOBULATION AND EXPLOITATION OF COMMAND AND CONTROL LEADERSHIP

I was impressed by the following words of Covey relative to the potential effect of servant-leadership upon America and upon capitalism.

I believe that the overwhelming majority of the people of this country, with the right kind of servant-leadership at all levels, most importantly at the family level, could heal our country. Otherwise, our social problems will worsen and deepen until eventually they will overwhelm



the economic machinery and this would discombobulate everything. (in Spears, 1998, Foreword, p. xviii)

This prediction comes not from a philosopher or from the halls of academia. Precisely the opposite. It comes from a very practical and respected consultant to free enterprise leaders. And he prophetically warns that a command and control leadership in business will eventually overwhelm our economic machinery with its cyclical episodes of greed and exploitation of employees, investors, and perhaps ultimately our environment.

In the light of the latest economic exploitations, disasters, and business boondoggles that have again befallen business leadership in America, the persistent and seamy side of capitalism, Greenleaf's and Covey's words seem prophetic.

When the most recent economic bubble burst in America, business leadership was again faced with an array of embarrassing investigations and charges of civil or criminal wrongdoing. America found that the corporate business leaders of Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, and many other public corporations and their officers, accountants, board members, insiders, financial analysts, investment bankers, and other assorted allies had spun webs of exclusivity, intrigue, crooked accounting, greed, and deceit. The results for employees, stockholders, and America's economy were devastating. Corrupt corporate cultures in America seem to be endemic to business leadership and free enterprise.

Millions of employees, small investors, and businesses, nation-wide, had been economically devastated. Greed ruled the day in Wall Street and in prestigious financial circles and in many a board room. Even the board of the venerable New York Stock Exchange was scored for unconscionable conduct. Capitalism received yet another severe black eye, and as I write this new breaches of law by business leaders and their advisors are emerging.

As a Member of Congress for fourteen years, I have marveled at the number of major economic disasters caused by business leaders that seem



to come along every few years like clockwork to embarrass free enterprise and our nation. And often, some of these disasters, like the Savings and Loan financial crisis, have required the taxpayers of America to bail out big business robber barons and their advisors and cohorts with billions of dollars of taxpayer funds. And the beat goes on.

One thing is for sure: a great many corporate executives, accountants, board members, financial experts, insiders, *ad infinitum* had contributed a lot, to use Covey's words, to "overwhelm the economic machinery and to discombobulate everything." And, of course, as a result Congress is called upon to pass a plethora of new laws to control the selfishness and greed of big business. But we all know that even the best of laws, alone, won't change these cyclical business disasters that afflict free enterprise and create societies with too great a disparity between the rich and poor. Robber barons have been an embarrassing part of the capitalist system for too long. Ultimately, there has to be a change of consciousness here, not a change of laws, in order to alter the questionable culture of America's long line of big business manipulators. Without the evolution of new concepts, such as servant-leadership in business affairs, these manipulators will always find ways of getting around the law to greedily discombobulate and exploit the economy and savings of employees and stockholders.

Somehow, the corporate cultures of greed must change. And eventually they will, as they did in the seventeenth century when George Fox, the English Quaker businessman, developed his new ethics of truthfulness, dependability, and fixed prices.

The old concepts of command and control and "power counts" have been descriptive of business leadership for too long. We are in a new millennium. Responsibility, stewardship, and yes, love, are not just nice words. They are practical and a part of any sustained success and progress of human nature. Servant-leadership is something we all ought to be thinking about in business, education, and politics, in making for a better place for the children we so blithely bring into this world. It may be the only way to save democracy, free enterprise and capitalism, and perhaps civilization. It



should be a vital part of the expansion of democracy and of the bill of rights for the people of our world.

#### WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR CAPITALISM TO ABANDON TRADITIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL LEADERSHIP?

For business leaders to ever give up command and control leadership, or at least to begin modifying it, they must at least become convinced that a global economy will insist on high quality products and services delivered to the consumer for less and with greater speed than ever before, and that the only practical way of doing that in a sustained way is through empowerment of employees with high-trust cultures.

In other words, the global economy is going to insist that business leaders must recognize that employees (and stockholders and consumers) are not just cogs in an inert machine. They are living, breathing human beings who must be empowered by being treated with dignity and respect.

