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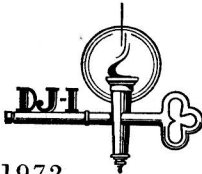
# ***STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY***

*The silent revolution against  
corporate conformity*

ROGER M. D'APRIX



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***STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY***

*The silent revolution against  
corporate conformity*

Also by Roger D'Aprix

**HOW'S THAT AGAIN? A Guide to Effective Written  
and Oral Communication in Business**

For Theresa and All *Cursillistas* Everywhere in  
Witness to the Life in Colors. *De Colores!*

*"I may be able to speak the languages  
of men and even of angels, but if I  
have not love, my speech is no more  
than a noisy gong or a clanging bell.  
I may have the gift of inspired preaching;  
I may have all knowledge and understand  
all secrets; I may have all the faith  
needed to move mountains—but if I have  
not love, I am nothing. . . .*

*"Love is patient and kind; love is not  
jealous, or conceited, or proud; love  
is not ill-mannered, or selfish, or  
irritable; love does not keep a record  
of wrongs; love is not happy with evil,  
but is happy with the truth. Love  
never gives up: its faith, hope and  
patience never fail."*

Paul's First Letter to  
the Corinthians, Chapter 13

# Preface

I REALLY BEGAN to write this book 16 years ago when I took my first job as a high school teacher in a city public school. It was then that I started in earnest to try to make some sense of my personal existence within a large and structured organization. I have continued that task through the years, long after I gave up my brief teaching career for a job with a corporation. For the last dozen years, this question of my personal relationship to an organization has been close to an obsession for me.

Like most obsessions, it has not been exactly fun-filled. The discrepancy between what is and what we have been conditioned to believe in is frequently substantial, and it is always uncomfortable. That discrepancy gives rise to considerable personal tension and anguish when we try to confront it and distill it to understandable terms.

This book is my subjective view of the organizational discrepancy. It is an attempt to define what I have characterized as a silent revolution within our organizations. It is also an attempt to tell the individual how he might deal with this revolution on a *personal* level.

Generally, people are prone to look at this sort of turmoil

in our organizations either from a management perspective or from the perspective of the total organization. I have tried to tell this story from the most bewildering perspective of all—from the subjective point of view of the individual caught up in it, trying to understand it, and struggling to develop a rationale for his own existence within it.

God knows I don't claim to be an expert on the total subject of business organizations. But I *am* an expert on my subjective view of what has happened to them and what is likely to happen to them and to their employees.

Mostly this is an attempt at explanation, with some general suggestions for how *you* might deal with your unique relationship with your organization. It avoids a step-by-step, how-to approach for the obvious reason that the details will differ considerably for everyone. But there are many common elements, and these are what I have tried to make some sense of.

*Struggle for Identity* is addressed to any individual who senses that something has gone wrong with our organizations and that the satisfactions he joined up for are missing. It is addressed to any person in any organization who wants to protect his selfhood and who wants to be his own man to the greatest possible extent.

More and more these wants are being expressed in business organizations by the so-called knowledge-workers—the highly educated and generally youngish managers, engineers, salesmen, accountants, programmers, and others who earn their paychecks by contributing from their personal knowledge and understanding. They are generally an influential group in terms of their numbers and their unwillingness to tolerate the system merely because it is the system and must be tolerated.



So far they have been relatively docile—at least compared to their younger counterparts on the college campuses and elsewhere. The most recent recession certainly has tended to keep them more subdued.

But when good times return and their talents are more in demand than they are now, we could easily see a new brand of militancy in the organization. And even if business expansion takes place at a much slower rate in the years ahead, there is a good chance that the organization will be dealing with attitudes and expectations best described by the adjective “alienated.”

The truly interesting question is how the traditional organization will deal with its alienated knowledge-workers. Will it take the easy way out—or what looks to be the easy way out—and merely be repressive? Will it fall into line with many of our other institutions and fashion a new kind of corporate permissiveness? Or will it be caught short by its failure to understand what is happening, or even how it happened, and then merely blunder from one short-term solution to another?

