

Create a Crisis and Pray: A Narrative Interview with Richard Cloward

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ABSTRACT. This is the second of three narrative interviews conducted with Richard Cloward. This interview covers Cloward's work at Mobilization for Youth, his anti-poverty efforts, relationship with welfare rights organizations and his work with Frances Fox Piven that culminated in the "motor voter" act. Cloward reflects on his essential ideas and seminal articles published with Piven in the 1960s that were developed in their major books, such as *Regulating the Poor* and *Poor People's Movements*. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second of three interviews conducted with Richard Cloward during the late spring of 2000. The interviews were conducted at his home in upstate New York. The first interview, published in a special tribute issue to Cloward of *Reflections* (Miller, 2002), covered the evolution of his career, his work as a criminologist, relationship with Robert Merton and “the tenure wars” involving him and his partner Frances Fox Piven. The third interview, to be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Progressive Human Services* (Miller, forthcoming), has Cloward reflecting about the meaning of his career, particularly on how he and Piven worked together as writers and organizers.

Richard Cloward had a distinguished career as an activist, scholar, theoretician, author, and professor at Columbia University School of Social Work. He was a larger than life figure who influenced sociologists, political scientists, historians, social workers, lawyers, labor organizers, anti-poverty activists, politicians and who gave voice and meaning to the lives of poor people. Abels (2002, p. 3) said, “There was something mythic and fabulous about him.” According to Gitterman (2002, p. 26), he “is probably the most widely read social work scholar in the profession.”

I had adapted a form of phenomenological interviewing from Seidman (1991) to explore the lives of major figures in the social work profession, previously publishing interviews with Mitchell Ginsberg (Miller, 1995) and Ann Hartman (Miller, 1998a; 1998b; 1999). For years, I had hoped to interview Cloward, having been very influenced by his ideas, commitment to activism, and unflagging integrity. My plan was to try to create a space where Cloward could reflect on the history, experience, and meaning of his career and go beyond what he had written, integrating the complexities of his life with his work. When he was diagnosed with lung cancer, this project became imperative. When I interviewed Richard, he was already quite weak from the cancer but lucid, articulate, and frequently eloquent. When I returned to edit the interview transcripts with him, he often knew exactly on what page a clause was located that needed repair and tactfully offered me advice about how to prune, cut and paste the interviews. Fortunately, the majority of the work was completed before Richard died in August of 2001.

This interview focuses on Cloward and Piven as activists and organizers, with Mobilization for Youth, the National Welfare Rights Organization and their voting rights campaign, which culminated in the “Motor Voter Law.” Cloward also tracks the evolution of their four seminal articles, published in the 1960s, and major books (references

cited in the text). He articulates their philosophy of community organizing and the analysis of history and power that informed their work. From organizing welfare demonstrations and a strategy to flood relief rolls, to getting candidate Bill Clinton to endorse the “Motor Voter Law” on MTV, we get a sense of Cloward’s intelligence, tenacity, creativity, willingness to try different strategies, grasp of the political complexities of policy formation and implementation, and his passionate and unyielding commitment to devote his life’s work on behalf of poor people. As Piven (2002, p. 7) stated, “Richard’s moral beacon was his preoccupation with the social injustices that follow from extreme inequality.”

INTERVIEW

5/28/2000

JM: The last time we met we were talking about your time at Mobilization for Youth (MFY), and you told me a bit about how it was set up: the anti-gang fever, and how Henry Street Settlement was part of that. The Kennedys were really interested in it. One of the things that you mentioned, that we really didn’t go explore, was that you went into it thinking that it was a delinquency or gang program and then while you were there you realized that it was a poverty issue. Could we start with that?

RC: Well, I would restate that slightly. We thought that gang delinquency was a poverty issue, and the idea was to help people climb out of poverty by expanding opportunity. Opportunity was the hallmark. There were literacy programs and youth unemployment programs that had that objective. By 1963 and 1964, the Kennedy administration—and then after his assassination in November of 1964, the Johnson administration—had a growing problem with the Black community. It wasn’t just in the south. It was also in the big northern city ghettos. The riots started in 1964 and you could feel things boiling up. They had to respond to it in some way. Well, the Civil Rights Movement had big demonstrations in Birmingham in the spring of 1963, and then in August 1963 the March on Washington occurred: “Jobs and freedom, jobs and freedom.” In other words, it was a focus on economics and politics. The Kennedy administration did not have any economic program for the ghettos. They began planning one before his death in November 1963. The problem had great urgency; it was not as if they could sit down and

spend two or three years trying to think about what to do about the general problem. They really didn't have that kind of time. What they did was to adopt the community action model, which is what Mobilization for Youth was. It was a community action against gang delinquency model. They converted it into a community action against poverty issue. One day Mobilization for Youth was an anti-gang project and the next day it was an anti-poverty project.

JM: It sounds like you are saying "they," like it wasn't an internal decision.

RC: It wasn't us. It was the administration. It really wasn't us.

JM: Anyone particular in the administration?

RC: Well, it was the people around Sargent Shriver. When Johnson appointed Shriver to head the anti-poverty program these guys all went over as key staff. They just moved from the President's Committee on Gangs to become anti-poverty staff.

JM: It seems unusual to have that kind of vision within government.

RC: Well, the problem with all of that was that the gang projects were really established to facilitate upward mobility by improving people's skills. It was oriented towards teenagers, but poverty is just a much bigger problem than gangs. The point that I am trying to make is that the anti-gang projects were made into anti-poverty projects, but they couldn't really be anti-poverty projects because the institutional sources of poverty were not something these projects could deal with. What could these projects do about the fact that the construction unions kept Blacks out? What the hell could the poverty projects do about situations in schools, and the slum areas, and the ghetto areas? The gang projects could not really effectively promote institutional change.

JM: Nor could they change social structures.

RC: They couldn't change social structures. They did not have that kind of power. In that sense, it was all a fraud. However, the gang projects, in the final analysis, did have a big impact on poverty, but not the way anybody anticipated.

JM: Tell me more about that.

RC: They drove up the God damned welfare rolls!

JM: When did that become a strategy?

