LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN A WAR ECONOMY

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Lay leadership is taken for granted in a democracy. Community and farm organizations base their programs upon it, as do the Extension Service and many governmental agencies working at the grass roots. Most communities have ample potential leaders but suffer from a scarcity of functioning leaders. The difference between the two is largely one of training.

In view of this need, an attempt was made to discover some of the problems faced by lay leaders and to determine to what degree their efficiency could be increased by a short training institute built upon the actual problems defined by the leaders themselves. Four 2-hour sessions were held, consisting of clinical analysis of problems, lectures, and laboratory exercises.

The following summarizes the subject content and results of the institute by: (1) listing the areas of concern and problems faced by the participating leaders (as they defined them) around which the course was designed, (2) giving their evaluation of the help received on the specific problems which they designated, (3) giving their evaluation as to the degree to which the institute increased their general leadership ability, and (4) showing their attitudes as to the present amount of attention which extension workers give to leadership training.

1. Areas of Concern and Problems Faced by the Participating Lay Leaders

a. What are the characteristics of a good leader?

b. What are the essentials of a good program?

c. How to delegate authority without losing control of the program.

d. How to give recognition to those who do a job well.

e. How to stimulate a group to carry a program to completion.

f. How to exercise initiative without being "bossy."

g. How to develop community awareness of the need for a particular program.

h. How to choose and develop potential leaders.

i. How to overcome resistance to new ideas and programs.

2. Results of Training Course as Indicated in Increased Understanding of Problems Defined by Lay Leaders as Evaluated by Them.

a. Increased understanding of characteristics of good leader

55% reported they were helped a great deal

45% reported they were helped a little

0% nobody reported the course was worthless in this regard

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b. Increased understanding of what constitutes a good program

50% reported they were helped a great deal
50% reported they were helped somewhat
0% nobody reported the course was worthless in this regard

c. Increased understanding of how to delegate authority without losing control

12% reported they were helped a great deal
64% reported they were helped a little
9% reported they were helped very little
9% reported they received no help from the course in this regard

d. Increased understanding of how to give recognition to those who do a job well

46% reported they were helped a great deal
54% reported they were helped a little
0% nobody reported the course was worthless in this regard

e. Increased understanding of how to stimulate group to complete program

28% reported they were helped a great deal
54% reported they were helped a fair amount
9% reported they were helped a little
9% reported they received no help from the course in this regard

f. Increased understanding of how to exercise initiative without being "bossy"

36% reported they were helped a great deal
46% reported they were helped a fair amount
16% reported they were helped vaguely
0% nobody reported the course was worthless in this regard

g. Increased understanding of how to develop community awareness of need for program

9% reported they were helped very much
82% reported they were helped somewhat
9% reported they were helped very little

h. Increased understanding of how to choose and develop leaders

37% reported they were helped a great deal
55% reported they were helped a fair amount
18% reported they were helped a little
0% nobody reported the course was worthless in this regard

i. Understanding of how to overcome resistance

36% reported they were helped considerably
55% reported they were helped a little
9% reported they received no help from the course in this regard
3. Participants' Estimate of Percentage of Increase in Their General Leadership Ability as a Result of the Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% People</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>100 or more</td>
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4. Attitude of Participants toward Amount of Time Extension Workers Should Give to Leadership Training

83% indicated more time should be given
17% indicated present satisfactory

Conclusions

The enthusiastic response which the participating lay leaders gave the institute indicates that they recognize the need for help and want it; and the results of their evaluation of the program indicate further that help was given. The experiment suggests the necessity for further study of the problems faced by such leaders, a further refinement of the training program in the light of these problems, and the giving of additional time in the extension program to leadership training.

Philosophy of the Experiment

It was felt that a comprehensive training program should do at least four things to help the leader. First, help him in an accurate delineation, definition, and analysis of the problems with which he is confronted. Second, assist in the determination of the extent to which leaders understand the problems they face and of what information and background material is necessary to understand them. Third, determine what definite plans leaders have developed to meet the problems. Fourth, determine what techniques and skills the leader possesses which will enable him to execute his program. It was possible to consider only part of these objectives in this project.

Purpose

In the light of the foregoing we prepared for, executed, and evaluated a leadership training conference as an experimental project in the importance of leadership training in the county agricultural program of war economy. More specifically, we attempted to: (1) determine what the major problems are that are facing the lay leaders, (2) find the answers to some of these problems, (3) develop a program of leadership training in the light of the problems as to methods, techniques, and subject matter, (4) ascertain how much their ability as leaders can be increased in a relatively short time by a course in leadership training, and (5) evaluate the importance of leadership training in the minds of the people.

Procedure

As suggested in the foregoing, we held four 2-hour leadership training sessions at intervals of approximately 3 days. The leaders selected to participate
in the program were chosen from various communities in a county and, although somewhat above average in ability, were representative of the various types of leadership associated with the agricultural extension program.

The session was opened by calling upon the people to define the major problems which confronted them. Following this, four definite steps were taken. (1) An attempt was made to throw light on the major problems by providing background information and interpretative material through instruction and discussion. (2) Laboratory exercises were developed which provided opportunity for the participants in the program to apply the information and techniques presented through instruction and discussion in the actual work of analyzing the job and planning a specific program in the light of conditions. (3) In the light of material given group evaluation of the projects was worked out by sub-committees. (4) Individual evaluation of the course was made on the basis of help given each person, increased ability as a leader, and importance of leadership training in the extension program.