

GROUP RELATIONS AND PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

23 September 1964

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NOTICE

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COLONEL AUSTIN: Ladies and Gentlemen: We continue our examination of human relations in organizations with Dr. Stanley Seashore, who, with a group of several people, has been trying to take the predicted behavior of individuals and groups in organizations from the realm of armchair speculation into the realm of actions based on observed behavior in the form of research.

This morning, to help us in that regard, we have Dr. Stanley Seashore, Assistant Director of the Institute for Social Research at The University of Michigan, a close friend and associate of Dr. Likert, who is the author of the book in which we are doing the reading assignment today. We are glad to have you, Dr. Seashore.

DR. SEASHORE: Thank you. I think I can help you best this morning if I talk like a social scientist, using my language and concepts rather than yours, but raising, I hope, some issues that are of concern to you as managers. So please bear with me if I talk in this way.

There are really only a half-dozen ideas I want to raise with you. They have to do with the nature of groups in formal organizations, with the nature of power, control, and influence as these can arise from groups, and the implications of these notions for the practice of participative management.

Before I begin on these ideas, however, I would like to prepare a course of retreat. That is good military practice, is it not? I know which team I have been assigned to here. I am supposed to be in favor of participative management and in favor of group activity and group decision. To a very large degree I am, but I would like to say that our research is aimed not at promoting these ideas but at assessing them and finding the conditions under which they will work or not work. Believe me, there are some limitations to these concepts. However, this morning I will be positive. I know which team I have been assigned to.

Let me give you first a brief account of a study we did recently. This will do two things. It will raise the character of the issues we want to talk about, and secondly, it will illustrate some research methods and aims. This will be a thumbnail sketch of a study we completed recently in, of all things, an insurance company. The fact that they were selling insurance is quite irrelevant to my point. It could have been any of several other kinds of organizations.

This was a typical business firm, with a large headquarters organization, a full roster of staff activities, and field sales offices, a large number of them, each operated by a manager with a good deal of autonomy. In most cases the agency manager was also the owner of the agency. Each regional manager had a small service staff of his own and a complement of 10 to 60 salesmen.

The firm was interested, as I was, in the curious fact that year after year some of these agencies sold a lot of insurance and others did not sell much. After all the analyses that could be made about market potential, adequacy of training programs and the financial resources for building staff and so on, and accounting for these, there still remained a big difference in sales volume and profitability for these agencies. As you can imagine, the brass worries about such conditions. Particularly they worry about the agencies that are not doing so well.

Our aim was to locate the best agencies and the poorest ones, to get a lot of information about the organization structure, the interpersonal relations, and the managerial strategies, and to see if there was anything in these areas that might help us to understand the dramatic differences in success among these little organizations. We got our data. It took 2 years' time to do this study. It involved the very active collaboration of some 3,000 people who were interviewed and filled out questionnaires or provided data from company records. There are three results I want to mention to you.

There were very marked differences between the highly successful and the unsuccessful agencies with respect to a number of measures having to do with group-oriented work. The successful agencies had more meetings, better meetings, more different kinds of meetings. Quite apart from meetings, more of the day-today work was done, not singly by individuals but by persons in pairs, triads, and fours--a lot of spontaneous group activity. Some of the managerial functions in these outstanding agencies had been set up to be planned and conducted by groups, rather than being kept in the manager's own hands

as a personal activity. So one dramatic difference was the sheer amount of group-oriented activity in these two classes of agencies.

Another result has to do with the balance of power (or influence, or control, whichever of those words you prefer to use). In the highly successful agencies the manager usually said, and he really meant it, that he did not use an awful lot of influence that the shop pretty much ran itself, the men taking care of things. This gave his view of how the organization ran. The staff people and the agents in turn would say that, oh, sure, the manager has a great deal of influence on how that agency ran, but that they, too, had a lot of influence. The agents perceived themselves as having a lot to say about the action decisions, business policies, and day-to-day work practices in their agency. In low-production agencies this was not so. Agents did not perceive themselves as having much influence on the work in their unit.

The third study result to mention has to do with the total amount of power or control or influence. In the highly successful agencies there was by our method of measurement a very substantially greater total amount of interpersonal influence exercised. More people had more influence on more others. Now, this is a hard idea for most people to grasp, because we are stuck with the notion that there is only a fixed amount of control in an organization, such that you can divide it up in different ways but there cannot really be any more or any less. This notion is just not true. These agencies were dramatically different with respect to the amount of social influence that was present in them.

