Chapter VI

Committee Meetings

EFFECTIVE AGENDA. With the foregoing preparations, your meeting should be off to a running start. In order to carry on the meeting effectively, however, a carefully prepared statement of agenda, docket, or order of business should be available for each person who attends.

(*a*) *Conference with Chairman.* The agenda are usually prepared by the secretary after conference with the chairman. This conference ordinarily is held after notices have been sent out and shortly before the meeting, since additional material beyond that mentioned in the notice often requires attention.

(*b*) *Statement of Subjects.* Some social agencies have a prescribed order of business—for example, minutes, treasurer's report, superintendent's report, communications, old business, new business, and so on. These organizations merely follow this routine blindly. Progressive social agencies, however, usually prepare special agenda which, like the suggested notice of the meeting, state clearly the subjects to be considered.

(*c*) *Presentation of Arguments on Agenda.* The form of the statement of agenda is important. If specific recommendations of committees are to be acted upon, or if formal motions already presented are to be considered, this material should be included in definite formal shape. The action then taken may be precisely in accordance with the proposals.

If the secretary is sure of the wisdom of a proposed action, he may suggest that procedure in the question itself. The following statement would suggest favorable action on the proposition: "The Committee on Administration has found that a good reconditioned adding machine will cost $200. We can save $300 a year by installing this equipment. Shall we accept the recommendation of the committee?"

On the other hand, the secretary may be uncertain regarding the

course to be taken, or he may think that the subject is one on which there is great diversity of opinion. He will then probably consider it wise to suggest the subject in a noncommittal way—for example, "The Committee on Office Administration recommends that we purchase a reconditioned adding machine for $200 which will probably pay for itself over a period of three or four years. Do you think it wise to make this purchase?"

Some able executives always state the propositions on their list of agenda in the form of problems. They may give possible solutions and arguments for or against each, so that the committee members may have the most complete possible basis for making their decisions.

(*d*) *Exhibits Attached to Agenda.* If the material to be considered in connection with any proposition on the agenda is too voluminous to be copied readily as part of that document, or if even when condensed the proposal makes the agenda too long, then the material should be copied as briefly as possible and attached to the agenda. This procedure can be followed with letters, abstracts of reports, and other documents. Each exhibit should be lettered to correspond with the item on the docket and should be attached in the order in which it is to be considered. The attention of the committee member should be called to the fact that the material is referred to on the agenda statement itself, as, "See Exhibit A, attached."

(*e*) *Presentation by Members.* One of the advantages of presenting in the agenda statement or in the attached exhibits all matters which require consideration is that this procedure reduces to a minimum the vocal participation of the secretary in the meeting. As will be developed here later, the secretary should be seen rather than heard. As far as possible, the chairman or members of the committee should present the subjects which are to be considered. Their names should appear on the agenda after the topics which they are to present. Often, if a subject has not been considered in advance by a subcommittee, a member of the committee can be asked to look into the matter and make the initial presentation. In this way the members of the committee may inform themselves more fully about the business in hand and be enabled to take more responsibility than if the secretary did most of the presentation.

(*f*) *A Good Example from Cleveland.* Our suggested mode of presentation, through summaries included in the agenda and the exhibits attached, may require a good deal of work in preparation and duplication; but it is worth the effort and expense, it facilitates effective committee action.

A good example lies before us in the docket (that is what they call the list of agenda in Cleveland) of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Cleveland Welfare Federation, held at 12:15 P.M in the Mid-Day Club. The material was loaned to us by Executive Secretary Edward D. Lynde. The docket contains twenty-six topics, concluding with this excellent one: "Matters board members wish to present." That is a good idea, to leave something to the members' initiative!

Practically every item on the Cleveland docket is assigned to some member for presentation. Under almost every topic there is a paragraph or so of single-spaced summary. Naturally the docket runs to seven and one-half ages. Attached are fifteen mere pages of copies of letters, committee reports, and so forth. That makes twenty-three pages in all. This sounds and looks like a lot of material, but we'll bet the board found it useful and did a good job with it.

That even the skillful secretary, Ned Lynde, had some qualms about all this material is indicated by item 5, "Attachments to the Docket." The summary underneath reads as follows:

> What are the wishes of the Board with regard to the attachment of material to the docket? Such attachments take considerable paper and some mimeographing. For example, the last Board docket took, all together, for all copies, about 1,350 sheets of paper at a total over-all cost of $1.35 for the paper.
>
> On the other hand, this relatively small expense and use of paper, even in this period of scarcity, may be worth while if it enables the Trustees to get through their business more expeditiously. For example, in the last docket, the attachments were (1) a letter from Marvin Harrison regarding the Pin-Boy Welfare Committee, and (2) a letter from the Children's Aid Society and the recommendations of two councils with regard to the transfer of the Children's Aid Society from one council to the other. The purpose of attaching the letters was to save the time which it would take to have the communications read in the Board meeting and yet to enable the Board to have the arguments on both sides of these questions before them. Otherwise, in a brief period, both sides of the question might not be adequately presented. In fact, on occasions when we have not attached such information, there has been criticism that the Board was expected to rubber-stamp the recommendation of a committee without full knowledge of the facts.
>
> You will observe the material attached to the docket today.
>
> What is the Board's desire? Shall we be more conservative, or shall we follow the same policy as in the past in attaching information to the docket? Will you please bear the question in mind and challenge us now or on any occasion when we seem to incorporate more or less material than is necessary in the docket or attached to the docket. But please be very specific as to exactly what material you wish to omit or include.

