

MULTIPLE LEVELS OF CONFLICT
IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A CONFERENCE SUMMARY

May 9, 1987

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"Multiple Levels of Conflict in Everyday Life"

**A One Day Conference Sponsored by:
The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Saturday, May 9, 1987**

Conference Summary

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Presents a One Day Conference:

"Multiple Levels of Conflict in Everyday Life"

Saturday, May 9, 1987
Rackham Graduate School
University of Michigan

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Introduction

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives (PCMA) is led by a group of nine faculty from different disciplines within the University of Michigan who are committed to the study of conflict and conflict management. They are aided in this effort by several graduate research assistants and technical staff members. In addition, they are linked to and collaborate with faculty colleagues throughout the University of Michigan and elsewhere, and with organizational and community members throughout various agencies and locations in the Upper Midwest.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach, PCMA has focused on the social justice, roots, and implications of contemporary conflicts. PCMA has examined issues of organizational structure and change, race and gender, inequality, cultural differences, and the special roles of practitioners and advocates in the resolution of conflict.

This conference was designed to bring scholars and practitioners together to discuss the conflicts that we find in our everyday lives. The object was to foster an interactive discussion of theories of conflict and alternative practices of conflict management. The presentations and workshops at the conference were intentionally informal and loosely structured. The result was a delightfully broad mix of perspectives and ideas about the way conflict affects our daily lives.

Similarly, the following summaries are not precise recordings of the conference proceedings, but only general overviews of the presentations and workshops. The conference enhanced the interplay of researchers and practitioners who deal with conflict, and we tried to portray that interplay within this report. We hope that it will serve as a guide to some of the ways in which theories of conflict and the practices of conflict management can be productively integrated.

Keynote Address

"Multiple Levels of Conflict in Everyday Life"
Excerpts from an informal presentation by:
Edith W. Seashore, Organization Consultant

As we prepare to talk about conflict in everyday life, I was thinking about the conflicts you and I may have encountered in the last twenty-four hours. Some of our conflicts are internal. We often encounter these, and they can be quite simple, like whether or not to order dessert after you've heard it described by the waitress.

Some conflicts can be interpersonal. For instance, one thing that no one in my family can seem to do is to put anything back into the fridge that they've taken out. For many years that created a great deal of conflict in our family, because I figured that it was so simple to put it back where it belongs that people must be avoiding their responsibilities. I assumed a lot of things that escalated the issue. Now I've found a way to resolve that conflict: I put it back in the fridge and I don't think about it.

Some conflicts we can solve this easily and some not. Another example of interpersonal conflict occurred when I was consulting recently at the University of Massachusetts. I had the honor of meeting and hearing Jesse Jackson, as I hear some of you did here, and I was very excited about his articulateness and effectiveness. As a result, I ran around Washington telling everyone that the next president had to be Jesse Jackson. I was in continual conflict with people in Washington who didn't think that the next president could or would be Jesse Jackson.

There also are, of course, group conflicts, and we've run into a fair amount of them recently on college campuses. Yesterday, I was listening to some of your

faculty and administration discuss the issues between minorities and non-minorities here at the University of Michigan.

We can have conflicts within and among organizations as well. For instance, various groups or units within organizations may have differing agendas or perceptions, as in "labor-management conflict." Then, too, organizations may engage in conflict with one another over prestige, control of resources, or market-share.

Finally, we have conflict among nations. Being very naive when I got out of college, I thought that the United Nations would be the ultimate example of how international conflict gets resolved. As I watched it work, however, I realized that this wasn't the intention at all, and it was very interesting for me to recognize that one of the goals of many nations was to figure out how to keep conflict going, not how to resolve it.

What I want to do in this opening session is to work on some of the ways we can understand conflict, and some of the ways we can begin to work with it more effectively.

Among the many phrases used for conflict resolution these days is "managing differences." In some ways this phrase deals with a more generic process. Conflict is one way we can choose to deal with differences. Some of us are turned on by differences, and see their management as creative and exciting. Others of us have learned early in life that the best way of handling conflict or differences is to avoid them altogether. For some people, who can do nothing but engage in it, I recommend learning a little bit of avoidance behavior; for others, like me, it is important to learn how to get engaged in it more often.

I'd like you to think about some conflicts you have been involved in during the last twenty-four hours. Would you jot them down on a piece of paper, just so we have your frame of reference. It doesn't have to be an astronomical conflict, it

could be about something as simple as warm orange juice or as complex as racism at the university.

Now write down four or five characteristics about yourself that you value, one word for each one. I'll put one down to give you an idea of what I value about myself: "Smart." What are some examples you are writing down: "Humor;" "Creative;" "Optimistic." Fine--you get the idea.

Now write down the psychological opposite of each characteristic; your psychological opposite, or the dictionary's. For me the psychological opposite of "smart" is "dumb." For example, let me have the psychological opposites of the prior examples: "Humor - Dour;" "Creative - Apathetic;" "Optimistic - Pessimistic."

The interesting thing is that these psychological opposites are the things we probably value least in ourselves, and they often create conflict within us. For instance, if I am afraid to look dumb, I may not ask the questions or take the risks involved in trying to look smarter. These opposites also are the kinds of characteristics I find in other people who I am most apt to get into conflict with. I am most apt to have difficulty with people who act dumb. It doesn't make any difference if they are salespeople at the store or one of my colleagues in a training event. When you are in a situation where you are trying to be creative, and are working with people who are apathetic, that will create conflict. It would be interesting to take your list of people with whom you are in conflict and ask whether any of them have the characteristics you find least valuable.

One way to handle this kind of conflict is to take your psychological opposite and try to neutralize it. For instance, if I can see somebody as not dumb, but naive, then that does not lead to the same problem for me. Then the educator comes out in me: I can help them to learn something because they are just naive. Take your list of psychological opposites and try to neutralize them so that they

are more acceptable to you. Let's get some of these ideas from the audience. What neutralized your term: "Dour - Serious;" "Apathetic - Satisfied;" "Pessimistic - Realistic."

I urge you to use this process around the people with whom you find yourself in conflict. There often are behavior patterns that we can tolerate less well than others, and that immediately sets up conflict, at least at the interpersonal level.

Now take one of the conflicts you are involved with that you identified earlier and we will work on it for a grand total of six minutes. This will be a mini-workshop within a mini-lecture. Pair up with a person sitting next to you. I'd like one of you to take that conflict and talk about what the problem is for one minute. Talk about the aggravation this conflict creates, how terrible it is, how difficult and dreadful it is, and how miserable it makes you feel. After one minute switch with the other person.

For the next minute each, I want you to look at the payoffs for you for staying in this conflict: what's keeping you there? Then look at the conflict in a broader perspective and get a cosmic chuckle out of the situation. For the last minute each, I want you to discuss the possibilities for growth because of this problem--what you can learn from the experience. Feel free to ask questions of your partner and make comments. You don't have to solve anything. We are simply exploring a way of looking at problems to be able to work on them more effectively.