RC: Imagine the situation around 1965. The poverty program was passed in 1964, Shriver was appointed, delinquency program staff moved over to anti-poverty program, much more money became available, and projects like Mobilization for Youth were sprouting everywhere. The telephone book size proposal that George Brager and Jim McCarthy and I wrote that set up Mobilization for Youth became, I

think, the basis for communities submitting proposals for government funding all over the country. There is no question that MFY was the flagship of the poverty program. So, it is 1965, these projects are out there—poverty, poverty, poverty . . . you can't change institutions, so what do you do about the fact that the people with whom you are working are desperately poor? MFY had a series of storefront centers. We would lease the storefronts and set up casework services in these storefronts with the idea that the services should be near the people. You should just be able to walk in instead of having to deal with centralized bureaucratic agencies. So people walked in. An 18-year-old woman with a three-month old baby comes in. She traveled from a North Carolina tobacco plantation where she had been mechanized out of a job. You have to remember now that this is a period when mass migration into the cities from the South happened, as well as from Puerto Rico. She went to the welfare office and they gave her a bus ticket to go back to North Carolina. That is what was happening then in New York State. Welfare departments were giving people bus tickets to go back, and the white citizen councils in the South were giving them bus tickets to go north. She was living in a room in a basement of a tenement building with no food and a three-month-old baby, and she was turned down for welfare. As more and more people like this woman began to appear in these anti-poverty settings, there was just an inevitable strain on the staff of these agencies to start paying more attention to welfare.

JM: It sounds like it was an inductive process; you didn't go into that setting . . .

RC: No, there is nothing in the MFY proposal about welfare.

JM: But it kept hitting everybody in the face.

RC: Right, it kept hitting everybody in the face when confronted with the reality of poverty and the people with whom they were dealing. They couldn't do anything about slum tenement housing, or about jobs, but it gradually began to dawn on everybody that they could do something about welfare.

JM: Was that a kind of collective dawning?

RC: Yes it was. At Mobilization for Youth, the key person who began to understand that problem was Sherman Barr. He ran the neighborhood service centers. We couldn't do anything else about these people's conditions, but at least we could get them some money. Staff began studying up on welfare regulations. Who the hell had ever done that?

JM: Who would *want* to do that?

RC: Who would want to study up on welfare regulations? It was a big problem by the way. You couldn't get them. They were held like

top-secret documents, but we found caseworkers in the welfare department who would steal them. Later there were lawsuits over whether they were public documents, which of course we won, but in the beginning, it was very hard to get the regulations. The welfare system is very conservative, with an orientation towards keeping people off welfare no matter what the regulations said about eligibility. In any case, we got them and by then MFY hired some lawyers.

JM: They were violating their own regulations?

RC: They were violating their own regulations. What began to come out of these storefront centers were manuals, one page eligibility manuals, three page eligibility manuals, twenty page manuals. They touted “know your rights,” that kind of thing. Those manuals were produced both for welfare staff and for clients. In the Community Organizing Division of MFY, headed by Harry Specht—we began to organize welfare recipients to demonstrate and picket. That began in 1965.

JM: I have a couple of things to mention. One, it sounds like you, up until this point in your career, had been more of a researcher, writer, and academic, and it seems like you became more of an activist here. Is that fair to say?

RC: Well, participating in MFY was activist work. There is no question about that. I have always been both, an academic and an activist, and Frances is the same way. What has always interested me is the application of ideas to action.

JM: Did your thinking change while you were part of MFY?

RC: Yes. I began to think much more about power, about poor people’s power. That is partly a result of my association with Frances. I hired Frances; she was recommended to me by Lloyd Ohlin. We published *Delinquency and Opportunity* (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) together, and planned the MFY project together. I didn’t think about gang delinquency, poverty and things like that, particularly in power terms; I thought about them in stratification terms—economic stratification but not political, not as expressions of political power. Frances had a more political orientation. She came out of political science. I noticed her and paid attention to her, and we began collaborating.

JM: It was really from that point that you began collaborating?

RC: Yes. We began talking a lot in 1963 and 1964. She had some background in housing, and she was interested in the rent strikes that were going on. There was a lot of grassroots insurgency in that period; not just civil rights, but rent strikes and eventually welfare rights. Anyway, the decisive point came when I was at a staff meeting of the neighborhood service centers with Sherman Barr. As the Research Director

of MFY I went to a lot of these meetings to figure out what was going on, and what research we should be doing, and on this particular day, sometime in 1965, I was just struck full in the face with the phenomenon of welfare turning everybody down, and the growing conflict between the neighborhood service center staff, the legal services staff, and welfare. I went back to the office, I found Frances, and I said to her, “I wonder what proportion of the people who are eligible for welfare are actually on the rolls?” So, we did a simple study. We got the 1960 census data on family structure and income, so you could figure out how many female-headed families received how much income, for example. Then we got the welfare regulations on how much income you could receive and still be eligible for welfare, so we could make a very crude estimate on the proportion of female-headed families whose incomes were below a certain level, and then you could look to see how many people were on welfare. It turned out that roughly twenty-five percent were on welfare. That is what we estimated. Then we asked what would happen if we really tried to rev up the poverty programs all over the country—the legal service attorneys and paraprofessionals, etc., to begin a massive nationwide campaign to get people on the rolls.

JM: What were you hoping would be accomplished?

RC: We thought two things would be accomplished. One, we thought that it could make a big dent in poverty. The second was really Frances’ contribution. Funding arrangements have since changed, but welfare costs at that time deemed that big cities were paying part of the cost of welfare. So, the question was, if you doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled the rolls, what would the financial impact be? It would be considerable. If it had a considerable financial impact then you were going to have a political impact because big city democratic mayors would be in a very difficult situation because they were elected by white ethnics. They would have to say to their white ethnic constituents, “Welfare costs are going up so much we are going to have to raise your taxes.” They weren’t about to do that. Or they would say, “Welfare costs have gone up so much we are going to have to cut budgets for schools in your communities.” They were not about to do that either. They could also say they we were going to stop this, were going to come down with the iron hammer and force people off welfare, and crack down on welfare. By 1965, the riots had begun. In the summers, mayors were suspending evictions; evictions were occasions for confrontations between people on the street and law enforcement. That is how riots start. Frances and I talked about all that and what Frances argued was that what these mayors would do instead would be to turn to the Federal Government and

say, "Bail us out. Federalize this system. Federalize AFDC." Flooding the rolls would create federal income legislation.

JM: Also, that federalizing welfare would lead to more consistent benefits across the country.

