KEY QUESTIONS

- WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN THIS SITUATION AND HOW WOULD YOU DEAL WITH THEM ?

- WHAT CAN THE SUPER-INTENDENT DO IN THIS SITUATION TO MANAGE THIS MESS AND MINIMIZE ITS NEGATIVE IMPACT ?

of them." He also indicated that students could "pick and choose" from the list and were not required to read any particular selection. That same day, eight of the nine Board members — including four who were running for re-election — were quoted in the local newspaper as being vehemently opposed to this type of material. An editorial accompanying the article called for a Blue Ribbon Curriculum Review Committee "to take the important task of deciding whether or not instructional materials are congruent with community values out of the hands of teachers."

Superintendent Neil was relieved that today was Friday. Unfortunately, it had not prevented the telephone from ringing off the hook. The superintendent had received the following calls:

- the Board president had asked him to move quickly to personally get involved in this issue and to resolve the problem before it got even more out of hand.
- the principal and the chairperson of the School Leadership Team had both urged him to stay out of the issue and allow the site-based management system to "do what it was set up to do."
- three local ministers had demanded that he immediately discipline the teacher for "using unbelievably poor judgment."
- the president of the local teachers' association had reminded him of his previous statements about the importance of teachers having the professional flexibility of making instructional decisions that governed what happened in their classrooms.
- the chairs of each of the two high school Faculty Senates had informed him that teachers saw this issue as one of academic freedom and felt that there was "no reason for anyone to get involved in this matter as long as the teacher gave students choices and did not require them to read any particular selections."
- the head of the Budget Committee of the County Commissioners told the superintendent that the majority of her colleagues were "shocked" by the excerpts and warned him as a "friend" that unless he took some action to "close the loopholes," the District would have "serious problems with your budget come the Spring."
- the chair of the Community Multicultural Task Force had stressed that this issue had "opened up a real can of worms in town and illustrated why it was so important for the District to do a better job of teaching mutual respect for all groups of people."
- seven parents had called demanding that the teacher be fired for "trying to recruit students into the homosexual life style."
- two professors from local universities who had been volunteering to write a proposal to improve the Gifted program had told him that they could not continue to work with the district on the project if the "basic concept of academic freedom is not supported by the administration."

Peter Neil had a real MESS on his hands!

A REAL MESS
by Stanley A. Schainker

Superintendent Peter Neil knew that he had a real mess on his hands — and it was a mess that seemed to have developed overnight.

Earlier in the week, at a public Board of Education meeting held on Monday night, a parent of a senior attending one of the two high schools in the district had demanded that a popular high school English teacher be fired for "forcing her daughter to study things that her family found morally offensive." She had gone to great lengths to get her daughter out of that particular teacher's class. The school's guidance department had refused this request, however, because the parent "did not have a valid reason that justified her request."

After some investigation the next day, the superintendent learned the following information:

- the teacher in question had recently admitted that he was gay.
- the mother was one of the founding members of a group called "FOR THE CHILDREN" — a group that was affiliated with Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority.
- FOR THE CHILDREN was running a slate of candidates for the School Board and was having difficulty generating interest in its slate. (The Board election was a month away.)
- the teacher had been using the same approach in his classroom for the past three years and it had previously been reviewed and approved by the high school curriculum committee.
- students were given the option to study three of the eight units in the elective course that focused on multi-cultural American literature. The Gay-Lesbian writers' unit was just one of the eight.
- the daughter had rank-ordered the eight units at the beginning of the year. She had listed the Gay-Lesbian unit as #3.
- the guidance counselor who had reviewed the parent's request to move the student and who had denied it justified her decision by saying that the girl had seven other options from which to choose and had not been required to study the Gay-Lesbian unit.

On Wednesday, one of the FOR THE CHILDREN School Board candidates held a press conference at which he quoted excerpts from some of the books on the suggested reading list that pertained to the unit on Gay-Lesbian writers. He labeled the material as "disgusting, pornographic, and totally inappropriate and offensive." The highlighted excerpts graphically described a variety of homosexual acts such as sodomy, group masturbation, pederasty, and men engaging in oral sex with other men. He went on to stress that this kind of thing happened when the superintendent and the School Board were afraid to do their jobs and urged the public to vote for him and his FOR THE CHILDREN colleagues "to prevent this from happening again!"

