

7

Building a Powerful, Democratic Social Change Movement

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Chapter 5 outlined a specific, four-stage program for fundamentally transforming society based on education and mass social change movements. Chapter 6 presented the Vernal Education Project as a means to achieve the goals of the first stage of this strategic program. If carried out, the Vernal Project would produce a network of thousands of skilled and dedicated activists working all across the United States for fundamental progressive change — a solid core of hardworking activists that could both reassure other activists that their efforts would not be wasted and energize everyone to do the hard tasks necessary to succeed.

This chapter further explores the role and influence of Vernal activists. It first describes some likely characteristics of Vernal activists, the ways they would probably support themselves, their likely numbers and influence, and their likely focus of activity. It then describes the many ways these activists might support, inform, and inspire over one million

other activists. This would greatly increase the strength and endurance of progressive change organizations, thereby achieving the goals of the second stage of the strategic program (Gather Support).¹

To get the bad customs of a country changed and new ones, though better, introduced, it is necessary first to remove the prejudices of the people, enlighten their ignorance, and convince them that their interests will be promoted by the proposed changes; and this is not the work of a day. — Benjamin Franklin

ABOUT VERNAL GRADUATES

Characteristics of Vernal Graduates

Those activists who met the entrance requirements for a Vernal program would be more likely than most activists to have certain characteristics. Attending a Vernal session would tend to bolster these characteristics and add a few more. As a result, most Vernal graduates would probably have the following attributes:

- **Highly Motivated Activists**

Those people attracted to a Vernal program would probably already be highly motivated progressive activists. To be accepted into a session, they would express a desire to work primarily for progressive change for at least eight years.

In attending the program, they would learn about the horrendous problems of our current society and about effective ways to overcome them. This would probably increase their interest in working for change, and being surrounded by other dedicated Vernal students and graduates would likely inspire them even more. Therefore, Vernal graduates would likely be enthusiastic.

Vernal graduates would likely also understand the importance of basic routine work to bring about change. Knowing its importance, they would probably be more willing to do this under-appreciated work even when it was difficult, boring, or tedious.

- **Familiar with Visions of a Good Society**

Vernal students would read and discuss a wide variety of ideas about what should characterize a good society. They would consider and evaluate many possibilities. By the time they graduated, they would likely have their own informed and principled perspective on most aspects of a good society — from how people should relate to one another to how the economy should function.

- **Dedicated to Working for Fundamental Change**

Vernal students would learn about the extent of society's problems and how much society must change to fulfill their vision. Hence, most graduates would probably desire broad, wide-ranging, fundamental social change. They would understand the many steps required to bring about comprehensive change and why an immense effort would take decades to succeed. Hence, most graduates would probably dedicate themselves to working long-term for fundamental change.

- **Dedicated to Using Bold, Nonviolent Methods**

Vernal students would learn the moral and strategic benefits of nonviolent struggle and the pitfalls of revenge and feuding. Knowing the checkered history of revolution and war, they would probably be skeptical of activities that promised instant results through use of intimidation or violence. Consequently, most graduates would probably appreciate and use bold, nonviolent methods to bring about change.

- **Dedicated to Supporting and Educating Other Activists**

Knowing that to bring about democratic change it is essential to persuade and mobilize large numbers of people, Vernal graduates would probably commit themselves to supporting and educating many other activists. In the Vernal program they would learn a variety of ways to encourage and support other activists.

- **Highly Skilled and Experienced**

Activists applying to a Vernal program would already have had at least one full year of social change experience. The yearlong Vernal session would expand their knowledge

in all aspects of progressive change. With a few more years of experience after graduating, they would probably be much more skilled and experienced than most other activists.

In particular, Vernal graduates would likely have a broader understanding of issues than most activists — for example, they would probably understand and appreciate at least two sides of most important controversies. Vernal graduates would also have much greater skills than most activists for developing change campaigns and for dealing with their fellow activists' emotional conditioning, addictions, and interpersonal conflicts. Moreover, they would probably understand the social inculcation process, understand the basis of their own native culture, appreciate the benefits of other cultures, and know how to transform the culture around them in positive directions.

God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

— Reinhold Niebuhr

- **Life-Long Learners**

Those who attended a Vernal session would likely be particularly interested in education. Presented with many valuable, yet diverse and contradictory perspectives, Vernal students would probably realize the importance of continually questioning and learning. After graduating, most Vernal activists would probably therefore continue to read a wide variety of materials and attend workshops, seminars, and discussion groups where they could learn and ponder new ideas. They would likely seek out opportunities to discuss and debate ideas with their friends, colleagues, and opponents.

- **Physically and Emotionally Healthy**

Encouraged to eat well, exercise daily, and maintain a healthy, balanced lifestyle and taught how to overcome destructive emotional and cultural conditioning, Vernal graduates would probably be much more physically and emotionally healthy than most activists. They would probably have far fewer addictions, compulsions, obsessions, fears, or phobias than most people, and they at least would be aware of and might be mostly free of prejudices. Most of the time they would probably feel fulfilled and lighthearted.

When confronted with other people's prejudices, anger, depression, or low self-esteem, they would be much more likely than most people to remain calm, clear-headed, confident, and loving. Most of the time they would probably be able to respond intelligently, compassionately, maturely, and perhaps even joyfully.

Vernal graduates would probably be relatively open to new ideas, flexible in their thinking, and playful. They would also have at least a basic understanding of how to

challenge their own and others' rigid and dysfunctional behavior through gentle banter and loving support.

• Principled, Trustworthy, Honorable

Vernal students would likely know they could only persuade other people to a progressive perspective if their own personal behavior conformed to high political ideals. As a result, they would probably strive to be extremely honest, honorable, trustworthy, and straightforward in all their dealings. I expect most would also try to be strong, gentle, courageous, altruistic, and humble.

May you live your life as if the maxim of your actions were to become universal law. — Immanuel Kant

• Inspiring and Appealing

With their knowledge, skills, experience, and dedication to change, Vernal graduates would probably be quite inspiring and appealing both to other activists and to the general public. People would appreciate their expertise and their commitment to making the world better.

I expect most Vernal graduates would be exemplary role models of empowered and responsible citizens. Moreover, most graduates would probably seek jobs in which they could do satisfying and ethically responsible work. Most would probably live simply (reduce their material desires to a low level) to minimize their consumption of natural resources and their impact on the natural environment. I also expect most would establish positive relationships with a variety of people. They would likely be caring, generous, honest, and joyous — they would probably share, laugh, and play with others.

Nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain dealing. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

• Hopeful

Vernal graduates would have the opportunity to work regularly with other skilled and dedicated activists. Knowing they were part of a large and solid effort to build a powerful, long-term force for positive change would give Vernal graduates hope that fundamental transformation of society is possible. I expect they would be rousing optimistic about the prospects for comprehensive social change.

Financial Support of Vernal Graduates

To be able to spend at least twenty hours each week working for fundamental social change, very active Vernal graduates would need some way to meet their basic needs for food, housing, transportation, health care, and so on. Many would probably live simply and share housing, tools, bicycles, and automobiles with others to reduce their expenses. Nevertheless, most graduates would still need some

kind of income. I expect that Vernal graduates would rely on one or several of the following financial sources:

• A Social Change Job

Some Vernal graduates would be able to find jobs doing direct social change work. Social change organizations typically pay low wages, but usually pay enough to support activists who are willing to live simply. Change organizations are often focused on narrow, near-term goals, and they devote much of their time to fundraising, but Vernal graduates might be able to configure their job tasks so they could devote at least twenty hours each week to fundamental progressive change.

Hey buddy, can you spare some social change?
— Bumpersticker

• A Conventional Part-time or Temporary Job

Some Vernal graduates might take part-time jobs or a series of short, temporary jobs that would provide them with a reasonable income but would not limit or distract them from their primary social change activity. Vernal activists might be drawn particularly to part-time jobs at social change organizations doing non-program work such as administration, canvassing for funds, grant writing, publication production, or bookkeeping. Or they might work part-time for social service agencies or other nonprofit groups.

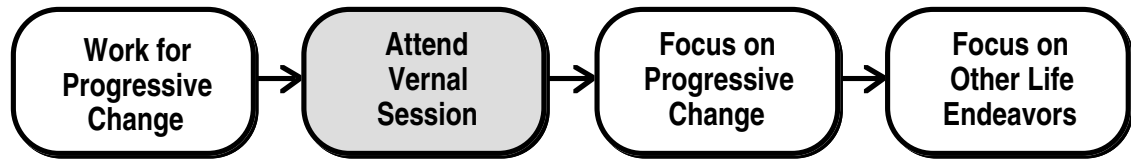
These jobs are usually much more available than social change jobs, they typically pay better, and they are usually more stable. Though not directly oriented toward fundamental social change, these jobs would allow graduates to do socially beneficial work, earn a living, and still leave them time to work for change.

Some graduates might choose flexible jobs such as temporary office work, waiting tables in a restaurant, catering, substitute teaching, conference or event organizing, or freelance carpentry, painting, or landscaping. Others might do contract writing, typing, editing, graphic design, web design, publication production, theater production, video production, or computer programming. Still other graduates might take seasonal work as forest firefighters, retail sales clerks (during the Christmas buying season), river raft guides, ski instructors, or tax form preparers. Though not change-oriented, these jobs pay reasonably well, are not oppressive, and allow time for other pursuits.

• Independent Wealth

Vernal graduates who had worked all their lives in a conventional career and then retired might be able to rely on a combination of their savings, a pension, and Social Security payments. Those who owned their homes might have relatively modest expenses, and if their children had moved out of their house, they might rent out rooms to generate some additional income. Those Vernal graduates

Figure 7.1: Typical Careers of Vernal Activists



	Prospective Vernal Students	Vernal Students	Very Active Vernal Graduates	Less Active Vernal Graduates
Time in this Role	At least 1 year of prior social change work	1 year	7 year intention (but for most, actual would be less)	For most graduates: the rest of their lives
Social Change Activity Level	Variable	First nine months: about 3 hours/week working for fundamental change Last three months: about 9 hours/week	Work at least 20 hours/week for fundamental progressive social change	Probably most would work at least 1 hour/week for fundamental progressive change
Social Change Expertise	Probably most would have 1–3 years of prior experience working for change	Somewhat more experienced	Experienced/very experienced	Very experienced

born to wealthy families might be able to rely on gifts from their parents or an inheritance.

• A Supportive Spouse

Some Vernal graduates would likely be supported by their working spouses.

• Sponsors

Many graduates would probably rely on the benevolence of one or more friends who agreed to support their social change work. For example, a graduate might have five friends who were each willing and able to give her \$20 each week. Such gifts would total more than \$5,000 annually. Other friends might offer free room and board in their homes or the free use of an automobile.

People with a direct, personal connection to a Vernal activist would typically be family members (siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, grown children), close neighbors, fellow churchmembers, old family friends, old friends from high school or college, or former colleagues at a conventional job.

would do exactly that — they would work primarily for fundamental change for seven years and then would shift their primary focus to other endeavors. Some especially dedicated graduates might devote themselves to change work for more than seven years, and those few graduates completely dedicated to social change would do so for their whole lives.