RC: The implementation of national minimum standards would have been particularly important in the south. Minimum standards would have raised welfare levels in the south considerably and really would have done a lot to eliminate southern poverty. We decided to roll the dice. We wrote an article for the *Nation* (Cloward & Piven, 1966) that said we should flood the f_____g rolls, bankrupt the cities as a way of trying to force the federalizing of AFDC. At the same time we set out to politicize all of the anti-poverty programs, which wasn't hard and did happen for the reason I said—they were all stuck. What could they do? Here are these poor people. What could they do for them? Get them on welfare and get them some money. That they could do. In other words, the basic structural pressure was there so when I say we were able to politicize them I mean that they were ready to be politicized.

But, we also thought that there ought to be a movement. There ought to be an organization beyond the poverty program that would beat the drums to build the rolls: activists, ghetto ministers, militant AFDC recipients, and so forth. We began talking to Civil Rights leaders. We talked to Bayard Rustin, Whitney Young of the Urban League. They were very negative. Whitney Young said, "I would rather get one black woman a job as an airline hostess than I would fifty women on welfare." I said to Bayard Rustin one day, "We have a plan for poverty that we would like to talk to you about. It will take about two hours." The reason I said two hours was because we had to explain everything about welfare. Who knows about welfare? I didn't know anything about welfare until I got involved with those neighborhood service centers. His response was, "If you need two hours, you don't have an idea." A year later, he was speaking at welfare rights demonstrations. Anyway, the guy we ended up talking to, who was very sympathetic, was George Wiley. He was the Associate National Director of CORE. In 1965, CORE was being swept by the Black Nationalist trends and James Farmer was stepping down. Farmer was an integrationist, and Wiley was an integrationist. Wiley ran for Farmer's job against a guy named Floyd McKissick, who was the nationalist candidate, and Wiley lost. Wiley was thus in the market for an organizing idea. He liked the welfare idea; "the poorest of the poor" he used to say. He had one of his aides check our estimates of the number of unaided families. The guy came back and said that if anything the estimates were on the conserva-

tive side. So Wiley said that “it is a go, we were going to form a national welfare rights organization.” This was in the spring of 1966. He sent out a call to civil rights activists around the country that he knew, and he called a meeting in Chicago in May of 1966. It was at the University of Chicago. What had happened was some students at the University of Chicago School of Social Service got interested in guaranteed income, and that is what we were talking about. We said that if you flood the rolls you are going to get a federal guaranteed income.

JM: You already had the vision of a guaranteed income?

RC: Well, it wasn’t our vision. It was in the air at the time. Leading people were going around the country saying that 10 million people would be unemployed by the end of the decade as a result of automation. Even Milton Friedman, in this period, began writing about negative income tax. It was in the air. I don’t know if we even used the term “guaranteed income” in that strategy article.

JM: You were describing, then, a strategy to achieve a guaranteed income?

RC: Exactly, a strategy to achieve it . . . bankrupt the Goddamn cities, convert every big city mayor into a lobbyist for federal legislation. That was the strategy. It is also true that there was a parallel for that in the Depression. The Depression hit, people lost their jobs, people had no money, and it was the big city mayors who faced the music. They set up soup kitchens, etc., but their resources were strained. The mayors began to bellow at Roosevelt to do something. The Federal Emergency Relief Program was the result. So, we were saying the same thing. Create a crisis for these guys and their options are very limited. They wouldn’t be able to use repression, and they don’t have the money to make concessions. The only real option they will have is to try to buck the problem upward. So, that was the strategy, and Wiley bought it. He opened an office in Washington, and we raised \$20,000 from a foundation for him to get started. He hired Tim Samson as an associate director. We began calling meetings and groups began sprouting up everywhere, many of them organized by the anti-poverty program staff. If you were to look at the organizers who developed welfare rights groups in that period, by far the most important single group would be VISTA.

JM: Were you and Frances very involved with the organizations?

RC: Yes, we were up to our ears in it, day and night. We were on the road preaching welfare rights, sharing platforms with George. It was like a brush fire. We said that the way to create the political influence is to drive up the rolls, flood the cities, bankrupt the cities, and given their bad options at the time, dealing with rioting, that these big city mayors

and governors would start screaming for federal reform. In other words, we said the key to power is creating a crisis in the cities. They [The National Welfare Rights Organization] however had a traditional organizing theory of power, which is a mass based membership organization that becomes a lobbying power. That was an argument that went on all through the life of the movement, which wasn't very long because welfare rights went bankrupt in 1973. They wanted to build organizations so they built an intricate national organizational structure with a national coordinating committee of welfare recipients. It was elected from the states and then there were city associations, and then there were neighborhood groups. They were all linked together in a national structure. At its peak, welfare rights had about 25,000 dues paying members. In a country that had a population of 200 million at that time, 25,000 people were not going to be a very effective lobby group.

JM: They were 25,000 poor people, as well.

RC: Yes. It is true that they had rioting going for them, and the civil rights movement too, which means even a small organization could get a hearing, and the recipient heads of welfare groups were testifying in Congress all the time, and they were invited to speak at women's groups. They really became public figures. And of course the more they became public figures the less they wanted to go back to those local welfare centers where they started out. By 1970, 1971, 1972 the movement had begun to lose its base. The difference in theories of power is an important point. [One argument was] about whether poor people's organizations using conventional strategies of political influence can win anything.

JM: One of the dilemmas it seems to me is that when you start to create an organization like this organization, can it stay in that level of spontaneity? It almost inevitably moves into another phase, doesn't it?

RC: That's right. That is what we argue. We have been having that argument with academics all our careers. One thing we said was, and we argued this endlessly, these periods of mass unrest don't last.

JM: It is like a tiny little tear in a seam that you take advantage of.

RC: Yes, you take advantage of it. We said get what you can while you can, and don't build organizations; the organization will not survive the ebbing of unrest. Well that is what happened in the 1930s and that is what happened again in the 1960s. We were absolutely right about that.

JM: Did you know that at the time? The riots were going on, and did you realize you were in one of those moments?

RC: We said that over and over. We argued with the rent strike organizers because we didn't agree with their strategy either, which was the

same strategy: build tenant organizations. We said no—bankrupt the slum housing system. It is the same issue: crisis versus conventional mass organization.

JM: This seems like such a big idea, and you then in *Regulating The Poor* (Piven & Cloward, 1971) developed it historically. Did you have that historical understanding then, or was it more of just grasping what was happening at the moment?

