

33rd Kerrisdale Centennial Troop Patrol Leader Training 5

Leading makes use of many skills....

Representing the Group

At the troop leaders' council meeting, Charlie, the Fox Patrol leader, voted for the hike to Donner's Mill with great enthusiasm. He thought it would be a great hike. At a later troop meeting, the senior patrol leader announced the hike to Donner's Mill and there was a loud groan from the Foxes. The Scoutmaster and senior patrol leader were quite surprised, since Charlie had been so enthusiastic. What made the Foxes react in that way? Did they have a better location in mind? Had they grown tired of Donner's Mill for some reason? Most likely, they just wished they had been consulted.

Charlie just hadn't represented them. He had spoken for himself, not his patrol.

In a pure democracy, everyone speaks for himself. No one is ever appointed to speak for anyone else. Thus, everyone has to be consulted before anything is done. There aren't many pure democracies, because it is almost impossible to get very much done. The bigger the group, the less possible it becomes to have a pure democracy.

To overcome these problems, we have representative democracies. A Scout troop is an example of one. The patrol leaders are the representatives of the patrol. They speak for the members of their patrol.

Suppose you are a patrol member. The patrol is going to elect a leader. Three members of your patrol are candidates. You don't know which one to vote for.

Each candidate is asked to state what he understands about representing his patrol at the troop leaders' council. Which of the following boys would get your vote?

SAM: Look, man, if you elect me, you gotta trust me to do what's right. know what you guys want. I won't let you down.

PAT: I don't agree with Sam. I don't think he knows what you want. I don't know either. But any time there's a question, we'll take a vote. Majority rules. I'll speak for the side with the most votes. Isn't that fair?

TIM: No, it's not fair. I think the leader should speak for everybody, not just the majority. If five of you vote for A and only two of you vote for B, I think the two should be heard too. If you elect me, I'll speak for everybody, whether we all agree or not. You can vote the way you please, but...

Sam will speak for himself. When his views and yours are the same, he'll be representing you. When they're different, your views won't be represented.

Pat will represent your views whenever they're on the majority side. If less than half of the patrol thinks your way, you won't be represented.

Tim will represent you every time -- even when he doesn't agree with you.

You Can Count on This. -- ***You can't represent a group unless you know what they think. And you can't know what they think unless you ask them.***

Here are some suggestions for asking:

Get the facts. Do you understand what they're telling you? Do they understand what they're being asked about?

Analyze the situation. If there's a problem, can it be handled inside the group? Or must other leaders be brought in?

Get the group's reaction. If all feel the same way, fine. If there's a difference of opinion, find out all sides of it.

Take notes. You can't remember all details long enough to represent the group. Write them down. Read them back to the group to be sure you haven't left out anything.

When You Represent the Group -- Make sure you get all the information, opinions, and ideas of your group before speaking for it.

Give the facts. If there are different points of view, state them.

Give the reason for them. Present them so fairly that no one will know which side you favor.

Respect their opinions. Your group may all agree on something. Other groups may agree on the opposite. Listen to what they have to say. They may have information your group did not know about.

Represent some things in private. When there's some personality

problem in your group, present it to one or two leaders. Don't hang it out for everyone to see.

Take notes. You will have to report back to your group. They will want to know what happened and why. Write it down so you won't forget anything.

Have you been elected patrol leader? How can you best represent your patrol at the troop leaders' council and the council to your patrol? Some possibilities are (1) give the facts, (2) respect others' opinions, (3) represent some things in private, and (4) take notes.

As you practice the skills noted above, you need to evaluate your progress. Are you giving every patrol member a chance to express his opinion? Do you report opinions different from your own? Do you present the opinions of others fairly or slant them to your own opinions?

"Leading makes use of many skills...." is adapted from Patrol and Troop Leadership, the handbook on leadership development written for Patrol Leaders and published by the Boy Scouts of America in 1972.