And what of the emerging class of knowledge-workers themselves? Richard Barber estimates in his book *The American Corporation: Its Power, Its Money, Its Politics* that by 1975 white-collar workers will make up more than half of the total civilian work force. What this means, he says, is that top management “will increasingly find themselves dealing with nonunionized employees who nonetheless possess credentials which, in their view, entitle them to professional respect and preferred economic status.” Barber predicts that “these technocrats . . . will make demands on managements no less aggressively than those once presented by blue-collar industrial trade unions.”

Will their "demands" be rooted in a mature understanding of what a business organization is and how it operates? Or will they be "non-negotiable ultimatums" rooted in a simplistic view of such an organization?

Dealing with these questions intelligently will require maturity, tolerance, and imagination on the part of everyone involved. This book looks at the problems largely from the professional employee's viewpoint, suggesting some insights and attitudes that I feel are essential first to his understanding and well-being, and second to the contemporary organization's ultimate survival in our changing society.

At this point there are many more questions than answers, but perhaps the right questions are a good place for all of us to start.

### *Acknowledgments*

Any book of this sort is the product of countless hours of reading, discussion, debate, and thinking and rethinking of experience and ideas. In this regard I must admit my debt to an endless list of friends and colleagues who have been as fascinated as I have with this subject and who were willing to share their own views.

I also owe a great deal to the various executives I have worked for and who have shaped my own view of what management is all about. I know of no better way to learn the art of management than as an apprentice to one who practices it well. I would especially like to acknowledge my personal gratitude to Xerox management for providing the kind of enlightened corporate environment where independent action and thought are both permitted and fostered.

The chief architect of this environment and certainly one of the pioneers of reminding business of its responsibilities to society and to its employees was the late Joseph C. Wilson, Xerox board chairman. Like thousands of other Xerox employees, I counted this man as one of my heroes in the business community. If he had lived to read this book, I hope he would have recognized his influence on its pages.

Though we are all inevitably products of our various environments, let me make the emphatic point that none of this book represents any official Xerox viewpoint or endorsement. It is my own view of the realities of corporate life as I have observed and interpreted it in a number of companies. I take responsibility for it as a personal statement. The insights—both good and bad—are my insights. If there are flaws in the reasoning, if there are errors or omissions, they too are mine.

Finally, my personal thanks to Cheryl Yehl for help with the manuscript and other clerical details; to my friend Elton L. Francis, who read the manuscript chapter by chapter as it was being written and who offered valuable advice and criticism; and most of all to my wife Theresa and my children who sacrificed countless hours of my time and attention and who tolerated me during the gestation and delivery of this book. Writing a book is worse than waiting for the arrival of a baby, and in our family we were doing both simultaneously. With the conclusion of both of these events, I now excuse myself to breathe a heavy sigh of relief.

*February 1972*

ROGER M. D'APRIX

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# *Part I*

## How things got this way

*Great economic and social forces flow with a tidal sweep over communities that are only half conscious of that which is befalling them. Wise statesmen are those who foresee what time is thus bringing, and endeavor to shape institutions and to mold men's thought and purpose in accordance with the change that is silently surrounding them.*

John, Viscount Morley  
*Life of Richard Cobden*





## {1}

*Setting the stage**Aspiring to be angels, men rebel.*

Alexander Pope

IF WE DEFINE revolution as convulsive change, with or without violence, then it is clear that we have been in the throes of a revolution in America for some years. The evidence is almost too obvious to mention—the rebellion of our youth against what they view as a materialistic society, the revolt of our black population against racial tyranny, the repudiation of our government's role in Vietnam and perhaps the repudiation of anything but a defensive war in the future, the demand for “liberation” by American women, and on and on. This has been the age of protest against established tradition and authority. It is a turbulent age marked by upheaval as group after group asserts itself against established traditions and institutions.

In the face of all this change and ferment, no one could possibly expect the American corporation to be immune from the pressures that are tearing apart some of our traditions and institutions. The revolution is just beginning to make