Driving into town from Burbank this morning, I caught the tail-end of an interview on NPR. Turns out is was with a guy named Michael Soussan, who has just published a memoir of his time at the United Nations, and his frustrated attempts to expose Saddam Hussein’s subversion of the oil-for-food program. It caught my ear because his frustrations with the bureaucracy of that august institution reminded me of all the experiences I have had with bureaucracy: corporate, non-profit, academic, you name it. It all devolves very quickly to turf wars which are as nasty as they are inconsequential. Bureaucracy is a necessary evil that isn’t going anywhere, but my allergic reaction to it has been a big part of my decision to go it alone as an acting teacher. Soussan talked about how exceedingly frustrated people who were high-minded or idealistic became in that environment (he himself resigned over his superiors’ refusal to expose the aforementioned Hussein fraud). It can be isolating, but not having to play along with all of that nonsense makes the adversity worthwhile.

I still harbor a vision of a small, lean group of collaborators that would begin to work together to create theater with the absolute minimum of organizational support. Additional organizational support could be added to support growth, but always with a less-is-better principle. Staying lean is where it’s at.

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Andrew Wood Acting Studio