The way things are going in the world these days, I figure whatever we can do in six minutes, all the better. If you are working with a group or a team that is experiencing serious conflict, it may be very useful for them to go through this exercise. They should get some insight into their interpersonal process, and very often will come out at a different place than where they entered.

A number of years ago, Schmidt and Tannenbaum wrote an article called "The Management of Difference." They discussed four basic issues underlying conflicts we get into: facts, methods, values, and goals.

I had a perfect example of a conflict around facts the other day with my teenage daughter. She works for a doctor, and had asked him for a Friday off. She had explained all of the reasons that it was so terribly important to her, but he came back with a rejection that didn't make sense to her. So she said to me, "I just don't like the way this is working out, and I'm going to do it anyway." She and I talked a little bit about it, and I couldn't understand what the doctor's problem was either, but I have a lot of faith in both of them, so I said, "Go back and give it one more try." She did and came home with this grin from ear to ear. She said, "We were talking about two different Fridays." When this factual misunderstanding was cleared up, all of the reasons why he thought it wasn't a good idea disappeared, and he became a perfectly reasonable human being. It was as simple as that. It's a good idea to see if we're talking about the same set of facts, before we get into an escalated scenario.

It also is difficult to work together when we have very different values relevant to a situation or a choice of action. If the values you hold around important issues don't concern me, and you aren't committed to my set of values, how can we resolve the conflict? We have to work on understanding and appreciating, or having respect for each other's values, even if we cannot agree with one another.

We often have conflict around the methods used to handle a problem. Recently, Gary Hart discussed an argument he had with the Mondale campaign around convention procedures, and it was strictly around methods. If you remember some of the problems that we've had in negotiations with the Russians, around whether we have a round table or a square table, you can see that it can

get us into a lot of difficulty. In the civil rights movement, we sometimes experienced conflicts about methods used to pursue justice -- protests v. education v. litigation. Families with problems often experience conflict regarding the methods used to solve their problems: should they talk about their problems or not; should they undergo counseling or not; should the children be disciplined gently or harshly.

Another example of conflicting methods evidently occurred on this campus recently when the president was confronted by angry students. The question was whether the students and the president could agree on methods for negotiation. If they couldn't do that, they couldn't get any further, and couldn't deal with the core issues underlying the protest. It's possible that they also had very different facts, and surely they had some different values.

We also can have conflicts around goals. When I met yesterday with a campus faculty group, they said that they'd had a number of fantastic discussions about racism, but that they had no agreement about what their goal was. They had never discussed or come to a common agreement around any of their goals for responding to racial incidents or racism on campus. Fascinating discussions will go nowhere if you have conflict about goals.

The interesting thing is that we are often working on all four of these issues at the same time. You could be working on conflict regarding values, and I could be working on differing goals. To the extent that we agree on any of these four, that narrows the possible field of conflict.

Another reason we have difficulty getting out of conflict is that we really don't listen to each other very well. We have been working on ways of improving that here, and I'd like to leave you with one more. It may make a difference in some of the ways that you work on your conflicts.

There are several issues around which we have been having disagreements within the past few weeks: surrogate motherhood; diversity and excellence; affirmative action and reverse discrimination; and, publicizing politicians' private lives. Pair up with another person, pick one of these issues, and present your point of view, whatever it is. Before the other person responds to your point of view, they have to say, twice, "I appreciate (something)"--something that you've said, or the way you've expressed it. It doesn't have to be your particular point of view that they appreciate, but they might appreciate the way you presented it, or the knowledge you had, or the passion you have, or even the fact that you bothered to talk about it at all. Then let the other person give their point of view and think of two things that you appreciate.

What I've tried to do, in an interactive and workshop fashion, is to share some of the useful ways I know for working with interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict: neutralizing opposites; four steps in dealing with interpersonal conflict; the Schmidt-Tannenbaum conceptual scheme; and, how we can listen more carefully and find something in other people to appreciate.

Session #1: Conflict Over Human Services

Workshop 1-A: "Responding to Crises in Intimate Relationships"

Summary of an informal panel discussion with:

Moderator: Susan Contratto, Clinical Psychologist

Panelists: Kathy Edgren, Member of Ann Arbor City Council

Micky Price, Psychologist

Helen Weingarten, PCMA and School of Social Work

Conflict often leads to crises in intimate relationships, and the consequences can be extremely violent. Different types of sexual conflict, including rape and spouse abuse, were described in this workshop. The participants distinguished varying levels of conflict in relationships, and discussed a range of personal, social, and legal responses to intimate crises. Methods for assessing conflict in order to identify appropriate responses were described, and laws designed to stop sexual violence were evaluated.

Different problems demand different solution strategies, and a model of multiple levels of conflict can help practitioners characterize different crises (see chart). Not to be misinterpreted as progressive stages, these levels of conflict represent the degree of a situation's difficulty based upon the perceptions of the parties involved. Varying levels of conflict will involve different sets of power resources, bases for discussion, and potential solutions.

When a practitioner attempts to resolve an intimate crisis, the level of conflict often can be characterized in terms of the objectives and assumptions of the parties, their views of the practitioner, the emotional climate, and the negotiation styles involved. By assessing these factors and identifying the level of conflict involved, efforts to collaborate can be enhanced, and appropriate responses to particular crises may emerge.

Multiple Levels of Conflict in Intimate Relationships*

Level	Major Objective, Motive, or Aim	Key Assumption	Client's View of Practitioner	Emotional Climate	Negotiation Style
I.					
Problem to solve	Solve the problem	We can work it out	Advisor/facilitator	Hope	Open; direct; clear and non-distorted communication; common interest recognized
II.					
Disagreement	Self-protection	Compromise is necessary	Enabler/mediator	Uncertainty	Cautious sharing; vague and general language; calculation beginning
III.					
Contest	Winning	Not enough resources to go around	Arbiter/judge	Frustration and resentment	Strategic manipulation; distorted communication, personal attacks begin; no one wants to be first to change
IV.					
Fight/flight	Hurting the other	Other person can't or won't change; the self doesn't need to	Partisan ally	Antagonism and alienation	Verbal/nonverbal incongruity; blame; perceptual distortions evident; refusal to take responsibility
V.					
War	Eliminating the other	Costs of withdrawal greater than costs of staying	Rescuer or intruder	Hopelessness and revenge	Emotional volatility; no clear understanding of issues; self-righteous; compulsive; inability to disengage

* This chart was first published in "Levels of Marital Conflict: An Intervention Model," a PCMA Working Paper by Helen Weingarten and Speed Leas, 1986.

Emphasis should be placed on the underlying interests of the parties, rather than their bargaining positions, in an effort to deal with the source of the problem. The parties should be separated from the problem, avoiding the tendency to blame each other, in order to foster a collaborative relationship. Both subjective and objective criteria should be used to invent resolution options that involve mutual gains for the people involved, and the alternatives to an agreement should be explored.