This story would be trivial and irrelevant, I think, if it stood by itself. We have studied various kinds of organizations in different lines of business and nonbusiness activity, including Government organizations. We have to expect results of this kind; not always, you understand, but usually, and often in a very dramatic form, as in the case I have given to you. I think we are on the track of identifying some of the factors that have a crucial place in determining the effectiveness of an organization, whether large or small, regardless of the kind of activity and goals that are involved.

With that beginning, ~~Let~~ us get on with our work. I have in mind to make some comments, first, about the nature of social power in organizations, and notions of power balance and the amount of power. I propose then to say a few things to represent the social scientist's view of the nature of groups in formal organizations:

what they are like and what characteristics they have that a manager ought to know about. Finally, I propose to try to bring these two together, as I think they naturally come together, so that we can understand and perhaps use better the trends we see toward more participative management in our organizations.

Let me then say a few things about social power (you can substitute "influence" or "control" if you like). It seems to me that we live in a time of very great concern about the nature of social power, where it comes from, who has it, and how it can be distributed and used.

I think from the remarks earlier this morning you might see that this concern is felt not only in formal organizations but elsewhere. My relationship with my children, in terms of power, is very different than was my relationship to my father, and I expect your experience is the same. The nature of the prevailing pattern of power balance between parent and child has changed in just one generation. Some people regret this, but there it is. It is happening.

Take our schools, and you will find a similar change. Teachers behave differently in the classrooms than they did a few years ago. Children behave differently. Children even have some say about what they are going to study or what the day's schedule will be. They have a degree of control over class purposes and class procedures that was almost unknown a few decades ago. There is a radical change in the power balance between the superior, the teacher, and the subordinate pupils.

To think on a grander scale, consider the international situation. Here we have, if I can grossly oversimplify it, an image of the centralized, monolithic state, such as in Nazi Germany or the U.S.S.R., competing with other nations that are dedicated to a rather different view of the proper allocation of social power, dedicated instead to the idea that government should be not only with the consent of the people but with the active participation of the people.

Now come back to the level of organizations. In industry, in Government, and also in military organizations there has been a parallel change, forced partly, I think, by historic events such as popular education, the mobility of labor, the rise of labor unions, and so on, but also forced by a growing realization that organizations do perform better if there is some provision for broadly shared

exercise of social power, some share in the vital activities of the organizations, quite apart from just doing one's assigned task. Arising out of this idea, we have in progress not just a small change in the technology of management but a very fundamental change in our view of the nature of social power and our view of how things should be.

There are two major misconceptions about power, control, and influence in organizations which I would like you to get clear in your minds. These misconceptions have led all of us, including managers of organizations, to some errors in judgment and practice.

One misconception has to do with the idea that social influence or control is an all-or-none thing. This is the assumption that, if I have power over you, then you do not have power over me, or vice versa. It is the notion that between two organizations one is likely to dominate and control the other.

This assumption gets expressed in managerial behavior, through a feeling on the manager's part that he cannot let anyone else have much control in the organization, because someone else might then get a little more than he, the manager, has, and when that happens instantly he loses all control. Is that not a familiar notion to you? You have heard managers say in effect, "I must keep control, because, if I don't have it then somebody else has it." This is a most unrealistic view. It is clear from our studies of all kinds of organizations that the possession of influence and control in organizations is dispersed; no one has all of it, and no has none. Consider the last time you had dealings with the least member of your own organization, and call to mind the way you calculated the possibilities this person had of countering your efforts at control. He can quit, he can go on strike, he can commit errors, he can restrict his performance, he can withhold information. He not only can do these things, if pressed, he will. You recognize his power, limited though it is, and take it into account in your calculations. We have to think of control, then, not in terms of having or not having, but in terms of some balance, some distribution of it, particularly across the hierarchical levels.

The other misconception I want to emphasize has to do with the notion of there being a fixed quantity of control in an organization, such that delegation to a subordinate diminishes the manager's own control. Managers often base their policies on this assumption, that there is only so much control, and if one party has less somebody else

has more. On the contrary, it is perfectly clear that the quantity of control in an organization is not fixed. You can create more power, more control; you can lose it in total. In fact, the extent to which an organization is "organized" probably is a direct reflection of the amount of social control and influence that goes on. When this amount reaches zero, you no longer have an organization at all. Some of you may have worked in organizations that were approaching this point, where you had all of the forms of organization, all the positions and roles filled, the duties assigned, and so on, but no one was really influencing the behavior of others, and as a consequence very little work got done.

