Chapter V

Committee Organization and Preparation

WHAT IS A COMMITTEE? Unless you were told the name of the group, you probably could not tell a board meeting from a committee meeting of a social agency. Same kinds of people; indeed, often some of the same people. Same procedures. Same problems, except that the committee usually gets them in less finished form, with more room for argument. And do the "boys and girls" argue!

This similarity is natural. Boards and committees of social agencies alike are groups of individuals charged with responsibility for deliberation and decision regarding the conduct of some aspect of social service. Hence it seems proper to consider the management of boards and committees as one problem which can be handled through one technique. Accordingly the words "board" and "committee" will be used interchangeably in this chapter. Please understand that the principles and practices discussed here are applicable to either group. The board is the ultimate authority. The committee usually is created by the board and is generally subject to it.

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines a committee as "a body of persons appointed or elected to consider, investigate, or take action upon, and usually to report concerning some matter or business, as by a court, legislative body, or a number of persons." In the social agency, a committee usually is appointed by the president and is responsible to the board for action in accordance with the constitution and bylaws or with a special "charge" committed to it by the board.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMITTEES. From early beginnings in legislative bodies, the use of committees developed steadily, especially in the joint stock companies which came to be a feature of the conduct of business as a result of the discovery of the New World and the expansion of commercial activity. Charitable organizations naturally adopted the corporate organization's method of procedure. Committees, so useful in corporate business, were used also by these organizations and adapted to the needs of social work. This tendency

has steadily expanded. Now almost every social agency of any importance has at least three or four standing committees. Sometimes the list of committees of an active organization runs into the dozens. Through committtee organization most of the plans and decisions of social work are made. The committee is the co-operative society's answer to the problem of meeting conditions of administration too complex for individual action. Social work has done well to adopt this device.

USES OF COMMITTEES. Committees have many uses. They enable the social agency to enlist the co-operation of other groups and that of individuals. Through participative membership, committees create understanding of the problems and methods of the agency. They provide centers for the interpretation of the agency's work in the community at large. They train their members for the assumption of larger responsibility in the agency and the community. Through application of the principles of creative discussion they create and improve ideas for application to the work of these agencies.

In the same way as does the board of directors, the committee tests the validity of the ideas of the secretary. It enables him, if he will, to keep his head in the clouds yet to make sure that his feet are on the earth and that he and his organization tread the paths of reality. The committee gives the executive of the social agency and his staff contact with people who represent diverse elements in the community with which they must work. It thus keeps the professional personnel from living in too rarefied an atmosphere of technical seclusion.

Committees bring about co-ordinated action by individuals or groups who make common cause as the result of joint decision. Committees train their members for service as officers and members of the board of directors. They give permanence to the policies of the organization. They transmit the enthusiasm of the executive and the officers of the agency to the whole community. They help to develop morale in the organization through the participation of their members in decisions and through their support of agency activities. A good committee may serve as a buffer between the executive and persons who make unreasonable or unfair demands on him, for the committee's decisions are impersonal rather than personal. In creative decisions following discussion, committees may take the initiative in working out plans for the agency's work. They afford an opportunity for effective activity to many people who are willing to serve, and they save argument by creating an informed group of co-opera-

tors. They prevent work at cross-purposes and promote harmonious action since all members of the committee may understand their relationship to the group decision. Committees, properly used, may constitute one of the most important forces in effective service by the social agency.

KINDS OF COMMITTEES. Although possessed of so many values, committees technically are of two main kinds: advisory committees with a responsibility for rendering opinions, and executive committees with a responsibility for direct action. The budget committee of a community chest might be considered an advisory committee in that it makes its recommendations to the board of trustees. The campaign committee might be considered an executive committee because it is charged with the duty of organizing the campaign and of carrying it through to a successful conclusion.

It is essential for a committee secretary to be familiar with the functions of each committee and to have that committee keep to its line of duty. A written "charge" based on excerpts from the constitution, bylaws, or minutes of the agency board may be a help to keeping the committee "within the reservation."

Committees vary greatly according to the nature and problems of the social agency. It has already been suggested that standing committees represent the continuous and permanent functions of the organization, whereas special committees are created to serve for shorter periods of time.

A typical community chest and council has officially an executive committee, a campaign committee, a public relations committee, a budget committee, a finance committee, and an executive committee. The council, in turn, has permanent sections or committees on case work, group work, health, research, and social service exchange. Special committees and subcommittees are established as needed for special projects or for subdivisions of the work of the standing committees or sections.

A typical Boy Scout organization has a council (or board of directors), an executive board, and the following committees: finance, camp, education, court of honor, circus, volunteers, publicity, reading, civic service, troop organization, leadership, plan and scope, and extension, as well as a committee on committees continuously to maintain committee membership at a high level of competence. In addition, each troop within the Boy Scout organization in the city has its own separate troop committee.

A social agency should study carefully the kinds of committees it

requires to carry on its work, and then it should see that such committees are created with the purposes, sizes, and personnel which will be most effective in view of the agency's particular needs.

An advisory committee, which meets only once or twice a year if at all, may be a useful device for recognizing the interest of retired board members and prominent citizens. It may keep them in touch with the work of the agency by mailing them reports and other literature on which their advice (if any) is requested. The names of these persons may add luster to the agency's letterheads and to annual reports, and they may be worth an annual newspaper story by which some readers may be impressed (favorably it is hoped).

SIZE OF COMMITTEES. As has already been suggested, the size of the committee is important. Just as Abraham Lincoln is reputed to have said that a man's legs should be long enough to reach the ground, so also the committee should be large enough to do its work. It should be of sufficient size to include the main interests and points of view which are to be considered, but small enough to make deliberation possible. A committee of five may have difficulty in effective deliberation if two or three of the members are absent; yet a committee of twenty, if everyone is present, may degenerate into a debating society.