Practitioners also must know when to encourage discussion, and when to discourage it. Some intimate crises cannot be resolved through negotiation, and separation of the parties may be necessary. Intimate conflict can lead to violence, and the protection of the individuals involved must sometimes be the first priority of the practitioner.

When sexual conflict becomes violent, as in rape and spouse abuse cases, society must intervene in order to protect the individuals involved. However, the utility of legal responses to intimate crises is dependent on how those crises are defined, which is sometimes a source of conflict itself.

Rape, for example, has recently been defined as the use of threat, physical force, or intimidation to coerce someone into engaging in sexual relations. The effect of this definition is to focus on the actions of the perpetrator, rather than those of the victim. Prior definitions have sometimes emphasized the victim's character, providing an opportunity to blame the victim for the rape. This changing focus has led to revised sexual conduct laws in some states, including Michigan.

But recent studies of acquaintance-rape have found some disagreement over definitions. Using the above definition, a Kent State University research group found that nearly one-fourth of the women it interviewed have been the victim of rape or attempted rape, and and most of them knew their assailants. Many of the

men polled said they had fulfilled the terms defined by the study, but denied that they committed rape. Acquaintance-rape is a major social problem, and conflict over the definition of rape appears to be at its source.

Perhaps men deny having committed rape because our culture reinforces aggressive sexual behavior. Men believe that women control sex, often suggesting that women who are raped "must have asked for it." The differences in males' and females' definitions and experiences might be attributed to gender-related power disparities in our society, and to the socialization process in general. Men are socialized to compete against each other for women, and seldom get opportunities to cooperate with one another. While women are socialized to cooperate with men, they also achieve status through their relationships with men. These factors contribute to the problem of gender conflict, and to its extreme forms of domestic violence and rape.

Women cannot completely stop rape or abuse, even with training in self-defense or the use of weapons, because they can generally be overpowered by men. To solve the problem, men must change their ideas about rape, violence, and aggression toward women. This will require changes in socialization processes, and greater awareness of what constitutes rape.

Another frequent consequence of intimate relationships, spouse-abuse, also requires intervention by law enforcement agencies. Ann Arbor's two new mandatory arrest ordinances serve as examples of possible community responses to violent domestic conflict. Modelled after similar laws passed in Duluth, Minnesota, the new ordinances rely on a significant body of data which shows that the arrest of batterers decreases violence.

The first ordinance requires Ann Arbor police to arrest anyone who is suspected of assaulting another person, even their spouse. The police must notify both the victim and Safehouse, a sanctuary for battered women, before the suspect

is released. This gives the victim time to take action, with assistance, before the possibility of having to deal with the batterer can arise again. The second ordinance creates a coordinating board of women's activists, community members, and bureaucrats to monitor the implementation of the policy, and to recommend improvements.

Prior to the enactment of these ordinances, the policy and practice of the police department was rather arbitrary. Batterers were arrested only if the beating was particularly bad and the police were assured that the victim would prosecute. Police frequently attempted to mediate disputes. When suspects were arrested, they were primarily men of color and men from lower-class backgrounds.

The new ordinances force the police to intervene and separate conflicting parties in cases of domestic assault. Rather than approaching the conflict as mediators, police are required to act as intervenors, protecting the victim.

The Ann Arbor police and the city attorney initially resisted the enactment of these ordinances, submitting two lists of objections to the laws. But organized community pressure and a persistent effort to educate all of the involved parties eventually led to passage of the laws. The result was a collaborative effort in which the city attorney and a group of women attorneys worked out the language of the ordinances together.

A response to any crisis in an intimate relationship generally requires an understanding of the conflict from which that crisis emerged. A full assessment of the nature of the conflict, as described in this workshop, can help identify the most appropriate response to a particular crisis, and it can help us to devise better policies for legally intervening in domestic disputes. The more we know about the dimensions of a conflict, the more capably we can respond to it.

Workshop 1-B: "Alternatives to the Traditional Delivery of Services"

Summary of an informal panel discussion with:

Moderator: Charles Moody, PCMA and Program for Educational Opportunity

Panelists: Barry Checkoway, School of Social Work

Carie Garrity, University Hospital Patient Relations and Family Services

Marilyn Schmidt, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies,

Wayne State University

Alma Smith, Ann Arbor Student Advocacy Center

When people who rely on human services lack control over the delivery of those services, patterns of conflict often emerge. Hospital patients generally have little control over health care services, for example, and public school students and parents are relatively powerless in determining educational policies. If services are inadequate, and conflict arises, such groups frequently find themselves in situations of imbalanced power, with little influence over decisions that are critical to their well-being.

This workshop focused on the development of mechanisms that can be used to improve such situations by providing low-power groups with trained advocates, offering skills in how to confront conflict, and finding alternative sources for needed services. Professional intermediaries, advocacy organizations, neighborhood groups, and mediation centers serve as examples of alternatives that can be suitable for different types of service-oriented problems. Conflict can be reduced in the long run as such groups become more influential, often improving the overall management of services.

The hospital environment can be distinguished from others by the level of crisis that regularly occurs within it. In general, life and death issues can be separated from everyday conflict, but not in hospitals. Factors including the the basic structure of the medical institution, a patient's lack of expertise, and a patient's medical condition can all render patients powerless over the quality of the health care that they are receiving. In such situations, patient representatives can provide an invaluable service.

The movement to represent consumer groups led to the establishment of an affiliated society of patient representatives by the American Hospital Association in 1972. There are more than 1000 members today, and there are four different patient representative groups at the University of Michigan Medical Center.

As changes in technology and business management practices have further complicated medical institutions, the need for patient representatives has increased. Patient representatives interact with every hospital unit, developing a broad understanding of the entire medical system, in order to provide patients with a liaison to the institution. The role demands strong principles, and the U-M patient representatives adhere to the American Hospital Association's regulations on Patient Rights and Responsibilities, which have also been endorsed by the Michigan legislature.

The University of Michigan hospital is a research and teaching center where residents, interns, and students rotate from service to service every thirty to forty days. A patient entering the hospital on the 29th day of a rotation, staying 31 days, could be served by two or three completely different sets of staff. Patients often find it difficult to establish or maintain relationships with medical staff, particularly when personnel from different disciplines are working on the same patient.

The family of an automobile accident victim, for example, may not appreciate being told by one specialist, "My part is okay, but that other specialist's part is not quite right." This sort of stress is the price we pay for specialization. One study found that, within the first twenty-four hours of hospitalization, a patient is seen by forty-five different staff members. But the family still wants to know what is happening to the whole person, and their interest is certainly legitimate. It can be a threatening and defensive situation, and people often need an emotional outlet.

Entering the hospital can be a traumatic experience in itself. Patients must sign insurance forms, payment agreements, arbitration agreements, and property loss waivers. They are given registration numbers, required to provide medical histories and take pre-admission tests. Then they are placed in a room, perhaps with a stranger, and left with only hospital clothing. The process is de-personalizing, threatening the dignity of the patient.