We rejoice to state that the Board voted to continue the policy of providing full information. What a board, and what a secretary!

(g) Duplicating committee material. Carbon copies of the original docket and exhibits may be made if the number is small. More copies can be dittoed or mimeographed. The secretary should prepare one set of this material for each member of the committee. The advantage of individualization is obvious. The ear finds it difficult to follow and to impress upon the memory the complicated figures or statements. If the material is available for each person to see, much more specific action can be taken than if the secretary or chairman merely reads the exhibits, and time can be saved.

(h) Selecting Subjects for Committee Action. In preparing the agenda the secretary should be careful to check over the minutes of the last meeting and to include all matters which are to be reported on or those which were left incomplete.

He may, with profit, keep a file folder for each committee for which he is responsible. Into each folder are put memoranda of all matters to be considered by the committee. Before each committee meeting the secretary takes from the folder the accumulated material, arranges it in order, and prepares the notice and the agenda.

The secretary should make sure that the meeting does not treat merely routine business. The group should also consider topics of special and varied interest. In that way the committee will have a feeling that interesting and worth-while things are to be done and that it is not to be used only as a "rubber stamp." When a commitee has a definite and regular date of meeting but important business is not available, it may sometimes be wise to have a staff member tell of especially interesting cases or discuss unusual problems, or to have the representative of another social agency tell about its work.

The secretary should be careful not to plan too much material for the meeting. It is well to estimate the amount of time to be given to each item. Otherwise, with the hour of adjournment past, the committee may either lose a quorum or fail to discuss important matters. If the meeting is too long, the members will be reluctant to attend another. A vigilant secretary watches the chairman and the committee for signs of weariness and knows when to suggest to the chairman that he adjourn the meeting. Still more diplomatic is it to plan the meeting so that the time will be full but not too full—as far as the vagaries of committees in spending time in discussion can be predicted (they usually are unpredictable).

(*i*) *Strategic Order of Business.* The order in which material is presented on the agenda makes a great difference in the attention it secures. Matters considered at the beginning of the meeting are likely not to be heard by tardy committee members if the meeting begins promptly. On the other hand, if important proposals are put too far toward the end of the meeting, some of the members whose consideration ought to be given to the subject may leave before these items are reached. Some executives therefore put their most important material in the middle of the programs.

One executive whom we have observed always puts his own report on the docket after that of the treasurer, at the meetings of his board of directors. This executive feels that he has to report on matters of organization policy which should be heard by the greatest possible number of those who are to be present.

Reports of committees usually come before other items of business. The secretary should put first, among the reports of the various committees and the other business, questions that can be given quick attention and rapidly disposed of. Questions that will take more consideration may be placed last. If this is not done the committee may get into a controversy at the beginning of the meeting over some subject to which it will devote the whole available time, and never settle a number of other important matters which could have been disposed of in a few minutes. (Of course, you never can be quite sure just what the boys and girls will argue about and what they will pass over perfunctorily.)

On the other hand, we have been told of secretaries who, when wanting to "put something over," have inserted the item to be put over at the very end of the agenda. The thought of the contriver was that the committee, by that time tired of discussion, would be glad to agree to anything. This procedure seems somewhat Machiavellian. We hope it will not be followed by secretaries and chairmen committed to the principles of democracy and participation. At any rate, the agenda should be carefully planned. On that, both autocrat and democrat can agree.

(*j*) *Adapting the Topics to the Committee.* The secretary should further have in mind the size of the committee and its readiness to give attention to his topics, before he puts them on the agenda. Certain subjects might be given adequate consideration by a small committee. On the other hand, a large committee might have so many points of view as to prevent these topics being given full consideration. It might therefore be well to withhold a matter from

consideration by a board of directors until the executive committee has had a chance to talk it over. If the executive is not sure that a board or committee can give adequate consideration to a subject, it would be better for him either to arrange for a subcommittee to discuss it or to have it held over for consideration until he has been able to give the committee or board such information that it can give the matter fair and full attention.

No matter how well prepared the agenda statement is, the chairman, the secretary, and the committee members should understand that it can act only as tentative index for the conduct of the meeting and that if certain members want other projects discussed these may be inserted in the order of business. On the other hand, any topic on the agenda may be postponed at the will of the membership.