The average person puts only 25% of his energy and ability into his work. The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50% of their capacity, and stands on its head for those few and far between souls who devote 100%. — Andrew Carnegie

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VERY ACTIVE AND LESS ACTIVE GRADUATES

When enrolling in a Vernal program, students would commit to working for fundamental change at least twenty hours per week for seven years after they graduated. Many

However, for one reason or another, a large percentage of graduates would not work at this pace for the full seven-year period. Inevitably, some would be pulled away by other obligations or interests. Some would be swamped by work demands, childrearing responsibilities, or other family obligations (such as caring for their aging parents). Others would incur injuries or develop health problems, and some would die from accidents, illness, or old age. Some Vernal graduates might become disillusioned with their change work, some might burn out from overwork, and some might become frustrated by living on a low income. Still others might simply decide that progressive change work had too few rewards compared to other enticing opportunities.

Figure 7.2: The Rate Vernal Graduates Would Become Less Active

Years After Grad	Baseline Assumption			Optimistic Assumption			Details
	Very Active at Beginning of Year	Shift to Less Active Status During the Year	Shift Rate (%)	Very Active at Beginning of Year	Shift to Less Active Status During the Year	Shift Rate (%)	
	30	4	13%	30	2	7%	Thirty students attend a session
1st	26	4	15%	28	1	4%	Graduates begin change work
2nd	22	3	14%	27	1	4%	
3rd	19	3	16%	26	1	4%	
4th	16	3	19%	25	2	8%	
5th	13	2	15%	23	1	4%	
6th	11	2	18%	22	1	5%	
7th	9	2	22%	21	1	5%	
8th	7	5	71%	20	10	50%	Many remaining very active grads would become less active
9th	2	2	100%	10	2	20%	
10th	0	0	—	8	2	25%	
11th	0	0	—	6	2	33%	
12th	0	0	—	4	1	25%	
13th	0	0	—	3	1	33%	
14th	0	0	—	2	2	100%	
15th	0	0	—	0	0	—	
Total	125	30		225	30		

3.7
7.0
 Average number of years Vernal graduates would be very active

Note: The commitment to be very active would end after the 7th year. Consequently, many very active graduates would probably become less active at the beginning of the 8th year after they graduated.

Some of these Vernal graduates would continue to work for change at a reduced pace; others might stop working for change completely. Eventually, every graduate would either shift to other activities or grow old and die.

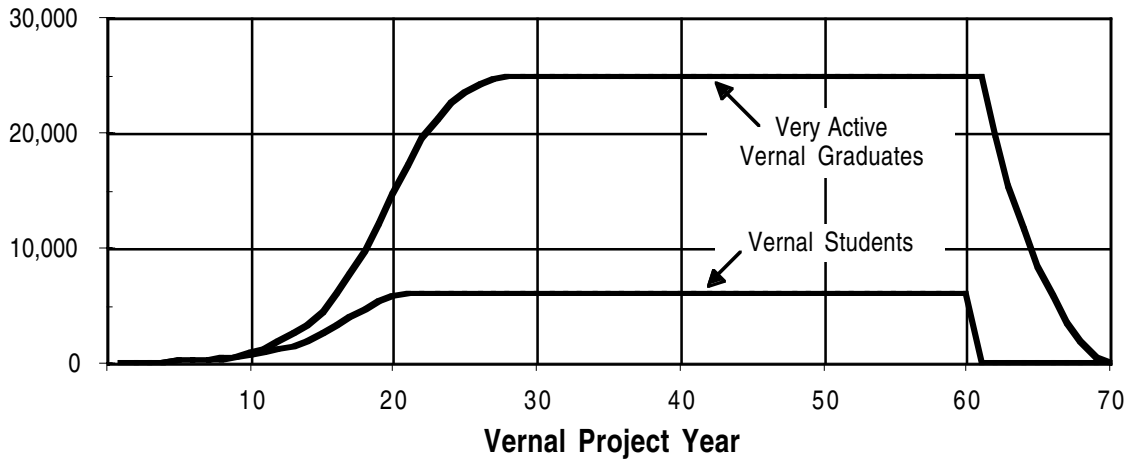
In order to estimate how much progressive change work Vernal graduates might do, I have chosen to group them into two categories: those “very active graduates” who would be working primarily for fundamental progressive change (twenty hours per week or more) and those “less active graduates” who would be focused primarily on some other activity and whose progressive activism would thus be a smaller part of their lives. Please note that I draw this line only for the purpose of analyzing the overall contribution of Vernal graduates, not to glorify those who work more for fundamental progressive change nor to denigrate those who work less.

Expect people to be people.
— Graffiti

Figure 7.1 shows the typical progression of Vernal activists’ social change careers. Before attending a session, they would have at least one year of activist experience — most would probably have one to three years. They would then attend a Vernal session for one year. After graduating, they would be very active for several years, and then they would shift into the less active category — most for the rest of their lives.

Estimating how long Vernal graduates would be very active is extremely difficult so I have made two estimates — a very conservative baseline estimate and a more optimistic estimate. In the base case (shown at the left side of Figure 7.2, I assume that an average of four of the thirty students who would begin each session (13 percent of the total) would drop out sometime during the year-long session. Another four (15 percent of those remaining) would become less active in the first year following their graduation. I

Figure 7.3: The Number of Vernal Students and Very Active Vernal Graduates — Baseline Scenario —



assume another three graduates would become less active during each of the next three years after that, and two more in each of the following three years.

In this conservative baseline scenario, only seven graduates would still be very active at the end of the seventh year after they graduated. Then at this point, having fulfilled their commitment, I assume most of these seven would turn to other activities during the eighth year, and I assume they would all be less active by the end of the ninth year. In this baseline scenario, Vernal graduates would be very active for an average of only 3.7 years after they graduated.

The optimistic scenario (shown at the right side of Figure 7.2) follows a similar track, but assumes graduates would shift to less active status at a slower rate. At the end of the seventh year (the beginning of the eighth), twenty graduates would still be very active. Two would still be very active until sometime during their fourteenth year after graduating. In this scenario, graduates would be very active for an average of 7.0 years after graduation.

To some, this optimistic scenario may still seem too pessimistic. I hope that the knowledge and support that students would receive in a Vernal session would enable them to continue working longer than the times shown here. But I also know how difficult progressive change work is, how poorly it pays, and what a great toll it can take on even the most dedicated activist. Moreover, for the purposes of this analysis, I want to be quite conservative in my estimates.

Combining these assumptions with my previous assumptions about the rate of growth of the overall Vernal Education Project (described in Chapter 6), it is possible to calculate the total number of Vernal graduates who would be very actively working for change each year. Figure 7.3

shows the results for the baseline scenario throughout the sixty years of the Vernal Project and the ten years after it ended.* In the baseline estimate, the number of very active graduates would rise to 25,000 by Vernal Project Year 30 (thirty years after the session officially begins) and then would remain at this level until the session ended in Year 60. From Years 30 to 60, the number of new very active graduates would be offset by a comparable number of graduates shifting to less active status.

The number of less active graduates would grow steadily as very active Vernal graduates shifted their focus to other endeavors. However, after a time, many graduates would die or completely drift away from progressive change work. For this analysis, I assume graduates would die or completely end their social change work an average of twenty-five years after they graduated from a Vernal session.† With this assumption, the number of less active graduates would grow to about 125,000 by Vernal Year 60 in the baseline scenario.

The optimistic scenario traces a similar trajectory except the number of very active graduates rises to a steady level of 45,000, and the number of less active graduates grows to about 105,000.

* Figure C.3 in Appendix C shows the same values in tabular form for both scenarios. Figures C.1 and C.2 show the intermediary calculations that generate these values.

† I assume the rate that graduates would die or drift away from progressive work would follow a Normal curve with a mean of twenty-five years and a standard deviation of seven years. See the note at the bottom of Figure C.3 in Appendix C for more detail.

THE INFLUENCE OF VERNAL ACTIVISTS

For the first few years of the Vernal Project, the small number of Vernal graduates means they would probably contribute relatively little to overall progressive change efforts. If the Vernal Project proceeded as described by the baseline scenario, at the beginning of the last year of Phase 1 (Vernal Year 5), there would be only 157 very active Vernal graduates, 53 less active graduates, and 120 students. Moreover, they would be concentrated in just a single metropolitan area. Since their numbers would be so small, their efforts would not be earthshaking (except perhaps in that metro area).

However, in Phase 2, the number of very active graduates would grow to almost 15,000 (in the baseline scenario). The number of less active graduates would grow to almost 12,000, and the number of students would grow to 6,000. Together, these Vernal activists would constitute a substantial force of dedicated, skilled, and experienced activists working all across the United States. Undoubtedly, they would contribute a considerable amount to progressive change efforts, and they could offer extensive support to other activists.

In Phase 3 (Years 20 to 60), the Vernal Project should be able to significantly affect progressive change efforts. To understand its impact, consider Vernal Year 40 in the middle of Phase 3 as representative. If the Vernal Project proceeded as described by the baseline scenario, there would be 6,000 Vernal students, 25,000 very active graduates, and about 104,000 less active graduates in this year. This large number of skilled activists could directly influence a large percentage of the total population. In this year, there would be one graduate for about every 2,000 people (including children) in the United States — perhaps one graduate for every 100 politically aware and active adults. If each of these graduates just spent a few hours each week talking to a different friend or neighbor about progressive change, Vernal activists could influence a sizable proportion of the total population each year.

Moreover, as described in the section below, it is likely these graduates would do much more than just discuss politics with their friends. I expect that Vernal activists would work for change primarily in two ways:

- (1) By helping other activists to build powerful, grassroots citizen movements that educate people about the need for progressive change, use nonviolent methods to challenge the power structure and oppressive cultural norms, and construct alternative institutions.

- (2) By helping themselves, other activists, and the public overcome destructive cultural and emotional conditioning through education, skill building, counseling, community building, and practicing alternative behavior.

It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. — Robert F. Kennedy

VERNAL ACTIVISTS' FOCUS OF ACTIVITY

Vernal activists would be free agents — they would be completely at liberty to do whatever kind of social change work they wanted to do (or none at all). However, with their background and the education they would receive in a Vernal session, I expect they would be dedicated activists and particularly inclined to do certain kinds of social change work. This section describes the methods and tactics they would probably use, the kind of social change campaigns they might develop, the goals for which they might strive, and the work they would probably do to help people overcome destructive cultural and emotional conditioning.

General Methods of Change

Figure 7.4 shows several general methods typically used to maintain or change society. With an orientation toward long-term, fundamental progressive change, I expect most Vernal activists would reject methods like physical force and propaganda and instead use more nonviolent and democratic methods like rational persuasion, appeals to high ideals, fellowship, structural engineering (changing the environment in which people operate), and nonviolent confrontation.

