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Some notes on –
A PHILOSOPHY
of Leadership

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(So much has been written on this subject that we are not publishing Sqn. Ldr. Truemner's excellent essay in its entirety. We have instead, taken the liberty of selecting excerpts from it which seem to us to summarize the problems of leadership in a terse and unusually vigorous manner. The author, who is at present attending Course No. 15 at the R.C.A.F. Staff College, has had several years' experience as a flying instructor in the R.C.A.F. and was formerly in command of the School of Service Management at Trenton. – Editor [*Roundel*])

Almost everyone in a peace-time military organization can be viewed as a potential war-time leader. Each individual, therefore, owes to himself and his country an obligation to discover what talents are required to provide true leadership. One belief is that leaders are born and not made. Another theory has it that almost any person of normal intelligence can learn to become a leader. Both statements hold considerable truth. Some people do possess a greater natural capacity for leadership than [*sic*] others. The average person, however, can develop and increase his skill as a leader just as he improves his technique as a pilot, a chef, or a mathematician.

DEFINITION

The term "leadership" is related to the field of human relationships where power is

exercised over people. One person or group of persons directs; the others, within the particular leadership situation, comply or follow. In human affairs of this nature, a certain friction develops between the will of the one commanding and the responding will of the individuals in the subordinate position. **Leadership is the ability to minimize the friction loss – to influence subordinates to follow instructions because they want to, rather than because they must.**

CONFIDENCE

The function of leadership cannot be developed properly without apportioning considerable thought to the characteristics which the director should possess. A careful study of prominent successful executives of past and present provides the proof that no real

mould exists for a leader. Instead, a full range of spiritual, intellectual, and physical qualifications is revealed, providing contrasts rather than a uniform pattern. One feature, nevertheless, can be stated as being present in all leadership situations – confidence. No real leadership process can be established without an atmosphere of confidence, because:

- the subordinates must have confidence in their leader;
- those to whom the leader is subordinate must have confidence in him;
- and, above all, the leader must have confidence in himself.

Confidence can not be improvised. It is a condition which must be properly initiated and constantly maintained. Paramount among the factors which contribute to this basis of leadership are:

1. The leader’s appreciation of the true meaning of discipline.
2. The leader’s proficiency in his work.
3. The irreproachableness of the leader’s personal example.
4. The leader’s understanding of his subordinates.

1. DISCIPLINE

Discipline is systematic training which can instil mutual confidence. Its real purpose is to bind together a number of vastly different individuals into an organized group which works as one unit, to one end, under one leader. Discipline is often confused with compulsion, the instrument to which established authority naturally turns to lend support to its commands; but the effects of compulsion last exactly as long as the club can be applied. Proper discipline is necessary, but there is a vast difference between the discipline that restricts and irritates and the discipline that stimulates confidence and team work.

Discipline, derived from the word “disciple,” carries the implication of the attitude of the

learner, the person who desires a contributing part in a movement, or philosophy, or religion. Discipline is not punishment or stern rule: it is systematic training which brings about control of mental, moral, and physical faculties.

2. PROFICIENCY

The leader must be skilled in his profession. Such proficiency comes from an understanding of each detail, each task, each responsibility of his employment.

Rudyard Kipling once wrote:

“I keep six honest serving men;

They taught me all I knew.

Their names are What and Why and When

And How and Where and Who.”

The individual is master of his work when he knows: what is to be done, why it is to be done [*sic*] how it is to be done, when it is to be done, where it is to be done, and who is to do it. This mastery is the product of constant hard work. The leader must always strive to know more about his military profession than any man under him, because efficiency stimulates the atmosphere of confidence.

The leader must be able to explain or teach his knowledge to others. In fact, many claim that “leader” and “teacher” are synonymous [*sic*] terms. Whether the leader is employed in the office, shop, hangar, or conference room, he will discover that each activity presents the responsibility of teaching someone to do something. The prerequisite to carrying out this function successfully is again that of knowing everything about one’s assignment.

The good N.C.O. [non-commissioned officer] or officer is never satisfied with knowing only his own duties well. After mastering his own, he extends his understanding upwards, not to assume the tasks of another, but to integrate his own activities with those related to his. As his Service time lengthens and he becomes experienced, his usefulness expands in proportion to his preparation and development.

3. PERSONAL EXAMPLE

As Winston Churchill once said: “the truly great leader is one who, by his own high example, inspires his followers with such a degree of confidence that they carry out quickly, cheerfully, and thoroughly whatever duties they are called upon to perform.” It follows that if a sergeant wants to command the best turned-out flight, or a commanding officer desires to have the finest-looking parade, he himself must be faultless in appearance. If the commander wants his men to “jump to it,” he too must be a man of action. If he expects a loyal attitude toward himself, he must set the example by being loyal to his superiors and subordinates. Men will try to mould themselves according to the pattern established by the leader. Men expect their leader to act like a leader, and they unconsciously set a high standard for their superior to attain. The man who cannot handle himself well, will not direct others successfully.

4. UNDERSTANDING SUBORDINATES

If men are to place their confidence in an individual, they must receive something personal in return. That payment can usually be understanding. Fundamental, in learning about a subordinate, is the discovery of how he differs from each of his fellows. At least the following five areas of difference should be studied:

Locality. The leader must consider from what locality a man comes. Town or country – east or west – dissimilar origins may explain dissimilarities in custom, culture, thought, speech, or even humour.

Former Job. Some personnel, accustomed to danger and hard manual labour, find it difficult to place their trust and confidence in another. The ex-clerk may be the opposite. His former employment may have dulled his initiative so that he depends on steady leadership. He, however, will possess habits of patience and endurance.

Temperament. In every group of men there will be the sulky, the good-humoured, the touchy, the lazy, the industrious, the amorous, the loyal, the shy, and so on *ad infinitum*. The N.C.O. or officer who endeavours to to [*sic*] know each immediate subordinate as an individual will be able to get the best from him.

Religion. To a great number of personnel scattered through the Services, religion matters a great deal. Religious faith not only aids morale but also strengthens confidence.

Upbringing. The kind of upbringing a man has experienced – good home, bad home – influences his acceptance of direction.

The more a leader investigates all such differences, the better he will be able to direct his men. No leadership process exists unless “those who follow” are considered and understood.

TO SUMMARIZE

True leadership is founded on confidence, and confidence is inspired by the commander’s understanding of discipline, his professional efficiency, his personal example, and his consideration for his subordinates.

Discipline will promote co-operation within the group.

Complete knowledge of his work will permit the leader to direct and instruct.

Personal example of the highest calibre will establish him in correct perspective with his men, and understanding of those men will place them in right perspective with him.

The individual who is vigilant about these factors is a worthy leader – that is, a leader who merits the confidence of his superiors, his subordinates, and himself. ■