This means that business leadership is going to have to be convinced that it is only that kind of practical leadership that can effectively compete long term in what is increasingly a global economy. Globalization has the potential of synergistically benefiting a greater part of mankind. Surely, business leaders realize, better than most of society, that we live in a shrinking world, and people from all nations are becoming aware that we are all interconnected now more than ever before. That cries out for a more loving and compassionate business leadership. Love knows no boundaries.

What damages free trade and globalization in the eyes of many today are international business organizations and their well-connected allies and collaborators who are seen as exploitative. That kind of a business as usual is not only immoral, but also against everyone's best interests. Economic viability is something all the world is seeking and needs. Only business leaders can give them this. Business leaders don't have to see this as a win-lose situation. And as the have-nots of this world also become more economically viable, they won't be un-welcomed crashers of our borders.





Why do so many business and political leaders have so little awareness of this? The universe's rules for safe conduct in our fragile human existence within time and space are not that difficult to understand. They simply call for the expansion of our love, given as unconditionally as possible in our fragile relationships with others — beyond family, tribe, religion, race, gender, nationality, social class, and so forth.

In the final analysis, this is a participative world, a unified cosmos — in which we all live and work and are united as one. Relationships are important. It's not going to work, however, if one-half of the people of this world are uneducated, sick, desperately poor, and starving. We all have experienced love. We don't have to take it by faith. No one has to explain what it is. In our better moments, we know it works. Without it, life is intolerable. Yet most of us apply it, with limits and conditions, within our family, home, religion, economic class or tribes, and assume that love and service in business or other worldly pursuits is too theoretical. Too "touchy-feely," too impractical, vague, and abstract to be otherwise applied. And thus, we condition the boundaries of our love and reap the grim consequences.

Rabbi Michael Lerner writes:

In a world where two billion people live on an income of two dollars a day, and an average of 30,000 children die every day from diseases related to malnutrition, those who live at the top of the world's food chain will always live in fear that military prowess will prove inadequate to protect them. (Michael Lerner, *Anyone But Bush? Tikkun*, March/April, 2004, p. 13)

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP: IS IT BEGINNING TO CHANGE?

The philosophy of leadership may, however, be changing. There are, at least, hopeful signs. The twentieth century brought with it an unprecedented revolution of democracy and human rights. And many world leaders, including some former tyrants, emerged from that bloody century recogniz-



ing that political command and control leadership had a dismal record of wars, hatred and reciprocal vengeance. Slowly, political leadership of some nations has shown signs that leadership based on command and control is an invitation to disaster.

For instance, it was difficult in the early days of the twentieth century not to notice how a very shy but effective leader, Mohandas Gandhi, was able to champion love, non-violence, forgiveness, and peaceful civil disobedience to unjust laws in successfully leading India to a largely bloodless revolution against England. Gandhi said that one person's love (1) can negate the hate of millions and (2) could gently shake a nation. At first, no one took such a philosophy of leadership seriously. He admitted that he got those ideas from a manuscript of a book, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, written by Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy in 1893. The book had been smuggled out of Russia into England, where Gandhi, as a young law student, chanced to read it. As a result, Gandhi later actually demonstrated in the twentieth century to an astonished world how the power of one person's love could indeed gently shake a continent and negate the hate of millions as he led a revolution to free India from English rule with a minimum of bloodshed.

And a youthful Nelson Mandela, one of the liberators of South Africa from apartheid and its first democratically elected President from 1994 to 1999, also developed a servant-leadership that copied the use of love, peaceful civil disobedience, and non-violence because he saw it so effectively used by Gandhi to battle racism and economic deprivation against Indians during Gandhi's 21-year residency in South Africa.

Gandhi's demonstration of the practical powers of love, forgiveness, non-violence, and peaceful civil disobedience to unjust laws was also replicated by Martin Luther King Jr. in the successful civil rights revolution in America led by Dr. King in the 1960s.

Later, Lech Walesa, the founder of the Solidarity labor movement in Poland, also copied Gandhi's tactics of non-violence and peaceful disobe-



ence against unjust laws in his successful drive for Polish independence from the powerful communist regime in Poland.

The power of leadership based on cultures of love, forgiveness, and non-violence also appeared during the twentieth century in unlikely political leaders who wearied of leadership based on command and control and terrorism. President F.W. de Klerk of South Africa—in the 1990s at a crucial time in South Africa’s history—demonstrated the courage and prophetic vision to announce to a startled world that the best interests of the white community of South Africa would be served by negotiating themselves out of exclusive control of political power. As South Africa’s Bishop Desmond Tutu (1997) put it: “Very few constituencies are likely to take too kindly to candidates for political office who say their platform is to hand over power to their traditional adversaries” (Tutu, p. 38).