(*k*) *Mechanical Form of Agenda and Exhibits.* From the mechanical point of view, the agenda statement should be typed with wide margins and with double or triple spacing between the lines so that the committee members may write in their comments. As has been suggested, both docket and exhibits may be typed and duplicated by carbon copy, mimeographing, or dittoing. Exhibits may also take other forms. For example, a photostatic copy may be made of an elaborate tabulation or of charts which show trends in finance or in service. Charts drawn in ditto ink or on mimeograph stencils may be reproduced as part of the material supplied to the committee members.

(*l*) *Visual Presentations.* In addition to exhibits attached to the docket, the secretary may employ other forms of demonstration of projects which are to be considered by the committee.

Instead of attaching exhibits to the agenda, it may sometimes be effective to distribute them to the committee members when the topic comes up for discussion. Some committee members have a disturbing practice of reading ahead in the exhibits and thus not paying attention to the matter under discussion. Distribution takes a little time, but this may be more than justified by resultant concentration of attention.

A blackboard may be effectively used during the meeting by the person who is making a report or submitting a proposition, or the data to be presented may be written on the board in advance of the meeting. Shade rollers are sometimes attached to blackboards and pulled down over the material that is to be exhibited until time for its consideration.

Large blocks of drawing paper on an easel equipped with crayon

may take the place of the blackboard. Business corporations often use this procedure for sales problems. In the same way, enlarged photographs or photostatic copies of charts can be shown on an easel, for the instruction of all.

Photographs of situations such as bad housing conditions, drawings of proposed new buildings, copies of budgets, or outlines of arguments may be reproduced on lantern slides and shown to the committee, especially if the committee is large. Lantern slides can be made at low cost from photographs and drawings. So-called radio mats can be purchased cheaply at motion picture supply houses. With a typewriter the radio mats can be turned readily into lantern slides of typed material. Motion picture films also can be shown if they reveal some condition which the committee should consider. Lantern slides and motion pictures have the advantage of concentrating attention on the subject under consideration. The members are necessarily "completely in the dark" about everything except what is presented on the screen.

(*m*) *Demonstrations.* Sometimes an actual demonstration may be given. For example, a salesman might show the operation of an addressing or adding machine which it is proposed that the committee authorize the executive of the organization to purchase. Demonstrations of different kinds of electric floor waxers might be made before the purchasing committee of a children's institution. To see a piece of apparatus in operation is often much more conclusive as to its value than is a mere description of it by the executive, a picture in a catalogue, or even a fluent description of it by the salesman. The committee concentrates its attention on the exhibit, especially if it moves. Further, the device in full size and operation gives an idea of its performance which is not otherwise possible.

(*n*) *Presentations by Proponents.* It may be discreet to arrange for advocates of special projects to appear before the committee rather than have those projects presented by the secretary, especially if it is unlikely that the proposal will be approved. The secretary of a health organization might know that his organization would refuse to endorse the proposal of an enthusiastic representative of an anti-vivisection society that the health agency go on record against vivisection. The secretary would know, however, that the anti-vivisectionist would be exceedingly disappointed if the proposition were turned down and would probably think that the failure had occurred because the secretary had failed to present the proposal properly. If, however, the anti-vivisectionist appeared personally before the exec-

utive committee of the organization, he would know that if the decision were adverse his own presentation had failed. Besides, he would feel his failure less if it were at the hands of a committee, which is more or less impersonal and the members of which are presumably important members of the community, than if he thought the turn-down was due to the secretary.

It may be desirable to have the advocate of a proposition talk, even though his proposal is likely to be approved. The verbal presentation makes the meeting livelier and more diversified than if the secretary does the explaining. And the thought that so important a committee is to listen to the advocate pleases him. Perhaps, too, this procedure secures better attendance and attention from the committee; its members may think they must come to hear what Mr. Blank has to propose—especially if he is an important citizen.

(*o*) *Inspection of a Project.* Another form of demonstration consists in taking the committee to see the proposition upon which action is to be taken. A house committee can judge better of the need for repairs on the roof of a hospital if it inspects the roof. The budget committee of a community chest is likely to be more favorably inclined toward the purchase of chairs for a children's institution if the committee is taken out to see the youngesters sitting dolefully on backless benches. In this respect, as in all other ways of presenting material to committees, the fundamental principle is to give so vivid and clear a presentation that the committee can make its decision intelligently.

AIDS TO PRESERVATION OF COMMITTEE MATERIAL. A valuable aid to members of a committee in presenting the agenda and exhibits is to provide each member with a durable loose-leaf binder. The agenda, exhibits, notices, minutes, and other material which are presented to the committee may be punched for these binders. Thus preserved, the material can always be available in convenient form. The members should, of course, return the binders when their use is ended.

Ordinary cardboard file folders bearing the name of the organization may also be used effectively for committee work. Each member may be given a folder in which to file all pertinent material. The documents presented at meetings can be bound into the folders with brass pins.

