

GROUP RELATIONS AND PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

23 September 1964

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.