And, fortunately, when Nelson Mandela then emerged from 27 years of prison, he amazingly did not demonstrate hatred or revenge, but rather love, non-violence, reconciliation, and forgiveness for his captors. As a result, South Africa joined the growing number of democracies in the twentieth century that guarantee freedom and basic human rights to all of its citizens regardless of race, religion or creed.

After the creation of the South Africa democracy, an equally amazing event occurred. The government of South Africa, headed by Nelson Mandela, created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission chaired by Bishop Desmond Tutu. The TRC was designed to grant forgiveness and amnesty for all acts of terrorism to those on both sides who admitted their guilt during the history of the South African apartheid nightmare.

Obviously, the TRC was a unique response of love and forgiveness by both sides to the bitter terrorism that plagued South Africa for so many years. Who could have predicted democracy followed by this massive act of reciprocal forgiveness by the people of South Africa? Yet, somehow, love and forgiveness championed over vengeance and revenge.

Interestingly, Bishop Tutu, a South African Anglican Bishop, who lived through the many years of struggle in South Africa, also stressed the



power and practicality of love. Tutu states in his book, aptly entitled *No Future Without Forgiveness*, that—

Forgiveness is not being sentimental. The study of forgiveness has become a growth industry. Whereas previously it was something often dismissed pejoratively as spiritual and religious, now because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa it is gaining attention as an academic discipline studied by psychologists, philosophers, physicians, and theologians. In the United States there is an international Forgiveness Institute attached to the University of Wisconsin, and the John Templeton Foundation, with others, has started a multimillion-dollar Campaign for Forgiveness Research. (1997, pp. 271-272)

Indeed, forgiveness, like love, is very practical and good for our collective health. Bishop Tutu adds:

Thus, to forgive is indeed the best form of self interest since anger, resentment, and revenge are corrosive of the *summum bonum*, that greatest good, communal harmony that enhances the humanity and personhood of all in the community. (1997, p. 35).

Indeed, as the title of Tutu's book states, there can be "no future without forgiveness."

Surely the metamorphosis of South Africa from a land dominated by terrorists on both sides of the apartheid issue to a democracy is testimony to the practical empowerment of love and forgiveness that has been duly noted by millions of people throughout the world as a very effective form of leadership.

It is interesting too to note that the concept of forgiveness as illustrated by the TRC would appear to clash with the Western, punitive sense of justice. Abraham McLaughlin, a staff writer for the *Christian Science Monitor*, reported on March 18, 2005 that a group of earnest religious leaders from the rural reaches of northern Uganda, home to Africa's longest-running war, traveled 4,500 miles to the Netherlands to make a passionate plea to the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague



which went something like this: Stay out of our war. We can handle it ourselves. You'll only make it worse if you get involved.

McLaughlin writes that "their plea is symbolic of a growing debate over the ICC's role in Africa, one that's fundamentally about balancing two vastly different systems of justice in order to boost peace on the continent."

McLaughlin also reported that the African religious leaders' pleas have also been seconded recently by Nigeria, which has proposed a "justice-and-reconciliation tribunal to deal with crimes in Darfur, where the UN now says 180,000 people have been killed since Feb. 2003."

Bishop Tutu also reports that "Freedom and reconciliation also broke out in the 1990s in another most unlikely place: the Berlin Wall fell and the Communist empire began to unravel as a result of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* (openness) and *glasnost*" (reform) (1997, p. 36).

Gorbachev, another prominent politician of the twentieth century, whose background was in authoritarian leadership, exercised surprising vision and courage when he jolted the "evil empire" known as the Soviet Union, and the rest of the world, with his theories of openness and reform. This is something that would have been impossible under previous Soviet command and control leaders of the Soviet Union. The world owes Gorbachev immense gratitude for his actions that led to the peaceful dissolving of the Soviet Union. According to General Colin Powell, in a speech at Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois, on April 15, 1998, Gorbachev surprised many people when he announced to Powell and President Reagan that "I have taken away your enemy" —the Soviet Union.

Interestingly, Bishop Tutu states:

It would have been a great deal more difficult for an F.W. de Klerk to have announced his extraordinary and courageous initiatives of February 2, 1990 had there still been a robust and predatory Communist empire (Tutu, 1997, p. 36).

