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# 1974-1983

## Community Development then and now

*Gavin Rennie*

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**Hall, T. (1981). ICA – Chicago style. *New Zealand Social Work*, 6(2), 11-13.**

It is both challenging and refreshing to have the opportunity to introduce current readers of the journal to Trish Hall's "ICA Chicago style" piece from *New Zealand Social Work* June 1981.

This is good community development praxis and continues to be relevant more especially I expect because we are moving into tough economic times which includes growing unemployment. It is in hard times that there is sometimes the inclination to look for answers from abroad. This article highlights the problematic of this approach

Hall brings to this writing clear values, experience and training about the importance of the local context. About giving community people with and ear to the ground a right to say how they want their communities shaped. It also says loudly, that top down development led by the Mayor let alone by a supra international development agency is not going to work. It also critiques international organisation for not acknowledging the previous (locally led) development that has already taken place. The article draws on research which evaluates ICA work in other countries and includes too interviews with a journalist (working in Samoa) all good Community development networking.

This is article proclaims values that community development practioners still hold dear. What is more important however is that this small piece of writing was together with local action, a catalyst for ICA to not only get access to local funding for its activities but in the end deciding to leave New Zealand to its own models of development. Not all Journal articles can have these sorts of effects but here reflection led to action something to gladden the hearts of those committed to Social Justice and Social Action

I commend it to you.

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## ICA Chicago style

*Trish Hall*

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*Trish Hall graduated from Victoria University with an MA in Social Work, 1973. She was a community worker with the Inner City Ministry, Wellington. In early 1976, she took a course 'Community*

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*Work and Social Change' at the National Institute of Social Work, London, and in that same year made a study tour of community work in Holland, Denmark and Norway. For the last five years she has been a community worker in London, more recently with the 'Albany' settlement and social action centre, London Borough of Lewisham. She returned to New Zealand at the end of 1980 to teach community work in the Department of Social Work, Victoria University.*

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The ICA, or as I see a ... Chicago organisation funded by big business trying to get involved in New Zealand community development.

Trish Hall

## **Who are they?**

The ICA stands for the Institute of Cultural Affairs. It is the secular arm of another organisation: the Ecumenical Institute, an interdenominational, religious organisation based in Chicago, concerned with world 'church renewal'.

The ICA was originally the research section of the Ecumenical Institute, but it was created as a separate body in 1973. The two organisations are still interchangeable, depending on whether staff are addressing church people, or the business or community sectors.

The ICA directs its energy outside the church 'ranging from comprehensive community development projects in many locations to management seminars for business executives.' (ICA leaflet, United Kingdom).

The ICA, like the EI, is an international organisation operating in over 100 locations in more than 40 countries. Their headquarters is a substantial office block in Chicago, with over 2,000 staff plus volunteers. The ICA representatives came to New Zealand from their Pacific base, the Marshall Islands.

## **Their beliefs**

The Institute of Cultural Affairs is a global service organisation whose purpose is to motivate co-operative action for social involvement within local communities (ICA USA literature).

Reading through their well set-out, glossy literature, it is very difficult to pin-point exactly what is the underlying motivation, nor is it easy to find a clear statement of their beliefs. Their writing is of an evangelical style:

Once people are given the tools which enable them to participate in their own lives, the future no longer seems dark and cold. Once people understand themselves to be co-creators of the 21st Century, they are set free to do the necessary tasks ... The ICA – NA programmatic presence is meant to be merely the 'first step' in claiming that bright promise for the people and communities of New Zealand (ICA's New Zealand Proposals, unpublished).

The ICA appear to assume that communities are in total collapse and disintegration. Their simplistic solution is that if the business, state and community sectors pull together then all interests will be served, and community conflict will be reduced.

A British minister of the United Reformed Church who went on an ICA/EI training course in Chicago in 1974 wrote after his experience:

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The major question to be answered is whether there is some major political force behind the Movement or at least using part of it? In as far as one can read between the lines and pick up disjointed references it would seem that the political implications of the Movement's policy would show themselves in Right Wing tendencies.<sup>1</sup>

### **Their methods**

They do believe that they have the methods for bringing 'the human factor into world development' (ICA Annual Report, 1979). They believe this method can be applied anywhere in the world. Their major purpose is 'to teach everything we know as quickly as possible to as many people as possible' (Donald Cramer, ICA, London).

The way ICA moved into Havelock North and New Zealand followed their well-practised pattern in other countries. A consultant or ICA volunteer is sent in to 'scout' a country. Key communities and key people are identified, talked to about the organisation, shown its methods and often these local people are sent to a training session at ICA centres in the USA or in their other international bases. This process usually produces a formal invitation for the ICA to establish itself in that country or community.