Committee members may be asked to keep this material in their homes or their offices and to bring it with them to the meetings. If, on the contrary, they are held in the office of the social agency,

the notebooks and folders may be kept there and passed out to the members at each meeting. This plan, however, is faulty, since the committee member will be unable to file the material which he may receive from the social agency between meetings. The success of this procedure depends on whether the committee member is willing to carry the material to and from meetings.

CHAIRMAN'S PART IN THE MEETING. Although many suggestions for the conduct of a meeting have already been made, a few other points are worth touching on.

The chairman's part in the stimulation of discussion, as has been indicated, is perhaps the most vital factor in the conduct of the meeting. Sometimes his leadership may be supplemented by that of other members of the committee who have had experience in its work. As already suggested, committee or subcommittee chairmen should make their own reports whenever possible, instead of having them read by the secretary. If the chairmen read their reports, they are more likely to stand responsible for the projects presented, work harder for their execution, and be more interested in the meeting itself. In addition, the participation of a number of committee chairmen in a meeting gives more variety and interest than if all the reports are more or less perfunctorily presented by the secretary. The wise committee chairman also will be wary of all talk and no action. Committees become discouraged when they see that nothing is happening.

SECRETARY'S PART IN DELIBERATION. To enlarge upon a point made earlier, the secretary should hold himself in the background as far as possible. His task at all times is to stimulate the responsibility, thought, and activity of committee members. Rather than raise a question himself, he should suggest to the chairman that he call on some member of the committee who has something interesting to suggest. The secretary should prefer to assist the chairman with suggestions, either whispered or written or made aloud by indirection, than to be too active a protagonist for any subject. If the secretary tends to monopolize or to dominate the discussion, the committee members will quickly feel that he thinks the organization belongs to him and that he is getting them to the meeting merely to approve his opinion and desires. No one likes to be a rubber stamp!

The secretary's active participation usually should be deferred until it becomes necessary for him to give information that no one else seems to have, or to keep discussion or action from going in a direction that might be harmful. It is better for a committee to take

an hour to come to its own decision than to have it made by the secretary in five minutes. In the first case, the decision is a group decision; in the second, the committee may feel perhaps that the decision has been forced down its non-participating throat and that thus there was no real point to having the meeting.

The secretary should at all times be brief and direct in dealing with the board or committee. He should state his opinion clearly and concisely when he does speak. Too much talk by the secretary has perhaps killed more committees than any other single cause.

When he has to offer suggestions it may be desirable for him to make them as though they were not his own—for example, "It has been suggested that such and such might be a good plan," even though the suggester is himself.

He should respect the opinion of others. Because of his intimate knowledge of the agency, he should be all the more careful to remain in the background and to give others a chance to discuss their points of view. He must remember that board and committee members have experience of their own which has distinguished them as successful citizens. Their points of view on certain subjects may be even more valuable to the organization than his. Their interested cooperation is vital to its success. This attitude of secretarial reticence is fundamental and in accordance with the philosophy of participation in administration.

On the other hand, the secretary should not be a weak-kneed nonentity in committee meetings. He should be recognized and respected as a technician with professional training and experience. He should expect to be called upon by the chairman, who will doubtless do so from time to time. The secretary should share in an informal and friendly way in the discussion when he can make a contribution which no one else has the knowledge or the enterprise to make. The committee must recognize its partnership with him as a competent authority, while fulfilling its own responsibility for thought and decision.

Sometimes, of course, questions of fundamental policy arise—matters of right and wrong. Then, when it is apparent that no other course will prevent a wrong decision, the secretary must fight for his principles with all his power and persuasiveness.

As a professionally qualified adviser, his task is to know all phases of the agency's operation. One of his required skills is to make the committee a truly deliberate and participative body. If the secretary

knows his job, he need not dominate the meeting in order to receive the prestige and respect due his position and his ability.

This does not mean, of course, that professional social workers (other than the secretary) who are members of the committee should not participate on the same basis as laymen. They should, but secretaries should "lie low."

MINUTES OF THE MEETING. Some more or less facetious person has said that the chairman is the mainspring of an organization because he keeps it going. Another frisky individual answered if that is the case the secretary must be the balance wheel because he keeps the minutes and the seconds (of motions) as well.

(*a*) *Importance of the Minutes.* The minutes are an essential part of almost every meeting. One of the secretary's tasks is to keep them, according to the best possible standards. The minutes should be an impartial record of all motions passed and of all reports submitted at meetings. The minutes must be precise and specific. They are vital in the conduct of the work of the organization, for in case of dispute they involve the decisions of all question of policy, of property ownership, as well as of many other essential matters.

Regardless of how well conducted the meeting may be, it is not satisfactory unless out of it come intelligible, reliable, and accurate minutes. They constitute the fundamental legal record of the procedure of the boards and committees of the organization. Hence they stand as evidence of the past as well as existing state of affairs and attitudes of the organization. The minutes may affect not only present activities but also future policies. The record must be so phrased that it may not in the future have implications contrary to present intentions.