On Thursday, it came to light that the reading list contained over 300 selections for the unit in question and the excerpts came from only two of them. The teacher also admitted that he was surprised that the books contained those descriptions but that the total reading list was comprised of over 3,000 titles and that he could not be "expected to remember all of the details found in each one

BASIC STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH A MESS

1. See all of the component problems within the context of the whole situation.

2. Explain or understand the whole situation.

3. Disaggregate by explaining the role or function of the parts within the whole situation.

4. Restructure the whole situation by creating new interactions among the various components.

Russell L. Ackoff

MOST PROBLEMS HAVE SOLUTIONS.
A MESS,
BY DEFINITION,
IS USUALLY
UNSOLVABLE !

OFTEN, THE BEST
YOU CAN DO WITH A
MESS IS
TO LIMIT ITS
NEGATIVE IMPACT !

MESS MANAGEMENT

MESS = a system of interrelated problems.

You can never understand a MESS by breaking it apart into its component problems and analyzing them separately. When you do that, you lose the ability to see the interrelationships among problems. A MESS is much more than the sum of its individual parts. It is the product of those interactions. Since a MESS is a system, you need a complex, comprehensive, systems approach to deal with it.

"Managing a system requires focusing on the interaction among the parts; not on taking actions related to the individual parts."

Adapted from:
Russell L. Ackoff, Management in Small Doses, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986.

YOU CANNOT

GET OUT OF A

PROBLEM

BY USING

THE SAME TYPE

OF THINKING

THAT GOT YOU INTO

IT !

ALBERT EINSTEIN

MINIMIZING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

CHANGE CAUSES PEOPLE TO FEEL INCOMPETENT, NEEDY, AND POWERLESS. Developing new skills, creating opportunities for involvement, and providing psychological support are essential.

CHANGE ALTERS THE CLARITY AND STABILITY OF ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS, CREATING CONFUSION AND CHAOS. This requires attention to realigning and renegotiating formal patterns and policies.

CHANGE GENERATES CONFLICT AND CREATES WINNERS AND LOSERS. Avoiding or smoothing over those issues drives conflict underground. Managing change effectively requires the creation of arenas where issues can be surfaced and negotiated.

CHANGE CREATES LOSS OF MEANING AND PURPOSE. People form attachments to symbols and symbolic activities. When the attachments are severed, they experience difficulty in letting go. Existential wounds require symbolic healing. Transition rituals are needed to alleviate grief.

Lee E. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, REFRAMING
ORGANIZATIONS: ARTISTRY, CHOICE, AND
LEADERSHIP, 1991.

THE IMPACT OF THE "NEW SCIENCE" ON LEADERSHIP

"My growing sensibility of a quantum universe has affected my organizational life in several ways. First, I try hard to discipline myself to remain aware of the whole and to resist my well-trained desire to analyze the parts to death. I look now for patterns of movement over time and focus on qualities like rhythm, flow, direction, and shape. Second, I know I am wasting time whenever I draw straight arrows between two variables in a cause and effect diagram, or position things as polarities, or create elaborate plans and timelines. Third, I no longer argue with anyone about what is real. Fourth, the time I formerly spent on detailed planning and analysis I now use to look at the structures that might facilitate relationships. I have come to expect that something useful occurs if I link up people, units, or tasks, even though I cannot determine precise outcomes. And last, I realize more and more that the universe will not cooperate with my desires for determination.

Those who have used music metaphors in describing leadership, particularly jazz metaphors, are on a quantum track. Improvisation is the saving skill. As leaders, we play a crucial role in selecting the melody, setting the tempo, establishing the key, and inviting the players. But that is all we can do. The music comes from something we cannot direct, from a unified whole created among the players -- a relational holism that transcends separateness. In the end, when it works, we sit back, amazed and grateful."

Margaret J. Wheatley, LEADERSHIP AND THE NEW SCIENCE -- LEARNING ABOUT ORGANIZATION FROM AN ORDERLY UNIVERSE, 1992.

THE BASIC LESSONS OF THE NEW PARADIGM OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

 # 1: YOU CAN'T MANDATE WHAT MATTERS.
(The more complex the change, the less it can be forced.)

 # 2: CHANGE IS A JOURNEY; NOT A BLUEPRINT.
(Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement, and sometimes perverse.)