MODE OF APPOINTMENT. Consideration must also be given to the mode of appointment. The board of directors may authorize the president of the agency or the chairman of the committee to appoint a committee according to his own idea. Again, the board may authorize either of them to appoint the committee but require that he submit the names for its approval before the committee is finally authorized. For instance, it is a good plan to have the names for the budget committee of a community chest submitted by the committee chairman to the board of directors before the committee becomes active, in order to make sure that all interests involved in the various agencies and in the community are represented as effectively as possible.

In the naming of committees by the president or the committee chairman, the secretary usually is the power behind the throne. He should know the available committee material and should suggest to the appointing officer the names of qualified persons and the reasons why he thinks they are suitable. His purpose is not to dominate the committee organization but, as in other forms of organization activity, to present material from which a wise selection may be made. If the executive does not know the names of persons who are

available for service, he can at least suggest the qualifications which should be met in the appointment, exactly as he may do with the nominating committee in the election of board members and officers. In connection with the typical Boy Scout organization mentioned above a committee on committees was mentioned. Such a committee may be very useful in canvassing the potential committee material and in suggesting the names of persons who will be available for service when openings develop.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP. No matter what the method of selection, the make-up of the committee should be carefully considered. It is a well-known fact that in legislative affairs the membership of the committee usually determines the results of its action. A senatorial finance committee with a Democratic majority is likely to present a social security bill acceptable to the Democrats, despite a minority report by Republican members. The struggles to control the appointment of committees in federal and state legislatures are notorious. Similar struggles should not exist in social agencies. Yet the social agency must always realize in forming its committees that their membership should be painstakingly shaped to the problem which is to be handled.

(*a*) *Qualification of Members.* First, a committee should include, if possible, persons interested in the subject. Next, if the subject matter of the committee is controversial, the committee should at least be bi-partisan or multi-partisan and should include persons qualified to present the various points of view which must be harmonized.

It may also be well to include in some committees certain persons primarily because the organization desires to interest them in the project under consideration. For example, some community chests put on their budget committees a few persons who represent wealth, individual or corporate, who it is thought may give larger sums of money because of their growing realization of the problems of community chest member agencies. Chest budget committees often include, also, representatives of organized labor, who it is hoped will favorably affect contributions by employees of industry and business in the annual chest campaigns.

When a committee is educational in purpose, it may be desirable to include persons who have contacts with groups to which they can transmit the information which they gain in the committee. Members may be chosen also for their influence in social action—for example, persons with important political connections, if the social

agency wishes to work out some arrangement with the city or county administration. Again, a prominent person may be appointed because his name will add prestige to the work of the committee.

Committee making is a fine art and should be practiced thoughtfully and with discretion.

(*b*) *Securing Members.* Appointment on a committee does not always mean that the person appointed will serve. If a committee task is difficult and the acceptance of the prospective member is uncertain, the president of the organization or the chairman of the committee, perhaps with other important citizens, should call on him and accentuate personal invitation with urgent persuasion. Some committee tasks are so difficult—for example, those of a campaign committee or of community council committees on touchy social problems—that only personal suasion diplomatically and urgently applied will secure acceptance of the appointment.

If the committee is to be elected by the governing body of the organization, the promise of the person to serve should be secured before the election takes place. On the other hand, some committee appointments which entail not only work but honor, with distinguished responsibility as well, can be handled by a letter which represents the official action of the organization. Its prestige and the importance of the work to be done may be sufficient to secure willing acceptance of the assignment. If, however, there is any doubt of acceptance and if the agency really wants the appointee to serve, it is best to have the appointing officer or a deputation of citizens call on him and bring his acceptance back with them.

(*c*) *Maintaining Lists of Members.* After the social agency has secured acceptance of its committees' members, it has the technical problem of keeping lists of such members available for use and reference. Some organizations keep their committee lists in manuscript form, perhaps in the executive's desk or in the general files. If the executive delegates the secretarial job to one of his professional staff, that person should be responsible for his committee list. Duplicate lists may well be sent to the chairman and members of the committee.

A manuscript list for a committee which is likely to change is not entirely satisfactory. As names are dropped or new ones added, the list may become increasingly illegible. A card list, filed either in the usual vertical box or drawer file or in a visible file, will probably be found much more serviceable and satisfactory than a manuscript list. An excellent way of keeping lists is on addressing machine plates or

stencils. Such a list can replace the card list already mentioned, can be used for reference, can be easily corrected, and can be used for addressing notices and for making up manuscript lists of members by means of the listing device on the addressing machine.

Every social agency which has a hundred or more names on mailing lists should have addressing equipment. If a committee has a membership of considerable size (say twenty-five or more) and meets as often as four times a year, the names should be put on plates or stencils. As a stencil is made a card can be imprinted from it and inserted in the committee file. Cards can also be made and inserted in a master alphabetical file of board and committee members. On each card should be written the name of each group on which the individual serves. This will help prevent too great a concentration of committee service on any one individual. If the addressing equipment is handy to the persons who will need to refer to the list of committee members, the supplementary card file can be entirely dispensed with, and reference can be made directly to the plates or stencils. Many an overworked committee secretary would find his tasks immeasurably lightened by purchase of an inexpensive mechanical addressing equipment.

THE CHAIRMAN. To make its work effective a committee thus chosen and listed must have a competent and able chairman. A chairman is a good deal like the balance wheel in a watch. He keeps the committee proceeding evenly and regularly upon its appointed task.

(*a*) *Duties of the Chairman.* A number of important duties devolve upon the committee chairman:

He must be informed on the subject under discussion.

Further, he must prepare for the meeting so that he may secure intelligent participation and definite decisions. He will usually find it desirable to confer with the secretary in advance of the meeting about the items which will be placed on the agenda and the order in which they will be considered, as well as any special problems which presentation and discussion will entail.

He must call the meeting to order on schedule. One of the chief wasters of civic time is the chairman who waits for his group to gather after the announced starting hour. Each time they will come later because they count on his leniency.