Much that might be said regarding minutes can be stated no better than in that authoritative book, Robert's *Rules of Order.* It should be read and followed by every secretary of a committee as well as by every presiding officer. Some of the points made there, however, need re-emphasis. Further, certain points of technique especially applicable to social agencies or outside the scope of the *Rules of Order* are well worth attention by any committee secretary.

(*b*) *Who Writes the Minutes?* Minutes are usually written by the secretary of the committee, but this task may be delegated to an assistant so that the secretary may be free to direct the progress of the meeting—if it needs direction by him. Minute writing is good

practice for the assistant. Further, it saves the time of the secretary, although he should always edit the record carefully. He is responsible!

Sometimes a stenographic record may be kept from which the secretary can prepare the minutes later on. Ordinarily, however, it is not necessary to take a verbatim report of committee meetings. The secretary, by that system of shorthand which consists in abbreviating familiar words and eliminating unnecessary ones, can usually make a sufficiently accurate memorandum of what has occurred to record the proceedings precisely.

(*c*) *Accuracy in the Minutes.* Clarity and accuracy of expression are essential to the proper writing of minutes. The secretary should make sure, before the committee goes on to other business, that he understands thoroughly the action which has been taken. If the nature of this action is not absolutely clear in his own mind, his confusion is almost certain to increase when he puts the minutes in their final form. Unless he is positive that he understands, he should request the meeting to listen to his wording of the resolution or action and correct it then and there in accordance with the understanding of all present.

(*d*) *Contents of the Minutes.* Manifestly the minutes should contain the name of the body that is meeting, the place, the date, the hour of convening and adjourning, and the names of the presiding officer and of the persons present. The minutes should include a specific statement of all seconded motions and of the action taken upon them. Practice varies considerably, however, as to whether the names of the mover and the seconder should be included. This should probably be done when a matter of policy is involved which is partly interpreted by the names of the persons who proposed and seconded the motion. On the other hand, if the motion is merely the sense of the meeting, following a general discussion which was initiated from the agenda itself, there would seem to be no need for a record of the mover and the seconder.

(*e*) *Literary Style of Minutes.* Minutes need not always be stated in the formal style of "Voted: That, . . ." They can ordinarily be written in an informal style. That makes them more attractive and easier to read than if phrased in dry and formal verbiage. Grace of expression takes nothing from the value of the record. Thus instead of saying, "Voted: To approve recommendation of the Committee on Ways and Means for . . ." the minutes might read, "Upon presentation of the budget for the year 1946 by Peter J. Smith, the chair-

man of the Ways and Means Committee, the following action was taken: . . ."

Some minutes are unduly brief and give only the bare motions, without any illumination as to the reason why those actions are taken. Other minutes are inordinately prolix and reproduce too much of the discussion. Good practice is to include only such a summary of the discussion as interprets the action taken. This material, after months or years have elapsed, may explain the reason for certain decisions. The wording, of course, should be simple, clear, and definite.

The minutes should be rendered in writing by the secretary as soon as possible after the meeting, sent to the chairman for correction, and then copied into the minute book.

(*f*) *Appearance of the Minutes.* Uniformity in the appearance of all the minutes of an agency is desirable. The secretary should follow a standard practice in respect to the width of the margin, the spacing between lines, and other details of arrangement. Original material, for example, may be double-spaced with a relatively narrow margin; material that is quoted, as well as formal resolutions presented to the meeting, may be single-spaced and indented. Rules may also be adopted and followed, according to the wishes of the social agency, in respect to the capitalization of the name of the organization; the indentation of the first lines of paragraphs; the use of subheads or of marginal captions in capital letters or in red (if the organization uses a two-color typewriter ribbon), to indicate the various items of business; the writing of sums of money both in words and in figures; and the amount of space to be left at the top and bottom of each page.

(*g*) *Distribution of the Minutes.* Many secretaries mail copies or abstracts of the minutes to all members of the committee, either directly after the meeting or enclosed with the notice of the next one. This procedure refreshes the members' memories as to what has happened and reminds them of duties which have been assigned to them; informs absent members of what has occurred so that they may keep in touch with committee activities; and, if any error has been made, affords the opportunity for prompt correction.

If the minutes are sent to all members of the committee, their reading at the next meeting may be dispensed with and time saved. The minutes should, however, be approved, and the approval should be made a matter of record. We have been told by a lawyer

board member that the minutes of the next meeting should not say, "Reading of the minutes of last meeting was dispensed with." That might invalidate the action recorded there. Rather, say, "The minutes of the last meeting were approved as presented." We personally in our organization always have the president or chairman correct and O.K. the minutes before anything further is done with them.

(*h*) *Approving and Correcting the Minutes.* Whether the actual reading of the minutes is dispensed with or not, action should be taken at the first subsequent meeting to approve the minutes. Both the secretary and the chairman should sign them, dating their signatures. The signatures are a great comfort to the secretary if anyone at some future time claims the minutes are incorrect. The fact that they have been approved and that the approval has been certified may eliminate a great deal of unnecessary argument and recrimination.