Now, these ideas about the quantity and the distribution of control in organizations have not been invented by social scientists but have been generated by people like yourselves who are running organizations and who have tried some rather venturesome new ways to run organizations. Let me mention some of the catch words here-- decentralization, multiple management, bottom-up management, management by committee, group-centered management, the task-force concept, the business-team concept. I could go on with a long roster of words like these that would bring to your minds various ways in which managements have attempted to express a new view of the nature of social power and its optimum distribution in an organization. All of these activities I have mentioned have this in common, that they imply a willingness on the part of the top-level people to be influenced by people at lower levels. When put in those terms and that bluntly, it sounds like revolution, and, gentlemen, that's what is going on: a small revolution in our notions about the origin and use of social power.

Well, so much about social power and control, the distribution of it and the amount of it. Let me go on, then, to say a few words about social groups.

Whenever you put people together, under almost any circumstance, they do not associate with each other randomly. They form groups, they cluster. The way in which this goes on is quite predictable, even though when we are personally involved in such a situation where spontaneous groups are forming, we may not observe the way in which the sequence of events is regular and repeats previous such events. Groups form. They become cohesive; they establish boundaries; they set up implicit rules about membership or exclusion from the group; they create a small social structure with differentiated roles, functions, and norms; they come to influence very profoundly

not only the behavior of the members but also the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the members.

Spontaneous groups are usually small. Six or eight is a common number. They rarely exceed 15. It is as though there were some physical limitation on how many people can effectively and in a satisfying way create a group. It is no accident, I suppose, that formal organization rules generally specify that supervisors should not ordinarily have a group of more than 10 or 15 immediate subordinates. I am told--I do not know whether it is true or not--that U.S. Communist Party cells, if they still exist number about 15 or 17. It is as though there were a widely recognized practical limit on the effective size of groups.

There are two reasons why groups form. One is a presumed basic, human need for affiliation, for intimacy, on a continuing and dependable basis. Now, when I say "need," as a psychologist, it is a very strong word. It does not mean just a whim. It means a need that, if not satisfied, limits the performance of the whole organism. This is a way of saying, in our special language, that an unaffiliated individual is a sick individual, a handicapped individual.

The other reason for the formation of groups is the very practical reason that, by pooling resources in group activity, we can do things we otherwise could not do, we can protect ourselves against the hazards of a sometimes hostile world. We soon learn, even as children, that our ability to deal with our personal problems, whatever they might be, is multiplied if we are able to become members in appropriate social groups.

Groups are universal because they serve human purposes and needs. Those of us who do manage to establish group memberships live longer, are healthier, have fewer diseases, have more creative ideas, get more done of the things we want to do, and we enjoy it more. These are persuasive arguments for trying, at least part of the time, to become skillful in the function of being an effective group member.

Now, from a manager's point of view, there are certain things you need to take into account in thinking about the group phenomena in your organization, or in considering the strategies of management that involve deliberately creating groups, or creating circumstances in which groups can grow or change their character.

For one thing, groups tend to be exclusive. In time, a healthy group will have no uncertainty about who is in and who is out, and about the rules for membership. You might keep this in mind when, without much thought, you simply hire someone to replace a departing member of your staff, giving no thought, perhaps, to the question of whether this person is qualified for membership in the group--qualified in the eyes of the members. It is a distressing fate, as some of you may have experienced, to be inserted by managerial act into an organization where, by the rules of the group, you are excluded from full membership. Life can be rather grim under these circumstances. There are lots of ways in which your work and your personal life can be sabotaged.

Groups tend to be exclusive. They tend to divide the organization. They tend to create barriers to the easy movement of people and ideas. At the same time, groups make possible the binding together of organizations. People usually belong to more than one group. Within the organization there will be groups of various kinds, and multiple membership is the rule rather than the exception. This means that it is possible for a single individual, because of his joint membership in two or more groups, to transmit some of the values and attitudes, perceptions and problems of one group to the other. In effect, one person is maintaining a communication linkage that serves many, and he is able to do it quite effectively, whereas it would be impossible for all members of both groups to attempt to maintain the same degree of linkage. The existence of groups with overlapping membership makes it possible in principle for a large, diffused organization to remain connected. It keeps communication channels open and efficient. Note the implication of this. What I am saying is that the communication within your organization probably is good or not good depending on the vitality and health of the group processes of your organization.