RC: No, we were wrapped up in the moment. We didn't have it about welfare until we started reading back . . . *Regulating the Poor* was written in eighteen months (1968-1970). It came very fast. *Poor People's Movements* (Piven & Cloward, 1977) took us ten years.

JM: What was the difference?

RC: I don't know. *Poor People's Movements* is a fuller theory of power. There were aspects of it that troubled us. There were some early drafts we had that we put aside. Also, there were theoretical problems with the book. We didn't have the whole thing worked out adequately. But welfare—when we went back and looked at the history—we saw the same God damned thing. We saw these periods (like after Speenhamland)—the rolls were up. Ten percent of the English population was on the roll and then the new industrial entrepreneurial class got admitted to the English parliament and they passed the 1834 Poor Laws, in which they abolished the outdoor relief system and created workhouses. I mean, you see political crisis, the rolls rising, and then you see the work-enforcing phase.

JM: I'm interested in the intellectual evolution of this idea. It sounds like you had the experience at MFY, the riots were going on, you could see what was happening, and you had the Depression to look back on in a sense. You evolved this kind of theory, saw what was going on around you and then you were able to take that and see a pattern . . .

RC: Then we went back and reviewed relief history, and we saw the same thing. We didn't see what Trattner saw. Trattner's (1999) textbook *From Poor Law to Welfare State* gives you this kind of linear . . .

JM: Rational, incremental . . .

RC: Right, we didn't see that. What we saw was this. Now if you smoothed it all out over five-hundred years you could say from poor law to welfare state, but saying it that way conceals what this apparently evolutionary like line really was: It was a series of crises.

JM: It is almost as if you are just skipping from one of the mountains to the next mountain and leaving out all the valleys.

RC: That's right. We were originally going to call *Regulating the Poor*, "From Crisis to Crisis," but then we decided that is wasn't very illuminating. But that was the idea: from crisis to crisis.

JM: You are really describing a class struggle in that you only get what you take, and you only take what you can in certain periods.

RC: It was very oriented toward class structure, but not influenced particularly by Marxist thought . . . oriented toward class structure just the way the populists were. You know, it is a God damned hierarchy. They are up there and we are down here. My orientation has always been that simple: They are up there and we are down here. The question is how can you give them a kick in the ass every once in a while?

JM: You said this was the time when you really started to understand power in a different way.

RC: Well I didn't really have a conception of power. I just had a conception of hierarchy and stratification. They are up there and we are down here. I never asked myself the question "What can people down here do that will force those up there to react?" I really did, as a result of my need for a doctoral dissertation, my serendipitous placement in a prison and all of that, in the 1950s think of myself as a criminologist. I did not think of myself as a power analyst. It was the turbulence of the 1960s that turned me to thinking about power and caused me to give up criminology.

JM: It sounds like you really also immersed yourself in trying to understand social movements.

RC: Yes, that's right, I gradually became a social movement analyst. If you look at those articles on rent strike and the welfare strategy article, the dissensus politics article which is an analysis of the civil rights movement, they were all published in the 1966 to 1968 period. That was just a completely different subject matter of writing for me. If you look at those articles and look at *Delinquency and Opportunity* (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960), you wonder if they were written by the same person.

JM: I was just thinking that I do see a theme, which is that in *Delinquency and Opportunity* you took the other side of what Merton left out. He was talking about a kind of overt normative structure and you were looking at the under side of that. In a sense you described gang members or delinquents as players, an interaction between players in a social structure, and in some ways there are echoes of that in the theoretical model you evolved with Frances where poor people also have a locked opportunity structure. It is an interaction between what they are able to try and take from that, and there are certain times when you can or can't.

RC: A political opportunity structure.

JM: It is political and economic.

RC: Yes, but much more political than economic.

JM: Tell me more.

RC: I thought much more in economic terms in the 1950s. *Delinquency and Opportunity* is economic. The 1960s brought home the political dimension, and made me start thinking about power, not just problematically, like whether you should be in favor of a guaranteed income, but how you can get it. That is a political problem.

JM: Given that, what is your feeling about electoral politics and the role of the state. What is your thinking on that?

RC: We were very sour on all of that. What Frances said in “Low income people and the political process” (Piven, 1974) is that poor people have no chance of winning anything except by disruptive protest. So the next question is—and this is the question for the 1960s—what form of disruptive protest can they engage in? What resources do they have? Blacks couldn’t engage in mass strikes like the workers did in the 1930s because they weren’t in the God dammed factories. I mean you can’t disrupt an institution you are not in. There were Blacks coming into the cities unemployed—partially employed—seasonally employed—erratically employed. De-industrialization was going on, as you said earlier, so the question was what could people do. We said they could bankrupt the God dammed slum system and they could bankrupt the welfare system.

JM: That was their power within the social structure.

RC: That was their power. The problem in power is not just theoretical. You have to look at people’s concrete historically specific social situation. Are they in the factories or not in the factories? Well if they are not in the factories why talk about strikes? You have to look at their concrete situation and ask what the hell can they do given the limitations or possibilities in their situation. We saw three really. I mean, the civil rights movement in the south was disrupting the Democratic Party. It was wrecking it, and driving the whites out. That is what the dissensus article is about: driving the whites out and forcing the Democrats to enfranchise blacks to make up for white defectors. It wasn’t just lobbying and it wasn’t just litigation. They were blowing up the regional base of the Democratic Party. That was very clear to us. We wrote that dis-sensus article I think in 1968 (Piven & Cloward, 1968) before the civil rights movement was even over. Everybody else was talking about a coalition between northern liberals and southern Blacks. That was true, but there was another part of it, which was that they were driving southern whites out. Southern whites were absolutely inflamed by the civil rights demonstrations. Inflamed!

JM: What is implicit in all of this is the whole issue of race and racism, which you certainly don't duck, but it is not central sometimes to your titles or your concepts. When you were working with MFY were the majority of your clients African-Americans and Puerto Ricans?

RC: Yes. Well in a sense, politics is about race.

JM: I think so.

RC: Yes, there is no question about that. The Civil Rights movement exacerbated racial tensions, and drove Southern whites out of the Democratic Party.

JM: I think that is still the essential issue with welfare and the way the public responds to it.

RC: In those three articles—the rent strike article (Piven & Cloward, 1967), the welfare article (Cloward & Piven, 1966), and the dissensus politics article (Piven & Cloward, 1968)—I am sure I am right that they were all published within a two year period together with the “Low-income People and the Political Process” article which Frances wrote in 1963 (Piven, 1974), if you read them, you could basically say we never said anything different since.