The chairman must preserve order. While doing this must be good-humored and capable of maintaining the spirit of the committee. Thus he will make the lightning of his wit flash through the

clouds of acrimony, to prevent bitter argument and recrimination.

He must eliminate irrelevancies and hold the committee on the main line of discussion.

He must give all points of view an opportunity for expression. He should stimulate discussion, calling on bashful members who do not participate in the discussion or on particularly informed members whose points of view may aid in the decision. He should recognize all members of the committee when they wish to speak, and should give full leeway to their participation.

He must bring up the items of business to be considered in their proper sequence.

He must, of course, be impartial. He should ordinarily not argue for or against any project.

He may ask pertinent questions which will bring out points of which he is aware but which have not yet been considered.

From time to time he may sum up the opinion which seems to have been developed so far and ask the group if that represents its opinion. If it does, he may suggest that it is time to take action. He must make sure, when all the necessary talking has been done, that the committee comes to a prompt, united decision and passes on to the next business. He should be quick to detect the impatience of members. Then he will either end a discussion which is no longer profitable or bring about adjournment if he sees that the group is tired of all discussion.

The chairman must see that the motions presented are clear and specific and that the action taken includes a definite fixing of responsibility for its execution.

He must see also that the meeting adjourns on time, unless adequate reasons for continuance are manifest. A committee's reputation for meeting promptly will mean that members will arrive promptly. Reputation for adjournment on schedule (unless some emergency prevents) will mean that the members will attend when otherwise they might stay away for fear of not getting through on time.

The chairman has the further duty of presenting written reports, at the conclusion of the committee's work if it is a special committee, or at the monthly meetings of the board of directors and at the annual meeting of the members. The secretary usually has the duty of writing these reports, but sometimes he finds a jewel of a chairman who is sufficiently informed and interested to write his own.

The chairman's task, in brief, is to carry out the principles of

participation which have already been discussed and to see that his committee is a creative entity. Thus chaired, the committee will produce, through mutual discussion, ideas and decisions which would be impossible without its interplay of thought and personality.

(*b*) *Selection of the Chairman.* Although the duties of the chairman are manifold, his selection is variously provided for. In an informal committee it is often understood that the first person named as a member is the chairman, unless the chairman has been specifically named. Sometimes it is provided that the committee shall elect its own chairman. This procedure is started by some member of the committee who has more experience or more enterprise than the others. He says that he will act as temporary chairman and nominate Mr. So-and-So to be chairman of the committee; then he acts until a chairman has actually been elected. Usually, however, the chairman is selected by the appointing authority, whether that be the president of the organization or the board of directors. It is well to make sure that, if the chairman is not so chosen, the procedure by which he is to be selected is specified. Good chairmen are rare. An organization should select them painstakingly and encourage them by honor and advancement.

(*c*) *Rotation of Chairmen.* Difficult as it is to find good chairmen, the principle of rotation still holds. If a chairman stays in office for too long a time, the committee may come to be regarded in the eyes of the community or of the organization as his personal game preserve. Indeed, the committee itself may begin to think that it has no function beyond approving his proposals. Under such lamentable circumstances a committee is near to functional death.

A good chairman may be appointed for two successive terms of one year each. After the second year, however, it is wise either to give him a year's vacation from the committee's leadership or to make him the chairman or a member of some other committee on which he can serve satisfactorily.

The principle of rotation in office has been applied too long and too often to allow any doubt as to its validity. Something is wrong with an organization which cannot get along except with a certain man or woman as president or chairman of a committee. No one should be indispensable on the paid staff or as an officer of the organization. Apparent indispensability is the best evidence that a substitute should be trained at once and put in that position as soon as possible.

PLACE OF MEETING. Before the chairman thus duly appointed (and

rotated) can exercise his skill, however, the place and time of meeting must be arranged and the meeting actually called. Many considerations enter into the choice of a meeting place.

(*a*) *Kind of Place.* If possible, the place of meeting must be convenient for the majority of the members of the committee. Business men, for example, will usually want their meeting in the business district, if it is to be held during the day. On the other hand, if the meeting is to be held in the evening the committee will probably prefer a location in the residential district.

The meeting room should be well lighted, either artificially or by daylight. Pains should be taken to see that the members of the committee are seated so that they do not have to stare into the light.

The room should be well ventilated, in order to prevent, if possible, that torpor which so often falls upon committees. Air-conditioned rooms may be not only a comfort but a lure to attendance in hot weather.

The room should be large enough to hold the committee members comfortably, yet small enough so that they will not seem to rattle around and be insignificant because of the magnitude of the space. A lesson learned from public meetings applies to committee meetings. It is usually better to have an overflow meeting in a small hall, which gives the impression of popularity, than to have even a large group of people in a much larger hall in which they seem lost and unimportant.

A social agency need not always hold its committee meetings in its own office or go to the expense of renting an office large enough for them. Office space in most cities costs a great deal. Space used only for infrequent meetings represents a potential waste which should be carefully checked.

A social agency can usually secure without charge the use of meeting rooms in a great variety of places—public libraries, public schools, bank directors' rooms, chamber of commerce meeting rooms, church parish houses, and so on, almost without end. This may be done with propriety because the agency renders a community service.

The ideal arrangement is the location of the agency's office in a social service building where facilities for meetings of various sizes are available for a number of agencies. In that event, however, it is wise for an agency to check with some central clearinghouse in the building before it calls a meeting in a room which may already be engaged for the hour planned.

Arrangements must sometimes be made, too, with the janitor or some other official, for a public building to be opened and the lights turned on. The agency must have the assurance of the organization whose room is being borrowed that the room is available and that it can be used. Instances are not lacking of committees and social agencies which have called meetings without the consent of the legitimate possessor of the place selected. The board of directors of the First National Bank is not amused if it finds its room pre-empted by the Case Committee of the Travelers' Aid Society.