And every patient is different. Some patients will complain about everything, while others will not complain due to fear of retaliation, the possibility of being labelled a trouble-maker. Similarly, some people have a legitimate need for strong pain medication, but some drug abusers also want that medication. Patient representatives have to develop skills for finding the facts of these delicate situations in order to resolve daily conflicts.

Perhaps the greatest fear among patients is fear of the unknown, yet health practitioners remain reluctant to fully inform patients about their condition. Most people can handle most things if they are educated about them, and clear information is essential to the patient's well-being. Prior to open-heart surgery, for example, patients and their families are taken through the intensive care unit in order to help them become familiar with those surroundings. That experience often helps patients to adjust after the surgery is completed.

Patient representatives become involved in these personal dilemmas, as well as broader ethical problems including disputes over the type of treatment and the confidentiality of patient information. When working with conflict, a patient representative must gather as much information as possible in order to clarify the situation before choosing the appropriate means for resolving or diffusing the crisis. In some of the most difficult cases, it is worthwhile to commit the patient and the staff to a contractual agreement, making the responsibilities of each quite explicit. But the real issues of concern often underly the stated complaint, and it

is necessary to clearly identify those issues as quickly as possible in order to deal with the crisis.

The Ann Arbor Student Advocacy Center plays a somewhat similar role for a different low-power group: children. Public school students have little control over the educational system around them, and disputes tend to be resolved by teacher or administrative fiat. The Student Advocacy Center works with public schools at the state and local levels on problems involving students' rights. Issues range from attendance and discipline to student grouping and curriculum selection.

Because educational administrators tend to have far more power than students, officials sometimes tend to ignore conflict, rather than attempt to resolve it. The Student Advocacy Center provides students with some power and credibility, providing a means for resolving genuine conflict.

The potential for hindering education by failing to resolve conflict is illustrated by the following case: A teacher presents students with a list of class rules on the first day of class. One rule stipulates that five absences will result in automatic failure, whether or not the student's absences are excused. One student persistently asks the teacher to explain the policy, and particularly the fact that types of absences are not distinguished. The teacher refuses to respond, then dismisses the student from class on grounds of insubordination, and the student is suspended from school for a day.

When the student returns to class on the third day of school, requesting an opportunity to make up the work that has been missed, he is rebuffed on the grounds that he missed class. The student then discovers that the missed assignment was intended to determine his level of study for the coming year, but when he protests he receives another suspension, this time for three days.

During the suspension, the student writes a newsletter to his fellow students, which he attempts to distribute in school, and he is suspended again.

When the student's parents protest, the principal refuses to compromise, telling them that the school's policy must be maintained in a uniform manner. The dispute eventually reaches the courts, where it is determined that the student had the right to distribute the newsletter without permission.

As a result of the situation, the student has failed one class and received poor grades in others. All of the parties have devoted time and energy to a snowballing conflict, and the final resolution doesn't address the initial dispute.

The Student Advocacy Center was founded on the belief that addressing conflicts in their early stages will provide benefits for all parties, and protect the rights of students. The center provides legitimacy and credibility to students, and assures administrators that conflicts are genuine. As a result the center is active in resolving disputes, advocating changes in school policy, and providing information regarding the rights and responsibilities of public school students.

The need to address the underlying causes of conflict also applies to communities and neighborhoods, and has led to the creation of several conciliation services. The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) at Wayne State University has helped establish neighborhood-scale conciliation centers throughout the Detroit area, finding that they fulfill a need that is not satisfied by other agencies.

Courtroom justice is often too remote and too costly to be used for the resolution of neighborhood disputes. And courts tend to focus on individual issues, often overlooking the roots of a conflict. In contrast, a case developer at a mediation center can discuss a problem with all parties in order to deal with the whole problem.

In some cases, courts will refer disputes to a mediation center, but conflicts are usually brought to mediators by the parties. After a problem is discussed, mediated agreements are put into writing and signed by each of the parties.

Although these agreements may not be legally binding, people usually abide by them. Because the parties have negotiated voluntarily, and agreements are not signed unless everyone finds them acceptable, most people willingly keep their end of the bargain.

Another CPCS project involves a summer institute on conflict resolution within public schools. The institute is working with six pilot schools (three from Detroit and three from Bloomfield Hills), each with a team of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. The teams are learning negotiation skills in order to establish mediation centers within the schools.

The basic premise behind both of these programs is that conflicts are important even when they are trivial. Whether the conflict happens in school or in the neighborhood, the outcomes matter to us. It is important to recognize that most people learn to deal with major conflict by first dealing with trivial conflict.

At the summer institute, the importance of facilitating the resolution of disputes is stressed. The facilitators do not impose solutions on the parties, but help them find their own solutions. The clinic also involves education regarding human rights and responsibilities relating to racism, sexism, and other sources of unbalanced power.

These conciliation centers provide neighborhoods and schools with dispute resolution mechanisms that are nearby, rather than remote like the courts, and conciliation centers can offer help in dealing with conflicts that may not be appropriate for the courts.

The neighborhood organization has also emerged as a vehicle for the delivery of other types of services. Organizing at the neighborhood level permits a group to address several aspects of conflict, performing multiple functions for the benefit of the local community. They operate in public and private arenas, and can focus on areas ranging from employment and economic development to

housing and health care. Groups vary in their scope and structure, and in their roles and responsibilities within the community.

These groups have increased in quantity and quality in recent years. Some have developed in reaction to crisis or confrontation within the community, while others were designed through deliberate planning processes. They have different funding patterns, internal characteristics, and relationships with other institutions. But together they demonstrate that neighborhoods can take local initiative and achieve results.

Neighborhood organizations can perform multiple functions at different levels of activity. Participation, in itself, is often beneficial to individuals. Neighborhood service delivery can also help to develop an important organizational base for people who are traditionally excluded from the community's decision-making processes. They can affect policy formation and implementation, frequently developing more efficient service delivery methods, and neighborhood organizations or coalitions of neighborhoods can have far greater community influence than an assembly of individuals. In several cases, neighborhood housing and health care groups have been able to provide higher quality at lower costs than could be achieved through other public or private institutions.

The shift from traditional sources to neighborhood alternatives can promote social justice by mitigating the imbalances that are based on race, gender, age, or handicap. However, such groups may also find their energy being diverted from other powerful forms of social mobilization by focusing their attention on their most localized needs.

This shift may tend to benefit wealthier neighborhoods more than poor ones, too, due to the greater availability of resources and organizational tools. The poorest and neediest neighborhoods tend to benefit less from alternatives, particularly when the service delivery system involves self-help.