JM: You think that is true?

RC: That is true. We have elaborated, and we have refined.

JM: In those articles you really put down your core foundation of ideas.

RC: Two basic ideas: One, tactics of disruption are their only resource, and the second question is what institutions can they disrupt? In their concrete historically specific situation, what can they disrupt?

JM: And it seems your third question is when can they disrupt?

RC: Well, yes, it is only in rare moments that people will be ready to do it. Absolutely. That is why we kept saying get what you can get while you can, because this is not going to last.

JM: And you were right.

RC: Of course we were right. We were one-hundred percent right. As soon as the rioting ebbed, Nixon was elected in 1968, power was transferred from liberals to conservatives, law and order became the reigning national ideology, and unrest began to decline. Of course people wanted things and then people made concessions . . . It is easy to satisfy poor people. They will settle for very little.

JM: What do you feel people wanted, when you look back?

RC: It depends. In the South they clearly wanted political rights, and they got them. So, you've got them, now stop the disorder. In the northern cities, they got welfare. Of course a lot of them began to be absorbed into public jobs.

JM: You could also argue that affirmative action came out of this and a small group of people benefited from that, which is not insignificant. There is a Black middle class today that has its roots in it.

RC: That is right. There is no question about that. The period ended and when it ended all the organizations collapsed. National Tenants Union collapsed and went bankrupt, Welfare Rights went bankrupt. SNCC formed in 1962 or 1963, and it was dead by the end of the decade. I mean, everything we said came true. We said that these organizations will not outlast the unrest because the unrest is going to be very brief. We said that over and over and over again in our argument with organizers. Organizers said, “You are asking us to create a crisis and pray” and they said they didn’t want to do that. “We want to control the outcome, we want to be there in the Congress with our people mobilized to tell them what to do.” We said, “No, you won’t be able to organize that many people. It won’t work. The only way that you are going to get anything is through crisis, and welfare and housing are the key to that.”

JM: What I was going to say is that that idea of a dissensus, of fomenting crises, goes against the community-organizing tendency towards organization and bureaucracy . . .

RC: It goes against the idea of coalition too.

JM: . . . and the idea of coalition, and also personal need for power and control that leaders often have. Did you ever feel that you had any support for this from any key people? It goes against the grain so dramatically.

RC: Organizers really disagreed with us. It was a friendly disagreement, but they clearly disagreed with us. Academics disagreed with us too. Organizers and academics all had this pluralist model—organization/coalition. We objected and said no. We suggested disruption and dissensus, they said organization/coalition. It is a different model. It is anti-pluralism. It says pluralism is bullshit. Poor people don’t have conventional political resources, and they can’t use the conventional political system effectively. The National Association of Manufacturers can use it. They have the money, and the staff, and the contacts. It is an argument about pluralism really. That is what it is at the bottom. One was the theory that organizers held, which was organization and coalition, and the other was the theory that poor people held—they were rioting.

JM: Do you want to talk a little about what happened with the Guaranteed Annual Income and your involvement with that, and your disagreement with Moynihan? Do you feel that is worth going into?

RC: Well, that is complicated. If it had been left to the two of us to decide, we would have voted for the Family Assistance Plan [FAP]. We

were not against FAP. Welfare Rights was against FAP. Wiley was against FAP. The problem was that it would establish a national minimum income of \$1600 a year for a family of four, and then if you worked there were income disregards up to \$3900 for a family of four. Now that would have bailed out poor people in the south, but not in the northern cities. The welfare rights movement was centered in the north; it was not a southern movement. It was a northern movement and so naturally, the welfare rights leadership said, "What is this—the threatening of benefit levels?"

JM: Did you see it as at least getting a framework which you could then build on or modify, which could at least make a commitment that wasn't there before?

RC: We saw it as making a huge dent in southern poverty, which was the worst poverty in the nation, and as a step toward a guaranteed income. We would have voted for it. Frances and I were not part of that FAP fight. We stood aside. Welfare rights was really gung-ho to defeat it. It is not that we were great proponents of it, but we were not against it. We had predicted that there would be federal legislation, a federal response to the flooding of the rolls, and we were right about that. There was Nixon and Moynihan reacting to the cities. Republican governors were screaming bloody murder at Nixon to do something about welfare costs. It wasn't just Democrats.

JM: Do you feel it was a lost opportunity in hindsight, to not have FAP?

RC: Well, I have some ambivalence about FAP, about the forced work requirement, but I think the way I would say it is this: We didn't really think welfare rights could have any control over the outcome of all of this. They didn't defeat FAP. Nixon walked away from FAP as the 1972 election approached. What we really thought and what we really argued at the time was not about FAP, but it was about continuing to keep the pressure on. Go back to the God damned local centers, and let's keep the rolls rising.

JM: You realized that the pressure was why this was still being debated.

RC: Yes, exactly. We always said you can't control the outcome. That is the "create a crisis and pray" argument against us. You can only create the God damned trouble and hope for the best. Others are going to make the decision about outcomes. They are either going to come down and smash you or they are going to give you something to cool you off, but you are not going to determine which of those it is. If they give you something you are not going to determine what they give you.

All you can do is keep the pressure on. People join organizations when they see that the organizations win things. What the hell could poor people's organizations win? Nothing. They had no incentives to offer people. It was also clear by the FAP fight that welfare rights was going down the tubes. It was becoming a shell organization, as were all the other organizations of the period. The civil rights movement was over. SNCC had disappeared, CORE was shrinking, and King was dead.

JM: So, it was bigger than just welfare rights.

RC: Yes, the period of mass unrest was ending. That was signified by the backlash of Nixon's election, the transfer of power from liberal to conservative elites nationally. It was ending. We had said that when unrest ends the organizations will collapse. You could already begin to see it in welfare rights. The leadership was becoming oligarchical. They couldn't turn people out to demonstrations at the local level any more, and they didn't care because they were national personalities. They were getting audiences everywhere. Wiley decided just before he died in 1973 to break with welfare rights. He said we have to form a much broader based organization, a movement for economic justice. That was what he was about to do when he was in that terrible accident. He broke with welfare rights. It was a very bitter break with the leadership. The leadership was all that was left.

JM: Had you broken with it by then?