In New Zealand's case, six ICA staff arrived in Havelock North on visitors' permits, having been invited by the Mayor of Havelock North and some staff at the community college. The Mayor and his wife had been sent to see ICA projects in the USA. ICA-NZ was incorporated in October 1980 with a board of directors made up of ICA staff, New Zealand followers, a Havelock North businessman and an American director of Union Carbide New Zealand Ltd. (The ICA 1979 report mentions Union Carbide Co., New York as a major financial contributor.)

The ICA staff offer a package of Towns Meetings, Planning Consults, and LENS (Living Effectively in the New Society) training programmes. Whether you attended a town meeting in Krentzberg, West Berlin or Tirokino, Hawkes Bay, the format would be the same. Key people would be invited to the meeting, addressed by ICA staff, you would follow your ICA manual and brainstorm social issues, which would be ordered on to large sheets of paper on the wall by ICA staff who place these issues in triangles of economic, cultural and political issues.

After an interlude of singing and lunch, more workshops would look at practical proposals for the community. At the plenary a new song for the day is sung and a town meeting report given to everyone, incorporating the community challenges, proposals and a copy of the song or poem.

The meetings are characterised by the jargon that is used 'the great resurgence', 'discerning underling contradictions', 'political commonality' (from chapter headings in 'Towns Meeting' the ICA-UK Manual). Little discussion is allowed as leaders of the workshops play key roles in suggesting problems and controlling which ones are written up.

In Britain the fee to communities for running this day was usually £400. In New Zealand \$150 has been asked for a 'consult' with a voluntary agency, and the Havelock North Borough Council paid \$500 for the ICA to run a weekend planning meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Cook, G.J. (1974). *The Ecumenical Institute – Chicago, Summer 1974*. Unpublished report by an English clergyman who went on an ICA/EI course.

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### **Where does their money come from?**

The EI/ICA have four main sources of finance:

- donations from companies, individuals and charitable trusts,
- companies sometimes assign executives to work with the ICA,
- companies give materials, and free services,
- grants from government.

The ICA 1979 report gives these companies and trusts amongst the main donors: the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, First National Bank of Chicago, Gulf Oil, United States Steel, Mobil Oil, Shell Oil, Union Carbide, Johnson & Johnson, Xerox Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

ICA:NZ originally applied to the Department of Internal Affairs for \$24,000 for payment of staff and programme. Other organisations, such as the Borough Council, have applied to government departments for funds to enable them to use the ICA resource.

### **How they are experienced overseas**

The way ICA moves into each country or community follows a remarkably similar pattern and the ways communities experience their presence have some familiar characteristics. Little has been written on their impact that is independent of their own glowing reports. My information has been gathered while I was a community worker in London over the last five years, and from contacts in the USA and Samoa.

At first participants in ICA programmes are very enthusiastic about the methods designed to overcome the underlying cause of social and community problems. Subsequently as ICA promises are not met and the ICA becomes more pervasive, initiates change their minds. ICA presence almost always causes controversy and polarisation within communities. When nothing substantial is achieved ICA fades out of prominence or moves to another location.

Their methods with the accompanying jargon and 'culture' have been experienced as various degrees of imposition:-

... the attitude displayed seemed like a new kind of imperialism. There was no humility and openness, no disposition to become involved in real dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

Another example from India:-

The Indian Government in 1978 asked the 17 ICA foreign workers at the Malivvada training school to leave the country. The Government's action followed a visit by the State's chief minister and concern that the ICA's methods often ignored existing social structures and was overriding the traditions of Indian rural life. The Government also froze one of the ICA's bank accounts and ordered an enquiry into its financial affairs.<sup>4</sup>

Another experience from Australia:

In 1972 the Presbyterian Church in Australia assigned the EI (the ICA parent organisation) an Aboriginal Mission in Morrangjum. The EI claimed they made a stunning success, but the

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<sup>2</sup> *The Institute of Cultural Affairs 1979*. ICA 3444 W. Congress Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60624.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Takenaka. A Japanese clergyman who experienced the Ecumenical Institute in Japan, quoted in an article *An Evaluation of the Ecumenical Institute ordinarily known as International Training Institute, Chicago*, Bishop John Gonxalves, The North India Churchman, July 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Seventeen foreigners asked to quit India. *Time of India*, June 5th 1978.

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Presbyterian Church stated that: 'a system formulated in Chicago has been imposed on the Aboriginal people with a divisive result in the community itself.'<sup>5</sup>

And from London:

A member of Cahir St community in the Isle of Dogs, London, had this to say about their experience: 'ICA tactics seemed to be to use jargon and impressive sounding talks to confuse those attending the meetings.'

ICA brought out a prospectus of world-wide plans and objectives which they intended to follow. We questioned this at a weekly meeting and were told that the prospectus was 'too far advanced' for the people of Cahir St and that it should not have been brought out until later in our training.

The Cahir St residents also called for money that ICA had collected from local businesses for a community association to be handed over when the association was operating. The ICA claimed that the money had already been used to pay for the community 'consult'. Antagonism towards the ICA grew because of these experiences.

