Emerging themes in the field of OD

Andy Smith,
Director of Qualifications,
Research and Practice
Things change but they stay the same...

"the essential difference today….is the changing character of industrial societies……the change in the rate of change"

Major psycho-social problems in industry Ling, TM, in Mental Health and Human Relations in Industry (1954)
What are the issues coming up (1)?

- How people relate to uncertainty
What are the issues coming up (2)?

- The redefining of talent
What are the issues coming up (3)?

- Shift from behavioural science to neuroscience
What are the issues coming up (4)?

- The professionalization or extinction of OD /HR
What are the issues coming up (5)

- The rise of the leader as organisational architect
What are the issues coming up (6)?

- The reinvention of management
What are the issues coming up (7) – tensions for OD

- Teal
- Idealised notions of what could be
- Dialogue
- The positive appreciative self
- Going with the limited data of the new
- Lame duck
- Practical ways of working with what is
- Behaviourism
- The shadow
- Serving our apprenticeship in the tried and tested
Has thinking really changed?

‘(1) Man is a social animal.

(2) He lives and plays and works mainly with others.

(3) The groups that are formed in these activities have ties and characteristics of their own.

(4) It is largely the influence of these groups which forms habits and morals of the individuals who comprise the groups.

(5) Strong social pressures contrive to keep the individual in line with his group’s standards.

(6) The behaviour of an individual in any situation is the product of several factors working together, viz. his heredity, reflexes, habits and early upbringing, his past and present relationships with other people and his capacity for logical thought.

(7) The groups in which men live and work are systems, in the scientific sense; that is, the activities of the group are inter-related in such a way that an alteration in one activity or aspect of the system results in compensating changes and ramifications in all other aspects of the system.’

Chapter 10 Research in Industrial Management Scott, Jerome F in Mental Health and Human Relations in Industry Edited by Ling Thomas, M (1954)
A final thought on the role of researcher who...

“does not always arrive at conclusions different from those of common sense...It is nevertheless essential to the well-being and efficacy of industry that research workers do study the obvious facts of human relationships

Research in Industrial Management Scott, J R, in Mental Health and Human Relations in Industry (1954)