 # 3: PROBLEMS ARE OUR FRIENDS.
(Problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them.)

 # 4: VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING COME LATER.
(Premature visions and planning blind.)

 # 5: INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM MUST HAVE EQUAL POWER.
(There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink.)

 # 6: NEITHER CENTRALIZATION NOR DECENTRALIZATION WORKS.
(Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary.)

 # 7: CONNECTION WITH THE WIDER ENVIRONMENT IS CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS.
(The best organizations learn externally as well as internally.)

 # 8: EVERY PERSON IS A CHANGE AGENT.
(Change is too important to leave to the experts, personal mind set and mastery is the ultimate protection.)

Michael Fullan. CHANGE FORCES: PROBING THE DEPTHS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM. 1993.

CREATING YOUR OWN CASE STUDY OF A MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

- What was the underlying intent (or intentions) of the change effort that you have selected ?

- How would you briefly describe the strategy (or strategies) that was used to accomplish this change effort ?

- How would you briefly explain how the interconnections among the various elements (i.e., the 16 elements previously introduced) helped and/or hindered the ultimate success of the change effort ?

- What were the major lessons that you learned from this experience that will influence your future efforts to affect a significant organizational change ?

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THE COMPLEXITY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

TO ACCOMPLISH MOST SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN SCHOOLS, THE FOLLOWING INTERRELATED QUESTIONS EVENTUALLY MUST BE ADDRESSED :

- What are our priorities regarding the purposes of schooling ?
- What body of knowledge & skills are crucial for our students to learn ?
- What specific curriculum content will best serve as a vehicle for that body of knowledge & skills ?
- What specific instructional materials and technology will best convey that curriculum content ?
- How do students best learn that body of knowledge & skills ?
- What time allocations will best facilitate that learning ?
- What student grouping arrangements will best facilitate that learning ?
- What teaching strategies will best promote that learning?
- What professional development strategies/activities will best prepare the staff for what it needs to do to be successful in facilitating that learning ?
- What accountability measures/processes will best determine if the staff is successful ?
- What performance assessment standards/processes will best determine if the students are successful ?
- What individuals/roles will best provide the needed leadership for those various efforts ?
- What decision-making structure will best facilitate those various efforts ?
- What resource allocation system will best facilitate those various efforts ?
- What specific policies, procedures, and organizational roles will best support and contribute to the attainment of those various efforts ?
- What strategies will best involve all major stakeholders in these important decisions ?
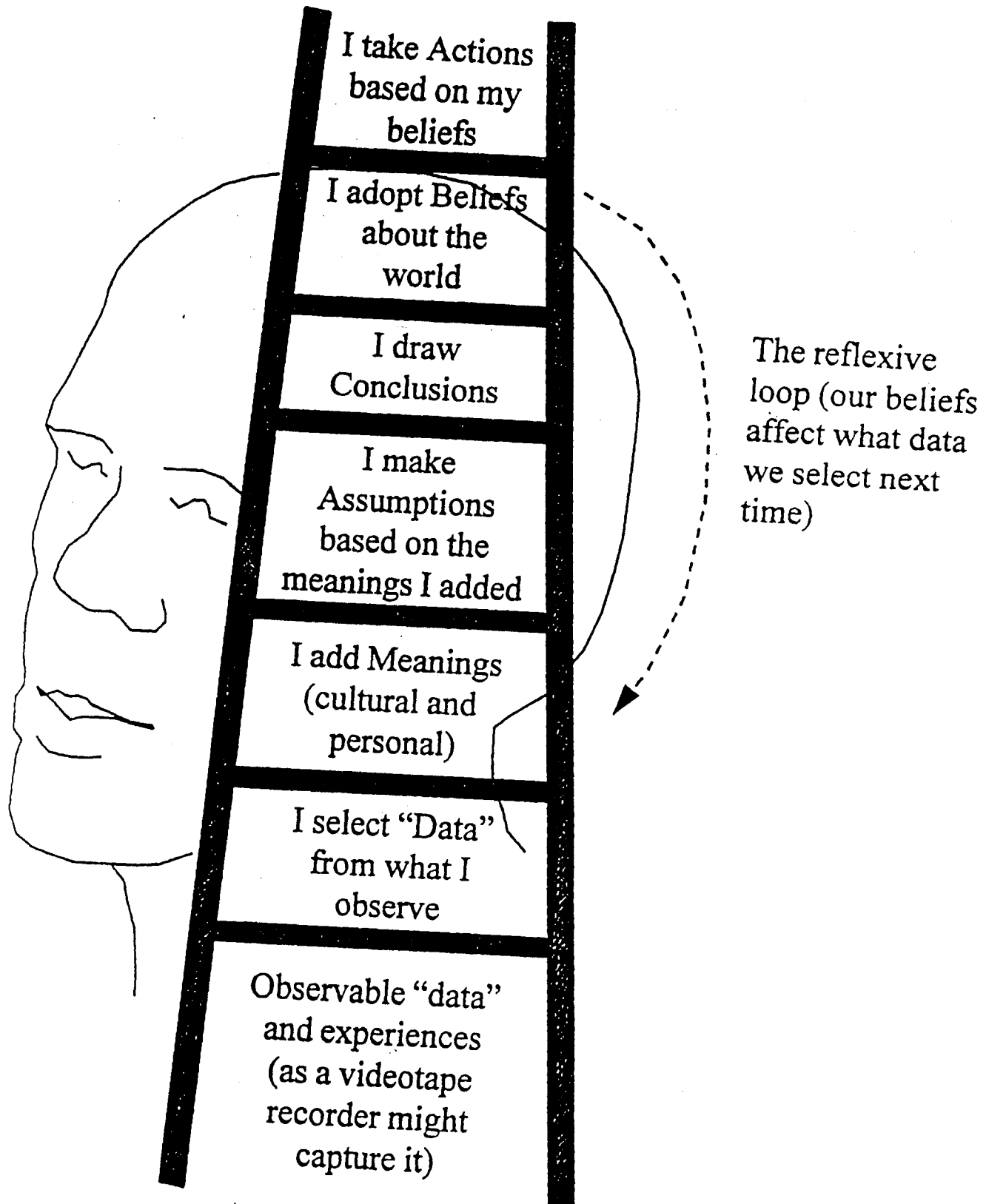
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE ?

