

In a fight almost anything goes. It almost reaches the point where you stop to apologize if a chance blow lands *above* the belt. When a corporation bungles like the one that burglarized my home and office, my visible public reaction is shock, horror, and moral outrage. In this case, we let it be known that sooner or later it would be confronted with this crime as well as with a whole series of other derelictions, before a United States Senate Subcommittee Investigation. Once sworn in, with congressional immunity, we would make these actions public. This threat, plus the fact that an attempt on my life had been made in Southern California, had the corporation on a spot where it would be publicly suspect in the event of assassination. At one point I found myself in a thirty-room motel in which every other room was occupied by their security men. This became another devil in the closet to haunt this corporation and to keep the pressure on.

The twelfth rule: *THE PRICE OF A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK IS A CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVE*. You cannot risk being trapped by the enemy in his sudden agreement with your demand and saying “You’re right—we don’t know what to do about this issue. Now you tell us.”

The thirteenth rule: *PICK THE TARGET, FREEZE IT, PERSONALIZE IT, AND POLARIZE IT*. In conflict tactics there are certain rules that the organizer should always regard as universalities. One is that the opposition should always be singled out as the target and “frozen.” By this I mean that in a complex, interrelated, urban society, it becomes increasingly difficult to single out who is to blame for any particular evil. There is a constant, and somewhat legitimate, passing of the buck. In these times of urbanization, complex metropolitan governments, the complexities of major interlocked corporations, and the interlocking of political life between cities and countries and metropolitan authorities, the problem that threatens to loom more and more is that of identifying the enemy. Obviously there is no point to tactics unless one has a target upon which to center the attacks ...

“Tactics” is reprinted from Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971). Check out his earlier book *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) too.

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Please note that FWS is a material support group. It does not represent the Woodwards Squat, Woodwards Coalition for Social Housing, or any other of the many groups and individuals currently involved in the DTES housing action.

W.O.O.D.S.Q.U.A.T. #29

For an elementary illustration of tactics, take parts of your face as the point of reference: your eyes, your ears, and your nose. First the eyes: if you have organized a vast, mass-based people’s organization, you can parade it visibly before the enemy and openly show your power. Second the ears: if your organization is small in numbers then do what Gideon did: conceal the members in the dark but raise a din and clamor that will make the listener believe that your organization numbers many more than it does. Third, the nose: if your organization is too tiny even for noise, stink up the place.

TACTICS

FROM AN ESSAY BY SAUL ALINSKY

“We will either find a way or make one.” – Hannibal

DAY 43 – SATURDAY – 26 OCT 02

TODAY: A LITTLE VISIT TO THE LIBERAL PARTY AGM IN PENTICTON & A PRESS CONFERENCE IN VANCOUVER FOR THE NATION-WIDE “GIVE IT OR GUARD IT” CAMPAIGN

Tactics means doing what you can with what you have. Tactics are those consciously deliberate acts by which human beings live with each other and deal with the world around them. In the world of give and take, tactics is the art of how to take and how to give. Here our concern is with the tactic of taking: how the Have-Nots can take power away from the Haves.

Always remember the first rule of power tactics: *POWER IS NOT ONLY WHAT YOU HAVE BUT WHAT THE ENEMY THINKS YOU HAVE.*

The second rule is: *NEVER GO OUTSIDE THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUR PEOPLE.* When an action or tactic is outside the experience of the people, the result is confusion, fear, and retreat. It also means a collapse of communication.

The third rule is: *WHENEVER POSSIBLE GO OUTSIDE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ENEMY.* Here you want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat. General William T. Sherman, whose name still causes a frenzied reaction throughout the South, provided a classic example of going outside the enemy's experience. Until Sherman, military tactics and strategies were based on standard patterns. All armies had fronts, rears, flanks, lines of communication, and lines of supply. Military campaigns were aimed at such standard objectives as rolling up the flanks of the enemy army or cutting the lines of supply or lines of communication, or moving around to attack from the rear. When Sherman cut loose on his famous March to the Sea, he had no front or rear lines of supplies or any other lines. He was on the loose and living on the land. The South, confronted with this new form of military invasion, reacted with confusion, panic, terror, and collapse. Sherman swept on to inevitable victory. ...

The fourth rule is: *MAKE THE ENEMY LIVE UP TO THEIR OWN BOOK OF RULES.* You can kill them with this, for they can no more obey their own rules than the Christian church can live up to Christianity.

The fourth rule carries within it the fifth rule: *RIDICULE IS MAN'S MOST POTENT WEAPON.* It is almost impossible to counterattack ridicule. Also it infuriates the opposition, who then react to your advantage.

The sixth rule is: *A GOOD TACTIC IS ONE THAT YOUR PEOPLE ENJOY.* If your people are not having a ball doing it, there is something very wrong with the tactic.

The seventh rule: *A TACTIC THAT DRAGS ON TOO LONG BECOMES A DRAG.* People can sustain militant interest in any issue for only a limited time, after which it becomes a ritualistic commitment, like going to church on Sunday mornings. New issues and crises are always developing, and one's reaction becomes, "Well, my heart bleeds for those people and I'm all for the boycott, but after all there are other important things in life"--and there it goes.

The eighth rule: *KEEP THE PRESSURE ON,* with different tactics and actions, and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.

The ninth rule: *THE THREAT IS USUALLY MORE TERRIFYING THAN THE THING ITSELF.*

The tenth rule: *THE MAJOR PREMISE FOR TACTICS IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIONS THAT WILL MAINTAIN A CONSTANT PRESSURE UPON THE OPPOSITION.* It is this unceasing pressure that results in the reactions from the opposition that are essential for the success of the campaign. It should be remembered not only that the action is in the reaction but that that action is itself the consequence of reaction and of reaction to the reaction, ad infinitum. The pressure produces the reaction, and constant pressure sustains action.

The eleventh rule is: *IF YOU PUSH A NEGATIVE HARD AND DEEP ENOUGH IT WILL BREAK THROUGH INTO ITS COUNTERSIDE.* This is based on the principle that every positive has its negative. We have already seen the conversion of the negative into the positive, in Mahatma Gandhi's development of the tactic of passive resistance.

One corporation we organized against responded to the continuous application of pressure by burglarizing my home, and then using the keys taken in the burglary to buglarize the offices of the Industrial Areas Foundation, where I work. The panic in this corporation was clear from the nature of the burglaries, for nothing was taken in either burglary to make it seem that the thieves were interested in ordinary loot—they took only the records that applied to the corporation. Even the most amateurish burglar would have had more sense than to do what the private detective agency hired by that corporation did. The police departments in California and Chicago agreed that "the corporation might just as well have left its fingerprints all over the place."