Another characteristic of groups is that they develop what we social scientists call "cohesiveness." Now, cohesiveness, technically, is defined as the sum of all the forces on the member toward remaining in the group--the net sum, after subtracting the forces on him toward leaving the group. The more cohesive the group is, the more power the group has over the member. Group cohesiveness generates social power. This sequence of ideas leads to the conclusion that one of the primary sources of social power in our organizations is the cohesiveness of the work groups. This is a tremendously important idea.

Groups generate power. This is why managers have to be concerned with the nature of groups, how they are formed, their

membership rules, the circumstances under which they form, the conditions which will determine the kinds of goals that groups will strive toward. This is why some organizations have a total quantity of control greater than others. They manufacture social control by the forming of cohesive groups. They manufacture a power of a kind that can be used for the management of the organization or, for that matter, can be used for the destruction of the organization.

Groups tend to develop a unity of purpose; sooner or later the members will come to agree rather well on what goals they have in common as a group. Now, the interesting question for an organization manager, when groups form in his organization, is not just that they are going to develop a unity of purpose, but, who's purpose? His, or theirs? The manager soon becomes interested, if he puts his mind to this, in the question of how he can create circumstances that will encourage groups to choose goals that are compatible with and supportive of the organization's purposes, rather than choosing group goals that are irrelevant or incompatible. He cannot tell these groups what goals to hold. He has no direct means to do that. But the manager can create circumstances that will increase the probability that groups in his organization will be choosing goals that are supportive to the organization's aims.

Let me make a diversion to illustrate the point. One of the studies I was involved in a few years ago had to do with group cohesiveness in a factory, on the one hand, and productivity, on the other. We were interested in the fact that in a series of studies nobody saw any consistent relationship between work-group cohesiveness and productivity, when the theory indicated there ought to be a relationship.

Well, it turned out in this study, that involved some 8,000 production workers in a machinery factory, that the more cohesive the work group was the more the members produced at the rate that was the norm for this group, and that the cohesive work groups tended to migrate toward either extremely high standards of production or extremely low standards of production. It was as though the cohesive groups elected, with respect to production, either to adopt management's goals or to oppose management's goals. What determined which way the cohesive group would migrate? It had to do basically with the amount of trust and confidence the group members had in the management of this firm to look after the interests of people like themselves. We could make a good

prediction for a new group as to which way its productivity norms would go, up or down, on this basis.

Mature groups, groups that have achieved a degree of cohesiveness and stability, and at least some unity of purpose, tend to do a strange thing. They tend to multiply their purposes. Like a healthy individual, a healthy group prefers doing many different things. A manager will find in his own organization that work groups will start doing things that he did not intend and that none of the members originally intended.

Groups develop and enforce norms. I mentioned that the cohesiveness of groups is one source of social power. This gets expressed through the requirement that members of a healthy group must, on certain matters, behave in the manner specified by norms of this group. There is some control over the behavior of members. Sometimes this control takes the odd form of a norm of diversity on some matters. Thus, the cohesiveness of work groups, whether at managerial levels or at nonsupervisory levels, may be connected not only with performance norms, but may be connected as well to such things as the rate of production of ideas. Group norms give rise to agreement in values and attitudes within a group. Each of us, while we like to value our independence and think of ourselves as unique, derives most of his characteristics from the groups of which we are or have been members. We are the product of our present and past social environment.

Now let me get on with some other ideas. I have mentioned a few things about the nature of social power, its distribution, and some changing notions on this, and some characteristics of groups as they function in formal organizations.

Now I would like to make some more evaluative statements. I would argue that there are few social mechanisms in the modern world that operate as inefficiently as do groups in most organizations. I think you would not tolerate a machine or a piece of military hardware that was as wasteful as are most groups in the organizations in which you work.

Keep in mind that we depend on groups and group action for our most important tasks--for planning, for policymaking, for writing legislation, for selecting executives, for promoting military officers. These are usually actions of groups. You saw a motion picture last night (Twelve Angry Men) that illustrated another kind

of decision that we give to groups: we decide guilt and innocence by group action. We must learn something about how groups function and what their character is, if we are to continue to entrust to them these most vital activities.

Now, as a consequence of our incompetence in managing groups, most of us have had some pretty discouraging experiences with them. I have heard that occasionally a committee can stumble or grope in a fog or perhaps wrestle hard and long and come up with nothing. I expect that, on the average, each of you in this room has six or eight permanent committee assignments. This is rather typical for people of your occupation and status. How many of those committees, as you see them, are really effective social groups with a unity of purpose and cohesiveness, a sharing of norms, and the generation of social power that gets things done better, not worse, than through other means?