Be sure, also, that the meeting place is congenial to the committee members. In many cities in the South and in some cities in the North the social agency, if it is one which expects to have Negroes present at its meetings, must make sure that they will be admitted to the building. Many hotels will not allow Negroes in their passenger elevators or sometimes even in their public rooms. The same difficulty may arise with certain clubs. Religious prejudices also must be considered. Members of one religious group may be offended or stay away because the meeting is held in a building dedicated to the uses of another religious body.

Economic attitudes, too, may affect the choice. Members of labor unions may hesitate to meet in a chamber of commerce. The answer, of course, is one of plain courtesy. If you expect to ask people to attend a meeting, make sure that the meeting place chosen is one where they may come without embarrassment.

A social agency, knowing the community prejudices, should not needlessly go contrary to these prejudices.

(*b*) *Meeting Room Equipment.* The equipment of the meeting room also deserves special consideration.

A sufficient supply of chairs should be available. They should be comfortable, preferably with arms. The backs should be curved appropriately to fit the spinal contours of human beings. Every experienced committeeman remembers hours of torture spent in straight-backed chairs and the ways in which he strove vainly to escape their discomforts—by tilting back against the wall unceremoniously, sitting sidewise, or otherwise contorting himself to escape the painful angularity of the seats.

If possible, have a table around which the committee can sit and on which they can put any documents they are to consider. On the table have ash trays for the smokers; they are bound to smoke.

If no large table is available, arrange the chairs in a horseshoe, with the chairman or leader at its opening so that all may be within

his sight. Thus each may see the others and all may participate in the discussion. Nothing is more difficult to handle than a committee seated in straight rows of chairs, with the front row sparsely occupied and the back rows more densely populated.

The person responsible for the meeting should make sure that coat racks or check-room facilities are available.

A blackboard should be provided, together with chalk and eraser, if needed for a demonstration.

If stereopticon slides, a motion picture film, or a sound-slide film are to be shown, necessary arrangements should include a projecting machine and an operator. A screen should be hung in the proper place. Arrangements should be made for blocking off the window light, the push buttons for the electric lights located, and someone appointed to turn off the lights at the proper signal. A pointer should be provided for the stereopticon lecturer and an electric buzzer signal for him to notify the operator when to change slides.

There should be a well-filled water pitcher and glasses if speeches are to be given. The speaker may need a reading lamp and reading table at suitable height.

The head table should be equipped with memorandum pads, pencils, and copies of reports which may be necessary for the chairman. Pencils and pads are useful items for committee members as well.

The chairman's gavel should not be overlooked. Thumping on the table with the chairman's watch may be bad for its works. Whacking a tumbler with a knife may add to the hotel's glassware bill. Besides, a gavel looks official.

DAY OF MEETING. Another preliminary to the calling of a committee meeting is the choice of a day which will be satisfactory to the members.

In cities where many meetings are held, it is sometimes a good plan, before calling an important committee, to telephone the members to see whether the day tentatively chosen is acceptable to them. If this is not satisfactory, another should be selected which will be agreeable to the majority. Such a complex arrangement is not usually necessary for committees that have definite days for meeting. Still, this procedure is often desirable for special meetings of committees. Sometimes the day for the next meeting can be set at the close of the current meeting so that all who attended will hold the day and hour.

Even for committees which meet regularly it is wise to find out by canvassing at a committee meeting or by a mail questionnaire what

day of the week will suit the members best for the regularly recurring meetings. An excellent plan for a standing committee is to have a definite hour, day, and place for the meeting each week or each month, or at whatever interval it occurs, so that the members may hold this time open and make their plans to attend.

THE HOUR. Not only the place and the day of meeting are important, but also the hour and its relationship to food.

(*a*) *Morning Meetings that Begin with Breakfast.* We still remember with a watering of our editorial mouth a community chest campaign meeting held years ago at breakfast in a YMCA, at which sausage, griddle cakes, and syrup were served. The attendance was excellent, the spirit enthusiastic, and the satisfaction complete. Everyone was released in time to go to his office for his morning's work. As the Yankee said of mince pie for breakfast, "You could feel it a-nourishin' you and a-nourishin' you all day long."

Morning meetings at 10 or 11 o'clock, after the business man has got his morning's mail out of the way, or after the housewife has done her work, may meet the needs of some committees.

(*b*) *Luncheon Meetings—a Few Cautions.* Luncheon meetings often are the most satisfactory of all. As just suggested in connection with breakfast meetings, food, even though paid for by the consumer, seems to be a bait which few people can resist. Lunch has the advantage that you do not have to get up so early, after a night before, to get it.

Decision, by the way, should be made in advance of the meeting as to whether the committee members are to pay for the luncheon, who is to announce the cost, and who is to collect for the meal. All too often the well-intentioned chairman who arranges for a meeting at his private club for the convenience of all concerned is too reticent to mention this matter and is left "holding the bag." Failure to mention the price may be all right if the members of the committee take turns in entertaining, but in a case like that mentioned above it may soon become too much of an old story for the chairman if the performance is repeated. The best plan for the self-respecting chairman is to make arrangements for payment and collection in advance and to put a word as to the cost of the meal in the notice for the meeting.

Private rooms of hotels and clubs may often be used for luncheon meetings. When such facilities are used, however, the person who arranges for them should find out whether there is a charge for the use of the room. Such a charge, if there are not enough members

present to share the cost, may be too heavy a burden on the individual host or, if paid by the agency, on it. Under these circumstances it may be desirable to meet for lunch around a table in a secluded corner of a hotel dining room, restaurant, or club. A resourceful secretary will have a list of the places (if any) where luncheon can be served at a cost that will not be too heavy, in private rooms for which no additional charge is made.

The person who arranges the meeting should make sure that the charge for luncheon will not be so great as to embarrass financially the members of the group who are to meet. A dollar-and-a-half luncheon charge may scare off some who feel they could stand a dollar. Often social agencies, such as the YMCA or the YWCA, serve committee luncheons at a reasonable cost. Usually good food, too!