RC: Oh yes. Wiley broke with it, but he also thought that he would absorb them. He was wrong about that. They went bankrupt and disappeared, but he knew he could absorb it because he was a very strong personality. He could raise the money, he could tap the organizers, and he knew welfare rights would not survive without him. He could absorb them, but he wanted to build a much broader constituency of welfare working poor, and unemployed. He would not have succeeded because it was the 1970s. You couldn't organize people. The period was over.

JM: That is what I wanted to ask you. What you are saying is that there is really a sort of historical determinism. So, what can people do once the period of unrest is over?

RC: Very little. There is little sympathy for them, they won't attract many members, and if they use disruptive tactics, they will be smashed.

JM: Is that a time to develop organization or is that irrelevant?

RC: You can't develop many members, so how can you develop organization? We did say in the "Reflections on Community Organizing" (Cloward & Piven, 1999) chapter, which I think is true, that you try to keep these small organizations alive and try to keep the idea of justice alive.

JM: You try to keep the pilot light going.

RC: Yeah, keep the pilot light going. That is a very good way of saying it. The justice pilot light is a very good way of saying it—to keep the idea of justice alive. But are they going to win anything? The answer is no. They get a little something here or there from a mayor, or some little God damned concession.

JM: Let's pick up your career after this, say in the 1970s and beyond. What happened with you?

RC: Well basically what happened was that everything quieted down.

JM: It sounds like things had stalled during the 1970s, and then in the 1980s things started going down.

RC: That's right. They stalled. Well, the question was: What could be done? We at first thought that it might be possible to mobilize the human service field to mount resistance. That is why we wrote the *New Class War* (Piven & Cloward, 1982). We even tried in New York to stage some demonstrations. We formed a little organization called The Emergency Campaign to Save Human Services. But the demonstrations, on the whole, were unsuccessful.

JM: I remember hearing about that. It sounds like this is a different strategy or tactic, which is resistance as opposed to disruption.

RC: Yes, that is right—resistance.

JM: When did you turn to voter registration?

RC: The way it happened was this: Frances and I went down to a meeting of grassroots organizers that was called by an organization called FRAC—the Food Research Access Center—in Washington. This was in the spring of 1982. We were at that time messing around with the emergency campaign, and trying to get people out to demonstrations and so forth. We went down and there were organizers of all kinds there: welfare, housing, neighborhood. It was a two-day meeting. There were all kinds of organizing ventures there, but none of them struck us as having any real potential. Then at lunch on the second day, a guy spoke named Sanford Newman. He was a former legal services attorney and he had gotten the idea that a more effective way to register people to vote than knocking on doors was to do it in welfare waiting rooms. He was clearly right about that. If you go into an unemployment office, and there they are lined up, and you just go up and down the line, you pass out the forms, make a rap, pass out clip boards, and you sign them up—save food stamps, save unemployment benefits, register to vote. So, we said to each other, “Jesus Christ, Newman is in welfare waiting rooms where the recipients of the welfare state are aggregated, and he is

using volunteers. His strategy depends on his ability to recruit volunteers.” That is not easy, particularly in conservative times. The prospect of Reagan’s reelection was turning the left on, and he was having success recruiting volunteers, but even so, we said to ourselves, the workers should do the registration.

JM: Make it institutionalized.

RC: Yes. The welfare state should become registration sites.

JM: What made you think that you would be able to get that through, since in some ways it was threatening the current elites in power?

RC: Well, we did not begin by thinking of national legislation. We were not thinking of the national Voter Registration Act. We were again thinking of the big cities, and of raising voter registration levels in the key industrial states to create pressure on the Democratic Party to defend the programs. Our strategy was to build an electoral defense of the welfare state. It was a resistance strategy. Build an electoral defense of the welfare state, and build it in the big northern cities and states, and the key to it would be human service workers.

JM: Is that where you got the name for Human SERVE?

RC: That is why we took the name Human SERVE. Human SERVE in an acronym for Human Service Employees Registration and Voters Education. We decided that we would focus on the private sector, on voluntary agencies first because we knew the public sector agencies were going to be a different kind of problem. We would have to get the approval of the governors and mayors for public agencies, but voluntary agencies like settlement houses, day care centers and family service agencies we thought we could persuade them to do it. There were thousands of those agencies.

JM: Did you see schools of social work as being take-off points?

RC: Yes, we put a lot of emphasis on schools of social work. We got deans all over the country to call meetings of their faculty, students, and agency staff, and they did it. They called the meetings. We were on the road all the time. Frances took the west coast, and I took Michigan, Ohio, and all those states. Christ, we were on the road all the time speaking before human service audiences because human service people were troubled and they were interested in what anybody had to say about what they could do. So they came to meetings, cheering and stomping their feet, but then they didn’t do it: They did not do voter registration in their agencies.

JM: There was not a vested interest in it. What is your take on that?

RC: Well, I don’t know. People ask me that question all the time. I remember talking about it with Mitchell Ginsberg [former Dean of Co-

lumbia School for Social Work]. Ginsberg's answer to that was very simple. He said they don't like their clients. They don't think of themselves as being in a natural coalition of self-interest with clients. Also, many of them had boards of directors who would not be terribly sanguine about an executive saying we are going to do nonpartisan voter registration. Someone could ask, "But who are you registering? If you are registering poor people then you are registering Democrats; don't tell us it is nonpartisan." So, I am sure that there was some of that. Maybe it was timidity. I don't know. All those answers are probably partially true.

JM: Did you have a national organization at this point, or was it just you and Frances?

RC: Well, we had raised money. We had a staff in thirteen states. I don't know what we raised in that early period between 1983 and 1984, but it was probably upwards of a million dollars. We put in six telephone lines and ran it out of my office. After the 1984 election, we abandoned the voluntary effort. It is not that there were no human service workers that did it—that is not true—it was not the massive thing that we had envisioned. Instead of getting millions registered, we would get five-hundred thousand. So, we turned to the public sector. We had worked out a strategy, which several of our state organizers took very seriously. It was a very simple idea. State constitutions vest control over voter registration in legislatures. They make all the laws and regulations regarding the electoral system. These legislatures in the big northern states had very strong rural suburban constituencies that would be opposed to seeing voter registration levels raised significantly in the big cities. That meant you probably could not get legislation or directing the human service workers to make voter registration part of their regular duties through legislatures. So what do you do? Frances and I argued that governors could order it done, and would not be infringing on the legislative prerogatives. The critical point of power in the voter registration process is when the forms get to the board of elections and they decide whether the person is or is not eligible. That is the crucial point of power. Governors would not be usurping that. All they would be doing is distributing voter registration applications and helping people fill them out. We said that the courts would not treat that as an infringement of legislative prerogatives; they will not treat it as a violation of the separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. That was our argument. We turned out to be right.

