

In other views there is a wider range. Some are set hard for it. Some are set hard against it. In talking to funding sources or other organizers one finds the same range of diversity. The conversations were important in the process but did not point clear directions.

CONCLUSION

Today is the day after Christmas. I am on vacation. I am in the office writing this memo. Walking near the coffee pot an hour ago, I was cussin' and bemoanin' writing this memo. Charles Koppelman, who happened to be within earshot said, "It's hell being accountable, isn't it?" What I told him then was I could hardly wait for the day when we all had to be as accountable as our processes make me.

On second thought though, the strong part of our internal process includes the wealth of discussion and information exchanged in this process. Though I felt frustrated because I prefer going right to the whole staff, the process does have some strong points.

I have heard some very fine, serious discussion on this issue, both pro and con. People on the staff have hit the heart of central issues again and again. In some cases I have found these issues persuasive and in other cases I have found them unconvincing. Regardless of my own determination in each case I have found them important because they reflect the depth of insight and experience possessed at all levels of the staff. The strength of the process is not just in the consensus at the end of it, but in the shared feeling that we all gave strong feelings to a serious question and came out with our staff together and ready for the next question, not with people running and hiding from discussion.

In talking to one of the head organizers last week who at points in the discussion had been strongly against going to Boston, I told him that I was increasingly leaning in favor based on the internal issues. He said, in effect, "Well, we're not going to agree on this, brother, maybe next time." Fundamentally, that is what the ACORN internal staff process has always been about. Consensus is not a matter of everyone shaking his head the same way at the same time. Consensus within the ACORN staff is a precondition of important, collective organizing, professional, and individual principles and commitments. Our staff is too good for us all to ever agree on everything no matter how important. Total agreement is not the test of final responsibility, real consensus, or even primary loyalty -- all of which we share collectively to the organization and each other. Consensus in the ACORN staff is tested at the point the shoulder hits the wheel, not when the wheel is being measured and drawn. None of us has ever doubted in this process that regardless of the decision and whether it favored or opposed our own viewpoint, that we would be there when it mattered and the work had to get done.

So, despite my bitching and moaning, I felt good about the process and for the most part felt very good about the maturity the staff showed in bringing their input and judgment and good faith into the process. Although I went in with some biases, I attempted to stay open from start to finish. I'm not real comfortable in that posture. I am more comfortable as an advocate. I felt constrained, but when all is said and done, the bottom line result is one that I feel strongly about and that came from a process I respect and support and will continue to be accountable to.