Sometimes agencies that have suitable facilities hold committee and directors' meetings in their conference rooms. Each guest is served with a light luncheon purchased in a restaurant or from a caterer and served on the agency's dishes, with coffee that has been made by a member of the staff. The committee members are charged the actual cost.

The menu for the luncheon should be neither heavy and soporific nor so light as to make the members seek a real meal when they are through.

One agency reported to us the following procedure:

> The restaurant sets the table in advance of the meeting and provides a buffet luncheon. . . . Much less time is consumed than when each member orders his own luncheon. This plan has worked out satisfactorily for groups of a dozen or more.
>
> The meeting is called for, say, 12:30. The secretary has his luncheon earlier. The actual business of the meeting is started not later than 12:30. The meeting goes ahead while the members are eating their luncheons. In this way from 15 to 20 minutes are saved.

Some staff member should be assigned the task of making the reservations for luncheon meetings and of checking off the names of those who say they will attend. Too often it happens that a number of those who promise to be present neither come nor cancel their reservations, that the number guaranteed to the hotel or restaurant is not reached, and that it then collects from the social agency the difference between the amount of money guaranteed and the amount actually paid. The facile committee secretary will learn what the usual percentage of attenders is and order accordingly.

Usually a hotel or restaurant will allow 10 per cent leeway in reservations, and the secretary can figure his attendance within that margin.

The privilege of ordering individually is usually difficult to arrange if a large number of people attend the meeting and if the service must be rapid. There should, however, be at least one choice on the menu. The person who arranges for the meeting should have in mind the dietetic laws of religious groups. He should provide fish on Friday if Roman Catholics are to be present, and kosher food if rigorously orthodox Jews are expected. A choice between fish and meat is often offered. The canny executive will make sure either that all present are served food which will be offensive to none (of course, he cannot guarantee the quality of the cooking) or that everyone is offered his choice.

In order for each member of the committee to have what he wishes for luncheon, where it is difficult to provide for individual orders, the meeting may be held at some such hour as one o'clock, with luncheon arranged for those who wish it and the others asked to have lunch before they come to the meeting.

(*c*) *Afternoon and Evening Meetings* (*with and without Food.*) Two o'clock meetings are often satisfactory for business men who go to lunch at one and can stay away from their office until 3:00 or 3:30 P.M.

Four o'clock may also be a good hour. Then, however, the chairman should make sure that he holds the business of the committee to a strict time limit. Otherwise housewives will commence trying to leave to prepare dinner or to meet husbands, and businessmen will want to get back to their offices to sign mail or be on their way toward their homes. No mention should perhaps be made here of four o'clock meetings with tea and "trimmings"—there might be no end to describing such agreeable events.

For many groups, especially in smaller communities, dinner meetings are satisfactory. The greater cost of dinner meetings as compared with that of luncheon meetings should, however, be considered.

Evening meetings also are sometimes suitable for people who have to work during the day or in another community. In suburban communities of New York and other huge cities an evening meeting is almost the only kind possible for social agencies. In many small towns, too, these meetings are satisfactory. In most large cities, however, evening meetings are difficult to hold, because committee mem-

bers have scattered to their various homes and do not feel inclined to travel the distances necessary to reach the meeting place.

The best rule, then, in arranging the time and the place for a meeting is to canvass the committee members carefully regarding their wishes—as to time, place, and the presence or absence of food —and to make such arrangements as will suit the majority.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LARGE MEETINGS. Most of what has just been said regarding arrangements for committee meetings applies also to those of larger groups, such as annual meetings of members of an organization, conferences, and the like. The theory has sometimes been advanced that a large meeting, because of its general character, may be more formal and dignified if held at some other time than at meal time, in the thought that meals tend to produce informality. Some social workers who have attended such affairs are inclined to the opinion that nothing can be more formal than a formal dinner and nothing more dignified than a head table adorned by ladies and gentlemen in evening clothes.

DRESS. If a dinner meeting is being planned, it is wise to decide whether evening clothes are to be worn and to inform the persons who are to sit at the speaker's table accordingly. The one man at a head table who appears in a dress suit when everyone else is in business clothes is not less uncomfortable than the uninformed man who arrives at a formal meeting in slacks and an odd jacket when all the other men are in Tuxedos.

LENGTH OF MEETING. Although, as has already been stated, meetings should begin on time and end on time, the meeting should be long enough to cover the business at hand. Some communities seem to have made a fetish of hour-long meetings. Some latitude should be allowed for full discussion. If the business cannot be covered within an agreed upon time limit, the committee should consider lengthening the limit or meeting more frequently than its earlier intention. Another possibility would be to break the committee into subcommittees, which would predigest some of the material that otherwise would require mental alimentation by the whole committee.

CALLING THE MEETING. Important as are the time, place, and length of meeting, they are merely the background for the activity indicated in the notice.

(*a*) *A Plan for the Meeting.* Before the notice is sent out, the secretary of the committee should plan the meeting thoroughly with the chairman. They should agree upon the form of the notice, the

subject matter, and the content and significance of the discussion. They should settle upon questions that interpret the work of the agency and yet are suitable for decision by a body of men and women who are not intimately in touch with details of professional social work.

(*b*) *Time between Notice and Meeting.* Regardless of the subject for the meeting, notice should be sent out in ample time before the meeting is held. One week in advance is usually satisfactory. If less time than this is given, the members of the committee may already have made other engagements for that time. On the other hand, if the notice is sent out more than a week in advance, the time that elapses may be too long. For example, if a meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 17, and if the notice is sent out on Monday, October 7, some of the committee members may note merely that the meeting is to be held on Thursday, and come on Thursday, October 10. We have done it ourselves!