At its worst, a movement toward neighborhood organization of services not only tends to divert energy from the larger context of social change, but it also seems to blame poor neighborhoods for their failure to help themselves. In such cases, alternative service delivery could produce another form of "blaming the victim" in which self-help groups are hurt by a process that exacerbates the very problems that they are trying to solve.

Clearly, it is important to carefully assess the scope of a conflict situation that involves important services, determining whether a neighborhood-level organization could be adequate and appropriate. There are potential benefits to be reaped from such groups, but there are pitfalls, too.

In general, conflicts regarding the delivery of services can often be relieved, if not remedied, by a group that is willing to take initiative, organize, and follow through with the effort required to implement changes. Before taking action, however, it is important to clearly identify the source of the conflict. Alternatives then can be compared and evaluated in terms of their potential effectiveness.

Session #2: "Conflict Over Economic Goods"

Workshop 2-A: "Labor-Management Relations"

Summary of an informal panel discussion with:

Moderator: Barbara Israel, PCMA and the School of Public Health

Panelists: Katherine Dannemiller, Organizational Consultants of
Ann Arbor

Ed Hartfield, Federal Mediation Service

Sue Schurman, Institute of Labor and Industrial
Relations

The labor laws written in the first half of this century, and especially during the New Deal, established the bargaining patterns that currently prevail in U.S. industrial disputes. Those bargaining methods functioned well when they were first established, and they remain adequate as tools for negotiating wages, benefits, and quality of work issues.

But the nature of the labor-management predicament has changed in recent years, often demanding that labor and management work together to develop long-term strategic plans. Adversarial collective bargaining methods are poorly suited to the climate of prolonged cooperation that these strategies require, and this workshop focused on the need for new ways of dealing with changing forms of conflict.

The paradigm within which labor-management relations developed was defined by assembly-line production techniques and clearly designated worker tasks. Company management generally assumed that workers would comply with instructions without becoming involved in strategic planning.

Contract negotiation and enforcement was the dominant function of union leaders, who carefully avoided being tied to company management. Workers coopted by involvement in corporate planning would have threatened the solidarity of the union and weakened their bargaining postures.

Changes in both the nature of production and the nature of international competition now limit the effectiveness of this perspective on contractual bargaining. The expansion of the economic pie no longer seems certain, and heightened international competition now requires companies to improve their efficiency in order to remain profitable.

Foremost among problems facing U.S. industries is competition from the highly productive economies of Southeast Asia. The industrial organizations in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong display a great capacity for long-range planning, primarily as a result of highly cooperative labor-management relations.

Traditional bargaining methods in the U.S. often depend on crisis, and disputes are defined in terms of approaching contract deadlines. The deadline provides the incentive for parties to resolve their differences, and negotiators rely on intensive marathon sessions to produce agreements. This system works well for wage and benefit bargaining, but a crisis environment is not conducive to resolving more complex problems.

Recent negotiations have focused on issues of much greater complexity than wage scale. Disputes now involve restructuring benefit arrangements to control costs, managing the wage gap between the U.S. and key foreign competitors, improving organizational structure, and developing new models for worker participation in plant operation. These changes require a shift from the old-style crisis bargaining to a negotiation format that allows longer periods of time for preparation and continuing discussion of complex problems. Prolonged cooperative arrangements are needed for the negotiation of management tasks, organizational development, and operational planning.

One example of an industrial project based on labor-management cooperation involved a Ford Motor Company subsidiary located in the Rouge complex in Southeastern Michigan. The company agreed to invest in new

equipment for a highly automated plant to produce galvanized steel. Employee participation in the project was voluntary, and many of the younger workers signed up.

The company hired an independent consultant who determined that the union could accept the project, and that the company's management had made a full commitment. Stressing that everyone involved should share the same basic information regarding the demands of the situation, the consultant implemented a series of programs that involved the entire 28-person staff. The workers and managers met together with several important stakeholders, including potential customers, stockholders, and government officials. Smaller labor-management teams were formed, and they interviewed stakeholders in depth, then presented reports to the larger group.

The workers were encouraged to regard conflict as being potentially productive, and managers successfully created an atmosphere of open communication, stressing the opportunity to discuss problems as they arose. These early training programs, involving "phase-planning" techniques that are common in contemporary business literature, produced a shared understanding of the whole situation. As a result, all parties were involved in conflict resolution, and a group process for strategic planning was developed.

Labor-management conflicts have generally entered a new paradigm that requires more prolonged cooperation and collaboration. In contrast to the adversarial scheme that characterized earlier labor-management disputes, conflicts now require new mechanisms for shared involvement in the planning process. The atmosphere of crisis-bargaining is not conducive to strategic planning, and new forums for the negotiation of complex disputes need to be developed.

Workshop 2-B: "Hunger and Poverty in the United States"
Summary of an informal panel discussion with:
Moderator: Donna Harris, Center for Research on Social Organization
Panelists: Bonnie Kay, School of Public Health
Blondeen Munson, Legal Services of Southeastern Michigan
Peter Yelorda, Washtenaw County Community Services Agency

Problems involving poverty, health care, and housing generally involve conflicts at several levels, ranging from problem-definition to solution strategy. . These problems are interrelated and complex, making it difficult to deal with any of them individually. This workshop involved discussion of poverty and hunger, with a special focus on the extent of Washtenaw County's problems.

Over the past few decades, the disparity between the wealthy and the poor in the U.S. has apparently increased, and a great deal of conflict has emerged regarding how we decide who is poor. The poverty definition that is currently used to make national policy uses an absolute cutoff based on income. Some people advocate the inclusion of subsidized resources (e.g., food stamps and medicaid) in the definition of family income, thereby raising many families above the cutoff line and deflating the apparent poverty rate. The irony of this particular method for calculating income is that sick persons who uses medicaid will appear to have an increase in income that could endanger their eligibility for assistance.

Poverty has become more systemic and less visible in the 1980's. Patterns of hunger have shifted from the rural South to states that traditionally were considered food producers--Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Efforts to determine the extent of hunger and homelessness have been problematic, largely because of conflict over definitions. One study indicates that there are 350,000 homeless people in the U.S., while another study suggests that there may be two million.

Similarly, conflict has emerged regarding indicators of community health that are related to poverty, like the infant mortality rate. The overall rate in the U.S. is just under 12 infant deaths per 1,000 births. But in some parts of Detroit, the rate is nearly 50 deaths per 1,000 births, which is similar to the infant mortality rate of Bangladesh. Like the disparity in income, there is a clear discrepancy in the health of the rich and poor populations of our nation.

Clearly intertwined with poverty, health care conflicts include debates over the practical implications of solution strategies as well as inquiries into the causes of illness. Access to medical care is a major issue. There are nearly 37 million people without health insurance in the U.S., and another 16 million people with minimal insurance. These figures suggest that almost one-fourth of the people in this country lack adequate access to medical care.

A concrete example of conflict over health services involves a college class that was working with a free health clinic in an urban area. The clinic's board asked the students to help them determine the most effective way to allocate \$15,000. They wanted to know whether they should spend the money on an x-ray machine, or use it to fund house calls.