All of us from time to time develop a pretty hearty distrust of groups, boards, committees, and other kinds of groups. Witness the popularity of the humorous definition of the camel. I guess you have all heard that--a horse designed by a committee.

Still, much of the work of our organizations is accomplished through group action and will continue to be accomplished through group action. I am predicting that a great deal more of the important work of organizations will in the future be conducted through group activity.

This is a trend compelled partly by technology, partly by the pace at which changes occur, partly by the size of our organizations. You understand that when changes are rapid, when technology keeps shifting, when organizations get large, the difficulties of maintaining coordination and of introducing changes in behavior rapidly multiply. Only by using the power of social groups can a manager manage under these new circumstances. This is why many large corporations, in spite of contrary personal convictions by the top people, are moving rapidly toward a group structure in the top echelons of the organization. They are finding out that it is the only way they can run the show.

Aside from the sheer necessity that forces us in this direction, the change is supported by a growing and widely shared conviction that emphasis on group action may have some merits, quite apart

from necessity. It may be compatible with the prevailing ideas in our society about how social power ought to be created--by consent, that is, rather than by the whip--and how social power ought to be exercised--by groups, that is, not by individuals. These notions are widely prevalent, whether you like them or not.

In our studies across the country of many kinds of organizations--political organizations, industrial business, Government, and what not--we nearly always find, when we compare those organizations with a high degree of effectiveness in whatever they are trying to do with those of less effectiveness, that the effective units typically have a vigorous, self-conscious, planned approach to the positive use of groups in management and to the use of groups in day-to-day productive work.

Groups used to be tolerated in organizations and a little bit feared. Now they are not merely tolerated. Conditions are created to foster them. There is purposeful planning about the size and composition and the circumstances of activity for groups of various kinds. The understanding and use of groups and of group process is, I think, an area of managerial skill that will be a crucial one in the next years.

Well, I will conclude then, very quickly. My concluding remarks here will have to do mainly with the observation that the arguments I have given and the concepts I have given are, in a way, the social scientist's attempt to understand what is happening and not an attempt to influence what is happening. These are not ideas created by social scientists and imposed on managers. All of the ideas I have given to you rise out of our observations of the behavior and practices of people like yourselves.

I think you, as managers, are long past the point where you have any choice about accepting or rejecting the notion of participative management. The practice is here. It is deeply imbedded in our social structure. It is incorporated in some of our laws. It is built into the organizational policies and practices of most organizations. You have no choice at all about whether you will have it or not have it; you have got it. The only question is how much shall you have in your organization of group-based participative practice? What limits are there in its use, if there are some limits that you as a manager can set? How shall I as a manager become skilled in the creation of appropriate groups, or in the gentle destruction of

groups that have outlived their purpose, or in the creation of circumstances that will permit the spontaneous rise of groups that are useful to the organization? How much risk shall I as a manager take in exploring the power of groups in my organization?

I mention risk last, because I suspect that for at least a third of you the thought of risk is prominent in your minds. To manage an organization, making maximum use of participative techniques and of group sources of social power is a much more demanding task than to manage by any of the more traditional methods. Only the brave and foolish try it. It takes a good deal more guts than leading in traditional ways, for the good reason that the hazards are there also.

COLONEL AUSTIN: Gentlemen, Dr. Seashore is ready for questions. He also recognizes that it may be open season on social scientists.

QUESTION: Dr. Seashore, we know what side you will be on this afternoon in the discussions, but will you speak a little more directly to the limitations on group participation as you mentioned in your opening remarks?

DR. SEASHORE: Yes, there are a number of limitations. I'll mention a few.

Some managers catch the fad of group-thinking and set about immediately to create all kinds of groups, committees, and group activities, most of which do not work at all, the reason being that, to convert an organization from an almost groupless process and structure to one involving groups, demands that people know how to be effective group members. This is not easily learned. There is a transition period at best.

In addition, when you create groups, including unskilled members and leaders, the risk is great that they will do things or undertake things that were not initially intended. There is some risk also that their activities will become irrelevant to the purposes of an organization and a diversion of energy and time. This is what happens to committees so often. You may create a committee that looks nice on paper and has a distinguished roster of membership. They spend a lot of time. Nothing happens. The circumstances for the formation of the group and perhaps the character of the membership turn out

to be inappropriate. There are risks, then, of the kind involving waste of effort or the diffusion of effort, rather than the creation of new, positive benefits.

