

## Appendix B

### The Future for Men at Work<sup>1</sup>

Good afternoon. I looked at the programme again and I see that the title in there for this talk is *The Future for Men at Work* and I realise that is impossibly and enormously grandiose. The truth is I haven't got a clue what the future for men at work is...

In saying that, I want to honour the importance of what we're doing but not over-inflate the actuality of what we're doing. I think what we're doing is important and it's only a small piece of a lot of important work that has to be done. I'm here as a member of the [Men's Development in Organisations] inquiry group. I don't profess to speak for everyone. I think if I tried to do that I'd either bombard you with fragmentary thoughts or I'd reduce it to a really impoverished common denominator so I shall speak for myself. But, as Ian<sup>2</sup> said, I stand here in some sense on behalf of those men too.

Professionally I am, and have been for the last twenty-five years, a policeman. So I was amused and interested by Bea Campbell's description of the games of cops and robbers on housing estates and I can assure you it's even more exciting from the air... But we can't play cops and robbers forever... sadly. Part of me is sad. But part of me realises that's true... we can't. The cops can't play cops and robbers and the robbers can't play cops and robbers forever. We have to grow out of it. What that does mean is that I do have a particular background - and it's quite narrow. I don't want to use the word 'privileged' because it's not a privileged background. It's a particular background and it obviously colours the way I see things. In part it limits and in part it informs. I'm also the father of daughters and sons and I have been involved actively in men's work for about three or four years.

I don't know how you left here last night. I left here with my guts churning and feeling very disturbed. I'd actually got to the point where I was beyond words and

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<sup>1</sup> Presentation to the *Men and Women: Working Together for a Change* conference – June 1996

<sup>2</sup> Ian Gee, a colleague from the Men's Development in Organisations inquiry group

beyond voice. I don't know if that was true for other men but my sense of the singing last night was that a number of us were beyond voice. The word that came to mind was *chastened*. I didn't actually know what it meant. I had to go and look it up. One meaning of the word, as I discovered from the dictionary, is 'being corrected by suffering'. I thought that's what I am - I feel chastened. I had a strong sense yesterday... in those two pools [of men and women]... of a lot of suffering, a lot of pain. So I didn't sleep much last night. But this morning I feel calmer. Something began for me in the afternoon in the workshop, which was the beginning of a sense of the sacredness of what we're doing. So I feel privileged to stand here and [feel] a considerable sense of responsibility too.

What I want to do is to share a few reflections with you on men's work and a few reflections on organisations that have come to my awareness during my time working with the inquiry group. Then... to speculate a little about how those two worlds might come together and perhaps leave you with a small poem, I hope.

The first thing above all [about men's work] is that, for me, it is about men healing men. That is not about healing sickness, it is about healing wounds. Wounds I take to be part of the human condition. We are all wounded. And the joy I have found in being able to turn to men for love, for comfort for nurturing and support has been immense. I realise the loss I have had in my life by not looking for that earlier. So that's one important thing to me about that... and it also offers up a possibility, because if I'm looking to men for what I can properly get from men then I'm not always looking to women for those things. I'm not looking to women, necessarily, in my personal life so much or in my professional life. I'm encouraged not to keep holding women in a caring role in a relationship to me. I think that has an enormous potential. I'm trying to make a connection [here] between what's important about men's work and healing of the genders.

Another thing for me, men's work has come to be about is... Yes it's about initiation into adulthood, but it's also about growing into elderhood. It's about becoming a mentor, it's about seeking to express generativity and share our blessings. I am [an older man] and I work with older men. There's part of me that still needs to become initiated into becoming whatever a man is. There's part of me too that has to take on the responsibilities of being nearly fifty.

The third thing is about the transformation of relationships – the possibility it opens up for... transforming my relationships with men, with women and transforming my relationship to work, [so that it becomes] less obsessive, less central in my life, less the primary source of value and identity.

Organisations - well I've been heavily involved in one for twenty-five years and have worked in others. As other speakers have mentioned during these two days, they are becoming paradoxical places, they demand more and more of the person, more creativity, more flexibility and more effort. They seem to demand the whole person and yet I find them often sterile and punishing places to be. I am more demanding of what I want from my organisation. I am not prepared to tolerate that. I want life to be different. I'm not prepared to work out my time until retirement in conditions that I think are demeaning and diminish my soul. I want to do something about it. Mostly I want to do something about it where I am. I think one of the reasons this is important is because [organisations are] so much the locus for our economic, social and political activity. It's a very important domain for men and women to work out gender differences in.