Anwar Sadat, the President of Egypt, and a Muslim, some 20 years ago was another political leader of the twentieth century who unilaterally



decided to forego a leadership based on hate and vengeance to pursue love and forgiveness and a secure peace with Israel. It obviously took a great deal of courage and an expansion of love and forgiveness for Sadat to take that step.

And Yitzhak Rabin, still another politician of the twentieth century, in his later years as the Prime Minister of Israel, took somewhat the same step as Sadat when he determined to lay down a lifetime of killing for a peace that would give Palestinians a homeland and recognize their interests in Jerusalem.

Interestingly, Gandhi, a Hindu, Sadat, a Muslim, and Rabin, a Jew, respectively, were all killed by religious extremists of their own faiths for extending love and forgiveness toward those of another religion. In the name of a religion each of these terrorists who took the lives of these three men exhibited how difficult it is for religious extremists to expand circles of love beyond the conditioned walls of their own orthodoxies and creeds of religious faith.

And Dr. Martin Luther King also was assassinated by a fanatic who could not adjust to unconditional love flowing to and from both the white and black races in America in the 1960s.

Who at the birth of the twentieth century could have predicted the rise of these world leaders who would break with traditional command and control leadership with its hoary traditions of wars, death and vengeance upon vengeance to embrace a new sanity, a new leadership, based on love, nonviolence and forgiveness? Certainly, it opened us to new revelations about effective leadership founded more on serving than being served.

On the other hand, the twentieth century also offered us tragic proof of the continued failures of national leaders who chose to follow the old discredited story of autocratic leadership. V. I. Lenin spoke for many leaders of his time when, after the Russian Revolution of 1917 swept away the ancient Russian monarchy, he said: "Freedom is good, but control is better" (Wheatley, 1999, pp. 24-25). Margaret Wheatley adds, "And our quest for control has been oftentimes as destructive as was his" (Wheatley, 1999, p.



25). That's the old story of authoritarian leadership. It has plagued leaders throughout recorded history. In the twentieth century, national leaders like Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, and many others opted for dominion, control, force, and vengeance to produce the bloodiest century of mankind's existence.

One would think that with the dismal failures of command and control leadership over the centuries, especially in the twentieth century, a new sanity in leadership would have to evolve. And, in fact, it does appear that a twilight of the world's tyrants is slowly taking place. Peter Ford, staff writer for the *Christian Science Monitor*, in an article entitled "The Twilight of the Tyrants," reports that the last 30 years of history shows that tyrants now go fairly easily when people start to get organized, pointing to leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic, who stepped down as President of Yugoslavia in 2000 without a shot being fired. He also reported that one quarter of the world's 192 nations are now not free, down from 43% of the countries in 1973, according to a report released recently by Freedom House, a New York-based human rights group that has been measuring political rights worldwide for 30 years (*Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 19, 2003).

Ford also reports that a growing number of former dictators have been indicted or put on trial, such as Milosevic, Argentine Generals Rafael Videla and Leopoldo Galtieri, Liberian leader Charles Taylor, Chadian dictator Hissan Habre, and Jean Kambanda, a former Rwandan prime minister, who was convicted of genocide.

Clearly, the civilized world today is attempting to communicate a long-overdue message: that a system of world leadership can no longer accept political leaders who believe in command and control leadership.

#### COMMAND AND CONTROL LEADERSHIP WITHIN DEMOCRACIES: BENIGN?

Some might say that the philosophy of leadership of nations is one thing, but command and control economic leadership within the safety of democracy can work comfortably.



The real question, however, is whether command and control leadership can ever fit comfortably with the mature human spirit. Or must we always suffer through the inevitable corruptions of such leadership even in a democracy with its inevitable cycles of economic exploitations under the law? Modern-day robber barons and their inner circles seem always able to rise above the law, even in democracies, to practice their greed and fraud upon the poor and upon an otherwise unsuspecting workforce, investors and society. The question appears to be, as Covey would see it, shall we continue to use command and control leadership that violates the worth and dignity of labor, investors and consumers until our social problems worsen and deepen and eventually overwhelm the economic machinery — and thus discombobulates everything?

#### A FRESH AND CRITICAL LOOK AT LEADERSHIP

Greenleaf obviously proposed that a fresh and critical look must be taken at the use of power and authority in all types of leadership, within or without a democracy. He envisioned servant-leadership as a new moral principle for all nations, suggesting that even in democracies we don't have to placidly wait for business leaders to cyclically discombobulate our economy and laws.