Another kind of risk is that badly structured groups may adopt purposes opposed to those of the organization. This happens when my children form a coalition against me. This happens when a business manager finds to his surprise that his employees (all of whom he knows by their first names and can ask about their children) form a union. This is the formation of a social group with a unity of purpose that is often, initially, at least, deliberately opposed to some of the objectives of the management; in time the purposes tend to converge. I heard a yarn while we were out having coffee a moment ago about a military base in which a subversive, highly cohesive, highly effective spontaneous group emerged, with some rather drastic consequences with respect to the effectiveness of that base.

When you create social power, it is dangerous and risky, in much the same sense that it is dangerous to make dynamite. Dynamite can be put to very good uses, but it can also be risky to handle and also to put to evil purposes. It is only in this sense that I say there is some risk in moving in this direction.

QUESTION: Doctor, you have pretty well put together such things as permanent committees, ad hoc committees, and cliques. It seems to me there is quite a difference between these, and I would like to have you talk on them a little.

DR. SEASHORE: One of the first things a manager must learn if he is to use groups well is to distinguish between different kinds of groups and the characteristics they will need. Let me pick up your theme by sketching as an illustration the differences between an ideal executive committee and an ideal coordinating committee. I expect that all of you at one time or another have created committees without paying attention as to whether the committee was intended for an executive function, that is decision-making, problem-solving, action-initiating, or whether instead the purpose of the committee was to coordinate, exchange ideas, and generate ideas.

Now, if your committee has executive purposes, and if you understand groups, you are going to adopt some very different standards and guidelines with respect to membership, with respect to the authority that is prescribed and the limitations on it, than if it is to be

a coordinating group. An executive group, if it is going to be effective, must be composed of those who substantially share the same objectives. This characteristic in a coordinating committee is a defect. To set up a coordinating committee, you should often deliberately seek out people having different perspectives, different values, different purposes, to put them together; the function of the group process is to create understanding and coordination from an initial state of difference. For the selection of membership, you see, you make drastically different choices for a coordinating committee than for an executive committee.

Consider the leadership of the committee. If you are creating an executive committee, not always but nearly always, you will want one member in that committee who is of higher rank and who is authorized to supersede and veto the committee. The President and his Cabinet is an illustration of such an arrangement. If you are setting up a coordinating committee you probably will not want that kind of leadership. You are likely to want a chairman of this committee who is just like the other members in status and authority. He just has some specialized leadership chores that he does for this committee. He is ordinarily not authorized to fix the agenda himself. He is not authorized to speak for the committee to outsiders. He is not authorized to veto or override the committee. His concern should be for managing the group process.

So, not only is the membership different for these two different kinds of committee purposes but the internal leadership structure must be different. Consider the function of representation. Again there is a sharp contrast here. When you create an executive group you must keep in mind that, if it is going to be an effective executive group, each member must be authorized and qualified to represent this group to the world and to speak for it and commit it. In the case of an effective coordinating committee, no single member can speak for it. The members are not authorized, except on instruction from the group, to speak for the group and to commit its views or actions.

Well, you can see some of the dramatic differences that will occur to a manager when he is setting up a committee, if he is clear in his mind, whether it is intended to be one kind of committee or another.

I have talked for illustration only about executive committees and coordinating committees. There are other classes of groups, also.

QUESTION: Sir, would you say that the military organization has more or less democratic leadership than the industrial organization?

DR. SEASHORE: I think it is impossible to give a simple answer, for the reason that the military practices are by no means uniform. I have had a chance to observe some military units where the degree of participative practice was as great as and as effective as any I have seen in private organizations. I do not know whether this is exceptional or whether this condition occurs rather widely or not. Just as in large, private organizations, like General Motors, there are some segments of the organization that manage by practices that have neither the approval nor the knowledge of higher level managers, so in large military units there is some diversity and some occurrence of extreme deviations from the usual practice.

QUESTION: Dr. Seashore, can you help me a little bit with a statement in "New Patterns of Management" on leadership functions? It talks about the characteristics of a highly effective group leader there, and says that he minimizes the influence of his high position. Then it goes on to illustrate this by saying that he is careful never to impose a decision on the group. Now, do we accept this literally, or is this an objective?

DR. SEASHORE: I think my friend, Dr. Likert, occasionally gets carried away by his enthusiasms. "Never" is a strong word. It is my belief that it is a most rare organization indeed where a leader literally never has to impose his will. I think there are times when organizational imperatives require this. I think there are unexpected and unplanned events that procedures of consent cannot handle. I think his point is a valid one, that these events ought to be minimized and that an imposed decision is accompanied by some harm and cost.