If conflict develops as to the accuracy of the minutes and the instructions of the chairman are not sufficient to settle the argument, the correct wording may be decided by vote of the committee. This vote should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the correction is made. Simple corrections are usually written into the minutes exactly as is the correction of any typographical error. Correction of official minutes should be initialed and dated in the margin by the secretary.

Every opportunity should be given for full expression of opinion by committee members on the correction of the minutes, so that all interested persons may be agreed as to the policies to which the organization has committed itself.

(*i*) *Preserving the Minutes.* Good minutes deserve to be well kept, and important ones must be carefully preserved.

The minutes of a committee which has great responsibility, handles large sums of money, or determines matters of vital policy may well be kept in a loose-leaf book with serially numbered pages. The book should have a lock to its binder, and the key should be kept in the possession of the secretary.

The minutes of a board of directors should always be kept in the organization's safe. The safe should be fireproof or in a fireproof building.

The name of the organization and that of the committee may be embossed in gilt on the cover of the board's minute book.

If the minute book is shared by the board of directors and the executive committee, it may well include the constitution and by-

laws of the organization so that they will be available for easy reference.

A loose-leaf book with serially numbered pages is better than a bound book, because the minutes can be typed on the loose leaves and additional pages can be inserted. The pages should be numbered to prevent the removal of one and the substitution of another.

Most committees can use satisfactorily the ordinary three-ring, loose-leaf book from which the sheets are removed annually to be filed or permanently bound.

The secretary should always bring the minute book to a meeting even though minutes have been sent out in advance, since those of other meetings may need to be referred to.

If not put in the safe, the minute books should be kept under supervision in a definite place in the office of the organization. They should be accessible only to authorized persons. A minute book should not be removed from the office except with the consent of the committee secretary, and if it is he should insist on its prompt return. It is better to have a copy made of the material to which reference is desired than to permit the removal of the book itself from the custody of the secretary.

(*j*) *Indexing the Record of Actions.* Reference to actions of committees is facilitated if the minutes are indexed. It is sometimes difficult to find in the minutes of several years' activities the exact place at which action was recorded to authorize some financial expenditure or some change in policy. Subheads which indicate the subject on the action may be typed above the paragraph which actually records the action. In our organization we always number these subheads in sequence for ease in reference. Gummed tabs may be stuck on the side of the page, with a word which suggests the subject inked on each tab.

A card file or a visible index may be made. In this there should be a card for each subject, and on the proper card each action should be recorded with the date, page, and paragraph.

Some minute books have in the front a page or half page for each letter of the alphabet. The subject indexed is merely written under the proper letter. This last device, however, is not very flexible, and a great deal of searching is sometimes necessary.

A visible index in a book about the size of the minute book would perhaps be best if the minutes are continually referred to at committee meetings.

One community chest budget committee assigns a page in a loose-

leaf book to each member agency. A carbon copy of the minutes of each meeting is cut up and the section which refers to a given agency is pasted on its page, with the date the action was taken. This procedure gives a complete record of the action taken on every request of each agency.

(*k*) *Attendance Records.* The minutes of all but the largest and most informal committees should include a record of those who attend. This record may be made by the secretary on his copy of the agenda of the meeting as the members come into the room.

Some agencies use a mimeographed form for recording the intention and actual attendance of committee members. At the left are typed the names of committee members. After them are two columns headed "yes" and "no" in which check marks show the result of telephoning the committee member before the meeting. At the meeting, the secretary checks the actual attendance.

If the group is large, or if the secretary is too busy to check the attendance or does not know all the members, it is well to have cards distributed, signed, and turned over to the secretary before the members leave. For this purpose plain white cards may be used. Some social agencies have attendance cards printed or mimeographed, with spaces provided for the name of the person and of the organization which he represents, as well as the name of the committee whose meeting he is attending.

In addition the minutes may well include a record of those not present. If the minutes sent to all members of the committee bear this double record, it is hoped that those who attended will get a proper thrill from seeing their names listed among those who were there and that those who were absent will be filled with compunction at the evidence of their non-participation.

For a large committee there might well be kept a detailed attendance report that shows the percentage of attendance of each member from the beginning of the organizational year or from that of the committee's activity. The members might be listed in descending order of percentage attendance. Members often take pride in standing toward the top of the list and endeavor to avoid a poor percentage.

The record of attendance could be put in graphic form, with bars of different lengths to correspond with each member's percentage of attendance.

Records and/or graphs, duplicated on the ditto machine or the

mimeograph, if sent to the committee members with the notice of the next meeting, might have a wholesome effect on attendance.