The students conducted a community needs assessment, and concluded that neither of those two choices would serve the most pressing needs of the area. They found that pre-natal care was a major concern in the community, which has high rates of teenage pregnancy and infant mortality. They also concluded that community residents were treated as passive receptors of medical care, and that they should have more influence in the operation of the clinic. The students suggested mechanisms for involving community residents in the clinic's health care decisions, and they recommended special programs for family-planning and pre-natal care.

But the physicians and staff at the clinic rejected the recommendations because a religious sponsor would object to any family-planning programs. This left the students in a dispute over whether they should make any recommendation at all. Clearly, dilemmas of this sort involve political and ideological as well as technical conflict.

Housing problems and homelessness provide similar examples of multi-dimensional conflict. In Ann Arbor, a tight housing market has produced long-term housing problems for low-income residents. A special feature of the Ann Arbor housing predicament is the competition for inexpensive housing between university students and poor residents. The University of Michigan does not provide enough housing for its entire student body, and the trend toward wealthier students has increased the pressure on the housing market for the poor.

Given the existing high demand for housing, landlords have been able to maintain occupancy with little effort. As a result, there is little incentive for landlords to improve the quality of their properties. And Washtenaw County now has a significant number of homeless people (the number fluctuates seasonally, and it is currently estimated at about 1,000).

Facing these housing conflicts, the people and agencies of Washtenaw County have banded together in exciting ways. The county's human service agencies formed a network to deal with housing problems, and the Ann Arbor Board of Realtors created a special committee to address the issue of affordable housing. Several community organizations have begun working on housing issues, and the Ann Arbor City Council appointed a housing task force that that has made some very effective recommendations.

One factor that continues to contribute to these socio-economic problems is racial conflict. During Michigan's economic recession of 1982-83, for example, massive unemployment problems were exacerbated by racial tension. Blacks felt

that the employment situation was hopeless, and Whites blamed Blacks for the loss of jobs. Tensions grew, and racial conflict polarized the community. Without addressing racial tensions within the community, any approach to resolving housing or economic conflict is likely to fail.

The systemic nature of racial bias can be observed in the disparity caused by the Ann Arbor housing situation. The upper-middle-class background of (mostly white) students puts them in a better position than poor Blacks to absorb rent increases and to compete for available housing. The poor are then forced to become more dependent on subsidized housing. But all of the units of government around Ann Arbor favor land-use policies that discourage or eliminate the construction of public housing projects, and the federal government has significantly reduced its funding of low-income housing. Each of the elements is important, and together they produce an extreme situation, leaving the poor, and particularly Blacks, with nowhere to live in Washtenaw County.

The factors involved in these crucial conflicts are diverse, and their outcomes often appear to be systemically produced and maintained. Resolutions clearly require a willingness to explore and combine several perspectives, as well as an understanding that many disputes are interrelated, tending to compound the disadvantages of low-power groups.

As discussed in this workshop, the definition and identification of problems often can produce a great deal of conflict, potentially hindering any attempt to seek resolutions. We need new processes for understanding the multi-faceted structure of these conflicts, and we need to develop responses that are integrative and coordinated.

Session #3: "Conflict Over Global Resources"

Workshop 3-A: "Use and Misuse of the Environment"

Summary of an informal panel discussion with:

Moderator: Bob June, PCMA and School of Natural Resources

Panelists: Bunyan Bryant, School of Natural Resources

Chris Branson, Community Systems Foundation

Barry Rabe, School of Public Health

As the global population reaches the five billion mark, conflict over the use and misuse of the environment is rapidly increasing. Disputes typically involve the rights to resources, appropriate types of development, responsibility for waste and pollution, and methods for making equitable decisions about resource use. This workshop provided a general description of the global resource dilemma, stressing the importance of shared information in decision-making processes, and outlined some hopeful new processes for resolving environmental disputes.

Technological advances and increased international economic activity have loosened our respect for the land, creating a new set of resource problems that is characterized by massive exploitation of our biological capital. We are rapidly changing the nature of the world in which we live.

The U.S. represents only six percent of the world's population, but accounts for 30 percent of global resource use and pollution. International power imbalances lend doubt to the prospects for the just mediation of disputes, and long-term solutions may require a major shift toward equalizing power among nations.

The destruction of ecosystems in underdeveloped countries is often a result of ecological imperialism--the control of a nation's resources by an external power. Solution strategies must include changes in the economic arrangements that foster this destruction. When the world economy starts to boom, a commensurate demand for raw materials follows. This leads to increased competition among nations, and increased exploitation of biological, mineral, and human resources.

Conflict over access to resources, their transformation and their sale, intensifies as the scarcity of raw materials increases. As scarce materials become more expensive, companies and countries try to maintain their profit margin by relaxing pollution standards, producing a continued threat to the environment.

The worldwide disparity of resource ownership has produced many conflicts over the use of those resources. Although many minority groups own resources (e.g., Indians on tribal lands in the U.S.), that ownership does not guarantee control. Conflicts frequently involve the displacement of people from their homeland so that the land can be developed or mined, and the importance of foreign currency to developing countries fuels the exploitation of the environment in order to maintain growth. Examples of conflicts involving such power imbalances include the mining of the ocean floor, the dispute between the U.S. and Canada over acid rain, the destruction of rain forests in the Amazon, and the conflict in Michigan over Indian fishing rights.

Economic sustenance and environmental protection must coexist if we are to begin to find meaningful solutions to these problems. Issues of access and equity must be addressed in any strategy designed to protect the future of our environment.

Information plays a key role in disputes regarding resources. Inadequate information makes it difficult to understand the implications of any action, and a great deal of conflict results from lack of information, or from unequal information.

We now know that the Earth's regenerative processes are actually quite long, for example, and this extends the impact of any environmental abuse. The interdependence of ecosystems and the chain of events that result from human action are becoming more obvious. Myths about the resilience of the environment have been confronted, and our understanding of the risks involved in these

conflicts is increasing. We also are learning that local actions can have widespread (even global) impacts, as in the cases of ozone depletion and acid rain.

In all disputes, and especially in dealing with global conflicts, our ability to develop effective resolutions often depends on our ability to exchange information. We need to increase our capacity to work in webs of relationships, building networks interorganizationally and across different levels of organization. Advances in telecommunications have improved our ability to interact, and a heightened awareness of the importance of shared information could help us to make better decisions about resource use and allocation.

Environmental conflicts tend to involve complex issues, many parties, and broad areas of dispute. The courts have not been successful in resolving many environmental conflicts, primarily because courts generally cannot deal with multiple parties and issues simultaneously. Consequently, the movement toward the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) techniques has gained momentum in the arena of environmental conflict, and it is now in vogue.

There are currently more than 100 major environmental disputes in negotiation. Some states now require the mediated settlement of certain types of cases, like the siting of toxic waste facilities. The object is to develop proactive policy formation in a field that has been characterized by reactive policy.