So there are some thoughts about both men's work and organisations. Can they come together? Is it possible to bring these two things which, for me often seem like opposites, together? Well I have a sense of ripeness, of something happening or about to happen which is partly what drew me to co-create the [Men's Development in Organisations] inquiry group with Ian. But what is going to happen and how, is much difficult to answer. The image I have is... of two circles overlapping, of an almond-shaped common ground, which I learned from Robert Johnson<sup>3</sup> is an ancient symbol called a *mandorla*. He talks of it as something that has immense healing significance. "The *mandorla* begins the healing of the split. The overlap generally is very tiny at first, only a sliver of a new moon; but it is a beginning. As time passes, the greater the overlap, the greater and more complete is the healing. The *mandorla* binds together that which was torn apart and made unwhole – unholy."

So that's my image. What's the reality of that and what is my hope for that? My reality is that the two circles in my life touch - sometimes barely and sometimes they just overlap. In what practical ways... does that manifest itself? In truth, in small ways: in

coming here, in bringing that part of me which is a policeman (and proud to say that) into this arena, in speaking out, in writing sometimes, in trying to have a small public voice. The other side of that is raising awareness of these issues in my own organisation, again in small ways: in conversation, in bringing [these kind of issues] into the organisation - with my colleagues, my peers and those I work for. It's true to say that I do it in a rather tentative and hesitant way and I'm quite often scared of ridicule, scared of loss of influence. But it's a beginning.

And doing small things differently. I think the best thing I've ever done is to take all the pictures of me on police courses out of my office. You know... "this is another educational experience I have had"... Throw those in the bin and cover the walls with pictures that I've painted. Without saying anything it has had a dramatic on people who come in there. It just lightens the tone and deepens the level of conversation, deepens the contact.

I think there are some practical things as well. Looking for opportunities within the work, in my workplace to bring people together. Introducing training and development programmes that bring together police and civilian staff, men and women, from many different levels of the organisation. Trying to create and build a culture of self-development and learning, supporting learning and building mentoring. These are things that are empowering and cut across the values of a traditional hierarchy or traditional patriarchy. They don't have the label of men's work or men's development on them and maybe they don't need to. Maybe we're not ready for that. But my hope is for this to grow.

My hope is that men at work and men in power at work will re-evaluate and re-examine, will question their own masculinity and the behaviours that go with it. As Bea (Mead, Campbell et al. ) said in her opening address to us, the activities of those youth involved in crime in some way merely parallels what those of us in positions of power and influence do. And if we're not prepared... to start with ourselves what can we ask for. I don't want to go out and save the world. That seems to me to be a typically male thing to do. I'd like to work with us. And let what may grow from that...

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<sup>3</sup> Johnson, R. A. (1991). Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche.

I think I need to be patiently impatient and stay where I am. That may be just an excuse because I'm too scared to go. But I think there's some value in me being where I am and trying to do what I do. It's a sliver of a new moon and I want to live there and try and nurture something into growth in the time I have left in this organisation.

I'd like to thank the members of the inquiry group for their support and encouragement, because courage is what I most often lack and what I most often need, and I'm very grateful to them for that.

And I'd like to close with a short poem if I can. This is a wonderful idea... I'm delighted there is some poetry here. This was a gift to me... I hadn't intended to read a poem but a woman friend at work heard that I was at the conference and sent me this note with the poem attached. She says: "I hope the conference is enjoyable and successful. I attach a poem by Ann Stevenson who I respect very much. I do hope the work you're all doing will help with unblocking our artificial barriers".

It's called *A Small Philosophical Poem...* by Ann Stevenson. I hope you like it...

Doctor Animus, whose philosophy is a table  
sits down contentedly to a square meal.  
The plates lie there and there,  
just where they should lie.  
His feet stay just where they should stay,  
between legs and the floor.  
His eyes believe the clean waxed surfaces  
are what they are.

But while he's eating his un-  
exceptional propositions, his wise  
wife Anima, sweeping a haze gold decanter  
from a metaphysical salver,  
pours him a small glass of doubt.  
Just what he needs.  
He smacks his lips and cracks his knuckles.  
The world is the pleasure of thought.

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San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco. P102

He'd like to stay awake all night  
(elbows on the table)  
talking of how the table might not be there.  
But Anima, whose philosophy is hunger,  
perceives the plates are void in empty air.  
The floor is void beneath his trusting feet.  
Peeling her glass from it's slender cone of fire  
she fills the room with love. And fear. And fear.

I read it to Ian the other day and he agreed with me that... it says something important about both the difference and the coming together of genders, between us and within us. And it honours the feelings I have about this work. Thank you.