PUBLICITY ON THE MEETING. The secretary, as we have seen, is responsible for the records of the committee, for the minutes, and for the attendance record. In addition he is responsible for the less formal record of the committee's activities which is given in newspaper publicity. In conference with the chairman he must determine at what stage of the proceedings of the committee publicity is desirable, and at that point he may invite reporters to be present at the meeting. If the proceedings are confidential, however, he may arrange with the reporters for an interview after the meeting, or he may send stories to the newspapers on what has occurred. If the organization has a director of public relations, the secretary may either arrange for him to attend the meeting and secure the necessary information then or may give it to him after the meeting. Sometimes the chairman of the committee or a publicity-experienced member can handle the public statement. No matter by whom handled, the publicity release should quote the chairman, not the secretary, as the announcing authority. Publicity on meetings is often as important in getting results as is the meeting itself. The alert secretary will see that no opportunities for constructive interpretation are missed.

The secretary must have an eye and ear for publicity material. At the same time, he must remember to enforce upon members of the committee the confidential nature of some of the business. They must be warned against repeating to anyone confidential matter which might gravely affect the relationship of their organization to another or to the general public. For example, serious results have come from the indiscretions of community chest budget committee members who have failed to keep to themselves their unfavorable opinions of the presentation of certain agencies. Possible co-operation on the part of such an agency in raising its standards has thus been completely lost because of criticism which got around not too subterraneously to the organization concerned. A canny secretary guards his minutes and warns his committee members to guard their tongues.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE MEETING'S DECISIONS. One meeting with its minutes does not make a committee. A committee is usually engaged in a continuing activity. The secretary or chairman is responsible for seeing that it has enduring life and effectiveness. After each meeting

the secretary should make in his tickler file or on his calendar memoranda of matters which are to be attended to. As soon as the minutes are O.K.'d he may send a marked copy of the minutes to each committee member to whom a job has been assigned, calling his attention to that responsibility. If the secretary wants to be a little fancier, he may send to each member a special letter which contains the excerpt from the minutes which authorizes this responsibility. It is good teamwork for the secretary to send to the chairman a carbon copy of each letter of this kind, so that he may know that this detail has been handled.

At the time for beginning or ending each assigned task, the secretary should follow up the individual responsible for it by telephone call or letter. Written reminders may be signed with the chairman's name, as has already been suggested.

The chairman should also be notified of any responsibility that he has in connection with the committee work, such as following up members, and so on.

In this follow-up work the secretary must have in mind the rules of diplomacy and not be over-insistent. He should ask, without implied criticism, how the committee member is getting on and how he as secretary can help him, even though he knows the member is not getting on at all. Let the chairman, not the secretary, be the critical member and the official prod. The secretary can call to the chairman's attention the problems created by committee workers who fail to do their duties, but it is up to the chairman to get results from them or to secure others to do the work. A further reminder of responsibility should be given in the notice of the meeting. In the notice the secretary can list the names of those who are to make reports on behalf of various committees and projects.

No committee can be effective unless it carries through to completion the projects assigned to it on a definite basis of responsibility. The secretary is ordinarily the person who must see that that responsibility is fulfilled.

EDUCATING THE COMMITTEE. In addition, the secretary must keep the committee informed on the subjects for which it is responsible. Minutes and notices of meetings are not sufficient for this purpose. The alert secretary will send to committee members other pertinent material, such as pamphlets on subjects connected with their committee responsibilities, clippings from newspapers, and copies of reports from other social agencies or of the annual report of the organization concerned. When the secretary returns from a social

work conference or a visit to a social agency in another city, he might summarize his more significant impressions and enclose them with a circular letter which asks opinions from the committee members.

Some secretaries mail periodical bulletins to all the committees of their organization. In this way the members are informed of the work of other committees as well as of their own. With this help, the members may more readily co-ordinate their work with that of other groups in the organization.

We personally in our own organization present to the Board of the Community Chest and Council at its monthly meeting a mimeographed "Confidential Report" compiled from the weekly reports made to us by staff executives and from our daily "log" or calendar. Our report is mailed, after the meeting, with the financial report, to members who were not present. The fact that the report is "confidential" may make it more thoroughly read—"inside stuff" has an appeal!

Books of significance may be passed around among committee members. Bibliographies also might be sent to the committee, with the suggestion that the secretary will be glad to get for a member any of the books on the list.

As a source of information for both old and new board and committee members, the secretary may prepare and distribute a summary of policies as revealed through the minutes of the committee over a period of years. New board members and members of standing committees should receive copies of the constitution and bylaws, marked with reference to their duties.

If he has the time, the secretary will find it worth while to call at least once a year on each of his committee members, to ask for their suggestions on the work of the committee, and to answer any questions which they may have. In addition to these calls, he may well call upon persons who are absent from meetings, express regret at their absence, describe what has been done at the meeting, and encourage attendance at the next one. Personal attention will pay large dividends in increased interest and participation.

The secretary should by all means call on new committee members, explain to them the work of the organization, and answer their questions. He can give them informative material, such as a history of the organization, a copy of the constitution and bylaws, and any other literature or reports which would help to bring them up to date on the work of the organization and of the committee. A new

committee member might be urged to come to the office and read the minutes of his committee.

If the executive cannot call on all the committee members he might send other qualified staff members (if he has them) in his place.