STUDENT: May I go on? How is it possible to reconcile the climate that you have for participative decision-making with the club always being available if it has to be used? In other words, you might have the iron fist that is slightly disguised.

DR. SEASHORE: I think we all live in a rather hazardous world and in any organization people at all levels will be aware that there are others who can seize the club and use it. They will learn from their experience how likely this is and they will act accordingly.

I am in the business of creating a new group in my own organization now, in order to resolve some ancient hostilities inherited when I moved to a higher job. One of the curious events in the sequence is that, at first, in meeting with this set of people I am trying to form into an effective group, there was tremendous suspicion of my motives. I became aware after a little time that several of the people were convinced that I was just setting some of them up for slaughter. I was urging them, you see, to take on responsibilities and a freedom of action such as they had not experienced before. They were a bit alarmed at this. They thought there was a danger in it somewhere, obviously, and the main one they could think of was that Seashore was planning some major organizational surgery.

Well, it is going to take some time for them to realize what I hope is the truth, and that is that it is not going to hurt them to try this method of work. They are perfectly aware that I could fire them tomorrow if I wanted to, they have seen me do this in one case, and they still have some thought that maybe I will again. Meanwhile, out of caution they are less effective than they could be and participation is far less than I hope for.

QUESTION: Dr. Seashore, a previous speaker has suggested that you might like to present the criteria by which you classify a good boss and a bad boss.

DR. SEASHORE: I like the definition that was given, but I think something more than that might be said. I am going to give a weasel answer, and I am doing it deliberately, because I think the question calls for that kind of answer. I question whether there is "good" leadership practice and "bad" leadership practice and that one must only choose the good and reject the bad. The image of a single, ideal practice of management is a decision. I would argue that the management of an organization is such a complicated business that, like the work of a painter or a musician, to do it well requires a wide variety of techniques and strategies.

I do have in mind a model of preferred leadership style. I have, myself, a liking for a supervisor who is ready to consult with others, who is considerate of my needs, who allows exploration of the implications of what he proposes to do, who is technically competent, who takes my ideas seriously, et cetera. I could go on with this list endlessly. That is what I prefer right now for most circumstances I am in. But I reject this as an ideal model that all managers

at all times under all circumstances should hold to, because it just would not work in some circumstances. It would be disastrous in some. It would be harmful to subordinates in others.

I would argue that the manager of the future will have more than one arrow to his bow. He will know how to be a skillful dictator when the occasion calls for it. He will know how to create groups to manage for him when the circumstances permit him to use this more effective and sophisticated style of management. He will not be restrained in using the power of his office when the situation calls for it, but he will not use it, out of sheer ignorance, for his convenience. He will use it deliberately, knowing that there is a price when he makes that choice. The manager should be able to choose among a variety of strategies. He must build an organization capable of responding to necessary changes in leadership strategy and capable of guiding his choice of strategy. He must be skilled in carrying out alternative strategies, and responsive to the changing leadership requirements of his people.

QUESTION: Would you reflect on the possibility that this new leadership philosophy has been an evolutionary process brought about by a fund of (1) the Golden Rule, which most religions subscribe to, (2) commonsense, (3) previous examples of poor leadership that we have all seen, (4) the realization of the leader that he needs all the oars going in the same direction for maximum protection?

DR. SEASHORE: I think it would be a sad thing if we moved in directions in management practice and strategy that were incompatible with the Golden Rule, with experience and commonsense, et cetera. I am saying yes. We evolve as we do because of the considerations you raise. They are part of the motivation behind it. I do not think that any managerial strategy would survive long if it violated fundamental moral values.

QUESTION: Would you care to comment on the risks in participative management between the production worker and new management, so to speak, or the different strata in the organization?

DR. SEASHORE: It is a curious thing that the practice of participative management prevails at the upper echelons of organizations. It is hard to find these days an organization of any size--Government or military or private--that does not at the top have boards, committees, task groups, business teams, and other expressions of participative management at that level.

It is still rather rare for organizations deliberately to extend this practice to nonsupervisory levels. I suppose one thought is that this is just too good for ordinary people. Another thought is that we can trust the basic values and motives of higher-level management but maybe we cannot trust the basic values and motives of lower-level people. There is an assumption, you see, that non-management people are moved by different motives and values; this guides some of the choices about the forms and degree of extension of participative practices. It turns out that in experimental laboratories and also in real-life cases where we have been able to study nonsupervisors, when given the opportunity to do so and the responsibility that goes with it, lower rank people tend to equal and sometimes even exceed management people in their sponsorship of the traditional managerial values. It is, by the way, an act of faith on both sides to introduce participative methods in the lower levels in an organization. If you do not have a fund of optimism about human nature, you had better not try it.