Figure 7.4: Some General Methods for Changing Society

Method	Description	Assumption	Appeals to *	Primary Users	Main Strengths	Main Dangers
Physical Force	Coerce people with threats of physical harm	People are best swayed by physical threats	Control; security; status; confrontation; hierarchy	Military; police; armed rebels; thugs; gangs; intelligence agencies; militant unionists	Usually quite effective for those with the most strength	Coercive; violent; elitist; anti-democratic; often gives control to militaristic or bloodthirsty leaders
Political Force	Use political authority to implement policies	Change authorities and the people will follow along	Status; attention; hierarchy	Political authorities	Lawful; seemingly democratic and moral; relatively good at implementing decisions	Elitist; anti-democratic (involves only political leaders); usually gives control to those with charisma or great wealth
Economic Force	Hire people to implement policies or hire agents to use physical or political force	People are best swayed by economic threats or offers	Control; material possessions; hierarchy	Corporations; the very wealthy; organized crime syndicates	Usually quite effective; seemingly democratic and moral; good at implementing decisions	Elitist; anti-democratic; gives control to the rich
Advertising, Propaganda	Persuade people by bombarding them repeatedly with the same message	Say the same things enough times in enough ways and people will be swayed	Control	Corporations; politicians	Often quite effective	Manipulative; anti-rational and anti-democratic
Engineering	Change people's physical or social environment to affect their views	People will adapt their perspective to their environment	Rationality; control	Urban planners; corporate managers; management consultants	Good at rectifying destructive or inefficient environments	Relies on those with specialized knowledge and expertise; can be manipulative
Rational Persuasion	Persuade people with arguments based on facts and research	People are rational and will change their minds when presented with reliable evidence	Rationality; autonomy	Scholars; lawyers; lobbyists; activists	Good at finding root causes, illuminating relevant information	Relies on those with specialized knowledge; time consuming; analytical and detached
Emotional Appeals to Ideals	Appeal to people's ideals or consciences	People are best swayed by emotional appeals to their ideals	High ideals	Religious/spiritual people; nonviolent activists	Uplifting, focuses on the positive	May be anti-rational; may give control to charismatic leaders
Emotional Appeals to Anger, Hatred, or Fear	Appeal to people's anger, fears, or prejudices	People are best swayed by invoking their fears or prejudices	Directness; anger	Lobbyists; lawyers; militant activists	Taps into gut emotions; good at mobilizing people	Often anti-rational and manipulative; may give control to charismatic leaders; often unstable
Fellowship and Personal Support	Bring people into a warm community	Kindness and community can persuade people to resolve their differences	Warmth, love, joy	Religious/spiritual people; therapists; activists	Uplifting; makes people feel good; effective in bringing new people in	Often ignores or suppresses differences and conflicts
Nonviolent Confrontation	Force people to deal with problems by directly confronting them	Confrontation can cut through emotional blocks and sway people in remarkable ways	Directness; confrontation	Nonviolent activists	Effective, uplifting, empowering	Can be manipulative

SOURCE: Inspired by and partially based on Kurt E. Olmosk, "Seven Pure Strategies of Change," *The 1972 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators* (La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1972, HM134 .A55): 163–172.

* Appeals to = This method typically appeals to those who value...

Figure 7.5: Characteristics of Some Typical Social Change Tactics

Type of Activity	Politically Based?	Organized?	Mass Participation?	Consistent w/ Good Society?	Challenges Opponents?	Direct?	Sends Clear Message?	Sends Loud, Public Message?	Builds Democracy?
Apathy, Ignorance	No	No	—	No	No	—	No	No	No
Utopian Withdrawal	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe	No	No	Maybe	No	No
Right Living	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe
Personal Counseling	Maybe	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Vandalism	Maybe	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Riots, Looting	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sabotage	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	No	Yes	Yes	Maybe	No	No
Terrorism, Assassination	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	No
Guerrilla Warfare	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	No
Advertising	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lobbying Authorities	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Maybe
Electoral Campaigns	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
Lawsuits	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Maybe
Personal Persuasion	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Public Speaking	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes
Street Theater	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rallies, Pickets, Marches	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boycotts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Strikes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sit-ins, Blockades	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

SOURCE: Inspired by and partially derived from Martin Oppenheimer, *The Urban Guerrilla* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969, JC491 .O6), pp. 30–33.

NOTES:

- **Politically Based?:** Are participants politically aware and savvy, and does the activity grow out of this awareness (rather than being based mostly on raw anger, hatred, prejudice, or fear)?
- **Organized?:** Is the activity highly organized and coordinated (rather than unplanned and undirected)?
- **Mass Participation?:** Does the activity involve large numbers of people and encourage bottom-up organization (rather than involving just a few activists and encouraging top-down organization)?
- **Consistent w/ Good Society?:** Is the activity consistent with a good society?
- **Challenges Opponents?:** Does the activity challenge powerful opponents and force them to respond?
- **Direct?:** Do participants directly bring about change (rather than appealing through others)?
- **Sends Clear Message?:** Does the activity convey a clear political message that might persuade other people?
- **Sends Loud, Public Message?:** Does the activity convey a message loudly and widely so that other people will hear it?
- **Builds Democracy?:** Does the activity encourage people to get involved? Does it give them the power to make decisions? Does it encourage them to think for themselves?

The **Yes** cells are shaded to make the patterns of characteristics more visible.

Tactics for Changing Society

People use a variety of tactics to bring about change. Some of these activities effectively promote positive change, others accomplish nothing, and some others are actually counterproductive. Figure 7.5 lists twenty of the more common tactics and shows whether they have several characteristics that promote positive change.

For example, rallies, pickets, and marches are organized ways to bring together large numbers of people for a social change purpose (rally support for a cause and pressure opponents). These three tactics are generally nonviolent and are acceptable in a good society. Typically, they directly challenge opponents of positive change and send out a loud, clear political message. They also build toward democracy by encouraging the participants (and observers) to think about an issue, take a stand, and get more involved.

In contrast, vandalism is usually carried out by a single individual or a small number of people who are angry, but not particularly politically aware. Typically, they act spontaneously, without much planning or organization, which means their efforts are often poorly directed. By its nature vandalism is destructive and not consistent with a good society. It directly challenges opponents but, at best, usually sends out a muddled and muted political message so it does not build understanding or democracy.

I would expect that Vernal activists, and the organizations in which they worked, would primarily use tactics that promoted long-term positive change, that is, the ones with many “Yes” entries in Figure 7.5.

Building Citizen Movements for Progressive Change

Being free individuals, Vernal activists could choose to work for progressive social change in any way they liked.

You can never have a revolution in order to establish a democracy. You must have a democracy in order to have a revolution.

— Gilbert K. Chesterton

Some Vernal activists would probably work in cities, others in rural areas. Some would direct their efforts towards people who already understand the workings of society and attempt to mobilize them to action. Other Vernal activists would probably work to help people with less knowledge learn the true workings of society and help them imagine better

structures. Some Vernal activists would work with community groups (like neighborhood associations, tenants’ unions, homeowner associations, or parent associations), some with religious or civic groups, some with professional groups (like teachers, doctors, or engineers), some with working people and labor unions, and others with students and faculty at colleges and universities. Some would focus on a single issue, others on a wide variety of issues. Some Vernal

activists would likely work in the halls of political power in Washington or state capitals, lobbying for specific legislation. Some would devote their efforts to electing progressive legislators. Some might work for public interest research groups writing reports to influence the news media and authorities. Others would work with public interest law firms that sought to win change through litigation.

However, as I mentioned above, I expect that most Vernal activists would choose to work at the grassroots level and would attempt to build large, democratically governed citizen movements oriented toward fundamental progressive change. To build these movements, they would probably come together with other activists in their community and develop specific change campaigns focused on major societal problems of interest to large numbers of people in their community.

If designed properly, these campaigns would:

- Reach out to large numbers of people.
- Promote positive visions of a good society and demonstrate positive and powerful means to create it.
- Teach people how to live in consonance with their ideals, especially how to solve their mutual problems collectively and make decisions together in a cooperative, caring, and democratic way.
- Illuminate current injustices and demonstrate positive alternatives in a clear way.
- Empower people to take action against injustice.
- Teach people the skills necessary to challenge opponents and tackle dysfunctional cultural norms.
- Help people form organizations, networks, federations, and political parties with other concerned citizens to muster enough strength to overcome opposition.
- Force major, structural changes in critical societal institutions using methods of nonviolent struggle.

SOCIAL CHANGE CAMPAIGNS

Successful change campaigns typically have many components and proceed through several distinct stages, each involving somewhat different constituencies. Based on his more than twenty-five years of experience participating in and planning nonviolent social change campaigns, Bill Moyer has developed a detailed eight-stage framework for understanding the progression of successful change campaigns.²

Moyer’s eight stages are:

1. Normal Conditions

During politically quiet times the public mostly supports or acquiesces to the status quo.

2. Prove Failure of Institutions

Activists — working mostly in established progressive organizations and using mostly mainstream tactics like preparing and publicizing research reports — show that powerholders violate the public’s cherished values (such as honesty, democracy, and freedom). Activists prove and

document that a problem exists and that official institutions do not respond properly.

3. Ripening Conditions

A small number of concerned activists engage in prototype nonviolent actions and prepare for a larger movement. A network develops of grassroots activists willing to push for change.

4. Social Movement Take-Off

A trigger event publicly dramatizes the reality that social conditions and powerholder policies violate the public's values. Thousands of people become passionately involved and engage in various acts of opposition (such as marches, rallies, vigils, pickets, strikes, and blockades). The news is filled with stories of people protesting the status quo. Activists work to inform larger numbers of people and to bring people into social change organizations. They design powerful demonstrations that expose societal myths and illustrate positive alternatives.

5. Identity Crisis of Powerlessness

After a time, the excitement wanes, and the number of visible demonstrations decreases. Seeing few immediate results from their efforts, many inexperienced activists despair or burn out even though the campaign is proceeding well and is simply shifting into a different mode as described in the next stage.

6. Majority Public Support

Change activity shifts from nonviolent actions carried out by a small number of activists to a larger, broad-based movement that uses more conventional methods (like lobbying and lawsuits) to pressure powerholders. Activists seek to inform large numbers of people, encourage them to oppose the status quo, and urge them to support alternatives.

7. Success

The great majority of the public demands change. This, then, finally forces the authorities to acquiesce. The social change movement wins one or more of its demands but usually through conventional channels such as changing a law or winning a legal settlement. Often those in power claim credit for the changes and deny that the social change movement influenced them in any way.

8. Continuing the Struggle

Activists work to assure that the successes won are actually realized (laws are implemented and enforced). The movement continues to fight for more and stronger measures or shifts to other issues and begins another round of the eight stages.

With their broad understanding of social change dynamics, Vernal activists could help other activists understand these eight typical stages of a campaign and success-

fully maneuver through them. They could especially help inexperienced activists understand that campaigns take years to succeed, that the focus of activity shifts from one arena to another over time (and requires different kinds of social change work), and that victories are seldom clear-cut. They could especially help discourage activists who work in different arenas from fighting with each other and help them weather the crisis of powerlessness in Stage 5.