When an important speaker conversant with the kind of work the committee is doing is in the city, members of the committee may be urged to attend a special or general meeting at which he may be heard. Members may also be urged to attend local, state, or national conferences of social work and similar meetings which will help them to do their committee work better.

If they have time, committee members may secure more direct contact with the work of the organization by actually seeing it in action. The boys' work committee of a social settlement should visit the boys' clubs and classes. A member of a case work committee of a family society might go with a visitor to the homes of certain selected clients of the organization or discuss with the case worker specific problems of these families. Committee members may attend staff meetings of the organization, either to listen, to participate in the discussion, or to describe the work of the committee on which they are serving. It may be wholesome for a committee member to spend a day or half a day in the office and observe what goes on. He will probably go away with a vastly increased respect for the complexity and difficulty of the work of the organization and for the competence with which it is handled.

JOBS FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS. All the principles already discussed regarding stimulation of the interest of board members through assignment of tasks for the agency also apply to committee members. The thoughtful secretary will know the talents and abilities of each committee member and will be sure that these qualities are exercised in the work of the organization when opportunity offers.

However, the secretary must show discretion in determining the amount of work to give a committee member. If the secretary is in proper touch with the members, he will know the amount of leisure each has, how much energy he possesses, and how deep his interest is in the work of the organization. The secretary will neither overload an indifferent member and thus drive him out of the service of the organization nor underload an able person. He will not give too much work to a person who is not strong and who may conscientiously do so much as to cause an actual collapse. We have seen this happen!

On the other hand, the secretary will not underestimate the interest of a committee member and fail to give him enough work to keep up his interest. People will do an astonishing amount of volunteer work if they feel that they are really responsible for it. The secretary must, however, look out for the committee member who starts a job enthusiastically and then leaves it half finished for a staff member to complete. One such experience with a member should be sufficient to preclude giving him any other important responsibility until he is really ready to carry through.

Of course the secretary will usually see that the chairman applies the ideas expressed above. It is the secretary's job, though, to think them up.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS. After all these considerations regarding effective committees (and each item is important) one final question remains—the interval between meetings. The secretary must make sure that a committee does not meet so frequently that the members feel overworked or so infrequently that they lose interest and feel that they have been appointed to no purpose. Important committees should usually have regularly stated meetings, perhaps monthly. Others may meet less frequently. On the other hand, weekly meetings may be necessary for some committees with urgent work. Sometimes committees may meet still more frequently, although not over long periods of time.

It is well to see that everyone on the committee is consulted when there is new work to be done. The chairman should not assume responsibility for carrying out projects which have not been agreed to by the committee. Neither should the secretary form the habit of transacting the committee's business with the chairman and of leaving the committee nothing to do. If a person accepts membership on a committee, he presumably expects to live up to its obligations.

It is sometimes wise to postpone a meeting by having a notice sent to the members or telephoned when there is not enough business to hold their attention.

The committee should decide when it has finished its assigned task. The organization should have no committees that are not active. The fact that a person believes he is a member of a committee which really is inactive may keep him from rendering other service to this or some other organization.

HANDLING "DEAD" MEMBERS. "Dead" members should not be kept on a committee. If a member becomes inactive and his interest cannot be revived, he should be dropped. Some organizations have

adopted the excellent rule that failure to attend three successive meetings of a committee, without adequate written excuse, automatically constitutes a resignation. If the committee is important and the member thinks he gains some prestige by serving on it, he is likely to think more of the committee if it is strict in requiring attendance.

The executive who has in mind the good of his organization and of the people whom it serves will cultivate his committees by a judicious selection of the means mentioned in the foregoing pages. He will reap a crop of effective service and strong organizational life which can be grown by no other methods.

QUESTIONS

1. In the committee work of some typical social agency you know, does the secretary plan the agenda with the chairman? If so, when and how?
2. How is the business stated on the agenda?
3. Is each member of the committee given a copy of the agenda and exhibits?
4. From what sources is material for committee meetings assembled?
5. In what order is the business presented, and why?
6. How is the material for consideration adapted to the size and make-up of the committee?
7. In what form, mechanically, are the agenda and exhibits presented?
8. What use is made of demonstrations, personal advocates of projects, visits of inspection, and the like?
9. What special aids does the committee have for the preservation of its material?
10. What part do the chairman and the chairmen of the subcommittees play in the meeting?
11. What is the secretary's part in the meeting?
12. What material, in general, appears in the minutes?
13. Who writes the minutes?
14. What steps are taken to insure their accuracy?
15. What general style is followed in them?
16. What standards of form or appearance are followed?
17. How are the minutes distributed?
18. How are they approved and corrected?
19. How are they preserved?
20. Are the minutes indexed? If so, how?

21. Are attendance records kept? If so, how?
22. How is publicity on the meetings handled?
23. How are the decisions of the meeting translated into action?
24. How is the committee educated in the work of the agency?
25. What other service do committee members render in the agency?
26. How often are meetings held?
27. How are "dead" members handled?
28. How do you think the procedures might be improved?