Greenleaf (1997) writes,

Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps, then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation, others, in a man, but I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundations of his own sufferings and joys, builds for them all. (1977, pp. 11-12)





Thus, we should not think we are alone in this battle for a new moral principle of leadership to which our children might aspire and for which so many gave their lives in the horrendous wars of the twentieth century. There were, of course, millions of such people who lived and suffered during that tumultuous century who gave nourishment and hope to persons who had the courage to be servant-leaders even if people might consider them to be a bit odd. These were people who negated the crudest aspects of that century. They were a part of a renaissance, a new consciousness, that refused to see common women and men as simply replaceable cogs in an insensitive machine. They were mostly unknown contemporary role models; some could be classified as prophets, most of whom are now resting in unmarked graves. But they served for the betterment of humanity.

They believed that people could be kinder and gentler, and were capable of producing great servant-leaders.

These were persons who intuitively lived the idea that most people tend to be the best way that we choose to see them; that one person's love can, indeed, shake a community, a nation; perhaps, the world; that everyone is our teacher; that everything comes from nothing to those who love; that one person's love can negate the hate of hundreds, thousands, millions. Service-oriented people are not soft in their principles. They know how to set limits, but they continue to love no matter what. These are the people who will not let anyone reduce their love to hate and vengeance, who realize their love is conditioned each time they judge and criticize their fellow man. They may be an artist, a parent, a teacher, a neighbor, an author, a friend, a mother or father, a grandparent, a poet, a musician, lovers of all types and all kinds, and, occasionally a politician; we all meet a lot of them in our everyday lives. They may be someone we meet just once and never see again. But they have a strong belief in the practical power of love, feeling that the more unconditional their love, the more unconditional their life. *Nobody has to explain to them what love is.*

It is among these people that we find our future servant-leaders. Many have that unfulfilled promise in them. They are the people who lead us, and



we often don't know we've been led. In fact, that is often the mark of the great leader, the servant-leader. These quiet leaders are the ones whose lives teach us that none of us exists separate from others and that we had best be concerned about building relationships of love and service, lest we punish ourselves by the sure consequences of their neglect.

These people are not often our traditional leaders in politics, government, business, entertainment, religion, or education; nor are they the news pundits; but there always seem to be just enough of them within all these ranks to have a disproportionate and positive effect upon society if we stop to hear them. They have a lot of love that flows through them to the world, and you can be assured that, as with beautiful music, there's always a market for their love and leadership.

#### THE MAKING OF A SERVANT-LEADER

Robert Greenleaf, himself a relatively unknown prophet of the twentieth century, writes:

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. That person is sharply different from the one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve, after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types and between them are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. 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, becoming 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? (Greenleaf, 1977, pp. 13-14)

Clearly, Greenleaf's definition of a servant-leader, or the "servant-



first,” is quite a challenge. Yet perhaps not as difficult as it may seem to be, for Greenleaf observes:

The person who is servant-first is more likely to persevere and refine a particular hypothesis on what serves another’s highest priority needs than is the person who is leader-first and who later serves out of promptings of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations. My hope for the future rests in part on my belief that among the legions of deprived and unsophisticated people are many true servants who will lead, and that most of them can learn to discriminate among those who presume to serve them and identify the true servants whom they will follow. (1977, p. 14)

Most of us want to be a leader-first. But that’s putting the cart before the horse—at least, in Greenleaf’s view. His message is clear. If one wants to be a great teacher, a great lawyer, a great business leader, a great Member of Congress, or a great anything, one must be a servant-first.

It is possible, of course, for one to be a leader without being a “servant-first.” However, what Greenleaf appears to be saying is that such a leader would initially be just another person who will feel the need to exercise the usual power drives or acquire material possessions. That may bring some success, but it will be more of the same, that is, the exercise of command and control leadership with an emphasis on the use of raw power with people serving them who do not grow as persons, do not become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, or more likely themselves to become servant-leaders, i.e., the “discombobulating” effect upon society Covey refers to.

But there are increasingly leaders-first, who taste its effects, feel its emptiness and then in later years choose to be servant-first, as it apparently worked during the later periods of life, for instance, with Yitzhak Rabin, Anwar Sadat, F.W. de Klerk, Mikhail Gorbachev, and a host of others who found command and control to be neither effective nor fulfilling.



## SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND THE EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT

Greenleaf (1977) wrote that “the servant-leader concept emerged after [his] deep involvement with colleges and universities during the period of campus turmoil in the late 1960s and early 1970s” (1977, p. 3). He felt that “our vast educational structure of America devotes very little care to nurturing leaders or to understanding followership and if there is any influence, formal education seems to discourage such pursuits” (1977, p. 4).

In addition, Greenleaf believed that educators were “specious” in believing that leadership preparation is implicit in general education (1977, p. 4) and wondered,

If that is true, how can it be that we are in a crisis of leadership in which vast numbers of “educated” people make such gross errors in choosing whose leadership to follow, and in which there is so little incentive for able and dedicated servants to take the risks of asserting leadership?

He continued:

The conclusion I reach is that educators are avoiding the issue when they refuse to give the same care to the development of servant-leaders as they do to doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers, engineers, scholars. Even schools of administration give scant attention to servant-leadership. I have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to persuade educators to accept the obligation and I am certain that, generally, they recognize neither the obligation nor the opportunity. Thus far in my experience, they are unpersuadable. An occasional gifted teacher will take some initiative, but the institutions rarely sanction the effort. The outlook for better leadership in our leadership-poor society is not encouraging. (1977, p. 4)

Greenleaf (1977) asks:

Could not many respected teachers at both secondary and college levels have sufficient latitude to speak those few words that might change the course of a life, or give it a new purpose, as Professor Oscar J. Helming did with me? (1977, p. 5)



He went so far as to write, “Alas, we live in the age of the anti-leader” (1977, p. 4).

GREENLEAF ASKS: TO WHOM, THEN, AM I SPEAKING?

Greenleaf (1977) then asks himself, “To whom, then, am I speaking in this collection of articles and essays?” (1977, p. 4) He answers that question by centering on those “legions of persons of good will who could sharpen and clarify their view of the more serving society they would like to live in and help build” (1977, p. 5), and upon “the legions of deprived and unsophisticated people, many of whom are true servants who will lead, and. . . most of them can learn to discriminate among those who presume to serve them and identify the true servants whom they will follow” (1977, p. 14).

Thus, Greenleaf never seemed to give in to pessimism in regard to the eventual rise of the servant-leader—perhaps because he was so optimistic about the potential of young people to be interested in the subject of leadership even if educators were not. He asserted that the “servant-leader potential is latent to some degree in almost every young person” (1977, p. 5).

He also wrote in the 1970s,

I am hopeful for these times, despite the tension and conflict, because more natural servants are trying to see clearly the world as it is and are listening carefully to prophetic voices that are speaking now. They are challenging the pervasive injustice with greater force and taking sharper issue with the wide disparity between the quality of society they know is reasonable and possible with available resources, and, on the other hand the actual performance of the whole range of institutions that exist to serve society (1977, p. 9).

And so Greenleaf noted that “a fresh critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority and that people are beginning to learn, however, haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways” (Greenleaf, 1977, pp. 9-10).



Greenleaf felt that

if a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them. (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 49)

That cannot be achieved by passing new laws. It must be achieved, if at all, by a groundswell of new consciousness that sees all of us as servant to each other and part of one human family.

Is this pie in the sky? I don't think so.

In Desmond Tutu's (2005) book *God Has a Dream*, he refers to the African ideal of *ubuntu*, which acknowledges that our private well being is contingent on the health and happiness of those around us. Tutu asks,

Would you let your brothers or sister's family, your relatives eke out a miserable existence in poverty? Would you let them go hungry? And yet every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger and three quarters of these are children under five. (2005, p. 23)

Tutu then writes, "If we could but realize our common humanity, a transfiguration would take place" (2005, p. 24). We are, indeed, all a part of the whole of humanity.

Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the 20th century, is credited with saying:

A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature. ([http://en.wikiquote.org/Albert\\_Einstein](http://en.wikiquote.org/Albert_Einstein))



John J. Gardner appears to agree when he writes: “Wholeness is our natural state; unrelated separateness is an illusion” (Spears, 1998, p. 117). And Margaret Wheatley adds: “The quantum world has demolished the concept that we are unconnected individuals” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 44).

The business people who introduced me to the Team Act and hence to servant-leadership were attempting to widen the circle of compassion in management and labor relations. Politically speaking, Congress and the President were not ready for this. However, I feel business leaders will increasingly see the value of servant-leadership upon a fragmented world and global market and put it to effective use long before our traditional political or religious leaders comprehend its signal truths.

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