SUCCESS, DEFEAT, REFORMISM, AND CO-OPTATION

Through the many steps of a social change campaign, pressure weighs on activists to be satisfied with meager gains or with mere cosmetic changes. Without a clear goal and the strength to achieve it, campaigns are often stymied or sidetracked. Instead of transforming society, they may only force modest reforms or bring about temporary changes.

Figure 7.6 lists seven distinct levels of success activists may achieve in a campaign. These successes range from simply gaining access to an existing institution to broad, structural transformation of societal institutions. In the early stages of a campaign, it may be a major victory simply to get existing authorities to listen to a new perspective. As a progressive organization grows in strength and influence, it may push for acceptance of progressive ideas, then for reform that includes these ideas, and finally for fundamental transformation of the institution. When an institution has been fundamentally transformed, its policies and practices adhere to progressive ideals like honesty, democracy, and equity without constant prodding by progressive activists.

For example, if schools received funding at a uniform rate per student throughout the nation, many current efforts would be unnecessary. Wealthy parents would have an incentive to support improvement of all schools, not just those in their neighborhoods. Other parents would have less incentive to move to wealthy suburban neighborhoods (that now have well-funded schools). With better schools and more supportive teachers, juvenile delinquency in poor neighborhoods would decline.

Faced with fierce opposition, progressive change campaigns seldom achieve the seventh level of success. Besides being thwarted by powerful opponents, progressive activists may also be led astray by sympathetic activists or politicians who believe that simple relief or reform is sufficient. Ambitious politicians or activists also frequently “co-opt” a progressive effort by adopting the rhetoric of activists or assuming the mantle of leadership, but failing to push for truly fundamental progressive change.

With their understanding of social change campaigns, Vernal activists could help other activists understand the differences between weak reforms and fundamental change. They could encourage their colleagues to celebrate limited successes but also to stay focused on long-term goals. They could push for “transformative reform” — that is, reform that allows and facilitates greater reforms later by democratizing underlying structures — rather than “reformist reform” that relieves the immediate problem but undercuts

Figure 7.6: Levels of Activist Success

Level	Example: Newspaper Coverage	Example: Government Policy Change
1. Access to an Existing Institution	A reporter reads a progressive organization’s press release and agrees to talk with activists.	Progressive activists testify at a Congressional hearing.
2. Agenda-Setting in the Institution	The reporter understands the activists’ perspective and considers it when writing articles.	A Congressman introduces a bill that includes progressive measures.
3. Policy Change in the Institution	The reporter includes the progressive perspective in articles on the issue.	Congress enacts legislation that includes the progressive measures.
4. Desired Output from the Institution	The editor prints these articles with the progressive perspective intact.	The legislation is enforced.
5. Desired Impact Achieved	The public reads the articles and understands the activists’ perspective.	The legislation is enforced enough that it has the intended consequences.
6. Reform of the Institution	Activists are offered a regular newspaper column in which they can present their perspectives on many issues.	People elect a more progressive Congress that is inclined to enact progressive policies and will ensure the policies are implemented.
7. Structural Transformation or Replacement of the Institution	Activists produce their own newspaper with wide circulation and regularly publish their views on many issues.	Changes in the constitution lead to a more democratic process for electing Congress. Congress is then continually more inclined to enact and implement progressive policies.

SOURCES: This seven-level model is based on a six-level model in Paul Burnstein, Rachel L. Einwohner, and Jocelyn A. Hollander, “The Success of Political Movements: A Bargaining Perspective,” in J. Craig Jenkins and Bert Klandermans, eds., *The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, JA76 .P6235 1995): 282–284, which is, in turn, based on a five-level model in Paul D. Schumaker, “Policy Responsiveness to Protest-Group Demands,” *Journal of Politics*, no. 37 (May 1975): 494–495. I have added the last row and the newspaper example.

further progressive action.³ In addition, they could explain why it is necessary to build organizations with enough strength to achieve sweeping victories.

Overcoming Emotional and Cultural Obstacles

As described in Chapter 3, widespread ignorance, emotional conditioning, and dysfunctional cultural norms significantly hinder progressive change. With their extensive skills and knowledge, Vernal activists would likely be especially adept at helping people overcome these obstacles and become more knowledgeable, clear-thinking, compassionate, and self-confident citizens.

I expect Vernal activists would work first to clear themselves of their own emotional and cultural limitations so they could behave well and serve as role models for others. Then they would help other activists overcome personal blocks and be more effective. Finally, working in conjunction with other activists, Vernal activists could assist the larger public. Figure 7.7 details some emotional and cultural obstacles and the specific contributions Vernal activists might make to help people surmount them.

THE DISTRIBUTION AND TASKS OF VERNAL ACTIVISTS

Very Active Vernal Graduates

To get a better sense of the extent that Vernal graduates might influence society in Phase 3 of the Vernal Project, this section presents a more detailed and numerical analysis based on a few simplifying assumptions.*

* Obviously, even if the Vernal Education Project proceeded exactly as I suggest (and this is very unlikely), the number and distribution of very active Vernal graduates would not match these assumptions. Every community is different, every social change organization has its own flavor and style, and every Vernal graduate would choose her own path. There is no way to know where Vernal graduates would live, what organizations they would join or create, whether they would work with other graduates, what work they would do, nor what impact they might have on the world. I have made these assumptions *only* to illustrate some possibilities and to indicate the kind and quantity of social change we might expect from the Vernal Project.

Figure 7.7: Overcoming Emotional and Cultural Obstacles

Typical Emotional and Cultural Obstacles	What Vernal Activists Could Contribute to Help Overcome these Obstacles
Ignorance Misinformation	Clear and accurate information Provocative questioning Cooperative problem solving methods
Prejudice (racism, sexism, ageism, and so on) Mistrust	Clear and accurate information Personal counseling Cooperative problem-solving methods
Addictions, compulsions, phobias, and other dysfunctional behavior	Clear and accurate information Personal counseling Support and encouragement Gentle prodding
Uncertainty, self-doubt, conceit, arrogance	Clear and accurate information Personal counseling Support and encouragement
Isolation	Cooperative community Personal support
Hopelessness	Clear conceptions of a good society Knowledge of positive alternatives Skill and experience working for positive change Dedication to working for change

First, I assume graduates would be spread throughout the country in numbers proportionate to the general population. I also assume that most would work with small, democratically governed grassroots organizations. For the purposes of this analysis, I assume the 25,000 very active graduates (in Vernal Years 25–60 in the baseline scenario) would be distributed as follows:

- I assume fifty very active graduates would work in each congressional district.* They would work with grassroots organizations focused on the local community. Since there are 435 congressional districts in the U.S., this would involve a total of 21,750 very active graduates nationwide.
- I assume an average of forty-five very active graduates would work in each of the fifty states. They would work

* I focus on congressional districts since CDs each have approximately the same population (currently about 600,000 people) and they roughly conform to geographic and social boundaries. I think it is easier to understand the influence that Vernal activists might have by imagining a single congressional district (for me, the one where I live), and envisioning these activists working here.

with progressive organizations focused on a state or regional level. This would involve a total of 2,250 graduates nationwide.

- I assume one thousand very active graduates would work with progressive organizations focused on the national and international level.

Note that many of these organizations — especially those working at the local level — would have only volunteer members and staff since probably only the largest could raise enough funds to be able to pay staffers.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

I assume that the fifty very active graduates in each congressional district working at the local level would work with several types of grassroots organizations: Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups, Alternative Institution Development Groups, Progressive Political Parties, and Progressive Caucuses within mainstream organizations. To further detail the analysis, I assume they would be distributed in the following way:

• Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups: Twenty-Four Very Active Vernal Graduates

I assume four very active graduates would work together in each of six separate community- or college-based advocacy groups campaigning on a particular issue.† These might be existing organizations or ones that the Vernal graduates would create. Each might be an independent organization or it might be a single committee or task force of a larger organization.

As I see it, these 2,610 advocacy groups dispersed across the country would focus on a local aspect of an important, pivotal issue like corporate domination, environmental destruction, weapons production, poverty, crime, police brutality, corruption, inadequate childcare, inadequate healthcare, destructive U.S. foreign policy, racism, sexism, domestic violence, wealth inequality, or drug abuse. Some might push for favorable treatment of cooperative enterprises, a more humane tax code, reform of election campaign financing, a more democratic decision-making structure, or some other worthy endeavor. In all their efforts, these organizations would push for democratic and cooperative control of society.

Some of these groups would probably work with a single constituency (such as doctors, high school students, environmentalists, mothers of small children, residents of a single poor neighborhood, members of a labor union, or owners of small retail stores). Others would probably try to reach a broad, general audience.

† As I see it, these groups would work for broad, fundamental change, but focus on one issue at a time and emphasize local aspects of this issue. Members of the group would “think globally, but act locally” and “think broadly, but act tightly focused” on one issue.

To build a powerful social change movement focused on their chosen issue, members of these groups would do some or all of the following:

- Research and write factual leaflets about the issue, describing the problems with the current situation, what created and sustains these problems, possible alternative solutions, and how to implement these alternatives. Effective leaflets would expose societal myths and reveal the web of power-brokering and corruption that maintains the status quo.
- Inform and persuade people by distributing these leaflets at public events, showing videos, sending e-mail, speaking at schools, churches, and civic groups, canvassing door-to-door, circulating petitions, writing letters to local newspapers, staging vigils, rallies, and marches, and performing guerrilla theater. They would encourage people to withdraw their support from those conventional institutions and authorities responsible for problems and instead support alternative institutions that would solve them.
- Track local news stories covering the issue and challenge and persuade reporters to adopt a more progressive perspective.
- Press for change by lobbying authorities, filing lawsuits, and/or organizing boycotts, strikes, and blockades. They might focus their attention particularly on local business leaders, government officials, or civic leaders.
- Actively encourage new activists to join their organization and work to inform and support them.
- Build an inspiring and effective organization that practiced cooperative democracy and mutual support in its internal processes.*
- Publish a newsletter for supporters.
- Reach out to other progressive groups in the area and, when appropriate, work in coalition or affiliate with them.

With four very active Vernal graduates essentially serving as steady, part-time staffmembers, these organizations would likely be much more capable than most current or past grassroots social change groups. Linked or allied with other similar groups working on the same issue in every part of the country, these focused groups would have tremendous power to bring about change in their chosen issue area. I expect they would be similar to — but stronger than — the alliances of local groups recently working against nuclear power, nuclear weapons, U.S. military support of dictatorships in Central America, toxic waste, the death penalty, and sweatshops.

As I see it, the four very active Vernal graduates would help their organizations in these ways:

- Devoting at least twenty hours per week to their organization, the four very active Vernal graduates could do much of the basic day-to-day grunt work, ensuring that the basic task and internal maintenance functions of their groups were adequately performed.

* See also the section below titled “Cooperative Activist Communities.”

