

PROBLEM 6

GENERATING AN ACTION PROGRAM

Central America, Spring 1990

One of the most important and difficult tasks we face is putting together the various insights and ideas that we glean from the tools we have been studying and coming up with a recommendation for who should do what tomorrow morning. There is no single way to do this. Depending on the problem, and what the different tools have suggested, some ideas will seem more promising than others. Once a recommendation has been thought of, it should still be checked out in various ways. All of the pieces of the puzzle should be made to fit together, usually by trial and error. One way to generate an Action Program is outlined below.

Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the United States are all directly involved in the current conflict in Central America. Select one of these governments to advise. In considering what specific recommendations you would make to this government with respect to the Central American problem, quickly prepare some of the basic tools and then prepare the following four worksheets:

Worksheet A: A Checklist of Tools and Conclusions

Before sitting down to invent some fresh ideas for ways to cope with a problem, it may be helpful to prepare a checklist of conclusions, ideas, and observations drawn from your preparation of the basic diagnostic and prescriptive tools. Such a worksheet might be set up as follows:

<u>Tool</u>	<u>Short Diagnosis</u>	<u>Conclusions, ideas, observations</u>
Partisan Perceptions and Target Perceptions		
Purpose and Means Analysis		
Positions and Interests Analysis		
Currently Perceived Choice (CPC)		
Target Future Choice (TFC)		
Atlas of Approaches		

It is not necessary to use every tool in every case, but it is a good idea to review those you have used in a particular case as well as those that look promising. Draw from each tool those things you learned from it that may affect your final recommendation.

Worksheet B: Some Brainstorming Ideas

With Worksheet A and its supporting tools at hand, you are well-prepared for an inventing session. With friends, classmate, or on your own, spend a few minutes brainstorming what the government you have selected might do to improve the current situation in Central America. *Who* might do *what* to change *whose* choice? Record the ideas generated in the session (without attribution), and list them on a separate page as Worksheet B. Refer to Chapter 10, "Setting Up a Devising Session" in the *CWIC* text as necessary.

Worksheet C: Creating a Yesable Proposition for Their Side

Having brainstormed some possible ideas, it becomes necessary to select among them one or more to frame as a Yesable Proposition for someone. In this selection process you may want to check each possibility against Worksheet A to see how well it seems to cope with the problems analyzed there. In particular, it should make sense in terms of someone's target choice in the government you are trying to influence.

Once you have selected an approach, you will want to frame it as a Yesable Proposition, one to which the answer "yes" is sufficient, realistic, and operational. It may be useful to use the four quadrants of the Circle Chart to make sure that you have a coherent theory about what is wrong and what you are proposing to do. Hence, on your third worksheet, you are to write out brief sentences opposite each of the four Circle Chart headings, summarizing the theory that underlies your Yesable Proposition -- your Quadrant IV action plan.

As an example, consider the following on Northern Ireland:

I. Problem

Today in Northern Ireland differences are being dealt with inefficiently and at high cost. There seems to be no hope for an end to sectarian antagonism.

Our purpose is to move in the direction of improving the efficiency and the effectiveness of the process of dealing with differences, and reducing its cost.

II. Diagnoses

One cause of the problem is coordinated prejudicial perceptions each side has of the other from early childhood. Another is the tendency of both sides to assume that if there is justice on their side there can be none on the other side. A third is that neither side is systematically taught the pertinent facts of Irish history -- the schools teach no history, leaving children to pick up only inflammatory distortions on the street.

III. General Approach

Someone should prepare a history textbook for Northern Irish (perhaps Republican as well) elementary schools that juxtaposes Catholic and Protestant interpretations and, through exercises, brings students to understand the power and the reality of partisan perceptions.

IV. Specific Action Proposal

Ask John Hume if he could arrange to suggest such a project to suitable Northern Irish academics, or, if not him, then who would be in a position to arrange it. Find a wealthy American Irish organization to provide the funding.

Worksheet D: An Action Program for Our Prince

So far, the preceding three worksheets have focused on the question of what new choice to give "them." Now that you have devised this new choice, the next question is how to present it most effectively. What does our prince have to do or say? Would it be better if this choice were seen as someone else's idea? This fourth worksheet should spell out the complete content of the decision we are asking our prince to make. What is the full extent of the Action Program he or she is being asked to undertake?

In the Northern Irish example above, we might be asking John Hume to decide:

- 1) To call friends of his at Belfast University who might know who would be good to work on such a project;
- 2) To arrange to meet with the people he comes up with to sound them out about the project; and,
- 3) To lend his support and approval to any funding proposal and to the project as a whole if it goes forward.

Write out briefly on this fourth page the Action Program you propose your prince undertake to send your Yesable Proposition to its recipient.