

"Strike the Hammer" by Dr. Laura Hill

Link: https://www.nfb.ca/film/through_conflict_to_negotiation/ [1968 (45 mins)]

The 1968 National Film Board of Canada presents, "Organizing for Power, the Alinsky Approach Through Conflict to Negotiation". The film begins with the aftermath of Rochester's 1964 Rebellion/Riot. Saul Alinsky describes how every Black church in Rochester invited his organizing structure into their spaces in 1965. Rev. Franklin (Delano Roosevelt) Florence is elected to lead the Black collective FIGHT—Freedom, Independence, God, Honor, Today—that will represent the oppressed, unemployed Black workers in Rochester. Whites who are aligned with the organization create Friends of FIGHT. The film focuses on how Kodak found itself at the negotiation table with the newly formed FIGHT. There, Kodak representatives agree to hire "600 Negroes" over two years without first using Kodak's standard of "testing" workers. But in '66, Kodak claims that the agreement to hire the 600 workers was not authorized appropriately. FIGHT refuses to meet with anyone but the CEO. Alinsky compares the move on Kodak's part to Hitler's betrayal of the Non-Aggression Pact.

In a brilliant, strategic political move, FIGHT buys stock in Kodak so that it can attend its annual shareholder meeting in New Jersey. A young Rev. Florence interrupts the meeting to make his demand for Kodak to honor the agreement. Outside of the event was a large protest supporting Florence. Kodak does not move its position. The media covers the event.

Alinsky begins to promote to white Christian churches and organizations the method of placing clout in FIGHT in the form of giving its stock proxies. In dollars, this would cost nothing, but it would provide FIGHT significant bargaining power. Alinsky acknowledges that while it would cause the churches to reveal their stock investments' wealth, all must move "against precedent in order to fight racism." The National Council of Churches denies giving the proxies to FIGHT.

(Former NY Senator) Daniel Patrick Moynihan—hired by Kodak—helps reopen negotiations with FIGHT. The number of 600 workers was no longer the contention point. Now the issue is that Kodak acknowledges that FIGHT bargains on behalf of Rochester's Black poor with the community's largest employer. At the following FIGHT meeting to ratify and celebrate the agreement, Rev. Florence talks about how integration is only feasible or powerful if and when all parties what it to be so.

Alinsky doubles down on his idea of stock proxies though a Proxies for People where progressives know where to invest so that their proxies—turned over to bargaining organizations—are moved toward collective power. He uses the example of how Kodak, and then Xerox were forced to the table to negotiate with FIGHT.