Seven Principles for a New Organizing Model

Based on her many years of organizing the multiracial Piedmont Peace Project in a poor, rural area of North Carolina, Linda Stout⁴ proposes that organizing efforts adhere to these seven principles:

1. Focus on social change (not on social service).
2. Work across race and class lines.
3. Include indigenous organizers and leaders (empower members of the community to be the organizers and leaders).
4. Encourage diversity (racial, class, and so on) with ongoing outreach and training — include diversity and leadership training in every staff meeting, board meeting, and retreat.
5. Focus on the connections between local and national issues.
 - Groups should educate themselves on how economic justice, peace, environmental, and women’s issues are interconnected.
 - Translate national issues into local language and issues so they appeal to people in the community.
6. Develop and maintain personal empowerment while working for organizational power by doing the following:
 - Listen to people.
 - Help them look at various options.
 - Help them see themselves in a position of power.
7. Be flexible and ready to create new models to adapt to the needs and leadership styles of participants.

- Their steady, long-term presence would provide much-needed stability and continuity of experience. They could convey the history and practices of their organization to new members. This would be of particular value to organizations based at colleges since students come and go so quickly.

- With their deep understanding of society and of change methods, the graduates could help their organizations choose penetrating issues, strategies, tactics, and goals; they could guide their organizations toward effective work. I expect they would push their groups to champion strong reform measures that democratized society and led to deep, fundamental change. They would steer their groups away from feeble compromises, measures based on narrow self-interest, or measures that might infringe on others. They would also point out the connections between issues and offer a broad perspective on social change. Most important, they would encourage their

Leadership is getting someone to do what they don't want to do, to achieve what they want to achieve. — Tom Landry

colleagues to investigate thoroughly all aspects of their chosen issue and act responsibly in all their change efforts.

- They would help connect and weave diverse people and groups together in coalitions and alliances.

- To increase understanding of the group's primary issue or to bolster their colleagues' social change skills, I imagine the four Vernal graduates would offer their colleagues a variety of educational materials: books, articles, notes, movies, videos, and web pages. At strategic times, they would facilitate educational workshops tailored to the interests and needs of the group's members. They might conduct workshops on a particular issue, or they might teach change skills such as how to develop strategic campaigns or how to use a particular change tactic. They might present personal transformation techniques, various ways to overcome cultural barriers, cooperative meeting processes, and positive ways to resolve conflict. They might present information on how their chosen issue fits with other progressive issues.

I imagine the Vernal graduates would also spend a significant amount of time every day individually mentoring other activists in their group — imparting their relevant knowledge and skills about every aspect of changing society and being an activist. Moreover, I expect they would help set up self-study groups to further educate themselves and their social change colleagues.

- The four graduates would probably devote a great deal of time to encouraging and supporting other members of their organization. I expect they could inspire their colleagues with their excitement and high expectations.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

- As I envision it, they would also be playful and loving, offering hugs and compassionate counseling to their colleagues during difficult periods. Whenever interpersonal

conflicts erupted, the Vernal graduates could calm the combatants and use their negotiation skills to mediate. Furthermore, they would help members of their groups understand and celebrate (rather than fret and fume about) their differences in age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and culture.

- Towards the goal of creating a democratic society of empowered citizens, I expect the Vernal graduates would encourage newcomers to take responsibility for the organization and to take initiative. To avoid disempowering other activists, I imagine Vernal activists would mostly aid and support others — working largely behind the scenes and only occasionally stepping out front into the limelight. I imagine they would try to let their colleagues make mistakes and learn from the consequences, without scolding them or taking control away from them.

- I also imagine the four graduates would expect the best of their fellow activists, prodding them to strive towards their highest ideals. They would encourage their fellow activists to boldly challenge conventional ideas, their own

perspectives, and each other's views. They would push them to struggle and learn from each other while they also supported and cared for one another. This would help to prevent their organizations from degenerating into wishy-washy feel-goodism or achieving only lowest common denominator accords.

With a reliable core of experienced, hard-working Vernal graduates, these local advocacy groups would likely do effective change work and make relatively few mistakes. Each group's integrity, effectiveness, and democratic procedures would impress both its members and outside observers, inspiring outsiders to join the group and members to work diligently towards its goals.

Based on my experience, I believe four very active graduates working together would be able to attract, mentor, encourage, and support about twenty-four other dedicated activists, and they could do it well enough that these twenty-four steadfast activists could work energetically for many years. If this were the case, each of these grassroots organizations would have twenty-eight active members who regularly attended meetings and carried out its projects. With this strong core, I believe each organization could attract and support about one hundred fifty active supporters (progressive advocates) who would regularly attend the group's events (presentations, hearings, demonstrations) or volunteer a few hours of work.*⁵

With so many active members and supporters, each of these grassroots organizations could probably reach several thousand more people each year — persuading them that society could be improved and convincing them of the value of a few specific positive alternatives. By having long and repeated conversations with large numbers of people, they probably would *profoundly* touch a certain number — perhaps fifty or one hundred individuals each year — and persuade them to radically alter their thinking about the nature of society and their role in it. Deeply affected by these conversations, many of these people would become activists eventually.

Note that I have assumed that the very active graduates would be most effective by working together as a group of four within each organization. If they worked individually, in pairs, or as a group of three, the twenty-four graduates in a congressional district could work with a larger number of organizations. However, they would also be more likely to become isolated or to go astray. I believe each Vernal graduate could more easily stay on track if she were continually working with three other experienced activists who had a similar understanding of the need for fundamental progres-

* Chapter 5 has more detailed definitions of steadfast activists and progressive advocates. In Appendix C, I further define steadfast activists as those who work from three to sixty hours each week for fundamental change and progressive advocates as those who work less than three hours each week, but at least ten hours per year.

Note that some of the steadfast activists and progressive advocates working with very active Vernal graduates would probably be less active Vernal graduates or Vernal students.

sive change. Knowing that the other three very active Vernal graduates were working skillfully and diligently with her for change would inspire her to her best work and hearten her in tough times. Furthermore, when one (or two or three) of them blundered or fell into despair, the others could use their well-developed support skills to comfort or heal her back to wholeness. Each graduate would know she could count on the other Vernal graduates to be honest, understanding, and caring even if other activists in the group defaulted.

• **Alternative Institution Development Groups:
Eight Very Active Vernal Graduates**

In each congressional district, I assume four very active graduates would work with each of two different groups striving to develop an alternative institution such as a community bank, a land trust, a cooperative food store, a farmer's market, a childcare cooperative, a tool sharing cooperative, a collectively owned and operated business, an alternative school, a battered women's shelter, a co-housing community, or a community garden. I expect the very active graduates would work to ensure that the alternative institution was fair, honest, open, democratic, cooperative, egalitarian, and powerful. They would work to build an institution that truly provided a progressive alternative to a conventional institution, which probably means that, as it grew over time, its existence would challenge the power structure or conventional cultural norms. If elements of the power structure fought back by attacking or undermining the alternative institution, the developers would then organize large numbers of supporters to resist the attacks and sustain the alternative institution.

I imagine that each of the 870 Alternative Institution Development Groups dispersed across the country would be similar in size to the Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups described above — with twenty-four steadfast activists and several hundred progressive advocates. I also assume the four very active Vernal graduates would provide a similar level of support and guidance to the other members of the group and to each other.

• **Progressive Political Parties: Six Very Active
Vernal Graduates**

In each congressional district, I assume six very active graduates would work together with a progressive political party like the New Party or the Green Party that has a multi-issue agenda. I expect they would do the same kind of education, advocacy, and recruitment work as activists in the Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups. They would probably also:

- Work with others to develop the party's platform.
- Work to elect progressive party members to public office.
- Coordinate efforts with the party's state and national offices.

With six hard-working very active graduates at its core, the local party chapter would likely be a vibrant organization. It would also be more likely to stay on a progressive track. Progressive political parties are always tempted to moderate their perspectives and soften their stances to appeal to large numbers of mainstream people or to attract big funders. Understanding how this might co-opt their efforts or compromise their integrity, the Vernal graduates could work to keep the party honest and its policies consistent with fundamental progressive change.

By reaching out to a large number of other organizations, including the Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups and Alternative Institution Development Groups, a progressive party should be able to attract many members and win elections, especially locally. Since most congressional districts currently have no organized progressive parties, having a large and vigorous one in all 435 CDs across the country would be a major breakthrough.

Democracy is based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.

— Harry Emerson Fosdick

• **Progressive Caucuses: Twelve Very Active Graduates**

In each congressional district, I assume four very active graduates would work together in each of three mainstream groups (a total of 1,305 groups across the country) such as conventional political parties, churches, labor unions, professional associations, civic organizations (like the Lions Club, Rotary Club, or Parent-Teacher Association), or social clubs. They would work to democratize the organization, to persuade members of the group to adopt more progressive perspectives, and to make the official policies of the organization more progressive.

If there was an existing progressive caucus within the organization, they might join it, or if there was none, they might create one. More often though, they would just gather informally to express their views. To sway the other members, they would present progressive ideas and circulate articles or papers that explained and promoted their positions. They would also seek out people in the organization who were open to progressive ideas, discuss issues with them, support them, inform them, and encourage them to learn more. Furthermore, in all their interactions with others, they would try to be models of honesty, integrity, and compassion.

Since these twelve very active graduates would work in only three mainstream organizations, it might seem that they would have little overall influence. In every community, there are hundreds of mainstream organizations including many that are quite large. However, these twelve very active graduates would be particularly skilled, knowledgeable, experienced, and active in their groups, making them more influential than most people. Each graduate would be a powerful voice for progressive ideas and a de-

pendable ally for other people who backed progressive measures. I also imagine they would be especially willing to work with coalitions like the local Council of Churches or Central Labor Council. This would greatly expand their influence.

Additional Work

Besides their primary work with the groups described above, each of these fifty very active graduates working in a single congressional district would probably devote some time to other change-related activities.

- As I mentioned earlier, they would all probably talk with their families, friends, and neighbors about progressive change.

- Many graduates might attend a weekly or monthly progressive study group, discussion group, video-watching group, eating club, singing group, or theater group. With the participation of fifty very active graduates in every congressional district, every community in the country might have several such camaraderie-building associations of progressive activists.

- Many graduates would likely also join mainstream organizations that matched their personal interests such as churches, civic organizations, or social clubs. Within these groups, they might periodically advocate for progressive change. Some activists might even deliberately join an organization with dissimilar interests as a way to reach out to conservatives in the community. For example, an activist who worked primarily with a group advocating for better community childcare facilities might join a conservative civic organization. As the members got to know her on a personal level, she could discuss her advocacy work and its importance. Conservative members who would scornfully reject her political arguments might be swayed by her personal integrity and her principled behavior. Eventually, they might be willing to consider her political ideas.

- These fifty very active graduates would serve as local examples of responsible and caring citizens. Some would likely visit schools to talk about the crucial role of an informed and active citizenry in a democratic society and present themselves as exemplary role models.

- Whenever a crucial issue or political campaign in their area came to a critical juncture, many of these activists would probably focus their efforts on it for a short time. With their deep understanding of progressive ideas and methods, there would usually be no need to persuade them to support the campaign, to convince them of the value of the change effort, nor to teach them particular tasks. Rather, they could jump right in and do effective work.