Some social workers in large cities have objected that this is not true there. They feel that, if there is to be a meeting of people who are at all busy, notice should be sent at least a month in advance in order for them to reserve the date. Under such circumstances it is probably wise to get out a brief notice a month in advance and to send a detailed notice a week before the meeting.

Since most cities, however, do not suffer from such complexities of life as does the metropolis, a notice one week in advance will usually suffice. This is especially true if the committee is one that has a definite and regular date of meeting or if a date has been agreed upon at the committee's prior meeting.

When emergencies arise, notices may sometimes be sent out less than a week before the meeting.

The efficient secretary, however, will not get into the slovenly habit of deferring his notices merely because he is too busy doing something else. He will put ticklers for the meeting date and notice date into his tickler file and will follow these gentle reminders meticulously. Getting notices out on time is as important in the technique of administering committees as is any other point in successful committee activity.

(*c*) *Methods of Notice.* Equally important with the time of sending out the notice is the method of giving the notice. Notices obviously may be given in various ways.

In some small rural towns it would probably be easy to call a meeting of a Red Cross chapter executive committee by having a suffi-

ciently stentorian-voiced person stand in the middle of the public square and shout the news of the meeting. Even a whisper at the courthouse gets around with astonishing speed in these towns.

Seriously, in small communities where members of committees are concentrated within a small area, it is feasible for the secretary of the committee to drop in personally to see them and tell them about the meeting. This is the slowest way of calling a meeting and the most expensive from the point of view of labor, yet it is probably the most effective. The personal touch in calling committees together, as in other phases of organized endeavor, usually gets the best results, but only in the smaller communities and with small committees is this personal method possible. The chief trouble with it is that the committee member has no visible notice and is likely to forget the date.

In larger cities the personal method may be attained through a telephone call by the secretary or his representative to all the members of the committee. They are told the time and place of the meeting and the chief subjects for discussion. Although a telephone call has the advantage of being personal, it has a disadvantage in that it does not always reach the individual desired. He may be out of his office or busy. The message may be incorrectly transcribed by his secretary or some other person who receives it. There is, further, the chance that the member himself may neglect to make a note of the message and may therefore completely forget to attend the meeting. Telephone calls are probably satisfactory for hurry-up meetings, but the great majority of notices for committee meetings everywhere are sent out in writing.

To maintain in a letter the value of the personal touch inherent in the personal call or the telephone call, a separately typed and personally signed letter is the most satisfactory. It gives an individual impression. The only trouble with this method is its high cost in labor and the fact that it requires first-class letter postage. Though this kind of letter may pay where the committee members are exceedingly particular individuals who are flattered by special attention, it is probably unnecessary for most notices. The secretary, in any case, will consider his committee carefully and determine whether its nature is such as to justify the extra expense of such highly personalized attention. With most committees it is not needed.

A satisfactory substitute for the individually typed letter to an important committee is the letter that is multigraphed, filled in on

the typewriter, and signed either by pen or with a signature device.

Presumably the members of the committee are interested in its work. A typed notice duplicated by the simple process of making carbon copies of the original on the typewriter, or by mimeograph or ditto machine, will be sufficient to secure their attendence. Notices to large committees are sometimes printed.

The problem of the methods of notice is the old question of the relationship of cost to efficiency. The secretary should weigh these factors carefully and choose that method which will produce the best results at the lowest cost per unit of participation.

(d) Delivery of Notices. Delivery of notices may be handled in various ways. If a messenger is available, the time short, the notice important, and the members of the committee likely to be impressed by personal attention, it may be worth while to deliver them by hand. A bank president whom we once knew, who was chairman of a small committee of which we were secretary, had a bank messenger deliver notices typed on his personal, engraved stationery. The boys certainly turned out!

Postal cards may be used satisfactorily for notices not of a confidential nature. They get quick attention and save postage, paper, and envelope cost.

Notices, not filled in or hand signed—and therefore eligible for third-class mail—are often sent by first-class mail in sealed envelopes in order to get preferential delivery and attention.

Identical notices to committees of twenty or more may by post-office regulation be sent unsealed as third-class mail for one and one-half cents each. The other one and one-half cents, or 50 per cent of the postage saved on each notice, may amount to a considerable sum in the course of a year. Delivery on letters sent under this third-class postal rate is slightly slower than on those sent under first-class postage. Presumably, too, such letters do not get quite the attention that first-class mail receives. So far as our observation shows, however, there is no indication in actual practice that notices sent under third-class postage are less effective than those at first class, except that deliveries have been slower when post-office personnel was scarce.

Special-delivery stamps may sometimes be used with striking effect. If an important meeting is to be called hurriedly, a special-delivery letter will secure speed in delivery and a certainty of attention given to no other form of postal delivery, except perhaps to registered mail for which the recipient must sign. The extra expense

of the thirteen-cent special-delivery stamp (we hope the cost will be reduced) may be well justified in important situations by the superior results secured.

All addresses on notices to be mailed should bear the postal zone numbers, to speed sorting in the postoffice.

There seems to be no good reason why, if the meeting is of the utmost importance, telegrams should not be used. They get attention—but of course it might be unfavorable! Unless no other means of notice will suffice, the social agency will without doubt be criticized for the extra cost of using telegrams for notices.

In addition to sending these various forms of individualized notices, the notice of the meeting may be published in the bulletin of the organization (if there is one which goes to all the committee members) or in the newspapers. However, where such casual and unspecialized notices were issued, a suspicion might arise in the minds of the members of the committee that the organization did not care particularly whether or not they came to the meeting. For the organization that does not care—and this book is not written for such organizations because it can hardly benefit them—this shotgun form of notice is less expensive than the rifle fire of the individualized notices which have been described. The obvious shortcoming of this form of notice is that although all good members of an organization are supposed to read its bulletins, as all good citizens are supposed to read the newspapers, they do not always do so.