QUESTION: Dr. Seashore, must we have prosperity for participative management to flourish or what happens during a period of recession or business depression?

DR. SEASHORE: This may sound like an irrelevant reply, but I would like to recommend some interesting Sunday morning reading to you, a very popular little military yarn called, "The March Up Country." It gives an account of a force of 10,000 Greek soldiers who encountered disaster in Asia Minor and spent, I think, 2 years in the process of survival and scope. The interesting part of the account is that rather early in this situation, at the brink of total disaster, there was a leadership revolution, including the election of a leader and the invoking of participative decision techniques, very dramatically displayed.

My point is that the use of the procedure of consultation and consent in policymaking and decision-making is hardly a new thing. It was applied long ago in large formal organizations. I think its applications by and large have been as often in situations of crisis and stress as otherwise.

QUESTION: Doctor, do you believe that social groups among our youth have a place in our modern education, too?

DR. SEASHORE: They must have a place, because they are there. We deplore some of the things that these youth groups do,

particularly when they form on the street corners and choose as their common objective the destruction of people and property. Nevertheless, it seems to me, the power of such spontaneous groups, as well as of planned community groups, and school groups among youth, can be mobilized for education, for social control, and for desirable social change.

We have in progress now a study in Chicago along this line. It is in its fourth year. It is an experiment to see whether by utilizing the power generated by such groups we can reduce the delinquency rate on the Southside of Chicago. We have an area a mile square as our experimental area and one matched in economic and population characteristics on the Westside as a control area. One aim is to see the extent to which existing group forces can be invoked for positive rather than negative ends. The results are not in, but it sounds like a good idea at this time.

COLONEL AUSTIN: Dr. Seashore, could you make a quick response to the earlier question, as to whether suicides have resulted from sensitivity training?

DR. SEASHORE: Oh, yes, I did want to react to that, because there is a rumor going around that it is risky and damaging to undertake sensitivity training activities. The facts appear to be that people who come to sensitivity training courses are, by and large, as healthy and normal as people at large. The occurrence of psychotic or neurotic disturbances is at a rate no different than is common in the general population, and for most people it is a healing and not a disturbing experience. It may be true that someone may have committed suicide during or after such a session, but then, people have done that right on their own home grounds and in their own homes, and in your offices, perhaps. I do not think there is a hazard of this kind connected with sensitivity training conducted by qualified professionals.

QUESTION: Dr. Seashore, regarding the insurance company studies that you described, what did the parent company do with the results? Were there any implementing actions of any type? If so, how did they go about implementing the results?

DR. SEASHORE: In that case the study was undertaken jointly by the company and my own institution, because we shared a common interest in certain issues. Now, their interest was obviously one of practical application. They hoped to learn something that they could use.

What they did was to take the findings from our first study, subject them to the scrutiny of a committee (if you will pardon the expression) composed of insurance salesmen, agency managers, some home office people, and some people from my own staff. From this process they abstracted about a dozen of the key findings that might be implemented, that ought to be in some fashion built into the company's selection, training, and management procedures.

We then located offices where these desirable characteristics were at their maximum, and for each one of these a paired office where the particular attribute was at a minimum. We sent a team of two men with tape recorders in hand, to find out just what it was that people did in these contrasting organizations, and particularly what the managers did. The idea, you see, was to clothe the general principle of the finding with the rich flesh of the concrete things a man does in the course of a day's work.

These tape recordings were doctored a bit so that voices and situations would not be recognized. They were condensed into a 2-hour tape in which the words of the successful and unsuccessful managers and agents were put in sharp contrast. This, of course, was done as a persuasive impact device.

This led then into the review of some of the company's formal policies with respect to employment and training. It led to a redirection of the philosophy of their training program for office managers and new agents. This work is still in progress. I am only reporting the kind of energy and deliberation that are being put into the application side of the study.

COLONEL AUSTIN: We must close now. May I remind the luncheon groups that the group with Dr. Thompson will go to the Club, and the group with Dr. Seashore will be in Room 204 here in the building. This afternoon you all get to do your talking on the subject.

Dr. Seashore, thank you very much for helping us still further.

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