Think about the major organizational change efforts that you have observed, participated in, and/or led throughout your career. Circle the 5 adjectives that BEST reflect how you feel about organizational change as the result of these experiences.

challenging	irreverent
chaotic	manipulative
conflict-laden	messy
confusing	orderly
depressing	overwhelming
disjointed	painful
draining	predictable
effective	productive
efficient	redundant
essential	self-defeating
exciting	sequential
exhilarating	synergistic
frustrating	time-consuming
fun	tiring
gratifying	uncontrollable
ineffective	unpredictable
inefficient	unproductive
inevitable	valuable
inspiring	workable
interconnected	worthwhile
OTHER ?	OTHER ?
OTHER ?	OTHER ?

The Ladder of Inference

I take Actions based on my beliefs

I adopt Beliefs about the world

I draw Conclusions

I make Assumptions based on the meanings I added

I add Meanings (cultural and personal)

I select "Data" from what I observe

Observable "data" and experiences (as a videotape recorder might capture it)

The reflexive loop (our beliefs affect what data we select next time)

Richard Ross, *"The Ladder of Inference"* in Peter M. Senge, Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ross, and Bryan Smith. *THE FIFTH DISCIPLINE FIELDBOOK: STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

THE LADDER OF INFERENCE

SUGGESTS THAT

WE ALWAYS NEED

TO REMAIN OPEN TO THE

POSSIBILITY

THAT WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

FROM OUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

IS NOT NECESSARILY RIGHT

OR

THE ONLY WAY

TO LOOK AT THINGS !

ORGANIZATIONAL STORIES

Think of a story

(real or fictitious)

that conveys or reflects some

important organizational norm

or norms in your home districts.

Share your story

within your group.

Select one story per group to

share with everyone.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORIES

"In successful organizations, people's sense of significance is rooted in shared stories, passed from person to person and generation to generation. 'Some say that community is based on blood ties, sometimes dictated by choice, sometimes by necessity. And while this is quite true, the immeasurably stronger gravitational field that holds a group together is their stories ... the common and simple ones they share with one another.' These stories are about people, events, triumphs, and tragedies. They transcend time and place." (p. 113.)

