

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Miss Molly McGhee

Because of the many requests received for Miss McGhee's speech, it is being reprinted in the interests of all Women's Institute members.

This article is written for present and future presidents of FWIO. It attempts to show what an important role the president has at every level of the organization and how each president can help it remain strong and flourish.

How can one describe a president? A president is appointed or elected to manage or represent the proceedings of a group of people. The person who becomes a president must become a successful leader; one who has the knack of getting other people to follow her and to do willingly the things she wants them to do. Nearly everyone can learn to become a successful leader if she takes the time and is willing to practice.

It is not always easy to get people to accept office because it does involve extra work. In many organizations, presidents occasionally find themselves in office simply because others were afraid to take on the duties expected of the chief officer. People often say: "I couldn't be the president because I'm not a leader." Some people are born leaders, but the majority who become good leaders do so because they worked hard and gave careful thought to the task of leadership.

One way a president can prepare for the job is to write down the word **PRESIDENT** vertically on a piece of paper, then assign words related to each of the letters. Think about them. It is surprising how many words can be assigned to each letter.

P — palace, panel, parliamentary, *participation*, pilots, powerful, presence, prestigious, procedures, production, profit, protection, publicity

R
E
S
I
D
E
N
T

When the list is completed, underline the most important word beside each letter.

Among the key words for **PRESIDENT** are:

PARTICIPATION

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

ENTHUSIASM

SOCIAL EFFECTIVENESS

IDEAS

DELEGATION

ENCOURAGEMENT

NEEDS

TEAM DEVELOPMENT

The good president will use **PARTICIPATION** to improve the efficient operation of her group, because studies have shown that the active participation or involvement of all the members has a great potential for developing the teamwork which is so very necessary to ensure the success of any group. If the leader involves a person physically, mentally and emotionally in a group situation, that person will contribute far more to group goals and share responsibility for them. This is the greatest benefit of participation and the foundation for developing a team approach.

ENTHUSIASM and **ENCOURAGEMENT** are also key words. Enthusiasm is shown by the person who endorses a cause. A sense of diplomacy, the ability to work democratically, and sound common sense, will all help the role of president to become easier. If **ENTHUSIASM** is added, this will cause a very sharp rise in the president's stock, because enthusiasm can be as contagious as an infectious disease. If she can become really excited about something and infect others, then participation will be obtained and the president is well on the way to developing a team.

The **ENCOURAGEMENT** of others is of prime importance. People work much better if they receive positive reinforcement or praise. Praise, in the form of saying thank you for help received; for a job well done, and the giving of credit where credit is due, will ensure that the leader can depend on others for help, especially when an emergency crops up.

Recognizing inexperience and nervousness in others, and guiding them unobtrusively when necessary, is an art which requires practice by all in charge. As people gain self confidence they, unfortunately, tend to forget their own discomfort as beginners. Psychologists have measured the muscular fatigue of subjects in experiments where some were praised and others criticized. It was found that praise produced an increase in energy, while criticism had just the opposite effect.

I, N and R represent **IDEAS, NEEDS AND RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**. It is very easy to discourage a fresh approach or a new idea. Everyone has experienced what she thought to be a good idea rejected. Everyone has heard the following: "We can't do that; it isn't in the constitution" or "We've tried that before and it didn't work" or "It's too much work". If the president continually vetoes or blocks out, or allows others to veto, good ideas, then there is little chance of an organization flourishing. The wise president will hold regular brainstorming sessions of the membership to obtain good ideas and pass these upward to each higher level of FWIO.

Brainstorming can be defined as the unrestrained offering of ideas by all members of a group to seek solutions to problems. Admittedly, it does take time for new ideas to be accepted. In some very successful public relations companies, participants at brainstorming sessions are fined if they pooh-pooh an idea, however crazy it appears to be.

The Pennies for Friendship Fund might really grow if some W.I. members had to put in a penny every time they turned down a good idea! Therefore, the president should welcome new ideas and withhold immediate criticism. Of course, some ideas will be controversial, even wild, but they can be moderated or combined with other, more practical ones to form a single good idea.

The president must anticipate a negative or sour-grape attitude from some members, cope with it quickly and clarify the benefits of any new ideas presented. She should try to make it easy for all of the members to accept a new idea. Above all, if an idea is successful, she should be sure to give credit where credit is due, to the person or persons who made the original suggestion.

If an organization is to survive, it must attract new members and be prepared to offer the type of program they want. Otherwise, one of three things will happen. If there are a great many new members, they may take over the organization or they, with some long time