Social workers experienced in committee activities in villages testify, on the contrary, that a notice in the village newspaper is sometimes sufficient—on the theory that there everyone reads the paper and talks about what is in it. This situation, however, is an exception to the general fact that newspaper publicity is not adequate for notices of committee meetings. If you want them, go after them!

(*e*) *Formal vs. Informal Notices.* No matter by what medium the notice of the committee meeting is issued, the notice itself may take two main forms. In the first place, it may be a purely formal notice—for example, "The regular meeting of the Admissions Committee of the Society of the Friendless will be held at . . . on . . . 19 . . in the Directors' Room. J. Westfall, Secretary." All the secretary has to do in this case is to insert the date and address on the cards. An American Legion post added to the efficiency of this kind of notice by using a special lure which may have secured results. The secretary wrote on each card, "Eats." For that particular post

that one word may have had more attraction than all the lengthy order of business which might have been inserted. A routine form of notice, however, would ordinarily indicate either that the organization did not care whether the members came or not, that the work of the committee had become routine, or that the committee was so tremendously interested that no other incitement was needed than announcement of the meeting.

Ordinarily, nevertheless, the formal notice is less effective than a special notice carefully adapted to the meeting that is to be held. This notice should state in detail the questions to be considered. It should include, if necessary, excerpts from reports or other material which will be helpful toward an understanding of these questions. The purpose of the notice should be not only to apprise the members that a meeting is to be held but also to inform them regarding the subjects to be discussed. Then the members can come prepared for intelligent participation and for prompt disposal of the matters to be considered. Moreover, this knowledge will help to develop better attendance and greater interest on the part of the committee members. Even if they cannot attend the meeting, they may call on the chairmen or secretary personally or write to him to express their points of view on these subjects, or drop in at his office after the meeting to see what has happened. The general experience of successful executives of social agencies shows the value of a complete and clear statement of the subjects to be considered.

Some time ago we saw the notice of a committee of a family society which contained such items for discussion as "mimeograph machine," "downtown office," and so on. This notice might have been improved by the addition of such questions as "Shall we purchase a used mimeograph machine guaranteed to be in first-class condition for the sum of $50 in order to save the cost of having our mimeograph material done by an outside firm at a present total cost of $250 a year?" and "Shall the downtown office be moved from its present location to 453 Adams Street, at no increase in rent?"

An enterprising secretary might experiment with his committee to see which form of notice—the routine, or the specialized—gets the better result. He may possibly find it desirable from time to time to change the form of the notice and the color of the paper (unless he persists in using the agency's letterhead) so that the interest of the committee will be aroused by the variety of presentation used. Notices may sometimes be made more attractive by sketching on the mimeograph stencil, or in ditto ink, more or less comical

or pertinent drawings which illustrate the subjects to be discussed or emphasize the importance of the notice.

The secretary must endeavor to keep the committee member from casting the notice aside with the remark, "Well, here's another notice from that ———— organization. I'm tired of those things!" and should make it so attractive that the members can neither avoid reading it nor fail to attend the meeting. The effective preparation of notices is a piece of public relations and salesmanship material just as important as those other forms of public relations material which are addressed to contributors or the general public. The committee member must stay "sold" on the work of his organization. The effective notice promotes that purpose.

(f) Using the Chairman's Name. Although the secretaries of committees often sign notices of meetings, it is usually better for the secretary (with the approval of the person concerned) to sign the name of the chairman of the committee and sometimes for the sake of variety to send the notice on the chairman's letterhead. The reason for this is clear. The staff secretary is usually a continuing personality, whereas the committee chairmen change. Committees may become tired of seeing the secretary's name always appended to notices, and the chairman's name may give a pleasing variety. Ordinarily, too, the chairman of the committee is a more conspicuous citizen than the secretary, and he usually has more influence over committee members. The chairman's name is likely to be more effective, therefore, in securing attendance and attention. It is to be suspected that some secretaries like to sign their own names to notices because this action gives them a feeling of importance. It is taken for granted, however, that if the committee secretaries who read this book wish to advance professionally they will wish to do so through the efficiency of their organizations. They will willingly forego the pleasure of seeing their names on notices if they can secure increased effectiveness in committee meetings by using the name of someone who is more influential with the committee personnel. Moreover, if the chairman's name is signed he is likely to feel more responsible for the operation of the committee and to take more pride in its results. Part of the secretary's work is to keep the chairman on the job.

(g) Follow-up before the Meeting. The person who signs the notices of meetings may well have his name used on a follow-up reminder of the meeting. In spite of the fact that a committee notice is sent out a week in advance, some members may lose, discard, or for-

get to look at the notice or to make a memorandum of it. When a large committee is considering important problems, it may be well worth while to incur the extra expense of mailing a postcard reminder on the night before the meeting so that the members will receive it in the morning. But if the committee is small the secretary may be able to do this by calling personally on the committee members.

The telephone reminder is most frequently used with committees of ordinary size, up to fifteen or twenty members. The secretary of the committee may do the telephoning, or if he has a secretary, switchboard operator, or some volunteer worker available that person may do it. The names of members of a large committee may be divided up on lists distributed among a few of the more active members, who will telephone those on their respective lists and remind them of the meeting.

It is good procedure to have the one who telephones say that he is speaking for Mr. ———— (chairman of the committee), who wishes to remind the member of the importance of the meeting and to say that he hopes the member will attend. The telephonist should have some clue as to the attitude of the members toward his calls. If a committee member is a busy person who dislikes being interrupted and has a secretary, it is the part of discretion to ask the secretary to remind Mr. Blank of the meeting. The telephonist should also be careful not to enrage the member by insisting on talking to him personally. It is better to leave the message than to demand that he be called to the telephone. A lady committee member whom we once had to placate was not particularly pleased when she was called from the third to the first floor of her home to answer a telephone inquiry as to whether she would be present at a meeting. She felt—and properly too—that the maid should have been asked to give her the message. The secretary or maid with whom the message is left may legitimately be asked to telephone a return message as to whether the committee member will attend the meeting.