JM: What made you think that the governors would be more receptive to that?

RC: Well, we were really struck by the 1982 election. That was the recession election, Reagan's recession. Unemployment was at eleven percent, and in that election, blue-collar workers and minorities turned out and they elected Democratic governors in four key states. Actually, three key states, and one not so key state. White, in Texas, was elected by overwhelming pluralities of Hispanics and Blacks; Celeste in Ohio, a former Peace Corps guy; and Cuomo in New York. It was a big minority turn out. Tony Anaya was the first Hispanic governor in New Mexico. We said, "Jesus, there is a tide running." That imagery of a tide running it is very important in our thinking. That is what these periods are. In the 1930s and 1960s the tide was running. The anger and political energy begins to burst forth from the bottom. We looked at the 1982 election and said the God dammed tides are starting to run. We make the point in *Poor People's Movements* that you first see discontent in the voting booth, and then it breaks out into the streets. People are conditioned to express their anger first by protest votes, like against Hoover in 1932. Then the political system doesn't react rapidly enough with sufficient concessions to cool out the anger, and so it begins to break out into various forms of civil disorder. So, we said, these governors were elected by minority voters so why would they not want more of them registered? Not the whole Democratic Party. Not all the conservatives from the south and other . . . but these four Democratic governors, we said, had a clear incentive to want to see more minority people or social beneficiaries registered to vote. So, we targeted them. We had an organizer in Texas, a former ACORN organizer, who organized a statewide coalition. It had some human service groups in it, as well as labor groups, and minority groups. They got Governor White to issue an executive order mandating voter registration in the human service agencies, like unemployment, welfare, and so on. That was in March of 1984. Frances and I worked in New York and got strong support from Victor Gotbaum, who was the head of District Congress 37 of the American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees (AFSCME). He had a lot of influence with Governor Cuomo, and Cuomo issued an order in July of 1984. We worked very closely with the Secretary of State in Ohio. He was a young guy who was trying to make his reputation using voter registration. He got Governor Celeste to issue an order. A social worker named Joseph Goldberg who had been teaching at the University of New Mexico was appointed by Anaya to be the head of human services. He heard about the idea and called us. He went ahead with it and got Anaya to issue an order. Except Anaya issued the order only for welfare, which we said was a mistake. You would get crucified.

JM: Only welfare offices would do it?

RC: Yes. You have got to include unemployment and other kinds of agencies because otherwise people would say, "What the hell is this?" And, that is just what they said. Anaya got blown out of the water. So, at the same moment that we were failing to get the voluntary agency sector we were having some success with big northern Democratic governors. At least we thought we were. After the election, we focused almost exclusively on governors. It didn't work; they didn't do it. They issued the f_____g orders. They wrapped themselves in the flag. They had press conferences. They sounded like the God damned founding fathers and all the while the cameras were rolling, but they didn't implement it. We had terrible problems with implementation. We were working all over the country in a lot of different states, and what slowly began to happen was, we would ask either Democrats in the legislature or Democratic governors to issue an executive order on human service agencies. What they began to do instead was to establish either executive orders or legislation establishing the voter registration in driver license agencies.

JM: Whose idea was that?

RC: Well, the first driver's license voter registration program started in Michigan in 1975 under a Black secretary of state. Four or five states adopted it subsequently. Maine was one state. Then it just sort of lay dormant. What we did was—by going around preaching agency-based registration, by saying the government has an affirmative obligation to register the electorate and should do it through agencies—it had the effect of reviving the motor voter idea, even though we were against motor voter.

JM: Why were you against it?

RC: In the early period (we later changed our minds) we were against it because of the differential by race and class in driver's licenses, which in 1983 was pretty substantial. By 1990, they were not. The driver's license figures were going up one percent a year. So, by 1990 you could say that 87 to 88 percent of the electorate had licenses, but it was not that way in 1983, when we started out. We downplayed motor voter. We emphasized human service agencies. What the governors said to themselves, was that human service is going to be a big hassle. Do motor voter instead. Democrats in the legislature said the same thing. Who can object to motor voter? So what happened was, we began to get motor voter program legislation and executive orders all over the country. We also understood that there was no hope of getting human service agencies unless we got motor voter. But we were wrong. We never got any human service agencies added on, except in Minnesota. So by 1987 or

so, we knew that the state strategy had failed. Both the executive order and the legislative order had failed. We weren't getting human service agencies. We would get the executive but it would not be implemented, or we would get legislation but it was just motor voter. It was just one or the other. So we said to ourselves that there is only one last hope, the Democrats in Congress. So, we began pushing for federal legislation. We did that by joining up with the National Voting Rights Coalition, which included the civil rights groups, The League of Women Voters, People for the American Way, Common Cause, and organized labor and we began having a debate with them. They were primarily civil rights groups. All of these groups were still focused on one-by-one registration. The NAACP would run door-knocking campaigns, and some NAACP chapters picked up Newman's strategy and they were doing welfare waiting rooms and they were doing Reagan cheese lines—registering people on the surplus cheese lines. In other words, they were doing hands-on. To the extent that they thought about institutional reform, they strongly favored day-of-election registration. We argued that day-of-election registration had no chance. The politicians simply were not going to do it. We said it was a hopeless strategy. They were also strongly in favor of mail registration, and we said that is all right, but where will people get the forms? Well, when the states passed mail registration, they made no provision for the distribution of forms. We said that distributing them through agencies was the way to put them into people's hands. Using agencies solves the distribution problem. Otherwise, mail registration doesn't work. We compared mail registration states with non-mail registration states, and the registration levels were the same. In other words, mail didn't make any difference.

JM: So it wasn't the mail that was having an impact, but instead access to the forms.