At this point, systematic research regarding the effectiveness of ADR in environmental disputes is only beginning. Although these techniques have been successful in addressing conflicts in areas like industrial relations, it isn't clear that these processes will produce better environmental decisions. Ultimately, we must ask if these alternative processes will generate better policy: will they help us to manage waste more effectively?

There are several fundamental shortcomings to current regulatory policies that may be exacerbated by ADR. First, waste management policies tend to be

reactive, focusing on how we should manage our waste problems, rather than how we can reduce them. Given this focus, ADR could produce more policies for managing waste without addressing the need to reduce waste. Second, environmental policy is now characterized by its separation of land, air, and water policies. The holistic approach of ADR could produce a weakened policy structure with respect to each of these areas. Third, if access to information is a source of power, well-funded groups may have a distinct strategic advantage over others. Finally, environmental disputes tend to be complex, sometimes involving too many parties to accommodate successful negotiation.

Conflicts over the use and misuse of resources, as reviewed in this workshop, tend to be characterized by multiple parties, interrelated problems, insufficient information, and power discrepancies. While ADR presents us with promising new ways of resolving conflicts, the need to develop more information and a better-balanced power structure remains pressing. In this arena, conflict is not limited to human interaction, but also includes interaction between humans and their environment. As a result, resolutions that focus solely on human conflict may fail to provide us with solutions to our underlying ecological dilemmas.

Workshop 3-B: "Peace Initiatives"

Summary of an informal panel discussion with:

Moderator: Nancy Moore, PCMA

Panelists: Anne Beebe, Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament

Phil Moulton, author of Ammunition for Peace Makers

Kris Siefert, School of Social Work

William Zimmerman, Department of Political Science

War is clearly the most extreme form of human conflict. This workshop described methods for reducing conflict in inter-governmental relations, and outlined methods for organizing and advocating peaceful policies.

The potential for nuclear war poses the most serious threat to human well-being, and practitioners of health services should treat the escalation of nuclear conflict as a central public health problem. The number of victims of an urban nuclear explosion would greatly exceed the capacity of health care facilities, and long-term health problems would be extreme. The diversion of funds from humanitarian services to support nuclear build-ups also precludes the satisfaction of other public health goals. As we face problems of increased poverty, infant-mortality, and limited access to health care facilities, it is clear that government spending on nuclear arms can prevent us from dealing with other areas of significant conflict.

From one perspective, there is room for an optimistic view of international relations, particularly those of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., because nuclear weaponry is decreasing, and more treaties are being developed. The recognition that nuclear conflict would be mutually destructive has produced an increased willingness to negotiate differences. Tit-for-tat responses in minor skirmishes sometimes deter the escalation of aggressive conflict, and the expectation of equivalent retaliation may restrain adventurism, thereby creating a climate conducive to negotiation.

Disarmament talks generally are characterized by an unwillingness of each party to make concessions. Some strategies for overcoming the resulting inertia include unilateral arms reductions, or a comprehensive ban on the development of new weapons. Unfortunately, these strategies would not put the genie back in the bottle, because the knowledge of how to build these weapons can no longer be unlearned. Even abolishing such weapons could not eliminate the threat of conflict, but large-scale reductions could provide the time needed to implement more peaceful initiatives.

Long-run solutions to the threat of nuclear warfare require the adoption of non-violent defensive strategies. Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND) is one organization that advocates non-violent social and political relations in order to produce international peace. At the national level, WAND advocates a nuclear test ban treaty, a freeze on the production of nuclear weapons, a halt to the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars), and a reallocation of resources to better meet human needs. The organization's strategy includes education of the public, lobbying lawmakers, and direct actions intended to raise awareness of conflict over nuclear weaponry.

The local chapter of WAND has 200 members, and three-fourths of them are women. The organization stresses the importance of women's perspectives in the struggle for peace, and emphasizes peaceful language and cooperative bargaining methods rather than adversarial strategies.

The quest for global peace involves myriad levels of conflict, and as expressed in this workshop, the solution must emanate from increased efforts to settle disputes peacefully, among individuals as well as among nations. Peace initiatives require us, not only to avoid and quell hostilities, but to develop forums for peacefully and thoroughly resolving conflicts that can lead to war.

Closing Address

"Understanding Differences and Building Networks"
Excerpts from an informal presentation by:
Robben Fleming, President Emeritus, The University of Michigan

Each of us interested in conflict resolution comes to the field with a different background. In the academic world today, the field of conflict resolution includes economists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, evolutionary biologists, and lawyers. Discussions today reflect those differences, covering the entire gamut of human problems, from war and peace to labor management disputes and family conflicts.

I was trained as a lawyer, and as I try to decide where my interest in conflict resolution came from, and where the values that I bring to it came from, I think that I can identify three sources.

One, as with all of us, was my family. My family had strong feelings about fairness, equity, and justice. That meant that you treated people decently, no matter who they were, that you tried to understand the other person, and that you tried to bring about, in conflict situations, a viable kind of agreement among them.

The second source of my values was my early work as a legal student and practitioner. When I was in law school, two groups influenced me very much. One was a group of lawyers within the faculty who were called "law and society people." They believed that, in order to understand and effectively use a law, you had to identify the social context or milieu in which a particular law would apply. The Volstead Act, for example, never worked well because people never accepted prohibition. In a democracy, a law doesn't work if people don't accept it. When people don't want a law to be enforced, the law often fails. Effective enforcement requires a sort of social compact stressing that this law will be enforced.

Similarly, many economists during that period were called "institutionalists." They argued that, in order to understand the economy, one really had to understand the social milieu in which it operated. So I came out of law school strongly influenced by those two strains of thought.

The third source of my views was the first job that I had when I got out of law school. By December of 1941 we were into the war, and I knew that I had little time before the army would claim me for its own. I took a job with the National War Labor Board, which was set up because we could not endure strikes in a time of war. My mentors there, who were the guiding lights of public policy regarding labor disputes, believed that the relationship between labor and management had to be carried on such that they could live together successfully. If you forced an unacceptable agreement on them, either by economic pressure or some other kind of coercion, it really wasn't going to work. Therefore, our job was to find some kind of middle ground, one which might not be perfect in the sense of absolute justice, or of somebody's first choice, but one with which all of the parties could live.

My philosophy remains essentially unchanged. I believe that the two most important elements in any dispute situation are the people and the milieu in which the dispute takes place. If your attention is not directed to them, you will not very successfully resolve the conflict.

I was a professional neutral in the labor management world for many years, so I used to arbitrate and mediate disputes in various industries all over the United States. When I became an administrator at the university, I was no longer a professional neutral, because I had to represent the university administration. Nevertheless, my attitude about situations that are highly controversial remains much the same. Even in my most recent experience of this last year--coming in at the behest of the government, and trying to get lawyers, doctors, insurance

companies, and hospitals into agreement on the malpractice problem--that was essentially what I was trying to do. It proved abortive, as some efforts do.