Another means of follow-up that is sometimes used is to mail to the committee members additional material not included with the notices—for instance, a report not available when the notice was sent but one which should have the consideration of the member in advance of the meeting.

An effective reminder, the principle of which is borrowed from the practice in some political campaigns, is to have members of the committee who have automobiles drive to the homes or offices of

other members, through arrangement made by telephone in advance, pick them up, and take them to the meeting. Free transportation is hard to resist.

General experience indicates that some one or more of these kinds of follow-up may well be used to stimulate attendance at meetings and that the expenditure of time and money will be well justified by the results.

(*h*) *Return Card to Indicate Intention.* As a means of emphasizing the importance of attendance at meetings and also of securing knowledge as to how many people are coming, a return postal card is often enclosed with the notice. If the notice itself is sent on a postal card, a double or return form of card may be used.

Government postal cards are not necessary for this purpose. Any texture or color cardboard may be used, and a one-cent stamp may be affixed, provided the card is no larger than 3–9/16 by 5–9/16 inches. For economy's sake the sender may be invited to stick his own stamp on the attached return card. Through some strange perversity of human beings, however, the "use your own stamps" idea seems to cut down the number of returns.

With large groups, where only a relatively small number will reply, a "business reply" card for which the ultimate recipient pays two cents on delivery, may be economical. The postmaster can give valuable advice on this subject.

The fact that a member has promised, by mailing a card, to attend the meeting seems to help enforce upon him the responsibility of attendance. Also, the fact that a certain person cannot come may change the plans for the topics to be considered at the meeting. Return cards are especially desirable in connection with luncheon and dinner meetings for which reservations must be made.

Return cards may be purely routine in their phraseology—for example, "I will (will not) attend the meeting of the Committee on Time and Place of the State Conference of Social Work at 4 P.M. on Friday, October 25. (Signed) . . . . . On the other hand, a little imagination may profitably be worked into return cards, so that through reading and signing the notice the committee member is more committed to attending the meeting than he otherwise would be. For example, the return card for a luncheon meeting of a committee to discuss the purchase of an automobile for a family society might read:

You certainly may (may not) count on me to attend that luncheon meeting of the Committee on Automobile of the Family Society in Mrs. Jones's

Tea Room at 12:30 P.M. on Friday, October 11. I realize that the question of the purchase of the automobile for the society is an important one and shall be glad to share in the decision as to whether or not the car should be purchased and, if it is to be purchased, what style and what make it should be. Expectantly yours,

. . . . . .

This jocular-kind of return card, matched by an equally alluring and specific notice, may sound silly to the sober reader, yet we can testify from actual experience that it has produced excellent results. The light touch often wins!

Return cards may involve as much salesmanship as notices. These cards, like the notices, may be illustrated with sketches drawn on the mimeograph stencil or in ditto ink. They may be prepared on paper of different color each time if private mailing or business reply cards are used instead of government postal cards.

(*i*) *Check-up on Performers.* Another necessary preliminary to the effective meeting of a committee is a checking up, by the secretary or chairman, of the persons who are scheduled to make reports or otherwise to participate in the meeting. One of the persons responsible should make sure that each one who is to make a report will be there and will be prepared to submit his report or, if he cannot attend, that an adequate substitute will present it. If a speaker is to appear, the secretary should ascertain whether he understands the place of meeting, his position on the program, and the amount of time he is to be allowed. If an important matter on which there is some difference of opinion is to be discussed, it may be wise for the secretary to get in touch with specially interested members of the committee and ask them to be prepared to discuss it and explain points of special interest that are likely to come up.

This does not mean, however, that a secretary should be in the position of logrolling for his pet projects. A secretary who attempts to fix meetings in advance by building up a majority of adherents for a pet project is likely sometime to be the victim of logrolling himself. His best course it to send with the notice such interesting and informative material that all members will be glad to prepare themselves for intelligent participation in the meeting.

The secretary's job is to see that the meeting is held in a suitable place at a convenient time, and that it is attended by the largest possible number of adequately informed and interested committee members. If these suggestions are followed, the secretary is likely to find that his meeting at least will start well.

QUESTIONS

1. How many and what kinds of committees does some business corporation with which you are familiar have?
2. Give the same information for a social agency.
3. What uses and values can you find in some typical committee in a social agency with which you are familiar?
4. Analyze the committees of some social agency as to whether they are advisory or executive, standing or special, and as to the kinds of problems they consider or the services they render.
5. Analyze these committees according to size. What reasons are there for the different sizes?
6. How are the committees in this agency appointed?
7. Analyze the membership of a typical committee of this agency as to the qualifications of its members. How do you think the membership might be improved?
8. In this agency, how are committee members notified of appointment, and how is their consent secured?
9. How are the lists of the committee members kept?
10. Analyze the duties and methods in meetings of a chairman of a typical committee. How do you think his procedure might be improved?
11. How are committee chairmen selected in this agency?
12. What is done about rotation in office?
13. On what basis are places selected for the meetings of the committees of this agency? How might this selection be improved?
14. How might the arrangement of furniture and equipment for these meetings be improved?
15. On what basis are dates for meetings of this agency arranged?
16. What considerations enter into the selection of hours for meetings?
17. If food is served at any of these meetings, what special arrangements are made?
18. Are large meetings handled differently in principle from small ones in this agency?
19. In a typical committee of a selected social agency, what planning for meeting notices does the secretary do jointly with the chairman?
20. How long advance notice is given of meetings?
21. What kind of notice is given for meetings?
22. How are written notices delivered?
23. Are notices routine or specialized?
24. Who signs the notice, and why?
25. What follow-up is used before the meeting?
26. Are return cards used to indicate intention of attendance? If so, what kind?
27. Are persons who are to report at meetings reminded of their duty? If so, how?
28. How might this procedure be improved?