For example, the fifty very active graduates in a congressional district might write fifty letters-to-the-editor to the local paper calling for a particular change, make fifty phone calls to a political officeholder, or be fifty people attending a rally, vigil, picket, or blockade. In the time immediately before an election, each might do a week of campaigning and canvassing for a progressive political candidate, empha-

sizing the issues and talking to the constituencies they knew best. By focusing intensive effort on a particular spot, they might enable a group to make a decisive breakthrough.

Clearly, fifty very active Vernal graduates in a single congressional district could contribute an incredible amount to bringing about progressive social change. If, as described here, each very active Vernal graduate could support, inform, and inspire six steadfast activists and if each of these six steadfast activists could support, inform, and inspire six progressive advocates, each congressional district would have fifty very active Vernal activists, three hundred steadfast activists, and eighteen hundred progressive advocates. Together, these 2,150 activists would constitute a powerful force in their community.

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

As I envision it, the very active graduates working at the state level would work with existing statewide progressive organizations, or they might start new ones. They would carry out such work as the following:

- Research important local, state, and regional problems and develop possible solutions. They would write reports, papers, and pamphlets and distribute these documents to local progressive activists. They would also prepare model legislation for state or local governments that embodied the best solutions.

- Investigate corruption and power brokering among powerful people, corporations, and government institutions. They would publish exposés and issue press releases describing their findings.

- Serve as a reliable and ready source of progressive information and commentary to journalists on important issues.

- Maintain information resources (such as newspaper clipping files and web pages) on important progressive issues, especially those on which local change groups were working.

- Coordinate the efforts of local activists. For example, an organization might collect information from various local groups and pass it on to others, arrange regional tours for prominent speakers, or organize large, cooperative events such as benefit concerts or large, regional rallies.

- Collect information about members of the state legislature and executive agencies and pass this on to local activists to aid them in their local lobbying.

- Watchdog, inform, lobby, and challenge state legislators, state administrators, and federal

legislators from their state. The power of these activists in lobbying authorities would be greatly enhanced by working in conjunction with grassroots groups.

- Coordinate large, class-action lawsuits.

I expect the very active Vernal graduates working in these state-level organizations would take on the same roles

The trouble with practical jokes is that very often they get elected.

— attributed to Will Rogers

as those working with the grassroots groups described above. Very active graduates would work in groups of four, and they would devote much of their effort to supporting and educating the other members or employees of their organizations.

I assume the number of very active graduates working in a state would be proportional to the state's population, so in the smallest states, there might be only five very active Vernal graduates working at this level. In the largest state, California, I assume there would be about two hundred. Overall, I assume there would be very active graduates working in a total of 562 statewide organizations across the country.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

As I imagine it, the thousand very active graduates working at the national level would perform the same kind of work as the activists working at the state level, but their focus would be on the national and international arena. Many would probably work in Washington, DC, and focus on the federal government. Others would probably work in important business centers like New York or Los Angeles and focus on transnational corporations. Some might even work overseas, perhaps with international organizations like the United Nations, Bread for the World, or War Resisters International.

At the national level, progressive activists confront powerful and sophisticated politicians, business executives, and public relations flacks who are skilled at deceiving and manipulating people. Activists at this level are usually under intense pressure to negotiate, bargain, log-roll, pander, fawn, toady, compromise, or just give in. For this reason, it would be especially important for these progressive activists to have a strong support group in which they could encourage each other to maintain high ideals and adhere to high standards. Very active graduates could arrange these support groups, encourage activists to stand up for their principles, and help sustain their vision of a good society. They could also arrange regular visits by principled activists from grassroots groups who could remind and encourage the activists working in this arena to focus on fundamental, progressive change.

Like those working at the local and state level, I assume these very active graduates would also mostly work in groups of four. In large organizations, they might work in groups of six. I assume there would be very active graduates working in a total of 225 national and international organizations.

Overall, as described here, very active Vernal activists would be working in groups of four or six in a total of 6,007 local, state, national, and international organizations across the country.

Less Active Vernal Graduates

Most Vernal graduates, even after their primary focus had shifted to some other endeavor, would probably continue to do some social change work. With their extensive skills and long experience, these activists could contribute a great deal to change efforts. In the baseline estimate, the number of less active graduates would steadily rise from about 15,000 in Vernal Year 21 to 125,000 in Year 60 and would average about 90,000 over this forty year period. In Vernal Year 40, there would be about 104,000 less active graduates.

Many less active graduates would probably continue to work with the change groups they had worked with before — they would just devote less time each week than before. They would therefore fall into my category of steadfast activist or progressive advocate. Others might have little social change involvement, but would occasionally work on a particular issue or political campaign. Most would likely vote for progressive political candidates and continue to influence their families, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Since most would probably continue to want to bring about fundamental change and would now have reasonably well paying conventional jobs, they would likely donate relatively large amounts of money to social change groups. This could provide a significant resource. For example, if 100,000 less active Vernal graduates contributed an average of \$1,000 each year, this would amount to \$100 million — enough to support more than 3,000 full-time activists.*

Vernal Students

The six thousand Vernal students would also contribute a great deal to social change efforts. For the first nine months of their Vernal session, students would be working with a grassroots change group for about three hours each week. In the last quarter, they would work nine hours per week, putting them in my category of steadfast activist. Since they would each have at least one year of social change experience prior to enrolling in a Vernal session, they would probably be more skilled than many of their colleagues in these groups.

For the last nine months of the Vernal session, each student would also be serving in an internship with progressive organizations for twelve hours per week. With six thousand Vernal students each doing three internships, most progressive organizations in the country could have at least one intern each year. This would provide an immense amount of skilled labor for these organizations.

* Figure C.5 in Appendix C shows more detailed estimates of monetary contributions that might be made by all progressive advocates.

An Example

To provide a sense of how much all these Vernal activists might contribute to progressive social change efforts, let's consider a particular campaign — the effort to significantly reduce U.S. military spending and redirect these funds to socially beneficial endeavors. Since this is an important and fundamental issue, let's assume that one-tenth of the grassroots Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups supported by very active Vernal graduates (a total of 261 groups) would decide to devote themselves to this single campaign.* With this many groups, perhaps half of the people in the country would have a grassroots group working specifically on this issue in or near their community. With 28 active members (very active Vernal graduates and steadfast activists) and about 150 progressive advocates, each group would be as big and effective as the largest current local social change groups.

I imagine that each of these groups would regularly show films and videos, speak to church and civic groups, distrib-

*Our country,
right or wrong.
When right,
to be kept right;
when wrong,
to be put right.*
— Carl Schurz

ute leaflets, hold vigils and rallies, canvass door-to-door, and send out e-mail. In all these ways, they would tell people that a large percentage of the federal budget goes to support the military and explain how this robs important social services of much needed funds. They would also point out that the U.S. military does not defend the United States from outside threats (of which there are virtually none now), but instead violently enforces the current oppressive world economic order. They would

argue that a much reduced military force, working in conjunction with the military forces of other countries under the direction of the United Nations' General Assembly, would be better at ensuring world peace and prosperity. They could also argue that nonviolent peacekeeping teams would be even more effective in establishing a democratic and just world than a massive military force.

Vernal activists in these communities working with Alternative Institution Development Groups would likely discuss how money redirected from the military could be used to bolster their alternative institutions. Perhaps five percent of the Alternative Institution Development Groups supported by Vernal activists across the country (43 groups) might attempt to form nonviolent peacekeeping teams for deployment in world hotspots. Other Vernal activists working in these same communities with mainstream groups would likely raise this issue with their constituencies, generating more and broader discussion as well as generat-

ing more pressure on elected officials. Other Vernal activists working across the country with a progressive political party would likely push for reduced military spending and be able to get this policy adopted into their party's platform. By presenting accurate information and well-reasoned arguments directly, face-to-face to thousands of people in these hundreds of different communities, these many groups should be able to drastically shift the perspective of much of the public.

At the national level, there might be ten or twenty organizations containing four or six very active Vernal graduates focused on this issue (such as Peace Action, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and the Council for a Livable World). They would research and document this issue and prepare reports and leaflets for distribution in Washington and across the country. These organizations would also raise this issue with Congressmembers and urge progressive members to sponsor legislation. Vernal activists would work to ensure that any proposed legislation was strong and fair.

Military contractors, military personnel, military hawks, defense industry workers, and other advocates of military spending would, of course, argue the importance of U.S. military operations overseas, the contribution to the economy provided by military contractors, the job losses associated with military cutbacks, and so on. Vernal graduates could then use these arguments to deepen the discourse and discuss militarism, global capitalism, lobbying by military contractors, and economic conversion.

At strategically appropriate times, the grassroots groups would organize simultaneous rallies or send large numbers of people to a rally in Washington. Some would probably also organize local nonviolent direct actions of various kinds to emphasize the critical need for change, demonstrate the depth of their commitment, and increase the visibility of the issue. With so many large, powerful local groups constantly staging events and reaching out to their communities, this issue would become so prominent that the national media would be forced to address it. This would then stimulate even greater citizen discussion, more rallies, larger demonstrations, and finally, votes for military cutbacks. Congressmembers would feel intense, constant pressure to address this issue. Progressive parties would run candidates to challenge intransigent Congressmembers and might win in a few districts.

Eventually, this anti-military/pro-nonviolent cooperation movement would grow large enough to force substantial change. With tens of thousands of activists insisting that legislation not be compromised and vigilantly tracking the results (both in Washington and at the grassroots), the government would be forced to make far-reaching changes.

During the entire time these Vernal activists were working on this issue, the other 2,349 grassroots Issue-Oriented Advocacy Groups and 827 Alternative Institution Development Groups supported by very active Vernal graduates would be doing similar work on other issues. For

* Note that in addition to these 261 groups, there would probably be many other organizations also working on this issue that had no very active Vernal graduates as members. For the purposes of this discussion, I focus here only on these 261 communities.

example, another 300 groups might attempt to challenge the prison-industrial complex. Some of these groups might lobby state legislators to cut funding for prisons and shift money to other uses in rural areas. Others would push for release of prisoners sentenced for drug possession and for rehabilitation services. Some groups might focus attention on how prison guards finance conservative legislators and work to sever this connection. Another 300 groups might seek to overhaul the political election system — advocating universal registration, campaign finance reform, informative voter pamphlets, proportional representation of parties in Congress, or other measures.

Meanwhile, hundreds of other groups might focus on comprehensive health care, toxic waste, police brutality, child abuse, income and wealth redistribution, land ownership, sweatshops, and all the other issues that must be addressed to bring about comprehensive progressive change. They would be supported by Vernal activists within progressive parties, progressive caucuses in mainstream organizations, and state and national organizations. By linking issues and supporting each other at crucial times, these independent efforts, focused on many issues, would comprise a massive movement for sweeping progressive change — a movement larger than has ever been seen in this country.

As victories were won and changes enacted, these many groups could push for deeper and broader change or shift their focus to other issues that needed attention. After decades of work, they would be able to address all the major issues and force significant change in every realm.