"Throughout history, people have relied on narrative to express deep spiritual messages hard to communicate any other way. Successful organizations are storied organizations. One does not have to belong to one of them for long or go very far to learn the lore. Many contemporary organizations regularly convene times for storytelling. Over time, layers of story accumulate to help people touch the dream world of corporate mythology. It has been suggested that 'a dream is a personal experience of that deep, dark ground that is the support of our conscious lives, and a myth is the society's dream. The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth.' Without story and myth, there is no public dream. Without shared dreams, organizations falter and perish. Individuals, groups, and organizations all need their own stories. Leaders must venture off the known and protected pathway to find their own private storehouse. Stories help them choose a direction and learn from their experiences. 'We tell stories to illuminate the paths we travel, and to share humor, courage, and wisdom in this liberation struggle.'" (pp. 142-143.)

Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. LEADING WITH SOUL:

SHAPING NORMS TO SUPPORT A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Identify some norms that might facili-
   tate the development of a learning
   organization and some concrete
   things that a superintendent could do
   to shape those organizational norms.

**FACILITATING
   NORMS**

**NORM-SHAPING
   STRATEGIES**

A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

IS

"AN ORGANIZATION SKILLED

AT CREATING, AQUIRING, AND

TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

AND

AT MODIFYING ITS BEHAVIOR

TO REFLECT

NEW KNOWLEDGE AND

INSIGHTS."

David A. Garvin, HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, July-August

HOW ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS CAN BE SHAPED

PRIMARY STRATEGIES:

◊ what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control.

◊ how leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises.

◊ the behavior that leaders consciously model, teach, and coach.

◊ the criteria that leaders use to allocate rewards and status.

◊ the criteria that leaders use to recruit, select, promote, retire, and "excommunicate" others.

SECONDARY STRATEGIES:

◊ the organization's design and structure.

◊ the organization's operating routines and procedures.

◊ the design of physical space and buildings.

◊ the stories, legends, myths, and parables about important organizational events and people.

◊ the formal statements of organizational philosophy, creed, mission, goals, accomplishments, etc.

Edgar H. Schein, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP: A DYNAMIC VIEW, 1985.

*   Explore identified discrepancies.   Do they
represent isolated occurrences or do they
reflect a pattern ?   If they form a pattern, what
conclusions can be drawn from that pattern ?

*   Remain open to newly emerging information and
the possibility of needing to draw new
conclusions.

ONE STRATEGY FOR IDENTIFYING KEY ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS

* Talk to people. Get their perceptions regarding such things as:

    -- how decisions are made and by whom.
    -- to what types of activities are fiscal resources allocated and how.
    -- what types of changes are supported and why.
    -- what types of changes are resisted and why.
    -- how changes are resisted.
    -- who influences whom and how.
    -- what types of behavior are valued/rewarded and why.
    -- what types of behavior are unacceptable / punished and why.

* Check out these perceptions by:

    -- verifying them with others.
    -- making your own observations about what and how things happen or do not happen in the organization.
    -- examining written policies and procedures.

* Look for discrepancies between:

    -- what is suppose to happen vs. what really happens.
    -- what people say that they think they should do vs. what they actually do.
    -- what the organizational rhetoric is vs. what the organizational reality is.

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ORGANIZATIONAL TABOOS

Identify 10 taboos within your school district. Select the taboos that have the greatest impact on your behavior as superintendent.

I. Thou shalt not

VI. Thou shalt not

II. Thou shalt not

VII. Thou shalt not

III. Thou shalt not

VIII. Thou shalt not

IV. Thou shalt not

IX. Thou shalt not

V. Thou shalt not

X. Thou shalt not

REFLECTING ON ONE OF YOUR MESSES

Remembering that "a MESS is a system of interre-
lated problems," identify a MESS with which
you are dealing or have dealt as part of your
professional responsibilities.   Use the space on
this sheet to outline the situation.   Be sure to
indicate how the major problems that comprise
your MESS are interrelated.   You will have
approximately 10 minutes to complete this task.