RC: Yes. So, around 1987 or 1988 we began making this argument to the National Voting Rights Coalition. We said that day-of-election registration was infeasible, and that the mail was feasible but it didn't work, and the only answer was agency-based registration. It was a fight, but we prevailed. We finally persuaded them, and key members of the Congress were also persuaded. By 1990, this became the goal of the national coalition—motor voter and agency-based human service agencies. The key Democrats endorsed it, but the big problem was in the Senate, because the Republicans filibustered the bill every time it came up. In the 1990 to 1992 period, the Democrats only had 57 Senators, and you need 60 to break a filibuster. We did finally break one in the spring of 1992. We got three Republicans to vote with us—Durenberger, of Min-

nesota; Jeffords, in Vermont; and Mark Hatfield, from Oregon. We broke the filibuster, but Bush vetoed it. So we knew that we had to have a Democratic president. So, we got on MTV during the 1992 campaign. The MTV people were very high on motor voter because kids drive. MTV gave us a lot of support. We got Clinton and Gore in a news conference on MTV and the correspondent said, "What about motor voter?" Clinton and Gore left MTV with motor voter t-shirts and motor voter caps. Clinton was committed then because of the youth vote. The youth vote had swung over to the Republicans in the 1980s, but it swung over to Clinton in 1992. So, they saw some political profit in motor voter. They didn't give a s— about human service agencies, but in motor voter, they saw some possibilities, because only about thirty-five percent of young people were registered, but eighty-five percent of them had driver's licenses. The possibilities for an increase in the youth registration levels were stupendous. So in the spring of 1993, after Clinton was elected, he made family leave his first priority and motor voter his second. In the first hundred days of Clinton's presidency, these were the first two bills that went forward. Anyway, there was a lot that went on in that period—filibusters—but finally we got it through, and Clinton signed it in May. We went down to the White House signing ceremony. We stood right behind the president.

JM: How did that feel?

RC: Well it was certainly interesting. We got a big pictorial play out of it. Everyone was in a semi circle in front of the audience, and there was a podium at one end where Clinton and Gore were, and in descending order of House and Senate, and it got down to the civic groups—us and then the NAACP person, and the League person. That was the end of the semi-circle. So, when you spoke you went up to the platform. Frances spoke for both of us. But when he signed, he walked all the way back to the signing table, and we were right behind the signing table, so all the pictures are of Clinton signing and the two of us standing right behind him.

JM: I saw that in the *Times*, or somewhere.

RC: Yes, it was in the *Times*, on television, it was everywhere because that was him signing, and there we were. That picture was worth a half a million dollars in fund raising. All you had to do was send the picture out and ask people to send money. We didn't have to persuade people that we had had anything to do with all this because it was clear. Then we began working on the implementation problem. We knew it was going to be a big hassle in the Republican states, getting them to do it in the human service agencies. We weren't worried about motor voter

agencies, because they were computerized. They could fit it in easily, but the human service agencies were something else. By this time, a fundamental change had occurred in governorships; many states had become Republican. They had no incentive to want to register these people. The whole problem was how to get the governors to do it. They went to court—there was a whole series of lawsuits—but we were prepared for that. We had money from the Ford Foundation to hold a big legal conference to get the civil rights and legal defense community, the ACLU, etc., geared up to fight what was going to be a states' rights fight. States always control voter registration so these Republican governors were like the old southern Bourbons. They argued federal intrusion on states' rights. It was the Tenth Amendment versus Article 1, Section 4, of the Constitution, which says Congress has the right to make and alter federal elections. It was a clash between those two parts of the constitution. We won at trial and on appeal. Appellate courts all said Section 1 prevailed over the Tenth Amendment on federal elections. The Supreme Court wouldn't hear the California appeal, because there were no conflicts among the appellate courts. There was no issue to resolve. The appellate courts were all unanimous. We beat the governors hands down on that issue, and then the problem was to get them to do it. That was a tough problem. Anyway, the bill went into effect in 1995. That was the starting date. The registration rolls rose dramatically. The turnout did not.

JM: Did you anticipate that?

RC: Well, no. We really did think that these difficulties in access to registration kept turn out down. Many others argued that we were wrong about that—academics of various kinds. Others argued that voter registration barriers were no longer a serious problem, but that it was motivational.

JM: What do you think now?

RC: Well, I would have to agree with the motivational argument, but in the sense that the political parties don't try to mobilize these groups. They don't offer them anything, and they don't design their rhetoric to appeal to them.

JM: The motivation is tied to that.

RC: Yes. By excluding these groups for so long, the parties grew up in the United States with minority groups excluded, and they didn't have to appeal to them. They didn't have to take them into account, unless there was some period of mass disorder like the 1960s and then they had to pay attention. So, it is an interactive process and there is no interaction.

JM: What do you see as the task at hand with this now, or do you feel you have gone as far as you can?

RC: The parties are so controlled now by big money. It is just incredible the money that is flowing through these parties now. I think the vote is almost meaningless. Money matters.

JM: Do you feel any satisfaction with what you achieved through this whole movement, with Human SERVE?

RC: Well, there are others in the civil rights and voting rights community who said to us, "Wait, it is too soon to judge it." I don't know. I feel a sense of satisfaction in that we did it, but if you ask me if I think it has or will make difference, I am no longer so sure.

JM: If you think of your feeling about historical periods and cycles it is possible that you laid down an infrastructure if the cycle . . .

RC: That is right. You could have a new period in which it will make a difference if more people are registered. I think that is right.

JM: In some ways this was keeping the pilot light burning during this period by doing that.

RC: Yes.

JM: I guess that remains to be seen.

RC: Yes, it remains to be seen whether it will make any difference or not. But I take a certain satisfaction in the fact that we little by little beginning in the early 1980s—we began to stumble, we made mistakes and we tried things that didn't work—but in the end we pulled it off.

JM: It is an incredible achievement, and hearing it in detail sounds like it is twenty years of non-stop work.

RC: So in that sense it was satisfying, but as to whether or not it will make any God damned political difference—I really don't know. I am a lot less sure today than I was when we started. When we started, I had no question in my mind about it. These were the two big organizing projects—welfare rights and Human SERVE were the two big projects. Mobilization for Youth was, I guess, also an organizing project.

JM: Do you feel okay about stopping at this point?

RC: Sure. This is a logical point. My career is ended.

JM: Well, we have taken it up to the success of Human SERVE. You are still writing.

RC: Yes, but writing the same thing.

JM: It sounds like you have gone through phases, though. Sometimes investing more in actually doing, and sometimes reflecting and writing.

RC: That's right. We withdrew for a year in the mid 1980s and wrote *Why Americans Don't Vote* (Piven & Cloward, 1988) to give the project intellectual respectability. Just like we wrote *Regulating the Poor* (Piven & Cloward, 1971). It is back and forth.

JM: Back and forth, between theory and praxis.

RC: Yes, exactly. Back and forth.

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