CREATING COOPERATIVE ACTIVIST COMMUNITIES

These examples indicate that Vernal activists could have an immense impact in their efforts to bring about political, economic, social, and cultural change in society. Still, their greatest contribution might actually be to help build larger and stronger communities of activists. By reducing the amount of bickering and in-fighting, Vernal activists could help progressive organizations adhere more closely to progressive ideals and be more effective in accomplishing their change goals. Progressive organizations would then be more attractive to outside observers and more effective in developing and spreading a new, cooperative culture.

*Together we stand,
divided we freak out.*

Supportive and Educational Change Organizations

As an illustration, imagine a new person interested in progressive change. She might be drawn to progressive work

by being convinced of the truth of progressive ideas or she might just be attracted to the people in a change organization and their considerate ways of relating to each other — a refreshing reprieve from the fear and loathing of the dominant society.

Either way, when this person attended the change organization's meetings, she would begin to learn the group's procedures for conducting its business. By participating in cooperative decision making, she would learn how to work cooperatively and democratically with others. She would learn how to take responsibility for herself and learn the importance of looking out for others in her community. By observing the group's process, she would learn how to encourage positive dissent and constructive conflict. She would also learn how to resolve conflicts using gentle means that led to mutually satisfying results.

Other members of the change group would support her as well as encourage her to be loving and compassionate. They would expect the best of her and help her to develop a positive self-image. Whenever her previous socialization or emotional wounds led her to feel depressed or unworthy, to become greedy, narrow-minded, or immobile, or to insult or hurt other people, the other members would gently guide her back on track. They would teach her ways to overcome her self-destructive or uncivil behaviors through means of meditation, positive goal setting, journal writing, or other techniques, and they would offer counseling to help her heal her emotional wounds. Moreover, in this supportive envi-

*It's the not me in
thee that makes thee
so valuable to me.*
—Quaker Proverb

Becoming a Social Change Activist

There are several reasons people typically decide to become social change activists:⁶

- **Morality:** They want to do the right thing and act in consonance with their values.
- **Altruism/Empathy:** Out of an unselfish sense of concern for others' welfare, they seek to help other people.
- **Identity:** They seek to maintain the image they have of themselves as ethical and altruistic people.
- **Self-Interest:** They gain social or economic gains for participating, or they are subject to sanctions (including social pressure) for not participating.
- **Fun:** They enjoy the process of working for change. They get to be part of a fun group of like-minded people with whom they experience community, caring, and support. Or they enjoy challenging authorities and working to end oppression.

ronment, she could learn how to joyfully and lovingly play with other people — and she would have ample opportunity to do so.

By building these strong, cooperative change organizations, Vernal activists would not only act in consonance with their ideals, they would also lessen the amount of discord and ill-will in their groups — making the groups more resistant to attack or infiltration. Participating in a positive model of a good society every day would inspire hope for the future in each member.

Communities of Support

Besides working in their own supportive change organizations, Vernal activists would also likely set up additional support links with other activists. Some would probably form tight support communities in which a small number of like-minded activists lived together, shared meals, food preparation, and maybe even their possessions and money (just like a family). Others would form looser friendship connections with activists who lived nearby, perhaps sharing a meal once a week. Some of these support communities might emphasize simple living, and some might hold ceremonies or engage in rituals that helped to bond them together. Some would likely tie together activists who all shared a particular philosophy or style. Physically remote activists might use e-mail and other electronic means of communication to connect and share with others.

No matter how loosely or closely bound, these congenial communities would provide a place for activists to interact with others who shared their perspectives and activities, and they would provide a safe environment in which activists could learn to love others openly and without fear. Within such a community, activists could build trust and develop and practice their skills of interpersonal interaction, active listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, counseling, cooperative decision-making, and leadership. In such a safe, supportive atmosphere, activists would be more likely to remember their ideals and would find it easier to stay true to them. Feeling secure in their home space, activists could venture out more courageously — tackling bigger problems, delving into riskier areas, and using more difficult or dangerous tactics.

We must all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.

— Benjamin Franklin

These communities could also provide a source of help and a safe haven for activists when they encountered harsh opposition. By maintaining a high level of caring and understanding, such a supportive community could ensure there were always at least one or two people who could think clearly and give lovingly. If opponents crushed the

spirits of some activists, those who were still in good emotional shape could nurture and counsel the rest back to health. Similarly, if some activists were physically hurt, the

Cohesive Communities

A cohesive community is characterized by:⁷

- **Common beliefs and values:** People agree about a large number of things and are not divided too much by economic inequality or cultural heterogeneity — such as linguistic, ethnic, or religious cleavages.
- **Direct and many-sided relations:** People deal directly with each other and they relate to each other in many ways: as neighbors, friends, co-workers, fellow members of churches, kinfolk, and so forth.
- **General reciprocity and mutual aid:** People give to one another and help each other out, without any immediate expectation of a returned favor (sharing, hospitality, help, generosity, fraternity, solidarity).
- **Stable relations:** People expect to continue to interact with one another in the future so they keep each other's needs in mind.
- **Collective action:** People know how to work together and do so regularly.
- **Communal self-governance:** People decide together how to act, especially in ways that promote the common good.
- **Collective regulation:** People promote socially desirable behavior and discourage destructive behavior by offering social or economic benefits (approval, companionship, warm embraces, money, food, desirable employment, and so on) or invoking sanctions (disapproval, censure, shunning, and so on).
- **Collective mediation and conflict resolution:** People effectively mediate and resolve conflicts.

others could carry on the work of their fallen colleagues while helping to nurture them back to health.

Interconnected Communities

As the number of activist communities increased and the bonds between them grew, activists could spend more and more of their time with other supportive people who shared their worldview. They could listen to alternative radio stations, watch alternative television shows, read alternative publications, and patronize alternative businesses. Surrounded by an alternative culture, they would be less subject to conventional norms and the propaganda disseminated by elements of the power structure. This would make it even easier for them to adopt alternative perspectives and demand a good society. Moreover, their everyday actions as consumers would provide crucial support to alternative institutions and would reduce their support of conventional institutions.

Figure 7.8: A Possible Distribution of Vernal Graduates, Steadfast Activists, and Progressive Advocates

	Num of Orgs	Very Active Vernal Graduates		Other Steadfast Activists	Progressive Advocates
		Num/Org	Total		
Total			25,000	150,000	900,000
Local Organizations	5,220		21,750	130,500	783,000
Total in each congressional district	12		50	300	1,800
<i>Issue Advocacy Groups</i>	6	4	24	144	864
<i>Alternative Institution Development Groups</i>	2	4	8	48	288
<i>Progressive Political Parties</i>	1	6	6	36	216
<i>Progressive Caucuses</i>	3	4	12	72	432
State Organizations	562.5	4	2,250	13,500	81,000
Average per State	11.3		45	270	1,620
National and International Organizations	225		1,000	6,000	36,000
Small	175	4	700		
Large	50	6	300		

THE OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF VERNAL ACTIVISTS

Overall, with their large numbers and well-developed skills, Vernal activists should be able to greatly increase the strength, skill-level, and endurance of progressive change organizations.

• Strength

As described above, I assume Vernal graduates and students would work many hours and do much of the actual mundane work of progressive social change groups. They would persuade people to adopt a progressive perspective and inspire people to work for change. Vernal activists would also support and encourage other progressive activists to work harder and longer, take bigger risks, stay in better physical and emotional health, and fight less with their fellow activists.

On average, I expect each very active Vernal graduate could support and encourage six other steadfast activists, each working at least three hours per week for fundamental progressive change. Assuming there were 25,000 very active graduates, they could therefore support a total of 150,000 steadfast activists (about 300 working locally in each con-

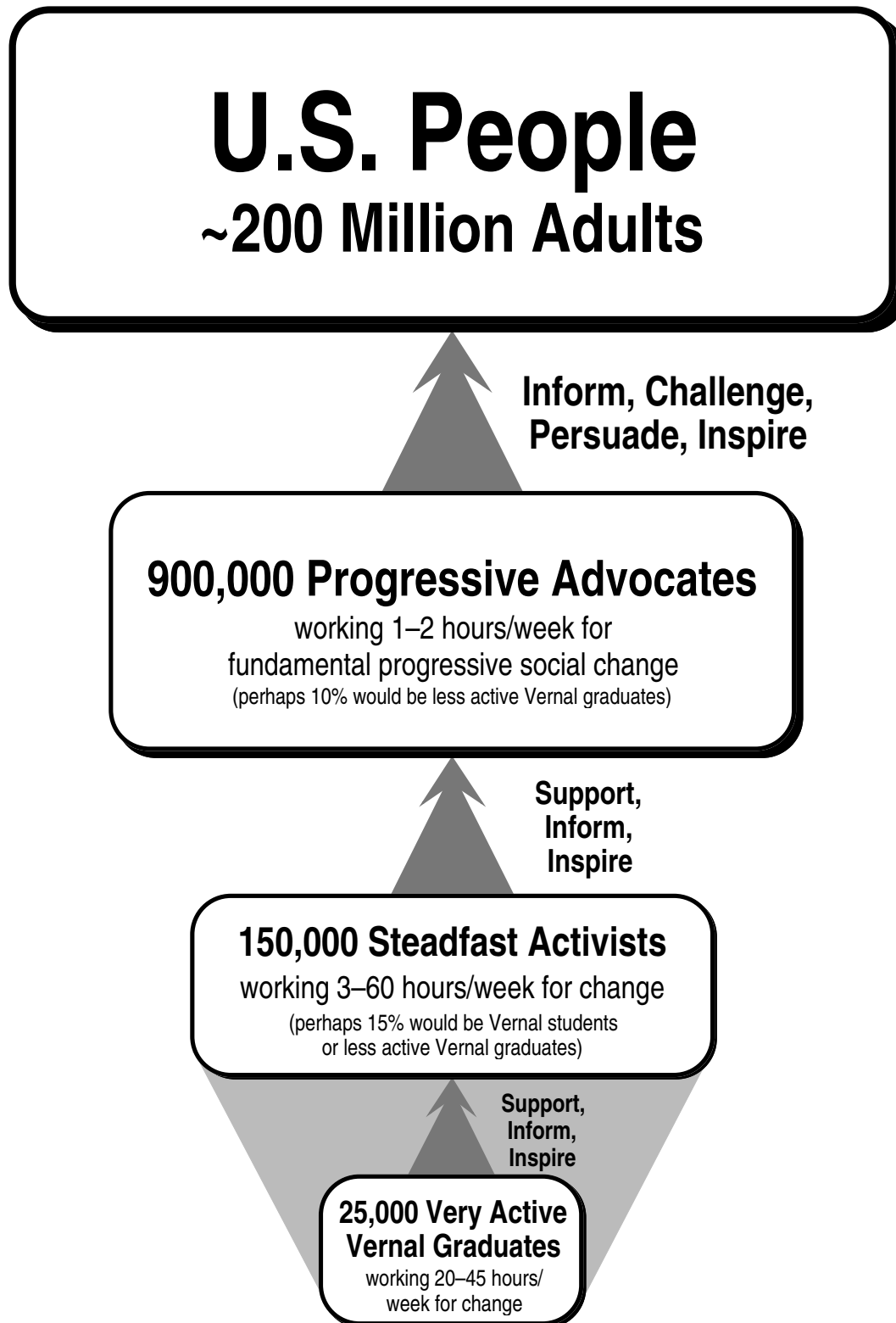
gressional district, an average of 270 working at the state level, and 6,000 working nationally).