The ICA literature seems to have blown the success of the experience out of all proportion; the ICA describes its Isle of Dogs work as 'the momentous context of Human Development Project/ Global Social Demonstration moving on relentlessly in the Isle of Dogs.'<sup>6</sup> The ICA has now left the Isle of Dogs community and set up their headquarters in Essex.

Another characteristic of ICA experiences is their reluctance to recognise and incorporate the social history of the community into which they move. Several communities in Britain felt that the ICA did not acknowledge their organisations' campaigns and community activities of the past.

### Examples

In Lower Broughton, Salford, a town meeting was held with the usual ICA brainstorming, writing up community needs and proposals. Throughout the exercise, the ICA ignored the presence in the community of a number of active tenants associations and community groups and a very active community newspaper.<sup>7</sup>

Again in Cahir St, Isle of Dogs, London, the ICA made no connection to a whole history of the old docklands disintegrating and the community groups that have organised around this and other housing issues, and who had come together under the Association of Island Communities'.<sup>8</sup>

In Ferndale, South Wales, the ICA made no reference and no connections with that community's considerable history of organising around jobs and housing. Because of this tendency the local branches of the National Union of Miners have come out strongly against the ICA.<sup>9</sup>

There have been some experiences of difficulties over money and materials in the ICA's community endeavours:

### Examples

The residents of Cahir St, Isle of Dogs, London, suggested the need for a community van and the ICA agreed. The residents found a van and it was bought by the ICA from money raised through local community activities.

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<sup>5</sup> ICA Exposed. *Community Action*, 32, July-August 1977, London, p.19.

<sup>6</sup> ICA Exposed. *Community Action*, 34, November-December 1977, pp.30-31, London.

<sup>7</sup> ICA Exposed. *Community Action*, 32, London.

<sup>8</sup> ICA Exposed. *Community Action*, 34, London.

<sup>9</sup> ICA More Revelations. *Community Action*, 38, London.

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The community suggested that the van should be insured in the name of the Isle of Dogs Human Development Project, thereby giving a wide number of groups the chance to use it. However the van was insured in such a way that it could only be driven by two members of ICA and in the end it was used for ICA business only.<sup>10</sup>

About two years ago the New Zealand High Commission in Western Samoa gave a village a discretionary grant of around \$2,000. The money, through the ICA's activities in the village, was deposited in a bank in Singapore with an ICA staff member and a person in Singapore being the only signatories to the account. After some more involvement from the New Zealand High Commission, the money was eventually returned to the village.<sup>11</sup>

Some Samoan Government officials are currently dubious of the ICA's involvement in village life there. The ICA made a 'promise' to double the income of a particular village within a year, expectations have not been met. The divisions within the village have been highlighted rather than diminished because a small group of villagers are ICA supporters while others do not support their activities or the results these have had.

### **What they plan for New Zealand**

ICA plan to make their national leadership training centre for New Zealand in Duart House, Havelock North. This large old house was bequeathed to Havelock North for community use. When the borough council gave the ICA rent-free accommodation for their staff, and use of the house for their programmes there was considerable community controversy. A YMCA Youth Leadership Course had previously been offered the use of the house, they now feel they have been squeezed out.<sup>12</sup>

From this base the ICA will work in three arenas: Havelock North, Hawkes Bay and the whole of New Zealand. A programme with five unemployed people will redecorate Duart House using the Department of Labour Skills Training Programme and including a training in 'domestic-family support system'. The second component of their plan is to be a resource to the Hawkes Bay area, moving towards establishment of a Human Development Network.

The third component of the ICA's programmatic presence during the next six months is related to New Zealand in its entirety. The presence calls for at least six representative communities across the nation to participate in CM:NZ.

These communities can represent typical yet unique human settlements that cover both the North and South Islands. We can also relate the CM:NZ to some special community situations such as South Auckland and Lower Hutt.<sup>13</sup>

(CM:NZ refers to ICA Community Meetings in New Zealand.)

### **Conclusions**

Putting everything together, the ICA is at best a well intentioned organisation gone wrong and at worst something much more questionable. Of course it could be both.

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<sup>10</sup> ICA Exposed. *Community Action*, 32, London.

<sup>11</sup> Information in a discussion with Mike Field, journalist, *Evening Post*, Wellington.

<sup>12</sup> Various news articles in *Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune*, November 1980.

<sup>13</sup> *New Zealand Proposals*. Unpublished paper, ICA, Havelock North.

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It is a new experience for New Zealand to have an international organisation moving in and offering us 'human development resources'. Before they are granted public funds we should be looking around us at the people, organisations and experience we have already and ask questions about what sort of community development we wish to foster.

At a time of high unemployment, when it is very difficult for community groups to get even 'seeding money' for local initiatives, should we be supporting such organisations with multi-national funding, shaky overseas experience, and ill-defined motives? I believe not.

The Editors extend an invitation to a Hawkes Bay person to write a reply or to comment on this paper for the next issue.

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