When I enter a dispute, I apply four guidelines. First, and in some ways most important of all, is "listen, listen, listen." It is extraordinary how many times in a dispute situation people feel that nobody has listened to them, that they never had a chance to say what they really wanted to say. So my first rule is to listen and to let people say what they want to say.

There is some research evidence that the mere fact that people feel they are listened to often goes a long way toward resolving a dispute. In the course of that listening, you must ask questions that point out to the parties the weaknesses and strengths in their own arguments. Almost all arguments have some weaknesses, and to the extent that you can make parties understand that there are some holes in their arguments, and that different points of view can be justified, you've made your task of helping to settle the dispute easier.

Another important reason to listen carefully is that you need to impress parties with your command of the facts of a situation. Until you can convince people that you know what the dispute is about, you won't gain very much respect from them. The minute you start to say inaccurate things, things which indicate that you don't really understand the situation, you've lost your greatest chance to go further. Moreover, as people in the dispute express their views, you get an opportunity to assess them. When you listen, you get some feel for what kind of people they are, the extent to which they are reasonable or unreasonable, and the kinds of arguments that do or don't appeal to them.

The second guideline is that while you're listening, and literally very quickly because you may not have much time, you begin to assess what it is that you're hearing. Most cases consist of both wheat and chaff, and somehow you've got to separate those as you listen to people. You do not want to say, as I once heard a

mediator say after hearing a party express a view, "that is the stupidest argument I ever heard." As you can imagine, he left the case at noon that same day. You don't have to insult people, but you can make it subtly apparent to them that there is at least some doubt about the arguments they are making.

There is a great deal more to every dispute than the apparent merits. All kinds of other elements can be involved, such as deep personal animosity, loss of face, and ideological commitment. It may be that the only reason that the case arose in the first place is because two people or two groups don't like each other. In that case, the engaged dispute is only a manifestation of their underlying dislike. That doesn't mean that the dispute will go away by your saying, "I think you really don't like each other. Why don't you settle that problem, but get off of this one." That isn't the way that people behave either, but it is terribly important for you to know what is happening.

By the time people have discussed an issue for quite a while, they become entrenched in positions that they cannot easily give up. They are publicly committed to their positions. Part of your task is to protect them from loss of face, to give them a way out so that they don't have to tell their constituents, "I've been wrong all this time." That they are unlikely to do!

Ideological commitments of all kinds cause parties to hold on to their views tenaciously. You are not going to resolve disputes if you only speak to the surface or the alleged basis of the dispute. Ideology often is apparent in political maneuvering, which is the way that all groups tend to work out their power plays. Thus the essence of a dispute may be the ideological difference between groups.

As you assess a dispute, you have to try to figure out what it is all about. To what extent is it really a dispute on the merits? To what extent is it caused by other things? How do you weigh the relative proportions of those things?

The third guideline is to re-package the dispute. You are faced with people who have taken fixed positions. It is very hard for human beings, as we all know, to admit that they are wrong, or even to take a different tack, as long as it is packaged in the framework of the original dispute. As you listen and assess, you make some judgement of where the center is, what might be the general shape of an agreement. What you have to do now is to re-package the dispute, that is, make it appear to be a different problem than the parties have been talking about. If you can do that, you give each side an escape hatch from their entrenched positions. Instead of admitting to their constituents that they've been wrong, they can say, "Now we've got a different proposal here." Sometimes that new proposal isn't different at all, it's just re-packaged.

We see this a lot in labor-management agreements where companies and unions may have a disagreement about economic issues. If you can change the dispute from wages to employment security, and offer some job protection that didn't exist before, you may be able to solve the dispute. It's essentially a re-packaged dispute, the same basic dispute changed around to make it appear different.

The fourth guideline is to persuade people that it is worse not to agree than it is to agree. If there is a genuine or serious dispute, you will not get many agreements which all of the participants regard as perfect, because they hold very different views of what is perfect. There is no way you can bring about an agreement if it has to be perfect in everybody's eyes. What you have to strive to do--by listening, by assessing, by re-packaging--is to appeal to those disparate groups with an agreement that is better than not having any agreement at all.

This approach will not succeed if it results in an unfair agreement. Therefore, your personal value system comes into play. If the agreement is so

imperfect that it has, in effect, sold out the values you have, then it's not a fair agreement, and it won't be successful.

Some cautions and conclusions:

I feel very strongly about three issues in this field. One is the human tendency all of us have to assume that our own beliefs are purer than anybody else's. Therefore, as we look at a situation, we often convert it into our own values, into our concept of the "right way to think," and we too often assign to other persons invidious or impure motives. If there is anything that I've learned in all these years, it is that people can have honest, different points of view. You can bring people who have honestly different points of view into agreement for reasons that I've already talked about. You cannot do it if you insist that your motives are more pure, or your values are better than anybody else's.

The second thing is not to confuse communication with agreement. Students used to say to me, when we were talking about some controversial issues, "we're just not communicating." I said, "We're communicating just fine. We just don't agree. What we've got to do is to transfer that communication into something that appeals to both of us." There is a great disposition, if somebody disagrees with you, to assume that they just don't understand what you're talking about. They may understand perfectly, and the argument may continue nevertheless.

A third caution is that you can't eliminate, nor should you strive to eliminate, all of the disputes in this world. One reason you can't eliminate them is that as you develop the machinery to cope with different controversies, the parties immediately adapt to those new methods. They will work out strategies to improve their own positions within the framework of that resolution method. Therefore, all strategies for resolving conflict have to continue to evolve. Just as

the parties adjust, so must the person who is trying to deal with the dispute. But even the most imaginative and adaptive mechanism cannot resolve all disputes, and certainly not within the limited time frame you are given.

I once was chairman of a presidential board to resolve a longshore strike that was in effect from New York to New Orleans. The first day that I met with the union, the union president took me aside to a different room, and he said: "I just want to tell you that if you have the two sides meet together, I will make a public statement that anyone knows that's not the way to get agreements--you've got to talk to each party privately. If you talk to each party privately, I will make a public statement that anyone knows you cannot reach agreement unless you have the two sides meet together. Nothing personal about this--I just wanted you to know that this dispute is not ripe for settlement, and it'll probably take several weeks before we're really ready to discuss it."

I understood that. We went through the motions for a day, went away, and in a week or two, when the time was ripe, we got people to accept an agreement.

If you find days of frustration when dealing with disputes and you can't seem to make anything work, join the club. Nobody does this successfully all of the time.

I do think that there are some universalities that apply to disputes. In any dispute you have to listen. In any dispute you have to assess all of the factors. In any dispute you have to re-package the problem, you have to be imaginative, and you have to think of ways to give the parties options for looking at things differently. And, in any dispute, people have to be persuaded that it is better to take a less-than-perfect package than it is to continue the dispute.