

Realizing Members' Potential

The following articles are taken from the Rural Seminars for Vital People handouts, which many WI members received at the Ontario-wide workshops. Chuck Jacobs, leadership specialist with the Rural Organizations and Services Branch, prepared the information.

Realizing Member's Potential

The more people your group has working, the less each individual has to do and the stronger your group becomes. This statement may seem obvious but how do you get "more people working"?

Principles of Working With Organization Members

- 1) People want to feel that they are important and that they have something to contribute.
- 2) People carry out plans best when they have been involved at some stage in the planning.
- 3) People develop loyalty to an organization and its purposes when they are treated like people, not machines.
- 4) People like to feel that they really belong to an organization.
- 5) People work better when there is a way for them to let their leaders know what they think and feel.
- 6) People react to dictatorial leadership with hostility and lose interest in the goals.
- 7) Inefficiency and apathy are often the results of poor human relations between members and leaders.
- 8) Often, workers can offer better solutions than the boss because they have better knowledge of the problems of the job.
- 9) Results are better when we work with people rather than dictate to them.

Consider two types of organizations: one where the executive is

always active and it seems like only a few people do all of the work, and one where most members have duties and the executive is only slightly busier than the members. The second and most desirable situation occurs only when two practices exist:

- 1) Leaders have responsibilities as members. (The executive must not let the members do **all** the work.)
- 2) Members have responsibilities as leaders and have a role to play in decision-making, goal setting, program planning, evaluating, etc.

Once members are participating, they have a couple "rights". If they have volunteered for a committee or a project, they have a right to know exactly what is expected of them and how much time will be involved. As most organization functions revolve around meetings, members should also have the right to attend **effective, interesting** meetings and be given the

chance to contribute.

Duties of a Good Member

- 1) Recognize and accept the fact that participation takes time. The members will find the time.
- 2) Attend meetings regularly. When absent, find out what went on.
- 3) Contribute ideas and discussion willingly, but do not monopolize speaking time.
- 4) Help other members contribute.
- 5) Be aware of the organization's goals and help to steer toward them.
- 6) Take assignments of responsibility seriously.
- 7) Remain fair and impersonal, voicing objections openly in front of the group.
- 8) Evaluate own work in the group.

As one last point in "Realizing Member's Potential", if a member is not participating, have they ever been asked?