I assume each very active Vernal graduate, working in conjunction with six steadfast activists, could support and encourage an additional thirty-six progressive advocates, each working one or two hours each week for fundamental progressive change. This would make a total of 900,000 progressive advocates working across the nation. Figure 7.8 summarizes these numbers.

If my assumptions are sound, through most of the forty years of Vernal Phase 3 there would be an average of over one million people working simultaneously for fundamental, progressive change. This would be a tremendous force of dedicated activists. I estimate this is about three times as many activists as are now working for fundamental change. Together, I estimate they would work about 3.6 times as many hours each week for comprehensive change as activists do now.*

* See Figure C.4 in Appendix C for the details behind these estimates.

Figure 7.9: A Large Progressive Movement with Vernal Graduates and Other Steadfast Activists Constituting the Base



A million activists and advocates promoting fundamental, progressive change would be enough to personally reach a significant portion of society. These activists and advocates could also greatly bolster the progressive infrastructure and culture necessary to sustain activists. Furthermore, this many activists would provide a strong base of subscribers for progressive magazines and newspapers, a steady funding base for community-sponsored radio and television stations, and a steady base of support for political musicians, comedians, and other artists.

Figure 5.2 showed a tiered structure with very active graduates at the bottom. Figure 7.9 is identical to Figure 5.2, but includes the number of activists who I assume would be working for change in the middle of Vernal Phase 3 (Year 40) as discussed in this chapter. At the bottom of this structure would be about 25,000 very active Vernal graduates working between twenty and forty-five hours each week for fundamental progressive change.* They would support, inform, and inspire about 150,000 steadfast activists working from three to sixty hours per week for fundamental change.† Perhaps fifteen percent of these steadfast activists (22,500) would be Vernal students or less active Vernal graduates. These steadfast activists would support, inform, and inspire another 900,000 progressive advocates working one or two hours each week for fundamental change. Perhaps ten percent (90,000) of these advocates would be less active Vernal graduates.

Together, these million activists would inform, challenge, persuade, and inspire all the rest of the people of the United States. Their efforts would be directed at transforming every person in society into an empowered, responsible citizen so that we can all live together cooperatively.

• Skills and Knowledge

Vernal activists would be much better educated than most activists today. By devoting much of their efforts to educating and personally mentoring the activists with whom they worked, they should be able to greatly increase the knowledge and skills of their colleagues. With their relatively large numbers, it would be feasible for Vernal activists to personally mentor all 150,000 steadfast activists and a significant portion of the 900,000 progressive advocates. As a result, the average knowledge and skill level of all progressive activists would likely be much greater than now, and activists would probably be significantly more effective in accomplishing their goals.

• Endurance

By providing a solid core of activists for a large number of progressive organizations, Vernal activists would also

likely increase the stamina and endurance of other activists. With good support, activists would enjoy working with their organizations more, and they would therefore persevere longer. There would probably be far less infighting and more effective work. Activists would stick around long enough to become knowledgeable and skillful and long enough to teach what they had learned to new activists.

Knowing there were a million other dedicated and skilled activists working for fundamental change would also inspire activists to work harder and remain truer to their highest ideals. It would provide the hope and inspiration that activists have long desired and needed.

Victory belongs to the most persevering.
— Napoleon Bonaparte

Total Contribution

In Phase 3, the Vernal Education Project — constituting 25,000 very active Vernal graduates, around 100,000 less active Vernal graduates, and 6,000 Vernal students — would likely provide a tremendous boost to progressive organizations. They would make it possible for every community in the United States to have a large number of powerful grassroots organizations working every day for change. They could ensure that their fellow activists were well versed in the theory and practical techniques of progressive change and that their change organizations stayed on a truly progressive path. They would likely increase the skills, strength, and endurance of progressive change organizations several-fold.

In Vernal Phase 3, the combined efforts of progressive activists might add up to a force perhaps three or four times more powerful than current progressive change work. This would be an unprecedented increase in the overall power of progressive forces.

REALIZING STAGE 2 OF THE STRATEGIC PROGRAM

Chapter 5 described a four-stage strategic program for fundamentally transforming society. Chapter 6 outlined an education program that could realize the goals of the first stage (Lay the Groundwork).

This chapter demonstrated that if the Vernal Education Project were implemented as described in Chapter 6, it would generate a large number of skilled and experienced activists working diligently for change. These Vernal activists would greatly bolster the work of other progressive activists, increasing the strength, knowledge, skill, and endurance of progressive change organizations, especially at the grassroots. By raising awareness about the need for change and building organizational strength, Vernal activists — working with over a million other activists — could

* I assume, to avoid burnout, Vernal graduates would work no more than forty-five hours per week.

† Since most steadfast activists would not be Vernal graduates, some would likely work at a burnout rate of up to sixty hours per week.

successfully implement Stage 2 of the strategic program (Gather Support).

Chapter 9 shows how the million activists supported by Vernal graduates — working together over several decades — could successfully implement Stages 3 and 4 of the strategic program and fundamentally transform society.

But first, in Chapter 8, let me try to make this all seem a bit more real by telling a story about a single community organization and a few activists who make it an effective force for progressive change.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 7

¹ My thinking about the role of Vernal activists in social transformation has been greatly influenced by the Populist Movement of the 1880s and 1890s especially as portrayed by Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, E669 .G672 1978). At its peak, the Populists had 40,000 lecturers who spoke directly to people and propounded practical ideas about building alternative institutions (like cooperative banks). They provided an alternative source of information which were outside of elite propaganda channels and were less influenced by the dominant culture. Populist organizations also provided a crucial support base for the members. The long line of wagons extending across the countryside on the way to each of the mass meetings of the National Farmers Alliance and Industrial Union in the 1880s showed all the participants that they were not alone.

The movements of the 1960s also showed me the ways that universities, Black churches, rap groups, teach-ins, and the whole “counterculture” offered support and alternative education to large numbers of people and how useful this was in bolstering social change movements.

² Bill Moyer, *The Movement Action Plan: A Strategic Framework Describing the Eight Stages of Successful Social Movements* (San Francisco, CA: Social Movement Empowerment Project [721 Shrader Street, 94117], 1987). Moyer describes each stage and the level and kind of public support for powerholders and opposition activists in each one. He also cites the goals, tasks, and pitfalls for activists in each stage. See also Tom Atlee, “How Nonviolent Social Change Movements Develop: An Interview with Bill Moyer,” *ThinkPeace* (Oakland, CA) 6, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 3–6.

³ By “transformative reforms” I mean changes in political, economic, social, or cultural institutions that advance fundamental transformation of society. In contrast to reforms conceived on the basis that they can be won and implemented readily within the current system, transformative reforms are those required to satisfy true human needs and desires. They often require changing the current system. Furthermore, transformative reforms enable and foster even greater reform — they win the immediate goal but also

reshape the playing field to make it easier to win further victories. They build progressive infrastructure, engender an enlightened consciousness, and empower people. Moreover, they equip people with the means to make decisions democratically and the means to ensure that the reforms are implemented properly.

André Gorz, *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, HD8431 .G613), pp. 6–8, uses the terms “non-reformist reform,” “revolutionary reform,” “anti-capitalist reform,” and “structural reform” to convey this same idea.

⁴ Linda Stout, *Bridging the Class Divide and Other Lessons for Grassroots Organizing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, HN65 .S75 1996), pp. 105–116.

⁵ My assumptions here are based on observations of effective social change activists and organizations. The really skilled activists I have known attract many other people to their organizations, and many of those who are attracted become activists and begin to work for change. Skilled activists know how to support people, teach them, and encourage them.

I assume that Vernal graduates would approach their level of skill and so would have comparable levels of success in encouraging other people to become activists. In considering several of these outstanding activists, I estimated that they are able to bring in and support roughly four to ten other people who then work significant amounts of time for change (and are therefore “steadfast activists”). I believe a skilled activist should be able to support at least four or five other people, but generally, it is difficult for an activist to give personal attention to more than nine or ten. So here, I assume that each very active Vernal graduate would be able to support an average of six other steadfast activists.

From my observations of social change organizations, it appears that effective organizations typically have many times as many “advocates” (people who are mostly busy with other parts of their lives, but who provide financial support and a bit of volunteer energy to the organization) as active members (steadfast activists). In considering these organizations, it appears that they attract somewhere around three to ten times as many advocates as steadfast activists. Here, I assume there are six progressive advocates for every steadfast activist (not counting the very active Vernal activists). This estimate is also very rough, but seems reasonable.

⁶ I derived these five reasons from two sources: (1) Michael Taylor, “Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action,” in Michael Taylor, ed., *Rationality and Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, HX550 .R48R37 1988): 63–97 (especially pp. 85–87). His analysis draws on Howard Margolis, *Selfishness, Altruism and Rationality: A Theory of Social Choice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, HB846.8 .M37), Tibor Scitovsky, *The Joyless Economy: An Inquiry into Human Satisfaction and Consumer Dissatisfaction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, HB801 .S35), and Stanley Benn, “The Problematic Rationality of Political Participation,” in Peter Laslett and James Fishkin, eds., *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, 5th series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, JA71 .L27); (2) Michael Albert, *Why Radicalism?*, a lecture recorded at Z Media Institute, Summer 1998, Boston, MA, available from *Z Magazine*.

⁷ I derived these points from Michael Taylor, "Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action," in Michael Taylor, ed., *Rationality and Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, HX550 .R48R37 1988): 63–97 (especially pp. 68, 71). Taylor discusses the first three points in more detail in Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy, and Liberty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, HX833 .T39 1982), pp. 26–32.

In these works, Taylor convincingly argues that cohesive communities, able to provide a strong social foundation, are crucial for bringing about fundamental change and maintaining a good society.

Michael Taylor and Sara Singleton, "The Communal Resource: Transaction Costs and the Solution of Collective Action Problems," *Politics & Society* 21, no. 2 (June 1993), 195–214, argue that the transaction costs (search costs, bargaining costs, and monitoring and enforcement costs) of reaching and implementing an optimal collective solution are greatly reduced in a cohesive community.

For a more general discussion of collective action, see Mancur Olson's defining work, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (1965; revised edition, New York: Schocken Books, 1971, HM131 .O55 1971). Olson explores the factors that encourage and prevent people from working together. In particular, he describes the "free rider" problem in which non-contributors have little incentive to work collectively with others since they receive the same benefits from a public good as do hard-working contributors. For a good review of the literature on collective action since 1965, see Pamela E. Oliver, "Formal Models of Collective Action," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 271-300.